9) Clash between Creation and emanation: If emanation: return in the lap of the "substance" that emanated. If creation: fate of man separated. If emanation: no boundaries of experimental recognition. If creation: definite distance.

10. Kabbalah [illegible] Gottesname [illegible] Rabbiner.

11. Zeitgemäss — [illegible] Charakter [illegible] [illegible] — [illegible] Spekulation. Secrecy [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Geheimnisse. [illegible]

1) Ablehnung der Lehren [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Verpflichtung [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Fundamentalität.

2) Kabbala: <u>Der</u> Ursprung — [illegible] [illegible]

3) <u>Secret</u>: secret God, secret meaning of the Thora etc. — [illegible] genuine meaning of secrecy: hidden before [illegible] [illegible]

4) Esoterik der Mystik — und Volksmystik. <u>Tradition</u>

5) <u>Hauptproblem</u>: Beziehung zwischen [illegible] [illegible] und Aberglauben.

6) Der unbekannte, seltsame (strange) [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] <u>Schöpfergott</u>

7) Clash between mystical [illegible] and that of [illegible]: Jewish mystics [illegible] [illegible] because of unity of the people. [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

8) Realitätsproblem: [illegible] [illegible] Opposition gegen das rabbinische Judentum [illegible] [illegible] Experimental-[illegible] [illegible] ist [illegible] — [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] <u>[illegible]</u> [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Harold Schmidt.

MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM

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The Hilda Stich Stroock Lectures, 1938

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by

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reprinted almost in the original form. To have expanded the brief account of Hasidism given here by a closer examination of specific phenomena would have necessitated writing a new book. I have therefore contented myself with an exposition of my general views on the subject. All in all, it may be said that the purpose of this book is not to give a complete historical account of Jewish mysticism but an outline of its principal features in the form of an analysis of some of its most important phases. A comprehensive critical history of Jewish mysticism, with special reference to all the various currents and cross-currents of Kabbalism, would require several volumes. Since these lectures were not intended exclusively for research students in this field but for the much wider circle of those who take an interest in questions of Jewish history and religion, I have laid greater stress on the analysis and interpretation of mystical thought than on the historical links between the various systems. Where it was possible without introducing too much philological detail I have nevertheless sketched the historical connections at least in outline. Only in the lecture on the Book Zohar and its author have I departed from this rule and attempted a more thorough philological analysis. I have considered it my obligation to do so both in view of the generally acknowledged importance of the matter for the history of Judaism and because of the unfortunate state of the discussion to date. Readers who take only slight interest in such questions of literary and historical criticism will miss little by skipping the fifth lecture. For similar reasons I have placed the notes at the end of the book, in order not to burden the text too much with references which have little meaning for those outside the circle of students of Judaism familiar with the reading of Hebrew texts.

This book challenges in some of its major theses not a few notions about Jewish history and religion which are more or less generally accepted by both Jews and non-Jews. If the great task of Jewish scholarship in our generation, the task of rewriting Jewish history with a deeper understanding of the interplay of religious, political and social forces, is to be succesfully carried out, there is urgent need for a new elucidation of the function which Jewish mysticism has had at varying periods, of its ideals and of its approach to the various problems arising from the actual conditions at such times. I have endeavoured to present my views on this subject as concisely and at the same time as clearly as possible in the hope of making a serious contribution to a very important and very much needed discussion. Among Hebrew writers, this discussion has now proceeded for a number of years; in the corresponding English literature on the subject it has been reopened by Salo Baron's "A Religious and Social History of the Jews," publication of which coincided with the delivery of these lectures. I, for one, sincerely believe that such a discussion of our past has something to do with our future.

CONTENTS

TABLE OF TRANSCRIPTION

In the text of the lectures, the use of Hebrew letters has been avoided throughout. The following is the transcription of the Hebrew alphabet used, apart from the exceptions given below, in the present volume:

א	omitted	ל	l
בּ	b	מ	m
ב	v	נ	n
ג	g	ס	s
ד	d	ע	omitted
ה	h	פּ	p
ו	w	פ	f
ז	z	צ	ts
ח	h	ק	k
ט	t	ר	r
י	y	שׁ	sh
כּ	k	תּ	t
כ	kh	ת	th

Biblical names are given in the form used in the Authorized Version. Certain accepted terms are given in the transliterations generally current, e. g. Zaddik.

FIRST LECTURE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF JEWISH MYSTICISM

I.

It is the purpose of these lectures to describe and to analyze some of the major trends of Jewish mysticism. I cannot of course hope to deal comprehensively in a few hours with a subject so vast and at the same time so intricate as the whole sweep and whirl of the mystical stream, as it runs its course through the movements which are known to the history of Jewish religion under the names of Kabbalah and Hasidism. Probably all of you have heard something about these aspects of Jewish religion. Their significance has been a matter of much dispute among Jewish scholars. Opinion has changed several times; it has varied between the extremes of hostile criticism and condemnation on the one hand, and enthusiastic praise and defence on the other. It has not, however, greatly advanced our knowledge of what may be called the real nature of mystical lore, nor has it enabled us to form an unbiased judgment as to the part this lore has played and continues to play in Jewish history or as to its importance for a true understanding of Judaism.

It is only fair to add that the exposition of Jewish Mysticism, or that part of it which has so far been publicly discussed, abounds in misunderstandings and consequent misrepresentations of the subject-matter under discussion. The great Jewish scholars of the past century whose conception of Jewish history is still dominant in our days, men like Graetz, Zunz, Geiger, Luzzatto and Steinschneider, had little sympathy — to put it mildly — for the Kabbalah. At once strange and repellent, it epitomised everything that was opposed to their own ideas and to the outlook which they hoped to make predominant in modern Judaism. Darkly it stood in their path, the ally of forces and tendencies in whose rejection pride was taken by a Jewry which, in Steinschneider's words, regarded it as its chief task to make a decent exit from the world. This may explain the negative opinions of these scholars regarding the function of mysticism in Jewish

history. We are well aware that their attitude, far from being that of the pure scholar, is rather that of the combatant actively grappling with a dangerous foe who is still full of strength and vitality; the foe in question being the Hasidic movement. Enmity can do a great deal. We should be thankful to those zealous early critics who, though their judgment and sense of values may have been affected and warped by their prejudices, nevertheless had their eyes open to see certain important factors with great distinctness. Often enough they were in the right, though not for the reasons they themselves gave. Truth to tell, the most astonishing thing in reading the works of these critics is their lack of sufficient knowledge of the sources or the subjects on which in so many cases they ventured to pass judgment.

It is not to the credit of Jewish scholarship that the works of the few writers who were really informed on the subject were never printed, and in some cases were not even recorded, since there was nobody to take an interest. Nor have we reason to be proud of the fact that the greater part of the ideas and views which show a real insight into the world of Kabbalism, closed as it was to the rationalism prevailing in the Judaism of the nineteenth century, were expressed by Christian scholars of a mystical bent, such as the Englishman Arthur Edward Waite[1] of our days and the German Franz Josef Molitor[2] a century ago. It is a pity that the fine philosophical intuition and natural grasp of such students lost their edge because they lacked all critical sense as to historical and philological data in this field, and therefore failed completely when they had to handle problems bearing on the facts.

The natural and obvious result of the antagonism of the great Jewish scholars was that, as the authorized guardians neglected this field, all manner of charlatans and dreamers came and treated it as their own property. From the brilliant misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Alphonse Louis Constant, who has won fame under the pseudonym of Eliphas Lévi, to the highly coloured humbug of Aleister Crowley and his followers, the most eccentric and fantastic statements have been produced purporting to be legitimate interpretations of Kabbalism.[3] The time has come to reclaim this derelict area and to apply to it the strict standards of historical research. It is this task which I have set myself, and in the following lectures

term *mysticism* to the classic manifestations of the great religions. It would be absurd to call Moses, the man of God, a mystic, or to apply this term to the Prophets, on the strength of their immediate religious experience. I, for one, do not intend to make use of a terminology which obscures the very real differences that are recognized by all, and thereby makes it even more difficult to get at the root of the problem.

3.

The point which I would like to make first of all is this: Mysticism is a definite stage in the historical development of religion and makes its appearance under certain well-defined conditions. It is connected with and inseparable from a certain stage of the religious consciousness. It is also incompatible with certain other stages, which leave no room for it in the sense in which the term is commonly understood.

The first stage represents the world as being full of gods whom Man encounters at every step and whose presence can be experienced without recourse to ecstatic meditation. In other words, there is no room for mysticism as long as the abyss between Man and God has not become a fact of the inner consciousness. That, however, is the case only while the childhood of mankind, its mythical epoch, lasts. The immediate consciousness of the interrelation and interdependence of things, their essential unity which precedes duality and in fact knows nothing of it, the truly monistic universe of Man's mythical age, all this is alien to the spirit of mysticism. At the same time it will become clear why certain elements of this monistic consciousness recur on another plane and in different guise in the mystical consciousness. In this first stage, Nature is the scene of Man's relation with God.

The second period which knows no real mysticism is the creative epoch in which the emergence, the break-through of religion occurs. Religion's supreme function is to destroy the dream-harmony of Man, Universe and God, to isolate man from the other elements of the dream stage of his mythical and primitive consciousness. For in its classical form, religion signifies the creation of a vast abyss, conceived as absolute, between God, the infinite and transcendental Being, and Man, the finite creature. For this reason alone, the rise

of institutional religion, which is also the classical stage in the history of religion, is wider removed than any other period from mysticism and all it implies. Man becomes aware of a fundamental duality, of a vast gulf which can be crossed by nothing but the *voice;* the voice of God, directing and law-giving in His revelation, and the voice of Man in prayer. The great monotheistic religions live and unfold in the ever-present consciousness of this bipolarity, of the existence of an abyss which can never be bridged. To them the scene of religion is no longer Nature, but the moral and religious action of Man and the community of men, whose interplay brings about history as, in a sense, the stage on which the drama of Man's relation to God unfolds.

And only now that religion has received, in history, its classical expression in a certain communal way of living and believing, only now do we witness the phenomenon called mysticism; its rise coincides with what may be called the romantic period of religion. Mysticism does not deny or overlook the abyss; on the contrary, it begins by realizing its existence, but from there it proceeds to a quest for the secret that will close it in, the hidden path that will span it. It strives to piece together the fragments broken by the religious cataclysm, to bring back the old unity which religion has destroyed, but on a new plane, where the world of mythology and that of revelation meet in the soul of man. Thus the soul becomes its scene and the soul's path through the abysmal multiplicity of things to the experience of the Divine Reality, now conceived as the primordial unity of all things, becomes its main preoccupation. To a certain extent, therefore, mysticism signifies a revival of mythical thought, although the difference must not be overlooked between the unity which is there before there is duality, and the unity that has to be won back in a new upsurge of the religious consciousness.

Historically, this appearance of mystical tendencies is also connected with another factor. The religious consciousness is not exhausted with the emergence of the classic systems of institutional religion. Its creative power endures, although the formative effect of a given religion may be sufficiently great to encompass all genuine religious feeling within its orbit for a long period. During this period the values which such a religious system has set up retain their original meaning and their appeal to the feelings of the believers. However, even so new religious impulses may arise which threaten to conflict with the scale of values established by historical religion. Above all, what encourages the emergence of Mysticism is a situation in which these new impulses do not break through the shell of the old religious system and create a new one, but tend to remain confined within its borders. If and when such a situation arises, the longing for new religious values corresponding to the new religious experience finds its expression in a new interpretation of the old values which frequently acquire a much more profound and personal significance, although one which often differs entirely from the old and transforms their meaning. In this way Creation, Revelation and Redemption, to mention some of our most important religious conceptions, are given new and different meanings reflecting the characteristic feature of mystical experience, the direct contact between the individual and God.

Revelation, for instance, is to the mystic not only a definite historical occurrence which, at a given moment in history, puts an end to any further direct relation between mankind and God. With no thought of denying Revelation as a fact of history, the mystic still conceives the source of religious knowledge and experience which bursts forth from his own heart as being of equal importance for the conception of religious truth. In other words, instead of the one act of Revelation, there is a constant repetition of this act. This new Revelation, to himself or to his spiritual master, the mystic tries to link up with the sacred texts of the old; hence the new interpretation given to the canonical texts and sacred books of the great religions. To the mystic, the original act of Revelation to the community — the as it were public revelation of Mount Sinai, to take one instance — appears as something whose true meaning has yet to unfold itself; the secret revelation is to him the real and decisive one. And thus the substance of the canonical texts, like that of all other religious values, is melted down and given another form as it passes through the fiery stream of the mystical consciousness. It is hardly surprising that, hard as the mystic may try to remain within the confines of his religion, he often consciously or unconsciously approaches, or even transgresses, its limits.

It is not necessary for me to say anything further at this point about the reasons which have often transformed mystics into heretics.

Such heresy does not always have to be fought with fire and sword by the religious community: it may even happen that its heretical nature is not understood and recognized. Particularly is this the case where the mystic succeeds in adapting himself to the 'orthodox' vocabulary and uses it as a wing or vehicle for his thoughts. As a matter of fact, this is what many Kabbalists have done. While Christianity and Islam, which had at their disposal more extensive means of repression and the apparatus of the State, have frequently and drastically suppressed the more extreme forms of mystical movements, few analogous events are to be found in the history of Judaism. Nevertheless, in the lectures on Sabbatianism and Hasidism, we shall have occasion to note that instances of this kind are not entirely lacking.

4

We have seen that mystical religion seeks to transform the God which it encounters in the peculiar religious consciousness of its own social environment from an object of dogmatic knowledge into a novel and living experience and intuition. In addition, it also seeks to interpret this experience in a new way. Its practical side, the realization of God and the doctrine of the Quest for God, are therefore frequently, particularly in the more developed forms of the mystical consciousness, connected with a certain ideology. This ideology, this theory of mysticism, is a theory both of the mystical cognition of God and His revelation, and of the path which leads to Him.

It should now be clear why the outward forms of mystical religion within the orbit of a given religion are to a great extent shaped by the positive content and values recognized and glorified in that religion. We cannot, therefore, expect the physiognomy of Jewish mysticism to be the same as that of Catholic Mysticism, Anabaptism or Moslem Sufism. The particular aspects of Christian mysticism, which are connected with the person of the saviour and mediator between God and man, the mystical interpretation of the Passion of Christ, which is repeated in the personal experience of the individual — all this is foreign to Judaism, and also to its mystics. Their ideas proceed from the concepts and values peculiar to Judaism, that is to say, above all from the belief in the Unity of God and

the meaning of His revelation as laid down in the Torah, the sacred law.

Jewish mysticism in its various forms represents an attempt to interpret the religious values of Judaism in terms of mystical values. It concentrates upon the idea of the living God who manifests himself in the acts of Creation, Revelation and Redemption. Pushed to its extreme, the mystical meditation on this idea gives birth to the conception of a sphere, a whole realm of Divinity, which underlies the world of our sense-data and which is present and active in all that exists. This is the meaning of what the Kabbalists call the *world of the 'Sefiroth'*. I should like to explain this a little more fully.

The attributes of the living God are conceived differently and undergo a peculiar transformation when compared with the meaning given to them by the philosophers of Judaism. Among the latter, Maimonides in the "Guide of the Perplexed" felt bound to ask: How is it possible to say of God that He is living? Does that not imply a limitation of the infinite Being? The words "God is living", he argues, can only mean that he is not dead, that is to say, that he is the opposite of all that is negative. He is the negation of negation. A quite different reply is given by the Kabbalist, for whom the distinction, nay the conflict, between the known and the unknown God has a significance denied to it by the philosophers of Judaism.

No creature can take aim at the unknown, the hidden God. In the last resort, every cognition of God is based on a form of relation between Him and His creature, i. e. on a manifestation of God in something else, and not on a relation between Him and Himself. It has been argued that the difference between the *deus absconditus*, God in Himself, and God in His appearance is unknown to Kabbalism.[7] This seems to me a wrong interpretation of the facts. On the contrary, the dualism embedded in these two aspects of the one God, both of which are, theologically speaking, possible ways of aiming at the Divinity, has deeply preoccupied the Jewish mystics. It has occasionally led them to use formulae of which the danger for the religious consciousness of monotheism was fully revealed only in the subsequent development of Kabbalism. As a rule, the Kabbalists were concerned to find a formula which should give as little offence as possible to the philosophers. For this reason the inherent contra-

diction between the two aspects of God is not always brought out as clearly as in the famous doctrine of an anonymous writer around 1300, according to whom God in Himself, as an absolute Being, and therefore by His very nature incapable of becoming the subject of a revelation to others, is not and cannot be meant in the documents of Revelation, in the canonical writings of the Bible, and in the rabbinical tradition.[8] He is not the subject of these writings and therefore also has no documented name, since every word of the sacred writings refers after all to some aspect of His manifestation on the side of Creation. It follows that while the living God, the God of religion of whom these writings bear witness, has innumerable names — which, according to the Kabbalists, belong to Him by His very nature and not as a result of human convention — the *deus absconditus,* the God who is hidden in His own self, can only be named in a metaphorical sense and with the help of words which, mystically speaking, are not real names at all. The favourite formulae of the early Spanish Kabbalists are speculative paraphrases like "Root of all Roots," "Great Reality," "Indifferent Unity,"[9] and, above all, *En-Sof.* The latter designation reveals the impersonal character of this aspect of the hidden God from the standpoint of Man as clearly as, and perhaps even more clearly than, the others. It signifies "the infinite" as such; not, as has been frequently suggested, "He who is infinite" but "that which is infinite." Isaac the Blind (one of the first Kabbalists of distinguishable personality) calls the *deus absconditus* "that which is not conceivable by thinking", *not* "He who is not etc."[10] It is clear that with this postulate of an impersonal basic reality in God, which becomes a person — or appears as a person — only in the process of Creation and Revelation, Kabbalism abandons the personalistic basis of the Biblical conception of God. In this sense it is undeniable that the author of the above-mentioned mystical aphorism is right in holding that *En-Sof* (or what is meant by it) is not even mentioned in the Bible and the Talmud. In the following lectures we shall see how the main schools of Kabbalistic thought have dealt with this problem. It will not surprise us to find that speculation has run the whole gamut — from attempts to re-transform the impersonal *En-Sof* into the personal God of the Bible to the downright heretical doctrine of a genuine dualism between the hidden *En-Sof* and the personal Demiurge of

Scripture. For the moment, however, we are more concerned with the second aspect of the Godhead which, being of decisive importance for the real religion, formed the main subject of Kabbalistic theosophical speculation.

The mystic strives to assure himself of the living presence of God, the God of the Bible, the God who is good, wise, just and merciful and the embodiment of all other positive attributes. But at the same time he is unwilling to renounce the idea of the hidden God who remains eternally unknowable in the depths of His own Self, or, to use the bold expression of the Kabbalists "in the depths of His nothingness."[11] This hidden God may be without special attributes — the living God of whom the Revelation speaks, with whom all religion is concerned, must have attributes, which on another plane represent also the mystic's own scale of moral values: God is good, God is severe, God is merciful and just, etc. As we shall have occasion to see, the mystic does not even recoil before the inference that in a higher sense there is a root of evil even in God. The benevolence of God is to the mystic not simply the negation of evil, but a whole sphere of divine light, in which God manifests Himself under this particular aspect of benevolence to the contemplation of the Kabbalist.

These spheres, which are often described with the aid of mythical metaphors and provide the key for a kind of mystical topography of the Divine realm, are themselves nothing but stages in the revelation of God's creative power. Every attribute represents a given stage, including the attribute of severity and stern judgment, which mystical speculation has connected with the source of evil in God. The mystic who sets out to grasp the meaning of God's absolute Unity is thus faced at the outset with an infinite complexity of heavenly spheres and stages which are described in the Kabbalistic texts. From the contemplation of these 'Sefiroth' he proceeds to the conception of God as the union and the root of all these contradictions. Generally speaking, the mystics do not seem to conceive of God as the absolute Being or absolute Becoming but as the union of both; much as the hidden God of whom nothing is known to us, and the living God of religious experience and revelation, are one and the same. Kabbalism in other words is not dualistic, although historically there exists a close connection between their way of thinking and

that of the Gnostics, to whom the hidden God and the Creator are opposing principles. On the contrary, all the energy of 'orthodox' Kabbalistic speculation is bent to the task of escaping from dualistic consequences; otherwise they would not have been able to maintain themselves within the Jewish Community.

I think it is possible to say that the mystical interpretation of the attributes and the unity of God, in the so-called doctrine of the 'Sefiroth', constituted a problem common to all Kabbalists, while the solutions given to it by and in the various schools often differ from one another. In the same way, all Jewish mystics, from the Therapeutae, whose doctrine was described by Philo of Alexandria,[12] to the latest Hasid, are at one in giving a mystical interpretation to the Torah; the Torah is to them a living organism animated by a secret life which streams and pulsates below the crust of its literal meaning; every one of the innumerable strata of this hidden region corresponds to a new and profound meaning of the Torah. The Torah, in other words, does not consist merely of chapters, phrases and words; rather is it to be regarded as the living incarnation of the Divine wisdom which eternally sends out new rays of light. It is not merely the historical law of the Chosen People, although it is that too; it is rather the cosmic law of the Universe, as God's wisdom conceived it. Each configuration of letters in it, whether it makes sense in human speech or not, symbolizes some aspect of God's creative power which is active in the universe. And just as the thoughts of God, in contrast to those of man, are of infinite profundity, so also no single interpretation of the Torah in human language is capable of taking in the whole of its meaning. It cannot be denied that this method of interpretation has proved almost barren for a plain understanding of the Holy Writ, but it is equally undeniable that viewed in its new light, the Sacred Books made a powerful appeal to the individual who discovered in their written words the secret of his life and of his God. It is the usual fate of sacred writings to become more or less divorced from the intentions of their authors. What may be called their after-life, those aspects which are discovered by later generations, frequently becomes of greater importance than their original meaning; and after all — who knows what their original meaning was?

5.

Like all their confrères, be they Christians or Moslems, the Jewish mystics cannot, of course, escape from the fact that the relation between mystical contemplation and the basic facts of human life and intellect is highly paradoxical. But in the Kabbalah these paradoxes of the mystical mind frequently assume a peculiar form. Let us take as an instance their relation to the phenomenon of speech, one of the fundamental problems of mystical thought throughout the ages. How is it possible to give lingual expression to mystical knowledge, which by its very nature is related to a sphere where speech and expression are excluded? How is it possible to paraphrase adequately in mere words the most intimate act of all, the contact of the individual with the Divine? And yet the urge of the mystics for self-expression is well known.

They continuously and bitterly complain of the utter inadequacy of words to express their true feelings, but, for all that, they glory in them; they indulge in rhetoric and never weary of trying to express the inexpressible in words. All writers on Mysticism have laid stress on this point.[13] Jewish Mysticism is no exception, yet it is distinguished by two unusual characteristics which may in some way be interrelated. What I have in mind is, first of all, the striking restraint observed by the Kabbalists in referring to the supreme experience; and secondly, their metaphysically positive attitude towards language as God's own instrument.

If you compare the writings of Jewish mystics with the mystical literature of other religions you will notice a considerable difference, a difference which has, to some extent, made difficult and even prevented the understanding of the deeper meaning of Kabbalism. Nothing could be farther from the truth than the assumption that the religious experience of the Kabbalists knows nothing of that which, as we have seen, forms the essence of mystical experience, everywhere and at all times. The ecstatic experience, the encounter with the absolute Being in the depths of one's own soul, or whatever description one may prefer to give to the aim of the mystical nostalgia, has been shared by the heirs of Rabbinical Judaism. How could it be otherwise with one of the original and fundamental impulses of man? At the same time, such differences as there are,

are explained by the existence of an overwhelmingly strong disinclination to treat in express terms of these strictly mystical experiences. Not only is the form different in which these experiences are expressed, but the *will* to express them and to impart the knowledge of them is lacking, or is counteracted by other considerations.

It is well known that the autobiographies of great mystics, who have tried to give an account of their inner experiences in a direct and personal manner, are the glory of mystical literature. These mystical confessions, for all their abounding contradictions, not only provide some of the most important material for the understanding of mysticism, but many of them are also veritable pearls of literature. The Kabbalists, however, are no friends of mystical autobiography. They aim at describing the realm of Divinity and the other objects of their contemplation in an impersonal way, by burning, as it were, their ships behind them. They glory in objective description and are deeply averse to letting their own personalities intrude into the picture. The wealth of expression at their disposal is not inferior to that of their autobiographical confrères. It is as though they were hampered by a sense of shame. Documents of an intimate and personal nature are not entirely lacking, but it is characteristic that they are to be found almost wholly in manuscripts which the Kabbalists themselves would hardly have allowed to be printed. There has even been a kind of voluntary censorship which the Kabbalists themselves exercised by deleting certain passages of a too intimate nature from the manuscripts, or at least by seeing to it that they were not printed. I shall return to this point at a later stage, when I shall give some remarkable instances of this censorship.[14] On the whole, I am inclined to believe that this dislike of a too personal indulgence in self-expression may have been caused by the fact among others that the Jews retained a particularly vivid sense of the incongruity of mystical experience with that idea of God which stressed the aspects of Creator, King and Law-giver.

In general, it may be said that in the long history of Kabbalism, the number of Kabbalists whose teachings and writings bear the imprint of a strong personality is surprisingly small, one notable exception being the Hasidic movement and its leaders since 1750. This is partly due to personal reticence, which as we have seen was characteristic of all Jewish mystics. Equally important, however,

is the fact that our sources leave us completely in the dark as regards the personalities of many Kabbalists, including writers whose influence was very great and whose teachings it would be worth while to study in the light of biographical material, were any available. Often enough such contemporary sources as there are do not even mention their names! Frequently, too, all that these writers have left us are their mystical tracts and books from which it is difficult, if not impossible, to form an impression of their personalities. There are very few exceptions to this rule. Among hundreds of Kabbalists whose writings are known to us, hardly ten would provide sufficient material for a biography containing more than a random collection of facts, with little or nothing to give us an insight into their personalities. This is the case, for instance, with Abraham Abulafia (13th century), with Isaac Luria (16th century) and, at a much later period, with the great mystic and poet Moses Hayim Luzzatto of Padua (died 1747), whose case is typical of the situation I have described. Although his mystical, moralizing and poetical works fill several volumes and many of them have been published, the true personality of the author remained so completely in the shadow as to be little more than a name until the discovery and publication, by Dr. Simon Ginzburg, of his correspondence with his teacher and his friends threw an abundance of light on this remarkable figure.[15] It is to be hoped that the same will gradually be done for other great Jewish mystics of whom today we know very little.

My second point was that Kabbalism is distinguished by an attitude towards language which is quite unusually positive. Kabbalists who differ in almost everything else are at one in regarding language as something more precious than an inadequate instrument for contact between human beings. To them Hebrew, the holy tongue, is not simply a means of expressing certain thoughts, born out of a certain convention and having a purely conventional character, in accordance with the theory of language dominant in the Middle Ages. Language in its purest form, that is, Hebrew, according to the Kabbalists, reflects the fundamental spiritual nature of the world; in other words, it has a mystical value. Speech reaches God because it comes from God. Man's common language, whose prima facie function, indeed, is only of an intellectual nature, reflects the creative language of God. All creation — and this is an important

principle of most Kabbalists — is, from the point of view of God, nothing but an expression of His hidden self that begins and ends by giving itself a name, the holy name of God, the perpetual act of creation. All that lives is an expression of God's language, and what is it that Revelation can reveal in the last resort if not the name of God?

I shall have to return to this point at a later stage. What I would like to emphasize is this peculiar interpretation, this enthusiastic appreciation of the faculty of speech which sees in it, and in its mystical analysis, a key to the deepest secrets of the Creator and His Creation.

In this connection it may be of interest to ask ourselves what was the common attitude of the mystics toward certain other faculties and phenomena, such as intellectual knowledge, and more particularly rational philosophy; or, to take another instance, the problem of individual existence. For after all, mysticism, while beginning with the religion of the individual, proceeds to merge the self into a higher union. Mysticism postulates self-knowledge, to use a Platonic term, as the surest way to God who reveals Himself in the depths of the self. Mystical tendencies, in spite of their strictly personal character, have therefore frequently led to the formation of new social groupings and communities, a fact which is true also of Jewish mysticism; we shall have to return to this fact and to the problem it involves at the end of these lectures. At any rate, Joseph Bernhart, one of the explorers of the world of mysticism, was justified in saying "Have any done more to create historical movement than those who seek and proclaim the immovable?"[16]

6.

It is precisely this question of history which brings us back to the problem from which we started: What is Jewish Mysticism? For now the question is: What is to be regarded as the general characteristic of mysticism within the framework of Jewish tradition? Kabbalah, it must be remembered, is not the name of a certain dogma or system, but rather the general term applied to a whole religious movement. This movement with some of whose stages and tendencies we shall have to acquaint ourselves, has been going on from Talmudic times to the present day; its development has been uninter-

religion have a meaning for the mystic chiefly as symbols of acts which he conceives as being divorced from time, or constantly repeated in the soul of every man. Thus the exodus from Egypt, the fundamental event of our history, cannot, according to the mystic, have come to pass once only and in one place; it must correspond to an event which takes place in ourselves, an exodus from an inner Egypt in which we all are slaves. Only thus conceived does the Exodus cease to be an object of learning and acquire the dignity of immediate religious experience. In the same way, it will be remembered, the doctrine of "Christ in us" acquired so great an importance for the mystics of Christianity that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was quite often relegated to the background. If, however, the Absolute which the mystic seeks is not to be found in the varying occurrences of history, the conclusion suggests itself that it must either precede the course of mundane history or reveal itself at the end of time. In other words, knowledge both of the primary facts of Creation and of its end, of eschatological salvation and bliss, can acquire a mystical significance.

"The Mystic," says Charles Bennett in a penetrating essay,[19] "as it were forestalls the processes of history by anticipating in his own life the enjoyment of the last age." This eschatological nature of mystical knowledge becomes of paramount importance in the writings of many Jewish mystics, from the anonymous authors of the early *Hekhaloth* tracts to Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav. And the importance of cosmogony for mystical speculation is equally exemplified by the case of Jewish Mysticism. The consensus of Kabbalistic opinion regards the mystical way to God as a reversal of the procession by which we have emanated from God. To know the stages of the creative process is also to know the stages of one's own return to the root of all existence. In this sense, the interpretation of *Maaseh Bereshith*, the esoteric doctrine of creation, has always formed one of the main preoccupations of Kabbalism. It is here that Kabbalism comes nearest to Neoplatonic thought, of which it has been said with truth that "procession and reversion together constitute a single movement, the diastole-systole, which is the life of the universe."[20] That exactly is also the belief of the Kabbalist.

But the cosmogonic and the eschatological trend of Kabbalistic speculation which we have tried to define, are in the last resort ways

of escaping from history rather than instruments of historical understanding; that is to say, they do not help us to gauge the intrinsic meaning of history.

There is, however, a more striking instance of the link between the conceptions of Jewish mysticism and those of the historical world. It is a remarkable fact that the very term *Kabbalah* under which it has become best known, is derived from an historical concept. Kabbalah means literally "tradition", in itself an excellent example of the paradoxical nature of Mysticism to which I have referred before. The very doctrine which centres about the immediate personal contact with the Divine, that is to say, a highly personal and intimate form of knowledge, is conceived as traditional wisdom. The fact is, however, that the idea of Jewish Mysticism from the start combined the conception of a knowledge which by its very nature is difficult to impart and therefore secret, with that of a knowledge which is the secret tradition of chosen spirits or adepts. Jewish mysticism, therefore, is a secret doctrine in a double sense, a characteristic which cannot be said to apply to all forms of mysticism. It is a secret doctrine because it treats of the most deeply hidden and fundamental matters of human life; but it is secret also because it is confined to a small élite of the chosen who impart the knowledge to their disciples. It is true that this picture never wholly corresponded to life. Against the doctrine of the chosen few who alone may participate in the mystery must be set the fact that, at least during certain periods of history, the Kabbalists themselves have tried to bring under their influence much wider circles, and even the whole nation. There is a certain analogy between this development and that of the mystery religions of the Hellenistic period of Antiquity, when secret doctrines of an essentially mystical nature were diffused among an ever-growing number of people.

It must be kept in mind that in the sense in which it is understood by the Kabbalist himself, mystical knowledge is not his private affair which has been revealed to him, and to him only, in his personal experience. On the contrary, the purer and more nearly perfect it is, the nearer it is to the original stock of knowledge common to mankind. To use the expression of the Kabbalist, the knowledge of things human and divine that Adam the father of mankind possessed is therefore also the property of the mystic. For this reas-

on, the Kabbalah advanced what was at once a claim and an hypothesis, namely, that its function was to hand down to its own disciples the secret of God's revelation to Adam.[21] Little though this claim is grounded in fact — and I am even inclined to believe that many Kabbalists did not regard it seriously — the fact that such a claim was made appears to me highly characteristic of Jewish Mysticism. Reverence for the traditional has always been deeply rooted in Judaism, and even the mystics, who in fact broke away from tradition, retained a reverent attitude towards it; it led them directly to their conception of the coincidence of true intuition and true tradition. This theory has made possible such a paradox as the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, the most influential system of later Kabbalism, though the most difficult. Nearly all the important points and major theses in Luria's system are new, one might even say excitingly new — and yet they were accepted throughout as true Kabbalah, i. e. traditional wisdom. There was nobody to see a contradiction in this.

7.

Considerations of a different kind will take us even deeper into the understanding of the problem. I have already said that the mystical sphere is the meeting-place of two worlds or stages in the development of the human consciousness: one primitive and one developed, the world of mythology and that of revelation. This fact cannot be left out of account in dealing with the Kabbalah. Whoever tries to gain a better understanding of its ideas, without attempting anything in the nature of an apology, cannot fail to notice that it contains, side by side with a deep and sensitive understanding of the essence of religious feeling, a certain mode of thought characteristic of primitive mythological thinking. The peculiar affinity of Kabbalist thought to the world of myth cannot well be doubted, and should certainly not be obscured or lightly passed over by those of us to whom the notion of a mythical domain within Judaism seems strange and paradoxical and who are accustomed to think of Jewish Monotheism as the classical example of a religion which has severed all links with the mythical. It is, indeed, surprising that in the very heart of Judaism ideas and notions sprang up which purported to interpret its meaning better than any others, and which yet represent a relapse into, or if you like a revival of, the mythical consciousness. This

is particularly true of the Zohar and the Lurianic Kabbalah, that is to say, of those forms of Jewish mysticism which have exerted by far the greatest influence in Jewish history and which for centuries stood out in the popular mind as bearers of the final and deepest truth in Jewish thought.

It is no use getting indignant over these facts, as the great historian Graetz did; they should rather set us thinking. Their importance for the history of the Jewish people, particularly during the past four centuries, has been far too great to permit them to be ridiculed and treated as mere deviations. Perhaps, after all, there is something wrong with the popular conception of Monotheism as being opposed to the mythical; perhaps Monotheism contains room after all for the development of mythical lore, on a deeper plane. I do not believe that all those devoted and pious spirits, practically the vast majority of Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewry, ceased, after the exodus from Spain, to be Jews also in the religious sense, only because their forms of belief appear to be in manifest contradiction with certain modern theories of Judaism. I, therefore, ask myself: What is the secret of this tremendous success of the Kabbalah among our people? Why did it succeed in becoming a decisive factor in our history, shaping the life of a large proportion of Jewry over a period of centuries, while its contemporary, rational Jewish philosophy, was unsuccessful in achieving the spiritual hegemony after which it strove? This is a pressing question; I cannot accept the explanation that the facts I have described are solely due to external historical circumstances, that persecution and decline weakened the spirit of the people and made them seek refuge in the darkness of Mysticism because they could not bear the light of Reason. The matter appears to me to be more complicated, and I should like briefly to set out my answer to the question.

The secret of the success of the Kabbalah lies in the nature of its relation to the spiritual heritage of Rabbinical Judaism. This relation differs from that of rationalist philosophy, in that it is more deeply and in a more vital sense connected with the main forces active in Judaism.

Undoubtedly both the mystics and the philosophers completely transform the structure of ancient Judaism; both have lost the simple relation to Judaism, that naiveté which speaks to us from the classical

documents of Rabbinical literature. Classical Judaism expressed itself: it did not reflect upon itself. By contrast, to the mystics and the philosophers of a later stage of religious development Judaism itself has become problematical. Instead of simply speaking their minds, they tend to produce an ideology of Judaism, an ideology moreover which comes to the rescue of tradition by giving it a new interpretation. It is not as though the rise of Jewish philosophy and of Jewish mysticism took place in widely separated ages, or as though the Kabbalah, as Graetz saw it, was a reaction against a wave of rationalism. Rather the two movements are inter-related and interdependent. Neither were they from the start manifestly opposed to each other, a fact which is often overlooked. On the contrary, the rationalism of some of the philosophical *enlighteners* frequently betrays a mystical tendency; and conversely, the mystic who has not yet learnt to speak in his own language often uses and misuses the vocabulary of philosophy. Only very gradually did the Kabbalists, rather than the philosophers, begin to perceive the implications of their own ideas, the conflict between a purely philosophical interpretation of the world, and an attitude which progresses from rational thought to irrational meditation, and from there to the mystical interpretation of the universe.

What many mystics felt towards philosophy is succinctly expressed by Rabbi Moses of Burgos (end of the 13th century). If he heard the philosophers praised, he used to say in some anger: "You ought to know that these philosophers whose wisdom you are praising, end where we begin."[22] Actually this means two things: on the one hand, it means that the Kabbalists are largely concerned with the investigation of a sphere of religious reality which lies quite outside the orbit of Mediaeval Jewish philosophy; their purpose is to discover a new stratum of the religious consciousness. On the other hand, though R. Moses may not have intended to say this, they stand on the shoulders of the philosophers and it is easier for them to see a little farther than their rivals.

To repeat, the Kabbalah certainly did not *arise* as a reaction against philosophical 'enlightenment',[23] but once it was there it is true that its function was that of an opposition to it. At the same time, an intellectual dispute went on between the Kabbalah and the forces of the philosophical movement which left deep marks upon

the former's structure. I should like to say that, in my opinion, there is a direct connection between Jehudah Halevi, the most Jewish of Jewish philosophers, and the Kabbalists. For the legitimate trustees of his spiritual heritage have been the latter, and not the succeeding generations of Jewish philosophers.

The Kabbalists employed the ideas and conceptions of orthodox theology, but the magic wand of Mysticism opened up hidden sources of new life in the heart of many scholastic ideas and abstractions. Philosophers may shake their heads at what must appear to them a misunderstanding of the meaning of philosophical ideas. But what from the philosopher's point of view represents a flaw in the conception can constitute its greatness and dignity in the religious sense. After all, a misunderstanding is often nothing but the paradoxical abbreviation of an original line of thought. And it is precisely such misunderstanding which has frequently become productive of new ideas in the mystical sphere.

Let us take, as an example of what I have said, the idea of "creation out of nothing." In the dogmatic disputations of Jewish philosophy, the question whether Judaism implies belief in this concept, and if so, in what precise sense, has played an important part. I shall not go into the difficulties with which the orthodox theologians found themselves faced whenever they tried to preserve the full meaning of this idea of creation out of nothing. Viewed in its simplest sense, it affirms the creation of the world by God out of something which is neither God Himself nor any kind of existence, but simply the non-existent. The mystics, too, speak of creation out of nothing; in fact, it is one of their favourite formulae. But in their case the orthodoxy of the term conceals a meaning which differs considerably from the original one. This *Nothing* from which everything has sprung is by no means a mere negation; only to us does it present no attributes because it is beyond the reach of intellectual knowledge. In truth, however, this *Nothing* — to quote one of the Kabbalists — is infinitely more real than all other reality.[24] Only when the soul has stripped itself of all limitation and, in mystical language, has descended into the depths of Nothing does it encounter the Divine. For this *Nothing* comprises a wealth of mystical reality although it cannot be defined. "Un Dieu défini serait un Dieu fini." In a word, it signifies the Divine itself, in its most impenetrable

For the Kabbalist, too, every existing thing is endlessly correlated with the whole of creation; for him, too, everything mirrors everything else. But beyond that he discovers something else which is not covered by the allegorical network: a reflection of the true transcendence. The symbol "signifies" nothing and communicates nothing, but makes something transparent which is beyond all expression. Where deeper insight into the structure of the allegory uncovers fresh layers of meaning, the symbol is intuitively understood all at once — or not at all. The symbol in which the life of the Creator and that of Creation become one, is — to use Creuzer's words[25] — "a beam of light which, from the dark and abysmal depths of existence and cognition, falls into our eye and penetrates our whole being." It is a "momentary totality" which is perceived intuitively in a mystical *now* — the dimension of time proper to the symbol.

Of such symbols the world of Kabbalism is full, nay the whole world is to the Kabbalist such a *corpus symbolicum*. Out of the reality of creation, without the latter's existence being denied or annihilated, the inexpressible mystery of the Godhead becomes visible. In particular the religious acts commanded by the Torah, the *mitswoth*, are to the Kabbalist symbols in which a deeper and hidden sphere of reality becomes transparent. The infinite shines through the finite and makes it more and not less real. This brief summary gives us some idea of the profound difference between the philosophers' allegorical interpretation of religion and its symbolical understanding by the mystics. It may be of interest to note that in the comprehensive commentary on the Torah by a great mystic of the thirteenth century, Moses Nahmanides, there are many symbolical interpretations as defined here, but not one instance of allegorical interpretation.

9.

The difference becomes clear if we consider the attitude of philosophy and Kabbalah respectively to the two outstanding creative manifestations of Rabbinical Jewry: Halakhah and Aggadah, Law and Legend. It is a remarkable fact that the philosophers failed to establish a satisfactory and intimate relation to either. They showed themselves unable to make the spirit of Halakhah and Aggadah, those elements which expressed a fundamental urge of the Jewish soul, productive by transforming them into something new.

the Halakhah never became a province of thought in which they felt themselves strangers. Right from the beginning and with growing determination, they sought to master the world of the Halakhah as a whole and in every detail. From the beginning, an ideology of the Halakhah is one of their aims. But in their interpretation of the religious commandments these are not represented as allegories of more or less profound ideas, or as pedagogical measures, but rather as the performance of a secret rite (or *mystery* in the sense in which the term was used by the Ancients).[28]

Whether one is appalled or not by this transformation of the Halakhah into a sacrament, a mystery rite, by this revival of myth right in the heart of Judaism, the fact remains that it was this transformation which raised the Halakhah to a position of incomparable importance for the mystic, and strengthened its hold over the people. Every *mitswah* became an event of cosmic importance, an act which had a bearing upon the dynamics of the Universe. The religious Jew became a protagonist in the drama of the World; he manipulated the strings behind the scene. Or, to use a less extravagant simile, if the whole Universe is an enormous complicated machine, then Man is the machinist who keeps the wheels going by applying a few drops of oil here and there, and at the right time. The moral substance of Man's action supplies this "oil," and his existence therefore becomes of extreme significance, since it unfolds on a background of cosmic infinitude.

The danger of theosophical schematism or, as S. R. Hirsch put it,[29] of "magical mechanism" is, of course, inherent in such an interpretation of the Torah, and it has more than once raised its head in the development of Kabbalism. There is danger of imagining a magical mechanism to be operative in every sacramental action, and this imagination is attended by a decline in the essential spontaneity of religious action. But then this conflict is inseparable from any and every fulfilment of a religious command, since every prescribed duty is also conceived as assumed willingly and spontaneously. The antinomy is, in fact, inescapable, and can only be overcome by religious feeling so long as it is strong and unbroken. When this begins to flag, the contradiction between command and free-will increases in proportion and eventually gathers sufficient force to become destructive.

By interpreting every religious act as a mystery, even where its

such as R. Abbahu's saying, that before making this world God made many others and destroyed them because he did not like them.[30] The philosophers, who had passed through the school of Aristotle, never felt at home in the world of Midrash. But the more extravagant and paradoxical these Aggadahs appeared to them, the more were the Kabbalists convinced that they were one of the keys to the mystical realm. Their vocabulary and favourite similes show the traces of Aggadic influence to an extent about equalled by philosophy and Gnosticism, Scripture being, of course, the strongest element of all.

10.

What has been said of the Halakhah and the Aggadah is also true of the liturgy, the world of prayer; the last of the three domains in which the religious spirit of post-Biblical Judaism has found its classical expression. Here too the conclusion is inescapable that the philosophers had little of value to contribute. Of entire prayers written by philosophers only a few have been preserved, and these are often a little anaemic and half-hearted in their approach, especially where the authors were not, like Solomon ibn Gabirol and Jehudah Halevi, motivated in the last resort by mystical leanings. There is in many of them a curious lack of true religious feeling. The case is entirely different when we turn to the Kabbalistic attitude towards prayer; there is perhaps no clearer sign that Kabbalism is essentially a religious and not a speculative phenomenon. The novelty of its attitude to prayer can be regarded under two aspects: the vast number of prayers whose authors were mystics themselves, and the mystical interpretation of the old traditional Community prayers — the backbone of Jewish liturgy.

To begin with the former, it is hardly surprising that the new religious revelation, peculiar to the visionaries of the Kabbalah, for which there existed no liturgical equivalent in the older prayers, strove after some form of expression and had already inspired the earliest mystics to write their own prayers. The first prayers of a mystical character, which can be traced back to the Kabbalists of Provence and Catalonia,[31] are carried forward by a long and varied tradition to the prayers in which, about 1820, Nathan of Nemirov, the disciple of Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav, gave valid expression to the world of Hasidic Zaddikism.[32] This mystical prayer, which bears

II.

As I have already said, mysticism represents, to a certain extent, a revival of mythical lore. This brings us to another and very serious point which I should like at least to mention. The Jewish mystic lives and acts in perpetual rebellion against a world with which he strives with all his zeal to be at peace. Conversely, this fact is responsible for the profound ambiguity of his outlook, and it also explains the apparent self-contradiction inherent in a great many Kabbalist symbols and images. The great symbols of the Kabbalah certainly come from the depths of a creative and genuinely Jewish religious feeling, but at the same time they are invariably tinged by the world of mythology. In the lectures on the Zohar and on Lurianic Kabbalism I shall give a number of particularly outstanding instances of this. Failing this mythical element, the ancient Jewish mystics would have been unable to compress into language the substance of their inner experience. It was Gnosticism, one of the final great manifestations of mythology in religious thought, and definitely conceived in the struggle against Judaism as the conqueror of mythology, which lent figures of speech to the Jewish mystic.

The importance of this paradox can hardly be exaggerated; it must be kept in mind that the whole meaning and purpose of those ancient myths and metaphors whose remainders the editors of the book *Bahir*, and therefore the whole Kabbalah, inherited from the Gnostics[35], was simply the subversion of a law which had, at one time, disturbed and broken the order of the mythical world. Thus through wide and scattered provinces of Kabbalism, the revenge of myth upon its conqueror is clear for all to see, and together with it we find an abundant display of contradictory symbols. It is characteristic of Kabbalistic theology in its systematical forms that it attempts to construct and to describe a world in which something of the mythical has again come to life, in terms of thought which exclude the mythical element. However, it is this contradiction which more than anything else explains the extraordinary success of Kabbalism in Jewish history.

Mystics and philosophers are as it were both aristocrats of thought; yet Kabbalism succeeded in establishing a connection between its own world and certain elemental impulses operative in every human mind. It did not turn its back upon the primitive side of life,

that all-important region where mortals are afraid of life and in fear of death, and derive scant wisdom from rational philosophy. Philosophy ignored these fears, out of whose substance man wove myths, and in turning its back upon the primitive side of man's existence, it paid a high price in losing touch with him altogether. For it is cold comfort to those who are plagued by genuine fear and sorrow to be told that their troubles are but the workings of their own imagination.

The fact of the existence of evil in the world is the main touchstone of this difference between the philosophic and the Kabbalistic outlook. On the whole, the philosophers of Judaism treat the existence of evil as something meaningless in itself; to the Kabbalists, on the other hand, it is one of the most pressing of problems, and one which keeps them continuously occupied with attempts to solve it. They have a strong sense of the reality of evil and the dark horror that is about everything living. They do not, like the philosophers, seek to evade its existence with the aid of a convenient formula; rather do they try to penetrate into its depth. And by doing so, they unwittingly establish a connection between their own strivings and the vital interests of popular belief — you may call it superstition — and all those concrete manifestations of Jewish life in which these fears found their expression. It is a paradoxical fact that none other than the Kabbalists, through their interpretation of various religious acts and customs, have made it clear what they signified to the average believer, if not what they really meant from the beginning. Jewish folklore stands as a living proof for this contention, as has been shown by modern research in respect of some particularly wellknown examples.[36]

It would be idle to deny that Kabbalistic thought lost much of its magnificence where it was forced to descend from the pinnacles of theoretical speculation to the plane of ordinary thinking and acting. The dangers which myth and magic present to the religious consciousness, including that of the mystic, are clearly shown in the development of Kabbalism. If one turns to the writings of great Kabbalists one seldom fails to be torn between alternate admiration and disgust. There is need for being quite clear about this in a time like ours, when the fashion of uncritical and superficial condemnation of even the most valuable elements of mysticism threatens to be replaced by an equally uncritical and obscurantist glorification of the Kab-

balah. I have said before that Jewish philosophy had to pay a high price for its escape from the pressing questions of real life. But Kabbalism too has had to pay for its success. Philosophy came dangerously near to losing the living God; Kabbalism, which set out to preserve Him, to blaze a new and glorious trail to Him, encountered mythology on its way and was tempted to lose itself in its labyrinth.

12.

One final observation should be made on the general character of Kabbalism as distinct from other, non-Jewish, forms of mysticism. Both historically and metaphysically it is a masculine doctrine, made for men and by men. The long history of Jewish Mysticism shows no trace of feminine influence. There have been no women Kabbalists; Rabia of early Islamic mysticism, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Juliana of Norwich, Theresa de Jesus, and the many other feminine representatives of Christian mysticism have no counterparts in the history of Kabbalism.[87] The latter therefore lacks the element of feminine emotion which has played so large a part in the development of non-Jewish mysticism, but it also remained comparatively free from the dangers entailed by the tendency towards hysterical extravagance which followed in the wake of this influence.

This exclusively masculine character of Kabbalism was by no means the result of the social position of Jewish women or their exclusion from Talmudic learning. Scholasticism was as much exclusively a domain of men as Talmudism, and yet the social position of women in Islam and in Mediaeval Christianity did not prevent their playing a highly important part among the representatives — though not the theoreticians — of Islamic and Christian mysticism. It is hardly possible to conceive Catholic mysticism without them. This exclusive masculinity for which Kabbalism has paid a high price, appears rather to be connected with an inherent tendency to lay stress on the demonic nature of woman and the feminine element of the cosmos.

It is of the essence of Kabbalistic symbolism that woman represents not, as one might be tempted to expect, the quality of tenderness but that of stern judgment. This symbolism was unknown to the old mystics of the Merkabah period, and even to the Hasidim in Germany, but it dominates Kabbalistic literature from the very be-

this attempt is as important for us today as it was for those ancient mystics. For as long as nature and man are conceived as His creations, and that is the indispensable condition of highly developed religious life, the quest for the hidden life of the transcendent element in such creation will always form one of the most important preoccupations of the human mind.

probably around 500. In the "Greater Hekhaloth", which are of such importance for our analysis, and from then on in almost all the later writings, the visionary journey of the soul to heaven is always referred to as the "descent to the Merkabah." The paradoxical character of this term is all the more remarkable because the detailed description of the mystical process nonetheless consistently employs the metaphor of ascent and not of descent. The mystics of this group call themselves *Yorde Merkabah,* i. e. "descenders to the Merkabah" (and not "Riders in the Chariot," as some translators would have it),[23] and this name is also given to them by others throughout the whole literature down to a late period. The authors of the "Greater Hekhaloth" refer to the existence of these *Yorde Merkabah* as a group with some sort of organization and identify them in the usual legendary fashion with the circle of Johanan ben Zakkai and his disciples. Since the "Greater Hekhaloth" contain Palestinian as well as Babylonian elements — the earliest chapters in particular bear unmistakable traces, in their subject-matter as well as their style, of Palestinian influence — it is not inconceivable that the organization of these groups did indeed take place in late Talmudic times (fourth or fifth century) on Palestinian soil. As a matter of ascertained fact, however, we only know of their existence in Babylonia, from where practically all mystical tracts of this particular variety made their way to Italy and Germany; it is these tracts that have come down to us in the form of manuscripts written in the late Middle Ages.

To repeat, we are dealing with organized groups which foster and hand down a certain tradition: with a *school* of mystics who are not prepared to reveal their secret knowledge, their 'Gnosis,' to the public. Too great was the danger, in this period of ubiquitous Jewish and Christian heresies, that mystical speculation based on private religious experience would come into conflict with that "rabbinical" Judaism which was rapidly crystallizing during the same epoch.[24] The "Greater Hekhaloth" show in many and often highly interesting details[25] that their anonymous authors were anxious to develop their 'Gnosis' within the frame-work of Halakhic Judaism, notwithstanding its partial incompatibility with the new religious spirit; the original religious impulses active in these circles came, after all, from sources quite different from those of orthodox Judaism.

One result of this peculiar situation was the establishment of

certain *conditions of admission* into the circle of the Merkabah mystics. The Talmudic sources already mention certain stipulations, albeit of a very general character, in accordance with which admission to the knowledge of theosophical doctrines and principles is made conditional on the possession of certain moral qualities. Only a "court president" or one belonging to the categories of men named in Isaiah III, 3 is found worthy of obtaining insight into the tradition of Merkabah mysticism. Chapter 13 of the "Greater Hekhaloth" lists eight moral requisites of initiation. In addition, however, we find physical criteria which have nothing to do with the moral or social status of the acolyte; in particular the novice is judged in accordance with physiognomic and chiromantic criteria — a novel procedure which appears to have been stimulated by the renaissance of Hellenistic physiognomics in the second century A. D.

Apart from being a criterion for the admission of novices,[26] physiognomy and chiromancy also figure in Hekhaloth mysticism as a subject of esoteric knowledge among the adepts. It is therefore not surprising that several manuscripts have retained a sort of introduction in the form of a chiromantic fragment[27] — incidentally the oldest chiromantic document known to us, since no Assyrian or Graeco-Roman texts of this kind have been preserved.[28] This preamble to the other Hekhaloth books interprets the significance of the favourable or unfavourable lines of the human hand, without reference to astrology but on the basis of a fixed terminology which to us is frequently obscure. One is perhaps justified in regarding the appearance of these new criteria as a parallel to the growth of neo-Platonic mysticism in the Orient during the fourth century. (It is characteristic of this period that Jamblichus, in his biography of Pythagoras — a book which throws a good deal more light on the period of its writing than on that of its subject-matter — asserts that entry into the Pythagorean school was conditional upon the possession of certain physiognomic characteristics.[29]) The above mentioned fragment, in which the angel Suriyah reveals to Ishmael — one of the two principal figures of our Hekhaloth tracts — the secrets of chiromancy and physiognomy, has a title taken from Isaiah III, 9: *Hakkarath Panim,* i. e. "perception of the face," and in fact this passage from Isaiah first received a physiognomic interpretation in the fourth century, as a Talmudic reference to the subject shows.[30]

3.

Those who passed the test were considered worthy to make the "descent" to the Merkabah which led them, after many trials and dangers, through the seven heavenly palaces, and earlier through the seven heavens themselves, to God's throne. These journeys through the heavens, their preparation, their technique, and the description of what is perceived on the voyage, are the subject-matter of the writings with which we are concerned.

Originally, we have here a Jewish variation on one of the chief preocupations of the second and third century gnostics and hermetics: the ascent of the soul from the earth, through the spheres of the hostile planet-angels and rulers of the cosmos, and its return to its divine home in the "fullness" of God's light, a return which, to the Gnostic's mind, signified Redemption. Some scholars consider this to be the central idea of Gnosticism.[31] Certainly the description of this journey, of which a particularly impressive account is found in the second part of the "Greater Hekhaloth,"[32] is in all its details of a character which must be called Gnostic.

This mystical ascent is always preceded by ascetic practices whose duration in some cases is twelve days, in others forty. An account of these practices was given about 1000 A. D. by Hai ben Sherira, the head of a Babylonian Academy. According to him, "many scholars were of the belief that one who is distinguished by many qualities described in the books and who is desirous of beholding the Merkabah and the palaces of the angels on high, must follow a certain procedure. He must fast a number of days and lay his head between his knees and whisper many hymns and songs whose texts are known from tradition. Then he perceives the interior and the chambers, as if he saw the seven palaces with his own eyes, and it is as though he entered one palace after the other and saw what is there."[33] The typical bodily posture of these ascetics is also that of Elijah in his prayer on Mount Carmel. It is an attitude of deep self-oblivion which, to judge from certain ethnological parallels, is favourable to the induction of pre-hypnotic autosuggestion. Dennys[34] gives a very similar description of a Chinese somnambulist in the act of conjuring the spirits of the departed: "She sits down on a low chair and bends forward so that her head rests on her knees. Then,

in a deep measured voice, she repeats three times an exorcism, whereupon a certain change appears to come over her." In the Talmud, too, we find this posture described as typical of the self-oblivion of a Hanina ben Dossa sunk in prayer, or of a penitent who gives himself over to God.[35]

Finally, after such preparations, and in a state of ecstasy, the adept begins his journey. The "Greater Hekhaloth" do not describe the details of his ascent through the seven heavens, but they do describe his voyage through the seven palaces situated in the highest heaven. The place of the Gnostical rulers (archons) of the seven planetary spheres, who are opposed to the liberation of the soul from its earthly bondage and whose resistance the soul must overcome, is taken in this Judaized and monotheistic Gnosticism by the hosts of "gatekeepers" posted to the right and left of the entrance to the heavenly hall through which the soul must pass in its ascent. In both cases, the soul requires a pass in order to be able to continue its journey without danger: a magic seal made of a secret name which puts the demons and hostile angels to flight. Every new stage of the ascension requires a new seal with which the traveller "seals himself" in order that, to quote a fragment, "he shall not be dragged into the fire and the flame, the vortex and the storm which are around Thee, oh Thou terrible and sublime."[36] The "Greater Hekhaloth" have preserved a quite pedantic description of this passport procedure;[37] all the seals and the secret names are derived from the Merkabah itself where they "stand like pillars of flame around the fiery throne" of the Creator.[38]

It is the soul's need for protection on its journey which has produced these seals with their twin function as a protective armour and as a magical weapon. At first the magical protection of a single seal may be sufficient, but as time goes on, the difficulties experienced by the adept tend to become greater. A brief and simple formula is no longer enough. Sunk in his ecstatic trance, the mystic at the same time experiences a sense of frustration which he tries to overcome by using longer and more complicated magical formulae, symbols of a longer and harder struggle to pass the closed entrance gates which block his progress. As his psychical energy wanes the magical strain grows and the conjuring gesture becomes progressively more strained, until in the end whole pages are filled with an

were no longer able to understand and apparently regarded as magical names of the divinity.[50] The fact that the original Merkabah mystics in Palestine prescribed the use of certain Greek formulae for certain occasions deserves special attention. It is difficult to say whether it indicates a concrete influence of Hellenistic religion, or whether the use of Greek words by the Aramaic-speaking Jewish mystics is merely analogous to the predilection for Hebraic or pseudo-Hebraic formulae characteristic of the Greek-speaking circles for whom the Egyptian magical papyri were written.

The idea of the seven heavens through which the soul ascends to its original home, either after death or in a state of ecstasy while the body is still alive, is certainly very old. In an obscure and somewhat distorted form it is already to be found in old apocrypha such as the Fourth Book of Ezra or the Ascension of Isaiah, which is based on a Jewish text.[51] In the same way, the ancient Talmudic account of the seven heavens, their names and their contents, although apparently purely cosmological, surely presupposes an ascent of the soul to the throne in the seventh heaven.[52] Such descriptions of the seven heavens, plus a list of the names of their archons, have also come down to us from the school of the Merkabah mystics in the post-Mishnaic period. It is precisely here that we still find an entirely esoteric doctrine. Thus for example in the "Visions of Ezekiel", which have recently become known,[53] Ezekiel sees the seven heavens with their seven Merkabahs reflected in the waters of the Chebar river. This form of speculation about seven Merkabahs corresponding to the seven heavens is still innocent of any mention of Hekhaloth, or chambers, of the Merkabah. Possibly both conceptions were known to different groups or schools of the same period. In any event, the second variant gradually became the dominant one.

4.

This idea of the seven Hekhaloth transforms the old cosmological conception of the world structure revealed during the ascent into a description of the divine hierarchy: the traveller in search of God, like the visitor at Court, must pass through endless magnificent halls and chambers. This change of emphasis, like other important aspects of the mystical system to which it belongs, appears to me to be connected with the fundamental religious experience of these

mystics, namely, the decisive importance which they assigned to the interpretation of God as King. We are dealing here with a Judaized form of cosmocratorial mysticism concerning the divine King (or Emperor). This form of adoration takes first place, and cosmological mysticism is relegated to the writings concerned with the creation of the world, the commentaries to *Maaseh Bereshith*. Not without good reason has Graetz called the religious belief of the Merkabah mystic "Basileomorphism."

This point needs to be stressed, for it makes clear the enormous gulf between the gnosticism of the Hekhaloth and that of the Hellenistic mystics. There are many parallels between the two, but there is a radical difference in the conception of God. In the Hekhaloth, God is above all King, to be precise, Holy King. This conception reflects a change in the religious consciousness of the Jews — not only the mystics — for which documentary evidence exists in the liturgy of the period. The aspects of God which are really relevant to the religious feeling of the epoch are His majesty and the aura of sublimity and solemnity which surrounds Him.

On the other hand, there is a complete absence of any sentiment of divine immanence. J. Abelson has made a valuable contribution to the understanding of the subject in his "Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature," where he has devoted a particularly searching analysis to the theory of the Shekhinah, God's "immanence" or "indwelling" in the world, in the literature of the Aggadah. Quite rightly he has stressed the connection between these ideas and certain mystical conceptions which have played a part in the later development of Jewish mysticism.[54] But in the Merkabah mysticism with which we are dealing here, the idea of the Shekhinah and of God's immanence plays practically no part at all. The one passage in the "Greater Hekhaloth" which has been adduced as proof of the existence of such conceptions is based on an obviously corrupt text.[55] The fact is that the true and spontaneous feeling of the Merkabah mystic knows nothing of divine immanence; the infinite gulf between the soul and God the King on His throne is not even bridged at the climax of mystical ecstasy.

Not only is there for the mystic no divine immanence, there is also almost no love of God. What there is of love in the relationship between the Jewish mystic and his God belongs to a much later period

and has nothing to do with our present subject. Ecstasy there was, and this fundamental experience must have been a source of religious inspiration, but we find no trace of a mystical union between the soul and God. Throughout there remained an almost exaggerated consciousness of God's *otherness*, nor does the identity and individuality of the mystic become blurred even at the height of ecstatic passion. The Creator and His Creature remain apart, and nowhere is an attempt made to bridge the gulf between them or to blur the distinction. The mystic who in his ecstasy has passed through all the gates, braved all the dangers, now stands before the throne; he sees and hears — but that is all. All the emphasis is laid on the kingly aspect of God, not his creative one, although the two belong together and the second, as we shall see, even becomes, in a certain perspective of this mysticism, the dominant one. True, the mysteries of creation and the hidden connection between all things existing in the universe are among the riddles whose solution is of deep interest to the authors of the Hekhaloth tracts. There are some references to them in the description of the Merkabah vision; thus the "Greater Hekhaloth" give promise of the revelation of "the mysteries and wonderful secrets of the tissue on which the perfection of the world and its course depends, and the chain of heaven and earth along which all the wings of the universe and the wings of the heavenly heights are connected, sewn together, made fast and hung up."[56] But the promise is not carried out, the secret not revealed. The magnificence and majesty of God, on the other hand, this experience of the *Yorde Merkabah* which overwhelms and overshadows all the others, is not only heralded but also described with an abundance of detail and almost to excess.

Strange and sometimes obscure are the names given to God, the King who thrones in His glory. We find names such as Zoharariel, Adiriron, Akhtariel,[57] and Totrossiyah (or Tetrassiyah, i. e. the Tetras or fourfoldness of the letters of God's name YHWH?[58]), names which to the mystics may have signified various aspects of God's glory. In this context it is well to remember that the chief peculiarity of this form of mysticism, its emphasis on God's might and magnificence, opens the door to the transformation of mysticism into theurgy; there the master of the secret "names" himself takes on the exercise of power in the way described in the various magical and theurgical

procedures of which this literature is full. The language of the theurgist conforms to that of the Merkabah mystic. Both are dominated by the attributes of power and sublimity, not love or tenderness. It is entirely characteristic of the outlook of these believers that the theurgist, in adjuring the "Prince of Divine Presence," summons the archons as "Princes of Majesty, Fear and Trembling."[59] *Majesty, Fear* and *Trembling* are indeed the key-words to this religious Open Sesame.

5.

The most important sources for our understanding of this atmosphere are undoubtedly the numerous prayers and hymns which have been preserved in the Hekhaloth tracts.[60] Tradition ascribes them to inspiration, for, according to the mystics, they are nothing but the hymns sung by the angels, even by the throne itself, in praise of God. In chapter IV of the "Greater Hekhaloth," in which these hymns occupy an important place, we find an account of how Rabbi Akiba, the prototype of the Merkabah visionary, was inspired to hear them sung at the very throne of glory before which his soul was standing. Conversely, their recitation serves to induce a state of ecstasy and accompanies the traveller on his journey through the gates. Some of these hymns are simply adjurations of God; others take the form of dialogues between God and the heavenly dwellers, and descriptions of the Merkabah sphere. It would be vain to look for definite religious doctrines, to say nothing of mystical symbols, in these hymns which belong to the oldest products of synagogal poetry, the so-called *piyut*. Often they are curiously bare of meaning, and yet the impression they create is a profound one.

Rudolf Otto in his celebrated book "The Idea of the Holy" has stressed the difference between a purely rational glorification of God, in which everything is clear, definite, familiar and comprehensible, and one which touches the springs of the irrational, or the "numinous", as he calls it, one which tries to reproduce in words the *mysterium tremendum*, the awful mystery that surrounds God's majesty. Otto[61] has called compositions of this latter sort "numinous hymns." The Jewish liturgy, and not only that of the mystics, contains a great number of these; and from the Jewish liturgy Otto himself has drawn some of the most important of his examples. In the

Almost all the hymns from the Hekhaloth tracts, particularly those whose text has been preserved intact, reveal a mechanism comparable to the motion of an enormous fly-wheel. In cyclical rhythm the hymns succeed each other, and within them the adjurations of God follow in a crescendo of glittering and majestical attributes, each stressing and reinforcing the sonorous power of the word. The monotony of their rhythm — almost all consist of verses of four words — and the progressively sonorous incantations induce in those who are praying a state of mind bordering on ecstasy. An important part of this technique is the recurrence of the key-word of the numinous, the *kedushah,* the trishagion from Isaiah VI, 3, in which the ecstasy of the mystic culminates: holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. One can hardly conceive of a more grandiose proof of the irresistible influence which the conception of God's kingdom exercised on the consciousness of these mystics. The "Holiness" of God, which they are trying to paraphrase, is utterly transcendent of any moral meaning and represents nothing but the glory of His Kingdom. Through various forms of the prayer known as the *kedushah,* this conception has also found its way into the general Jewish liturgy and left its imprint on it.[88]

In spite of the last mentioned fact, it cannot be denied that this "polylogy", or verbiage, of the mystics, these magniloquent attempts to catch a glimpse of God's majesty and to preserve it in hymnical form, stands in sharp contrast to the tendencies which already during the Talmudical period dominated the outlook of the great teachers of the Law. They could not but feel repelled by it, and in the Talmud one early encounters a strong dislike for extravagant enthusiasm in prayer, much as the Sermon on the Mount had attacked the polylogy of the pagans, their effusive and wordy style. Passages like the following read like an attack on the tendencies reflected in the Hekhaloth tracts: "He who multiplies the praise of God to excess shall be torn from the world." Or: "In the presence of Rabbi Hanina, one went to the praying-desk to say the prayer. He said, 'God, Thou great, strong, terrible, mighty, feared, powerful, real and adorable!' He waited until the other had finished, then he said to him: 'Have you ended with the praise of your God? What is the meaning of all this? It is as if one were to praise a king of the world, who has millions of pieces of gold, for the possession of a piece of silver.'"[89]

But this resistance to an enthusiasm and a verbiage so different from the classical simplicity and rationality of the fundamental prayers of Jewish liturgy was of no avail. That much is clear not only from the prayers and hymns of the Merkabah mystics, but also from certain important parts of the liturgy proper whose spirit reflects the influence of the *Yorde Merkabah*. Bloch was the first to point out that the community prayer in its final form, which it received in late Talmudic and post-Talmudic times, represents a compromise between these two opposing tendencies. Some of these prayers are indeed much older than was thought by Bloch, who has overlooked certain passages of the Palestinian Talmud and attributed every prayer which mentions the angels of the Merkabah to the post-Talmudic period.[70] But since the mystical school of the *Yorde Merkabah* is in general of much earlier origin than Zunz, Graetz and Bloch assumed and may have been in existence in Palestine during the fourth century, this fact presents no difficulty for our contention.

While the Merkabah hymns with which we are dealing hardly go back beyond the fifth century, they continue a tradition already visible in the throne mysticism and the apocalyptic of the Mishnaic period. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, whose connection with the Merkabah mysticism has also struck its English editor, G. H. Box, the patriarch who ascends to the throne hears a voice speaking from the celestial fire "like a voice of many waters, like the sound of the sea in its uproar." The same terms are used in the "Greater Hekhaloth" in describing the sound of the hymn of praise sung by the "throne of Glory" to its King — "like the voice of the waters in the rushing streams, like the waves of the ocean when the south wind sets them in uproar." The same apocalypse contains the song which Abraham is taught by the Angel who guides him on his way to heaven — and this song is nothing but the hymn sung by the angels who mount guard before the Throne.[71] Although the attributes of God are in some cases identical with those used in Greek and early Christian prayers,[72] this hymn already has the numinous character described above. God is praised as the Holy Being and also as the supreme master; this is quite in harmony with the characteristic outlook of these hymns, whether sung by the angels or by Israel, in which the veneration of God the King blends imperceptibly with the conjuring magic of the adept. The presentation of the crown to God

of the words has not yet substituted itself for the ascent of the soul and of the devotee himself. The pure word, the as yet unbroken summons stands for itself; it signifies nothing but what it expresses. But it is not surprising that when the fire out of which these prayers had streamed to heaven had burned low, a host of nostalgic souls stirred the ashes, looking in vain for the spirit which had departed.

6.

We have seen that the God of the Merkabah mystics is the Holy King who emerges from unknown worlds and descends "through 955 heavens"[78] to the throne of Glory. The mystery of this God in His aspect of Creator of the Universe is one of those exalted subjects of esoteric knowledge which are revealed to the soul of the mystic in its ecstatic ascent; it is of equal importance with the vision of the celestial realm, the songs of the angels, and the structure of the Merkabah. According to an account given in the "Greater Hekhaloth", which one is tempted to correlate with a similar passage at the end of the Fourth Book of Ezra, it was even the custom to place scribes or stenographers to the right and left of the visionary who wrote down his ecstatic description of the Throne and its occupants.[79] That the mystic in his rapture even succeeded in penetrating beyond the sphere of the angels is suggested in a passage which speaks of "God who is beyond the sight of His creatures and hidden to the angels who serve Him, but who has revealed Himself to Rabbi Akiba in the vision of the Merkabah."[80]

It is this new revelation, at once strange and forbidding, which we encounter in the most paradoxical of all these tracts, the one which is known under the name of *Shiur Komah*, i. e. literally translated, "Measure of the Body" (namely of the body of God.).[81] From the very beginning, the frank and almost provocative anthropomorphism of the *Shiur Komah* aroused the bitterest antagonism among all sections of Jewry which had held themselves aloof from mysticism.[82] Conversely, all the later mystics and Kabbalists came to regard its dark and obscure language as a symbol of profound and penetrating spiritual vision. The antagonism was mutual, for it is in this attitude towards anthropomorphism that the ways of Jewish rational theology and Jewish mysticism have parted always.

The fragment in question, of which several different texts are

the spirit and the form of the soul, and no creature may recognize it. His body is like chrysolite. His light breaks tremendously from the darkness, clouds and fog are around Him, and all the princes of the angels and the seraphim are before Him like an empty jar. Therefore no measure is given to us, but only secret names are revealed to us."[88] In the writings of the second and third century Gnostics, and in certain Greek and Coptic texts, which frequently show a mystical spiritualism, we find a similar species of mystical anthropomorphism, with references to the "body of the father,"[89] or the "body of truth." Gaster has pointed out the significance of such instances of anthropomorphism in the writings of the second century Gnostic Markos (described by some scholars as "kabbalistic") which are hardly less bizarre and obscure than the analogous examples in the *Shiur Komah*.[90]

The fact probably is that this form of speculation originated among heretical mystics who had all but broken with Rabbinical Judaism. At some date this school or group must have blended with the "rabbinical" Gnosticism developed by the Merkabah visionaries, i. e. that form of Jewish Gnosticism which tried to remain true to the Halakhic tradition. Here we come inevitably to the question *whose* bodily dimensions are the subject of these fantastic descriptions? The Prophet Ezekiel saw on the throne of the Merkabah "a figure similar to that of a man" (Ez. I, 26). Does it not seem possible that among the mystics who wrote the *Shiur Komah*, this figure was identified with the "primordial man" of contemporary Iranian speculation, which thus made its entry into the world of Jewish mysticism?[91] Going a step further we may ask whether there did not exist — at any rate among the Merkabah mystics to whom we owe the preservation of the *Shiur Komah* — a belief in a fundamental distinction between the appearance of God the Creator, the Demiurge, i. e. one of His aspects, and His indefinable essence? There is no denying the fact that it is precisely the "primordial man" on the throne of the Merkabah whom the *Shiur Komah* calls *Yotser Bereshith*, i. e. Creator of the world — a significant and, doubtless, a deliberate designation. As is well known, the anti-Jewish Gnostics of the second and third centuries drew a sharp distinction between the unknown, "strange," good God, and the Creator, whom they identified with the God of Israel. It may be that the *Shiur Komah* reflects an attempt

to give a new turn to this trend of thought, which had become widespread throughout the Near East, by postulating something like a harmony between the Creator and the "true" God. A dualism of the Gnostic kind would of course have been unthinkable for Jews; instead, the Demiurge becomes, by an exercise of mystical anthropomorphism, the appearance of God on the "throne of Glory," at once visible and yet, by virtue of His transcendent nature, incapable of being really visualized.

If this interpretation is correct, we should be justified in saying that the *Shiur Komah* referred not to the "dimensions" of the divinity, but to those of its corporeal appearance. This is clearly the interpretation of the original texts. Already the "Lesser Hekhaloth" interpret the anthropomorphosis of the *Shiur Komah* as a representation of the "hidden glory". Thus for example Rabbi Akiba says: "He is like us, as it were, but greater than everything; and that is His glory which is hidden from us."[92] This conception of God's hidden glory, which forms the subject of much theosophical speculation, is almost identical, as we have seen, with the term employed for the object of their deepest veneration by the actual representatives of the Mishnaic Merkabah mysticism, among them the historical Rabbi Akiba. One has only to compare it with the relevant passage of the *Shiur Komah* (already quoted above) where it says, "whoever knows the measurements of our Creator, and the glory of the Holy One, praise be to him," etc. The term employed: *shivho shel hakadosh barukh hu*, signifies not only praise of God — in this context that would be without any meaning — but glory, δόξα, *shevah* being the equivalent of the Aramaic word for glory, *shuvha*.[93] The reference, in short, is not to God's praise but to the vision of His glory. Later when the "Glory of God" had become identified with the *Shekhinah*, the "Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba" expressly referred to the "body of the Shekhinah"[94] as the subject of the *Shiur Komah*. The employment of this term is proof that its authors had in mind not the substance of divinity but merely the measurements of its appearance.

Shiur Komah speculation is already to be found in the earliest Hekhaloth texts and must be counted among the older possessions of Jewish Gnosticism. Graetz' theory that it came into being at a late date under the influence of Moslem anthropomorphic tendencies is entirely fallacious and has confused matters down to our own

splendour through these measurements?' And of this David hath said: O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!"

It is apparent from this passage that all these questions were systematically discussed, although some of them are not mentioned in the texts which have been preserved. Of the bridges in the Merkabah world, for instance, which find almost no mention in the "Greater Hekhaloth" and the Book of Enoch, we have several vivid descriptions.

Among the most important objects which Metatron describes to Rabbi Ishmael is the cosmic veil or curtain before the throne, which separates the glory of God from the host of angels. The idea of such a veil appears to be very old; references to it are to be found already in Aggadic passages from the second century. The existence of veils in the resplendent sphere of the aeons is also mentionel in a Coptic writing belonging to the Gnostic school, the *Pistis Sophia*.[113] Now this cosmic curtain, as it is described in the Book of Enoch, contains the images of all things which since the day of creation have their pre-existing reality, as it were, in the heavenly sphere.[114] All generations and all their lives and actions are woven into this curtain; he who sees it penetrates at the same time into the secret of Messianic redemption, for like the course of history, the final struggle and the deeds of the Messiah are already pre-existently real and visible. As we have seen, this combination of knowledge relating to the Merkabah and the Hekhaloth with a vision of the Messianic end — the inclusion, that is to say, of apocalyptic and eschatologic knowledge — is very old. It dominates the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Book of Enoch no less than the various Hekhaloth tracts four or eight centuries later. All of them contain varying descriptions of the end of the world, and calculations of the date set for the redemption.[115] Indeed, there is a passage in the "Greater Hekhaloth" where the meaning of the Merkabah vision is summed up in the question: "When will he see the heavenly majesty? When will he hear of the final time of redemption? When will he perceive what no eye has yet perceived?"[116] — Incidentally, according to these mystics, that which now belongs to the domain of secret lore shall become universal knowledge in the Messianic age. The throne and the glory which rests on it "shall be revealed anon to all inhabitants of the world."[117] At the same time the reasons, now obscure, of

the commandments of the Torah will also be revealed and made plain.[118]

It is safe to say that what might be termed apocalyptic nostalgia was among the most powerful motive-forces of the whole Merkabah mysticism. The attitude of these mystics towards the reality of history is even more pointedly negative than that of the contemporary Jewish Rabbinical theologians, the Aggadists.[119] The depressing conditions of the period, the beginning of the era of persecution by the Church since the fourth century, directed the religious interests of the mystics towards the higher world of the Merkabah; from the world of history the mystic turns to the prehistoric period of creation, from whose vision he seeks consolation, or towards the post-history of redemption. Unfortunately the sources at our disposal shed no light on the social environment of the founders and leaders of the movement. As I said at the beginning of this lecture, they have been only too successful in preserving their anonymity.

9.

By contrast with the connection between throne mysticism and apocalyptic which, as we have seen, is very close, that between eschatology and cosmogony — the end of things and the beginning of things — is rather loose, at any rate in the writings which have come down to us. In this respect, Merkabah mysticism differs not only from the non-Jewish forms of Gnosticism but also from the Kabbalism of the later period, where the connection between the two is exceedingly close. Moreover, the comparatively sparse account devoted to this subject under the heading of reflections on the *Maaseh Bereshith* is cosmology rather than cosmogony, that is to say, the emphasis is laid — so far as we are in a position to judge — on the order of the cosmos rather than on the drama of its creation, which plays so large a part in the mythology of the Gnostics. One has only to read the "Baraitha on the Work of Creation," which includes some fragments belonging to this period, albeit in a comparatively recent edition, and whose connection with Merkabah mysticism is evident, to become aware of this difference between Merkabah speculation and Gnosticism proper.[120] Its cause is obvious: the realm of divine "fullness," the *pleroma* of the Gnostics, which unfolds dramatically in the succession of aeons, is directly related to the problem of creation

and cosmogony, while for the Merkabah mystics, who substituted the throne world for the *pleroma* and the aeons, this problem has no significance at all. The constituents of the throne world: the *hashmal*, the *ofannim* and *hayoth*, the *seraphim*, etc., can no longer be interpreted in terms of a cosmogonic drama; the only link between this realm and the problem of creation was, as we have seen, the idea of the cosmic curtain. Here we have one of the most important points of difference between Merkabah mysticism and Kabbalism; the latter is distinguished by renewed interest in purely cosmogonic speculation, whose spirit often enough is entirely Gnostic. In the earlier literature — certainly during the phase represented by the Hekhaloth — theoretical questions have no place; its spirit is descriptive, not speculative, and this is particularly true of the best examples of this genre. Nevertheless it is possible that there was a speculative phase in the very beginning and that the famous passage in the Mishnah which forbids the questions: "What is above and what is below? What was before and what will be after?" refers to theoretical speculation in the manner of the Gnostics who strove after "the knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we are placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed."[121]

As a matter of fact there exists indubitable proof that among certain groups of Jewish Gnostics who tried to stay within the religious community of Rabbinical Judaism, Gnostical speculation and related semi-mythological thought was kept alive. Traces of such ideas in Aggadic literature are few but they exist. Thus for instance there is the well-known saying of the Babylonian teacher Rav in the third century A. D.: "Ten are the qualities with which the world has been created: wisdom, insight, knowledge, force, appeal, power, justice, right, love and compassion."[122] Or the following reference to seven hypostases of similar general ideas of the kind so often found in the names of Gnostical aeons: "Seven *middoth* serve before the throne of glory: wisdom, right and justice, love and mercy, truth and peace."[123] What the aeons and the archons are to the Gnostics, the *middoth* are to this form of speculation, i. e. the hypostatized attributes of God.

Much more important are the relics of speculation concerning aeons preserved in the oldest Kabbalistic text, the highly obscure and

awkward book *Bahir,* which was edited in Provence during the twelfth century.[124] This brief document of Kabbalistic theology consists, at least in part, of compilations and editions of much older texts which, together with other writings of the Merkabah school, had made their way to Europe from the East. It was my good fortune to make a discovery a few years ago which renders it possible to identify one of these Eastern sources, namely, the book *Raza Rabba,* "The Great Mystery," which some Eastern authors of the tenth century named among the most important of esoteric writings and which was hitherto thought to have been lost.[125] Fortunately, several lengthy quotations from it have been preserved in the writings of thirteenth century Jewish mystics in Southern Germany, which leave no doubt that the Book *Bahir* was to a large extent directly based on it.[126] It thus becomes understandable how gnostical *termini technici,* symbols, and mythologems came to be used by the earliest Kabbalists who wrote their works in Provence during the twelfth century. The point obviously has an important bearing on the question of the origins of mediaeval Kabbalism in general. It can be taken as certain that in addition to the *Raza Rabba,* which appears to have been a cross between a mystical Midrash and a Hekhaloth text, with a strong magical element thrown in, other similar fragments of ancient writings, with gnostic excerpts written in Hebrew, made their way from the East to Provence. It was thus that remainders of Gnostic ideas transmitted in this fashion entered the main stream of mystical thought via the Book *Bahir,* to become one of the chief influences which shaped the theosophy of the thirteenth century Kabbalists.

10.

The existence of speculative Gnostic tendencies in the immediate neigbourhood of Merkabah mysticism has its parallel in the writings grouped together under the name of *Maaseh Bereshith.* These include a document — the *Sefer Yetsirah* or Book of Creation — which represents a theoretical approach to the problems of cosmology and cosmogony.[127] The text probably includes interpolations made at a later period, but its connection with the Merkabah literature is fairly evident, at least as regards terminology and style. Written probably between the third and the sixth century, it is distinguished by its brevity; even the most comprehensive of the various editions does not

exceed sixteen hundred words. Historically, it represents the earliest extant speculative text written in the Hebrew language. Mystical meditation appears to have been among the sources from which the author drew inspiration, so far as the vagueness and obscurity of the text permits any judgment on this point. The style is at once pompous and laconic, ambiguous and oracular — no wonder, therefore, that the book was quoted in evidence alike by mediaeval philosophers and by Kabbalists. Its chief subject-matters are the elements of the world, which are sought in the ten elementary and primordial numbers — *Sefiroth,* as the book calls them — and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These together represent the mysterious forces whose convergence has produced the various combinations observable throughout the whole of creation; they are the "thirty-two secret paths of wisdom," through which God has created all that exists. After the author has analyzed the function of the *Sefiroth* in his cosmogony, or rather hinted at the solution in some more or less obscure oracular statements, he goes on to explain the secret meaning, i. e. function, of each letter in the three aspects of creation known to him: Man, the world, and the rhythmic flow of time through the course of the year. The combination of late Hellenistic, perhaps even late Neoplatonic mathematical mysticism[128] with exquisitely Jewish ways of thought concerning the mystery of letters and language is fairly evident. Nor is the element of Merkabah mysticism lacking: the author appears to have searched the Merkabah for a cosmological idea, and not without success, for it seems that the *hayoth* in the Merkabah described by Ezekiel, i. e. the "living beings" which carry the Merkabah, are for him connected with the *Sefiroth* as "living numerical beings."

Various peculiarities of the terminology employed in the book, including some curious neologisms, which have no natural explanation by Hebrew phraseology, suggest a paraphrase of Greek termini, but most of the details still await a full clarification.[129] Even the substance of its cosmogony, as set forth in the chapter dealing with the *Sefiroth,* is still a subject of discussion. On the question whether the author believes in the emanation of his *Sefiroth* out of each other and of God it is possible to hear directly conflicting views. According to some writers, he identifies the *Sefiroth* directly with the elements of creation (the spirit of God; ether; water; fire; and

the six dimensions of space). Others, with whom I am inclined to agree, see in his description a tendency towards parallelism or correlation between the *Sefiroth* and the elements. In any event, the *Sefiroth* which, like the host of angels in the Merkabah literature, are visualized in an attitude of adoration before God's throne, represent an entirely new element which is foreign to the conception of the classical Merkabah visionaries.

On the other hand, one cannot overlook the connection between the "Book of Creation" and the theory of magic and theurgy which, as we have seen, plays its part in Merkabah mysticism.[130] The ecstatic ascent to the throne is not the only element of that mysticism; it also embraces various other techniques which are much more closely connected with magical practices. One of these, for example, is the "putting on, or clothing, of the name," a highly ceremonious rite in which the magician impregnates himself, as it were, with the great name of God[131] — i. e. performs a symbolic act by clothing himself in a garment into whose texture the name has been woven.[132] The adjuration of the prince or archon of the Torah, *Sar Torah*, belongs to the same category.[133] The revelation sought through the performance of such rites is identical with that of the Merkabah vision. The "Prince of the Torah" reveals the same mysteries as the voice which speaks from the throne of fire: the secret of heaven and earth, the dimensions of the demiurge, and the secret names the knowledge of which gives power over all things. It is true that in addition these magical practices also hold out a promise of other things, e. g. a more comprehensive knowledge of the Torah, chiefly reflected in the fact that the adept can no longer forget anything he has learned, and similar accomplishments: Matters which to the Hekhaloth mystics were important but not vital, much as they tried to remain in conformity with Rabbinical Judaism — a tendency which finds its expression in the emphasis laid in the "Greater Hekhaloth" on the link with Halakhic tradition. These theurgical doctrines form a kind of meeting-place for magic and ecstaticism. The theurgical element is brought to the fore in various writings which display manifold points of contact with the Hekhaloth tracts, as, to take some instances, *Harba de-Moshe*, "The Sword of Moses," and the *"Havdalah* of Rabbi Akiba."[134]

II.

If Merkabah mysticism thus degenerates in some instances into magic pure and simple, it becomes subject to a moral re-interpretation in others. Originally, the ascent of the soul was by no means conceived as an act of penitence, but in later days the ancient Talmudic saying "Great is repentance... for it leads to the throne of Glory" came to be regarded — e. g. by the Babylonian Gaon Jehudai (eighth century) — as a reference to it. In this conception, the act of penitence becomes one with the ecstatic progress through the seven heavens.[135] Already in one of the Hekhaloth tracts the first five of the seven palaces through which the soul must pass are placed parallel to certain degrees or stages of moral perfection. Thus Rabbi Akiba says to Rabbi Ishmael: "When I ascended to the first palace I was devoted *(hasid)*, in the second palace I was pure *(tahor)*, in the third sincere *(yashar)*, in the fourth I was wholly with God *(tamim)*, in the fifth I displayed holiness before God; in the sixth I spoke the *kedushah* (the trishagion) before Him who spoke and created, in order that the guardian angels might not harm me; in the seventh palace I held myself erect with all my might, trembling in all limbs, and spoke the following prayer:... 'Praise be to Thee who art exalted, praise be to the Sublime in the chambers of grandeur'."[136]

This tendency to set the stages of ascent in parallel with the degrees of perfection obviously raises the question whether we are not faced here with a mystical reinterpretation of the Merkabah itself. Was there not a temptation to regard man himself as the representative of divinity, his soul as the throne of glory, etc.? A step in this direction had been taken by Macarius the Egyptian, one of the earliest representatives of fourth century Christian monastic mysticism. "The opening of his first homily reads like a programme of his mystical faith. It offers a new explanation of the obscure vision of Ezekiel (i. e. of the Merkabah)... according to him, the prophet beholds 'the secret of the soul which is on the point of admitting its master and becoming a throne of his glory'."[137] We find an analogous reinterpretation of the Merkabah among the Jewish mystics in the thrice repeated saying of the third century Palestinian Talmudist Simeon ben Lakish: "The Patriarchs (i. e. Ab-

raham, Isaac and Jacob) — they are the Merkabah."[138] The author tries to justify this bold assertion by an ingenious exegetical reasoning based on certain Scriptural phrases, but it is plain that the exegesis provided only the occasion for making it, not the motive; the latter is genuinely and unmistakably mystical.

It must be emphasized that these tendencies are alien to the spirit of Hekhaloth literature; we find in it none of that symbolic interpretation of the Merkabah which was later revived and perfected by the Kabbalists. Its subject is never man, be he even a saint. The form of mysticism which it represents takes no particular interest in man as such; its gaze is fixed on God and his aura, the radiant sphere of the Merkabah, to the exclusion of everything else. For the same reason it made no contribution to the development of a new moral ideal of the truly pious Jew. All its originality is on the ecstatical side, while the moral aspect is starved, so to speak, of life. The moral doctrines found in Hekhaloth literature are pale and bloodless; the ideal to which the Hekhaloth mystic is devoted is that of the visionary who holds the keys to the secrets of the divine realm and who reveals these visions in Israel. Vision and knowledge, in a word, Gnosis of this kind, represents for him the essence of the Torah and of all possible human and cosmic wisdom.

men whom their contemporaries already called with special emphasis *Haside Ashkenaz*, i. e. "the devout, or pious, men of Germany."

The rise of Hasidism was the decisive event in the religious development of German Jewry. Of all the factors determining the deeper religion of that community it was the greatest until the change which took place in the seventeenth century under the influence of the later Kabbalism, which originated at Safed in Palestine. Strictly speaking, it was the only considerable religious event in the history of German Judaism. Its importance lies in the fact that it succeeded already during the Middle Ages in bringing about the triumph of new religious ideals and values which were acknowledged by the mass of the people; in Germany and for the German Jewish community at any rate the victory was complete. Where the thirteenth century Kabbalism of Spain failed — for it became a real historical factor only much later, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and after Safed had become the new centre — German Hasidism succeeded. So far from being isolated, the Hasidim were intimately connected with the whole of Jewish life and the religious interests of the common folk; they were recognized as representatives of an ideally Jewish way of life even where their principles were never completely translated into practice. Side by side with the great documents of the Halakhah, and (in spite of their deep reverence for the divine commandment) by no means always in perfect conformity with them, the classical literature of Hasidism retained a truly canonical prestige — not indeed among the representatives of Talmudic learning, who can hardly have read documents like the "Book of the Devout" without experiencing some qualms, but with the average pious Jewish burgher or "householder," the *Baal Bayith*. Thus the Hasidim escaped the fate of the early Kabbalists who always remained a small aristocratic sect and whose ideas and standards never entered into the general consciousness of their contemporaries. Although the creative period of the movement was relatively short — about one century, from 1150 to 1250 — its influence on the Jews of Germany was lasting; the religious ideas to which it gave rise and which it filled with life retained their vitality for centuries. Theirs was not the least share in the merit of giving to German Jewry that inner strength and devotion which it displayed when new storms of persecution arose.

Like the Talmudic aristocracy before it, Hasidism found its leading representatives among that remarkable family which for centuries provided the Jewish communities in the Rhineland with their spiritual leaders: the Kalonymides, who had come to the Rhine from Italy and who, in Speyer, Worms and Mainz, formed a natural aristocracy among the communities. The three men who moulded German Hasidism all belonged to this family. Samuel the Hasid, the son of Kalonymus of Speyer, who lived in the middle of the twelfth century[1]; his son Jehudah the Hasid, of Worms, who died in Regensburg in 1217[2]; and the latter's disciple and relative, Eleazar ben Jehudah, of Worms, who died between 1223 and 1232.[3] All three exercized a deep and lasting influence on their contemporaries; Jehudah the Hasid in particular held an unrivalled position as a religious leader so long as Hasidism itself remained a living force. A contemporary said of him, "he would have been a prophet if he had lived in the times of the prophets."[4] Like Isaac Luria of Safed in a later age, he, too, soon became a legendary figure of mythical proportions, and in much the same way the personalities of the other two leaders of German Hasidism tend to disappear behind a tropical jungle of legends that has grown up around them. These legends have been preserved not only in Hebrew but also in a Yiddish version, the *Maase Buch*, which Gaster has translated into English.[5] They do not always give a true picture of what Hasidism actually was, but rather tell us what popular imagination would have liked it to be. And this distortion, too, is not without significance for an understanding of the motive-powers which were active in this movement.

Of Samuel the Hasid's writings little has been preserved, while the more numerous writings of his son Jehudah have come down for the most part only in the form given to them by his disciples. On the other hand, Eleazar of Worms, the most zealous of all the apostles of his master, has left a whole literature which is a veritable store-house of early Hasidic thought, including in particular the entire body of earlier mystical doctrine in so far as it was known to the members of this group. Indeed, his life work seems to have been devoted to the task of codification, whether of the Halakhah (in his great work *Rokeah* of which several editions have appeared in print), or of other materials and traditions. His voluminous writings, many of them extant only as manuscripts of which a distin-

begin in 1226 and culminate in 1240, the year 5000 of Creation, the rumour of this prediction spread far and wide.

These traditions concerning the way of life and the visions of the old ecstatics, by which the imagination continued to be powerfully affected although only a few followed in their footsteps, combined — probably in the main during the period of the Crusades — with various other and often quite heterogenous elements of thought. Thus the ideas of Saadia, the soberest of philosophic rationalists, who flourished in the first half of the tenth century, gradually became known and, paradoxically enough, they gained influence owing to the poetical, enthusiastic and quasi-mystical style of the old Hebrew translation, or rather paraphrase, of his magnum opus, the "Book of Philosophic Doctrines and Religious Beliefs," the original of which was written in Arabic. Apart from partly misunderstood elements of Saadia, there was the growing influence of Abraham ibn Ezra and Abraham bar Hiya, through which Neoplatonic thought, including some of purely mystical character, came to Northern France and to the Hasidim of Germany. The stream also carried along with it an indefinable mixture of traditions concerning occultism of which the sources are difficult to trace; the most extraordinary combinations of Hellenistic occultism, early Jewish magic, and ancient German belief in demons and witches are frequently encountered in the Hasidic literature of the period.[17] It is characteristic that Eleazar of Worms uses the term "philosopher" in the same sense in which it is used in the medieval Latin writings on alchemy and occultism, i. e. as the designation of a scholar versed in these occult sciences. Wherever in his book on psychology a "philosopher" makes his appearance, he introduces hermetical ideas of this kind.[18]

All these elements are intermingled in the richly varied literature of Hasidism, but rather in the form of an amorphous whole than as elements of a system. Its authors, as we have already had occasion to remark, showed themselves unable to develop these elements of thought or to produce anything like a synthesis; possibly they were not even conscious of the manifold inconsistencies among the various traditions, all of which were treated by them with the same reverence. As regards the form of their writings it is worth noting that they displayed nothing of that passion for anonymity, let alone pseudepigraphy, which is so characteristic of the Merkabah mystics. Only a

very small number of pseudepigraphic texts are grouped round the figure of one Joseph ben Uziel[19] who first makes his appearance in the "Alphabet of ben Sira" (tenth century), where he is introduced as the grandson of ben Sira and the greatgrandson of the Prophet Jeremiah. And even there it is not certain whether some of these texts, and possibly the "Alphabet" as well, did not originate in Italy. Whatever else there is to be found of pseudepigraphic elements in this literature apparently owes its origin less to deliberate intention and more to misunderstanding and confusion, such as for example the awkward commentary to the "Book of Creation" written by a disciple of Eleazar of Worms but published for some reason under the name of Saadia.[20]

3.

Notwithstanding the failure to establish doctrinal unity or rather the lack of any serious attempt to bring it about, these writings with all their manifold contradictions and inconsistencies, display a certain community of outlook. The new impulse which deeply affected the precarious life led by the German Jews in the twelfth century left a powerful imprint on the character of their literature; its spirit somehow permeates even the semi-philosophic arguments, the ancient mythologems scattered among the fragments, and the rest of this stream of traditions and reminiscences, replete with obvious misunderstandings and not infrequently showing a reversion to mythology.

For like the external world, the world of the spirit, too, had undergone a deep transformation. The force of the religious impulse which at one time found expression and satisfaction in the visionary perception of God's glory and in the apocalyptic vision of the downfall of the fiendish powers of evil, had waned and for a time ceased to shape the outlook of actively religious groups. Nothing, indeed, disappeared completely; all the old traditions were preserved, often in abstruse metamorphoses, for in this Hasidic world age is its own justification.

But in spite of the innate conservatism of German Judaism, the novel circumstances in the end called forth a new response. It will always remain a remarkable fact that the great catastrophe of the Crusades, the incessant waves of persecution which now broke over the Jews of Germany, failed to introduce an apocalyptic element into the religious tenets of German Jewry. Not a single apocalypse was written during that period, unless this name be given to the no longer extant "Prophecy" of Rabbi Troestlin the Prophet, the work of a Merkabah mystic who lived in Erfurt and of whose book a brief passage has been preserved.[21] It is true that the chroniclers of the persecutions and the writers of the new school of religious poetry, perhaps the most characteristic representatives of this period, sought consolation in eschatological hopes, but they laid far more stress on the blessed state of the martyrs and the transcendent splendour of the coming Redemption than on the terrors of the end and the vision of the Last Judgment.

As far as concerns the views of the Hasidic leaders, Jehudah the Hasid himself was radically opposed to all speculation concerning the time of the Messiah's arrival. In chronicling the account of the journey of Petahyah of Regensburg, who made a voyage to Baghdad and Persia around 1175, he even went so far as to censor the manuscript by leaving out the Messianic prophecy of one Samuel, an astrologer of Niniveh, "so that it might not seem as though he believed in it." And in the "Book of the Devout" he says: "If you see one making prophecies about the Messiah, you should know that he deals in witchcraft and has intercourse with demons; or he is one of those who seek to conjure with the names of God. Now, since they conjure the angels or spirits, these tell them: Do not reveal it so that it shall be plain to all the world. And in the end he is shamed because he has called up the angels and demons, and instead a misfortune occurs at that place. The demons come and teach him their calculations and apocalyptic secrets in order to shame him and those who believe in him, for no one knows anything about the coming of the Messiah."[22]

But for all the lack of apocalyptic elements in the Messianic conception of Hasidism it would be a mistake to overlook its eschatological character. There have been tendencies in this direction. Thus J. N. Simhoni, one of the few writers on the subject who have tried to go below the surface, has drawn a picture of Hasidism as a movement distinguished by a frankly anti-eschatologic form of devotion which holds out no expectations of reward in life for meritorious deeds, ignores the hope of salvation and remains resolutely wedded to the present.[23] "If heavy misfortune befall a man let him

humanity. The Hasid is "remarkable" not by any intellectual standard of values but only within the categorical frame-work of *Hasiduth* itself.

The word *Hasid* has a specific meaning which is sharply distinguished from the much more vague and general significance of the same term in Talmudic usage.[35] Three things above all others go to make the true Hasid as he appears before us in the "Book of the Devout": Ascetic renunciation of the things of this world; complete serenity of mind; and an altruism grounded in principle and driven to extremes. Let us consider these points a little closer.[36]

The ascetic turn of mind is the corollary of a darkly pessimistic attitude towards life, a characteristic expression of which may be found in the interpretation given to an old Midrash by Eleazar of Worms. The "Midrash on the Creation of the Child" relates that after its guardian angel has given it a fillip upon the nose, the newborn child forgets all the infinite knowledge acquired before its birth in the celestial houses of learning. But why, Eleazar asks, does the child forget? "Because, if it did not forget, the course of this world would drive it to madness if it thought about it in the light of what it knew."[37] Truly a remarkable variant of the Platonic conception of cognition as recollection, anamnesis, which lies also at the root of this Midrash! For this doctrine, hope is present only in the eschatological perspective. As Eleazar put it in a somewhat drastic metaphor, man is a rope whose two ends are pulled by God and Satan; and in the end God proves stronger.[38]

In practice, this asceticism enjoins the renunciation of profane speech, of playing with children and of other innocent pleasures — "he who keeps birds only for ornament would do better to give the money to the poor." In short, it amounts to turning one's back on ordinary life as lived by ordinary people, *usivath derekh erets*, to quote the pregnant term used in the "Book of the Devout."[39] The Hasid must resolutely reject and overcome every temptation of ordinary life. By a natural corollary, this asceticism finds its antithesis in a magnified eschatological hope and promise; by renouncing the temptations of this world, by averting his eyes from women, he becomes worthy of an afterlife in which he will see the glory of the Shekhinah with his own eyes and rank above the angels.[40]

Secondly, the Hasid must bear insults and shame without

flinching; indeed the very term *Hasid* is interpreted, with the aid of an ingenious play of words, as "one who bears shame." For to bear shame and derision is an essential part of the way of life of the true devotee; in fact, the Hasid proves himself worthy of his name precisely in such situations. Though he be insulted and pale with shame, yet he remains deaf and dumb. "For even though his face is now pale, Isaiah has already said (XXIX, 22): 'neither shall his face now wax pale'; for indeed his face shall be radiant hereafter."[41] "When the psalmist says: 'for thy sake are we killed all the day long' he means those who bear shame and dishonour and humiliation in carrying out His commands."[42] This constantly stressed imperviousness to the scorn and the mockery which the Hasid's way of life cannot fail to evoke by its extremism, is the true imitation of God. He, the ideal of the Hasid, is meant by the prophet when he says (Isaiah XLII, 14): "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still and refrained myself."[43] Here again the hope of eternal bliss is the predominant note, although, as we have seen, it is occasionally emphasized that this hope should not be the motive of one's actions. "One abused and insulted a Hasid; the latter did not mind while the other called down curses on his body and his possessions. But when he cursed him by saying he wished him many sins so that he might lose his share of eternal bliss, that grieved him. When his disciples questioned him about it, he replied: When he called me names, he could not wound me. I need no honour, for when a man dies, what becomes of his honour? But when he called curses down on my blessedness, then I began to fear that he might bring me to sin."[44]

No less stress is laid on the third point: "The essence of *Hasiduth* is to act in all things not on but within the line of strict justice — that is to say, not to insist in one's own interest on the letter of the Torah; for it is said of God, whom the Hasid strives to follow, (Psalm CXLV, 17): The Lord is *hasid* in all his ways."[45] This altruism is stressed already in the "Sayings of the Fathers," an ethical Mishnah treatise: "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours — that is the way of the Hasid." The famous commentator Rashi, too, repeatedly lays emphasis on the fact that the Hasid does not insist on the letter of the law even though it may be to his advantage to do so.[46]

There can be little doubt that the formulation of this principle in the *Sefer Hasidim* only partially bridges the divergence between this way of life and the normative canon of Rabbinical Judaism, the Halakhah. On the side of the Hasidim there was the ancient Talmudic tradition of a special "Mishnah of the Hasidim," whose commandments place far heavier demands upon the Hasid than the ordinary standards of common law. Tendencies of this kind appear only sporadically in Talmudic literature and have never been systematized; nevertheless, they could be used as a legitimation of those ideals of mediaeval Hasidism which were indirectly derived from contemporary religious movements.[47] In the "Book of the Devout" we find what amounts almost to a crystallization of this hitherto amorphous "Mishnah of the Hasidim." The "heavenly law," *din shamayim*, as conceived by the Hasid, i. e. the call to self-abnegation and altruism, in many instances goes far beyond the common law of the Torah as interpreted by the Halakhah. It is not difficult to perceive the latent antagonism between the two conceptions.[48] There are things chiefly concerning social relations which are permitted under rabbinical law but for which heaven nevertheless inflicts punishment.[49] As Baer has pointed out, this divergence between the law of the Torah and the heavenly law — the latter frequently used as a synonym for natural and humane fairness and equity — is a fundamental principle of the conception of morality outlined in the *Sefer Hasidim;* it is even made the criterion of what shall be considered right and just in everyday life.

True, even this higher law, which is considered binding only for the Hasid and which is set up in somewhat veiled opposition to the Halakhah, is capable of exegetical deduction from Scripture, an undertaking in which the author of the book displays considerable ingenuity.[50] But it is plain that anyone who proceeds from such assumptions can hardly be productive in the domain of strict Halakhah, however much veneration he may show for Halakhic tradition and however little he may feel inclined to adopt a "revolutionary" attitude towards it. And in fact we possess hardly a single new Halakhah from Jehudah the Hasid, in striking contrast to his productive influence in so many other fields. In the great Halakhic work *Or Zarua* written by his disciple, Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, who was with him in Regensburg during the last years of his life, not one

this is as nothing to him, everything except that he may do the will of his Creator, do good unto others, keep sanctified the name of God... And all the contemplation of his thoughts burns in the fire of love for Him."[54]

It is characteristic of this stage that the fulfilment of the divine will becomes purely an act of love. As in the contemporaneous Christian mystical love-poetry, the relation of the mystic to God is described in terms of erotic passion, not infrequently in a way which shocks our modern sensibilities.[55] The use of such metaphors goes back to the exhaustive treatment of the subject in Saadia's theologic magnum opus.[56] The earthly love, which he describes in considerable detail, was for the early German Hasidim a complete allegory of the heavenly passion, just as it was in a later age for Israel Baal Shem, the founder of Polish Hasidism, who is quoted as saying: "What Saadia says of love makes it possible to draw an inference from the nature of the sensual to that of the spiritual passion; if the force of sensual love is so great, how great must be the passion with which man loves God."[57] The mystical principles of this *Hasiduth* which culminates in pure love of God are necessary for the understanding of theosophy and of what is here called Merkabah mysticism, and it is as such prerequisites that they are introduced by Eleazar of Worms.[58]

It is clear that this ideal of the Hasidic devotee, an ideal which bears none of the traces of scholarly gravity that might be expected in a centre of Talmudic learning like mediaeval Germany, is closely related to the ascetic ideal of the monk and particularly to its most archaic traits. Its practical message is indistinguishable from the *ataraxy*, the "absence of passion" of the Cynics and Stoics — an ideal which, although originally not conceived from religious motives, powerfully affected the nascent asceticism of Christianity and, at a later period, the way of life of the ancient Mohammedan mystics, the Sufis. What we have before us in these writings is a Judaized version of Cynicism, which makes use of cognate tendencies in Talmudic tradition but relegates to the background or eliminates altogether those elements which did not fall into line with these tendencies. The influence of Cynicism is obvious in the ideal of complete indifference to praise or blame, which very often in the history of mysticism figures as a *sine qua non* of mystical illumination, not least in the

writings of the Kabbalists. The point is well brought out in the following anecdote told by the Spanish Kabbalist Isaac of Acre (around 1300): "He who is vouchsafed the entry into the mystery of adhesion to God, *devekuth*, attains to the mystery of equanimity, and he who possesses equanimity attains to loneliness, and from there he comes to the holy Spirit and to prophecy. But about the mystery of equanimity the following was told to me by Rabbi Abner: Once upon a time a lover of secret lore came to an anchorite and asked to be admitted as a pupil. Then he said to him: My son, your purpose is admirable, but do you possess equanimity or not? He replied: Indeed, I feel satisfaction at the praise and pain at the insult, but I am not revengeful and I bear no grudge. Then the master said to him: My son, go back to your home, for as long as you have no equanimity and can still feel the sting of insult, you have not attained to the state where you can connect your thoughts with God."[59] — There is nothing in this Kabbalistic or Sufic anecdote which is not entirely in harmony with the spirit of Hasidism.

Another element of Cynicism is evident in the way in which the practice of certain actions is carried to extremes and the whole moral and religious fervour of the mind concentrated on a single aspect of religious life or on a single moral quality. Already the old paraphrasis of Saadia, through which, as we have seen, numerous religious ideas were transmitted to these circles, defines the Hasid as one "who all his life devotes himself to one particular religious commandment to which he stays obedient under any circumstances, even though he may be inconsistent in fulfilling other commandments... But one who wavers from one day to another between the various commandments is not called a Hasid."[60] Here the element of radicalism and extremism which later on Maimonides too regarded as characteristic of the Hasid[61] appears already in the definition of the term. On the other hand, the element of indifference to praise or blame, the ideal of *ataraxy* which stands in such striking contrast to this religious radicalism, is nowhere referred to in the theological sources of Hasidism and must have come from outside, that is to say, probably from the Christian environment. Both are equally essential, for it is the paradoxical combination of these two spiritual qualities which makes the Cynic, and it is the ideal of the monkish Cynic which appears before us in a Jewish guise under the

name of Hasidism. Generally accepted as the moral ideal by contemporary Christian society, glorified by saints, popular preachers and tract writers, it struck roots among the German Jews in the atmosphere created by the Crusades. The innumerable little stories in which the Hasidic ideal is developed in the "Book of the Devout" have a close counterpart in the collections of those "examples" which Christian preachers were in the habit of introducing in their homilies.[62] Alongside a mass of folklore these contain not a few stories of profound moral interest, thoughts common to the mystics of every religion and which might have grown out of any one of them. Such tales travel fast and know no boundaries; a story such as that of the devout man who bears the odium of apparent depravity and lives among whores and gamblers in order to try to save them from at least one sin[63], is international in its appeal.

For the old Merkabah mystics, the devotee, as we have seen, was at best the keeper of the holy mysteries. This conception differs radically from that of the Hasidim for whom humility, restraint and self-abnegation rank higher than the pride of heart which fills the Merkabah visionary in the mystical presence of God. The place of the ecstatic seer, whose mystical élan carries him across all barriers and hindrances to the steps of the heavenly throne, is taken by the meditative devotee, sunk in humble contemplation of the Omnipresent Infinite. However, this ideal of the purely contemplative mystic must be understood in its true religious and social context. The Hasid whose face is as it were turned towards God and away from the community, nevertheless functions as the latter's true guide and master. The guiding function appears very clearly in the manner in which Hasidic literature is at pains to make allowances for human weakness and to show every consideration for the conditions of life of the community. The moral casuistry of the "Book of the Devout", which in this respect goes far beyond the older Halakhic literature in its earth-bound realism, is a precious document of true humanity. For all the moral and religious radicalism of its demands upon the devout, Hasidism does not hesitate to condemn the ostentatious display of these qualities and what the Talmud already called "heedless" or "absurd" devotion. Its monkish character is also apparent in the quiet assumption that not everybody is destined to be a Hasid. Both Jehudah the Hasid and his father are pictured by the legend as saints

in whom both aspects of this form of religious life were harmoniously combined: radical, anti-social, introspective devotion to the ideal, and loving care for the maintenance of the community.

To this trait must be added another: The helpless, selfless, indifferent Hasid figures in the minds of a public influenced by Hasidism as an enormously powerful being who can command the forces of all the elements. Here the popular conception of the true Hasid supplements the picture which the Hasidim have drawn of themselves, though not without creating some discrepancies. To take one example, Jehudah the Hasid, though fully convinced of the effectiveness of magic and other occult disciplines, was sharply opposed to their practice. He appears to have sensed very clearly the contrast between the magician who prides himself on his control of the elements, and the humble Hasid who craves no form of power. But his perception of the danger did not prevent the magical elements in his heritage from gaining the upper hand over his moral ideal. In the legend, he appears as the bearer and dispenser of all those magical powers and attributes which he was at such pains to renounce, and this legend is by no means the product of later generations: it began to form already during his lifetime.[64] In this conception, the Hasid appears as the true master of magical forces who can obtain everything precisely because he wants nothing for himself. Nowhere else in Judaism has Man the magical creator been surrounded with such an halo. It is to Hasidism that we owe the development of the legend of the Golem, or magical homunculus — this quintessential product of the spirit of German Jewry — and the theoretical foundations of this magical doctrine.[65] In the writings of Eleazar of Worms, the most faithful of Jehudah's disciples, discourses on the essence of *Hasiduth* are to be found side by side with tracts on magic and the effectiveness of God's secret names, in one case even in the same book.[66] There one also finds the oldest extant recipes for creating the Golem — a mixture of letter magic and practices obviously aimed at producing ecstatic states of consciousness.[67] It would appear as though in the original conception the Golem came to life only while the ecstasy of his creator lasted. The creation of the Golem was, as it were, a particularly sublime experience felt by the mystic who became absorbed in the mysteries of the alphabetic combinations described in the "Book of Creation." It was only later that the popular legend attri-

only with Biblical passages of equal numerical value, but also with certain designations of God and the angels, and other formulas. Prayer is likened to Jacob's ladder extended from the earth to the sky; it is therefore conceived as a species of mystical ascent and appears in many of these "explanations" as a "highly formalised process full of hidden aspects and purposes."[72] But while we know a great deal about the external technique of these "mysteries of prayer" as the Hasidim called them, we are in the dark as regards the real meaning, the functional purpose of these mystical numerologies. Were certain meditations meant to go with certain prayers, or does the emphasis lie on the magical influence of prayer? In the former case we should be dealing with what the Kabbalah since 1200 referred to as *Kawwanah,* literally "intention," i.e. mystical meditation on the words of prayer while they are being spoken. *Kawwanah,* in other words, is something to be realized in the act of prayer itself.

Now among the German Hasidim, this fundamental doctrine of Kabbalistic mysticism of prayer does not yet occur. Eleazar of Worms, in his great commentary on the prayers, makes no mention of it, and where, in another context, he refers in passing to a conception of *Kawwanah* which comes close to the Kabbalistic one — a fact which I shall discuss later — it is clear that this concerns not particular words but the whole of the prayer. As to how the Hasidim themselves interpreted the use of the above-mentioned "mysteries" I have been unable to come to a final conclusion, but it is plain that this mysticism of prayer stands in opposition to the old Merkabah mysticism. The emphasis is no longer on the approach of the mystic himself to God's throne but on that of his prayer. It is the word, not the soul, which triumphs over fate and evil. The enormous concern shown for the use of the correct phrase in the traditional texts, and the excessive pedantry displayed in this regard reveal a totally new attitude towards the function of words. Where the Merkabah mystics sought spontaneous expression for their oceanic feeling in the prodigal use of words, the Hasidim discovered a multitude of esoteric meanings in a strictly limited number of fixed expressions. And this painstaking loyalty to the fixed term does indeed seem to go hand in hand with a renewed consciousness of the magic power inherent in words.

his father and there was a bowl with water and oil before them, his father drew his attention to the incomparable radiance which the light of the sun produced on the surface of the liquid, and said to him: "Pay attention to this radiance, for it is the same as the radiance of the Hashmal" (one of the personified objects of Ezekiel's Merkabah vision).[77]

We have seen how the new temper transformed the old spirit of prayer. But it also opened new spheres of religious experience — important in spite of all the doubts that they may raise in the minds of later generations — such as the theory and practice of penitence which here first in the development of Jewish mysticism acquired vehement force. Hitherto penitence had not been of paramount importance to the mystics; now it became the central fact of their existence. In the place of the heavenly journey of the self-absorbed ecstatic, and parallel to the new emphasis laid on the now enormously important act of prayer, the technique of penitence was developed into a vast and elaborate system until it became one of the cornerstones of true *Hasiduth*. It is important to realize that previously an elaborate casuistry of penitential acts corresponding to every conceivable degree of transgression had been almost unknown among Jews.[78] The Hasidim were thus not restricted by traditional obstacles when they undertook the task of formulating a ritual of penitence that was entirely in accordance with the new spirit they represented.

Here we are again undoubtedly faced with the after-effects of Christian influence. The whole system of penitence, particularly in the codified form given to it by Eleazar of Worms in several of his writings, closely corresponds to the practices prescribed by the early mediaeval Church in its literature on the subject, the "penitentiary books."[79] Among the latter, the Celtic and later the Frankish tracts developed a peculiar system of which the understanding is pertinent to our subject. Penitence is conceived as reparation for an insult to God through a personal act of restitution, the sinner undertaking to perform certain well-defined acts of a penitentiary character — a conception which inevitably led to the establishment of what can only be described as a tariff of penitence. These "forcible cures and powerful remedies," of which the history of ecclesiastical penitence is full, were doubtless suited to the comprehension of the recently Christianized Celts and Germans and accorded well with their primitive noti-

ons of justice, especially in the case of the Franks. But the point to be noted here is that they were also taken over by the Hasidim and adapted to the Jewish *milieu*. Although after the Gregorian reform of the Church in the eleventh century, Rome opened a fight against the old "penitentiary books", their authority remained paramount among wide circles during the whole period of the Crusades, at a time, that is to say, when the Jewish communities in Germany were themselves under the influence of a mood favourable to their adoption. Authority could easily be ascribed to them by pointing to some scattered analogies in the older Jewish literature. In this manner it became possible to justify the adoption of a whole system of penitence, beginning with all sorts of fastings and leading through various acts, frequently of a highly bizarre nature, to the supreme punishment of voluntary exile — an act of penance already known to the Talmud.[80]

Generally speaking, the system as developed in the *Sefer Hasidim* and conserved in the moral literature of later generations distinguishes between four categories of penitence.[81] In its mildest form, penitence simply meant that the opportunity for committing the same sin again was not utilised *(teshuvah habaah);* but penitence could also amount to a system of voluntary restraints and the preventive avoidance of all occasions calculated to tempt one into committing a certain sin *(teshuvath hagader);* thirdly, the amount of pleasure derived from committing a sin could be made the criterion of the self-imposed askesis *(teshuvath hamishkal);* lastly, in the case of transgressions forbidden under pain of death by the Torah, the sinner must undergo "tortures as bitter as death" — often amounting to extravagantly painful and humiliating punishments — in order to obtain divine forgiveness and avoid the "extermination of the soul" which the Torah threatens for certain sins *(teshuvath hakatuv).* In regard to these practices we have the evidence not only of the Hasidic writings, whose exhortations might be dismissed as belonging purely to the realm of theory, but also of a good many accounts of actual happenings through which the fame of the German Hasidim soon spread far and wide. These stories, of which there are many, leave no doubt about the spirit of fanatical earnestness which animated the zealots. To sit in the snow or in the ice for an hour daily in winter, or to expose one's body to ants and bees in summer, was judged a

ian contemporaries: it does not enjoin sexual askesis. On the contrary, the greatest importance is assigned in the *Sefer Hasidim* to the establishment and maintenance of a normal and reasonable marital life. Nowhere is penitence extended to sexual abstinence in marital relations. The asceticism of the typical Hasid concerns solely his social relations towards women, not the sexual side of his married life.

8.

Turning to the influence which Hasidism as a whole has exercised upon the Jews of Germany one finds that its practical side, i. e. the new morality, the system of penitence, and the mysticism of prayer, have held their own much longer than the theological and theosophical ideas and the conception of God expounded in the writings of Jehudah the Hasid and his disciples. With the gradual infiltration, since the fourteenth century, of a more highly developed system of thought, the Kabbalism of Spain, early Hasidic theosophy lost ground and in time — albeit never completely[85] — relinquished its hold on those Jewish circles which were at all concerned with theological questions.

Nevertheless, an understanding of Hasidism also requires an analysis of these theosophical ideas of which the literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth century is full; and here one is immediately forced to recognize the existence of a new religious mood with a strong tendency towards pantheism, or at least a mysticism of divine immanence. In the literature with which we are concerned, this element is combined with Aggadic traditions, with remnants from the heritage of Merkabah mysticism[86] — sometimes in a new guise — and above all with the consistently influential theology of Saadia. In the case of some of these representations and transformations of theosophical ideas, some doubt remains both as regards their origin and their Rabbinical orthodoxy. Now and then, when they got entangled in mystical brooding, it seems as though these pious and naive mediaeval Jewish devotees unconsciously drew upon the religious heritage of heretics and sectarians. One even finds tendencies towards a kind of *Logos* doctrine.

The God of the old pre-Hasidic mystics was the Holy King who, from his throne in the *empyraeum*, listens to the ecstatic hymns of his creatures. The living relationship of these mystics to God

rested upon the glorification of certain aspects of the divinity, its solemnity, the absence of everything profane, even its immensity and overwhelmingness. In contradistinction to this picture, German Hasidism now develops a different conception of God which poignantly contrasts with the older one.

The Hasidim like to employ Saadia's terminology in order to describe the pure spirituality and the immeasurable infiniteness of God, two aspects of His being on which they lay the greatest emphasis. To these attributes was added a third which, like the two others, played no part in the mysticism of the Merkabah period, namely God's omnipresence, which in turn imperceptibly acquired the character of an immanence not easily reconciled with the supramundane transcendence of the Creator, another Hasidic article of faith. As the idea is finally developed by the outstanding representatives of the new school, God is not so much the master of the universe as its first principle and prime mover. Side by side with this new conception, the earlier belief seems to linger on as though by force of tradition. The new conception is formulated by Eleazar of Worms in a significant passage where he says: "God is omnipresent and perceives the just and the evil-doers. Therefore when you pray, collect your mind, for it is said: I always place God against myself; and therefore the beginning of all benedictions runs 'Praise be to Thee, oh God' — as though a man speaks to a friend."[87] No Merkabah mystic would have given this interpretation of the "Thee" with which God is addressed. More than that, the change between the second and the third person in the formulae of the benedictions ("Praise be to Thee... who has blessed us") is quoted as proof that God is at once the nearest and the farthest, the most plainly revealed and the most completely hidden of all.[88]

God is even closer to the universe and to man than the soul is to the body. This doctrine, propounded by Eleazar of Worms[89] and accepted by the Hasidim, closely parallels Augustine's thesis— so often approvingly quoted by the Christian mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries — that God is closer to any of His Creatures than the latter to itself. In its most uncompromising form this doctrine of God's immanence is expressed in the "Song of Unity", a hymn composed by a member of the inner circle around Jehudah the Hasid — who seems to have written a commentary to it — which

gives an impressive version of Saadia's conception of God[90]. Thus we read: "Everything is in Thee, and Thou art in everything; Thou fillest every thing and dost encompass it; when everything was created, Thou wast in everything; before everything was created, Thou wast everything." Expressions of this kind recur in every kind of Hasidic writing. As Bloch has shown, they are nothing but enthusiastic embellishments of the idea of divine omnipresence as set out in the old Hebrew paraphrase of Saadia's magnum opus.[91]

But from where are they taken? Whose spirit do they reflect? One is tempted to think of John the Scot, called Scotus Erigena, the "great light" of Neoplatonic mysticism in the ninth century. His influence was immense and could very well have extended to Jewish circles in Provence where, according to some scholars, the above-mentioned paraphrase of Saadia seems to have originated. It is well known that writers from these circles drew heavily upon early sources of Latin scholasticism. And indeed, it is the spirit of John the Scot, which is reflected in such formulae as those that I have quoted. Nobody would be surprised if they closed with the words: "For Thou shalt be everything in everything, when there shall be nothing but Thee alone" — words which are actually a transposition into direct speech of a sentence taken from John the Scot's book "On the Division of Nature."[92]

Not infrequently the idea of immanence is given a naturalistic twist, as when Moses Azriel, a thirteenth-century Hasid, defines it thus: "He is One in the cosmic ether, for He fills the whole ether and everything in the world, and nowhere is there a barrier before Him. Everything is in Him, and He sees everything, for He is entirely perception though He has no eyes, for He has the power to see the universe within His own Being."[93] Some of these passages have been taken literally from Saadia's commentary to the *Sefer Yetsirah*, where he refers in very naturalistic terms to God's life as a positive attribute of His Being.[94]

Here it should be remarked in passing that this widespread doctrine of divine immanence, which clearly corresponded to the deepest religious feeling of the Hasidim, had already been criticized sharply by a disciple of Jehudah the Hasid: Moses Taku expressed the fear that this pantheistic element in the conception of the divinity might be used as a justification of paganism, since it made it possible for the heathen to argue that "they were serving the

glory of the Lord went up from the cherub." For the Hasidim, this cherub is identical with Saadia's "visible glory."[114] He is the emanation of God's Shekhinah or His invisible glory — according to others, the product of the "great fire" of the Shekhinah whose flame surrounds the Lord, while the throne of glory, on which the cherub appears, springs from a less exalted fire. According to the mythical account[115], the reflection of the divine light in the cosmic waters produced a radiance which became a fire and out of which the throne and the angels arose. From the "great fire" of the Shekhinah not only the cherub emanates but also the human soul, which therefore ranks above the angels. The cherub can take every form of angel, man or beast; his human form was the model in whose likeness God created Man.[116]

What this idea of the cherub originally signified can only be guessed, for it is clear that the Hasidim merely adapted to their own thoughts a conception of much earlier origin. A hint is perhaps supplied by an idea which one encounters among certain Jewish sectaries of the period of Saadia. Philo thought that the *logos,* the divine 'word' acted as an intermediary in the process of Creation. This Philonic doctrine of creation was developed by these sectarians, who for a long time moved on the fringe of Rabbinic Judaism, in a somewhat crude form which, incidentally, had been ascribed already in earlier writings to isolated heretics.[117] According to them, God did not create the world directly, but through the intermediary of an angel, whether this latter emanated from Him or was himself a created being. This angel, who thus appears as creator or demiurge, is also defined as the subject of all Biblical anthropomorphisms and as the being which is perceived in the vision of the prophets.

This discovery of an echo of Philonic thought need not surprise us. Although not many traces of it are to be found in Talmudic and early Rabbinic literature, there can be no doubt, since Poznanski's researches on the subject, that the ideas of the Alexandrian theosophist somehow spread even to the Jewish sectarians in Persia and Babylonia who as late as the tenth century were in a position to quote from some of his writings.[118] It is by no means impossible that the cherub on the throne was originally nothing but the transformed *logos,* especially if one takes into account the fact that for the pre-Hasidic mystics — as we have seen in the previous lecture — the

of our Creator, the spirit of the living God," i. e. His "holiness", which in spite of everything is almost defined as the *Logos*.

10.

Side by side with this theosophy and the mysticism of immanence ascribed to the authority of Saadia, one finds a third element of thought which for all its lack of colour and true metaphysical breadth merits the description of Neoplatonism. Certain ideas derived from the writings of Spanish-Jewish Neoplatonists were taken up by the Hasidim and incorporated in their own system. In a number of cases, of course, these ideas underwent a process of retrogression from the metaphysical to the theological or Gnostical sphere, if not to pure mythology.

It has been argued that the mystical theology of the Spanish Kabbalists and that of the German Hasidim represent two different schools of thought which have nothing whatsoever in common. The Spaniards, according to this reading of the facts, followed in the footsteps of the Neoplatonists, while the typical Hasidic conceptions go back to Oriental mythology.[128] This appears to me to be an oversimplification. The fact is that Neoplatonic thoughts came to be known among both groups, but with the difference that in Spain and Provence these ideas became a potent factor in transforming the character of the early Kabbalism, which was almost entirely a Gnostical system, whereas in Germany the elements of such speculations as they engendered failed to make a lasting impression on Hasidic thought. To the Hasidic mind they carried no real life. Instead of transforming the doctrine of Hasidim they were themselves transformed by being deprived of their original speculative content. In the final stage of decomposition they are no longer even recognizable for what they were. Thus to take an example, Abraham bar Hiya's doctrine of the hierarchy of the five worlds — that of light, of the divinity, of the intellect, of the soul, and of (spiritual) nature — was incorporated in a highly peculiar fashion in the Hasidic system in which cosmological ideas played a not unimportant part.[129]

Of special interest in this connection is the doctrine of the archetypes — wholly foreign to Saadia — which dominates Eleazar's work on "The Science of the Soul," but is of importance also for the "Book of the Devout." According to this doctrine, every "lower"

form of existence, including lifeless things, — "even the wood block" to say nothing of even lower forms of life, has its archetype, *demuth*.[130] In this conception we recognize the traits not only of Plato's theory of ideas, but also of the astral theory of correspondence between higher and lower planes, and of the astrological doctrine that everything has its "star." The archetypes, as we have already seen in connection with the Hekhaloth tracts,[131] are conceived as being pictorially represented in the curtain spread before the Throne of Glory. According to the Hasidim, this curtain consists of blue flame and surrounds the Throne from all sides except from the West.[132] The archetypes themselves represent a special sphere of non-corporeal, semi-divine existence. In another connection, mention is actually made of an occult "Book of Archetypes."[133] The archetype is the deepest source of the soul's hidden activity. The fate of every being is contained in its archetype, and there is even an archetypal representation of every change and passing made of its existence.[134] Not only the angels and the demons draw their foreknowledge of human fate from these archetypes[135]; the prophet, too, is able to perceive them and thus to read the future.[136] Of Moses it is expressly said that God showed him the archetypes.[137] There is a hint that even guilt and merit have their "signs" in the archetypes.[138]

These mysteries of the Godhead and its glory, then, the archetypes of all existence in a mythically conceived realm of ideas, and the secret of Man's nature and his path to God, are the principal subjects of Hasidic theosophy. In a curiously pathetic manner those who studied them became absorbed in a mixture of profound and abstruse ideas and tried to combine a naive mythical realism with mystical insight and occult experience.

There is little to connect these old Hasidim of the thirteenth century with the Hasidic movement which developed in Poland and the Ukraine during the eighteenth century and with which we shall deal in the final lecture. The identity of name is no proof of real continuity. After all, the two are separated by two or three great epochs in the development of Kabbalistic thought. The later Hasidism was the inheritor of a rich tradition from which its followers could draw new inspiration, new modes of thought and, last but not least, new

modes of expression. And yet it cannot be denied that a certain similarity between the two movements exists. In both cases the problem was that of the education of large Jewish groups in a spirit of mystical moralism. The true Hasid and the Zaddik of later Hasidism are related figures; the one and the other are the prototypes of a mystical way of life which tends towards social activity even where its representatives are conceived as the guardians of all the mysteries of divinity.

balistic ethics. The first three chapters of the little book have been printed many times, and on the whole they make interesting reading. So far so good. But Vital has added a fourth chapter, in which he sets out in detail various ways of imbuing the soul with the holy spirit and prophetic wisdom, and which, by virtue of its copious quotations from older authors, is really an anthology of the teachings of the older Kabbalists on the technique of ecstasy. You will not, however, find it in any of the printed editions of the book; in its place the following words have been inserted: "Thus speaks the printer: This fourth part will not be printed, for it is all holy names and secret mysteries which it would be unseemly to publish." And in fact, this highly interesting chapter has survived in only a few handwritten copies.[4] It is the same, or almost the same, with other writings which describe either ecstatical experiences or the technique of preparing oneself for them.

Still more remarkable is the fact that even when we turn to the unpublished writings of Jewish mystics, we find that ecstatic experience does not play the all-important part one might expect. It is true that the position is somewhat different in the writings of the early mystics who lived before the development of Kabbalism and whose ideas we have come to know in the second lecture. Instead of the usual theory of Mysticism, we are treated in these documents of Jewish Gnosticism to enthusiastic descriptions of the soul's ascent to the Celestial Throne and of the objects it contemplates; in addition, the technique of producing this ecstatic frame of mind is described in detail. In later Kabbalistic literature these aspects tend more and more to be relegated to the background. The soul's ascension does not, of course, disappear altogether. The visionary element of Mysticism which corresponds to a certain psychological disposition, breaks through again and again. But, on the whole, Kabbalistic meditation and contemplation takes on a more spiritualized aspect. Moreover, the fact remains that, even leaving aside the distinction between earlier and later documents of Jewish Mysticism, it is only in extremely rare cases that ecstasy signifies actual union with God, in which the human individuality abandons itself to the rapture of complete submersion in the divine stream. Even in this ecstatic frame of mind, the Jewish mystic almost invariably retains a sense of the distance between the Creator and His creature. The latter is joined to the

former, and the point where the two meet is of the greatest interest to the mystic, but he does not regard it as constituting anything so extravagant as identity of Creator and Creature.

Nothing seems to me to express better this sense of the distance between God and man, than the Hebrew term which in our literature is generally used for what is otherwise called *unio mystica*. I mean the word *devekuth*, which signifies "adhesion," or "being joined," namely to God. This is regarded as the ultimate goal of religious perfection. *Devekuth* can be ecstasy, but its meaning is far more comprehensive. It is a perpetual being-with-God, an intimate union and conformity of the human and the Divine will.[5] Yet even the rapturous descriptions of this state of mind which abound in later Hasidic literature retain a proper sense of distance, or, if you like, of incommensurateness. Many writers deliberately place *devekuth* above any form of ecstasy which seeks the extinction of the world and the self in the union with God.[6] I am not going to deny that there have also been tendencies of the opposite kind[7]; an excellent description of the trend towards pure pantheism, or rather Acosmism, can be found in a well-known Yiddish novel, F. Schneerson's *Hayim Grawitzer*[8], and at least one of the famous leaders of Lithuanian Hasidism, Rabbi Aaron Halevi of Stârosselje, can be classed among the Acosmists. But I do maintain that such tendencies are not characteristic of Jewish Mysticism. It is a significant fact that the most famous and influential book of our mystical literature, the Zohar, has little use for ecstasy; the part it plays both in the descriptive and in the dogmatical sections of this voluminous work is entirely subordinate. Allusions to it there are[9], but it is obvious that other and different aspects of mysticism are much nearer to the author's heart. Part of the extraordinary success of the Zohar can probably be traced to this attitude of restraint which struck a familiar chord in the Jewish heart.

2.

Considering all the aforementioned facts, it is hardly surprising that the outstanding representative of ecstatic Kabbalism has also been the least popular of all the great Kabbalists. I refer to Abraham Abulafia, whose theories and doctrines will form the main subject of this lecture. By a curious coincidence, which is perhaps

think of the knights who go to war and do not flee before the sword, for they are ashamed to flee, and so as not to expose themselves to shame they let themselves be killed or wounded, and they receive no reward from their masters for their death in battle. Thus let him speak with the Scripture: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him', and I will serve him without hope of reward."[24] According to Simhoni, the legend which ascribes to Jehudah the Hasid an unsuccessful attempt, before his death, to unravel the date of the 'end' is typical of the belated efforts to represent Hasidism as more Messianic than it really was.

But is it possible to accept this fundamentally anti-eschatological interpretation of Hasidism? It is not borne out even by the "Book of the Devout," far less by the other documents of this group, such as, for example, the writings of Eleazar of Worms. If it is true that their religious interest does not centre on the Messianic promise in the strict sense, it is no less true that the imagination of these writers is powerfully affected by everything which concerns the eschatology of the soul. The whole subject was of less direct interest to the apocalyptically inclined Merkabah mystics than to the older visionaries like the author of the Ethiopic book of Enoch, but it was studied in other circles and inspired several of the shorter Midrashim. Eschatological ideas concerning the nature of the state of bliss in Paradise, the dawn of Redemption, the nature of Resurrection, the beatific vision of the just, their bodies and garments, the problem of reward and punishment, etc., were of real importance to a man like Jehudah the Hasid.[25] These notions were by no means mere literary ballast carried along with many traditions of a different kind; indeed, they belong to the very heart and core of the religious faith of these men which manifested itself in so many different ways. Many were no doubt the spontaneous creation of the age, but even those which came from the East in the wake of the eschatological Aggadah, like the description of the terrors of the judgment held in the grave itself in the first days after burial *(Hibbut Ha-Kever)*, were eagerly taken up and embellished.[26]

At all times the vagueness of eschatological hopes the contents of which have not been dogmatically defined, has evoked more interest among the common people than some great Jewish theologians have been willing to allow. For Jehudah the Hasid, mysticism rep-

3.

About Abulafia's life and his person we are informed almost exclusively by his own writings.[17] Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia was born in Saragossa in 1240, and spent his youth in Tudela, in the province of Navarre. His father taught him the Bible with its commentaries as well as grammar and some Mishnah and Talmud. When he was eighteen years old he lost his father. Two years later he left Spain and went to the Near East in order, as he writes, to discover the legendary stream Sambation beyond which the lost ten tribes were supposed to dwell. War turbulence in Syria and Palestine soon drove him back from Acre to Europe, where he spent about ten years in Greece and Italy.

During these years of travel, he steeped himself in philosophy and conceived for Maimonides an admiration that proved lifelong. For him the doctrines of Maimonides and Mysticism were no antitheses. He rather considered his own mystical theory as the final step forward from the "Guide of the Perplexed" to which he wrote a curious mystical commentary. This affinity of the mystic with the great rationalist has its astounding parallel — as the most recent research has shown — in the relationship of the great Christian mystic Meister Eckhart to Maimonides, by whom he seems to be much more influenced than was any scholastic before him. While the great scholastics such as Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, although having learned and, indeed, accepted much from him, none the less frequently oppose him, the Rabbi is — as Josef Koch has ascertained[18] — for the great Christian mystic a literary authority to whom Augustine at best is superior. In the same way Abulafia tries to connect his theories with those of Maimonides.[19] According to him, only the "Guide" and the "Book of Creation" together represent the true theory of Kabbalism.[20]

Coincidentally with these studies he seems to have been deeply occupied with the Kabbalistic doctrines of his age, without, however, being overmuch impressed by them. About 1270 he returned to Spain for three or four years, during which he immersed himself completely in mystical research. In Barcelona he began to study the book *Yetzirah* and twelve commentaries to it showing both philosophic and Kabbalistic inclinations.[21] Here, too, he seems to have come into

contact with a conventicle the members of which believed they could gain access to the profoundest secrets of mystic cosmology and theology "by the three methods of Kabbalah, being *Gematria, Notarikon,* and *Temurah.*" Abulafia especially mentions one Baruch Togarmi, precentor, as his teacher, who initiated him into the true meaning of the *Sefer Yetsirah.* We still possess a treatise of this Kabbalist — "The Keys to Kabbalah" — about the mysteries of the book *Yetsirah.*[22] Most of them, he says, he felt not entitled to publish, nor even to write down. "I want to write it down and I am not allowed to do it, I do not want to write it down and cannot entirely desist; so I write and I pause, and I allude to it again in later passages, and this is my procedure."[23]

Abulafia himself at times wrote in this vein. By immersing himself in the mystical technique of his teacher, Abulafia found his own way. It was at the age of 31, in Barcelona, that he was overcome by the prophetic spirit. He obtained knowledge of the true Name of God, and had visions of which he himself, however, says, in 1285, that they were partly sent by the demons to confuse him, so that he "groped about like a blind man at midday for fifteen years with Satan to his right." Yet on the other hand he was entirely convinced of the truth of his prophetic knowledge. He travelled for some time in Spain, expounding his new doctrine, but in 1274 he left his native country for the second and last time, and from then on led a vagrant life in Italy and Greece. It was still in Spain that he exerted a deep influence upon the young Joseph Gikatila who later became one of the most eminent Spanish Kabbalists. In Italy too, he found disciples in various places and taught them his new way, partly in pursuit of the philosophy of Maimonides. Quick enthusiasm about his disciples turned quickly into disappointment and he complained bitterly of the unworthiness of some of those whom he had had in Capua.[24]

He became the author of prophetical writings wherein he prefers to designate himself by names of the same numerical value as his original name of Abraham. He prefers to call himself Raziel or Zechariah. Only in the ninth year after the beginning of his prophetic visions he began, as he says himself,[25] to compose distinctly prophetic writings, although he had written before that time other tracts on different branches of science, among them "writings on the mysteries of Kabbalah."[26] In the year 1280, inspired with his mission,

he undertook a most venturesome and unexplained task: He went to Rome to present himself before the Pope and to confer with him "in the name of Jewry." It seems that at that time he nursed Messianic ideas. Well may he have read of such a mission of the Messiah to the Pope in a then very widely known booklet.[27] This contained the disputation of the famous Kabbalist Moses ben Nahman with the apostate Pablo Christiani in the year 1263. Here Nahmanides said: "When the time of the end will have come, the Messiah will at God's command come to the Pope and ask of him the liberation of his people, and only then will the Messiah be considered really to have come, but not before that."

Abulafia himself relates[28] that the Pope had given orders "when Raziel would come to Rome to confer with him in the name of Jewry, to arrest him and not to admit him into his presence at all, but to lead him out of town and there to burn him." But Abulafia, although informed of this, paid no attention, much rather gave himself up to his meditations and mystical preparations and on the strength ot his visions wrote a book which he later called: "Book of Testimony," in remembrance of his miraculous rescue. For as he prepared himself to come before the Pope, "two mouths," as he obscurely expresses himself, grew on him, and when he entered the city-gate, he learned that the Pope — it was Nicholas III. — had suddenly died during the night. Abulafia was held in the College of the Franciscans for twenty-eight days, but was then set free.

Abulafia then wandered about Italy for a number of years. Of these he seems to have spent several in Sicily, where he remained longer than in any other place. Almost all his extant works were written during his Italian period, particularly between the years 1279 and 1291. We are altogether ignorant of his fate after the year 1291. Of his prophetic, or inspired, writings only his apocalypse, *Sefer ha-Oth*, the "Book of the Sign," a strange and not altogether comprehensible book, has survived.[29] On the other hand, most of his theoretical and doctrinal treatises are still extant, some of them in a considerable number of manuscripts.

He seems to have made many enemies by claiming prophetical inspiration and antagonizing his contemporaries in various other ways, for he very often complains of hostility and persecution. He mentions denunciations by Jews to Christian authorities[30], which may

perhaps be explained by the fact that he represented himself as a prophet to Christians as well. He writes that the found among them some who believed more in God than the Jews to whom God had sent him first.[31] In two places Abulafia tells of his connection with non-Jewish mystics.[32] Once, he relates, he talked with them about the three methods of the interpretation of Torah (literal, allegoric, and mystic), and he noted their agreement with one another when conversing with them confidentially "and I saw that they belong to the category of the 'pious of the gentiles', and that the words of the fools of whatever religion need not be heeded, for the Torah has been handed over to the masters of true knowledge."[33] Another time he tells of a dispute with a Christian scholar with whom he had made friends and in whose mind he had implanted the desire for the knowledge of the Name of God. "And it is not necessary to reveal more about it."[34]

These connections of Abulafia's do not, however, testify to a special inclination to Christian ideas as some scholars have assumed.[35] On the contrary, his antagonism to Christianity is very outspoken and intense.[36] He sometimes, indeed, intentionally makes use — among many other associations — of formulae which sound quite trinitarian, immediately giving them a meaning which has nothing whatsoever to do with the trinitarian idea of God.[37] But his predilection for paradox as well as his prophetic pretensions alienated from him the Kabbalists of a more strictly orthodox orientation. And indeed he acutely criticizes the Kabbalists of his times and their symbolism insofar as it is not backed by individual mystical experience.[38] On the other hand, some of his writings are devoted to the refutation of attacks directed against him by 'orthodox' Kabbalists.[39] But "poverty, exile, and imprisonment"[40] were powerless to make Abulafia, a proud and unbending spirit, abandon the standpoint to which his personal experience of things divine had led him.

Yet for all his pride in the achievement of prophetic inspiration and his knowledge of the great Name of God, there was combined in his character meekness and a love of peace. Jellinek rightly points out that his moral character must be estimated very highly. When accepting disciples to his Kabbalah he is extremely fastidious in his requirements as to a high morality and steadiness of character and it may be concluded from his writings even in their ecstatic parts that

in the theosophy of northern Buddhism. Only recently a French scholar published a Tibetan didactic tract the title of which may be translated: "Book on Untying the Knots".[47]

What does this symbol mean in Abulafia's vocabulary? It means that there are certain barriers which separate the personal existence of the soul from the stream of cosmic life — personified for him in the *intellectus agens* of the philosophers, which runs through the whole of creation. There is a dam which keeps the soul confined within the natural and normal borders of human existence and protects it against the flood of the Divine stream, which flows beneath it or all around it; the same dam, however, also prevents the soul from taking cognizance of the Divine. The "seals," which are impressed on the soul, protect it against the flood and guarantee its normal functioning. Why is the soul, as it were, sealed up? Because, answers Abulafia, the ordinary day-to-day life of human beings, their perception of the sensible world, fills and impregnates the mind with a multitude of sensible forms or images (called, in the language of mediaeval philosophers, "natural forms"). As the mind perceives all kinds of gross natural objects and admits their images into its consciousness, it creates for itself, out of this natural function, a certain mode of existence which bears the stamp of finiteness. The normal life of the soul, in other words, is kept within the limits determined by our sensory perceptions and emotions, and as long as it is full of these, it finds it extremely difficult to perceive the existence of spiritual forms and things divine. The problem, therefore, is to find a way of helping the soul to perceive more than the forms of nature, without its becoming blinded and overwhelmed by the divine light, and the solution is suggested by the old adage "whoever is full of himself has no room for God." All that which occupies the natural self of man must either be made to disappear or must be transformed in such a way as to render it transparent for the inner spiritual reality, whose contours will then become perceptible through the customary shell of natural things.

Abulafia, therefore, casts his eyes round for higher forms of perception which, instead of blocking the way to the soul's own deeper regions, facilitate access to them and throw them into relief. He wants the soul to concentrate on highly abstract spiritual matters, which will not encumber it by pushing their own particular import-

ance into the foreground and thus render illusory the whole purpose of mental purgation. If, for instance, I observe a flower, a bird, or some other concrete thing or event, and begin to think about it, the object of my reflection has an importance or attractiveness of its own. I am thinking of this particular flower, bird, etc. Then how can the soul learn to visualize God with the help of objects whose nature is of such a sort as to arrest the attention of the spectator and deflect it from its purpose? The early Jewish mystic knows of no object of contemplation in which the soul immerses itself until it reaches a state of ecstasy, as in the Passion of Christ in the mysticism of Christianity.

Abraham Abulafia is, therefore, compelled to look for an, as it were, absolute object for meditating upon; that is to say, one capable of stimulating the soul's deeper life and freeing it from ordinary perceptions. In other words, he looks for something capable of acquiring the highest importance, without having much particular, or if possible any, importance of its own. An object which fulfills all these conditions he believes himself to have found in the Hebrew alphabet, in the letters which make up the written language. It is not enough, though an important step forward, that the soul should be occupied with the meditation of abstract truths, for even there it remains too closely bound to their specific meaning. Rather is it Abulafia's purpose to present it with something not merely abstract but also not determinable as an object in the strict sense, for everything so determined has an importance and an individuality of its own. Basing himself upon the abstract and non-corporeal nature of script, he develops a theory of the mystical contemplation of letters and their configurations, as the constituents of God's name. For this is the real and, if I may say so, the peculiarly Jewish object of mystical contemplation: The Name of God, which is something absolute, because it reflects the hidden meaning and totality of existence; the Name through which everything else acquires its meaning and which yet to the human mind has no concrete, particular meaning of its own. In short, Abulafia believes that whoever succeeds in making this great Name of God, the least concrete and perceptible thing in the world, the object of his meditation, is on the way to true mystical ecstasy.[48]

Starting from this concept, Abulafia expounds a peculiar discip-

tion of sounds, and the same is true of the combination of letters. It touches the first string, which is comparable to the first letter, and proceeds to the second, third, fourth and fifth, and the various sounds combine. And the secrets, which express themselves in these combinations, delight the heart which acknowledges its God and is filled with ever fresh joy."[49]

The directed activity of the adept engaged in combining and separating the letters in his meditation, composing whole motifs on separate groups, combining several of them with one another and enjoying their combinations in every direction, is therefore for Abulafia not more senseless or incomprehensible than that of a composer. Just as — to quote Schopenhauer — the musician expresses in wordless sounds "the world once again," and ascends to endless heights and descends to endless depths, so the mystic: To him the closed doors of the soul open in the music of pure thought which is no longer bound to "sense," and in the ecstasy of the deepest harmonies which originate in the movement of the letters of the great Name, they throw open the way to God.

This science of the combination of letters and the practice of controlled meditation is, according to Abulafia, nothing less than the "mystical logic" which corresponds to the inner harmony of thought in its movement towards God.[50] The world of letters, which reveals itself in this discipline, is the true world of bliss.[51] Every letter represents a whole world to the mystic who abandons himself to its contemplation.[52] Every language, not only Hebrew, is transformed into a transcendental medium of the one and only language of God. And as every language issues from a corruption of the aboriginal language — Hebrew — they all remain related to it. In all his books Abulafia likes to play on Latin, Greek, or Italian words to support his ideas. For, in the last resort, every spoken word consists of sacred letters. For the combination, separation and reunion of letters reveal profound mysteries to the Kabbalist, and unravel to him the secret of the relation of all languages to the holy tongue.[53]

5.

Abulafia's great manuals, such as "The Book of Eternal Life"[54], "The Light of Intellect"[55], "The Words of Beauty"[56] and "The Book of Combination"[57] are systematic guides to the theory and practice of

keep it locked up in its normal state and shut off the divine light, are relaxed, and the mystic finally dispenses with them altogether. The hidden spring of divine life is released. But now that the mind has been prepared for it, this irruption of the divine influx does not overwhelm it and throw it into a state of confusion and self-abandonment. On the contrary, having climbed the seventh and last step of the mystical ladder,[60] and reached the summit, the mystic consciously perceives and becomes part of the world of divine light, whose radiance illuminates his thoughts and heals his heart. This is the stage of prophetic vision, in which the ineffable mysteries of the divine Name and the whole glory of its realm reveal themselves to the illuminate. Of them the prophet speaks in words which extoll the greatness of God and bear the reflection of His image.

Ecstasy, which Abulafia regards as the highest reward of mystical contemplation, is not, therefore, to be confused with semi-conscious raving and complete self-annihilation. These uncontrolled forms of ecstasy he treats with a certain disdain and even regards them as dangerous. Rationally prepared ecstasy, too, comes suddenly[61] and cannot be enforced, but when the bolts are shot back and the seals taken off, the mind is already prepared for the 'light of the intellect' which pours in. Abulafia, therefore, frequently warns against the mental and even physical dangers of unsystematic meditation and similar practices. In combining the letters every one of which — according to the book *Yetsirah* — is co-ordinated to a special member of the body "one has to be most careful not to move a consonant or vowel from its position for if he errs in reading the letter commanding a certain member, that member may be torn away and may change its place or alter its nature immediately and be transformed into a different shape so that in consequence that person may become a cripple."[62] In the account I am going to quote at the end Abulafia's disciple also mentions spasmodic distortions of the face.

Abulafia lays great emphasis on the newness and singularity of his prophecy. "Know that most of the visions which Raziel saw are based on the Name of God and its Gnosis, and also on his new revelation which took place on earth now in his days and the like there was not from the time of Adam until his."[63] The prophets who draw from the knowledge of the true name, are at the same time, to his mind, the true lovers. The identity of prophecy with the love of God

to say that he deserves to be called a Prophet, especially if he has not yet been touched by the pure intellect, or if touched [that is to say, in ecstasy] does not yet know by whom. If, however, he has felt the divine touch and perceived its nature, it seems right and proper to me and to every perfected man that he should be called 'master', because his name is like the Name of his Master, be it only in one, or in many, or in all of His Names. For now he is no longer separated from his Master, and behold he is his Master and his Master is he; for he is so intimately adhering to Him [it is here that the term *Devekuth* is used], that he cannot by any means be separated from Him, for he is He ["he is He" being a famous formula of advanced Moslem Pantheism]. And just as his Master, who is detached from all matter, is called *Sekhel, Maskil* and *Muskal,* that is the *knowledge,* the *knower* and the *known,* all at the same time, since all three are one in Him[76], so also he, the exalted man, the master of the exalted name, is called *intellect,* while he is actually knowing; then he is also *the known,* like his Master; and then there is no difference between them, except that his Master has His supreme rank by His own right and not derived from other creatures, while he is elevated to his rank by the intermediary of creatures."

In this supreme state, man and Torah become one. This Abulafia expresses very cleverly when he supplements the old word from the "Sayings of the Fathers" about the Torah: "Turn it round and round, for everything is in it" by the words: "for it is wholly in thee and thou art wholly in it."[77]

To a certain extent, as we have seen, the visionary identifies himself with his Master; complete identification is neither achieved nor intended. All the same, we have here one of the most thoroughgoing interpretations of the meaning of ecstatic experience to which Rabbinical Jewry has given birth. Hence the fact that nearly all Kabbalists who in everything else follow the steps of Abulafia, have as far as I can see recoiled from this remarkable doctrine of ecstatic identification. Let us take as an instance a little tract called *Sullam Ha-Aliyah,* "the Ladder of Ascent" — i. e., ascent to God — written in Jerusalem by a pious Kabbalist, Rabbi Jehuda Albottini, one of the exiles from Spain. It contains a brief statement of Abulafia's doctrine, and its tenth chapter, which I once had an occasion to publish, describes "the paths of loneliness and the preliminaries of

The state of ecstasy as described by Abulafia, frequently, so it seems, on the basis of personal experience, also carries with it something like an anticipatory redemption. The illuminate feels himself not only aglow with a heavenly fire, but also as it were anointed with sacred and miraculous oil. He becomes, as Abulafia puts it, by playing upon the double meaning of the Hebrew word *Mashiah*, the Lord's anointed.[83] He is, so to speak, his own Messiah, at least for the brief period of his ecstatical experience.

7.

Abulafia calls his method "The Path of the Names," in contrast to the Kabbalists of his time, whose doctrine concerning the realization of the Divine attributes is referred to as "The Path of the Sefiroth."[84] Only together the two paths form the whole of the Kabbalah, the Path of the Sefiroth the 'rabbinical' and that of the Names the 'prophetic' Kabbalah. The student of Kabbalah is to begin with the contemplation of the ten Sephiroth.[85] These, indeed, during meditation are to become objects of quickened imagination rather than objects of an external knowledge acquired by merely learning their names as attributes or even symbols of God.[86] For in the Sephiroth, too, according to Abulafia, there are revealed the 'profundities of the *intellectus agens*', that cosmic power which for the mystic coincides with the splendour of the Shekhinah.[87] Only from there is he to proceed to the 22 letters which represent a deeper stage of penetration.

For what he calls the Path of the Names, the ancient Jewish gnostics, as we have seen, employed another term, namely *Maaseh Merkabah*, literally translated "The Work of the Chariot," because of the Celestial chariot which was supposed to carry the throne of God the Creator. Abulafia, with his penchant for playing upon words, introduces his new doctrine as the true *Maaseh Merkabah* — a term which can also be taken to mean "combination". The theory of combining the letters and names of God — that is the true vision of the Merkabah.[88] It is true that where he describes the seven stages of knowledge of the Torah, from the inquiry into the literal meaning of the word to the stage of Prophecy, he draws a distinction between Prophetic Kabbalism, which is the sixth stage, and the holy of holies to which it is merely the preliminary. The substance of this final

stage, in which "the language which comes from the active intellect" is understood, may not be divulged even if it were possible to clothe it in words.[89] But as we have seen, Abulafia himself, despite this solemn vow, has lifted a corner of the veil.

It remains to be said that Abulafia is far from despising philosophical knowledge. Indeed, he even says in one place that Philosophy and Kabbalah both owe their existence to the active intellect, with the difference that Kabbalism represents a more profound manifestation of the spirit and probes into a deeper and more spiritual region.[90] At the same time, however, he is definitely of opinion that certain philosophical problems are meaningless, except insofar as they serve to lead the mind astray. It is interesting to hear his comment on the dispute concerning the supposed eternity or non-eternity of the universe, by and large one of the main issues of Jewish philosophy in its struggle against pure Aristotelianism. The fact that the Torah advances no proof for either contention is explained by Abulafia by remarking that from the point of view of prophetic Kabbalism, itself the crowning achievement of the Torah, the whole question is meaningless. "The Prophet, after all, demands nothing from the Torah except that which helps him to reach the stage of Prophecy. What then does it mean to him whether the world is eternal or created, since its eternity can neither advance his development nor take anything away from him. And the same is true of the hypothesis that the world came into existence at a given moment."[91] Religious importance attaches solely to that which contributes to man's perfection, and that is above all else the Path of the Names. Although Abulafia himself denies the eternity of the world[92], he is inclined to adopt a strictly pragmatic attitude and to dismiss the whole argument as sterile.

In short, Abulafia is before all else what one might call an eminently practical Kabbalist. It is true that in Kabbalistic parlance 'Practical Kabbalism' means something entirely different. It simply means magic, though practised by means which do not come under a religious ban, as distinct from black magic, which uses demonic powers and probes into sinister regions. The fact is, however, that this consecrated form of magic, which calls out the tremendous powers of the Names, is not very far removed from Abulafia's method; if the sources from which he drew the elements of his doctrine are in-

vestigated more closely — a task which is outside the scope of this lecture — we get the result that all of them, both the Jewish and the non-Jewish, are in fact closely connected with magical traditions and disciplines. This is true both of the ideas of the mediaeval German Hasidim, which seem to have made a deep impression upon him[93], and of the tradition of *Yoga* which in devious ways had also influenced certain Moslem mystics, and with which he may have become acquainted during his Oriental travels. But it is no less true that Abulafia himself has decisively rejected magic and condemned in advance all attempts to use the doctrine of the holy names for magical purposes. In countless polemics he condemns magic as a falsification of true Mysticism[94]; he does admit a magic directed towards one's own self, a magic of inwardness — I think that is the general name one could give to his doctrine — but none which aims at bringing about external sensory results, even though the means may be inward, permissible and even sacred. Such magic is possible, according to Abulafia, but he who practises it is accursed.[95] Already in his first known work Abulafia says that conjuration of demons, although as a matter of fact based on a delusive fantasy, was just good enough to strike the rabble with a healthy terror of religion.[96] Elsewhere he warns against the use of the "Book of the Creation" for the purpose of creating to oneself — in the words of the Talmud — a fat calf. They who want this, he says bluntly, are themselves calves.[97]

Abulafia has resolutely taken the path that leads inwards, and I think one can say he has pursued it as far as anybody in latter-day Jewry. But this path runs along the border between Mysticism and Magic, and for all the irreconcilable difference that appears to exist between the two, their interrelation is more profound than is usually taken for granted. There are certain points at which the belief of the mystic easily becomes that of the magician, and Abulafia's magic of inwardness, which I have just outlined, is one of them. Although he himself escaped the danger of sliding insensibly from the meditative contemplation of the holy names into magical practices aimed at external objects, many of his successors fell into confusion and tended to expect from the inward path the power to change the outer world. The magician's dream of power over nature by mere words and strained intention, found its dreamers in the Ghetto also and formed

the highest order. Much rather is this the "Path of the Names": The less understandable they are, the higher their order, until you arrive at the activity of a force which is no longer in your control, but rather your reason and your thought is in its control. I replied: 'If that be so [that all mental and sense images must be effaced], why then do you, Sir, compose books in which the methods of the natural scientists are coupled with instruction in the holy names?'[106] He answered: 'For you and the likes of you among the followers of philosophy, to allure your human intellect through natural means, so that perhaps this attraction may cause you to arrive at the knowledge of the Holy Name.' And he produced books for me made up of [combinations of] letters and names and mystic numbers [*Gematrioth*], of which nobody will ever be able to understand anything for they are not composed in a way meant to be understood. He said to me: 'This is the [undefiled] Path of the Names.' And indeed, I would see none of it as my reason did not accept it. He said: 'It was very stupid of me to have them shown to you.'

"In short, after two months had elapsed and my thought had disengaged itself [from everything material] and I had become aware of strange phenomena occurring within me, I set myself the task at night of combining letters with one another and of pondering over them in philosophical meditation, a little different from the way I do now, and so I continued for three nights without telling him. The third night, after midnight, I nodded off a little, quill in hand and paper on my knees. Then I noticed that the candle was about to go out. I rose to put it right, as oftentimes happens to a person awake. Then I saw that the light continued. I was greatly astonished, as though, after close examination, I saw that it issued from myself. I said: 'I do not believe it.' I walked to and fro all through the house and, behold, the light is with me; I lay on a couch and covered myself up, and behold, the light is with me all the while. I said: 'This is truly a great sign and a new phenomenon which I have perceived.'

"The next morning I communicated it to my teacher and I brought him the sheets which I had covered with combinations of letters. He congratulated me and said: 'My son, if you would devote yourself to combining holy Names, still greater things would happen to you. And now, my son, admit that you are unable to bear not combining. Give half to this and half to that, that is, do combinations

half of the night, and permutations half of the night.' I practised this method for about a week. During the second week the power of meditation became so strong in me that I could not manage to write down the combinations of letters [which automatically spurted out of my pen], and if there had been ten people present they would not have been able to write down so many combinations as came to me during the influx. When I came to the night in which this power was conferred on me, and midnight — when this power especially expands and gains strength whereas the body weakens — had passed, I set out to take up the Great Name of God, consisting of seventy-two names, permuting and combining it.[107] But when I had done this for a little while, behold, the letters took on in my eyes the shape of great mountains, strong trembling seized me and I could summon no strength, my hair stood on end, and it was as if I were not in this world. At once I fell down, for I no longer felt the least strength in any of my limbs. And behold, something resembling speech emerged from my heart and came to my lips and forced them to move. I thought — perhaps this is, God forbid, a spirit of madness that has entered into me? But behold, I saw it uttering wisdom. I said: 'This is indeed the spirit of wisdom.' After a little while my natural strength returned to me, I rose very much impaired and I still did not believe myself. Once more I took up the Name to do with it as before and, behold, it had exactly the same effect on me. Nevertheless I did not believe until I had tried it four or five times.

"When I got up in the morning I told my teacher about it. He said to me: 'And who was it that allowed you to touch the Name? Did I not tell you to permute only letters?' He spoke on: 'What happened to you, represents indeed a high stage among the prophetic degrees.' He wanted to free me of it for he saw that my face had changed. But I said to him: 'In heaven's name, can you perhaps impart to me some power to enable me to bear this force emerging from my heart and to receive influx from it?' For I wanted to draw this force towards me and receive influx from it, for it much resembles a spring filling a great basin with water. If a man [not being properly prepared for it] should open the dam, he would be drowned in its waters and his soul would desert him. He said to me: "My son, it is the Lord who must bestow such power upon you for such power is not within man's control."

"That Sabbath night also the power was active in me in the same way. When, after two sleepless nights, I had passed day and night in meditating on the permutations or on the principles essential to a recognition of this true reality and to the annihilation of all extraneous thought — then I had two signs by which I knew that I was in the right receptive mood. The one sign was the intensification of natural thought on very profound objects of knowledge, a debility of the body and strengthening of the soul until I sat there, my self all soul. The second sign was that imagination grew strong within me and it seemed as though my forehead were going to burst. Then I knew that I was ready to receive the Name. I also that Sabbath night ventured at the Great ineffable Name of God [the name JHWH]. But immediately that I touched it, it weakened me and a voice issued from me saying: 'Thou shalt surely die and not live! Who brought thee to touch the Great Name?' And behold, immediately I fell prone and implored the Lord God saying: 'Lord of the universe! I entered into this place only for the sake of Heaven, as Thy glory knoweth. What is my sin and what my transgression? I entered only to know Thee, for has not David already commanded Solomon: Know the God of thy father and serve Him; and has not our master Moses, peace be upon him, revealed this to us in the Torah saying: Show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may there find grace in Thy sight?' And behold, I was still speaking and oil like the oil of the anointment anointed me from head to foot and very great joy seized me which for its spirituality and the sweetness of its rapture I cannot describe.

"All this happened to your servant in his beginnings. And I do not, God forbid, relate this account from boastfulness in order to be thought great in the eyes of the mob, for I know full well that greatness with the mob is deficiency and inferiority with those searching for the true rank which differs from it in genus and in species as light from darkness.

„Now, if some of our own philosophizers, sons of our people who feel themselves attracted towards the naturalistic way of knowledge and whose intellectual power in regard to the mysteries of the Torah is very weak, read this, they will laugh at me and say: See how he tries to attract our reason with windy talk and tales, with fanciful imaginations which have muddled his mind and which he takes at

their face value because of his weak mental hold on natural science. Should however Kabbalists see this, such as have some grasp of this subject or even better such as have had things divulged to them in experiences of their own, they will rejoice and my words will win their favour. But their difficulty will be that I have disclosed all of this in detail. Nevertheless, God is my witness that my intention is *in majorem dei gloriam* and I would wish that every single one of our holy nation were even more excellent herein and purer than I. Perhaps it would then be possible to reveal things of which I do not as yet know... As for me, I cannot bear not to give generously to others what God has bestowed upon me. But since for this science there is no naturalistic evidence, its premises being as spiritual as are its inferences, I was forced to tell this story of the experience that befell me. Indeed, there is no proof in this science except experience itself... That is why I say, to the man who contests this path, that I can give him an experimental proof, namely, my own evidence of the spiritual results of my own experiences in the science of letters according to the book *Yetsirah*. I did not, to be sure, experience the corporeal [magic] effects [of such practices]; and even granting the possibility of such a form of experience, I for my part want none of it, for it is an inferior form, especially when measured by the perfection which the soul can attain spiritually. Indeed, it seems to me that he who attempts to secure these [magic] effects desecrates God's name, and it is this that our teachers hint at when they say: Since licence prevailed, the name of God has been taught only to the most reticent priests.[108]

"The third is the Kabbalistic way. It consists of an amalgamation in the soul of man of the principles of mathematical and of natural science, after he has first studied the literal meanings of the Torah and of the faith, in order thus through keen dialectics to train his mind and not in the manner of a simpleton to believe in everything. Of all this he stands in need only because he is held captive by the world of nature. For it is not seemly that a rational being held captive in prison should not search out every means, a hole or a small fissure, of escape. If today we had a prophet who showed us a mechanism for sharpening the natural reason and for discovering there subtle forms by which to divest ourselves of corporeality, we should not need all these natural sciences in addition to our Kabbalah which

FIFTH LECTURE

THE ZOHAR
I. THE BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR

1.

In the years immediately following 1275, while Abraham Abulafia was expounding his doctrine of Prophetic Kabbalism in Italy, a book was written somewhere in the heart of Castile which was destined to overshadow all other documents of Kabbalist literature by the success and the fame it achieved and the influence it gradually exerted; this was the *Sefer Ha-Zohar,* or "Book of Splendour." Its place in the history of Kabbalism can be gauged from the fact that alone among the whole of post-Talmudic Rabbinical literature it became a canonical text, which for a period of several centuries actually ranked with the Bible and the Talmud. This unique position, however, was only achieved gradually. It took the better part of two centuries to raise the Zohar from the comparative obscurity of its early beginnings to the foremost eminence in Kabbalistic literature. Moreover, there is little doubt that its author, whoever he may have been, had nothing so far-reaching in mind. Everything goes to suggest that when writing the Zohar his primary object was simply to find a congenial expression for his thoughts. His mind was completely immersed in the world of Kabbalistic thought, but the manner in which he deals with the subject bears the imprint of his own personality, much as he tried to obscure the personal aspect. As a writer, he can claim to have achieved his object, for whatever one may think of the book's merits, it was undeniably a success, first among the Kabbalists and later, particularly after the exodus from Spain, among the whole Jewish people. For centuries it stood out as the expression of all that was profoundest and most deeply hidden in the innermost recesses of the Jewish soul. The story is told of Rabbi Phineas of Koretz, a famous Hasidic saint (died about 1791), who was wont to praise and thank God because he had not been born while the Zohar was still unknown to the world; *"denn der Zohar hot mich derhalten beim Yiddishkeit* (for the Zohar has helped me to remain

I have already said that the author is a homiletical rather than a systematic thinker. In this, however, he is at one with a deeply rooted tendency in Jewish thought. The more genuinely and characteristically Jewish an idea or doctrine is, the more deliberately unsystematic is it. Its principle of construction is not that of a logical system. Even the Mishnah, which comes nearest to presenting an orderly array of thought, reflects this lack of systematization. True, there have been attempts to express Kabbalistic thought in systematic form; indeed, most of the fundamental ideas found in the Zohar were expressed only a little later in a systematically constructed treatise, *Maarekheth Ha-Elohuth,* "The Order of God."[2] But how dry and lifeless are these skeletons and bones of thought compared with the flesh and blood of the Zohar! As I have said, the Zohar does not so much develop an idea as it applies it in a homily, and it must be said that the author is distinctly a genius of homiletical thought. Under his touch the most unpretentious verses of Scripture acquire an entirely unexpected meaning. As David Neumark, that searching historian of Jewish philosophy, once said, even the critical reader is occasionally plagued by doubts whether the true interpretation of certain passages of the Torah may not after all be found here and nowhere else! Frequently the author loses himself in mystical allegorizations, and not infrequently he becomes abstruse, but again and again a hidden and sometimes awful depth opens before our eyes, and we find ourselves confronted with real and profound insight. His style, tortuous on other occasions, is then lightened up by a magnificent clarity of expression, by a profound symbol of that world into whose hidden regions his mind has so deeply penetrated.

I have spoken of an "author" of the Zohar and therefore assumed his existence, but we must now turn to the question whether there ever was a single author. On this subject it is still possible to hear widely divergent views. Was there one author or were there many? Was the Zohar the work of many generations, or at any rate a compilation from more than one author, rather than the work of one man? Do its several parts, of which we shall presently hear more, correspond to different strata or periods? In short, we have to face the crucial questions of "higher criticism": What can be said to be known about the compilation of the Zohar, the time of its writing and its author or authors? I have spent many years trying to lay a

stable foundation for critical work of this kind, and it seems to me that in so doing I have arrived at a number of incontrovertible conclusions.[3] Research work of this kind has something of the character of a detective story, but fascinating though it is, at least to me, this is not the place to describe it in detail. What I propose to do in this lecture is to give an account as precise as possible of my views on the subject and the manner in which I have arrived at my final conclusions.

To begin briefly with the latter, I have come to accept in substance the contention of Graetz — itself only the most articulate expression of a whispered tradition of centuries — that the Spanish Kabbalist Moses de Leon must be regarded as the author of the Zohar. The fact that Graetz was in a surprisingly large number of respects unable to supply satisfactory proof of his theory[4] has facilitated the more general acceptance of the contrary view, very common now, viz., that the Zohar represents only a final edition of writings composed over a long period — so long as to make it seem possible that they still contain rudiments of the original mystical thought of Simeon ben Yohai.[5] I may say that when I began studying the Zohar twenty years ago, I also inclined to this view,[6] as is probably the case with everyone who reads the Zohar for the first time (not to mention those who read it only once in their lives). But in the attempt to base my preference for this explanation on solid philological grounds, I gradually became convinced that I had been on the wrong track.[7]

2.

At first sight, the existence of a multitude of writings of apparently very different character, loosely assembled under the title of "Zohar," seems to leave no argument against the view that they do in fact belong to different writers and different periods. Our first task, therefore, must be to examine more closely the major components which make up the five full volumes of the "Zoharic literature."[8] These may be summarized under the following heads:

a) The bulky part which has no specific title and is wholly composed of discursive commentaries on various passages from the Torah. Everything that I have said of the literary character of the Zohar applies fully to this part, in which discourses, discussions and longer or shorter stories are mingled throughout in about the same proportion.

but a philologist, and modern criticism can benefit a good deal from an analysis of his not infrequent "howlers". In some instances it is possible to show that he made use of the standard Hebrew and Aramaic dictionaries of the period. In other cases he evidently employed expressions newly coined by himself, either by inventing completely new words[53] or by altering old ones,[54] and it is of some interest that the same three or four consonants recur in most of these neologisms *(Teth, Samekh* and in particular *Koph).*[55]

These peculiarities of language and style are uniformly present in every one of the eighteen writings on our list, from the *Midrash Ha-Neelam* and the *Idroth* to the *Mishnas* and the tracts on physiognomy. The *Sifra di-Tseniutha,* which some writers have assigned to remote antiquity, without offering the least proof of so far-reaching a thesis, is distinguished in nothing from the Aramaic sections of the *Midrash Ha-Neelam* which, according to the same authorities, were written a long time after the main part of the Zohar.[56]

Everything that has been said of the vocabulary of the Zohar also applies to its phraseology. Whether the style is elliptic and oracular or verbose and circumstantial, there is the same tendency to employ words such as all-profundity, all-completion, all-connection, all-configuration, all-mystery, etc., — expressions in which the word *de-kola* ("of the whole") is tacked on to the substantive.[57] Such expressions, although used a good deal by the Gnostics, are not to be found in the language of the ancient Jewish literature; in the literature of Kabbalism, their appearance in the wake of the Neoplatonic revival constitutes one of the most striking examples of the gradual penetration of Neoplatonic terminology into Kabbalism. Also due to the same influence is the increasing vogue enjoyed by superlatives on the pattern of "mystery of mysteries," "bliss of blisses," "depth of depths", etc., of which a large number are to be found in all parts of the Zohar.

Another characteristic peculiarity of style which must be mentioned in this context is the author's predilection for oxymora and paradoxes. Rhetorical figures of speech such as "cooked and uncooked" also occur in the Talmud, but there they signify — in our instance — "half-baked". The long list of similiar expressions in the Zohar is usually employed to indicate that a certain act is of a spiritual and impenetrable nature. "It is and is not" signifies, not that

Among the writings which must be regarded as his principal sources are the Babylonian Talmud, the *Midrash Rabba* in its various parts, the Midrash to the Psalms, the *Pesiktoth* and the *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer,* and also the *Targumim,* and Rashi's commentary to the Bible and the Talmud. Over and above these there emerges a long list of other writings of which use is made more occasionally.[74] As Bacher has shown in a brilliant essay on the subject,[75] he drew heavily upon the mediaeval Scriptural commentators. More than that, it is possible to show that he also made use of the main writings of Jehuda Halevi[76] and Moses Maimonides, and that some of his ideas on questions of the first order which were among his favourite subjects are directly based on the views of Maimonides, such as for instance his frequent references to paganism as a form of astral worship closely linked with magic and idolatry.[77]

To this can be added that he has clearly made much use of thirteenth century literature, both Hasidic and Kabbalistic; and in particular he has drawn freely upon the writings published by the school of Kabbalists whose centre was the little Catalan town of Gerona and who between the years 1230 and 1260 did more than any other contemporary group to unify and consolidate what was pregnant and living in the Kabbalism of Spain. There can be no doubt that the writings of the brothers Ezra and Azriel ben Solomon[78] and of Moses ben Nahman,[79] the leading figure of this group, influenced him not only generally but also down to certain peculiar details of his own doctrine. The latest ascertainable source of a highly important *terminus technicus* adopted by the Zohar is Joseph Gikatila's *Ginnath Egoz,* the "Nut Garden," which was written in 1274. This book is the source both of the term used to describe the "primordial point," or mystical centre, which one encounters in widely separated parts of the Zohar,[80] and of the highly original manner in which the conception of the primordial point is linked with that of the primordial Torah conceived as the wisdom of God.[81]

Naturally these sources are not mentioned. Instead, the author contents himself — and discontents the reader — with vague references to ancient writings or mystical tracts dealing with the same topics. Thus the discovery of the real sources, which he is so careful to obscure, is one of the main prerequisites for a correct appreciation of the historical and doctrinal significance of the Zohar.[82] The task is

itself, while the names of the divine Sefiroth merely represent abstract qualities such as wisdom, intelligence, grace, beauty, etc. Complete mythologies of this realm of darkness are to be found above all in the writings of Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen and Moses of Burgos.[92] The author of the Zohar adopts these ideas but plays new variations on the original theme. Starting out from the same assumptions as the writers we have just mentioned, he yet arrives at a doctrine of the "other side," *sitra ahra,* which closely parallels but does not converge with that of his contemporaries.

But, and this carries us a step further, the individuality of the author is no less clearly expressed in what he omits than in what he emphasizes. To take a particularly striking example, he completely ignores a form of speculation very popular among thirteenth century Kabbalists, namely, the idea of successive periods of cosmic development, each lasting seven thousand years, in which the universal process follows certain theosophic laws, until in the fifty thousandth year, the Great Jubilee, it returns to its source.

This theory was first expounded in the book *Temunah* (around 1250)[93] in the form of a mystical interpretation of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and was based on a new interpretation of the Biblical prescriptions for the Sabbath year, the *Shemitah,* and the Jubilee, when all things shall return to their possessor. To the Kabbalists of Catalonia, these rules were but symbolical representations of the stages of the process in which all things emanate from God and return to Him. The literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is full of speculations on this subject. The question how many world-periods or Jubilees there are was of as much importance to some Kabbalists as that of the state of the world in the various *Shemitahs.* Indeed, the assumption was even made that the Torah was read in different ways during the various successive periods, without however being changed in its literal content as the secret name of God, i.e. that it is capable of revealing more than one meaning. The current period, according to the book *Temunah,* is that of stern judgment, i. e. that which is dominated by the Sefirah, the divine quality, of rigour, and in which there are accordingly commandments and prohibitions, pure and impure things, holy and profane matters — in accordance with the present reading of the Torah. But in the coming aeon, the next *Shemitah,* the Torah will

no longer contain prohibitions, the power of evil will be curbed, etc., in brief, Utopia will at last be realized.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that we are dealing here with an independent Jewish parallel to the doctrine of Joaquin of Fiore concerning the three cosmic stages which accord with the three figures of the Christian Trinity. This doctrine, which was first developed in far-off Calabria towards the end of the twelfth century, became of importance in the forties of the thirteenth century when it was taken up and developed further by the Franciscans of Italy.[94] By a curious coincidence, the doctrine of the *Shemitahs* was codified in Gerona at about the same time. Of a direct historical connection between the two there is no proof and the idea carries little probability. Moreover, the *Shemitahs* concern not only the process of our present cosmos, like the three world-periods of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the writings of Joaquin, but its past and future as well. Nevertheless, it remains a remarkable fact that in both doctrines the various manifestations of the Divine — the Trinity and the Sefiroth — appear as successive principles each of a particular cosmic unit, an aeon. It is clear that in the eschatological perspective this doctrine opened up a vast number of new vistas: the probable meaning of the Messianic time, the transformation of all things before the rebirth of the world in the new *Shemitah,* the continuity of the soul in this process of change, and other questions which to the followers of this doctrine inevitably appeared in a new light.

Now the remarkable fact is that our author, for all his lively interest in the eschatological fate of the soul, appears to have strongly disapproved of this doctrine which I have just outlined. In the whole of his great work there is not a single mention to be found of the *Shemitahs* in this pregnant sense of the term, although he too refers to the passage of fifty thousand years before the "Great Jubilee."[95] It is as though he was repelled by something in this doctrine, perhaps its latent antinomianism which is perceptible behind the utopian expectation of a change in the commandments and prohibitions of the Torah during the coming *Shemitahs.* A good example of this antinomian tendency is to be found in the doctrine expounded by a writer of this school which postulates the existence of a twenty-third letter of the Hebrew alphabet, invisible in our present aeon but to be resuscitated in the next — a theory which of course implies a

which would positively exclude the possibility of Moses de Leon being the author, such as for example repeated flagrant misunderstandings of the text of the Zohar by Moses de Leon himself. But although hundreds of quotations from the Zohar occur in the writings published under his own name, be it textually or paraphrased, I have been unable to discover a single case in which it is possible to speak of a significant misunderstanding. I have thus come to abandon the idea that the theory of another authorship is capable of being proved. On the other hand, the assumption that the author of the Zohar was also the author of the Hebrew writings supplies an adequate explanation of all doubtful points, if it be fairly borne in mind that the writer was not willing to disclose the pseudepigraphic character of his work on the Zohar.

What I have said does not mean that the personality of Moses de Leon and his authorship of the Zohar no longer offer any problem. To say that would be to overlook that we possess too little documentary material which goes beyond the bare rehearsal of his theosophic doctrines. Even if the proof of Moses de Leon's authorship which I shall advance is conclusive, the acceptance of this theory still leaves a number of questions unanswered. These questions in particular concern the various stages of Moses de Leon's religious development and the events which brought about his pseudepigraphic activity. This applies for instance to the still unsolved problem of his relationship to Joseph Gikatila.

There can be no doubt that Moses de Leon, too, began as a follower of Maimonides and was only gradually attracted by the study of Kabbalism. This is plain enough from the philosophical elements of his Hebrew writings, and in addition we have the clearest documentary proof in the form of a manuscript — described in the autographed catalogue of the Guenzburg collection of Hebrew manuscripts, now in Moscow — of the Hebrew translation of Maimonides' "Guide of the Perplexed", which was written in 1264 "for the erudite *(ha-maskil)* Rabbi Moses de Leon."[131] The absence of further honorifics suggests that he was at that date still a young man, although of sufficient means to be able to pay for a private copy of so voluminous a book. We shall probably not go wrong in assuming that he was born around 1240. The period of more than twenty years between 1264 and 1286 we may picture as being filled

II.

If proper account is taken of all these facts, certain allusions in Moses de Leon's writings to his mystical 'sources' appear no longer as anything but veiled references to his own authorship. Thus in 1290 he remarks in his "Book of the Rational Soul," that "only recently the spring of mystery has begun to flow in the land"[150] — a plain allusion to the recent publication of some of the Zoharic writings. But the most remarkable hints of this genre are to be found in the *Mishkan ha-Eduth,* written in 1293, from which I shall quote, as literally as possible, the most important passage, one which, like so much else, has escaped the notice of writers on the subject. In a passage where he discusses the theory of a two-fold *Gehenna* — a close parallel to the above-mentioned idea of a double Paradise — he prefaces his Zoharic variations on the subject by the following remarks:

"Concerning this matter there are hidden mysteries and secret things which are unknown to men. You will now see that I am revealing deep and secret mysteries which the holy sages regarded as sacred and hidden, profound matters which properly speaking are not fit for revelation so that they may not become a target for the wit of every idle person. These holy men of old have pondered all their lives over these things and have hidden them, and did not reveal them to every one, and now I have come to reveal them. Therefore keep them to yourself, unless it be that you encounter one who fears God and keeps His Commandments and the Torah... I looked at the ways of the children of the world and saw how in all that concerns these [theological] matters, they are enmeshed in foreign ideas and false, extraneous [or heretical] notions. One generation passes away and another generation comes, but the errors and falsehoods abide for ever. And no one sees and no one hears and no one awakens, for they are all asleep, for a deep sleep from God has fallen upon them, so that they do not question and do not read and do not search out. And when I saw all this *I found myself constrained to write and to conceal and to ponder, in order to reveal it* to all thinking men, and to make known all these things with which the holy sages of old concerned themselves all their lives. For they are scattered in the Talmud and in their [other] words and secret sayings, precious and hidden

better even than pearls. And they [the sages] have closed and locked the door behind their words and hidden all their mystical books, because they saw that the time had not come to reveal and publish them. Even as the wise king has said to us: 'Speak not in the ears of a fool.' Yet I have come to recognize that it would be a meritorious deed to bring out to light what was in the dark and to make known the secret matters which they have hidden."[151] And a few pages later he says: "And though I now reveal their mysteries, the Almighty God knows that my purpose in doing so is good, in order that many may become wise and retain their faith in God, and hear and learn and fear in their soul and rejoice because they know the truth."[152]

Now this appears to me a highly significant document. To refer in such a manner and in so many ambiguous terms to a work which, as we have seen, was without any doubt written shortly before, is to reveal one's authorship. Short of abandoning the pseudepigraphical fiction — a thing not to be expected of him — Moses de Leon could hardly go farther in proclaiming himself to be the author of these "words of the wise" which he feels compelled *to write and to conceal,* as his own excellent phrase puts it. He does not explicitly claim to have discovered the old books themselves; his purpose is merely to reveal what must be contained in them if they were in accordance with that meaning of the Kabbalah which was to him natural and supremely important.

At the same time, the evidence he provides in these passages also supplies a clear picture of the motives which led him to write the Zohar and which are expressed with special emphasis in his long preface to the *Sefer ha-Rimmon.* Jellinek, who was the first to discern these motives from the much briefer allusions in the "Book of the Rational Soul,"[153] and Graetz who followed him on this point, were right in their assertion: Moses de Leon wrote the Zohar in order to stem the growth of the radical rationalistic mood which was widespread among his educated contemporaries and with regard to which we have quite a number of interesting testimonials. He refers in one of his books to the opinions and habits of these circles who had already broken in theory as well as in practice with large parts of Jewish tradition and religious law.[154] In opposition to them he strives to maintain the undefiled Judaism of the Torah, as he in-

SIXTH LECTURE

THE ZOHAR

II. THE THEOSOPHIC DOCTRINE OF THE ZOHAR

I.

Taken as a whole, the Zohar must be regarded as the complete antithesis to the now familiar system of Abulafia. That esoteric doctrine centered round a pragmatic philosophy of ecstasy for the elect, which laid exclusive emphasis on meditation as the way to the cognition of God. By contrast, the Zohar is chiefly concerned with the object of meditation, i. e. the mysteries of the *mundus intelligibilis*. Again, the doctrine of Prophetic Kabbalism presents itself as the most aristocratic form of Mysticism, whereas the language of the Zohar is that of a writer who has experienced the common fears of mankind as profoundly as anyone. For this reason if for no other it struck a chord which resounded deeply in human hearts and assured it a success denied to other forms of early Kabbalism. Last but not least, Abulafia presents the reader with something very much like a system, and his ideas are set out on the whole without reference to Scripture. (Of course, Abulafia, too, has written mystical commentaries to the Torah,[1] but his particular contribution to Mysticism did not grow out of these writings.) Here again the Zohar strikes a different note: Everything it says reflects the homiletic viewpoint and remains closely bound to the Scriptural text. Often an idea is not so much extrapolated and projected into the Biblical word as it is conceived in the process of mystical reflection upon the latter. In making this approach the Zohar remains true to the tradition of Jewish speculative thought which, to repeat, is alien to the spirit of systematization.

If I were asked to characterize in one word the essential traits of this world of Kabbalistic thought, those which set it apart from other forms of Jewish Mysticism, I would say that the Zohar represents Jewish theosophy, i. e., a Jewish form of theosophy. Thirteenth century Kabbalism with its theosophic conception of God is essentially an attempt to preserve the substance of naive popular faith,

now challenged by the rational theology of the philosophers. The new God of Kabbalism who, according to the Kabbalists, is simply the old God of Creation and Revelation and man in his relation to Him — these are the two poles of Kabbalistic doctrine round which the system of Zoharic thought revolves.

Before saying more about this, I should like to indicate in a few words what I am trying to express by using this much abused term theosophy. By theosophy I mean that which was generally meant before the term became a label for a modern pseudo-religion,[2] i.e. *theosophy* signifies a mystical doctrine, or school of thought, which purports to perceive and to describe the mysterious workings of the Divinity, perhaps also believing it possible to become absorbed in its contemplation. Theosophy postulates a kind of Divine emanation whereby God, abandoning his self-contained repose, awakens to mysterious life; further, it maintains that the mysteries of Creation reflect the pulsation of this Divine life. Theosophists in this sense were Jacob Boehme and William Blake, to mention some cases of famous Christian mystics.

I shall now try to go a little deeper into the meaning of this theosophical conception of God, which, it can hardly be doubted, has exercised a decisive influence on the majority of Kabbalistic writers. It rests upon a basic assumption to which I have referred in the course of the first lecture, where I tried to trace its origin in the problem of the Divine attributes. There I also mentioned the Kabbalistic term *Sefiroth* — a term for which the approximate translation would be 'spheres' or 'regions' (although the Hebrew word *sefirah* has nothing to do with the Greek *sphaira,* various hypotheses to the contrary notwithstanding). In the "Book of Creation" from which it was originally taken, Sefiroth simply meant numbers,[3] but with the gradual development of mystical terminology, with which I cannot deal here, it changed its meaning until it came to signify the emergence of Divine powers and emanations.

It may be useful at this point to consider the difference between the old Merkabah mysticism and the Kabbalistic system. The world of the Merkabah, with its celestial throne, its heavenly household, and its palaces through which the wanderer passes, is for the Kabbalist no longer of supreme importance, though its core, frequently clothed in new disguise, never ceases to attract his interest. All knowledge

concerning it is, for him, merely provisional. Indeed, some Kabbalists go so far as to refer to Ezekiel's Merkabah as the *second Merkabah*.[4] In other words, the new Kabbalistic Gnosis or cognition of God, which in the Hekhaloth tracts is not even mentioned, is related to a deeper layer of mystical reality, an "inner Merkabah",[5] as it were, which can be visualized only in a symbolical way, if at all. Briefly, this gnosis concerns God Himself. Where previously the vision could go no farther than to the perception of the glory of his appearance on the throne, it is now a question, if the expression be permitted, of the inside of this glory. In the early period of Kabbalistic thought, represented by the book *Bahir* and various smaller writings down to the middle of the thirteenth century,[6] these two domains, the world of the throne and that of the divinity — the original *pleroma* of the Gnostics — are not yet completely differentiated. Nevertheless the tendency to separate them, and to penetrate into a new field of contemplation beyond the sphere of the throne, is at the roots of the original impulse of the Kabbalah.

Historically, Jewish Mysticism has tended to carry this process ever further, striving to detect successively new layers in the mystery of the Godhead. These worlds of the Sefiroth, too, became, in their turn, a starting-point of fresh attempts to push on into yet more remotely hidden worlds where the radiance of the divine light is mysteriously refracted in itself.[7] The more the original perception, born from deep meditation, of a given mode of divine reality, was externalized and transformed into mere book-learning, in which the symbols lost their tremendous meaning and unfettered allegory filled their empty husks, the more did original thinkers among the Kabbalists strive to penetrate into new and yet deeper layers of mystical consciousness; hence the adoption of new symbols. For the Zohar, however, the Sefiroth still had the unbroken reality of mystical experience. To the analysis of this experience, or at least of some of its essential traits, we must now turn our attention.

2.

The hidden God, the innermost Being of Divinity so to speak, has neither qualities nor attributes. This innermost Being the Zohar and the Kabbalists like to call *En-Sof*, i. e., the Infinite.[8] Insofar, however, as this hidden Being is active throughout the Universe,

it has also certain attributes which in turn represent certain aspects of the Divine nature; they are so many stages of the Divine Being, and Divine manifestations of His hidden life. That is to say, they are not meant to be mere metaphors. To the mediaeval philosopher, a Scriptural allusion to the "arm of God" was simply an analogy to the human arm, which is the only one that exists, i. e. the "arm of God" is merely a figure of speech. To the mystic, on the contrary, the arm of God represents a higher reality than the human arm.[9] The latter exists only by virtue of the former's existence. In other words, the mystic believes in the existence of a sphere of Divine reality to which this term, among others, is really applicable. Each sphere of this sort constitutes one of the Sefiroth. The Zohar[10] expressly distinguishes between two worlds, which both represent God. First a primary world, the most deeply hidden of all, which remains insensible and unintelligible to all but God, the world of *En-Sof;* and secondly one, joined unto the first, which makes it possible to know God, and of which the Bible says: "Open ye the gates that I may enter", the world of attributes. The two in reality form one, in the same way — to use the Zohar's simile[11] — as the coal and the flame; that is to say, the coal exists also without a flame, but its latent power manifests itself only in its light. God's mystical attributes are such worlds of light in which the dark nature of *En-Sof* manifests itself.

According to the Kabbalists, there are ten such fundamental attributes of God, which are at the same time ten stages through which the Divine life pulsates back and forth. The point to keep in mind is that the Sefiroth are not secondary or intermediary spheres which interpose between God and the Universe. The author does not regard them as something comparable to, for example, the 'middle stages' of the Neoplatonists which have their place between the Absolute One and the world of the senses. In the Neoplatonic system, these emanations are "outside" the One, if it is possible to use that expression. There have been attempts to justify an analogous interpretation of the theology of the Zohar and to treat the Sefiroth as secondary stages or spheres outside of, or apart from the divine personality. These interpretations, which have been advanced above all by D. H. Joel,[12] have the distinct advantage of avoiding the problem of God's unity in the Sefiroth, but it may be said not unfairly

that they ignore the crucial point and misrepresent the intention of the author. True, the Zohar frequently refers to the Sefiroth as stages, but they are plainly regarded not as the steps of a ladder between God and the world, but as various phases in the manifestation of the Divinity which proceed from and succeed each other.

The difficulty lies precisely in the fact that the emanation of the Sefiroth is conceived as a process which takes place *in* God and which at the same time enables man to perceive God. In their emanation something which belongs to the Divine is quickened and breaks through the closed shell of His hidden Self. This something is God's creative power, which does not reside only in the finite Universe of Creation, although of course there, too, it is immanent and even perceptible. Rather do the Kabbalists conceive this creative power to be an independent theosophical world of its own, which antedates the natural world and represents a higher stage of reality. The hidden God, *En-Sof,* manifests himself to the Kabbalist under ten different aspects, which in turn comprise an endless variety of shades and gradations. Every grade has its own symbolical name, in strict accordance with its peculiar manifestations. Their sum total constitutes a highly complex symbolical structure, in which almost every Biblical word corresponds to one of the Sefiroth. This correspondence, which in turn could be subjected to the most searching investigation regarding its motives,[13] enables the Kabbalists to base their interpretation of Scripture on the assumption that every verse not only describes an event in nature or history but in addition is a symbol of a certain stage in the Divine process, an impulse of the Divine life.

The mystical conception of the Torah, of which mention has been made in the first lecture, is fundamental for the understanding of the peculiar symbolism of the Zohar. The Torah is conceived as a vast *corpus symbolicum* representative of that hidden life in God which the theory of the Sefiroth attempts to describe. For the mystic who starts out with this assumption, every word is capable of becoming a symbol, and the most inconspicuous phrases or verses are precisely the ones into which at times the greatest importance is read.[14] For the peculiar speculative genius which discovers in the Torah layer upon layer of hidden meaning, there is in principle no limit. In the last resort, the whole of the Torah, as is often repeated by

the author, is nothing but the one great and holy Name of God. Seen that way it can not be "understood"; it can only by "interpreted" in an approximate manner.

The Zohar is the first book in which the theory of the four methods of interpreting Scripture, originally developed by Christian exegetes, is taken up by a Jewish author.[15] But of the four layers of meaning: the literal, the Aggadic or homiletic, the allegorical, and the mystical, in the last resort only the fourth — *Raza,* i. e. "The Mystery", in the terminology of the Zohar — matters to the author. It is true that he also advances numerous examples of Scriptural interpretation based on the other three methods, but these are either taken from other writings or, at the most, developed from ideas not peculiar to Kabbalism.[16] Only when it is a question of revealing the mystery of a verse — or rather one of its many mysteries — does the author show real enthusiasm. And, as we have seen, the "mystery" in every case concerns the interpretation of the Biblical word as a symbol pointing to the hidden world of God and its inner processes.

Incidentally, the author frequently takes issue with those among his contemporaries who rejected the view that the Torah had more than one meaning. He does not, it is true, in any sense question or deny its literal meaning, but he makes the assumption that it merely hides and envelopes the inner mystical light.[17] Indeed, he goes so far as to assert that if the Torah really contained merely those tales, genealogies and political precepts which are capable of being literally understood, we should be able even to-day to write a much better one.[18]

Still more radical are the ideas developed by the author of the *Raya Mehemna;* here we already find sharp invective against the representatives of purely literal exegesis and the dogmatic advocates of an exclusively Halakhic study of the Talmud who, in his view, show no understanding of the religious problems with which the mystics are wrestling.[19] This sharply critical attitude towards non-mystical Judaism reached its climax in the second half of the fourteenth century, when an anonymous Kabbalistic theosophist in Spain summed up the doctrine of his school in two important works, the book *Peliah* and the book *Kanah* — the first a commentary to the first six chapters of Genesis, the second an explanation of the meaning of the religious commandments.[20] This writer goes so far as to proclaim

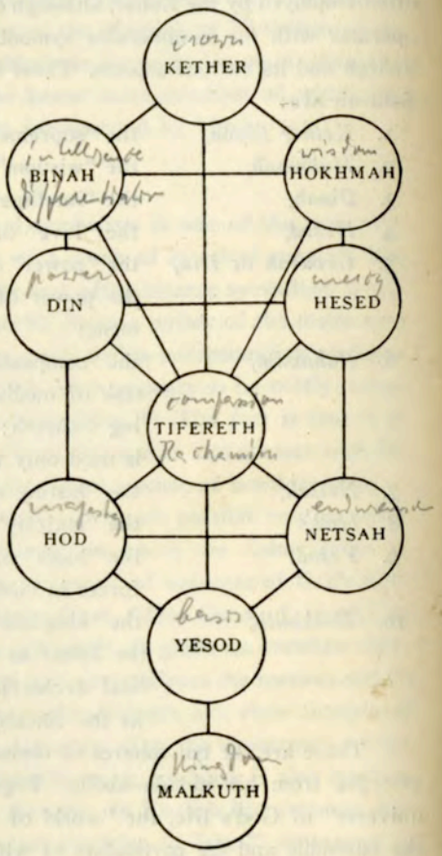
the literal meaning even of the Rabbinical sources, and above all the Talmud, to be identical with the Kabbalistic interpretation. By applying the method of immanent criticism he tries to prove that the Talmudic discourses on the law become meaningless unless they are so interpreted.[21] Here then we have nothing less than a *reductio ad absurdum* of traditional Judaism and an attempt to replace it by an entirely mystical system within the framework of tradition. In this system, nothing exists except symbols, and signs mean nothing independently of the symbols manifest in them. It is not surprising that a latent anti-Talmudism has been diagnosed in these writings,[22] nor does it surprise us to learn that the Messiah of Kabbalism, Sabbatai Zevi, studied no other Kabbalistic books in his youth than the Zohar and the book *Kanah,* the latent antinomianism of which became manifest in the movement inaugurated by him.

3.

The nature of this mystical symbolism is one of the main obstacles to a true understanding of a work of mystical exegesis like the Zohar, and yet this elaborate and often bizarre symbolism is the key to its particular religious world. Even a writer of the distinction of R. T. Herford who has given proof of his understanding of Judaism, speaks of a "symbolism which often appears to be wildly extravagant and sometimes gross and repulsive."[23] The fact is that it is hardly possible for anyone when he at first comes into contact with the world of Kabbalistic symbolism to escape a sense of bewilderment.

In the course of a brief lecture it is not possible to give more than a few examples of the manner in which the Zohar seeks to describe in symbolical terms the theosophical universe of God's hidden life. Joseph Gikatila's *Shaare Orah,* "The Gates of Light," is still much the best book on the subject.[24] It gives an excellent description of Kabbalistic symbolism and also analyzes the motives which determine the correlation between the Sefiroth and their Scriptural symbols. Gikatila wrote only a few years after the appearance of the Zohar, and although he leans heavily on it, his book is also marked by some original departures in thought. In English literature on the subject A. E. Waite's "The Secret Doctrine in Israel" represents a serious attempt to analyze the symbolism of the Zohar. His work, as I have had occasion to remark at the outset of these lectures,

The manner in which the Sefiroth are described in the Zohar which, it should be pointed out, avoids this classical term and uses others instead, throws some light on the extent to which the idea of God's mystical qualities has moved away from the conception of Divine attributes. They are called "mystical crowns of the Holy King"[26] notwithstanding the fact that "He is they, and they are He."[27] They are the ten names most common to God, and in their entirety they also form his one great Name. They are "the King's faces,"[28] in other words, his varying aspects, and they are also called the inner, intrinsic or mystical Face of God. They are the ten stages of the inner world, through which God descends from the inmost recesses down to His revelation in the Shekhinah. They are the garments of the Divinity, but also the beams of light which it sends out.[29]



The world of Sefiroth is described, for instance, as a mystical organism, a symbol which has the additional advantage of supplying the Kabbalist with a ready justification for the anthropomorphic mode of Scriptural expression. The two most important images used in this connection are that of the tree — see the drawing — and that of the man. "All the divine powers form a succession of layers and are like a tree" — we read already in the book *Bahir*,[30] through which, as we have seen, the thirteenth century Kabbalists became the heirs of gnostical symbolism. The ten Sefiroth constitute the mystical Tree of God or tree of Divine power, each representing a branch whose common root is unknown and unknowable. But *En-Sof* is not only the hidden Root of all Roots, it is also the sap of the tree; very branch, representing an attribute, exists not by itself but by virtue of *En-Sof*, the hidden God. And this tree of God is also, as it were, the skeleton of the Universe; it grows throughout the whole of Creation and spreads its branches through all its ramifications. All mundane and created things exist only because something of the power of the Sefiroth lives and acts in them.

The simile of the man is as often used as that of the Tree. The Biblical word that man was created in the image of God means two things to the Kabbalist: First, that the power of the Sefiroth, the paradigm of Divine life, exists and is active also in man. Secondly, that the world of the Sefiroth, that is to say the world of God the Creator, is capable of being visualized under the image of man the created. From this it follows that the limbs of the human body, to repeat the instance I have already given, are nothing but images of a certain spiritual mode of existence which manifests itself in the symbolic figure of *Adam Kadmon*, the primordial man.[31] For, to repeat, the Divine Being Himself cannot be expressed. All that can be expressed are His symbols. The relation between *En-Sof* and its mystical qualities, the Sefiroth, is comparable to that between the soul and the body, but with the difference that the human body and soul differ in nature, one being material and the other spiritual, while in the organic whole of God all spheres are substantially the same.[32] Nevertheless the question of the essence and substance of the Sefiroth, with which the Zohar itself is not concerned, subsequently became to theosophical Kabbalism a special problem whose consideration we must forego here.[33] The conception of God as an organism had the advantage of answering the question why there are different manifestations of the Divine power, although the Divine Being is an Absolute Whole. For is not the organic life of the soul one and the same, although the function of the hands differs from that of the eyes, etc.[34]

Incidentally, the conception of the Sefiroth as parts or limbs of the mystical anthropos leads to an anatomical symbolism which does not shrink from the most extravagant conclusions. Thus, for instance,

the concept of the various aspects of the beard worn by the "most ancient one" is stated to be symbolical of varying shades of God's compassion. The *Idra Rabba* is almost entirely devoted to a most radical symbolism of this kind.

Side by side with this organic symbolism, other ways of symbolical expression present themselves to the theosophist who is concerned to describe the realm of Divinity. The world of the Sefiroth is the hidden world of language, the world of the Divine names. The Sefiroth are the creative names which God called into the world, the names which He gave to Himself.[35] The action and development of that mysterious force which is the seed of all Creation is, according to the Zohar's interpretation of the Scriptural testimony, none other than speech. "God spoke — this speech is a force which at the beginning of creative thought was separated from the secret of *En-Sof.*"[36] The process of life in God can be construed as the unfolding of the elements of speech. This is indeed one of the Zohar's favourite symbols. The world of Divine emanation is one in which the faculty of speech is anticipated in God. Varying stages of the Sefiroth-Universe represent, according to the Zohar, the abysmal will, thought, inner and inaudible word, audible voice, and speech, i. e. articulated and differentiated expression.[37]

The same conception of progressive differentiation is inherent in other symbolisms of which I should like to mention only one, that of the I, You and He. God in the most deeply hidden of His manifestations, when he has as it were just decided to launch upon His work of Creation, is called He. God in the complete unfolding of his Being, Grace and Love, in which He becomes capable of being perceived by the "reason of heart," and therefore of being expressed, is called "You." But God, in His supreme manifestation, where the fullness of His Being finds its final expression in the last and all-embracing of His attributes, is called "I."[38] This is the stage of true individuation in which God as a person says "I" to Himself. This Divine Self, this "I", according to the theosophical Kabbalists — and this is one of their most profound and important doctrines — is the Shekhinah, the presence and immanence of God in the whole of Creation. It is the point where man, in attaining the deepest understanding of his own self, becomes aware of the presence of God. And only from there, standing as it were at the gate of the Divine

Realm,[39] does he progress into the deeper regions of the Divine, into His "You" and "He" and into the depths of Nothing. To gauge the degree of paradox implied by these remarkable and very influential thoughts one must remember that in general the mystics, in speaking of God's immanence in His Creation, are inclined to depersonalize Him: The immanent God only too easily becomes an impersonal Godhead. In fact, this tendency has always been one of the main pitfalls of Pantheism. All the more remarkable is the fact that the Kabbalists and even those among them who are inclined to Pantheism managed to avoid it, for as we have seen the Zohar identifies the highest development of God's Personality with precisely that stage of His unfolding which is nearest to human experience, indeed which is immanent and mysteriously present in every one of us.

4.

Among the symbolical descriptions of the unfolding of God in His Revelation, special attention must be given to that which is based on the concept of the mystical Nothing. To the Kabbalist the fundamental fact of Creation takes place *in* God; apart from that he admits of no act of Creation worth that name which might be conceived as fundamentally different from the first inmost act and which takes place outside the world of the Sefiroth. The creation of the world, that is to say, the creation of something out of nothing, is itself but the external aspect of something which takes place in God Himself. This is also a crisis of the hidden *En-Sof* who turns from repose to Creation, and it is this crisis, Creation and Self-Revelation in one, which constitutes the great mystery of theosophy and the crucial point for the understanding of the purpose of theosophical speculation. The crisis can be pictured as the break-through of the primordial will, but theosophic Kabbalism frequently employs the bolder metaphor of Nothing. The primary start or wrench in which the introspective God is externalized and the light that shines inwardly made visible, this revolution of perspective, transforms *En-Sof,* the inexpressible fullness, into nothingness. It is this mystical 'nothingness' from which all the other stages of God's gradual unfolding in the Sefiroth emanate and which the Kabbalists call the highest Sefiirah, or the "supreme crown" of Divinity. To use another metaphor, it is the abyss which becomes visible in the gaps of existence. Some Kabbalists

who have developed this idea, for instance Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom of Barcelona (1300), maintain that in every transformation of reality, in every change of form, or every time the status of a thing is altered, the abyss of nothingness is crossed and for a fleeting mystical moment becomes visible.[40] Nothing can change without coming into contact with this region of pure absolute Being which the mystics call Nothing. The difficult task of describing the emergence of the other Sefiroth from the womb of the first — the Nothing — is somehow managed with the aid of copious metaphors.

In this connection it may be of interest to examine a mystical *jeu de mots* which comes very close to the ideas of the Zohar and was already used by Joseph Gikatila.[41] The Hebrew word for nothing, *ain* has the same consonants as the word for I, *ani* — and as we have seen, God's "I" is conceived as the final stage in the emanation of the Sefiroth, that stage in which God's personality, in a simultaneous gathering together of all its previous stages, reveals itself to its own creation. In other words, the passage from *ain* to *ani* is symbolical of the transformation by which the Nothing passes through the progressive manifestation of its essence in the Sefiroth, into the I — a dialectical process whose thesis and antithesis begin and end in God: Surely a remarkable instance of dialectical thought. Here as elsewhere, mysticism, intent on formulating the paradoxes of religious experience, uses the instrument of dialectics to express its meaning. The Kabbalists are by no means the only witnesses to this affinity between mystical and dialectical thinking.

In the Zohar as well as in the Hebrew writings of Moses de Leon, the transformation of Nothing into Being is frequently explained by the use of one particular symbol, that of the primordial point.[42] Already the Kabbalists of the Geronese school employed the comparison with the mathematical point, whose motion creates the line and the surface, to illustrate the process of emanation from the "hidden cause."[43] To this comparison, Moses de Leon adds the symbolism of the point as the centre of the circle.[44] The primordial point from Nothing is the mystical centre around which the theogonical processes crystallize. Itself without dimensions and as it were placed between Nothing and Being, the point serves to illustrate what the Kabbalists of the thirteenth century call "the Origin of Being",[45] that "Beginning" of which the first word of the Bible

In the following Sefirah, the point develops into a "palace" or "building" — an allusion to the idea that from this Sefirah, if it is externalized, the "building" of the cosmos proceeds.[50] What was hidden and was as it were folded up in the point is now unfolded. The name of this Sefirah, *Bina,* can be taken to signify not only "intelligence", but also "that which divided between the things", i.e. differentiation. What was previously undifferentiated in the divine wisdom exists in the womb of the *Binah,* the "supernal mother", as the "pure totality of all individuation."[51] In it all forms are already preformed, but still preserved in the unity of the divine intellect which comtemplates them in itself.

In the passage from the Zohar which has been quoted above, the image of the point is already combined with the more dynamic one of the fountain which springs from the heart of the mystical Nothing. In many places, the primordial point is directly identified with this fountain from which all bliss and all blessings flow. This is the mystical Eden — Eden meaning literally bliss or joy — and from here the stream of divine life takes its course and flows through all the Sefiroth and through all hidden reality, until at last it falls into the "great sea" of Shekhinah, in which God unfolds His totality. The seven Sefiroth which flow from the maternal womb of the *Binah* are the seven primeval days of Creation.[52] What appears in time as the epoch of actual and external creation is nothing but the projection of the archetypes of the seven lower Sefiroth which, in timeless existence, are enshrined in God's inwardness. One is tempted to apply to this hidden life of the Sefiroth in their relation to *En-Sof* Shelley's lines:[53]

> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

It is true that this supreme entity which springs out of Nothing, this entity in God, this substance of Divine wisdom, lies beyond the horizon of human experience. It cannot be questioned or even visualized; it precedes the division between the subject and the object of consciousness without which there is no intellectual cognition, that is to say, no knowledge. In describing this division of the Divine consciousness, the Zohar in one of its profoundest symbolisms,[54] speaks of it as a manifestation of God's progressive unfolding. A-

mong the manifestations of God, there is one — for several reasons the Kabbalists identify it with *Binah,* the Divine Intelligence — in which He appears as the eternal subject, using the term in its grammatical sense, as the great Who, *Mi,* who stands at the end of every question and every answer; a thought which suggests the idea of an apotheosis of the well-known Jewish penchant for putting questions. There are certain spheres of Divinity where questions can be asked and answers obtained, namely the spheres of "this and that", of all those attributes of God which the Zohar symbolically calls *Eleh,* i. e., the determinable world. In the end, however, meditation reaches a point where it is still possible to question "who", but no longer possible to get an answer; rather does the question itself constitute an answer; and if the domain of *Mi,* of the great Who, in which God appears as the subject of the mundane process, can at least be questioned, the higher sphere of Divine wisdom represents something positive beyond the reach of questioning, something which cannot even be visualized in abstract thought.

This idea is expressed in a profound symbol: The Zohar, and indeed the majority of the older Kabbalists, questioned the meaning of the first verse of the Torah: *Bereshith bara Elohim* "In the beginning created God"; what actually does this mean? The answer is fairly surprising. We are told[55] that it means *Bereshith* — through the medium of the "beginning," i. e., of that primordial existence which has been defined as the wisdom of God, — *bara,* created, that is to say, the hidden Nothing which constitutes the grammatical subject of the word *bara,* emanated or unfolded, — *Elohim,* that is to say, its emanation is *Elohim.* It is the object, and not the subject of the sentence. And what is *Elohim? Elohim* is the name of God, which guarantees the continued existence of Creation insofar as it represents the union of the hidden subject *Mi* and the hidden object *Eleh.* (The Hebrew words *Mi* and *Eleh* have the same consonants as the complete word *Elohim.*) — In other words, Elohim is the name given to God after the disjunction of subject and object has taken place, but in which this gap is continuously bridged or closed. The mystical Nothing which lies before the division of the primary idea into the Knower and the Known, is not regarded by the Kabbalist as a true subject. The lower ranges of God's manifestation form the object of steady human contemplation, but the highest plane

which meditation can reach at all, namely the knowledge of God as the mystical *Mi* (Who), as the subject of the mundane process, this knowledge can be no more than an occasional and intuitive flash which illuminates the human heart, as sunbeams play on the surface of water — to use Moses de Leon's metaphor.[56]

5.

These are only a few instances of the method by which the author of the Zohar seeks to describe in symbolical terms the theosophical Universe of God's hidden life. At this point we are faced with the problem of the worlds outside the Sefiroth, or in other words, that of Creation in the narrower sense and its relation to God — a problem involving that of pantheism. In the history of Kabbalism, theistic and pantheistic trends have frequently contended for mastery. This fact is sometimes obscured because the representatives of pantheism have generally endeavoured to speak the language of theism; cases of writers who openly put forward pantheistic views are rare.[57] Most of the texts, and in particular the classical writings of the theosophic school, contain elements of both tendencies. The author of the Zohar inclines towards pantheism, a fact made even clearer by the Hebrew writings of Moses de Leon, but one would look in vain for confession of his faith beyond some vague formulae and hints at a fundamental unity of all things, stages and worlds. On the whole, his language is that of the theist, and some penetration is needed to lift its hidden and lambent pantheistic core to the light.

We read in one passage:[58] "The process of creation, too, has taken place on two planes, one above and one below, and for this reason the Torah begins with the letter "Beth", the numerical value of which is two. The lower occurrence corresponds to the higher; one produced the upper world (of the Sefiroth), the other the nether world (of the visible creation)." — In other words, the work of Creation as described in the first chapter of Genesis has a twofold character: Insofar as it represents, in a mystical sense, the history of God's self-revelation and His unfolding in the life of the Sefiroth, the description is theogony — it is difficult to find a more suitable term, for all its mythological connotations — and only in so far as it brings the "nether" world into being, i. e. Creation in the strict sense of a *processio Dei ad extra*, as the scholastic definition goes,

can it be described as cosmogony. Both differ, as we are told in the continuation of the above quoted passage,[59] only in that the higher order represents the dynamic unity of God, while the lower leaves room for differentiation and separation. For the description of this lower realm the Zohar favours the term *alma de-peruda*, the "world of separation".[60] Here there exist things which are isolated from each other and from God. But, and at this point the pantheistic tendency comes to the surface, to the eye which penetrates more deeply this isolation, too, is only apparent. "If one contemplates the things in mystical meditation, everything is revealed as one."[61] Already Gikatila has the formula "He fills everything and He *is* everything."

Theogony and Cosmogony represent not two different acts of creation, but two aspects of the same. On every plane — in the world of the Merkabah and the angels, which is below the Sefiroth, in the various heavens, and in the world of the four elements — Creation mirrors the inner movement of the divine life. The "vestiges" of the innermost reality are present even in the most external of things.[62] Everywhere there is the same rhythm, the same motion of the waves. The act which results beyond and above time in the transformation of the hidden into the manifest God, is paralleled in the time-bound reality of every other world. Creation is nothing but an external development of those forces which are active and alive in God Himself. Nowhere is there a break, a discontinuity. Though the "palaces" *(Hekhaloth)* of the Merkabah world emanate from the light of the *Shekhinah*,[63] this is not a *creatio ex nihilo*, which at this stage would no longer be a mystical metaphor.

The most frequent illustration of this doctrine to be found in Moses de Leon's Hebrew writings is that of the chain and the links of which it consists. There are in this chain, the links of which are represented by the totality of the different worlds, different grades of links, some deeply hidden and others visible from outside, but there is no such thing as isolated existence: "Everything is linked with everything else down to the lowest ring on the chain, and the true essence of God is above as well as below, in the heavens and on the earth, and nothing exists outside Him. And this is what the sages mean when they say: When God gave the Torah to Israel, He opened the seven Heavens to them, and they saw that nothing was there in reality but His Glory; He opened the seven worlds to them

and they saw that nothing was there but His Glory; He opened the seven abysses before their eyes, and they saw that nothing was there but His Glory. Meditate on these things and you will understand that God's essence is linked and connected with all worlds, and that all forms of existence are linked and connected with each other, but derived from His existence and essence."[64]

The pantheistic side of this conception has its limits and can be shelved altogether if necessary. All created existence has a certain kind of reality to itself in which it appears independent of these mystical worlds of unity. But in the sight of the mystic the separate outlines of things become blurred until they, too, represent nothing but the Glory of God and His Hidden Life which pulsates in everything.

It is true that this is not all. As we shall see further on, this limited and isolated existence of separate things is not really a primary and essential component of the divine scheme of Creation. Originally, everything was conceived as one great whole, and the life of the Creator pulsated without hindrance or disguise in that of his creatures. Everything stood in direct mystical rapport with everything else, and its unity could have been apprehended directly and without the help of symbols. Only the Fall has caused God to become "transcendent". Its cosmic results have led to loss of the original harmonious union and to the appearance of an isolated existence of things. All Creation was originally of a spiritual nature and but for the intervention of evil would not have assumed material form. No wonder that where the Kabbalists of this school describe the state of the Messianic world and the blissful knowledge of the devotee in a world purged of its blemish, the emphasis is on the restoration of the original coexistence and correlation of all things.[65] What is at present reserved to the mystic whose gaze penetrates through the outer shell to the core of the matter, will anon be the common property of mankind in the state of Redemption.

It is true that despite this multiformity of stages and manifestations, the theosophist tries to maintain the unity of God and to avoid the danger of postulating a plurality. Theoretically he manages this frequently with the aid of the philosophical formula that the semblance of difference between God's compassion, wrath, etc., exists only in the mind, but not in the objective reality of God's

existence. In other words, the appearance of a multitude of manifestations is due to the existence of a medium, the finite creature, which perceives the Divine light in its own way.[66] However, it is impossible to escape from the fact that such formulae, ingenious as they are, do not entirely correspond to the essence of the particular religious feeling which has found its expression in the doctrine of the Sefiroth.

As I have said previously, these symbolically conceived spheres of God are more than the attributes of theology, or the mediations and hypostases which Plotinus, in his doctrine of emanation, interposed between the Absolute and the phenomenal world. The Sefiroth of Jewish theosophy have an existence of their own; they form combinations, they illuminate each other, they ascend and descend. They are far from being static. Although each has its ideal place in the hierarchy, the lowest can under a certain aspect appear as the highest.[67] In other words, what we have here is something like a real process of life in God, the fluctuations of which the theosophist perceives, if his experience can be called perception, the organ of perception being, so to speak, the heart. To reconcile this process with the monotheistic doctrine, which was as dear to the Kabbalists as it was to every Jew, became the task of the theorists of Kabbalistic theosophy. Although they applied themselves bravely to it, it cannot be said that they were completely successful. Even the most grandiose efforts to establish a complete synthesis, like the one made by Moses Cordovero of Safed,[68] left an indissoluble remainder which defied rationalization. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the problem was from the beginning insoluble, that mysticism originally perceived an aspect of God which is beyond rationality and which becomes paradoxical the moment it is put into words. The author of the Zohar seldom makes a direct approach to the problem; the theosophic world of Sefiroth is so real to him as to be, according to him, perceptible in almost every word of the Bible. The symbols and images which serve to describe it are, after all, more than mere metaphors to him. He is not simply a mystic who hunts for expressions to describe his irrational experience; he is that, too, and the origin of the mystical symbol, described by E. Récéjac in his "Essay on the Bases of the Mystical Knowledge" (1899), can be traced in many a striking passage. But at the same

time the Zohar, indeed the whole of theosophical Kabbalism, reflects a very ancient heritage of the soul, and it would be too much to say that this mystical heritage has everywhere been successfully integrated into the doctrine of Monotheism.

6.

Some of these mythical symbols afford a particularly striking instance of the way in which genuine Jewish thought became indissolubly mixed up with primitive mythical elements. This is true above all of sexual symbolism. It is well known that those deepest regions of human existence which are bound up with the sexual life play an important part in the history of Mysticism. With few exceptions mystical literature abounds in erotic images. Even the mystical relation to God is frequently described as love between the soul and God, and Christian Mysticism in particular has become notorious for the way in which it pushed this metaphor to extremes. The first fact to be noted is that this particular interpretation of man's relation to God plays hardly any part in the documents of the older, and particularly the Spanish, Kabbalah. It may be remarked in passing that the older Kabbalists never interpreted the "Song of Songs" as a dialogue between God and the soul, i. e., an allegorical description of the path to the *unio mystica* — an interpretation common to Christian mystics since the days of Bernard of Clairvaux. The mystical school of Safed in the sixteenth century was the first to have its attention drawn to it.[69]

It is true that for the Kabbalists, as well as for the Hasidim of Germany, love towards God is a matter of the greatest importance. Again and again the Zohar recurs to the problem of the two-fold attitude towards God, that of love and that of fear.[70] Like Eleazar of Worms, whose writings, as well as similar mystical tracts on morality, were doubtless known to him, Moses de Leon, too, postulates the identity of the deepest fear with the purest love. But even in the most extravagant descriptions of this love its character remains that of the love of the child for its father; it is never the passion of the lover for his beloved. Here the Kabbalists of Spain differ radically from the Hassidim of Germany who, as we have seen, did not shrink from taking this final step. The Zohar, in its description of the soul's fate after death, speaks of an ascent of the

soul into higher regions until in the end it enters the "chamber of love". There the last veil falls and the soul stands pure and undisguised before its Maker. But this is not the bridal chamber of contemporary Christian mysticism: "Like a daughter" to quote the Zohar, the soul receives the kiss of its father as the mark and seal of the highest state of bliss.[71]

There is only one instance in which the Zohar refers to the relation of a mortal to the Divinity, to be exact, the Shekhinah, in terms of sexual symbolism. The exception is provided by Moses, the man of God; of him and of him alone it is said in a striking phrase that he had intercourse with the Shekhinah.[72] Here for once, the continuous relation with the Divinity is pictured in terms of a mystical marriage between Moses and the Shekhinah. From certain passages in the Midrash where mention is made of the termination of Moses' sexual relationship with his wife after he had been vouchsafed personal intercourse with God "from face to face", Moses de Leon has drawn the conclusion that for him, the marriage with the Shekhinah had taken the place of earthly marriage.

But while in all other instances the Kabbalists refrain from employing sexual imagery in describing the relation between man and God, they show no such hesitation when it comes to describing the relation of God to Himself, in the world of the Sefiroth. The mystery of sex, as it appears to the Kabbalist, has a terribly deep significance.[73] This mystery of human existence is for him nothing but a symbol of the love between the Divine "I" and the Divine "You," the Holy one, blessed be He and His Shekhinah. The ἱερὸς γάμος, the "sacred union" of the King and the Queen,[74] the Celestial Bridegroom and the Celestial Bride, to name a few of the symbols, is the central fact in the whole chain of divine manifestations in the hidden world. In God there is a union of the active and the passive, procreation and conception, from which all mundane life and bliss are derived.

This sexual imagery is employed again and again, and in every possible variation. One of the images employed to describe the unfolding of the Sefiroth pictures them, as I have said above, as the offspring of mystical procreation, in which the first ray of Divine light is also the primeval germ of Creation; for the ray which emerges from Nothing is, as it were, sown into the "celestial mother", i. e. into the

as elsewhere, an unprejudiced analysis of this phenomenon would be of greater assistance for the understanding of the Zohar than the eloquent denunciation of so-called obscenities which Graetz and other detractors of this "book of lies" have permitted themselves. Charges of this kind simply misconstrue both the morality and the tendency of the Zohar, and are hardly relevant even to the literary form of presentation; but above all they completely ignore the problem presented by the resurrection of mythology in the heart of mystical Judaism, of which the Zohar is the classical representative. Undoubtedly the author has gone farther in the Aramaic disguise, and under cover of pseudepigraphy, than in his Hebrew writings in which these tendencies have found a far more moderate expression. But it is precisely the comparatively uninhibited language of the Zohar which provides us with that deeper insight into his mind denied us by the majority of the writings of this school.

7.

In this connection, attention must be directed above all to the new meaning infused into the idea of the Shekhinah. This restatement of an ancient conception actually represents one of the most important constituent elements of Kabbalism. In all the numerous references to the Shekhinah in the Talmud and the Midrashim — I have already referred in the second lecture to Abelson's work on the subject — there is no hint that it represents a feminine element in God. Not a single metaphor employs such terms as Princess, Matron, Queen, or Bride to describe the Shekhinah. It is true that these terms frequently occur where reference is made to the Community of Israel in its relation to God, but for these writers the Community has not yet become a mystical hypostasis of some divine force; it is simply the personification of the real Israel. Nowhere is there a dualism, with the Shekhinah, as the feminine, opposed to the "Holy one, praise be to Him," as the masculine element in God. The introduction of this idea was one of the most important and lasting innovations of Kabbalism. The fact that it obtained recognition in spite of the obvious difficulty of reconciling it with the conception of the absolute unity of God, and that no other element of Kabbalism won such a degree of popular approval, is proof that it responded to a deep-seated religious need. I have already suggested in the first lecture

that the mystics, for all their aristocratic tendencies, were the true representatives of the living, popular religion of the masses, and that the secret of their success is to be found in this fact. Not only for the philosophers, but for the strict Talmudists as well, insofar as they were not themselves mystics, the conception of the Shekhinah as the feminine element in God was one of the main stumbling-blocks in approaching the Kabbalistic system. It says something for its vitality that, despite the opposition of such powerful forces, this idea became part of the creed of wide circles among the Jewish communities of Europe and the East.

Traces of this conception are to be found already in the book *Bahir,* the oldest document of Kabbalist thought, upon whose relation to earlier Gnostic sources I have already commented in a few places.[79] This fact is further proof, if proof were needed, that, so far from being Christian, the idea originally belonged to the sphere of pagan mythology. In the Gnostic speculations on the male and female aeons, i. e. divine potencies, which constitute the world of the *pleroma,* the 'fullness' of God, this thought assumed a new form in which it became known to the earliest Kabbalists through the medium of scattered fragments. The similes employed in the book *Bahir* to describe the Shekhinah are extremely revelatory in this respect. For some Gnostics, the "lower Sophia," the last aeon on the rim of the *pleroma,* represents the "daughter of light" who falls into the abyss of matter. In close parallel with this idea, the Shekhinah, as the last of the Sefiroth, becomes the "daughter" who, although her home is the "form of light," must wander into far lands.[80] Various other motives helped to complete the picture of the Shekhinah as drawn in the Zohar; above all, she was now identified with the "Community of Israel," a sort of invisible church, representing the mystical idea of Israel in its bond with God and in its bliss, but also in its suffering and its exile. She is not only Queen, daughter and bride[81] of God, but also the mother of every individual in Israel. She is the true "Rachel weeping for her children," and in a magnificent misconception of a passage from the Zohar, the Shekhinah weeping in her exile becomes for later Kabbalism "the beauty who no longer has eyes."[82] It is as a woman that she now appears to the visionaries among the Kabbalists, like that Abraham Halevi, the disciple of Luria, who in 1571 saw her at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem as a woman dressed

in black and weeping for the husband of her youth.[83] In the symbolic world of the Zohar, this new conception of the Shekhinah as the symbol of "eternal womanhood"[84] occupies a place of immense importance and appears under an endless variety of names and images. It marks the sphere which is the first to open itself to the meditation of the mystic, the entrance to that inwardness of God which the Zohar very frequently paraphrases by the term *raza de-mehemanutha,* "the mystery of faith," i. e. a domain which discloses its secret only to those who approach it in a spirit of complete devotion.[85]

8.

The union of God and the Shekhinah constitutes the true unity of God, which lies beyond the diversity of His various aspects, *Yihud* as the Kabbalists call it. Originally, according to the Zohar, this unity was a steady and continuous one. Nothing disturbed the blissful union of the rhythms of Divine existence in the one great melody of God. Equally, nothing disturbed at first the steady contact of God with the worlds of Creation, in which His life pulsates, and particularly with the human world.

In his original paradisical state, man had a direct relation to God. As Moses de Leon, using an older formula, frequently expresses it: Man is a synthesis of all the spiritual forces which have gone into the work of Creation.[86] He reflects, as we have seen, in his organism the hidden organism of God's own life. However, an important modification is to be noted: Man was originally a purely spiritual being.[87] The ethereal shape which enclosed him and which was later transformed into the organs of his body stood in an entirely different relation to its nature than his body does now. It is to sin that he owes his corporeal existence, born from the pollution of all matter by the poison of sin. Sin, a subject on which the Jewish mystics have lavished an immense amount of speculation, has destroyed the immediate relation between man and God and thereby also in some way affected the life of God in His Creation. It is only now that the distinction between the Creator and Creation assumes the nature of a problem. To quote Joseph Gikatila: "In the beginning of Creation, the core of the Shekhinah was in the lower regions. And because the Shekhinah was below, heaven and earth were one and in perfect harmony. The well springs and the channels through which every-

thing in the higher regions flows into the lower were still active, complete and unhindered, and thus God filled everything from above to below. But when Adam came and sinned, the order of things was turned into disorder, and the heavenly channels were broken."[88]

From this time on there has been a mysterious fissure, not indeed in the substance of Divinity but in its life and action. This doctrine has been completely hedged round with reservations, but its basic meaning for all that is clear enough. Its pursuit led to the conception of what the Kabbalists call "the exile of the Shekhinah."[89] Only after the restoration of the original harmony in the act of Redemption, when everything shall again occupy the place it originally had in the Divine scheme of things, will "God be one and His name be one," in Biblical terms, truly and for all time.[90]

In the present unredeemed and broken state of the world this fissure which prevents the continuous union of God and the Shekhinah[91] is somehow healed or mended by the religious act of Israel: Torah, *mitswoth* and prayer. Extinction of the stain, restoration of harmony — that is the meaning of the Hebrew word *Tikkun*, which is the term employed by the Kabbalists after the period of the Zohar, for man's task in this world. In the state of Redemption, however, "there shall be perfection above and below, and all worlds shall be united in one bond."

In the Community of Israel, whose mundane life reflects the hidden rhythm of the universal law revealed in the Torah, the Shekhinah is immediately present, for the earthly Community of Israel is formed after the archetype of the mystical Community of Israel which is the Shekhinah. Everything that is done by the individual or the community in the mundane sphere is magically reflected in the upper region, i. e. the higher reality which shines through the acts of man. To quote a favourite expression of the Zohar: "The impulse from below *(itharuta dil-tata)* calls forth that from above."[92] The earthly reality mysteriously reacts upon the heavenly, for everything, including human activity, has its "upper roots"[93] in the realm of the Sefiroth. The impulse which originates from a good deed guides the flow of blessing which springs from the superabundance of life in the Sefiroth into the secret channels leading into the lower and the outer world. The devotee, it is even said, through his acts links the visible and practicable Torah with the invisible and mysterious one.

The supreme religious value which the Zohar, in common with the whole of Spanish Kabbalism, places in the centre of its ethical system is *devekuth*, the continuous attachment or adhesion to God, that direct relationship which — as I have already mentioned in a previous lecture — almost takes the whole place of the previous ecstatic experience.[94] Although *devekuth* is definitely a contemplative value, it is not predicated upon special or abnormal modes of consciousness. Indeed, according to Moses ben Nahman — a generation before the Zohar — true *devekuth* can be realized in the normal life of the individual within the community.[95] It is therefore capable of being transformed into a social value, a point of great importance in the subsequent influence of Kabbalism on popular ethics. All the other values of Kabbalist ethics — fear of God, love of God, purity of thought, chastity, charity, study of the Torah, penitence and prayer — are set in relation to this highest ideal and take their ultimate significance from it. Those that I have mentioned may be said to represent the meritorious acts to which the Zohar attaches special importance. Together they constitute an ideal which unites, through a mystical revaluation, the virtues of the poor and the devotee in a manner interesting also from the point of view of social ethics.

In harmony with this tendency, the Zohar, for the first time in the history of Rabbinical Judaism, lays special stress on the glorification of poverty as a religious value. It has been suggested by F. I. Baer that this mood reflects the influence of the popular movement led by the radical wing of the Franciscans, known as the "Spirituals", which spread through southern Europe in the thirteenth century and found its most impressive representative in Petrus Olivi in Spain during the very years in which the Zohar was written. Whatever the facts, it is undeniable that the glorification of poverty found in the Psalms was considerably dimmed in the later development of Rabbinical Judaism[96] until its revival in the *Sefer Hasidim* on the one hand, and in the Zohar on the other. To the mystic, the poor are "God's broken vessels," to quote the frequent metaphor which one would look for in vain in the old Midrash.[97] This spiritualistic identification of the poor and the devotee finds further expression in the fact that Moses de Leon, in his Hebrew writings, uses the same term for the poor which in the Zohar he very often employs for the mystics, the true devotees: they are *bne hekhla de-malka*, the true "Court" of God.[98]

In the *Raya Mehemna*, written shortly after the Zohar, these tendencies are systematized into a radical, spiritualistic criticism of contemporary Jewish society.[99] The Zohar itself as yet draws no such consequences, but it already contains an interpretation of theosophic thoughts in which the quality of poverty is attributed to the Shekhinah, in other words to God Himself in the last of his manifestations: The Shekhinah is poor for "she has nothing from herself," but only what she receives from the stream of the Sefiroth.[100] The alms from which the poor live symbolically reflect this mystical state of the Shekhinah. The "just," or righteous man, the *Zaddik* of the Zohar, therefore, is he who attains to the state of *devekuth* with God. It is hardly an accident that among the ethical values glorified by the Kabbalists, those of a purely intellectual nature — apart from the study of the Torah — are all but entirely absent. In this conception of ethics, which lays so much more stress on the voluntaristic than on the intellectualist element, the Kabbalists again prove themselves close to the religious faith of the common people.

To repeat what I said before, the Zohar's sexual symbolism reflects the influence of two different tendencies. Insofar as it shows a positive attitude towards the function of sexual life, within the limits ordained by Divine Law, it may be said to represent a genuinely Jewish outlook. Chastity is indeed one of the highest moral values of Judaism: Joseph, who by his chastity has "upheld the covenant" is regarded by the Midrash and the Kabbalah as the prototype of the righteous man, the true Zaddik.[101] But at no time was sexual asceticism accorded the dignity of a religious value, and the mystics make no exception. Too deeply was the first command of the Torah, Be fruitful and multiply, impressed upon their minds. The contrast to other forms of Mysticism is striking enough to be worth mentioning: Non-Jewish Mysticism, which glorified and propagated asceticism, ended sometimes by transplanting eroticism into the relation of man to God. Kabbalism, on the other hand, was tempted to discover the mystery of sex within God himself. For the rest it rejected asceticism and continued to regard marriage not as a concession to the frailty of the flesh but as one of the most sacred mysteries. Every true marriage is a symbolical realization of the union of God and the Shekhinah. In a tract on the "union of a man with his wife" Moses ben Nahman already gave a similar interpretation of

the mystical significance of marriage.[102] The Kabbalists deduced from Gen. IV, 1: "And Adam knew Eve his wife" that "knowledge" always means the realization of a union, be it that of wisdom (or reason) and intelligence, or that of the King and the Shekhinah. Thus knowledge itself received a sublime erotic quality in this new Gnostical system, and this point is often stressed in Kabbalistic writings.[103]

9.

We find the same curious mixture of mystical and mythical strains in the Zohar's interpretation of the nature of evil. The ancient Christian, and the mediaeval Jewish Gnostic, have both asked the question, *unde malum?* What is the source of evil? For the theosophical school of Kabbalism, which in addition to a definite similarity in outlook was, through certain channels, historically connected with Gnosticism, this was indeed a fundamental question. In dealing with it, as I propose to do now, one becomes more than ever aware of the difference between religious and intellectual motives of thought. To the intellect the problem is no real problem at all. All that is needed is to understand that evil is relative, more, that it does not really exist. This done, it really *has* ceased to exist, or so the intellect imagines, whereas the religious consciousness demands that evil should be really vanquished. This demand is based on the profound conviction that the power of evil is real, and the mind which is conscious of this fact refuses to content itself with intellectual tours de force, however brilliant, which try to explain away the existence of something which it knows to be there.

That is also the position of the theorists of evil in the old Kabbalah, mystics like Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen of Soria, Moses ben Simon of Burgos,[104] Joseph Gikatila and Moses de Leon. The Zohar itself puts forward several different attempts at a solution which have this in common — that they all assume the reality of evil. For the rest, the author of the Zohar often treats as one various aspects of evil — such as the metaphysical evil, the imperfect state of all beings, the physical evil, the existence of suffering in the world, and the moral evil in human nature — while sometimes he is specially concerned with the latter. The task of reducing the conception of evil in the theosophic school of Kabbalism to a brief formula is made difficult by the fact that its adherents advance not one theory but

several. Sometimes the existence of evil is identified with that of a metaphysical domain of darkness and temptation which exists independently of human sinfulness; on other occasions we are told that man's sinfulness actualized the potentially evil, i. e. made it tear itself away from the Divine. In fact, moral evil, according to the Zohar, is always either something which becomes separated and isolated, or something which enters into a relation for which it is not made. Sin always destroys a union, and a destructive separation of this kind was also immanent in the Original Sin through which the fruit was separated from the tree, or as another Kabbalist puts it, the Tree of Life from the Tree of Knowledge.[105] If man falls into such isolation — if he seeks to maintain his own self, instead of remaining in the original context of all things created, in which he, too, has his place — then this act of apostasy bears fruit in the demiurgical presumption of magic in which man seeks to take God's place and to join what God has separated.[106] Evil thus creates an unreal world of false contexts[107] after having destroyed or deserted the real.

However, the fundamental causes of evil lie deeper than that; in fact they are bound up, according to an important Zoharic doctrine, with one of the manifestations or Sefiroth of God. This must be explained: The totality of Divine powers forms an harmonious whole, and as long as each stays in relation to all others, it is sacred and good. This is true also of the quality of strict justice, rigour and judgment in and by God, which is the fundamental cause of evil. The wrath of God is symbolized by His left hand, while the quality of mercy and love, with which it is intimately bound up, is called His right hand. The one cannot manifest itself without involving the other. Thus the quality of stern judgment represents the great fire of wrath which burns in God but is always tempered by His mercy. When it ceases to be tempered, when in its measureless hypertrophical outbreak it tears itself loose from the quality of mercy, then it breaks away from God altogether and is transformed into the radically evil, into Gehenna and the dark world of Satan.[108]

It is impossible to overlook the fact that this doctrine, whose fascinating profundity is undeniable, found a highly remarkable parallel in the ideas of the great theosophist Jacob Boehme (1575—1624), the shoemaker of Goerlitz whose thoughts exercised so great an influence on many Christian mystics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in Germany, Holland and England. Boehme's doctrine of the origins of evil, which created such a stir, indeed bears all the traits of Kabbalistic thought. He, too, defines evil as a dark and negative principle of wrath in God, albeit eternally transfigured into light in the theosophical organism of divine life. In general if one abstracts from the Christian metaphors in which he tried, in part at least, to express his intuitions, Boehme, more than any other Christian mystic, shows the closest affinity to Kabbalism precisely where he is most original. He has as it were discovered the world of Sefiroth all over again. It is possible, of course, that he deliberately assimilated elements of Kabbalistic thought after he had made, in the period following upon his illumination, their acquaintance through friends who, unlike himself, were scholars. At any rate, the connection between his ideas and those of the theosophic Kabbalah was quite evident to his followers, from Abraham von Franckenberg (died 1652) to Franz von Baader (died 1841),[109] and it was left to the modern literature on the subject to obscure it. F. C. Oetinger, one of the later followers of Boehme, relates in his autobiography[110] that about 1740 he asked the Kabbalist Koppel Hecht in Frankfort-on-Main how he might best gain an understanding of Kabbalism, and that Hecht referred him to a Christian author who, he said, spoke of Kabbalism more openly even than the Zohar. "I asked him which he meant, and he replied: Jacob Boehme, and also told me of the parallels between his metaphors and those of the Kabbalah." — There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this story. Let it be recalled that at the end of the seventeenth century, a follower of Boehme, Johann Jacob Spaeth, was so impressed by this astonishing affinity with Kabbalism that he even became a convert to Judaism.

To return to the subject-matter, the metaphysical cause of evil is seen in an act which transforms the category of judgment into an absolute. As I have said before, the Zohar supplies no completely unequivocal answer to the questions why this transformation takes place, whether it is rooted in the essence of the theosophic process, or whether its origin is to be found in human sin. The two ideas intermingle; on the whole the author appears to incline to the first: Evil fell upon the world not because Adam's fall actualized its potential presence, but because it was so ordained, because evil has a

reality of its own. This was also the doctrine of Gnosticism: Evil is by its very nature independent of man; it is woven into the texture of the world, or rather into the existence of God. It is this thought which leads the Zohar to interpret evil as a sort of residue or refuse of the hidden life's organic process. This peculiar idea, in itself an audacious consequence of interpreting God as a living organism, has found frequent expression in a variety of similes. Even as the tree cannot exist without its bark, or the human body without shedding "unclean blood," so, too, all that is demonic has its root somewhere in the mystery of God.[111] The incompatibility of these varying explanations does not appear to have struck the author of the Zohar, who sees no contradiction in alternatively using metaphysical and physical or biological metaphors. One of these metaphors has become predominant in later Kabbalism. It is that which considers evil as the *Kelipah,* or the "bark" of the cosmic tree[112] or "the shell" of the nut. (The nut as a symbol of the Merkabah was taken over by the Zohar from the writings of Eleazar of Worms.)

It is true that some Kabbalists of this school have advanced another theory according to which evil represents an illegitimate inroad upon the Divine realm of light, and that it becomes evil only because something which is good in its right place tries to usurp a place for which it is not fitted. Thus Joseph Gikatila, who laid great emphasis upon this point.[113] The Zohar, on the other hand, takes an entirely different view; according to its author, evil is indeed something which has its ordained place, but in itself it is dead, it comes to life only because a ray of light, however faint, from the holiness of God falls upon it[114] or because it is nourished and quickened by the sin of man[115]; by itself it is simply the dead residue of the process of life. A spark of God's life burns even in Sammael,[116] the personification of evil, the "other" or "left side."[117] This sinister demonic world of evil which forms the dark side of everything living and threatens it from within, exercises a peculiar fascination upon the author of the Zohar. A comparison of the very scanty attention paid to these ideas in the *Midrash Ha-Neelam* and the embarras de richesse which confronts us in the parts written later clearly reveals their progressive influence upon his thought. It is true that these philosophical and gnostical speculations, including the conception of evil as the remains of the primeval world which existed before God

destroyed it,[118] are intermingled with less sophisticated ideas. Thus we read for instance that, far from being rooted in a theogonic or cosmogonic process, evil is there simply in order to increase man's chances; because God wanted man to be free, he ordained the real existence of evil, that he might prove his moral strength in overcoming it.[119]

10.

The Kabbalistic view of the nature of man and the essence of sin is of course closely connected with the theory of the soul set out in the Zohar. The intimate connection between cosmogony and psychology in all gnostical systems is so well known that its appearance in the Zohar is hardly a cause for surprise. In a mystical hymn, Moses ben Nahman has described the birth of the soul in the depth of the divine spheres from where its life streams forth. For the soul, too, is a spark of the divine life and bears in it the life of the divine stages through which it has wandered. These are the words of Nahmanides[120]:

From the beginning of time, through eternities
I was among his hidden treasures.
From Nothing he called me forth, but at the end of time
I shall be reclaimed by the King.

My life flows from the depth of the spheres
Which give order and form to the soul;
Divine forces build it and nourish it;
Then it is preserved in the chambers of the King.

He radiated light to bring her forth,
In hidden well-springs, right and left.
The soul descended the ladder of heaven,
From the primeval pool of Siloam to the garden of the King.[121]

The psychology of the Zohar shows a peculiar mixture of two doctrines held by certain schools of mediaeval philosophy. The first distinguished between the vegetative, the animal, and the rational soul — three stages which Aristotelian doctrine regarded as different faculties of the one soul, while the mediaeval followers of Plato

were inclined to think of them as three different entities. The second, which was generally held by the Arab philosophers and popularized among the Jews by Maimonides, is based on the conception of the "acquired intellect." According to this view, the rational faculty latent in the mind is actualized in the process of cognition, and this realization of the intellect is the sole guide to immortality.[122] To this doctrine, the Zohar now gives a Kabbalistic turn. It retains the distinction between three spiritual agencies: *Nefesh* or life; *Ruah* or spirit; and *Neshamah* or soul proper, but abandons the idea that they represent three different faculties of the soul. Rather all three are already latently present in the first, *Nefesh,* and the higher grades correspond to the new and deeper powers which the soul of the devotee acquires through the study of the Torah and through meritorious actions.

In particular, *Neshamah,* the "holy soul," can be realized only by the perfect devotee, who, for the author of the Zohar, is identical with the Kabbalist, and it is only by penetrating into the mysteries of the Torah, that is to say, through the mystical realization of his cognitive powers, that he acquires it.[123] *Neshamah* is the deepest intuitive power which leads to the secrets of God and the Universe. It is therefore natural that *Neshamah* is also conceived as a spark of *Binah,* the divine intellect itself.[124] By acquiring it, the Kabbalist thus realizes something of the divine in his own nature. The various detailed theories concerning the functions, origins and destinies of the three souls of man are obscure and sometimes contradictory, as well as involved, and it is not my intention here to analyze them, but it is perhaps worth noting that, on the whole, our author holds to the view that only *Nefesh,* the natural soul given to every man, is capable of sin: *Neshamah,* the divine, innermost spark of the soul, is beyond sin. In his Hebrew writings, Moses de Leon actually propounds the question: How is it possible for the soul to suffer in Hell, since *Neshamah* is substantially the same as God, and God therefore appears to inflict punishment upon Himself?[125] His solution of the problem — which incidentally throws a flood of light on the pantheism at the bottom of his system — is that in the act of sin, *Neshamah,* the divine element, abandons man, and its place is taken by an impure spirit from the "left side" who takes up his abode in the soul and who alone suffers the torments of retribution. *Neshamah* itself is not affected, and if it descends to Hell, it is only to guide some of the suffering souls up to the light. In the Zohar, too, the punishment of the soul after death is similarly restricted to *Nefesh,* and in some passages extended to *Ruah,* but never to *Neshamah.*[126].

The story of the soul's fate after death, of reward and punishment, of the bliss of the devout and the torments of the sinner, in short the eschatology of the soul, is the last of the major problems with which the author is concerned.[127] Its connection with the fundamental thoughts of his theosophy is but loose, but his vivid imagination constantly produces new variations on the theme whose detailed exemplification fills a considerable part of the Zohar. Taken by and large, the doctrine expounded by the author is fairly consistent. Like all Kabbalists he teaches the pre-existence of all souls since the beginning of creation. Indeed, he goes so far as to assert that the pre-existent souls were already pre-formed in their full individuality while they were still hidden in the womb of eternity. "Since the day when it occurred to God to create the world, and even before it was really created, all the souls of the righteous were hidden in the divine idea, every one in its peculiar form. When He shaped the world, they were actualized and they stood before Him in their various forms in the supreme heights [still in the Sefirotic world], and only then did He place them in a treasure-house in the upper Paradise."[128] There the souls live in pure celestial garments and enjoy the bliss of the beatific vision. Their progress from the Sefirotic sphere to the paradisical realm, which latter is already outside God, is interpreted as a consequence of the mystical "union of the King and the Shekhinah."[129] But already in this pre-existent state, there are differences and gradations in the position of the souls.

On more than one occasion we read of the 'audience' given to the soul by God[130] before its descent into a mundane body and the vow taken by the soul to complete its mission on earth by pious acts and mystical cognition of God. From its good deeds, *mitswoth,* nay from the days on which it has accomplished good, as the poetic description has it, the soul during its earthly stay weaves the mystical garment which it is destined to wear after death in the lower Paradise.[131] This notion of heavenly garments of the souls has a special attraction for the author. Only the souls of the sinners are "naked," or at any

rate the garment of eternity which they weave in time and out of time has "holes." After death, the various parts of the soul, having accomplished their mission, return to their original location, but those which have sinned are brought to court and are purified in the "fiery stream" of Gehenna, or, in the case of the most shameful sinners, burned.[132]

Here the doctrine of transmigration, *Gilgul*, also plays a part. One encounters it first in the book *Bahir*.[133] Unless it goes back to the literary sources of this work, it is reasonable to assume that the Kabbalists of Provence who wrote or edited the book *Bahir* owe it to the influence of the Catharists, the chief religious force in Provence until 1220, i. e. during the years which saw the rise of Kabbalism. The Catharist heresy, which was only stamped out after a bloody Crusade, represented a late and attenuated form of Manichaeism, and as such clung to the doctrine of metempsychosis which the Church condemned as heretical.[134] It must be kept in mind, however, that to the early Kabbalists metempsychosis was not the general destiny of the soul but, according to the Zohar, an exception brought about, above all, by offences against procreation.[135] He who has not obeyed the first commandment of the Torah assumes a new existence in a new bodily abode, be it as a form of punishment or as a chance of restitution. Thus the institution of the levirate is explained by the theory of transmigration. If the dead man's brother marries his widow, he "draws back" the soul of the deceased husband. He builds it up again and it becomes a new spirit in a new body.[136] On the other hand, Moses de Leon, unlike other early Kabbalists, seems to have disapproved of the theory of transmigration into non-human forms of existence. Such transmigration is mentioned as a punishment in the case of certain sins by Menahem of Recanati (1300) who quotes several details about it from the "modern Kabbalists." However, the conception of metempsychosis as a general form of divine retribution is not unknown to the early Kabbalist tradition.[137] The fundamental contradiction between the ideas of punishment in Hell and of metempsychosis — two forms of retribution which in the strict sense are mutually exclusive — is blurred in the Zohar by the limitation of the idea of punishment proper to the process of torment in Hell.

Taken altogether, the spiritual outlook of the Zohar might

SEVENTH LECTURE

ISAAC LURIA AND HIS SCHOOL

I.

After the Exodus from Spain, Kabbalism underwent a complete transformation. A catastrophe of this sort, which uprooted one of the main branches of the Jewish people, could hardly take place without affecting every sphere of life and feeling. In the great material and spiritual upheaval of that crisis, Kabbalism established its claim to spiritual domination in Judaism. This fact became immediately obvious in its transformation from an esoteric into a popular doctrine.

When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, the Kabbalistic form of Jewish mysticism had reached the end of a certain stage of development. The main currents of twelfth and thirteenth century Kabbalism had run their course by the close of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth. This coincided with the beginning of the persecution of the Jews in Spain and the appearance of Marrano Judaism after 1391, and the literature of the fifteenth century reflected an unmistakable flaccidity of religious thought and expression.

The Kabbalists of the time were a small group of esoterics who had little desire to spread their ideas,[1] and who would have been the last men to promote any movement for introducing radical changes into Jewish life, or for altering its rhythms. Only two isolated mystics, the authors of the *Raya Mehemna* and of the book *Peliah*, had been dreaming about a mystical revolution in Jewish life, and nothing had responded to their call.[2] Kabbalism was essentially the privilege of the elect who pursued the path of ever deeper penetration into the mysteries of God. This attitude was clearly manifest in the older Kabbalah, with its 'neutralization' of all Messianic tendencies which, though not complete, was very marked. This comparative indifference to the suggestion that the course of history might be somewhat curtailed by mystical means was due to the fact that originally the

mystics and apocalyptics had turned their thoughts in the reverse direction: The Kabbalists concentrated all their mental and emotional powers not upon the Messianic end of the world, upon the closing stage of the unfolding universe, but rather upon its beginning. Or to put it in other words, in their speculation they were on the whole more concerned with Creation than with Redemption. Redemption was to be achieved not by storming onward in an attempt to expedite historic crises and catastrophes, but rather by retracing the path that leads to the primordial beginnings of Creation and Revelation, at the point where the world-process (the history of the universe and of God) began to evolve within a system of laws. He who knew the way by which he had come might hope eventually to retrace his steps.

The mystical meditations of the Kabbalists on theogony and cosmogony thus produced a non-Messianic and individualistic mode of Redemption or Salvation. In union — says a fourteenth century Kabbalist[3] — there is redemption. In these meditations history was purged of its taint, since the Kabbalists sought to find their way back to the original unity, to the world-structure prior to Satan's First Deception, with the consequences of which they were bound to identify the course of history. Given a new emotional approach at this point, the Kabbalah might have absorbed the intensity of Messianism and become a powerful apocalyptic factor, because retracing the spiritual process to the ultimate foundations of existence might in itself have been regarded as the Redemption, in the sense that the world would thus return to the unity and purity of its beginnings. This return to the cosmogonic starting-point, as the central aim of the Kabbalah, need not always have proceeded in the silent and aloof meditations of the individual, which have and can have no relation to outward events.

After the catastrophe of the Spanish Expulsion, which so radically altered the outer aspect of the Kabbalah if not its innermost content, it also became possible to consider the return to the starting-point of Creation as the means of precipitating the final world-catastrophe, which would come to pass when that return had been achieved by many individuals united in a desire for 'the End' of the world. A great emotional upheaval having taken place, the individual mystic's absorption could have been transformed, by a

kind of mystical dialectics, into the religious aspiration of the whole community. In that event, what had been hidden under the mild aspect of *Tikkun* (striving for the perfection of the world) would be revealed as a potent weapon, one capable of destroying all the forces of evil; and such destruction would in itself have been tantamount to Redemption.

Though Messianic calculations, ideas, and visions were not an essential part of the older Kabbalah, it was by no means lacking in these matters, and it should not be inferred that Kabbalism altogether disregarded the problem of Redemption "in our time". The point is that if and when it did concern itself with it, it did so in a spirit of supererogation. Typical of the catastrophic aspects of Redemption — of which the Kabbalists were fully aware — is the gruesome fact that, long before 1492, some Kabbalistic writers had proclaimed that catastrophic year as the year of the Redemption.[4] However, 1492 brought no liberation from above, but a most cruel exile here below. The consciousness that Redemption signified both liberation and catastrophe permeated the new religious movement to such an extent that it can only be called the obverse side of the apocalptic temper predominating in Jewish life.

The concrete effects and consequences of the catastrophe of 1492 were by no means confined to the Jews then living. As a matter of fact, the historic process set going by the Expulsion from Spain required several generations — almost an entire century — to work itself out completely. Only by degrees did its tremendous implications permeate ever more profound regions of being. This process helped to merge the Apocalyptic and Messianic elements of Judaism with the traditional aspects of Kabbalism. The last age became as important as the first; instead of reverting to the dawn of history, or rather to its metaphysical antecedents, the new doctrines laid the emphasis on the final stages of the cosmological process. The pathos of Messianism pervaded the new Kabbalah and its classical forms of expression as it never did the Zohar; the 'beginning' and the 'end' were linked together.

The contemporaries of the Expulsion were aware chiefly of the concrete problems it had created, but not of its deep-lying implications for religious thought and its theological expression. For the exiles from Spain the catastrophical character of the "End" was

again made clear. To summon up and to release all the forces capable of hastening the "End", became once more the chief aim of the mystics. The messianic doctrine, previously the concern of those interested in apologetics, was made for a time the subject of an aggressive propaganda. The classic compendia in which Isaac Abarbanel codified the Messianic doctrines of Judaism a few years after the Expulsion were soon followed by numerous epistles, tracts, homilies, and apocalyptic writings in which the repercussions of the catastrophe reached their most vigorous expression. In these writings, whose authors were at great pains to link up the Expulsion with the ancient prophecies, the redemptive character of the 1492 catastrophe was strongly emphasized. The birthpangs of the Messianic era, with which history is to "end" or (as the apocalyptics would have it) to "collapse", were therefore assumed to have set in with the Expulsion.[5]

The sharply etched and impressive figure of Abraham ben Eliezer Ha-Levi in Jerusalem, an untiring agitator and interpreter of events "pregnant" with Redemption, is typical of a generation of Kabbalists in which the apocalyptic abyss yawned, but without swallowing up the traditional categories of the mystical theology or, as happened later, transforming it.[6] The emotional force and eloquence of a preacher of repentance were here combined with a passion for the apocalyptic interpretation of history and of historical theology; but the very belief that the Redemption was near prevented the drastic experiences of the Expulsion, vividly as they were still remembered, from being transmuted into ultimate religious concepts. Only gradually, as the Expulsion ceased to be regarded in a redemptive light and loomed up all the more distinctly in its catastrophic character, did the flame which had flared up from the apocalyptical abyss sweep over wide areas of the Jewish world until they finally seized upon and recast the mystical theology of Kabbalism. The new Kabbalah, which was fashioned by this transforming and fusing process in "the Community of the Devout" at Safed, bore enduring marks of the event to which it owed its origin. For, once the catastrophic had been sown as a fertile seed in the heart of this new Kabbalah, its teachings were bound to lead to that further catastrophe which became acute with the Sabbatian movement.

The mood which prevailed in the Kabbalistic circles enkindled

Such deep-seated feeling as to the religious significance of catastrophes was bound, after the acute apocalyptic phase had subsided, to be transferred to more solid and substantial regions and there to struggle for expression. This expression was achieved in the far-reaching changes in the outlook on life and in the new religious conceptions with which the Kabbalah of Safed laid claim to dominate the Jewish world, and did in fact so dominate it for a long time.

The exiles from Spain must have held an intense belief in the fiendish realities of Exile, a belief that was bound to destroy the illusion that it was possible to live peacefully under the Holy Law in Exile. It expressed itself in a vigorous insistence upon the fragmentary character of Jewish existence, and in mystical views and dogmas to explain this fragmentariness with its paradoxes and tensions. These views won widespread acceptance as the social and spiritual effects of the movement which originated either in the catastrophe of 1492 itself or in the Kabbalistic-apocalyptic propaganda attached to that event, made themselves increasingly felt. Life was conceived as Existence in Exile and in self-contradiction, and the sufferings of Exile were linked up with the central Kabbalistic doctrines about God and man. The emotions aroused by these sufferings were not soothed and tranquilized, but stimulated and whipped up. The ambiguities and inconsistencies of "unredeemed" existence, which were reflected in the meditations on the Torah and the nature of prayer, led that generation to set up ultimate values which differed widely from those of the rationalist theology of the Middle Ages if only because the religious ideals it affirmed had no connection with a scale of values based on an intellectual point of view. Aristotle had represented the essence of rationalism to Jewish minds; yet his voice, which had not lost its resonance even in mediaeval Kabbalism despite its passage through a variety of media, now began to sound hollow and spectral to ears attuned to the new Kabbalah. The books of the Jewish philosophers become "devilish books".[10]

Death, repentance, and rebirth were the three great events in human life by which the new Kabbalah sought to bring man into blissful union with God. Humanity was threatened not only by its own corruption, but by that of the world, which originated in the first breach in Creation, when Subject and Object first parted com-

pany. By its emphasis upon death and rebirth (rebirth either in the sense of reincarnation or by the spiritual process of repentance), the Kabbalistic propaganda, through which the new Messianism sought to win its way, gained in directness and popularity. This propaganda shaped the new attitudes and social customs which originated in Safed no less than the new systems and theologumena on which they were based. There was a passionate desire to break down the Exile by enhancing its torments, savouring its bitterness to the utmost (even to the night of the Exile of the Shekhinah itself), and summoning up the compelling force of the repentance of a whole community. (The Zohar promised Redemption if only a single Jewish community would repent whole-heartedly.[11] The strength of the belief in this promise was demonstrated in Safed even while the attempt itself failed.[12]) Attempts to curtail or end the Exile by organized mystical action not rarely took on a social or even quasi-political character. All these tendencies, which were manifested in the very theatre of the Redemption — Eretz Israel — clearly reflect the circumstances in which the Kabbalah became the authentic voice of the people in the crisis produced by the banishment from Spain.

The horrors of Exile were mirrored in the Kabbalistic doctrine of metempsychosis, which now won immense popularity by stressing the various stages of the soul's exile. The most terrible fate that could befall any soul — far more ghastly than the torments of hell — was to be "outcast" or "naked", a state precluding either rebirth or even admission to hell. Such absolute exile was the worst nightmare of the soul which envisaged its personal drama in terms of the tragic destiny of the whole people. Absolute homelessness was the sinister symbol of absolute Godlessness, of utter moral and spiritual degradation. Union with God or utter banishment were the two poles between which a system had to be devised in which the Jews could live under the domination of Law, which seeks to destroy the forces of Exile.

This new Kabbalism stands and falls with its programme of bringing its doctrines home to the community, and preparing it for the coming of the Messiah.[13] On the lofty pinnacles of speculative thought, sustained by the deep founts of mystical contemplation, it never proclaimed a philosophy of escape from the madding crowd; it did not content itself with the aristocratic seclusion of a few elect,

but made popular education its business. In this it was for a long time surprisingly successful. A comparison of typical popular moralizing and edifying treatises and writings, before and after 1550, reveals the fact that until and during the first half of the sixteenth century this type of popular literature showed no trace of Kabbalistic influence. After 1550, the majority of these writers propagated Kabbalistic doctrines. In the centuries that followed, almost all the outstanding treatises on morals were written by mystics, and, with the exception of Moses Hayim Luzzatto in his "Path of the Upright" *Mesilath Yesharim*, their authors made no attempt to conceal this fact. Moses Cordovero's *Tomer Deborah*, Elijah de Vidas' *Reshith Hokhmah*, Eliezer Azikri's[14] *Sefer Haredim*, Hayim Vital's *Shaare Kedushah*, Isaiah Horovitz' *Shne Luhoth Ha-Berith*, Zevi Koidanover's *Kav Ha-Yashar*, to mention only a few of a long list of similar writings between 1550 and 1750 — all played their part in carrying the religious message of the Kabbalah into every Jewish home.

2.

The most important period in the history of the older Kabbalah is linked up with the little Spanish town of Gerona in Catalonia, where a whole group of mystics were active in the first half of the thirteenth century; this group was also the first which succeeded in familiarizing influential circles of Spanish Jewry with Kabbalist thought. It was mainly their spiritual heritage that was brought to the fore in the Zohar. Similarly the small town of Safed, in Upper Galilee, became about forty years after the exodus from Spain the centre of the new Kabbalistic movement. There its peculiar doctrines were first formulated, and from there they began their victorious march through the Jewish world.

Strange as it may seem, the religious ideas of the mystics of Safed, which had such an immense influence, have to this day not been properly explored.[15] The fact is that all the scholars who followed Graetz and Geiger were inclined to single out the Lurianic school of Kabbalism for attack and to pillory it. Hence anyone can read in our historical literature how deeply Isaac Luria injured Judaism, but it is not so easy to discover what Luria actually thought. The mystical system, the influence of which on Jewish history has

certainly been no less than that of Maimonides' "Guide of the Perplexed", was considered by nineteenth century rationalism a slightly unsavoury subject. This view no longer holds good. You get a valuable introduction to the subject in Schechter's beautiful essay "Safed in the Sixteenth Century", where he describes the general characteristics of the movement and more particularly some of the leading figures.[16] But Schechter who says "I lay no claim to be initiated in the science of the invisible,"[17] studiously refrains from giving what would amount to an analysis of their mystical ideas. It is here that our task really begins.

The Kabbalists of Safed have left us a great many of more or less voluminous writings, some of them complete systems of mystical thought, of which the two most famous are those of Moses ben Jacob Cordovero and of Isaac Luria. It would be a fascinating task to compare and contrast the personalities and ideas of the two men, in the manner which Plutarch developed in his famous biographies, for they differ as much from one another as they are intimately related to each other. I must leave such an analysis to another occasion. Let me, however, say this much: Cordovero was essentially a systematic thinker; his purpose is to give both a new interpretation and a systematic description of the mystical heritage of the older Kabbalah, particularly the Zohar. One may say that this thinking, rather than a new stage of mystical insight, leads him to new ideas and formulas. To describe him in the terms of Evelyn Underhill, he is a mystical philosopher rather than a mystic, although he was by no means lacking mystical experience altogether.[18]

Of the theoreticians of Jewish Mysticism Cordovero is undoubtedly the greatest. He was the first to make an attempt to describe the dialectical process through which the Sefiroth pass in the course of their development, with particular emphasis on that side of the process which may be said to take place inside each. Again, it was he who tried to interpret the various stages of emanation as stages of the divine mind. The problem of the relation of the substance of *En-Sof* to the "organism," the "instruments" (*kelim:* i. e. vessels or bowls), through which it works and acts was one to which he returned again and again. The intrinsic conflict between the theistic and the pantheistic tendencies in the mystical theology of Kabbalism is nowhere brought out more clearly than in his thought, and

his attempts to synthetize the contradiction not only dominated the speculative side of his thinking but also produced tentative solutions which are frequently as profound and audacious as they are problematical. His ideas on the subject are summed up in the formula — a century before Spinoza and Malebranche, — that "God is all reality, but not all reality is God."[19] *En-Sof,* according to him, can also be called thought (i. e. thought of the world) "in so far as everything that exists is contained in His substance. He encompasses all existence, but not in the mode of its isolated existence below, but rather in the existence of the substance, for He and existing things are [in this mode] one, and neither separate nor multifarious, nor externally visible, but rather His substance is present in His Sefiroth, and He Himself is everything, and nothing exists outside Him."[20]

Cordovero's fecundity as a writer is comparable to that of Bonaventura or Thomas Aquinas, and like the latter he died comparatively young. When death carried him away in 1570, he was only 48 years old. The bulk of his writings is still extant, including an immense commentary on the Zohar, which has come down to us in a complete copy from the original.[21] He had the gift of transforming everything into literature, and in this as in many other things he was the complete antithesis of Isaac Luria, in whom we meet the outstanding representative of later Kabbalism. Luria was not only a true "Zaddik" or saintly man — that Cordovero was no less, from all we know about him[22] — but in addition there was also in him that creative power which has led every successive generation to regard him as the leader of the Safed movement. He was also the first Kabbalist whose personality impressed his disciples so deeply that some thirty-odd years after his death a kind of "saint's biography" began to circulate which gave not only a multitude of legends, but a faithful description of many of his personal traits. It is contained in three letters written by one Solomon, better known as Shlomel Dresnitz, who came from Strassnitz in Moravia to Safed in the year 1602 and from there spread Luria's fame in his letters to his Kabbalistic friends in Europe.[23]

Luria was no less a scholar than many other Kabbalists; during his formative years in Egypt he had his fill of theoretical learning. But although he speaks the symbolical language of the old Kabba-

lists, particularly that of the anthropomorphists among them, it is evident that he is looking for ways of expressing new and original thoughts. Unlike Cordovero he left no written legacy when he passed away in 1572 at the age of 38; indeed he seems to have lacked the literary faculty altogether. When one of his disciples, who seem to have worshipped him like a superior being, asked him once why he did not set out his ideas and teaching in book form, he is said to have replied: "It is impossible, because all things are interrelated. I can hardly open my mouth to speak without feeling as though the sea burst its dams and overflowed. How then shall I express what my soul has received, and how can I put it down in a book?"[24] Actually, a critical analysis of the very numerous written tracts which circulate under his name and to which the Kabbalists always reverently referred as *Kithve Ha-Ari,* "The writings of the Sacred Lion", shows that either before or during his stay in Safed, which lasted only about three years, Luria did make an attempt to put his thoughts down in a book, which is undoubtedly authentic and in our possession. This is his commentary to the *Sifra di-Tseniuta,* "The Book of Concealment," one of the most difficult parts of the Zohar.[25] But here we find but little that is peculiar to him. In addition, a number of his commentaries on certain passages of the Zohar have survived. Finally there are his three mystical hymns for the Sabbath meals, which are among the most remarkable products of Kabbalistic poetry and may be found in almost every prayer-book of Eastern Jewry.

On the other hand, all we happen to know of his system is based on his conversations with his disciples; conversations which were as diffuse and unsystematic as possible. Luckily for us his pupils have left us several compilations of his ideas and sayings, including some which were written independently of each other, so that we are not, as has sometimes been said, dependent upon a single source. His most important follower, Hayim Vital (1543—1620), is the author of several versions of Luria's system, the most elaborate of which runs into five folio volumes, the so-called "Eight Gates" *(Shemonah Shearim)* into which he has divided his life work, *Ets Hayim,* "The Tree of Life".[26] In addition we have several anonymous writings, also by his followers, as well as a more compact presentation of the theosophical side of his system by Rabbi Joseph ibn

Tabul, the most authoritative of his disciples after Vital.[27] Tabul's book in manuscript was for a long time buried in various libraries, with nobody paying any attention to it, and even when it was finally published by pure accident in 1921,[28] it was attributed to the more famous Vital — ironically enough, since Vital seems to have had little sympathy for his rival. What is common to both versions may safely be regarded as the authentic Lurianic doctrine.

As regards Luria's personality it is fortunate that Vital has carefully jotted down hundreds of little personal traits which bear the unmistakable imprint of authenticity.[29] Altogether Luria's personality comes out much clearer than that of Cordovero. Although not long after his death he had already become a legendary figure, there remains enough genuine biographical material to show us the man. First and foremost he was a visionary. As a matter of fact, we owe to him a good deal of insight into the strength and the limits of visionary thinking. The labyrinth of the hidden world of mysticism — for that is the way it appears in the writings of his disciples — was as familiar to him as the streets of Safed. He himself dwelt perpetually in this mysterious world, and his visionary gaze caught glimpses of psychical life in all that surrounded him; he did not differentiate between organic and inorganic life, but insisted that souls were present everywhere and that intercourse with them was possible. He had many uncanny visions, as for example when he frequently pointed out to his disciples, while walking with them in the vicinity of Safed, the graves of pious men of old with whose souls he held intercourse. Since the world of the Zohar was to him completely real, he not infrequently discovered the tombs of men, who were nothing but literary phantoms, from the romantic trappings of that remarkable book.[30]

Vital's account of his master's critical remarks on earlier Kabbalistic literature is also interesting; he warns against all the Kabbalists between Nahmanides and himself, because the prophet Elijah had not appeared to them and their writings are based purely on human perceptions and intelligence, and not on true Kabbalah. But the books he recommends, such as the Zohar, the commentary of the so-called pseudo-Abraham ben David to the "Book of Creation", the book *Berith Menuhah* and the book *Kanah,* were without exception written during the period which he condemns. Moreover,

etus. The hegemony of the Safed school and more especially of its most important offshoot, the Lurianic Kabbalah, may justly be described as a period in which practical mysticism dominated, but for the specific difference between the Lurianic doctrine and its immediate predecessors we must look elsewhere.

To repeat what I have said, Luria's ideas are developed by him out of those of his predecessors including not only Cordovero but far older authors. In the case of certain important details, for which he went back to the old Kabbalists, it can be said that these played no conspicuous part in their writings, while to Luria they were all-important. These connections between Luria and a few half-forgotten Spanish Kabbalists still await an adequate historical analysis.[41]

4

As we shall see later on, the form in which Luria presented his ideas is strongly reminiscent of the Gnostic myths of antiquity. The similarity is, of course, unintentional; the fact is simply that the structure of his thoughts closely resembles that of the Gnostics. His cosmogony is intensely dramatic, and I am inclined to believe that this quality, which was lacking in Cordovero's system, partly explains its success. Compared to that of the Zohar, whose authentic interpretation — on the basis of Elijah's revelations — it purports to be, its cosmogony is both more original and more elaborate. The older Kabbalists had a much simpler conception of the cosmological process. According to them, it begins with an act in which God projects His creative power out of His own Self into space. Every new act is a further stage in the process of externalization, which unfolds, in accordance with the emanationist doctrine of Neoplatonism, in a straight line from above downwards. The whole process is strictly one-way and correspondingly simple.

Luria's theory has nothing of this inoffensive simplicity. It is based upon the doctrine of *Tsimtsum*, one of the most amazing and far-reaching conceptions ever put forward in the whole history of Kabbalism. *Tsimtsum* means originally "concentration" or "contraction", but if used in the Kabbalistic parlance it is best translated by "withdrawal" or "retreat." The idea first occurs in a short and entirely forgotten treatise which was written in the middle of the thirteenth century and of which Luria seems to have made use,[42] while

its literary original is a Talmudic saying which Luria inverted. He stood it on its head, no doubt believing that he had put it on its feet. The Midrash — in sayings originating from third century teachers — occasionally refers to God as having concentrated His Shekhinah, His divine presence, in the holiest of holies, at the place of the *Cherubim*, as though His whole power were concentrated and contracted in a single point.[43] Here we have the origin of the term *Tsimtsum*, while the thing itself is the precise opposite of this idea: To the Kabbalist of Luria's school *Tsimtsum* does not mean the concentration of God *at* a point, but his retreat *away* from a point.

What does this mean? It means briefly that the existence of the Universe is made possible by a process of shrinkage in God. Luria begins by putting a question which gives the appearance of being naturalistic and, if you like, somewhat crude. How can there be a world if God is everywhere? If God is 'all in all', how can there be things which are not God? How can God create the world out of nothing if there is no nothing? This is the question. The solution became, in spite of the crude form which he gave it, of the highest importance in the history of later Kabbalistic thought. According to Luria, God was compelled to make room for the world by, as it were, abandoning a region within Himself, a kind of mystical primordial space from which He withdrew in order to return to it in the act of creation and revelation.[44] The first act of *En-Sof*, the Infinite Being, is therefore not a step outside but a step inside, a movement of recoil, of falling back upon oneself, of withdrawing into oneself. Instead of emanation we have the opposite, contraction. The God who revealed himself in firm contours was superseded by one who descended deeper into the recesses of His own Being, who concentrated himself into himself,[45] and had done so from the very beginning of creation. To be sure, this view was often felt, even by those who gave it a theoretical formulation, to verge on the blasphemous. Yet it cropped up again and again, modified only ostensibly by a feeble 'as it were' or 'so to speak'.

One is tempted to interpret this withdrawal of God into his own Being in terms of Exile, of banishing himself from his totality into profound seclusion. If seen this way, the idea of *Tsimtsum* is the deepest symbol of Exile that could be thought of, even deeper than the 'Breaking of the Vessels'.[46] In the 'Breaking of the Vessels',

with which I propose to deal later, something of the Divine Being is exiled out of Himself, whereas the *Tsimtsum* could come to be considered as an exile into Himself. The first act of all is not an act of Revelation but one of limitation. Only in the second act does God send out a ray of His light and begin his Revelation, or rather his unfolding as God the Creator, in the primordial space of His own Creation. More than that, every new act of emanation and manifestation is preceded by one of concentration and retraction.[47] In other words, the Cosmic process becomes two-fold. Every stage involves a double strain, i. e. the light which streams back into God and that which flows out from Him, and but for this perpetual tension, this ever repeated effort with which God holds Himself back, nothing in the world would exist. There is fascinating power and profundity in this doctrine. This paradox of *Tsimtsum* — as Jacob Emden said[48] — is the only serious attempt ever made to give substance to the idea of Creation out of Nothing. Incidentally, the fact that an idea which at first sight appears so reasonable as "Creation out of Nothing" should turn out upon inspection to lead to a theosophical mystery shows us how illusory the apparent simplicity of religious fundamentals really is.

Apart from its intrinsic importance, the theory of *Tsimtsum* also acted as a counterpoise to the pantheism which some scholars think is implied by the theory of emanation.[49] Not only is there a residue of divine manifestation in every being, but under the aspect of *Tsimtsum* it also acquires a reality of its own which guards it against the danger of dissolution into the non-individual being of the divine "All in all". Luria himself was a living example of an outspoken theistic mystic. He gave the Zohar, for all its intrinsic pantheism, a strictly theistic interpretation. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than that the pantheistic tendencies which began to gain momentum in Kabbalism, especially from the period of the European Renaissance onwards, clashed with the Lurianic doctrine of *Tsimtsum*, and that attempts were made to re-interpret it in such a way as to strip it of its meaning. The question whether it should be interpreted literally or metaphorically came sometimes to be symbolical of the struggle between Theistic and Pantheistic trends, so much so that in later Kabbalism the position which a writer occupied in this struggle is to a certain extent implied by his stand on the question

of *Tsimtsum*.[50] For if *Tsimtsum* is merely a metaphor to which no real act or occurence, however shrouded and mysterious, corresponds, then the question how something that is not God can really exist remains unsolved. If the *Tsimtsum* — as some later Kabbalists have tried to prove — is only a veil which separates the individual consciousness from God in such a way as to give it the illusion of self-consciousness, in which it knows itself to be different from God, then only an imperceptible change is needed so that the heart may perceive the unity of Divine subsistence in all that exists. Such a change would necessarily destroy the conception of *Tsimtsum* as one intended to provide an explanation for the existence of something other than God.

As I have already said, the doctrine of *Tsimtsum* played an extremely important part in the development of Lurianic thought, and new attempts to formulate it were made continuously. The history of this idea from Luria down to our own days would give a fascinating picture of the development of original Jewish mystical thought.[51] Here I must content myself with stressing one more aspect, which Luria himself undoubtedly regarded as highly important and for which our source is an authentic remark by himself.[52] According to this, the essence of the Divine Being, before the *Tsimtsum* took place, contained not only the qualities of love and mercy, but also that of Divine Sternness which the Kabbalists call *Din* or Judgment. But *Din* was not recognizable as such; it was as it were dissolved in the great ocean of God's compassion, like a grain of salt in the sea, to use Joseph ibn Tabul's simile. In the act of *Tsimtsum*, however, it crystallized and became clearly defined, for inasmuch as *Tsimtsum* signifies an act of negation and limitation it is also an act of judgment.[53] It must be remembered that to the Kabbalist, judgment means the imposition of limits and the correct determination of things. According to Cordovero the quality of judgment is inherent in everything in so far as everything wishes to remain what it is, to stay within its boundaries.[54] Hence it is precisely in the existence of individual things that the mystical category of judgment plays an important part. If, therefore, the Midrash says that originally the world was to have been based on the quality of strict judgment, *Din*, but God seeing that this was insufficient to guarantee its existence, added the quality of mercy, the Kabbalist who follows Luria

interprets this saying as follows: The first act, the act of *Tsimtsum*, in which God determines, and therefore limits, Himself, is an act of *Din* which reveals the roots of this quality in all that exists; these "roots of divine judgment" subsist in chaotic mixture with the residue of divine light which remained after the original retreat or withdrawal into the primary space of God's Creation. Then a second ray of light out of the essence of *En-Sof* brings order into chaos and sets the cosmic process in motion, by separating the hidden elements and moulding them into a new form.[55] Throughout this process the two tendencies of perpetual ebb and flow — the Kabbalists speak of *hithpashtuth*, egression, and *histalkuth*, regression[56] — continue to act and react upon each other. Just as the human organism exists through the double process of inhaling and exhaling and the one cannot be conceived without the other, so also the whole of Creation constitutes a gigantic process of divine inhalation and exhalation. In the final resort, therefore, the root of all evil is already latent in the act of *Tsimtsum*.

True to the tradition of the Zohar, Luria regards the cosmic process, up to a certain point, after the *Tsimtsum*, as a process *within* God — a doctrine, incidentally, which has never failed to involve its adherents in difficulties of the most complex sort. This assumption was made easier for him by his belief, already mentioned in passing, that a vestige or residue of the divine light — *Reshimu* in Luria's terminology — remains in the primeval space created by the *Tsimtsum* even after the withdrawal of the substance of *En-Sof*.[57] He compares this with the residue of oil or wine in a bottle the contents of which have been poured out.[58] This conception makes it possible to lay stress alternatively on the divine character of the *Reshimu*, or on the fact that the essence of *En-Sof* has been withdrawn so that what comes into being as the result of this process must stand outside God. It remains to be added that some of the more decided theists among the Kabbalists have solved the dilemma by disregarding the *Reshimu* altogether.

Before going further it may be of interest to point out that this conception of the *Reshimu* has a close parallel in the system of the Gnostic Basilides who flourished about 125 A. D. Here, too, we find the idea of a primordial "blessed space, which can neither be conceived of, nor characterized by any word, yet is not entirely deserted

from the Sonship;" the latter is Basilides' term for the most sublime consummation of the universal potentialities. Of the relation of the Sonship to the Holy Spirit, or Pneuma, Basilides says that even when the Pneuma remained empty and divorced from the Sonship, yet at the same time it retained the latter's flavour which permeates everything above and below, even as far as formless matter and our own state of existence. And Basilides, too, employs the simile of a bowl in which the delicate fragrance of a "sweetest smelling unguent" remains though the bowl be emptied with the greatest possible care.[59]

5.

Side by side with this conception of the cosmic process, we find two other important theosophical ideas. Luria has expressed them in bold mythical language, at times perhaps rather too bold. These two ideas are the doctrine of *Shevirath Ha-Kelim*, or "Breaking of the Vessels," and that of *Tikkun*, which means mending or restitution of a defect. The influence of these two ideas on the development of later Kabbalistic thought is no less than that of the doctrine of *Tsimtsum*.

Let us begin by considering the one I mentioned first. We have to assume that the divine light which flowed into primordial space — of which three-dimensional space is a late development — unfolded in various stages and appeared under a variety of aspects. There is no point in going here into the details of this process. Luria and his followers are inclined to lose themselves partly in visionary, partly in scholastic, descriptions of it.[60] It came to pass within a realm of existence which, to use a Gnostic term, might well be called the sphere of *Pleroma*, or the "fullness" of divine light. The decisive point is that, according to this doctrine, the first being which emanated from the light was *Adam Kadmon*, the "primordial man."

Adam Kadmon is nothing but a first configuration of the divine light which flows from the essence of *En-Sof* into the primeval space of the *Tsimtsum* — not indeed from all sides but, like a beam, in one direction only. He therefore is the first and highest form in which the divinity begins to manifest itself after the *Tsimtsum*. From his eyes, mouth, ears and nose, the lights of the Sefiroth burst forth. At first these lights were coalesced in a totality without any differentiation between the various Sefiroth; in this state they did

ciples, it has none of the characteristics of chaos or anarchy. On the contrary, it is a process which follows certain very definite laws or rules which are described in considerable detail. Subsequently, however, the popular imagination took hold of the picturesque side of the idea and gave a literal interpretation, so to speak, to metaphors like "breaking of the vessels" or "world of the *tohu*"; in this manner, the emphasis was gradually shifted from the lawful to the catastrophic nature of the process.

The cause of this "breaking of the vessels," which releases the whole complexity of the cosmological drama and determines man's place in it, appears in Luria's and Vital's doctrine under varying aspects. In the immediate sense, the event is traced back to certain technical flaws in the structure of the Sefirotic atom-cosmos from which the 'accident' follows with necessity.[67] In a profounder sense, however, the event is due to what I propose to term, with Tishby,[68] the cathartic cause. For Luria, the deepest roots of the *Kelipot,* or "shells," i. e. the forces of evil, existed already before the breaking of the vessels and were mixed up, so to speak, with the lights of the Sefiroth and the above-mentioned *Reshimu,* or residue of *En-Sof* in the primordial space. What really brought about the fracture of the vessels was the necessity of cleansing the elements of the Sefiroth by eliminating the *Kelipot,* in order to give a real existence and separate identity to the power of evil.[69] The Zohar, as we have seen, already defines evil as a by-product of the life process of the Sefiroth, and more particularly, of the Sefirah of strict judgment. According to Luria, these waste products were originally mixed with the pure substance of *Din* (sternness), and it was only after the breaking of the vessels and the subsequent process of selection that the evil and demonic forces assumed real and separate existence in a realm of their own. Not from the fragments of the broken vessels but from the "dross of the primordial kings" did the domain of the *Kelipah* arise. More than that, the Zohar's organological imagery is developed to its logical conclusion: The *Shevirah* is compared to the "break-through" of birth, the deepest convulsion of the organism which, incidentally, is also accompanied by the externalization of what might be described as waste products.[70] In this manner, the mystical "death of the primordial kings" is transformed into the far more plausible symbol of a mystical 'birth' of the pure new vessels.

Tikkun, to use the Hebrew term. Naturally enough the mysteries of *Tikkun* are the chief concern of Luria's theosophical system, theoretical and practical. Its details, particularly on the theoretical side, are of a highly technical nature and I shall not go to the length of describing them here.[75] What we have to consider are the few basic ideas which find their expression in the theory of *Tikkun.*

6.

These parts of the Lurianic Kabbalah undoubtedly represent the greatest victory which anthropomorphic thought has ever won in the history of Jewish mysticism. It is as certain that many of these symbols reflect highly developed mystical meditations, which are almost impenetrable to rational thought, as it is undeniable that, taken as a whole, this symbolism is of a somewhat crude nature. The tendency to regard human life and behaviour as symbols of a deeper life, the conception of man as a *micro-cosmos* and of the living God as a *macro-anthropos,* has never been more clearly expressed and driven to its utmost consequences.

In the stage which corresponds to the manifestation of God under the aspect of *Adam Kadmon,* before the Breaking of the Vessels, the forces in action are not yet altogether parts of an organic whole and likewise have not yet assumed a distinctive, personal and characteristic configuration. Now that the vessels are broken a new stream of light wells from the original source of *En-Sof* and bursting forth from the forehead of *Adam Kadmon,* gives a new direction to the disordered elements. The lights of the Sefiroth streaming from *Adam Kadmon* are organized in new configurations in each of which *Adam Kadmon* is reflected in certain definite forms. Every Sefirah is transformed from a general attribute of God into what the Kabbalists call *Partsuf,* "countenance" of God, which means that all the potentialities implied in every Sefirah are now brought under the influence of a formative principle,[76] and that in each the entire personality of God becomes apparent, if always under the aspect of a distinctive feature. The God who manifests Himself at the end of the process, represents a great deal more than the hidden *En-Sof;* He is now the living God of religion, whom Kabbalism attempted to portray. The whole attempt of Lurianic Kabbalism to describe the theogonic process in God in terms of human existence represents an

effort to arrive at a new conception of the personal God,[77] but all it does is to culminate in a new form of Gnostical mythology. There is no use trying to get away from this fact; Luria tries to describe how in the process of *Tikkun*, of restoring the scattered lights of God to their right place, the various aspects, under which God manifests Himself, emerge one from the other as so many *Partsufim;* the conception of these is already quite personalistic.

In reading these descriptions one is easily tempted to forget that to Luria they refer to purely spiritual processes. Superficially at least, they resemble the myths through which Basilides, Valentinus or Mani tried to describe the cosmic drama, with the difference that they are vastly more complicated than these Gnostical systems.

The chief *Partsufim* or configurations are five in number.[78] Their names were suggested to Luria by the symbolism of the Zohar, particularly in the Idras; but the function and significance which he assigns to them is to a large extent entirely novel.

Where the flowing potencies of pure mercy and divine love which are contained in the supreme Sefirah are gathered together in a personal figure, there, according to the Zohar, arises the configuration of *Arikh Anpin*, occasionally translated "The Long Face," but actually signifying "the Long-Suffering", i. e. God the long-suffering and merciful.[79] In the Zohar, *Arikh* is also called *Attika Kaddisha*, i. e. "the Holy Ancient One." For Luria, the former is to some extent a modification of the latter. The potencies of the Sefiroth of divine wisdom and intelligence, *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, have become the *Partsufim* of "father and mother," *Abba* and *Imma*.[80] The potencies of the six lower Sefiroth (with the exception of the Shekhinah), in which therefore mercy, justice and compassion are in harmonious balance, are organized into a single configuration which Luria, in accordance with the Zohar, calls *Zeir Anpin*. Again, the correct translation is not "The Short Face," but "The Impatient,"[81] as opposed to "The Long-Suffering." In this configuration, the quality of stern judgment, which has no place in the figure of the "Holy Ancient One," plays an important part.

In the same manner in which, according to the Zohar, the six Sefiroth, corresponding to the six days of Creation, play the chief part in the cosmic process and through the unity of their motion represent God as the living Lord of the Universe, so the figure of *Zeir*

Anpin stands in the centre of Lurianic theosophy in so far as the latter refers to the process of *Tikkun*. *Zeir Anpin* is "The Holy One, praise be to Him." What the "Holy One, praised be He," and the Shekhinah were for the Zohar, *Zeir Anpin* and *Rachel*, the mystical configuration, or *Partsuf*, of the Shekhinah, are to Luria. As long as the *Tikkun* is not complete they form two *Partsufim*, although the doctrine essentially concerns the one fully developed personality of the living God which is carved out of the substance of *En-Sof* by the immeasurably complicated process of *Tikkun*. The doctrine of *Zeir* and *Rachel*, therefore, is the real focal point of the theoretical side of the *Tikkun*. The origin of *Zeir Anpin* in the womb of the 'celestial mother', his birth and development, as well as the laws in accordance with which all the 'upper' potencies are organized in him, form the subject of detailed exposition in the system developed by Luria's followers.[82]

Luria is driven to something very much like a mythos of God giving birth to Himself; indeed this seems to me to be the focal point of this whole involved and frequently rather obscure and inconsistent description. The development of man through the stages of conception, pregnancy, birth and childhood, to the point where the developed personality makes full use of its intellectual and moral powers,[83] this whole process appears as a bold symbol of the *Tikkun* in which God evolves His own personality.

The conflict here is latent but inescapable: Is *En-Sof* the personal God, the God of Israel, and are all the *Partsufim* only His manifestations under various aspects, or is *En-Sof* the unpersonal substance, the *deus absconditus*, who becomes a person only in the *Partsufim?* What could easily be managed so long as it concerned only the theological interpretation of the doctrine of the Zohar, with its immediate relationship between *En-Sof* and the Sefiroth, becomes a pressing problem in this very complicated process of *Tsimtsum* and *Shevirah* and the long chain of events leading up to the development of *Zeir Anpin*. The more dramatic the process in God becomes, the more inevitable is the question: Where in all this drama is God?

For Cordovero, only *En-Sof* was the real God of whom religion speaks, and the world of divinity with all its Sefiroth nothing but the organism in which He constitutes Himself in order to bring forth the universe of Creation, and to act in it. In reading the authentic

literature of Lurianic Kabbalism, one is frequently struck by the opposite impression: *En-Sof* has little religious interest for Luria. His three hymns for the three Sabbath meals are directed to the mystical configurations of God: The "Holy Ancient One", the *Zeir Anpin*, and the *Shekhinah* for which he employs a Zoharic symbol, the "holy apple garden."[84] These hymns have the magnificent sweep of a mind which visualizes a mystical process, half describing it, half conjuring and producing it through these very words. Their solemnity is highly suggestive, and the third hymn in particular deserves its immense popularity, so well does it express the mood which envelopes the mind when the growing dusk proclaims the end of the Sabbath. In these hymns, then, Luria appears to address the *Partsufim* as separate personalities. This is an extreme attitude. There have always been Kabbalists who declined to go so far and, like Moses Hayim Luzzatto, insisted on the personal character of *En-Sof*. These outspoken theists among the theosophists never ceased to reinterpret the doctrine of the *Partsufim* in a sense designed to strip it of its obvious mythical elements, a tendency particularly interesting in the case of Luzzatto whose doctrine on the world of divinity was the offspring not of pure theory but of mystical vision. For the rest, the manifold contradictions and *non sequiturs* in Vital's writings supplied these Kabbalists with a sufficiency of arguments in favour of their own theistic exegesis.

According to Luria, this evolution of personality is repeated and as it were reflected at every stage and in every sphere of divine and mundane existence. From earlier sources, the Kabbalists of Safed, and in particular Cordovero, had adopted the doctrine of four worlds placed between the *En-Sof* and our earthly cosmos — a doctrine of which no trace is to be found in the major part of the Zohar.[85] In Safed, this theory was for the first time more fully elaborated and Luria, too, accepted it, though in his own way. The four worlds are: (1) *Atsiluth*, the world of emanation and of the divinity which has so far been our subject; (2) *Beriah*, the world of creation, i. e. of the Throne, the *Merkabah* and the highest angels; (3) *Yetsirah*, the world of formation, the chief domain of the angels; and (4) *Asiyah*, the world of making (and not, as some translators would have it, action). This fourth world, similar to Plotinus' hypostasis of "Nature," is conceived as the spiritual archetype of the material world

ing-point of all the processes after the *Tsimtsum*, was not of the same substance as *En-Sof* but was created *ex nihilo*.[90] All these interpretations must, however, be regarded as deviations from Luria's authentic teachings.

7.

This brings us to a further aspect of the doctrine of *Tikkun*, which is also the more important for the system of practical theosophy. The process in which God conceives, brings forth and develops Himself does not reach its final conclusion in God. Certain parts of the process of restitution are allotted to man. Not all the lights which are held in captivity by the powers of darkness are set free by their own efforts; it is Man who adds the final touch to the divine countenance; it is he who completes the enthronement of God, the King and the mystical Creator of all things, in His own Kingdom of Heaven; it is he who perfects the Maker of all things! In certain spheres of being, divine and human existence are intertwined. The intrinsic, extramundane process of *Tikkun*, symbolically described as the birth of God's personality, corresponds to the process of mundane history. The historical process and its innermost soul, the religious act of the Jew, prepare the way for the final restitution of all the scattered and exiled lights and sparks. The Jew who is in close contact with the divine life through the Torah, the fulfilment of the commandments, and through prayer, has it in his power to accelerate or to hinder this process. Every act of man is related to this final task which God has set for His creatures.

It follows from this that for Luria the appearance of the Messiah is nothing but the consummation of the continuous process of Restoration, of *Tikkun*.[91] The true nature of Redemption is therefore mystical, and its historical and national aspects are merely ancillary symptoms which constitute a visible symbol of its consummation. The redemption of Israel concludes the redemption of all things, for does not redemption mean that everything is put in its proper place, that the original blemish is removed? The 'world of *Tikkun*' is therefore the world of Messianic action. The coming of the Messiah means that this world of *Tikkun* has received its final shape.

It is here that we have the point where the mystical and the

Messianic element in Luria's doctrine are welded together. The *Tikkun*, the path to the end of all things, is also the path to the beginning. Theosophic cosmology, the doctrine of the emergence of all things from God, becomes its opposite, the doctrine of Salvation as the return of all things to their original contact with God. Everything that man does, reacts somewhere and somehow on this complicated process of *Tikkun*. Every event and every domain of existence faces at once inwardly and outwardly, which is why Luria declares that worlds in all their externals are dependent on acts of religion, on the fulfilment of the commandments and meritorious deeds; but, according to him, everything internal in these worlds depends on spiritual actions, of which the most important is prayer.[92] In a sense, therefore, we are not only masters of our own destiny, and in the last resort are ourselves responsible for the continuation of the *Galuth*, but we also fulfil a mission which reaches far beyond that.

In a previous Lecture I mentioned the magic of inwardness connected with certain Kabbalistic doctrines. In Lurianic thought these elements, under the name of *Kawwanah*, or mystical intention, occupy a highly important position. The task of man is seen to consist in the direction of his whole inner purpose towards the restoration of the original harmony which was disturbed by the original defect — the Breaking of the Vessels — and those powers of evil and sin which date from that time. To *unify* the name of God, as the term goes, is not merely to perform an act of confession and acknowledgment of God's Kingdom, it is more than that; it is an action rather than an act. The *Tikkun* restores the unity of God's name which was destroyed by the original defect — Luria spoke about the letters JH as torn away from WH in the name JHWH — and every true religious act is directed towards the same aim.

In an age in which the historical exile of the people was a terrible and fundamental reality of life, the old idea of an exile of the Shekhinah gained a far greater importance than ever before. For all their persistent claim that this idea represents a mere metaphor, it is clear from their own writings that the Kabbalists at bottom saw something else in it. The exile of the Shekhinah is not a metaphor, it is a genuine symbol of the 'broken' state of things in the realm of Divine potentialities. The Shekhinah fell, as the last Sefirah, when the vessels were broken. When the *Tikkun* began and the last Sefirah

ermost to the innermost.[99] More than that: Prayer is a mystical action which has an influence on the spheres through which the mystic moves in his *Kawwanah*. It is part of the great mystical process of *Tikkun*. Since *Kawwanah* is of a spiritual nature, it can achieve something in the spiritual world. It can become a most powerful factor, if used by the right man in the right place. As we have seen, the process of restoring all things to their proper place demands not only an impulse from God, but also one from his creature, in his religious action. True life and true amends for original sin are made possible by the confluence and concurrence of both impulses, the Divine and the human.

The true worshipper, in short, exercises a tremendous power over the inner worlds, just as he bears a correspondingly great responsibility for the fulfilment of his Messianic task. The life of every world and every sphere is in continuous movement; every moment is a new stage in its development.[100] At every moment it strives to find the natural form which will lift it out of the confusion. And therefore there is in the last resort a new *Kawwanah* for every new moment. No mystical prayer is completely like any other. True prayer is modelled on the rhythm of the hour for which and in which it speaks.[101] Since everyone makes his individual contribution to the task of *Tikkun*, in accordance with the particular rank of his soul in the hierarchy, all mystical meditation is of an individual nature. As for the general principles concerning the direction of such meditation, the principles which everyone may apply in his own way and in his own time to the standard prayers of the liturgy, Luria believed he had found them, and his followers developed them in great detail. They represent an application of Abulafia's theory of meditation to the new Kabbalah. The emphasis on the strictly individual character of prayer, which occupies an important place in Hayim Vital's theory of *Kawwanah*, is all the more important as we are here in a region of mysticism where the danger of degeneration into mechanical magic and theurgy is greatest.

Luria's doctrine of mystical prayer stands directly on the border between mysticism and magic, where the one only too easily passes into the other. Every prayer which is more than mere acknowledgment of God's Kingdom, indeed every prayer which in a more or less clearly defined sense is bound up with the hope of its

being granted, involves the eternal paradox of man's hope to influence the inscrutable ways and eternal decisions of Providence. This paradox, in the unfathomable depths of which religious feeling has its abode, leads inevitably to the question of the magical nature of prayer. The facile distinction between magic and so-called true mysticism, which we find in the writings of some modern scholars, (and which we have also met in Abulafia's account of his own system), with their abstract definition of the term *mysticism,* is quite irrelevant to the history and to the lives of many mystical thinkers. Granted that magic and mysticism belong to fundamentally different categories, that does not disprove the fact that they are capable of meeting, developing and interacting in the same mind. History shows that particularly those schools of mysticism which are not purely pantheistic and show no tendency to blur the distinction between God and Nature, represent a blend of the mystical and the magical consciousness. That is true of many forms of Indian, Greek, Catholic and also of Jewish Mysticism.

That the doctrine of *Kawwanah* in prayer was capable of being interpreted as a certain kind of magic seems clear to me; that it involves the problem of magical practices is beyond any doubt. Yet the number of Kabbalists who weakened under the temptation is surprisingly small. I have had occasion in Jerusalem to meet men who to this day adhere to the practice of mystical meditation in prayer, as Luria taught it, for among the 80,000 Jews of Jerusalem there are still thirty or forty masters of mystical prayer who practise it after years of spiritual training.[102] I am bound to say that in the majority of cases a glance is sufficient to recognize the mystical character of their devotion. None of these men would deny that the inner *Kawwanah* of prayer is easily capable of being externalized as magic, but they have evolved, or perhaps one should rather say, inherited a system of spiritual education in which the centre of gravity lies on mystical introspection. The *Kawwanah* is to them also the way to *Devekuth,* that mystical contact with God which, as we have seen in a previous lecture, is the typical form of *unio mystica* in Kabbalism. Ecstasy is possible here only within the limits imposed by this *Kawwanah;* it is an ecstasy of silent meditation,[103] of a descent of the human will to meet that of God, prayer serving as a kind of balustrade on which the mystic leans, so as not to be plunged suddenly

or unprepared into an ecstasy in which the holy waters might drown his consciousness.

8.

The doctrine and practice of mystical prayer is the esoteric part of Lurianic Kabbalism, that part of it which is reserved to the elect. Side by side with this doctrine, however, we find ideas of a different character. Above all the doctrine of practical realization of the *Tikkun,* and its combination not only with the aforementioned view of the devotee's task, but also with the doctrine of metempsychosis, secured to all three elements the strongest influence on wide circles of Jewry. The task of man has been defined by Luria in a simple but effective way as the restoration of his primordial spiritual structure or *Gestalt.*[104] That is the task of every one of us, for every soul contains the potentialities of this spiritual appearance outraged and degraded by the fall of Adam, whose soul contained all souls.[105] From this soul of all souls, sparks have scattered in all directions and become diffused into matter. The problem is to reassemble them, to lift them to their proper place and to restore the spiritual nature of man in its original splendour as God conceived it. According to Luria the meaning of the acts which the Torah prescribes or forbids is none other than the execution, by and in the individual, of this process of restitution of man's spiritual nature. The Targum already drew a parallel between the 613 commandments and prohibitions of the Torah and the supposed 613 parts of the human body.[106] Now Luria advances the thought that the soul, which represented the original appearance of man before its exile into the body, also has 613 parts. By fulfilling the commandments of the Torah, man restores his own spiritual structure; he carves it out of himself as it were. And since every part corresponds to a commandment, the solution of the task demands the complete fulfilment of all the 613 commandments.

Incidentally, this interrelation of all men through Adam's soul already moved Cordovero to mystical speculations. To quote his words, "in everyone there is something of his fellow man. Therefore, whoever sins, injures not only himself but also that part of himself which belongs to another." And this, according to Cordovero, is the true reason why the Torah (Lev. XIX, 18) could prescribe the com-

mandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," — for "the other is really he himself."[107]

At this point I should like to insert a remark. The gnostical character of this psychology and anthropology is evident. The structure of Luria's anthropology corresponds on the whole to that of his theology and cosmology, with the difference that the point of reference is no longer the mystical light of Divine emanation and manifestation, but the soul and its 'sparks'. Man, as he was before his fall, is conceived as a Cosmic being which contains the whole world in itself and whose station is superior even to that of Metatron, the first of the angels.[108] *Adam ha-Rishon,* the Adam of the Bible, corresponds on the anthropological plane to *Adam Kadmon,* the ontological primary man. Evidently the human and the mystical man are closely related to each other; their structure is the same, and to use Vital's own words, the one is the clothing and the veil of the other. Here we have also the explanation for the connection between man's fall and the cosmic process, between morality and physics. Since Adam was truly, and not merely metaphorically, all-embracing, his fall was bound likewise to drag down and affect everything, not merely metaphorically but really. The drama of *Adam Kadmon* on the theosophical plane is repeated and paralleled by that of *Adam Rishon.* The universe falls, Adam falls, everything is affected and disturbed and enters into a "stage of diminution" as Luria calls it. Original sin repeats the Breaking of the Vessels on a correspondingly lower plane.[109] The effect is again that nothing remained where it should be and as it should be; nothing therefore was from then on in its proper place.[110] Everything is in Exile. The spiritual light of the Shekhinah was dragged down into the darkness of the demonic world of evil. The result is the mixture of good and evil which must be dissolved by restoring the element of light to its former position.[111] Adam was a spiritual being whose place was in the world of *Asiyah*[112] which, as we have seen, was also a spiritual realm. When he fell into sin, then and then only did this world, too, fall from its former place and thereby become mixed up with the realm of the *Kelipoth* which originally was placed below it.[113] Thus there came into being the material world in which we live, and the existence of man as a part spiritual part material being.[114] And whenever we fall into sin we cause a repetition of this process, of the confusion of the holy with the unclean, the 'fall' of the Shekhinah and her exile. "Sparks of the Shekhinah" are scattered in all worlds and "there is no sphere of existence including organic and inorganic nature, that is not full of holy sparks which are mixed up with the *Kelipoth* and need to be separated from them and lifted up."

To the student of religious history the close affinity of these thoughts to the religious ideas of the Manichaeans must be obvious at once. We have here certain Gnostic elements — especially the theory of the scattered sparks or particles of light — which were either absent from or played no particular part in early Kabbalist thought. At the same time there can be no doubt that this fact is due not to historical connections between the Manichaeans and the new Kabbalah of Safed, but to a profound similarity in outlook and disposition which in its development produced similar results. In spite of this fact, or perhaps rather because of it, students of Gnosticism may have something to learn from the Lurianic system which, in my opinion, is a perfect example of Gnostical thought, both in principle and in detail.

9.

But let us go back to where we started. The fulfilment of man's task in this world is connected by Luria, as well as by all the other Safed Kabbalists, with the doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of the soul. In the later development of the school of Safed, this remarkable doctrine has been elaborated in great detail, and Hayim Vital's *Sefer Ha-Gilgulim,* or "Book of Transmigrations," in which he gave a systematic description of Luria's doctrine of metempsychosis, is the final product of a long and important development in Kabbalistic thought.[115] I do not intend to pursue this point further than to remark that there is a considerable difference between the respective attitudes of the older and the newer school of Kabbalism towards this idea, which as I said found its classic expression in Luria's and Vital's doctrine. As for the motives which prompted both the old and the new Kabbalah to embrace the doctrine of transmigration, they were probably not different at first from those which have always encouraged belief in it, i. e. the impression made upon sensitive minds by the sufferings of innocent children, the contentedness of the wicked and other phenomena which demand a natural

explanation in order to conform with the belief in divine justice within the sphere of nature. For it must be admitted that the solution of these apparent contradictions by the conception of divine retribution, and in general by eschatological hopes, has at all times failed to satisfy the mind of many believers in religion. The difference is that the majority of older Kabbalists believed in *Gilgul*, to use the Hebrew term for transmigration, only in connection with certain offences, chiefly sexual. As I have pointed out in the previous lecture, they know nothing of a universal law of transmigration considered as a system of moral causality — that is to say, a system of moral causes and physical effects — *Karma*, as the Hindus call it. It fits into this picture that the whole doctrine, which at first seems to have encountered much opposition, was regarded as a particularly occult mystery and gained no entrance into wider circles. A thirteenth century mystic like Isaac ibn Latif rejected it disdainfully.[116]

Sixteenth century Kabbalism took a totally different view, for meanwhile — as I said at the beginning of this lecture — the doctrine of *Gilgul* had come to express in a new and forcible way the existence of Exile. Its function was, as it were, to lift the experience of the Jew in the *Galuth*, the exile and migration of the body, to the higher plane of a symbol for the exile of the soul.[117] The inner exile, too, owes its existence to the fall. If Adam contained the entire soul of humanity, which is now diffused among the whole genus in innumerable modifications and individual appearances, all transmigrations of souls are in the last resort only migrations of the one soul whose exile atones for its fall. In addition, every individual provides, by his behaviour, countless occasions for ever renewed exile. Altogether we have here a fairly comprehensive conception of the *Gilgul* as a law of the Universe, and the idea of retribution by punishment in Hell is pushed rather far into the background. Obviously a radical theory of retribution in the process of transmigration leaves no room at all for the conception of hell, and it is not surprising to find that there have indeed been attempts to allegorize the idea of hell so much as to deprive it of its literal meaning.[118] In general, however, we find a mixture of both ideas, and the Safed school in particular was inclined to allot a certain place in its scheme of transmigratory stages to the old-fashioned hell. The two ideas intertwine, but the emphasis is undoubtedly on transmigration.

This doctrine now becomes closely involved with the conception of man's role in the Universe. Each individual soul retains its individual existence only until the moment when it has worked out its own spiritual restoration. Souls which have fulfilled the commandments, be they those of all humanity — of "the sons of Noah" — or, in the case of the Jews, the 613 of the Torah, are exempted from the law of transmigration and await, each in its blessed place, their integration into Adam's soul, when the general restitution of all things shall take place. As long as the soul has not fulfilled this task it remains subject to the law of transmigration. Transmigration is thus no longer mere retribution, it is also at the same time a chance of fulfilling the commandments which it was not given to the soul to fulfil before, and of thereby continuing the work of self-emancipation. Pure retribution is indeed implied by the idea of transmigration into other spheres of nature, such as animals, plants and stones. This banishment into the prison of strange forms of existence, into wild beasts, into plants and stones, is regarded as a particularly dreadful form of exile. How can souls be released from such an exile? Luria's reply to this question refers to the relationship between certain souls, in accordance with the place which they originally occupied in the undivided soul of Adam, the father of mankind. There are according to him, relationships between souls, and even families of souls, which somehow constitute a dynamic whole and react upon one another.[119] These souls have a special aptitude for assisting each other and supplementing each other's actions, and can also by their piety lift up those members of their group or family who have fallen onto a lower plane and can enable them to start on the return journey to higher forms of existence. According to Luria, this mysterious interrelation of souls throws light on many biblical histories. Altogether the true history of the world would seem to be that of the migrations and interrelations of the souls, which is precisely what Hayim Vital tried to describe in the later parts of his *Sefer Ha-Gilgulim*. There, and in similar writings of this kind, we find a characteristic and curious mixture of elements of pure vision, characterological intuitions (including some that are very profound) and purely homiletical ideas and associations of thought.

To recapitulate what we have said, the *Gilgul* is part of the process of restoration, of *Tikkun*. Owing to the power of evil over

mankind, the duration of this process is immeasurably extended, but — and here we come to a point in Luria's doctrine which appealed very strongly to the individual consciousness — it can be shortened by certain religious acts, i.e. rites, penitential exercises and meditations.[120] Everybody carries the secret trace of the transmigrations of his soul in the lineaments of his forehead and his hands,[121] and in the aura which radiates from his body.[122] And those to whom it is given to decipher this writing of the soul can aid it in its wandering. It is true that this power is conceded by Cordovero and Luria only to the great mystics.[123]

Now it is very interesting and significant that this Kabbalistic doctrine of transmigration, the influence of which was originally confined to very small circles, extended its influence with startling rapidity after 1550. The first voluminous book which is based on a most elaborate system of *Gilgul* is the *Sode Razaya* "The Secret Mysteries," written in 1552 by an anonymous author.[124] In a short time this doctrine became an integral part of Jewish popular belief and Jewish folklore. This is all the more remarkable as we have here a doctrine which, contrary to many other elements of Jewish popular religious belief, was not generally accepted in the social and cultural environment in which the Jews lived. To repeat what I have already said, I am inclined to believe that the particular historic situation of the Jews in those generations had as much to do with its success as did the general popular disposition towards animism. Primitive belief is animistic in that it is inclined to regard all things as animated, acting creatures. And the doctrine of the *Gilgul* not only appealed to this stratum of primitive thought but also explained, transfigured and glorified the deepest and most tragic experience of the Jew in the *Galuth*, in a manner which appealed most strongly and directly to the imagination. For *Galuth* here acquires a new meaning. Formerly it had been regarded either as a punishment for Israel's sins or as a test of Israel's faith. Now it still is all this, but intrinsically it is a mission: Its purpose is to uplift the fallen sparks from all their various locations. "And this is the secret why Israel is fated to be enslaved by all the Gentiles of the world: In order that it may uplift those sparks which have also fallen among them... And therefore it was necessary that Israel should be scattered to the four winds in order to lift everything up."[125]

10.

The influence of the Lurianic Kabbalah, which from about 1630 onwards became something like the true *theologia mystica* of Judaism, can hardly be exaggerated. It taught a doctrine of Judaism which even in its most popular aspects renounced nothing of its Messianic pathos. The doctrine of *Tikkun* raised every Jew to the rank of a protagonist in the great process of restitution, in a manner never heard of before. It seems that Luria himself believed the end to be near and that he "entertained the hope that the year 1575 was the year of Redemption", a hope that was shared by many other Kabbalists of this generation.[126] It seems to be in the nature of such doctrines that the tension which they express demands a sudden and dramatic relief. Once the doctrine of *Tikkun* had entered into the popular consciousness, the eschatological mood was bound to grow; it could hardly be otherwise. But even after the Messianic element of the new mysticism had threatened to kindle the flames of an apocalyptic conflagration in the heart of Jewry, its basic speculative ideas and practical conclusions retained their influence.

Not only the ideas but also a large number of customs and rites propagated for mystical reasons by the Kabbalists of Safed — by no means only the followers of Luria — were accepted in all the communities. To a large extent these rites and customs were connected with the ever growing ascendancy of ascetic principles in communal life, e.g. the fasting of the first born on the day before Passover, the night vigil before *Shevuoth* and *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the transformation of the latter day from a feast of joy into a day of penitence which really concludes the Day of Atonement, the transformation of the last day before every new moon into a so-called "lesser day of atonement" and many other examples of the kind.[127] In place of the rites of penitence prescribed by the old Hasidim of Germany we now find Isaac Luria's prescriptions for penitents.[128] In particular, the liturgy, at all times the clearest mirror of religious feeling, was deeply affected by the influence of the mystics. A multitude of new prayers, for the individual as well as for the community, gradually made their way, at first into the prayer books of private conventicles and later into the generally accepted forms of prayer.[129] Thus the mystics were instrumental in causing

the famous hymn *Lekha dodi likrath kallah* of Solomon Alkabez of Safed to be included in the Friday evening liturgy. By far the most beautiful and detailed description of the life of the Kabbalistic devotee all through the year, such as it became under the dominant influence of Lurianic Kabbalism, is to be found in *Hemdath Yamim*,[130] "The Adornment of Days," the work of an anonymous follower of the moderate Sabbatians who remained true to Rabbinical tradition. (The old theory that its author was no other than the Sabbatian prophet Nathan of Gaza himself must be discarded.) Written in Jerusalem towards the end of the seventeenth century,[131] this voluminous book remains in my opinion, despite all that strikes us as bizarre, one of the most beautiful and affecting works of Jewish literature.

The Lurianic Kabbalah was the last religious movement in Judaism the influence of which became preponderant among all sections of the Jewish people and in every country of the Diaspora, without exception. It was the last movement in the history of Rabbinic Judaism which gave expression to a world of religious reality common to the whole people. To the philosopher of Jewish history it may seem surprising that the doctrine which achieved this result was deeply related to Gnosticism, but such are the dialectics of history.

To sum up, the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria may be described as a mystical interpretation of Exile and Redemption, or even as a great myth of Exile. Its substance reflects the deepest religious feelings of the Jews of that age. For them, Exile and Redemption were in the strictest sense great mystical symbols which point to something in the Divine Being. This new doctrine of God and the Universe corresponds to the new moral ideal of humanity which it propagates: The ideal of the ascetic whose aim is the Messianic reformation, the extinction of the world's blemish, the restitution of all things in God — the man of spiritual action who through the *Tikkun* breaks the exile, the historical exile of the Community of Israel and that inner exile in which all creation groans.

2.

This task, however, cannot be undertaken without saying a few words about the personalities of the two original leaders of the movement and their place in its first outbreak and subsequent development. This is all the more needed because in this, as in so many other matters discussed in the course of these lectures, I am bound to take a view which differs to a considerable extent from the customary one. What then was the basic trait of Sabbatai Zevi's personality and how are we to judge his individual contribution to the movement? In particular, how are we to interpret his relation to Nathan of Gaza, his subsequent prophet? To these questions, the only documents available in print until recent years have not permitted a definite answer. Those which throw most light on the subject have not hitherto been published, and in their absence it has often been impossible to form a correct impression even of published writings. In these circumstances undue weight has been given to the testimony of persons who were not intimately acquainted with the leaders of the movement. It is, therefore, scarcely astonishing that where the scholars had failed poets, dramatists and other masters of fiction have tried to complete the picture by drawing on the resources of their imagination. Yet there are in our possession not a few highly important documents, some personal and others theological, emanating from the closest circle of Sabbatai Zevi's followers, which throw an entirely unexpected light on all these questions. An analysis of all the sources to which I have had access yields the following main conclusions:

It was not Sabbatai Zevi himself who by his appearance and his constant activity over a number of years finally succeeded, in the teeth of persecution, in founding the movement which bears his name. True, without him it would have been unthinkable in this form, but his own unaided activity would never have sufficed to bring it about. It was the awakening of Nathan of Gaza to his prophetic mission which set the whole train of events in motion. The role of this brilliant and ardent youth, who at the time of the inception of the movement was only twenty years old, has scarcely been understood and now appears in a totally different light.

Even before the critical date of 1665, Sabbatai Zevi (1625—

1676) appears to have regarded himself in certain moments as the Messiah and to have made occasional references to this conviction. But no one, literally no one, took this claim seriously. To be precise, nobody, including his admirers in Smyrna, gave the faintest sign between 1648 — when there appears to have been for the first time a slight scandal about him — and 1665 of knowing anything about the existence and personality of the true Messiah of God. The explanation of this fact is very simple and provides the key to the understanding of this tragic Messiah: Sabbatai Zevi was psychically a sick man. To some extent this truth has of course been suspected before; people have talked of paranoia or hysteria.[2] But a mass of documentary evidence now available shows that his affliction was in fact of a somewhat different nature: He was constitutionally a maniac-depressive, that is to say he belonged to a type whose lack of mental balance displays itself in alternate fits of deepest gloom and most uncontrollable exuberance and exaggerated joy. Periods of profound depression and melancholia constantly alternated in him with spasms of maniacal exaltation, enthusiasm and *euphoria,* separated by intervals of a more normal state of mind. What is known of his character does not give the faintest indication of paranoia, but on the other hand it hardly lacks a single trait of maniac-depressive psychosis as described in the standard handbooks of psychiatry.[3] The evidence of his biographers permits us to conclude that he showed the first traits of this mental affliction between his sixteenth and his twentieth year.[4] Now it is of special importance for our understanding of his character, that this mental illness is distinguished from all others by the fact that it does not lead to the decomposition and destruction of the human personality and in particular does not affect the intelligence. Actually the term *illness* is used only in a single, a very eloquent testimony, written by one of his most important followers who retained his faith in him to the end: Samuel Gandor, who in the summer of 1665 was sent from Egypt to Gaza in order to investigate the events which had taken place there. This enthusiastic follower of Sabbatai Zevi and travelling companion of Nathan has left us the following description of his master:[5] "It is said of Sabbatai Zevi that for fifteen years he has been bowed down by the following affliction: He is pursued by a sense of depression which leaves him no quiet moment and does not even permit him to read, without his being

of mind. Of the temptations to which he was subjected in his fits of depression a great deal is said, especially in the writings of Nathan of Gaza, and we are told that they were of a demonic and erotic character.[15] In brief, we have before us a man who felt himself pursued by demons during periods of melancholy depression which exposed him to a severe physical and mental strain, and who above all was the helpless victim of these forces.[16] On the other hand, he shared with others of the same psychical type who were like him men of a remarkable moral or intellectual level the gift of a strong personal suggestive power over others. This personal magnetism, however, was bound up with his states of exaltation and did not survive them. Incidentally, his intellectual qualities, although fully developed, were by no means out of the ordinary. He has left no writings and, what is more important, he is not credited with a single unforgettable word, epigram, or speech. As a Kabbalist and a scholar he does not appear to have raised himself above mediocrity. The emotional side of his character was more fully developed: He was unusually musical, fond of singing and of listening to song — during his imprisonment in the fortress of Gallipoli, in the summer of 1666, he was almost constantly surrounded by musicians[17] — and the singing of the Psalms, for which he had a special fondness, moved him easily and deeply. But his truly original characteristic is without any doubt to be found in the peculiarity of his mania: the commission of antinomian acts which in his state of exaltation he appears to have regarded as sacramental actions. That was his specific trait and that was also his specific contribution to the Sabbatian movement in which he played on the whole a fairly passive part, for it was this peculiarity which gave its special character to the movement from the moment when he had first been recognized as a religious authority. The law which dominated this development was the law of his own personality, although it was left to Nathan of Gaza to discover it in him and to formulate it in conscious terms. In his state of illumination he was the living archetype of the paradox of the holy sinner, and it may well be that, without his being able to express it, the image of an act of *Tikkun* through the infringement of the holy law was before his eyes in these exalted states of mind. And this and nothing else is the true heritage of Sabbatai Zevi: The quasi-sacramental character of antinomian actions, which here always take the

form of a ritual, remained a *shibboleth* of the movement, not least in its more radical offshoots. In his 'normal' state, the Sabbatian is anything but an antinomian. The performance of such acts is a *rite*, a festive action of an individual or a whole group, something out of the ordinary, greatly disturbing and born from the deep stirring of emotional forces.

3.

Thus Sabbatai Zevi wandered through the world for years, without friends or real followers and without doing anything for the furtherance of the Messianic aspirations which dominated him in rare moments of high exaltation. Had it not been for Nathan of Gaza he would undoubtedly have remained one of the many anonymous enthusiasts of his generation who, in the years after the great catastrophe of the Chmielnitzki persecution in 1648, entertained vague dreams of Messianic vocation, without anybody paying any attention to them. It was a turning-point in his life that he should have settled in Jerusalem in 1662. During the first two years of his stay there, Nathan of Gaza (1644—1680), at that time a young student of the Talmud, cannot have failed to see a good deal of Sabbatai Zevi, already approaching forty and doubtless the subject of much gossip in the small Jewish community of the town. Even in the absence of close personal relations between them, for which there exists no proof, the personality of Sabbatai Zevi must have made a deep impression on the sensitive and susceptible young man who was then between seventeen and nineteen.

In the final and decisive awakening of the prophetic mood in Nathan, Sabbatai Zevi, who was at that time on a mission in Egypt, had no part. Nathan has told the story himself in a hitherto unpublished letter dated in the year 1667, from which I quote the following passage:[18] "I studied the Torah in purity until I was twenty years of age, and I carried out the great *Tikkun* which Isaac Luria prescribes for everyone who has committed great faults. Although, praise be to God, I have not advertently committed any sins, nevertheless I carried it out in case my soul be sullied from an earlier stage of transmigration. When I had attained the age of twenty I began to study the book Zohar and some of the Lurianic writings. But he who comes to purify himself receives the aid of Heaven, and thus

He sent me some of His holy angels and blessed spirits and revealed to me many of the mysteries of the Torah. In that same year, my force having been stimulated by the visions of the angels and the blessed souls, I was undergoing a long fast in the week after the feast of *Purim*. Having now locked myself in holiness and purity in a separate room and completed the morning prayer under many tears, the spirit came over me, my hair stood on end and my knees shook and I saw the Merkabah, and I saw visions of God all day long and all night, and I was vouchsafed true prophecy like any other prophet, as the voice spoke to me and began with the words: 'Thus speaks the Lord'. And with the utmost clarity my heart perceived towards whom my prophecy was directed [i. e. towards Sabbatai Zevi], and until this day I have never yet had so great a vision, but it remained hidden in my heart until the Redeemer revealed himself in Gaza and proclaimed himself the Messiah; only then did the angel permit me to proclaim what I had seen."[19]

How then did Sabbatai Zevi come to proclaim himself as the Messiah in Gaza? The answer is as simple as it is startling. When Sabbatai Zevi, who was then in Egypt, learned from a letter sent by Samuel Gandor that an illuminate had appeared in Gaza who disclosed to everyone the secret root of his soul and the particular *Tikkun* of which his soul stood in need, he "abandoned his mission and went also to Gaza in order to find a *Tikkun* and peace for his soul."[20] I consider this to be the most interesting sentence in the history of Sabbatai Zevi. Thus when the story of Nathan's illumination spread, Sabbatai Zevi came to him, not as the Messiah or in accordance with some secret understanding, but "in order to find peace for his soul." To put it plainly: He came as a patient to a doctor of the soul. We know from Laniado's letter that precisely at this time in Egypt he had come into one of his normal periods and was troubled about his transgressions. He sought a cure for his psychosis and only then was he convinced by Nathan — by virtue of the latter's prophetic vision in which, as he discloses in another context,[21] he had also seen the figure of Sabbatai Zevi — of the authenticity of his Messianic mission. It was Nathan who dispelled his doubts and prevailed upon him, after they had wandered together for several weeks through the holy places of Palestine, to proclaim himself the Messiah.

Nathan represents a most unusual combination of character traits. If the expression be permitted, he was at once the John the Baptist and the Paul of the new Messiah, surely a very remarkable figure. He had all the qualities which one misses in Sabbatai Zevi: tireless activity, originality of theological thought, and abundant productive power and literary ability. He proclaims the Messiah and blazes the trail for him, and at the same time he is by far the most influential theologian of the movement. He and his successor, the former Marrano Abraham Miguel Cardozo, are the great theologians of classical Sabbatianism, that is to say of a many-coloured heretical movement within Jewish mysticism. Nathan does not himself practise antinomianism; he interprets it. He raises an indefinable state of exaltation with its *euphoria,* which manifests itself in absurd, bizarre and sacrilegious actions, to the rank of a 'sacred act' in which a sublime reality becomes manifest: the state of the new "world of *Tikkun.*" The meeting of these two personalities made the Sabbatian movement. The great historical force of this new Messianism was born on the day on which Nathan discovered that Sabbatai Zevi, this curious sinner, ascetic and saint who had occasionally dreamed of his Messianic mission, was indeed the Messiah, and having discovered him, made him the symbol of a movement and himself became its standard-bearer.

Thus from the moment of its appearance, long before the apostasy of the Messiah, the theology of Sabbatianism was already conditioned by the need to furnish a mystical interpretation of the personal peculiarities and the strange and paradoxical traits in the character and the actions of Sabbatai Zevi. His manias and depressions receive a Kabbalistic interpretation, and in particular the figure of Job is consistently treated by Nathan from the very beginning as the prototype of the personality of his Messiah. There still exist a few manuscripts of a highly remarkable little book written by Nathan under the title *Derush Ha-Tanninim* "Treatise on the Dragons," in the form of a commentary to a Zoharic passage on the mystery of the "Great Dragon that lieth in the midst of the rivers of Egypt" (Ezekiel XXIX, 3).[22] In this treatise, which was written during Sabbatai Zevi's imprisonment in Gallipoli,[23] at a time when no one even dreamed of the apostasy of the Messiah, there are as yet no suggestions of a downright heretical character. The writer develops his

gons', is completed — which, however, will not be the case before the end of the *Tikkun* generally — the soul of the Messiah will leave its prison and reveal itself to the world in an earthly incarnation. Thus Nathan of Gaza. It is a matter of the deepest interest that one encounters in the writings of a youth from the Ghetto of Jerusalem in the seventeenth century an age-old Gnostical myth of the fate of the Redeemer's soul, built up from Kabbalistic ideas but nevertheless obviously intended as an apology for Sabbatai Zevi's pathological state of mind. Were it not for the fact that the raw material of this Kabbalistic doctrine is actually to be found in the Zohar and in the Lurianic writings, one would be tempted to postulate an intrinsic, though to us obscure, connection between this first Sabbatian myth and that of the ancient Gnostical school known as Ophites or as Naassenes who placed the mystical symbolism of the serpent in the centre of their Gnosis.[25]

The practical application of this new theory is put forward by Nathan quite frankly and stressed with great frequency. Thus he says: "All these matters we have only described in order to proclaim the greatness of our master, the King Messiah, how he will break the power of the serpent the roots of which are deep and strong. For these serpents always endeavoured to allure him, and whenever he had laboured to extract great holiness from the *Kelipoth*, they were able to take possession of him when the state of illumination had departed from him. Then they showed him that they, too, had the same power as the Sefirah of 'Beauty' in which he [Sabbatai Zevi] believed the true God to be represented, just as Pharaoh — who is the great dragon, the symbol of the *Kelipah* — said: Who is God? But when the illumination came over him, he used to bend it [the serpent or dragon which tormented him in his depression] down. And of this our teachers already said [Baba bathra 15b]: "Greater is that which is written of Job than that which is written of Abraham. For of Abraham it is said only that he feared God, but of Job that he feared God and eschewed evil. For I have already explained above that in the Scripture the Redeemer is called Job because he had fallen under the domination of the *Kelipoth*. And this refers to the days of darkness which are the days of his depression; but when the illumination came over him, in the days of calm and rejoicing, then he was in the state of which it is said 'and eschewed evil'; for then he emerged from the realm of the *Kelipoth* among which he had sunk in the days of darkness."[26]

In this interpretation, therefore, the metaphysical and the psychological element are closely intertwined; or to be more exact, they are one. The metaphysical prehistory of the Messiah's soul is also the history of those psychical states which for Nathan are precisely the proof of his divine mission. And it is easy to perceive that the Gnostical idea of an imprisonment of the Messiah in the realm of evil and impurity, which in this doctrine has as yet no heretical connotations, lent itself without difficulty to such a development after the apostasy of the Messiah. In a way which strikes one as almost uncanny, the subsequent heretical doctrine of Nathan and the other Sabbatians concerning the mission of the Messiah, and in particular concerning his apostasy as a mission, is contained *in nuce* in this astounding document of early Sabbatianism.[27]

4.

It seems to me that the facts which I have briefly outlined thus far in this lecture throw considerable new light on the origins and the course of the Sabbatian movement. Having established these facts, I now propose in speaking of Sabbatianism to give special attention to the religious movement which developed in consequence of the tragic apostasy of the new Messiah and both directly and indirectly deepened the paradoxical nature of his step.[28] I regard it as important to follow the course of this movement, if only because the part which Sabbatianism played in the spiritual development of Jewry during the generations that followed, is generally underrated. Sabbatianism represents the first serious revolt in Judaism since the Middle Ages; it was the first case of mystical ideas leading directly to the disintegration of the orthodox Judaism of "the believers." Its heretical Mysticism produced an outburst of more or less veiled nihilistic tendencies among some of its followers. Finally it encouraged a mood of religious anarchism on a mystical basis which, where it coincided with favourable external circumstances, played a highly important part in creating a moral and intellectual atmosphere favourable to the reform movement of the nineteenth century.

To trace the history of Sabbatianism through its various stages objectively, *sine ira et studio*, has been impossible as long as two

distinctly opposed but equally strong emotional currents combined to prevent the description of this most tragic chapter in later Jewish religious history. These were on the one hand the very understandable aversion of the orthodox against the antinomian tendencies in Sabbatianism, and on the other the dread felt by rationalists and reformers, particularly during the nineteenth century, of having their spiritual ancestry traced back to that despised sect which was commonly regarded as the incarnation of every conceivable aberration and perversion. Those who felt this way may be said to have somewhat uncritically adopted the traditional views bequeathed to them by their fathers. In the eighteenth century, to be called a Sabbatian was to all intents and purposes equivalent, so far as the effect on ordinary public opinion was concerned, to being termed an Anarchist or a Nihilist in the second half of the nineteenth. I could go on telling about my own difficulties in trying to penetrate into this vanished world, difficulties which arise not so much from the supposed obscurity or abstruseness of the Sabbatian doctrine, which is largely a myth, but from the fact that most, if not all, the theological and historical documents which could throw some light upon it have undoubtedly been destroyed. That this should be so is no less understandable from the psychological point of view than it is sad for the historian. The followers of Sabbatai Zevi who persisted in worshipping him as the Messiah, were persecuted during the eighteenth century with all the means at the disposal of the Jewish communities of those days. From the point of view of orthodoxy there is nothing in this that stands in need of being justified. Its representatives could hardly be expected to adopt any other attitude towards a revolutionary sect which kindled the flames of a destructive conflagration and which sometimes, if only darkly and abstrusely, proclaimed a new conception of Judaism. Wherever it was possible, the mystical literature of Sabbatianism was destroyed, and when the movement had been stamped out, everything was done to minimize its importance. It became obligatory to depict it as an affair of a very small minority and to pretend that there had been from the start a sharp division between the orthodox believers and the heretics.

In actual fact things were a little different. There were for instance various moderate forms of Sabbatianism in which orthodox piety and Sabbatian belief existed side by side, and the number of

more or less outstanding Rabbis who were secret adherents of the new sectarian mysticism was far larger than orthodox apologists have ever been willing to admit. That there should be so much confusion regarding its strength is partly accounted for by the fact that Sabbatianism as a movement was long identified with its more extreme, antinomian and nihilistic aspects, with the result that care was taken to obscure the fact that this or that reputed scholar or well-known family had had anything to do with it. Thus stigmatized it became no easy matter to admit one's descent from a Sabbatian family, and only very few men of high standing and untarnished reputation had the courage to do so. For a long time, and particularly during the nineteenth century, descent from Sabbatian ancestors was widely regarded as a shameful thing which might under no condition be publicly mentioned. As late as in the middle of that century, Leopold Loew, the leader of the Jewish reform movement in Hungary who in his youth had come into touch with the Sabbatians in Moravia, wrote that in their circles much was done to propagate and encourage the new rationalist movement.[29] Yet in the whole of Jewish historical literature you will find no reference to this highly important relation between the mystical heretics and the representatives of the new rationalism. It is as though this spiritual and often even ancestral relationship was regarded as something to be ashamed of. In several famous Jewish communities where Sabbatian groups played an important part right up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, care was taken to destroy all documents containing the names of sectarians whose children or grandchildren had risen to influential positions — not infrequently owing to their early attachment to the new world of emancipation.

The important part played by religious and mystical movements in the development of eighteenth century rationalism is today a generally accepted fact so far as the Christian world is concerned, and in England and Germany in particular, much work has been devoted to the task of unravelling these subterranean connections. Thus, to take an example, it has become almost a commonplace that the radical pietists, Anabaptists and Quakers represented such mystical movements the spirit of which, although nourished from the purest of religious motives, created an atmosphere in which the rationalist movement, in spite of its very different origins, was enabled to grow

and develop, so that in the end both worked in the same direction. *Mutatis mutandis,* the same applies to Judaism. It is not as though the Sabbatians were a species of Quakers — many of them were anything but that. But here again, the attempt of a minority to maintain, in the face of persecution and vituperation, certain new spiritual values which corresponded to a new religious experience, facilitated the transition to the new world of Judaism in the period of emancipation. Some authors have regarded the eighteenth century Hasidic movement as the trail-blazer for the modern emancipated Jewry of the nineteenth. S. Hurwitz was the first to offer vigorous opposition to this romantic misconception and to stress the fact that this description might with far greater justice be applied to Sabbatianism.[30]

As we have seen, Lurianic Kabbalism had in the seventeenth century become the dominant spiritual influence through the entire Diaspora. It is therefore hardly surprising that the explosion of Sabbatianism, bound up as it was with the preponderant influence of the older school, affected fairly large parts of the community, although it never succeeded in becoming a mass movement. By contrast with its comparatively very limited strength it had a particularly deep and lasting effect upon many of its adherents. Yet even its numerical strength must not be underrated. Immediately after the apostasy of Sabbatai Zevi large groups, particularly among the Sephardic Jews, showed themselves susceptible to the propagation of apostasy as a mystery. In Morocco this tendency was especially marked, but it was also noticeable among many communities in Turkey, particularly in the Balkans, then under Turkish domination.

At first, too, the propaganda for the apostate Messiah was conducted quite openly. It was only later, after a number of years, when the expected triumphant return of Sabbatai Zevi from the spheres of impurity had still not occurred, that Sabbatianism changed its character. From a popular movement it became a sectarian one, whose propagandist work was conducted in secret. The transformation did not take many years. Comparatively soon, Sabbatianism took the form of a more or less loosely organized sect whose adherents met in secret conclave and were at pains to hide their ideas and activities from the outside world in order to avoid persecution. This occurred in spite of the recurrent appearance of prophets who believed

in these latter countries Sabbatianism was particularly strong numerically and that Rabbinical circles, large and petty traders and manufacturers were alike under its influence. Some of the most influential Bohemian and Moravian Jews in the reign of Maria Theresa and her successors were secret adherents of the sect. Twice Sabbatianism took the form of organized apostasy by large groups who believed such repetition of the Marranic example to be the way to salvation. The first time in Salonica, where in 1683[35] the sect of the *Doenmeh* — as the Turks called them, the word meaning "apostates" — was founded, its members outwardly professing Islam; and for the second time in Eastern Galicia, where the followers of the sinister prophet Jacob Frank in 1759 entered the Catholic Church in large numbers. The members of both groups continued to call themselves *Maaminim* ('believers', namely in the mission of Sabbatai Zevi), the common name used by all Sabbatians when they speak of themselves. The members of both groups remained in close contact with the extremist wing of Sabbatianism even after their formal apostasy which they regarded of course as purely extrinsic. This was particularly true of the followers of Frank, most of whom remained Jews — almost all in Bohemia and Moravia, and the majority also in Hungary and Rumania. It was the influence of these elements which had not openly cut themselves off from Rabbinical Judaism, which, after the French Revolution, became important in fostering the movement towards reform, liberalism and 'enlightenment' in many Jewish circles.

Around 1850, a consciousness of this link between Sabbatianism and reform was still alive in some quarters. In circles close to the moderate reform movement, a very remarkable and undoubtedly authentic tradition had it that Aron Chorin, the first pioneer of reformed Jewry in Hungary, was in his youth a member of the Sabbatian group in Prague.[36] Prossnitz and Hamburg, both in the eighteenth century centres of Sabbatian propaganda and the scene of bitter struggles between the orthodox and the heretics or their sympathizers, were among the chief strongholds of the reform movement in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The sons of those Frankists in Prague who in 1800 still pilgrimed to Offenbach, near Frankfort, the seat of Frank's successors, and who educated their children in the spirit of this mystical sect, were among the leaders,

in 1832, of the first 'reform' organization in Prague. The writings of Jonas Wehle himself, the spiritual leader of these Prague mystics around 1800, already display an astonishing mixture of mysticism and rationalism. Of his extensive writings, an extremely interesting commentary to the Talmudic *Aggadoth* is extant in manuscript[37] from which it is clear that his particular Pantheon had room for Moses Mendelsohn and Immanuel Kant side by side with Sabbatai Zevi and Isaac Luria.[38] And as late as 1864, his nephew, writing in New York, lengthily praises in his testament his Sabbatian and Frankist ancestors as the standard-bearers of the "true Jewish faith", i. e. of a deeper spiritual understanding of Judaism.[39]

5.

The question remains why and how it happened that the Kabbalists who came under the influence of the Sabbatian movement, became the bearers of ideas which brought them into more or less open conflict with the tenets of Rabbinical Judaism. Let me recall here what I have said in the last lecture about the doctrine of Redemption through *Tikkun*. The mystical conception and interpretation of exile and deliverance was of course originally based upon actual experience of the exile and upon the popular ideas of the way in which Redemption would take place. The very conception of deliverance had a practical and historical connotation: Liberation from the yoke, new freedom — these were the enormously powerful messianic motivating forces which went into the doctrine evolved by the Kabbalists of Safed. In their interpretation, the popular conception of Messianism and national restoration was transformed into a drama of cosmic importance.

Redemption is no longer primarily a liberation from the yoke of servitude in exile, but a transformation of the essence of Creation. It is conceived as a process which runs through all the visible and the hidden worlds, for it is nothing but *Tikkun*, the restoration of that great harmony which was shattered by the Breaking of the Vessels and later by Adam's sin. Redemption implies a radical change in the structure of the universe. Its significance is seen to be, not so much the end of that exile which began with the destruction of the Temple, as rather the end of that inner exile of all creatures which began when the father of mankind was driven out of

Paradise. The Kabbalist laid far greater emphasis on the spiritual nature of Redemption than on its historical and political aspects. These are by no means denied or discounted, but they tend more and more to become mere symbols of that mystical and spiritual process of which I have spoken. "When good and evil are finally separated, the Messiah will come", as Vital puts it. The historical redemption is as it were a natural by-product of its cosmic counterpart, and the Kabbalists never conceived the idea that a conflict might arise between the symbol and the reality which it was supposed to express. Nobody could foresee the danger inherent in such a shifting of the emphasis to a sphere of inner reality, as long as the messianic idea was not put to the test in a crucial moment of history. In its original form at any rate, Lurianic Kabbalism had as its main purpose the preparation of men's hearts for that renaissance the scene of which is the human soul. It placed the regeneration of the inner life far above that of the nation as a political entity. At the same time it was convinced that the former was the essential precondition of the latter. Moral improvement was to bring about the delivery of the people from its exile.

With the coming of Sabbatai Zevi and his enthusiastic reception by the masses of the people, this experience of inner freedom, of a pure world, which so far had been experienced only by Kabbalists in rare moments of exaltation, became the common property of the many. Naturally they also expected the complete fulfilment of the external and historical part of the Messianic promise. These hopes were speedily disappointed, but what had taken place in the brief but thorough experience of Messianic uprising could not be taken away again. To many this experience, which the Kabbalists call "the elevation of the Shekhinah from the dust"[40] became a lasting and indestructible part of their consciousness.

Sabbatianism as a mystical heresy dates from the moment when the apostasy of Sabbatai Zevi, which was an entirely unforeseen occurrence, opened a gap between the two spheres in the drama of Redemption, the inner one of the soul and that of history. Inner and outer experience, inner and outer aspects of *Geulah*, of Redemption and Salvation, were suddenly and dramatically torn apart. This conflict, for which nobody was prepared, which nobody had ever dreamt could happen, went to the very root and core of existence.

A choice became necessary. Every one had to ask himself whether he was willing to discover the truth about the expected redemption in the distressing course of history or in that inner reality which had revealed itself in the depths of the soul. Sabbatianism as a heresy came into existence when large sections, first of Sephardic and later also of Ashkenazic Jewry, refused to submit the judgment of their soul to that of history. It was argued that God, who does not even place a stumbling-block in the path of the "beast of the righteous,"[41] could not have misled his people and deceived it with the false appearance of Redemption.[42] Doctrines arose which had one thing in common: That they tried to bridge the gap between the inner experience and the external reality which had ceased to function as its symbol. The sudden emergence of a contradiction between the external and the internal aspects of life imposed upon the new doctrine the task of rationalizing this conflict, in other words, of making life bearable under the new conditions. Never before had this task been forced upon the Kabbalah, whose tendency, as we have seen, had been throughout to represent the outer world as a symbol of the inner life. Sabbatianism arose out of the awareness of an inherent contradiction, out of a paradox, and the law of its birth determined its subsequent development. It is built upon the tragic paradox of an apostate Saviour and it thrives upon paradoxes of which one implies the other.

Inevitably there is a far-reaching and highly illuminating similarity between the religious characteristics and the development of Sabbatianism on the one hand, and of Christianity on the other. In both cases the ancient Jewish paradox of the sufferings of God's servant is pushed to extremes. In both cases, too, a certain mystical attitude of belief crystallizes round an historical event which in turn draws its strength from the very fact of its paradoxality. Both movements begin by adopting an attitude of intense expectation towards the *Parousia*, the advent or return of the Saviour, be it from Heaven, be it from the realm of impurity. In both cases the destruction of the old values in the cataclysm of redemption leads to an outburst of antinomian tendencies, partly moderate and veiled and partly radical and violent; in both cases you get a new conception of 'belief' as the realization of the new world of Salvation, and in both this 'belief' involves that latent polarity of even more startling para-

is a personality in every fibre of his being, is also the most hideous and uncanny figure in the whole history of Jewish Messianism.

To return to our comparison, the fate of the Messiahs is entirely different and so is the religious paradox. The paradox of crucifixion and that of apostasy are after all on two altogether different levels. The second leads straight into the bottomless pit; its very idea makes almost anything conceivable. The shock which had to be surmounted in both cases is greater in the case of Sabbatianism. The believer is compelled to furnish even more psychical energy in order to overcome the terrible paradox of an apostate Saviour. Death and apostasy cannot possibly evoke the same or similar sentiments, if only because the idea of betrayal contains even less that is positive. Unlike the death of Jesus, the decisive action (or rather, passion) of Sabbatai Zevi furnished no new revolutionary code of values. His betrayal merely destroyed the old. And so it becomes understandable why the deep fascination exercised by the conception of the helpless Messiah who hands himself over to the demons, if driven to its utmost limits, led directly to nihilistic consequences.

As we have seen, the starting point of Sabbatianism is the attempt to defend the mission of Sabbatai Zevi. Perhaps few things could be more paradoxical than the endeavour to glorify the most abominable act known to the Jewish mind — betrayal and apostasy. By implication this fact suggests something of the volcanic nature of the spiritual upheaval which enabled men to maintain such a position.

It seems almost unbelievable that a movement based upon such foundations should have been able to influence so great a number of people. One must, however, take into account the existence of an external factor of crucial importance; and that is the part played in the movement by the Sefardic communities. For generations the Marranos in the Iberian peninsula, the offspring of those Jews who, in their hundreds of thousands, went over to Christianity in the persecutions between 1391 and 1498, had been compelled to lead as it were a double life. The religion which they professed was not that in which they believed. This dualism could not but endanger, if it did not indeed destroy the unity of Jewish feeling and thinking, and even those who returned to the fold after they or their children had

fled from Spain, particularly in the seventeenth century, retained something of this peculiar spiritual make-up. The idea of an apostate Messiah could be presented to them as the religious glorification of the very act which continued to torment their own conscience. There have been Marranos who tried to find a justification for their apostasy, and it is significant that all the arguments which they were wont to put forward in defence of their crypto-Judaism, recur later on in the ideology of Sabbatianism, above all the frequent reference to the fate of Queen Esther who was supposed to have led a kind of Marranic existence at King Ahasuherus' court "telling not her race nor her birth," yet still faithful to the religion of her fathers.[44]

That the Messiah should by the very nature of his mission be forced into the inescapable tragedy of apostasy was a doctrine ideally made to provide an emotional outlet for the tormented conscience of the Marranos. I doubt whether without this spiritual disposition on the part of numerous Sefardic communities the new doctrine would have taken sufficient root to become an important factor in the disintegration of the Ghetto. The similarity between the fate of the Marranos and that of the apostate Messiah was remarked only a short time after Sabbatai Zevi's apostasy, and it is no accident that the leading propagandist of this school, Abraham Miguel Cardozo (died 1706), was himself born as a Marrano and began by studying Christian theology.[45] Cardozo and Nathan of Gaza, the new prophet, are the first in the list of the great Kabbalist heretics, whose doctrines had in common the paradoxical and, to the unsophisticated mind, outrageous character of their basic tenets. Both were men of tireless literary and propagandistic activity and both have taken great pains to develop their new ideas in all their details. Nathan's *magnum opus, Sefer Ha-Beriah* "The Theory of Creation," was written in 1670, whereas Cardozo wrote a whole literature on the new Sabbatian doctrine of God in the following decades.

6.

Taking as their starting point the fate of the Messiah and the question of Redemption in general, these doctrines gradually extend to other spheres of religious thought, until at last they begin to pervade the whole of theology and ethics. Thus for instance Cardozo taught that in consequence of Israel's sins all of us were originally

fated to become Marranos,[46] but that from this awful destiny of having to live as it were in constant denial of one's own inner knowledge and belief, the grace of God has saved us by imposing this supreme sacrifice upon the Messiah; for only the soul of the Messiah is strong enough to bear this fate without loss. It goes without saying that this conception of the Messiah appealed to the unhappy dualism of the Marranic mind. It also happened to recall an idea of entirely different historic origin, namely the Lurianic theory of restitution through "the uplifting of the fallen sparks", which I outlined in the previous lecture. This doctrine was capable of being given a turn of which nobody had thought before Sabbatai Zevi's apostasy, but which from then on quickly became only too fashionable. According to its recognized, orthodox interpretation, Israel has been dispersed among the nations in order that it may gather in from everywhere the sparks of souls and Divine light which are themselves dispersed and diffused throughout the world, and through pious acts and prayers "lift them up" from their respective prisons. When this process is more or less complete, the Messiah appears and gathers the last sparks, thereby depriving the power of evil of the element through which it acts. The spheres of good and evil, of pure and impure, are from then on separated for all eternity. The heretic version of this doctrine, as expounded with considerable success by Nathan of Gaza,[47] differs from the orthodox mainly in its conclusions: The attraction of saintliness is not always sufficient to liberate the sparks from their prisons, the *Kelipoth* or "shells". There are stages of the great process of *Tikkun*, more particularly its last and most difficult ones, when in order to liberate the hidden sparks from their captivity, or to use another image, in order to force open the prison doors from within, the Messiah himself must descend into the realm of evil. Just as the Shekhinah had to descend to Egypt — the symbol of everything dark and demonic — to gather in the fallen sparks, so the Messiah too at the end of the ages starts on his most difficult journey to the empire of darkness, in order to complete his mission. Not before he has reached the end of his journey will evil disappear and Redemption extend to the external world.

It can easily be seen how this doctrine satisfied those who thought they had experienced their own and the world's salvation

in their inner consciousness and consequently demanded a solution of the contradiction between their experience and the continuation of Exile. The apostasy of the Messiah is the fulfilment of the most difficult part of his mission, for Redemption implies a paradox which becomes visible only at the end, in its actual occurrence. It is not a steady and unhindered progress as it appears in Luria's doctrine, but a tragedy which renders the supreme sacrifice of the Messiah incomprehensible to others. In order to fulfil his mission he must condemn himself through his own acts. An immense amount of religious passion has been lavished on the task of developing this dangerous paradox and letting the believers taste its bitterness to the full.[48]

To this must be added something else. What the Sabbatians call the "strange acts of the Messiah," have not only a negative aspect, from the point of view of the old order, but also a positive side, in so far as the Messiah acts in accordance with the law of a new world. If the structure of the world is intrinsically changed by the completion of the process of *Tikkun*, the Torah, the true universal law of all things, must also appear from then on under a different aspect. Its new significance is one that conforms with the primordial state of the world, now happily restored, while as long as the Exile lasts the aspect it presents to the believer naturally conforms to that particular state of things which is the *Galuth*. The Messiah stands at the crossing of both roads. He realizes in his Messianic freedom a new law, which from the point of view of the old order is purely subversive. It subverts the old order, and all actions which conform to it are therefore in manifest contradiction with the traditional values. In other words, Redemption implies the destruction of those aspects of the Torah which merely reflect the *Galuth*, the Torah itself remains one and the same, what has changed is its relation to the mind. New vistas are opened up, a new Messianic Judaism takes the place of the Judaism of the *Galuth*. The numerous instances of radical phraseology and the hints of a state of the world to come when there will be a new law, in which particularly the *Raya Mehemna* in the Zohar abounds, could be used by the Sabbatians to justify their revolutionary doctrine. Here the ideas of an isolated Jewish "spiritual" around 1300 have at last found a home, so to speak, and begin to exercise an influence among wider circles.[49]

It is amazing how clearly these thoughts were expressed as early as one or two years after Sabbatai Zevi's apostasy. In a treatise written in 1668, Abraham Perez, one of Nathan's pupils in Salonica, sets forth what can only be described as a theory of antinomianism:[50] Whoever remained faithful, in the new world, to the "oral Torah", i. e. to the Rabbinical tradition, or to put it as plainly as possible, to the real and existing Judaism of the *Galuth*, is to be positively regarded as a sinner.[51] A new understanding of the essentially unchangeable Torah, that is to say, a new Judaism, was proclaimed in the place of the old. And the author shows that he is fully aware of the implications and consequences of this theory. It is true that he has taken precautions against the danger of *pure* antinomianism: The positive law of the new world becomes visible, according to him, only with the complete and final Redemption, i. e. after the Messiah will have completed his Calvary through the world of evil and annihilated or transformed its power from within. Until that new epoch, in the early dawn of which we ourselves live, the ancient law retains its force. In this way the facade of orthodoxy is preserved, although there can be no doubt that the emotional relation to its tenets and values has undergone a complete change.

Such theories, in which the antinomian tendencies remain only latent, were put forward in various guises by the moderate schools of Sabbatianism. Not a few Sabbatians achieved the miracle of living is the continuous paradox of devout fulfilment of the law and belief in the impending approach of a new era in which such fulfilment will become meaningless. We know of such enthusiastic Sabbatians, whose devout attachment to the traditional tenets of their religion, within the sphere of Rabbinical Judaism, is reflected in documents of the most intimate kind in which they have opened their hearts without reserve. The most astonishing and moving of these documents is the diary of two Sabbatians in Modena, in Northern Italy, of which I have given a detailed account elsewhere.[52] The existence of such a moderate wing of Sabbatianism, in particular until about 1715, is of importance for the understanding of the movement, and the fact that it was ignored has tended to obscure matters. For this reason frequent and unsuccessful attempts have been made to dispute the fact that such men belonged to the Sabbatian movement, which was regarded as nothing but an unholy rebellion

against Rabbinical Judaism, with an open tendency towards transgressions and sins in theory and practice. A picture which is far from portraying the whole truth.

On the other hand it must be admitted that the mood which speaks from such ideas as were advanced by Abraham Perez had its counterpart in eruptions of real antinomianism. For the first time in the history of mediaeval Jewry, the rigid emotional and intellectual attitude born from the continuity of life under the undisputed dominance of the Mosaic and Rabbinic Law gave way to a new mood. The positive influence of this way of life over the Jewish mind had been so great that for centuries no movement, least of all an organized movement, had rebelled against the values linked up with the practical fulfilment of the Law. This is all the more remarkable as orthodox Judaism by its very nature offered much greater scope to antinomian explosions than either Christianity or Islam, which yet had far oftener to contend with them. For the causes of this apparent contradiction one must go back to certain external historical factors, such as the strong instinct of self-preservation in Jewry which sensed the subversive nature of antinomian tendencies; the historical situation of Jewry was such as to make this danger only too real. One must also take into account the fact that for individuals who rebelled against the Law the obvious course was to seek a way out of the Jewish community and to enter the non-Jewish fold. Only a mystical interpretation of the fundamental categories of the Law and the Redemption was capable of preparing the ground for antinomian tendencies which strove to maintain themselves within the general frame-work of Judaism. On the other hand, the antinomian rebellion, when it came, was all the wilder while it lasted and engulfed a large part of the Sabbatian movement, its radical wing, to use a modern term.

The motives which came to the surface in the development of extreme antinomianism were of two kinds. There was on the one hand the personality of the Messiah and its paradox, and on the other the attitude and the individual experience of the believer. The point at which moderate and extreme Sabbatianism parted ways was supplied by the question whether the actions of the Messiah serve as an example to the believer or not.[53] The moderate thought not. They held that the paradox of the new religious life is limited to the person of the Messiah. The Messiah alone stands at the crossroads where the old values are no longer binding, and he alone must tread the weary path through the world of evil which is the mark of his mission. His actions are not examples to be followed; on the contrary, it is of their nature to give offence. Already Nathan of Gaza asserted (in 1667) that precisely the "strange actions" of Sabbatai Zevi constituted proof of the authenticity of his Messianic mission: "For if he were not the Redeemer, these deviations would not occur to him; when God lets His light shine over him, he commits many acts which are strange and wonderful in the eyes of the world, and that is proof of his truth."[54] The true acts of Redemption are at the same time those which cause the greatest scandal. In the life of the believers there can be no room for nihilistic tendencies, as long as the completion of the *Tikkun* has not yet transformed the external world and Israel remains in exile. The paradox of the Messiah is a matter purely of belief; if it makes its appearance in the life of the individual it does so only in spheres which lie beyond practicality. Especially Cardozo has taken great pains to defend this stand on the question of mystical apostasy.

7.

It was over this point that the split became inevitable. The radicals could not bear the thought of remaining content with passive belief in the paradox of the Messiah's mission. Rather did they hold that as the end draws nearer this paradox necessarily becomes universal. The action of the Messiah sets an example and to follow it is a duty. The consequences which flowed from these religious ideas were purely nihilistic, above all the conception of a voluntary Marranism with the slogan: We must *all* descend into the realm of evil in order to vanquish it from within. In varying theoretical guises the apostles of nihilism preached the doctrine of the existence of spheres in which the process of *Tikkun* can no longer be advanced by pious acts; Evil must be fought with evil.[55] We are thus gradually led to a position which, as the history of religion shows, occurs with a kind of tragic necessity in every great crisis of the religious mind. I am referring to the fatal, yet at the same time deeply fascinating doctrine of the holiness of sin, that doctrine which in a remarkable way reflects a combination of two widely different ele-

ments: The world of moral decadence and another, more primitive, region of the soul in which long-slumbering forces are capable of sudden resurrection. That in the religious nihilism of Sabbatianism, which during the eighteenth century proved so dangerous to the most precious possesion of Judaism, its moral substance, both these elements had a share, cannot be proved better than by the tragic history of its last phase, the Frankist movement.

The connection postulated by the Torah between original sin and the sense of shame confronts the Kabbalists concerned with the *Tikkun*, the elimination of the stigma of sin, with the awkward problem of the disappearance of shame in the new Messianic state.[56] The opposite solution, that of seeking redemption by "treading upon the vesture of shame," in the words of a famous phrase ascribed by some Gnostics to Jesus,[57] was openly proclaimed among the radical Sabbatians by Jacob Frank. The ancient and profound word of the Mishnah that it is possible to love God also with the 'evil impulse'[58] now received a meaning of which its author had not thought.

Moses Hagiz distinguishes between two forms of the Sabbatian heresy: "The way of the one sect is to regard every impure person who defiles himself by lighter or heavier transgressions as a saint. They say that what we see with our eyes, how they eat on the days of fast, is not a corporeal but a spiritual meal, and that when they defile themselves before the eyes of the world, that is not an impurity but an act through which they come in contact with the spirit of holiness. And of every evil action which we see them commit, not only in thought but also in reality, they say that this is precisely how it must be, and that there is a mystery in the matter, and a *Tikkun* and a salvaging of holiness from the *Kelipoth*. And thus they are agreed that whoever commits a sin and does evil is good and honest in the eyes of God. But another sect among them turns the heresy to a different purpose. It is their custom to argue that with the arrival of Sabbatai Zevi the sin of Adam has already been corrected and the good selected out of the evil and the 'dross'. Since that time, according to them, a new Torah has become law under which all manner of things formerly prohibited are now permitted, not least the categories of sexual intercourse hitherto prohibited. For since everything is pure, there is no sin or harm in these things. And if before our eyes they nevertheless adhere to the Jewish law, they do so only because it is written: "Do not forsake altogether the Torah of thy mother."[59]

These assertions of a heresy-hunter like Hagiz, which in themselves would perhaps not carry full conviction, are, however, supported by a mass of evidence on the development of Sabbatianism between 1700 and 1760. The doctrine described and condemned by Hagiz in 1714 was practised in various forms and in widely scattered localities until the end of the century. In the history of Gnosticism, the Carpocratians are regarded as the outstanding representatives of this libertinistic and nihilistic form of Gnosis.[60] But nothing that is known of them touches the resolute spirit of the gospel of antinomianism preached by Jacob Frank to his disciples in more than two thousand dogmatic sayings. The ideas he adduced in support of his preachings constitute not so much a theory as a veritable *religious myth of nihilism*.[61]

Generally speaking, it is in the nature of nihilistic doctrines that they are not proclaimed publicly and, even in written tracts, are hardly ever preached without reserve. In the case of Frank, however, the boundless enthusiasm and devotion of his followers led them to preserve this unique document. To them, he was the incarnation of God and his words divine inspiration. For whatever one may think of the character and personality of Jacob Frank, his followers, of whom we have at least two independent writings,[62] were without doubt largely men of pure heart. Deep and genuine religious emotion speaks to us from their words and it is clear that they must have found in those dark sayings of their prophet, on the "abyss into which we must all descend" and on the "burden of silence" which we must bear, a liberation which the Rabbinical Torah denied them. Thus it comes about that we possess two or three manuscripts in the Polish language of the *Ksiega Słów Panskich*, the "Book of the Words of the Lord."[63] In this collection of sayings, parables, explanations and 'words of Torah' — if they can be called that — the characteristic mixture of primitive savagery and putrescent morals, which I have mentioned, strikes one with its full force. It is only fair to add that a certain vigour of style and élan of thought cannot be denied to this work, perhaps the most remarkable "holy writ" which has ever been produced.

Certain more or less paradoxical utterances from the Talmud and other sources, as well as certain mystical symbols, became after 1700 the slogans of a religious Nihilism in which the ideational content of a depraved mysticism comes into open conflict with every tenet of the traditional religion. Talmudic and semi-Talmudic sayings, such as "Great is a sin committed for its own sake,"[64] or "The subversion of the Torah can become its true fulfilment,"[65] — remarks whose meaning was originally by no means antinomistic or nihilistic but which lent themselves to such interpretation — were turned upside down. The Torah, as the radical Sabbatians were fond of putting it,[66] is the seed-corn of Salvation, and just as the seed-corn must rot in the earth in order to sprout and bear fruit, the Torah must be subverted in order to appear in its true Messianic glory. Under the law of organic development, which governs every sphere of existence, the process of Salvation is bound up with the fact of man's actions being, at least in certain respects and at certain times, dark and as it were rotten. The Talmud says: "David's son comes only in an age which is either completely guilty or completely innocent."[67] From this epigram, many Sabbatians drew the moral: Since we cannot all be saints, let us all be sinners.

The truth is that this doctrine of the holiness of sin represents a mixture of several ideas: In addition to the belief that certain actions, which are in reality pure and holy, must bear the outward appearance of sin, we also find the idea that that which is really and truly evil is transformed from within by being practised with, as it were, religious fervour. It is obvious that these conceptions are radically opposed to everything which for centuries had formed the essence of moral teaching and speculation in Judaism. It is as if an anarchist rebellion had taken place within the world of Law. The reaction went so far that in certain radical conventicles acts and rites were practised which aimed deliberately at the moral degradation of the human personality: He who has sunk to the uttermost depths is the more likely to see the light. In the elaboration of this thesis, the apostles of the radicals who came from Salonica, and above all Jacob Frank, were tireless.

Mere condemnation of this doctrine, however, leads us nowhere. Attention must be given also to its positive side. The religious, and in some case the moral, nihilism of the radicals is after all only the

confused and mistaken expression of their urge towards a fundamental regeneration of Jewish life, which under the historic conditions of those times could not find a normal expression. The feeling of true liberation which "the believers" had experienced in the great upheaval of 1666, sought to find an expression on the moral and religious plane, when historical and political realization was denied to it. Instead of revolutionizing the external circumstances of Jewish life, a thing it could no longer do after the apostasy of the Messiah, it became introverted and encouraged a mood which easily adapted itself to the new spirit of rationalism and reform, once the myth of the Messiah's journey to the gates of impurity had begun to fade.

To this must be added a further motive, also well known from the history of religion and particularly from that of the mystical sects, which almost invariably makes its appearance together with the doctrine of the holiness of sin. That is the idea that the elect are fundamentally different from the crowd and not to be judged by its standards. Standing under a new spiritual law and representing as it were a new kind of reality, they are beyond good and evil. It is well known to what dangerous consequences Christian sects in ancient and modern times have been led by the idea that the truly newborn is incapable of committing a sin, and that therefore everything he does must be regarded under a higher aspect. Similar ideas made their appearance very soon in the wake of Sabbatianism especially in Salonica. The inner reality of Redemption, which has already been inaugurated in the hidden worlds, even though it does not yet manifest itself in the external world, was held to dictate a higher law of conduct to those who experience it.

I do not propose to discuss the various concrete applications of this thesis. The two contentions: It is meritorious to sin in order to overcome the power of evil from within, and: It is impossible for those who already live in the Messianic world of *Tikkun* to sin, because to them evil has already lost its meaning — I say these two contentions appear to conflict with one another, but from a practical point of view their effect is the same. Both have the tendency to make all external action and conduct appear unreal, and to oppose to it an inner secret action which is the counterpart of true belief. The radical Sabbatians, the nihilists, were agreed that just as Redemption had so far become only intrinsically real and not yet visible,

so the true belief must be held only in secret, while external behaviour must conform to the power of evil in the world of the *Galuth*. The belief which one professes can by its very nature no longer coincide with that which one really holds. Everyone must in some way share the fate of the Marranos; one's heart and one's mouth may not be one.[68] This can be done also within the orbit of Judaism, and in fact the great majority even of the radical Sabbatians remained Jews. Here the external world the value of which was denied by the inner and secret rites, was that of Rabbinical Jewry, for which the Messianic Judaism of Antinomianism, the secret annihilation of the Torah as its true fulfilment, became the secret substitute. But this external world could also be Mohammedanism, if one followed the example of Sabbatai Zevi, or Catholicism if one followed that of Frank.[69] The blasphemous benediction "Praise be to Thee, O Lord, who permittest the forbidden" came to be considered by these radicals as a true expression of their feeling.[70] For the purpose was not to deny the authority of the Torah, but to oppose a "Torah of the higher world," *Torah de-Atsiluth*, which alone is relevant, to the Torah in its present sensual appearance, *Torah de-Beriah*.[71] To the anarchic religious feeling of these new Jews, all the three great institutional religions have no longer an absolute value. This revolution of the Jewish consciousness was gradually spread by groups who, like the majority of Sabbatian Jews in Germany and in the countries of the Habsburg Monarchy, remained within the walls of the Ghetto, those who continued to profess Rabbinical Judaism but secretly believed themselves to have outgrown it. When the outbreak of the French Revolution again gave a political aspect to their ideas, no great change was needed for them to become the apostles of an unbounded political apocalypse. The urge towards revolutionizing all that existed no longer had to find its expression in desperate theories, like that of the holiness of sin, but assumed an intensely practical aspect in the task of ushering in the new age.

The man of whom it appears to have been thought for some time, that after Frank's death in 1791 he would become his successor as the leader of the sect in Offenbach, was sent to the guillotine in 1794, together with Danton, under the name of Junius Frey.[72] However, these are extreme cases. On the whole, the movement remained within the confines of the Jewish communities. The account given by

Moses Porges of Prague of the description of Frankism given to him by his father in 1794 is highly characteristic: "There exists in addition to the Torah a holy book, the Zohar, which has revealed to us the secrets only hinted at in the Torah. It calls upon men to work for their spiritual perfection and shows the way to reach this aim. There are many noble souls who have devoted themselves to the new doctrine. ***Their end, their aim is liberation from spiritual and political oppression.*** God has revealed Himself in the latter days as He did in days of old. You my son, shall know all about this."[73]

8.

In this critical transformation of Judaism in the consciousness of both the moderate and the radical wing of Sabbatianism, the traditional forms of Kabbalism could not but become problematical. As a theory, Sabbatianism had its roots in an extravagant overstressing of certain aspects of Lurianism. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that from now on a multitude of new theories either tried to draw the final consequences from Luria's ideas, or else started from scratch with mystical ideas of their own. In the history of Kabbalism, the emergence of new ideas and systems was almost without exception accompanied by the belief that the last age was drawing near. Again and again we read in Kabbalist documents that the most profound and true mysteries of the Divinity, obscured in the period of Exile, will reveal their true meaning on the eve of the last age. The courage it took to break away from earlier doctrines and substitute new ideas for old ones was grounded in such beliefs, even though the pretence of 'tradition' was maintained. Abulafia, the Zohar, the book *Peliah*, the Kabbalistic systematizers of Safed — they all no less than the Sabbatians and Frankists, plead the coming of the dawn as the justification of what was new in their ideas. Thus, while certain Sabbatians, like Nathan of Gaza, merely gave a new interpretation to the Lurianic ideas without renouncing them, others have more or less radically broken away from them. The Sabbatian Kabbalists, above all during the fifty to sixty years after Sabbatai Zevi's apostasy, spent a great deal of thought on this point.[74] Abraham Cardozo, Samuel Primo, Abraham Rovigo and his disciple Mordecai Ashkenazi, Nehemia Hayun and finally Jonathan Eibeschuetz, are the outstanding representatives of a Sabbatian Kabbalah of more or less definitely

The ancient Gnostics of the second and third century distinguished between the hidden and benevolent God, the God of the illuminate whose knowledge they call 'Gnosis', and the Creator and Lawgiver whom they also call the Jewish God, and to whom they attribute the writings of the Old Testament. The term *Jewish God* or *God of Israel* is abusive and meant to be so. The Gnostics regarded the confusion between the two Gods, the higher, loving one, and the lower who is merely just, as a misfortune for religion. It is metaphysical antisemitism in its profoundest and most effective form which has found expression in these ideas and continues to do so. The same dualism is to be found in Sabbatian theology, but with a significant difference. The Sabbatians distinguish between the hidden God, whom they call the 'First Cause', and the revealed God who is the 'God of Israel'. The existence of a First Cause is in their opinion evident to every rational being, and its knowledge forms an elementary part of our consciousness. Every child able to use its intelligence cannot fail to perceive the necessity of a primary cause of existence. But this knowledge which we receive through our reasoning is without religious significance. Religion is in no sense concerned with the First Cause; rather is its essence to be found in the revelation of something which the mind by itself cannot grasp. The First Cause has nothing to do with the world and with Creation; it exercises neither providence nor retribution. It is the God of the philosophers, the God of Aristotle, which according to Cardozo even Nimrod, Pharaoh and the pagans have worshipped. The God of religion, on the other hand, is the God of Sinai. The Torah, the documentary evidence of Revelation, says nothing about the hidden root of all being, of which we know nothing except that it exists, and which is never and nowhere revealed. Revelation alone has the right to speak, and does speak, of that 'God of Israel', *Eloke Israel,* who is the Creator of everything, but at the same time Himself the First Effect of the First Cause.

Where the ancient Gnostics disparaged the God of Israel, the Sabbatians disparaged the unknown God. According to them, the error committed by Israel in exile consists in confusing the First Cause and the First Effect, the God of Reason and the God of Revelation. Cardozo and Hayun did not flinch from the awful consequence that, in the martyrdom of exile, Israel had lost the true and pure

knowledge of God. The philosophers who tried to bulldoze us into accepting the God of Aristotle as the God of Religion, will one day have to justify themselves, and Israel has little reason to be proud of them.

The object of religion, the goal of our prayers, can only be the 'God of Israel' and its unity or union with his Shekhinah. From this original dualism some Sabbatians developed a Trinity of the unknown God, the God of Israel and the Shekhinah, and it did not take long for the idea to develop that the completion of Salvation is dependent upon the separate appearance of a Messiah for each of these three aspects of Trinity, with a female Messiah for the last! The conceptions which the Sabbatians had of this new Trinity, one version of which has been set out at length in Nehemia Hayun's *Oz l'Elohim,* "Power of God," — the only document of Sabbatian Kabbalism which was ever printed[79] — however interesting they may be, are of no particular importance in this connection. What is more important is the fact that even the moderate Sabbatians tried to evolve a conception of God which conflicted with the fundamental tenets of Judaism. Their passionate insistence in proclaiming a derivative of something else the supreme object of religion has something strange and perturbing. The furious reaction of orthodoxy and also of orthodox Kabbalism against this attempt to tear the God of Reason and the Revealed God asunder, is only too comprehensible.

To the Sabbatians all reality became dialectically unreal and contradictory. Their own experience led them to the idea of an existence in permanent contradiction with itself, and it is not surprising that their God no less than their Messiah bears the mark of such self-contradiction and disintegration.

ficial peculiarities of Hasidic life there subsists a stratum of positive values, which were all too easily overlooked in the furious struggle between rationalistic 'enlightenment' and mysticism during the nineteenth century.

It is a well-known fact that the emotional world of Hasidism exercised a strong fascination upon men who were primarily concerned with the spiritual regeneration of Judaism. They soon perceived that the writings of the Hasidim contained more fruitful and original ideas than those of their rationalistic opponents, the *Maskilim*, and that the reborn Hebrew culture could find much of value in the heritage of Hasidism. Even so restrained a critic as Ahad Haam wrote around 1900, in a critical essay on modern Hebrew literature:[2] "To our shame we must admit that if today we want to find even a shadow of original Hebrew literature, we must turn to the literature of Hasidism; there, rather than in the literature of the *Haskalah*, one occasionally encounters, in addition to much that is purely fanciful, true profundity of thought which bears the mark of the original Jewish genius."

Among the factors which have made Hasidic writings more easily accessible to the layman than earlier Kabbalistic literature, two must be mentioned above all. One is the comparatively modern style of the more important Hasidic authors, the other their fondness for epigrams or aphorisms. In the case of most of the older Kabbalistic authors, the reader must make the effort of transplanting himself into a world of strange symbolism; the mind must adapt itself to a complicated and often abstruse mystical vocabulary, and even so understanding often becomes difficult. Hasidism marks an exception. For all their obvious defects in matters of Hebrew grammar not a few and not the least important Hasidic treatises are fascinatingly written. In general, although it would be very misleading to call it perfect, the style of Hasidic books is easier and more lucid than that of earlier Kabbalistic works of literature. Their Mysticism notwithstanding, there is in them what must be called the breath of modernity. We should know more about the older Kabbalah if its representatives had included such masters of incisive epigrammatic style as Rabbi Phineas of Koretz, Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav, Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk, and other leaders of Hasidism.

But although, as I said, there are books in all languages which

deal with the subject, some of them in a masterly fashion, there is still room for further attempts to interpret Hasidism, particularly in its relation to the whole of Jewish Mysticism. I have no wish to compete with the excellent collections of Hasidic anecdotes and epigrams which nowadays enjoy such wide circulation. You will not expect me to add anything to the wealth of Hasidic tales and teachings contained for instance in the writings of Martin Buber or in the voluminous "Hasidic Anthology" which has been compiled by Louis Newman.[3] It is not that I should find any difficulty in adding to it; the range of this literature is enormous. But in this lecture I should like to confine myself to a few points which have a more direct bearing upon our problem.

The fact is that attempts have been made for some time to deny the mystical character of Hasidism.[4] Although I do not agree with these views, it seems to me there is something to be said in their favour; moreover they have a value precisely because they show us that we are dealing with a problem. The problem to my mind is that of the popularization of Kabbalistic thought, or to put it a little differently, we have to consider in this lecture the problem of the social function of mystical ideas. But before going further, let me recall the subject of the last two lectures. Lurianic Kabbalism, Sabbatianism and Hasidism are after all three stages of the same process. As we have seen, a proselytizing tendency was already inherent in the first. The distinguishing feature of Lurianic Kabbalism was the important part played by the Messianic element. Lurianism, as I have said before, appealed to the masses because it gave an expression to their yearning for deliverance by emphasizing the contrast between the broken and imperfect state of our existence and its perfection in the process of *Tikkun*. In the Sabbatian movement this urge for redemption 'in our time' became the cause of aberrations. Great as was the influence of Sabbatianism, it was bound to fail as a missionary movement. Its extravagant paradoxicalness, which overstressed the fundamental paradoxy inherent in every form of Mysticism, remained an affair of comparatively small groups. Hasidism, on the other hand, broadly speaking represents an attempt to make the world of Kabbalism, through a certain transformation or re-interpretation, accessible to the masses of the people, and in this it was for a time extraordinarily successful.

"was a community resolved to live in unity and sanctity. Of those who thought to enter its portals it demanded the attainment of the scholar and the self-abnegation of the ascetic. Thus it missed the masses."[7] We are in possession of documents signed by twelve members of this group in the eighteenth century, in which the signatories pledge themselves to build up, through their common life, the mystical body of Israel and to sacrifice themselves for each other "not only in this life but in all lives to come."[8] Kabbalism becomes at the end of its way what it was at the beginning; a genuine esoterism, a kind of mystery-religion which tries to keep the *profanum vulgus* at arm's length. Among the writings of the Sephardic Kabbalists of this school, which has exercised a considerable influence on Oriental Jewry,[9] it would be difficult to find a single one capable of being understood by the laity.

Finally there was a third way, and that is the one which Hasidism took, particularly during its classical period. Here the Kabbalah did not renounce its proselytizing mission; on the contrary, Hasidism — a typical revivalist movement whose founder was innocent of higher Rabbinical learning — aimed from the beginning at the widest possible sphere of influence. Later on I shall have to say something about the way in which Hasidism achieved this aim and the price it had to pay for it. But first let us see what distinguishes this movement from the previous ones; this will also give us a starting point for the question, what unites them.

As far as I can see, Hasidism represents an attempt to preserve those elements of Kabbalism which were capable of evoking a popular response, but stripped of their Messianic flavour to which they owed their chief successes during the preceding period. That seems to me the main point. Hasidism tried to eliminate the element of Messianism — with its dazzling but highly dangerous amalgamation of mysticism and the apocalyptic mood — without renouncing the popular appeal of later Kabbalism. Perhaps one should rather speak of a 'neutralization' of the Messianic element. I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I am far from suggesting that the Messianic hope and the belief in Redemption disappeared from the hearts of the Hasidim. That would be utterly untrue; as we shall see later on, there is no single positive element of Jewish religion which is altogether lacking in Hasidism. But it is one thing to allot a niche to the idea of Re-

had never met Rabbi Heshel Zoref, who during his closing years led the secluded life of a saint, in a little room of the *Beth ha-Midrash* in Cracow. The Baal Shem intended to have the voluminous and partly cryptographic manuscript copied by one of his friends who was a famous Kabbalist, Rabbi Sabbatai Rashkover, but nothing came of his plan and the manuscript fell into the possession of the Baal Shem's grandson, Aaron Tutiever, who finally had it copied. The copy we have is based on that first copy which became the property of another famous Hasidic leader, Rabbi Mordecai of Czernobyl. So far everything is perfectly straightforward, and there is an interesting commentary by the copyist in the colophon of the manuscript, where he sings the praise of this profound Kabbalistic work. What the copyist, however, did not know was that the author was without doubt one of the outstanding prophets of moderate Sabbatianism. I mentioned his name in the last lecture.[17] Like many others he seems to have kept his belief in Sabbatai Zevi secret during the latter part of his life, but we know from trustworthy witnesses that it has found a symbolical expression in his book[18] of which some contemporary writers speak with the deepest veneration. Now all this amounts to no less than the fact that the founder of Hasidism guarded the literary heritage of a leading crypto-Sabbatian and held it in the highest esteem. Apparently we have here the factual basis of the legend of Rabbi Adam Baal Shem. The historical Rabbi Heshel Zoref, who was indeed something like a Baal Shem, was transformed into a mythical figure, when it became known, to the considerable scandal of the Hasidim, that he was 'suspected' of Sabbatianism.[19] It seems to me to be a fact of great importance that, between the new Hasidim and the old to whom Rabbi Heshel Zoref belonged, there was a link, if only an unconscious one — assuming that Rabbi Heshel's Sabbatian belief was as little known to the Baal Shem as to his followers, one of whom is even credited with an abortive attempt to have the work printed.

There is a further and very important point in which Sabbatianism and Hasidism join in departing from the Rabbinical scale of values, namely their conception of the ideal type of man to which they ascribe the function of leadership. For Rabbinical Jewry, particularly in those centuries, the ideal type recognized as the spiritual leader of the community is the scholar, the student of the Torah, the learned

"of pouring scorn on the students of the Torah and the learned, inflicting all manner of ridicule and shame on them, turning somersaults in the streets and market places of Kolusk and Liozna, and generally permitting themselves all sorts of pranks and practical jokes in public."[20] And yet there is an all-important difference between even these radical groups and the Sabbatians: Their motives are entirely different. For the followers of the "Great *Maggid*," Messianism as an active force of immediate appeal no longer had any importance. The mood that inspired them and scandalized their opponents was the primitive enthusiasm of mystical "friends of God." I have already mentioned the fact that in its beginnings Hasidism bore a good many revivalist traits. Its founder had evolved a new form of religious consciousness in which Rabbinical learning, whatever its intrinsic significance, played no essential part. For the foundations of his immediate experience he went back to the Kabbalistic books which helped him to give expression to his emotional enthusiasm. He follows the ideas of the *Tsimtsum* of God, the uplifting of the fallen sparks, the conception of *Devekuth* as the highest religious value, and other notions of which we have already heard. For the soaring flight of the soul from the worlds created in the act of *Tsimtsum* there are no limits. "He who serves God in the 'great way' assembles all his inner power and rises upwards in his thoughts and *breaks through all skies in one act* and rises higher than the angels and the seraphs and the thrones, and *that* is the perfect worship." And: "In prayer and in the commandment which one keeps, there is a great and a small way... but the 'great way' is that of right preparation and enthusiasm through which he unites himself with the upper worlds."[21]

The clearest reflection of this enthusiasm is to be found in the Hasidic prayer which strikes one as an almost complete antithesis of the form of mystical prayer which was developed at about the same time in Jerusalem by the Sefardic Kabbalists of Beth-El. The latter is all restraint, the former all movement. It would be almost possible to speak of a contrast between 'sunken' and 'ecstatic' moods in the literal meaning of the term *ecstatic* "to be out of one's mind" — were it not for the reflection that such extreme opposites are always two sides of the same thing. To the Hasidic mind, *Devekuth* and *Kawwanah* were primarily emotional values, a significance

in this world, why did he not taste the sweetness of power?"[23] This almost sensuous love for power, which Frank possessed in the highest degree, is the stigma of nihilism. To Frank the grand gesture of the ruler is everything.

What matters here is that the development of Zaddikism, after Hasidism had become the religious organization of large masses, took a similar course. True, the unlimited power and authority of the Zaddik over his followers was not purchased at the price of such destructive paradoxes as Frank had to uphold. Zaddikism was able to attain its goal without coming into open conflict with the basic tenets of traditional Judaism. But this fact should not blind us to its doctrinal implications. Lust for power is active even among those profound theoreticians of Zaddikism who developed the doctrine of the Zaddik, the saint and the spiritual leader of the Hasidic community, as the non-Messianic Messiah, and characteristically carried it to its extreme. A man of genius like Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav impresses us by his extravagant references to the power of the Zaddik, but he does so because in his case one senses an obvious concern for the spiritual aspects of Zaddikism. With many others, however, this spiritual character is only faintly or not at all recognizable, and the greatest and most impressive figure of classical Zaddikism, Israel of Rishin, the so-called Rabbi of Sadagora, is, to put it bluntly, nothing but another Jacob Frank who has achieved the miracle of remaining an orthodox Jew. All the mysteries of the Torah have disappeared, or rather they are overshadowed and absorbed by the magnificent gesture of the born ruler. He is still witty and quick at repartee, but the secret of his power is the mystery of the magnetic and dominant personality and not that of the fascinating teacher.

4

But I am running ahead of my own thoughts. Let us return for a moment to the question, what Hasidism means and what it does not mean. There are two things about the movement which are particularly remarkable. One is the fact that within a geographically small area and also within a surprisingly short period, the ghetto gave birth to a whole galaxy of saint-mystics, each of them a startling individuality. The incredible intensity of creative religious feeling, which manifested itself in Hasidism between 1750 and 1800,

produced a wealth of truly original religious types which, as far as one can judge, surpassed even the harvest of the classical period of Safed. Something like a rebellion of religious energy against petrified religious values must have taken place.

No less surprising, however, is the fact that this burst of mystical energy was unproductive of new religious *ideas*, to say nothing of new theories of mystical knowledge. If you were to ask me: What is the new doctrine of these mystics, whose experience was obviously first hand, more so perhaps than in the case of many of their predecessors? What were their new principles and ideas? I say, if you were to ask me this, I should hardly know what to answer. In the previous lectures it was always possible to lay down a blue-print, so to speak, of the spiritual architecture of the subject-matter and to give a more or less precise definition of its ideational side. In the case of Hasidism, certainly a creative religious movement, we cannot do so without repeating ourselves innumerable times.

It is precisely this fact which makes Hasidism a special problem for our interpretation. The truth is that it is not always possible to distinguish between the revolutionary and the conservative elements of Hasidism: or rather, Hasidism as a whole is as much a reformation of earlier mysticism as it is more or less the same thing. You can say if you like that it depends on how you look at it. The Hasidim were themselves aware of this fact. Even such a novel thing as the rise of the Zaddikim and the doctrine of Zaddikism appeared to them as being, despite its novelty, well in the Kabbalistic tradition. So much seems clear, that the followers of these Hasidim became genuine revivalists. Rabbi Israel of Koznitz, a typical Kabbalist among the Zaddikim, used to say that he had read eight hundred Kabbalistic books before coming to his teacher, the "Great *Maggid* of Meseritz," but that he had really learned nothing from them. If, however, you merely read his books you will not find the slightest doctrinal difference between his teachings and those of the old authors whom he affected to despise. The new element must therefore not be sought on the theoretical and literary plane, but rather in the experience of an inner revival, in the spontaneity of feeling generated in sensitive minds by the encounter with the living incarnations of Mysticism.

A good deal of light is thrown on the attitude of the Hasidim to the question of their relationship — or that of their great teachers — to Kabbalism as a whole, by the testimony of Solomon of Luzk who edited the writings of the *Maggid* of Meseritz.[24] On the one hand, he reproves the later Kabbalists for their supercilious attitude towards earlier documents of Kabbalism; but then again he seems to regard the writings of Rabbi Baer of Meseritz as purely Kabbalistic and not at all as a new departure. Speaking generally one does get the impression from reading Hasidic authors that the continuity of Kabbalistic thought was not really interrupted.

Again it would be quite wrong to regard, as the original and novel contribution of Hasidism to religion, the fact that it popularized the Kabbalistic ideas of a mystical life with God and in God. Though it be true that this tendency has celebrated its greatest triumph in the Hasidic movement and its literature, its antecedents go farther back. Too little attention is given to the fact that the popularization of certain mystical ideas had begun long before the rise of Hasidism and that, at about the time of its first appearance, it had already found its most magnificent literary incarnation. I am thinking here of the now almost forgotten writings of Jehudah Loewe ben Bezalel of Prague (about 1520—1609), the "Exalted Rabbi Loew" of the Golem legend. In a sense, one could say that he was the first Hasidic writer. It is certainly no accident that so many Hasidic saints had a penchant for his writings. Some of his more voluminous tracts, such as the great book *Gevuroth Adonai*, "the Mighty Deeds of God",[25] seem to have no other purpose than to express Kabbalistic ideas without making too much use of Kabbalistic terminology.[26] In this he succeeded so well that not a few modern students have failed to perceive the Kabbalistic character of his writings. Some have gone so far as to deny that he occupied himself with Kabbalistic thought at all.

The Hasidim themselves did not go so far in their popularization of Kabbalistic thought as the Exalted Rabbi Loew, who appears to have renounced the Kabbalistic vocabulary only in order to give the widest possible range of influence to Kabbalistic doctrine. They too on occasions depart from the classical terminology of Kabbalism, especially where it had become petrified; there is subtlety and ambiguity in their writings which is not found in earlier authors,

deemed of the highest importance. To put it as briefly as possible, the distinctive feature of the new school is to be found in the fact that the secrets of the Divine realm are presented in the guise of mystical psychology. It is by descending into the depths of his own self that man wanders through all the dimensions of the world; in his own self he lifts the barriers which separate one sphere from the other;[28] in his own self, finally, he transcends the limits of natural existence and at the end of his way, without, as it were, a single step beyond himself, he discovers that God is "All in All" and there is "Nothing but Him". With every one of the endless stages of the theosophical world corresponding to a given state of the soul — actual or potential, but at any rate capable of being felt and perceived — Kabbalism becomes an instrument of psychological analysis and self-knowledge, an instrument the precision of which is not infrequently rather astounding. What gives the writings of the *Habad*-school their distinctive feature is that striking mixture of enthusiastic worship of God and pantheistic, or rather acosmistic, interpretation of the Universe on the one hand, and intense preoccupation with the human mind and its impulses on the other.

Something of this attitude is indeed common to the whole Hasidic movement, even though the majority of its followers rejected the mood of religious intoxication peculiar to the *Habad* mystics, whose theoretical outlook struck them as being a little too scholastic and strained. This much then can be said: In the Hasidic movement, Kabbalism appears no longer in a theosophical guise, or to be more exact, theosophy with all its complicated theories, if it is not entirely dropped, is at least no longer the focal point of the religious consciousness. Where it continues to play a prominent part, as for instance in the school of Rabbi Zevi Hirsh of Zydaczow (died 1830), it is bound up with some belated offshoot of the older Kabbalah within the framework of Hasidism. What has really become important is the direction, the mysticism of the personal life. Hasidism is practical mysticism at its highest. Almost all the Kabbalistic ideas are now placed in relation to values peculiar to the individual life, and those which are not remain empty and ineffective. Particular emphasis is laid on ideas and concepts concerning the relation of the individual to God. All this centres around the concept of what the Kabbalists call *Devekuth*, the meaning of which I have tried to explain in the fourth lecture. The comparatively few terms of religious expression which date back to Hasidism, such as *Hithlahavuth*, "enthusiasm," or "ecstasy," or *Hithazkuth*, "self-maintenance", are related to this sphere.

There is much truth in Buber's remark in the first of his Hasidic books that Hasidism represents "Kabbalism turned Ethos", but a further ingredient was needed to make Hasidism what it was. Ethical Kabbalism can also be found in the moralizing and propagandist literature of Lurianism which I have mentioned, yet it would be stretching the term too far to call this Hasidic. What gave Hasidism its peculiar note was primarily the foundation of a religious community on the basis of a paradox common to the history of such movements, as the sociology of religious groupings has shown. Briefly, the originality of Hasidism lies in the fact that mystics who had attained their spiritual aim — who, in Kabbalistic parlance, had discovered the secret of true *Devekuth* — turned to the people with their mystical knowledge, their "Kabbalism become Ethos", and, instead of cherishing as a mystery the most personal of all experiences, undertook to teach its secret to all men of good will.

Nothing is further from the truth than the view which regards Zaddikism, that is to say the unlimited religious authority of an individual in a community of believers, as foreign to the nature of Hasidism, and insists that one must distinguish between the "pure" Hasidism of the Baal Shem and the "depraved" Zaddikism of his followers and their followers. This simon-pure Hasidism never existed because anything like it could never have influenced more than a few people. The truth is that the later development of Zaddikism was already implicit in the very start of the Hasidic movement. As soon as the mystic felt the urge to perpetuate his personal and solitary experience in the life of a community, which he addressed not in his language but in its own, a new factor made its appearance round which the mystical movement as a social phenomenon could and did crystallize. The believer no longer needed the Kabbalah; he turned its mysteries into reality by fastening upon certain traits which the saint, or Zaddik, whose example he strove to follow, had placed in the centre of his relation to God. Everyone, thus the doctrine ran, must try to become the embodiment of a certain ethical quality. Attributes like piety, service, love, devotion,

humility, clemency, trust, even greatness and domination, became in this way enormously real and socially effective. Already in mediæval Jewish literature, as we have seen in the third lecture, the radical or extreme practice of a good deed, or *Mitswah,* is mentioned as characteristic of the idea of *Hasiduth.* The modern Hasid certainly showed himself worthy of his name. Certain religious values were pushed so far and became symbolical of so much ardour and piety that their realization sufficed to bring about the mystical experience of *Devekuth.*

All this demanded from the first, and particularly during the most creative and virile period of the movement, the existence of the Zaddik or saint as the actual proof of the possibility of living up to the ideal. The whole energy and subtlety of emotion and thought, which in the case of the orthodox Kabbalist went into the exploration of the theosophical mysteries, was turned about in the quest for the true substance of ethico-religious conceptions and for their mystical glorification. The true originality of Hasidic thought is to be found here and nowhere else. As mystical moralists the Hasidim found a way to social organization. Again we see the ancient paradox of solitude and communion. He who has attained the highest degree of spiritual solitude, who is capable of being alone with God, is the true centre of the community, because he has reached the stage at which true communion becomes possible. Hasidism produced a wealth of striking and original formulations of this paradox, formulae which bear the mark of the utmost sincerity, but which with the decay of the movement became only too easily a screen for the more sinister potentialities of saintly existence. To live among ordinary men and yet be alone with God, to speak profane language and yet draw the strength to live from the source of existence, from the "upper root" of the soul[29] — that is a paradox which only the mystical devotee is able to realize in his life and which makes him the centre of the community of men.

5.

To sum up: The following points are of importance for a characterization of the Hasidic movement:

1. A burst of original religious enthusiasm in a revivalist movement which drew its strength from the people.

2. The relation of the true illuminate, who becomes a popular leader and the centre of the community, to the believers whose life centres round his religious personality. This paradoxical relation led to the growth of Zaddikism.

3. The mystical ideology of the movement is derived from the Kabbalistic heritage, but its ideas are popularized, with an inevitable tendency towards terminological inexactitude.

4. The original contribution of Hasidism to religious thought is bound up with its interpretation of the values of personal and individual existence. General ideas become individual ethical values.

The whole development centres round the personality of the Hasidic saint; this is something entirely new. *Personality* takes the place of *doctrine;* what is lost in rationality by this change is gained in efficacy. The opinions particular to the exalted individual are less important than his character, and mere learning, knowledge of the Torah, no longer occupies the most important place in the scale of religious values. A tale is told of a famous saint who said: "I did not go to the 'Maggid' of Meseritz to learn Torah from him but to watch him tie his boot-laces."[30] This pointed and somewhat extravagant saying, which must not of course be taken literally, at least throws some light on the complete irrationalization of religious values which set in with the cult of the great religious personality. The new ideal of the religious leader, the Zaddik, differs from the traditional ideal of Rabbinical Judaism, the *Talmid Hakham* or student of the Torah, mainly in that he himself "has become Torah." It is no longer his knowledge but his life which lends a religious value to his personality. He is the living incarnation of the Torah. Inevitably the original mystical conception of bottomless depths within the Torah was soon transferred to the personality of the saint, and in consequence it quickly appeared that the various groups of Hasidism were developing different characteristics in accordance with the particular type of saint to whom they looked for guidance. To establish a common type becomes not a little difficult. In the development of Hasidism opposing extremes found their place, and the differences between Lithuanian, Polish, Galician and South Russian Jewry were reflected in the personalities of the saints round whom they were grouped; all of which is not to say that the Zaddik was ever completely one with his environment.

The upshot of all this unlimited emotionalism was paradoxically enough a return to rationality. Such paradoxes by the way are not infrequent. In the event the waves went so high that emotion turned against itself. There was a sudden anti-climax. Zaddikim such as Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk, the most important among this group and generally speaking one of the most remarkable personalities — not a "saint", but a true spiritual leader — in Jewish religious history, began to inveigh against the extravagant sentimentalism which the cult of religious emotion had produced, notably among the Jews in Poland. Strict rational discipline suddenly becomes a fetish. The Rabbi of Kotzk had no sympathy for the Hasidic community whose yoke he bore only with the greatest reluctance. He hates emotionalism. In reply to an inquiry about man's way to God he is credited with the frank and laconic answer — in Scriptural language, Numbers XXXI, 53 — "The man of war had taken spoil, *every man for himself.*"[31]

After an interval of a hundred years, during which Hasidism as a whole, apart from the solitary figure of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi, developed independently of the rabbinic tradition, there occurred a revival of rabbinic learning, chiefly under the influence of the Rabbi of Kotzk. You find Zaddikim who write Rabbinical responsa and works of "Pilpul," that is to say, hair-splitting casuistry. But important as these aspects of later Hasidism no doubt are, they certainly represent a departure from what is new and original in Hasidism. There this sort of learning was of no consequence. Everything was mystery, if not exactly mystery in the Kabbalistic sense, for compared with the peculiar note of Hasidic emotionalism, even the Kabbalistic mystery has a rational character. Now it is dissolved into personality and in this transformation it acquires a new intensity. The miraculous thing about it all is the fact that Hasidism did not conflict much more sharply with orthodox Judaism than it did; and yet everything seemed to move towards a mortal struggle. The personality of the Zaddik, its interpretation by the Hasidic writers, their insistence upon his supreme religious authority, his elevation to the rank of a source of canonical inspiration, of a medium of revelation — all this fairly compelled a clash with the recognized religious authority of rabbinic Judaism.

Such a conflict broke out with great vehemence in many localities. The "Gaon" Elijah of Vilna, the outstanding leader of Lithuanian Jewry and an excellent representative of the highest Rabbinical learning combined with a strictly theistic, orthodox Kabbalism, took the lead, in 1772, in an organized persecution of the new movement. Nor were the orthodox squeamish about the means that were employed in this struggle. As late as 1800, fanatical opponents of Hasidism tried to induce the Russian Government to take action against it. The history of these organized persecutions and of the Hasidic defence against them has been fully described by Simeon Dubnow. There can be no doubt that the Hasidim cherished a feeling of moral superiority over their contemporaries which has found expression in the writings of some famous Hasidic authors. One could easily make a collection of Hasidic epigrams which breathe a spirit not very far removed from that of Sabbatianism. The Hasidic Zaddik, too, is occasionally compelled to descend to a lower or even dangerous plane in order to rescue the scattered sparks of light, for "every descent of the Zaddik means an elevation of Divine light."[32] And yet Hasidism did not go the way of Sabbatianism. Its leaders were far too closely connected with the life of the community to succumb to the danger of sectarianism. Opportunities were not lacking. Yet these men whose utterances not infrequently throw more light on the paradoxical nature of the mystical consciousness than anything before them, became — supreme paradox! — the advocates of the simple and untainted belief of the common man, and this simplicity was even glorified by them as the highest religious value. So profound an intellect as Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav, a man whose Kabbalistic terminology hides an almost hyper-modern sensitiveness to problems, turned all his energy to the task of defending the simplest of all beliefs.

The fact is that from the beginning the Baal Shem, the founder of Hasidism, and his followers were anxious to remain in touch with the life of the community; and to this contact they assigned an especial value. The paradox which they had to defend, that of the mystic in the community of men, was of a different nature than that upon which the Sabbatians took their stand and which inevitably gave a destructive turn to all their endeavours: Salvation through betrayal. The greatest saints of Hasidism, the Baal Shem himself, Levi Isaac of Berdiczew, Jacob Isaac the "Seer of Lublin," Moshe

Israel Baal Shem had been created solely for the purpose of confusing the modern theorists of Mysticism. Here you have a mystic whose authentic utterances permit no doubt as to the mystical nature of his religious experience and whose earlier and later followers have resolutely taken the same path. And yet he is also a true "Baal Shem", that is to say, a master of the great Name of God, a master of practical Kabbalism, a magician. Unbroken confidence in the power of the holy Names bridges the gap in his consciousness between the magician's claim to work miracles with his amulet, or through other magical practices, and the mystical enthusiasm which seeks no object but God. At the end of the long history of Jewish Mysticism these two tendencies are as closely interwoven as they were in the beginning, and in many of the intermediate states of its development.

The revival of a new mythology in the world of Hasidism, to which attention has been drawn occasionally, especially by Martin Buber, draws not the least part of its strength from this connection between the magical and the mystical faculties of its heroes. When all is said and done it is this myth which represents the greatest creative expression of Hasidism. In the place of the theoretical disquisition, or at least side by side with it, you get the Hasidic tale. Around the lives of the great Zaddikim, the bearers of that irrational something which their mode of life expressed, legends were spun often in their own lifetime. Triviality and profundity, traditional or borrowed ideas and true originality are indissolubly mixed in this overwhelming wealth of tales which play an important part in the social life of the Hasidim. To tell a story of the deeds of the saints has become a new religious value, and there is something of the celebration of a religious rite about it.[35] Not a few great Zaddikim, above all Rabbi Israel of Rishin, the founder of the Eastern Galician Hasidic dynasty, have laid down the whole treasure of their ideas in such tales. Their Torah took the form of an inexhaustible fountain of story-telling. Nothing at all has remained theory, everything has become a story. — And so perhaps I may also be permitted to close these lectures by telling you a story of which the subject, if you like, is the very history of Hasidism itself. And here it is, as I have heard it told by that great Hebrew novelist and story-teller, S. J. Agnon:

in the JThS in New York (= Parma 541 no. 21 and Oxford 2257), the greater part of which is incorporated in the version of the היכלות רבתי chapters 6—9 in the Ms. New York JThS 828; the entire literature around the figure of Zerubabel; the apocalypse of Simeon ben Yohai, etc.

116 היכלות רבתי chapter XVI.

117 מדרש תנחומא ed. Buber V p. 31.

118 Cf. the Midrash in חלכות גדולות ed. Hildesheimer p. 223 quoted by L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews vol. VI p. 438, and Rashi's commentary on Canticles I 2. On the question of מעמי תורה cf. זסחים 119a, סנהדרין 21b, שבת 120a.

119 Cf. the valuable contribution of N. Glatzer, Untersuchungen zur Geschichtslehre der Tannaiten (Berlin 1932).

120 There are several fragments of the בריית׳א דמעשה בראשית a) in ס׳ רזיאל 1701 f. 35a—36b; b) under the title סדר רבה דבראשית in בתי מדרשות ed. Wertheimer vol. I p. 1—31; c) in the supplement to Chone's רב פעלים (1894) p. 47—50; d) in L. Ginzberg's גנזי שכטר vol. I p. 182—187.

121 Cf. Mishnah *Hagigah* II,1, and the Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria ed. Casey (1934), § 78.

122 חגיגה 12b.

123 אבות דרבי נתן chapter 37.

124 See note 35 to Lecture I. I have published a German translation (Das Buch Bahir) in 1923.

125 The book is mentioned by Daniel אלקומסי, cf. J. Mann, Texts and Studies in Jewish History vol. II p. 76, 79, and by Hai Gaon, cf. אוצר הגאונים למסכת חגיגה, חלק התשובות p. 21.

126 Eleazar of Worms quotes several passages from the ס׳ סוד חגדול in his commentary on the *Shiur Komah* which I have discovered in a Ms. of the Angelica in Rome (Capua no. 27) and other Mss. (partly also in New York JThS 844 f. 100a—103a). Another fragment from the סוד חגדול is found in Ms. Milano 57 f. 20 in a piece called סוד המרכבה.

127 There exists a vast literature on this book, cf. my article Jezira in EJ vol. IX col. 104—111 where bibliographical notes are given. The English translation and commentaries of W. Westcott (1893) and K. Stenring (1923) contain some rather fantastic passages.

128 L. Baeck has tried to show that the Book of Creation is a Jewish adaptation of certain basic ideas of Proclus, much as the books of Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite are a Christian one, cf. MGWJ vol. 70 (1926) p. 371—376; vol. 78 (1934) p. 448—455. But his reasoning is not convincing, although his thesis looks fascinating enough.

129 Such words or phrases are גבולי אלכסון, ספירות בלימה, which make no sense in good Hebrew, or the use of עומק in the sense of

12 I know of some Kabbalists in Jerusalem who copied manuscripts of one of the most difficult of Abulafa's books, not in order to sell them but for the sake of their own work.

13 Jehudah Hayat in the preface to his commentary כנחת יהודה on the book מערכת האלהות Mantua 1558.

14 Moses Cordovero and Hayim Vital quote him more than once as a high authority, not to mention minor Kabbalists. Eliezer Eilenburg, a German Kabbalist (ca. 1555) says of Abulafia's אמרי שפר in rhymed prose שכולו עמוק מרחוק חופר and כל איש אשר מבחיש ספר אבדי שפר חוא איש סכל או איש כופר (Ms. New York JThS 891 f. 101a).

15 The Kabbalists used to quote all sorts of variations on Maimonides' saying (in תלבות יסודי תתורה IV, 13): ואני אומר אין ראוי לטייל בפרדס אלא כי שנתמלא כריסו לחם ובשר.

16 Of two great Kabbalists of the 13th century, the brothers Jacob and Isaac Hakohen of Soria, we know on very good authority שלא חיו בעלי חוראה בתלמוד cf. *Tarbiz* vol. III p. 261.

17 The following account is based chiefly on the fragment of Ab.'s אוצר עדן גנוז published by Jellinek in *Bet Ha-Midrasch* vol. III p. XL ff. of the introduction. Many other details are to be found in his commentaries on his own prophetical writings, cf. Steinschneider's analysis of Ms. Munich 285 in his Catalogue of the Hebrew Mss. in Munich (1895) p. 142—146.

18 Koch, Meister Eckhart und die Juedische Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters, in Jahresbericht der Schlesischen Gesellschaft fuer vaterlaendische Kultur 1928 (p. 15 of the reprint).

19 Abulafia's commentary on the *Moreh* is extant in two versions: a) חיי הנפש Ms. Munich 408; Enelow Memorial Collection 96 in JThS; b) סתרי תורה of which more than 25 manuscripts are known. Some pieces of it were printed (anonymously) in the Kabbalistical collection לקוטי שכחה ופאה (Ferrara 1556) f. 23—31.

20 According to אוצר עדן גנוז Ms. Oxford 1580 f. 17a.

21 The list of these commentaries is printed in בית המדרש III p. XLII.

22 מפתחות חקבלה Ms. Paris 770[1]; JThS 835, cf. my article on the author and the book in EJ III col. 1105.

23 ואני אומר לכתוב ואיני רשאי ואני אומר שלא לכתוב ואיני יכול לחניח לגמרי, לכן אני כותב ומניח וחוזר עוד בו במקום אחר וכן דרכי.

24 In 1279 he is full of praise for these pupils, cf. the passage in Jellinek's גנזי חכמת חקבלה German part p. 17 note 4. By 1282 he writes rather coolly about them (ספר תחיים Ms. Munich 285f. 21b) and 1285 he says bitterly יצאו לתרבות רעה כי נערים בלי מדע חיו ועזבתים *(Beth Ha-Midrash* III p. XLI).

25 Cf. MGWJ vol. 36 (1887) p. 558.

26 Fragments of one of these earlier works מ׳ מפתחות רעיון are extant in Ms. Vatican 291; the book גמ השמות complete in Ms. Oxford 1658.

76 Outstanding examples of this symbolism are to be found in Zohar I, 162a; II. 128a/b; III, 5a/b and 26a.

77 M. D. Georg Langer, Die Erotik der Kabbala, Prag 1923.

78 Zohar III, 296a/b, in a mystical interpretation of Psalm CXXXII, 13. Here ציון is used as a sexual symbol.

79 Cf. my German translation §§ 36, 43, 44, 52, 90.

80 Ibid. § 90.

81 The terms ברתא, מטרוניתא and כלה כלולה are employed, particularly the first.

82 עולמתא שפירתא דלית לה עיינין taken from the Zohar II, 95a where it symbolizes the Torah. As a symbol of the Shekhinah it is used by the whole Lurianic school.

83 Cf. ס' חמדת ימים (Venice 1763) vol. II f. 4a/b; Meir Poppers ס' אור חישר (Amsterdam 1709) f. 7d.

84 Cf. Zohar I, 228b: שכינתא כל נוקבי דעלמא קיימין בסתרהא.

85 See note 73.

86 האדם כלול מכל חדברים חרוחניים — a formula originally employed by Ezra ben Solomon, fifty years before the Zohar. In the latter's language, man is דיוקנא דכליל כלא (III, 139b).

87 Ezra says in סוד עץ חדעת Ms. Oxford, Christ Church College 198 f. 7b: אדם קודם אכילתו חיה כולו רוחני ולובש מלאכות כחנוך ואליהו ועל כן חיה ראוי לאכול מפירות גן עדן שהם פירות הנשמה. Cf. Zohar III, 83b.

88 שערי אורה (Offenbach 1715) f. 9a.

89 Zohar II, 41b; 216b; III, 77b.

90 Cf. the interpretation given in Zohar III, 77b of Zacharia XIV, 9 and III, 260b.

91 Cf. the same passage of the Zohar חשתא חייבי עלמא גרמו דלא אשתכח חד.

92 Zohar I, 164a and often.

93 שרשין עלאין cf. II, 34a.

94 The Zohar very often uses the verb אתדבקת בבאריה but only seldom the substantive דבקותא.

95 Nahmanides on Deuteron. XI, 22.

96 Sayings like *Hagigah* 9b: חזר הקב"ה על כל מדות טובות ליתן לישראל ולא מצא אלא עניות are exceptional.

997 מאנין תבורין cf. Zohar I, 10b etc., cf. my note in Baer's article ציון vol. V p. 30.

98 ספר הרמון Ms. British Museum f. 35b.

99 Cf. Baer's article in ציון vol. V. p. 1—44.

100 Zohar I, 249b.

101 Cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews vol. V p. 325.

102 Nahmanides אגרת הקודש... בענין חבור האדם אל אשתו, first edition Rome 1546.

103 Cf. Moses Cordovero פרדס רמונים chapter IV § 9.

104 I have published Moses of Burgos' ס' עבוד השמאלי in *Tar-*

בתחלת בריאתו חיה צורך גדול בתקון העולם בתיותו עומד במקומו והוא חיה שמש גדול נברא לסבול עול חכסלכות והשעבוד וראשו עד במתי ארץ וזנבו ער שאול ואבדון כי בכל העולמות כלם חיה לו מקום וצורך גדול לתקון כל חמרכבות כל אחד במקומו. וזה סוד תתל"י הידוע בס' יצירה והוא חמניע כל הגלגלים וחמתפך אותם ממזרח למערב ומצפון לדרום, ואלמלא הוא — אין לשום בריה מכל העולם שתחת גלגל חירח חיים, זריעה וצמיחה, ואין ההעוררות לתולדות כל חנבראים, ומתחלת חיה עומד מחוץ לכתלי מחנות חקדושה וחיה מחובר מחוץ לכותל חיצון שבמחברות (!) אחוריו כי חיו דבוקות בכותל ופניו פונות כלפי חוץ ולא חיה לו מקום ליכנס לפנים וחיה מקומו לעבוד עבודת חצטיחה ותתולדות מבחוץ וזהו סוד עץ חדעת טוב ורע. לפיכך חזחיר חש"י לאדם הראשון שלא יגע בעץ חדעת בעוד שחטוב וחרע שניהם דבוקים [יחד?] שזה מבפנים וזה מבחוץ עד שיסתין לחפריד את חערלה שב' וערלתם ערלתו את פריו וכתי' ותקח מפריו: חכנים צלם בחיכל ונמצאת חטומאה חיצונה נכנסת לפנים... דע כי כל מעשה תאלחים כשהם מקומם כל אחד באותו מקום שחכינו וחעמידו בבריאתו, חוא טוב... ואם נחפך ויצא ממקומו חוא רע... ולפיכך נאמר עושה שלום ובורא רע.

114 Zohar II, 69a/b, 216a, 227a; III, 252a.

115 Zohar II, 103a; I, 171a on the "legs" of the serpent, Sammael, who, according to Gen. III, 14, was left with nothing to stand on, but is provided with "legs on which to stand firm and upright" by Israel's sins.

116 Zohar II, 34b.

117 סטרא אחרא and סטרא דשמאלא are very frequent metaphors for the demonic power.

118 Zohar I, 223b; II, 34b; III, 135b and 292b. Cf. also the תשובה of the pseudo-Gikatila on the question תיאך כחטוב יצא רע in Festschrift Dr. Jakob Freimann zum 70 Geburtstag (1937), Hebr. part p. 170; מסכת אצילות ed. Jellinek in גנזי חכמת חקבלה (1853) p. 2.

119 Zohar II, 163a.

120 The Hebrew text of the whole hymn is printed in Michael Sachs, Die religioese Poesie der Juden in Spanien, 2. Aufl. (1901) p. 50—51.

121 Cf. Sachs, op. cit. p. 328—331; I have given a complete German translation in Almanach des Schocken Verlags auf das Jahr 5696/1936 p. 86—89.

122 Cf. L. Husik, A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy (1918) p. XLVII.

123 Zohar I, 206a; II, 141b; III, 70b. The original character of this psychology can still be gauged from the *Midrash Ha-Neelam*, especially on the section בראשית (printed in the editions of the *Zohar Hadash*).

124 *Binah* is often called נחר דנגיד ונפיק מן קדמוחי and *Neshamah* emerges from this stream of light. (The Zohar connects 'stream' נחר with 'light' נחורא). II, 174a hints at an even higher origin of *Neshamah* in the Sefirah of *Hokhmah*.

125 Moses de Leon puts this question twice, 1290 in ס' חמשקל

14 Azikri אזיכרי is the correct spelling of the name usually misspelt Azkari, according to the Mss. written in Palestine at that time, e. g. the autograph of Vital's autobiographical notes (Ms. Toaff in Leghorn).

15 S. A. Horodezky's presentation of the subject is very unsatisfactory, cf. תורת הקבלה של ר' משה קורדובירו (1924) and תורת האר"י in the yearbook כנסת vol. III (1938) p. 378—415.

16 Schechter, Studies in Judaism, Second Series (1908) p. 202—306.

17 Ibid. p. 258.

18 Cordovero alludes to his experience during meditation in his שעור קומה (1883) § 93, and in אור נערב end of chapter V. His ספר גירושין (1601) is based on a special mystical technique devised by him and his teacher Solomon Alkabiz, cf. קרית ספר vol. I (1924) p. 164.

19 אליטח רבתי (1881) f. 24d: תאלוח כל נמצא ואין כל נמצא תאלוח It is perhaps interesting to note that the German philosopher F. W. Schelling employed precisely the same formula to define Spinoza's attitude towards the problem of "Pantheism," cf. Schellings Muenchener Vorlesungen zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie, ed. A. Drews (1902) p. 44. Cf. on this question of Cordovero's "pantheism" MGWJ vol. 75 (1931) p. 452 ff, 76 (1932) p. 167—170.

20 שעור קומה (1883) § 40, p. 98.

21 On Cordovero's works cf. EJ vol. V col. 663—664.

22 Cf. Cordovero's ethical prescriptions published by Schechter op. cit. p. 292—294.

23 שבחי האר"י printed first in תעלומות חכמה (Basle 1629), cf. Schechter p. 323. Another letter of Shlomel's was recently published by S. Assaf קובץ על יד new series vol. III p. 121—133.

24 תעלומות חכמה 37b; לקוטי ש"ס (Livorno 1790) 33c.

25 Published e. g. in Vital's שער מאמרי רשב"י (Jerusalem 1898) f. 22a—30c. The authenticity of the commentary can be proved conclusively.

26 The שמונה שערים were printed for the first time in Jerusalem between 1850 and 1898. They contain the version edited by Vital's son Samuel. Another version of Vital's writings is given by Meir Poppers; the best edition of part of which (the עץ חיים) appeared in Warsaw 1891. Quotations from the *Ets Hayim* are given in accordance with this edition. The other parts bear separate titles for each volume: ספר הגלגולים, פרי עץ חיים, שער חיוחודים, ס' לקוטי תורה.

27 On Joseph ibn Tabul cf. my essay on Luria's disciples in ציון vol. V p. 133—160, especially p. 148 ff.

28 Tabul's book under the title ס' חפצי בת was published at the beginning of שמחת כהן, by Mas'ud Hakohen Al-Haddad (Jerusalem 1921).

29 Many of them are collected in ס' ארחות צדיקים (printed in

תורת העולמות in *Tarbiz* II p. 415—442; III p. 33—66. Its significance was emphasized by Cordovero, cf. פרדס רמונים chapter XVI.

86 עץ חיים chapters XL ff.

87 עץ חיים chapter XLVI, 1—2, and in many other places. Cf. Molitor, Philosophie der Geschichte vol. I (2nd edition 1857) p. 482. Luria himself (in his שער מאמרי רשב״י, פירוש ספרא דצניעותא f. 23d) states quite bluntly a purely theistic view which seems to have been somewhat blurred in his later oral teachings.

88 Both Ibn Tabul and Vital assert that the theory of the "curtain" holds good only for the אור פנימי but not for the אור מקיף which permeates and surrounds all the worlds in its original substance. In his more popular treatise on morals שערי קדושה ס׳ Vital deliberately employs a purely theistic terminology.

89 Cf. קונטרס כללי חתחלת החכמה (1893) and חוקר ומקובל ed. Freystadt (1840) p. 15—18.

90 This view is taken by Emanuel Hai Rikki in יושר לבב.

91 עץ חיים chapter XXXIX, 1 (vol. II, p. 130).

92 פרי עץ חיים I, 1 (Dubrowno 1804) f. 5a.

93 עץ חיים chapter XXXVI.

94 Cf. the passage quoted in note 91. On Adam's sin cf. also the lengthy passages in ספר חלקומים (1913) f. 56d and the דרוש חמא אדחי״ר in שער חפסוקים (1912) f. 1d—4b.

95 שער מאמרי רשב״י (1898) f. 37c/d.

96 Cf. ספר תגלגולים ch. 1—3; שער מאמרי רשב״י loc. cit.

97 לשם יחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה בדחילו ורחימו ליחדא שם י״ה בו״ה ביחודא שלים. This formula was generally introduced among the circles influenced by Lurianic Kabbalism, especially with the aid of Nathan Hannover's שערי ציון. Cf. Vital's שער הכוונות (1872) f. 3b and 4b.

98 Cf. my essay, Der Begriff der Kawwanah in der alten Kabbala, in MGWJ 78 (1934) p. 492—518.

99 This is the theory of כוונה developed in ס׳ הכוונות (Venice 1620), ס׳ פרי עץ חיים (best edition Dubrowno 1804) and שער הכוונות (Jerusalem 1873).

100 עץ חיים chapter I, 5 p. 29.

101 All this was expounded by Vital in a very interesting note printed at the beginning of the so-called *Siddur Ha-Ari* סדר התפלה על דרך הסוד Zolkiew 1781, f. 5c/d.

102 Their prayer-book has been published in Jerusalem 1911—1916. It is the so-called *Siddur* of R. Shalom Sharabi, concerning whom cf. above p. 324.

103 Paulus Berger, Cabalismus Judaeo-Christianus detectus (1707) p. 118, says that he has found the *Kawwanah* called *Sabbatismus ac silentium sacrum* by the Kabbalists. I have not yet been able to trace the source of this statement which seems to have been taken from Knorr's Kabbala Denudata.

כנוחה ושמחה כי לזה אמר ותיח האיש התוא תם וישר וגו' כי אין וחיח אלא לשון שמחה ואז היה "וסר טרע" שחיה יוצא מתוך חקליפות, לא כן ביסי חחושך שחיה טושקע בין חקליפות, ויש לו יתרון מאברחם שאפילו שחיה לו ענויים וטושקע ביניחם חיה איש תם, לא כן אברחם כי כאשר [יצא] מחם שוב לא חזר.

27 This is the major point in which the views taken in this lecture differ from the presentation of the subject in my essay מצוה חבאה בעבירה published in כנסת II (1937) p. 346—392.

28 It is not impossible that his apostasy itself was brought about by this illness, for it appears that at the time of it he was once more in a state of depression and utter passivity, cf. my note in קובץ חוצאת שוקן לדברי ספרות pp. 165—166.

29 Leopold Loew, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. II p. 171 and IV p. 449.

30 S. Hurwitz (ש"י איש חורוויץ) מאין ולאין (1914) pp. 181—285.

31 Cf. W. Rabinowitsch in ציון vol. V p. 127—132.

32 Cf. G. Scholem חלוטותיו של השבתאי ר' כרדכי אשכנזי (1938) and ציון vol. VI p. 94—96.

33 His full name is mentioned in a document published by Israel Halperin in תעולם (1930) No. 36. This disposes of the suggestions advanced by Rosanes IV p. 478.

34 מאמרים לזכרון ר' צבי פרץ חיות (Vienna 1933) p. 333.

35 The exact date has been settled by Cardozo's account of the event, cf. Bernheimer in JQR (1927) p. 102.

36 Leopold Loew, Gesammelte Schriften vol. II, p. 255 and Adolf Jellinek's letter ibid. vol. V p. 193 who says very characteristically: "Ueber den Sabbataeismus Chorins habe ich einen Zeugen, der merkwuerdige Beweise gibt: es ist aber die Frage, ob es klug ist, jetzt diesen Punkt zu diskutieren."

37 פירוש לעין יעקב Ms. in the Schocken Library in Jerusalem.

38 Cf. also my essay מצוה חבאה בעבירה in the yearbook כנסת vol. II (1937) p. 392. A very interesting light on this connection between the late Sabbatianism and the "enlightenment" is shed in the documents published by V. Zacek in Jahrbuch fuer Geschichte der Juden in der Czechoslovakischen Republik vol. IX (1938) pp. 343—410.

39 I am very much indebted to Miss Pauline Goldmark, of New York, who has been kind enough to present me with a copy of this very remarkable document written by her grandfather, Gottlieb Wehle.

40 לאקמא שכינתא מעפרא cf. the long disquisition of the "Maggid," one of the holy souls, addressed to Mordecai Ashkenazi, in my חלוטותיו של השבתאי ר' מרדכי אשכנזי pp. 79—100.

41 *Hullin* 7a.

42 Cf. the aforementioned discourse p. 80.

43 Far too little account has been taken in the literature on Messianism of his great book נצח ישראל (Prague 1599).

Yevreiski Almanach (Petrograd 1923) pp. 195—227, which came to my knowledge only after my aforementioned article had appeared in print.

62 These writings are (a) a "rewriting" of the prophecy of Isaiah in the spirit of Frankism, a very curious document fragments of which have been published by A. Kraushar, Frank i Frankisci Polscy, vol. II (1895) pp. 183—218; (b) the commentary on עין יעקב Ms. Schocken, in Jerusalem.

63 A considerable part is included in scattered form throughout Kraushar's book (see the aforegoing note) and particularly in the annexes vol. I pp. 378—429; vol. II pp. 304—392.

64 *Nazir* f. 23b גדולת עבירה לשמה ממצוה שלא לשמה.

65 בשולח של תורה זהו קיומה The saying is found in *Menahoth* 99b with the reading זהו יסודה. The reading of the Sabbatian formula is the same as in Wistinetzki's edition of the *Sefer Hasidim* § 1313.

66 Cf. לחישת שרף (1726) f. 2a/b.

67 *Sanhedrin* 98a.

68 This is the doctrine of משא דומה expounded in hundreds of Frank's sayings, but mentioned already 1713 by Hayun in דברי נחמיה f. 81 ff., who describes it (polemically) by using other symbols.

69 It must be borne in mind that only a small part of Frank's followers actually went over to Catholicism.

70 This formula is attested to by several writers dealing with the antinomianists of Salonica who used to ascribe it to Sabbatai Zevi himself. It is based on a pun, מתיר אסורים for מתיר אסורים "who frees those who are imprisoned." Cf. *Midrash Tehillim* ed. Buber f. 268 and Buber's notes.

71 Cf. כנסת II pp. 370—371.

72 Cf. Zacek in his essay quoted in note 38 p. 404. A monograph on Moses Dobrushka — Thomas Edler von Schoenfeld — Junius Frey is still a *desideratum*. He was certainly one of the leading Frankists.

73 די זברונות פון מאזעס פאדגעס תיסבאריש שריפטען published by the Yiddish Scientific Institute, vol. I (1929) col. 266. The original German text (of which only a translation has been published by Dr. N. Gelber), reads "Die Erloesung aus geistigem und politischem Druck ist ihr Zweck, ist ihr Ziel."

74 Some of them, such as Israel Jaffe in אור ישראל (1702) and Zevi Chotsh represent the Lurianic school of Sabbatianism. It is scarcely an accident that the author of the first attempt to popularize parts of the Zohar in the vernacular Yiddish was a Sabbatian, Zevi Chotsh in נחלת צבי (1711).

75 Of these Sabbatian authorities Samuel Primo's ideas are known only indirectly, through lengthy polemics against them in Cardozo's writings. By far the most voluminous tracts on Sabbatian

theology are those of Cardozo of which we have several volumes in manuscript.

76 My study on this important Sabbatian leader has appeared in ציון vol. VI (1941) p. 119—147, 181—201.

77 Cf. Mortimer Cohen's apology of Eibeschuetz in his book Jacob Emden, a Man of Controversy (1937) and my critical remarks on it in קריית ספר vol. XVI (1939) pp. 320—338. See also ציון vol. VI (1941) pp. 96—100. The apologetical arguments of Reuben Margulies in his polemical pamphlet סבת חתנגדותו של רבינו יעקב מעמדין לרבינו יחונתן אייבשיץ (Tel Aviv 1941) are entirely erroneous and misleading as I have shown in my rejoinder לקט מרגליות (Tel Aviv 1941).

78 Cf. Cardozo's account of these ideas published by Bernheimer in JQR n. s. vol. XVIII (1927) p. 122. In several of his unpublished tracts he is still much more outspoken about this "philosophy of Jewish History." Cf. also Cardozo's treatise מכתב בסוד חאלחות published in Weiss' בית חמדרש (1864) pp. 63—71, 100—103, 139—142.

79 עוז לאלחים Berlin 1713. This book has in its day given rise to bitter and protracted polemics, cf. Graetz vol. X (1897) p. 468—495; D. Kaufmann in REJ vol. 36 (1897) pp. 256—282, vol. 37 pp. 274—283; G. Levi in Rivista Israelitica vol. VIII (1911) p. 169—185; vol. IX p. 5—29; J Sonne in קובץ על יד n. s. vol. II (1938) p. 157—196. Graetz' interpretation of Hayun's teachings is incorrect insofar as he ascribes to him the theory of incarnation accepted by the most radical wing of the Sabbatian movement, but rejected by many Sabbatians. On the real history of the Sabbatian ideas on Sabbatai Zevi's apotheosis and their transformation into a theology of incarnation cf. chapter V of my essay on Baruchiah, in *Zion* vol. VI (1941) p. 181—191.

NOTES TO LECTURE IX

(HASIDISM: THE LATEST PHASE)

1 See the bibliography.

2 Ahad Haam תחית חרוח, in על מרשת דרכים vol. II p. 129.

3 See the bibliography.

4 This was the view taken by M. Loehr, Beitraege zur Geschichte des Hasidismus, Heft I (Leipzig 1925) and Lazar Gulkowitsch, Der Hasidismus religionswissenschaftlich untersucht (1927) p. 68.

5 Verus (i. e. Aaron Marcus), Der Chassidismus (1901) p. 286.

6 Cf. Ariel Bension שר שלום שרעבי (Jerusalem 1930).

7 Ariel Bension, The Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain (1932) p. 242.

8 Several of these documents have been published, cf. e. g. Ar. Bension, שר שלום שרעבי pp. 89—90 and especially E. Tcherikover's essay די קאמונע פון ירושלימער מקובלים „אחבת שלום" אין מיטן 18-טען יארהונדערט in YVO Studies in History (in Yiddish) vol. II (1937) pp. 115—139.

9 The members of this congregation of Kabbalists were recruited from among the Jews of North Africa, Turkey, the Balkans, Persia and Yemen.

10 There is a vast literature on the "Palestinian movement" in early Hasidism most of which is calculated to obscure the real issue of Hasidism and Messianism, e. g. Isaac Werfel חחסידות וארץ ישראל (Jerusalem 1940).

11 Even the legendary שבחי חבעש״ט still remember the existence of such Hasidim, and we are informed that two of the Baal Shem's earliest disciples belonged to them, cf. שבחי חבעש״ט ed. S. A. Horodezky (1922) p. 25.

12 Salomon Maimon's Lebensgeschichte ed. J. Fromer (1911) p. 170.

13 The nephew of Jehudah Hasid who was later converted to Lutheranism tells us that he and his comrades made the journey to Jerusalem "because of the false Messiah," cf. A. Fuerst, Christen und Juden (1892) p. 260.

14 Cf. Wolf Rabinowitsch, Der Karliner Chassidismus (1935).

15 The most complete collection of these fabrications has appeared in the Quarterly of the *Habad* Hasidim חתמים 1935—1938. The motive of the authors was obviously to prove the historicity of everything told in the שבחי חבעש״ט.

16 Cf. now the texts published by Wolf Z. Rabinowitsch in ציון vol. V (1940) pp. 126—131.

17 Cf. the details concerning his personality in the article quoted in the preceding note.

18 Cf. ציון vol. VI (1941) pp. 80—84.

19 Cf. my note on this subject in ציון VI pp. 89—93.

20 Cf. Dubnow תולדות חחסידות (1930) p. 112.

21 צוואת חריב״ש (1913) p. 27, 30.

22 אור חגנוז (Zolkiew 1800), section בראשית.

23 Kraushar, Frank i Frankisci Polscy vol. I (1895) p. 30.

24 Cf. his foreword to his teacher's ס׳ לקוטי אמרים (1781).

25 ס׳ גבורות ח׳ Cracow 1592.

26 Cf. A. Gottesdiener, תארי שבחכמי פרג (1938) p. 38—52: חמחר״ל בתור מקובל, who has collected some Kabbalistic material from his writings without attempting anything like a real analysis.

27 Torsten Ysander, Studien zum Bescht'schen Hassidismus in seiner religionsgeschichtlichen Sonderart, (Uppsala 1933).

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TO THE FIRST LECTURE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF JEWISH MYSTICISM

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