ASPECTS OF THE HEBREW GENIUS

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A VOLUME OF ESSAYS
ON JEWISH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT

EDITED BY

LEON SIMON

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DEDICATED

TO

THE MEMORY OF

GUSTAV KARPELES

HISTORIAN OF JEWISH LITERATURE

AND FOUNDER OF

THE UNION OF JEWISH LITERARY SOCIETIES

IN GERMANY

PREFACE

THIS volume of Essays owes its appearance to the Union of Jewish Literary Societies, and is a substitute for the Annuals issued in previous years by that body; but it is distinguished from its predecessors by greater unity of purpose and content, and has more conscious designs than they had on a permanent place in the comparatively small library of books written in English by Jews on Jewish subjects. The issue of the volume has been rendered possible by the generosity of four gentlemen—Mr. S. Japhet, Mr. Max Langermann, Mr. Claude G. Montefiore, and Mr. Otto Schiff—who have guaranteed the Union against financial loss through its publication. The Council of the Union has been represented, so far as the production of this book is concerned, by a Special Committee, consisting originally of Mr. A. M. Hyamson,

Mr. Norman Bentwich, and Mr. C. A. Franklin; afterwards of the two last-named gentlemen and myself.

This volume has a very essential connection with the popular Jewish literary movement of which the Union is the outcome and the representative. Of the seven Essays that it contains, six were originally lectures delivered before the North London Jewish Literary Union in the Sessions 1907–8 and 1908–9; though it should be added that the Essays on Philo, Saadiah, and Maimonides have been wholly, and that on Jewish Mysticism partly, rewritten for the present purpose. The remaining Essay — that of Dr. A. Wolf on Aristotle and Medieval Jewish Thought—reproduces a lecture read (as one of a series on "Aristotle in the Middle Ages") at the Summer Meeting of the University Extension, held at Cambridge in 1908; and the inclusion of the subject in the programme of that meeting was due to the suggestion of the Union.

Finally, the Introduction, which aims at linking together the isolated Essays, is a modified form of the Presidential Address delivered by Mr. Elkan Adler, as President of

the Union, at University College, on the 18th September.

The book is, of course, by no means a complete survey of Jewish literature and thought since the Dispersion. It makes no pretence to completeness, and may legitimately deprecate in advance any criticism based on the obvious fact that it leaves untouched many men and many tendencies of the first importance. But it does aim at indicating and explaining for the general reader some, at least, of the main lines along which the mind of the Jewish people has been working during the last two thousand years.

The Essays vary, not unnaturally, in method and point of view, and no contributor to this volume is responsible for the opinions of his collaborators; nor is the Editor answerable for the views of any of the contributors. His responsibility extends only to the selection and arrangement of the Essays; to the choice of a title for the book; to the securing of uniformity (or failure to secure it) in such minor matters as the trans-literation of foreign words; and to the preparation of the Index.

It is my privilege to be able to express the Union's thanks to the guarantors and to the

contributors, to whom jointly is due the credit for whatever value this book may have; and I would tender also my personal thanks to my colleagues on the Committee for assistance of various kinds. It remains only to add that the responsibility for any shortcomings, so far as they come within the sphere of editorship, rests with the Editor alone.

L. S.

LEWIS HOUSE, LONDON, E.
November, 1909

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INTRODUCTION

By E. N. ADLER

THIS volume of essays covers the whole range of Jewish thought during Christian times. Although the essays may somewhat overlap and are entirely independent of each other, and representative of different standpoints, for which, of course, neither the Union nor any of its members accepts responsibility, the collection has a certain degree of cohesion and continuity such as to justify its appearance in a single volume. The philosophers therein described—the Rabbis and the mystics—are all typical Jews, and there is not much Jewish literary activity which cannot be classed under one of these heads. Indeed, as Dr. Wolf shows, Rationalism, Dogmatism, and Mysticism are the three great schools in which thinkers can be classed. But we must beware of regarding literature exclusively as the province of the great man, however great a man he may have been. Such treatment would be to disregard the lesser fry as of no account. Battles are not won by generals alone ; the soldiers whom they command and who obey them are of at least equal importance. The writer is no hermit, he writes for a public ; and just as the modern historian regards the history of the people as more important than battles and the lives and deaths of monarchs, so literature in its modern point of view dares not ignore the public for whom the writer wields his

pen. A short history of the Jewish people, as distinguished from that of its scholars, officials, Rabbis and leaders, is sorely needed. It will prove them to have been imitators from the first. Already in Bible times the Diaspora and even the Palestine Jews were profoundly influenced by their environment.

At the dawn of Christianity the cultured world thought in Greek, and as Greeks. The New Testament itself, or the greater part of it, was written in that language, and the philosophy of the time was Hellenistic. At the head of the Hellenists was Philo. He was a typical Jew, because he was so clever and yet so imitative. It is only of late years that his supreme importance has begun to be recognised. Mr. Bentwich shows how skilfully that neo-Platonist allegorised Scripture, and how well he fits into his Greek setting. And yet he was a typical Jew, imbued, like the prophets, with the missionary spirit —a spirit to which we modern Jews, with some brilliant exceptions, have become almost strangers. Proud of his Judaism, he wishes to impose it upon all his readers, Jew and non-Jew alike. Only slightly the senior of the founder of Christianity, it is just possible that he heard, with little or no interest, of the great Radical movement under which the poor slaves of the Roman Military Junkers learnt to find life tolerable, nay, ideal. Of all the philosophers, Philo was of the greatest influence on early Christianity. Indeed, his theory of Logos is the keynote of the Fourth Gospel. Dr. Büchler's recent booklet on the *Jews of Sepphoris* gives us a brilliant and scholarly picture of social conditions in Palestine, and particularly in Galilee, within a few years of the destruction of Jerusalem, and is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Jewry when Mishnah and Talmud were being compiled.

The picture is not altogether a pretty one. There are lights and shades, and perhaps the shades predominate, so much so that it has been playfully suggested that this story of the Jews of Sepphoris is but a satire on those of London.

When, in the fifth century, the Amoraim had done their work, their place was taken by the Geonim at the rival colleges of Sura and Pumbeditha. These were both in Mesopotamia, where, under Parthian rule, Jewish scholars found a refuge from Roman oppression under their own Head of the Captivity. Dr. Ginzberg, in his *Gaonica*, skilfully, and by a method not unlike Dr. Büchler's, pieces together, largely from the new material which comes from the Genizah at Cairo, various data that give us quite a vivid picture of their life and condition. Here, too, we are constrained to admit that even in olden times all things were not perfect. Even then the cynic might have justly admired how those scholars loved one another. With the foundation of militant Mohammedanism by Mohammed, the condition of the Jews did not improve. But " Islam or the Sword " was not as dangerous to them as the foes within their own gates. The establishment of a reformed Judaism by ʿAnan, which sought to base itself upon Scripture alone, and to break away from traditional Judaism, proved a serious menace, and but for Saadiah, that inveterate and doughty controversialist, the Karaites might have won the day, and the tables might have been turned so that nowadays the Karaites might have been numbered by millions and the Rabbanites by thousands. Again, we are under deep debt to the Genizah, which has recovered for us much of Saadiah's lost works, and even his correspondence, so that nowadays we know almost as much about

him as we do of his illustrious successor, Maimonides, who lived three centuries later. Mr. Simon is most impressed by Saadiah's merit as a student of the Bible, and his desire to prove that it is only through traditionalism or Rabbanism that it can be understood and obeyed. He dwells on Saadiah's desire to convert the Karaites and non-Jewish as well as Jewish sceptics of the day to his views, and only regrets that Saadiah wrote in Arabic and not in Hebrew.

Maimonides is one of the most fascinating characters of medieval times. One likes to picture him as Saladin's physician in friendly conversation with that bold and burly troubadour, "Richard the Lion-Hearted." But, very properly, Dr. Wolf and Mr. Lewis dwell upon his importance as an Aristotelian Philosopher of the Arab School. In his struggle to fit all things Jewish into the procrustean bed of Aristotle he laid himself open to a well-founded hostile criticism. His works, especially his *Moreh Nebuchim*, provoked quite a storm of controversy among the European Jews of his own and subsequent generations. This controversy, by the by, after having slumbered for centuries, was revived in almost our own time by Luzzatto in the *Kerem Chemed*. Curiously enough, it is not the *Moreh* so much that he objects to as the *Jad hachazakah*, a dogmatic code, which never quotes an authority. Here Maimonides, in codifying the law, seems to have arrogated to himself the right to be a legislator, or rather the final court of appeal, and indeed in so many words claims that reference to Mishnah and Talmud is no longer required. Almost alone among our codifiers, his style is such as to make his book a delight to read and easy to be understood by a mere tyro in the Hebrew language.

Yet he was ever the Jew militant, seeking to reconcile religion with the science of his day, explaining the difficulties of Scripture, systematising Jewish observances and insisting on the scrupulous performance of each tittle of the law. He was perhaps the greatest of our codifiers, and in quite the modern spirit prefaced his 'Strong Hand' by a short but admirable sketch of Jewish literature. But the other codifiers are less self-reliant. They refer to their authorities; and even the *Shulchan 'Aruch*, which has been so much abused, leaves the individual freedom of choice when it points to difference of opinion as to what may or may not be done, so that it almost allows what we do without permission, each man prescribing unto himself his own *Shulchan 'Aruch*.

It had been originally intended to include in this volume a paper on Medieval Hebrew Poetry, but its publication has had to be postponed. It would have shown Ibn Gabirol and Jehudah Halevi in a more sympathetic light than that of cold philosophy. And yet we should have been forced to the conclusion that, as with other branches of literary activity, so with poetry, the Jew is not distinguished for originality. Our northern poets of the Middle Ages were often troubadours, difficult to distinguish from the rest of their clan, except perhaps that their royal and noble patrons treated them less generously. Our Andalusian poets, though Hebrew may have been the vehicle of their own emotions, write in the style and metre of their Moorish contemporaries. Only in sacred poetry have the Jews always preserved pre-eminence, from the time of the earliest Psalmist even to the days of our own poetical translators of the Machzor. The lay poetry of the Jew is not of much distinction. Most is written in minor key or, worse, with biting sarcasm and bitter satire.

One of these poets, Ibn Ezra, was also a Bible critic, who anticipated many of the striking views of the Higher Criticism. His Bible Commentaries are occasionally marked by daring views. He ever seeks to explain away difficulties on a rational or rationalistic basis. He, too, is attacked for this by Luzzatto, especially for his views on angels, but he is defended by Nachman Krochmal.

Throughout our history, we Jews have been characterised by an unceasing conflict between our tribalism and our cosmopolitanism, what Dr. Wolf happily calls centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. The rationalism of the early Middle Ages had inevitably to yield to Mysticism. The philosophy even of our poets—aye, even of that poet who "philosophises against philosophy"—provoked a reaction, and became responsible for the Kabbalah.

In its origin, Jewish Mysticism, as Mr. Sperling points out, was a natural yearning after the infinite, the innate religiousness of the Jew. Our prophets and psalmists in their repugnance to materialism became "enthusiastic and mystic." "Judaism discovers its soul when it compares souls with the Greeks," and in the period of the Apocrypha its mysticism is philosophical. In Talmud and Midrash we clearly trace the mystical theology of the Agadah, though Theosophy is discountenanced by the more sober Rabbis.

The Kabbalah, as we know it, is quite late, though its chief books claim famous Tannaim as their authors. It arose by way of protest against the rationalism of the Aristotelians, and is symptomatic of the opposition to Maimonides. "The rational instinct of self-preservation feels that it is already saturated with foreign thought, and unless that be

checked a disintegration of the national religion will set in."

The Kabbalah in Spain was less extravagant than in Northern Europe; but even there, with Abulafia, who claimed Messianic power, it rejected philosophy and sought to proselytise among even Popes and Christians. The *Zohar's* 'Splendour,' revealed to the world late in the thirteenth century, soon became the textbook of the Kabbalists. It was a mystical commentary in Aramaic on the Pentateuch, that least mythical of biblical books. Its philosophy is "a mixture of Hindu, Chaldean, and Greek thought, made suitable for Jewish acceptance." But it is also largely impregnated with Christian elements, and that is one great reason for the distaste with which it is regarded by the intellectual Jew.

The invention of printing and the establishment of the Inquisition bring us to the period of the Reformation. Those great events acted and reacted upon Jews and non-Jews alike. Scholars, whether Christian or Jewish, have always been broad-minded enough to care for each other's society, and to learn the one from the other. Their kindred tastes were sufficient to counteract their difference in religious belief. The Reformation would have been impossible but for the Rabbis who helped and taught the Bible translators and Protestant reformers, such as Erasmus and Reuchlin, Luther and Melancthon. With the success of the Reformation in Northern Europe, religious enthusiasm, coupled with mysticism of an extravagant type, became increasingly prevalent. The leading Protestant theologians were on terms of intimacy with Jewish scholars, and searched the Hebrew scriptures with great care and zeal. Sects such as the Anabaptists and Indepen-

dents became more and more Jewish in their line of thought. Many Christians began to doubt whether the Messiah had come at all, and most looked forward at least to his return. Books were written with a view to reconcile the Jewish and Christian beliefs as to the Messiah. At the time of the return of the Jews to England, several Christians declared themselves to be Messiahs of the Jewish nation, and imagined a Jewish kingdom of which they were to be the king. Many kept the Jewish seventh day Sabbath, and we are told of certain Quakers called Sabbatharii, that they were so pious that they killed a cat for eating a mouse on Saturday! Tovey tells that the anti-Semites of the time declared that the Jews saw in Cromwell their Messiah, and were in treaty for the purchase of St. Paul's Cathedral and the Bodleian at Oxford for half a million! The study of Hebrew had become fashionable. Already in Tudor times two of our own Queens were good Hebrew scholars, and Jews, always glad to follow the fashion, threw themselves into the study of their own literature with all the more zest. The chief printing-press of the Reformers was at Basle, and the Jews, profiting by their example, printed many books in that city as well as in Lublin.

It is customary to regard the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries as the darkest period in Hebrew literature, I think with injustice. Jewish affairs in Poland and in Germany were administered by representative councils which met periodically, and exercised great influence for good upon their co-religionists. Thus, in 1558, the 'Council of Four Lands' וַעַד אַרְבַּע אַרְצוֹת encouraged the printing of the Lublin Talmud, as can be seen from the interesting Haskamah prefixed to the edition. There were similar representative councils at Frankfort.

That which met there in 1603 was attended by delegates from fourteen German cities, and raised such a stir that it was thought to be an international conference of Jews, and its members guilty of high treason. The Elector Palatine, Ferdinand of Cologne, complained about the matter to the Emperor, and was snubbed for his pains. Dr. Horovitz has published an interesting account of this conference, and edited its resolutions. One of these is quite Teutonic. It directed that the title of *Chaber* conferred by a foreign Rabbi was not to be recognised in Germany, and it laid down rules for the conferment of Rabbinical diplomas, and licensed the printing of Hebrew books. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and especially the second expulsion in 1630, which poured a large number of Marranos into Western Europe and North Africa, was of the greatest influence upon our history and our literature. It was they who founded Jewish communities in Antwerp and Amsterdam, in Bordeaux and Hamburg, in London and New York. Once freed from the restraints of the Inquisition, these Marranos threw themselves into the study of the Hebrew religion and literature with the greatest zeal and enthusiasm, and a whole literature grew up for their use. The process of this growth is clearly defined. First there are liturgies, consisting of the Hebrew Prayer-book printed in Spanish characters for the newcomers who could not read Hebrew; and then there were many books in Spanish and Portuguese, and afterwards in Hebrew with and without translations. From the midst of the Marranos there arose men who were veritable literary giants. Spinoza was one of the greatest philosophers of all time; Menasseh Ben Israel was a publicist of no mean order. Aboab and Nieto and

a host of others kept aloft the flag of Hebrew scholarship.

I have already referred to the Messianic extravagance which prevailed in England, Holland, Denmark and Germany during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This had its counterpart, as usual, among the Jews. With them it took the form of belief in quite a series of pseudo-Messiahs. Such there had been from time to time ever since the destruction of the Temple. But with the Reformation the pseudo-Messiah took another form. Instead of being merely the unsuccessful leader of Jewish rebels against their oppressors, he was a man who generally numbered non-Jews among his friends or followers, and occasionally had diplomatic relations with the princes of his time. In 1524, David Reubeni, that is, David of the tribe of Reuben, came to the Pope with credentials from the Portuguese authorities in India, and, after having had various personal interviews with the Emperor Charles V and the King of Portugal, was ultimately discredited and fell a sacrifice to the Inquisition. He had represented himself as the brother of a Jewish King, and promised an alliance in order to ward off the attacks of the Mohammedans in Southern India. He is generally regarded as an impostor, and his diary as a spurious and impudent curiosity of literature; but I have elsewhere sought to show that his story may have been quite true, and that his ultimate failure was due to the fact that a few months after his arrival in Rome the Jewish Rajah of Cranganore was dethroned, and his Jewish subjects exiled. I have myself seen and spoken with descendants of these exiles on the Malabar Coast. Undoubtedly one immediate result of his arrival was a temporary cessation of the persecution of the Marranos. One

of these, Diego Pires, a Portuguese Royal Secretary, openly adopted the Jewish faith, changed his name to Solomon Molko, eagerly plunged into the study of the Kabbalah, and ultimately proclaimed himself the Messiah. He went to Turkey and Palestine, where he met Joseph Taytazak and Joseph Caro. In 1529 he published some of his addresses under the title of *The Book of Wonder* (*Sefer Hamme foar*). He was burnt at the stake at Mantua. Caro, methodical formalist as he was, had also a strongly marked mystical side, and deeply reverenced Molko, and hoped to emulate his martyrdom. Other Kabbalists, such as Isaac Luria and Chajim Vital and Abraham Shalom, proclaimed themselves to be Messiahs or forerunners of the Messiah, and their works and manuscripts are still piously studied by many Oriental Jews.

The chief of these false Messiahs, however, was Sabbatai Zevi, born at Smyrna in 1626. His adventures created a tremendous stir in Western Europe. There are several curious English pamphlets which tell his story, and I was myself lucky enough to find among the archives of the Royal Society a letter from Dr. Oldenburg, its founder, to Spinoza, asking Spinoza's opinion about his claims. The year of Sabbatai's apogee was the mystical 1666. Eventually he became an apostate to Islam, notwithstanding which fact he had a line of successors, in whom the strange sect of Donmeh, who live in Salonica, continue to believe. Jacob Frank, of Podolia, revealed himself in 1755 as the Holy Lord, 'Santo Señor,' in whom, by metempsychosis, there dwelt the same Messiah-soul that had dwelt in David, Elijah, Jesus, Mohammed, Sabbatai Zevi and his followers. The whole of the eighteenth century is filled with con-

troversial writings by Jews in connection with Sabbatianism, of which the memorable dispute between Emden and Eybeschütz is typical. But the councils proved of great value in discountenancing such lapses into mysticism, though they failed to suppress the Kabbalists.

In the eighteenth century there was a powerful reaction against imaginative and emotional religion. The Jews were no less reactionary than the Gentiles, and their intellectuals, the Maskilim, or Men of Haskalah, or Enlightenment, proved more potent than the authority of a Va'ad. They were the sons of the revolution. England had its revolution in 1648, and one of the memorable results of that revolution was the return of the Jews to England in 1655. France was the next country to change the old order of things. The vast scientific movement of the eighteenth century found expression in the French Revolution. It had been in the air for fifty years before it culminated in 1792, when the happy contagion spread to the surrounding countries, and particularly to Germany. It was the idea of the French Revolution which brought about the eventual emancipation of the Jews of Western Europe, and what is generally regarded as another renaissance of Jewish literature under the leadership of such men as Mendelssohn and Wessely, Krochmal and Bensew, and in a certain sense even the Gaon Elijah of Wilna. The Gaon was exceptional, as Schechter points out, in that though an orthodox Rabbi he was a scholar, who studied pre-Talmudic literature and the Jerusalem Talmud. He was wont to complain that even the Geonim and Maimonides did not pay sufficient regard to the Jerushalmi and the Midrash. One result of the triumph of the historical school was to

shift scholarship from the Rabbis to the Professors and Doctors. Unfortunately, nowadays a Rabbi is not necessarily a profound scholar, even though he may be a flashy or even an eloquent preacher.

The Mendelssohnian school effected quite a revolution in the language of Jewish literature, or rather a reversion to the practice of Saadiah and Maimonides. The vernacular took the place of Hebrew. The Bible first, and then textbooks of art and science and literature were written in the German language, but in Hebrew letters, so as to be understanded of the Jew of the time. The same process can be noticed all over the world. The Jew, who is more conversant with his vernacular than Hebrew, writes his own language in Hebrew letters. And so when I say that I have a collection of so many Hebrew manuscripts, such a statement is only partially correct. Though all look Hebrew, some of them are really written in Arabic, some in French, some in Persian, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, and especially German. All these transliterated languages tend to become corrupt through containing Hebrew and other foreign elements, and so they come to be despised as jargon. But I utterly repudiate the contempt which is generally showered upon these idioms. It is unkind and unfair. Why, even the Yiddish, the most despised of all jargons, is really a comparatively pure form of Old High German, because the Russians who write it are descendants of fourteenth century exiles from Germany, and carried their language with them, and, like good conservatives, have preserved it. Although the German and Austrian Mendelssohnians limited their writings to the vernacular, they had no monopoly of Jewish letters. In the nineteenth century a whole literature sprang up in Yiddish,

and the inhabitants of the Slavish countries were not brought into the fold of the German nation. Jewish persecutions led many talented writers, who had availed themselves of Russian culture, to devote themselves to the service of their less fortunate brethren. The Mendelssohnian writing was lost sight of, and Yiddish literature became an art. *Belles lettres* and poetry were first developed, and then scientific books, histories, political economy, and even novels were translated into it. And yet Karpeles, who devotes thirty pages to medieval Yiddish, dismisses its rich modern development with only two lines. The Maskilim, or disciples of the Haskalah, who had formerly been one in their cry for assimilation, are now all nationalists to a man. Gordon, though he advocated reform by seeking to free Judaism from the accumulated superstition of the ages, never sought an abandonment of its fundamental principles. Himself a master of classical Hebrew, he ultimately became the great Yiddish poet, and characteristically, in his poem on the Beard, made a woman mourn her husband's loss of that hirsute appendage, because "after shaving it off he had come to look like a contemptible German." Of Zunz and the noble band of German followers who succeeded him—of Geiger and Frankel and Rabbinu Hirsch—Mr. Segal gives an adequate account in his brilliant paper on the Jewish New Learning of the Nineteenth Century. But I may be permitted to conclude with a personal anecdote about Zunz, whose life filled the whole of the nineteenth century (1794–1886). It was my privilege to be presented to him in 1884, a year or two before he died; he asked me my business, and when I told him I was studying for the law, he said, "That's right, be anything, only don't be a Rabbi."

And so, after a lapse of two thousand years, we again meet with the same intolerance of Scribes and Pharisees, Prophets and Rabbis, which we find in Ezekiel and the New Testament.

What is the general outcome of these considerations ? Are we not driven to the irresistible conclusion that, apart from the Bible, Hebrew literature can hardly be said to be original, that those great Jews, Philo, Maimonides, Mendelssohn, and all their tribe are but sons of their age and representative of the light and leading of their time rather than of their contemporary brethren in faith, that nevertheless they have all in their Judaism one common denominator, one outstanding characteristic ? Aye, and a Judaism of a distinctly nationalist type. They are all missionaries, seeking not only to maintain Jews in their Judaism, but also to persuade and convince and convert the non-Jew. Judaism, at least Judaism as conceived by its most prominent and intellectual adherents, *is* a missionary faith. For a time, indeed, but for a very short time, as Mr. Segal points out, the Jews of the Revolution abandoned their tribal nationalism and looked forward to assimilation with the nations among whom they dwelt. That was the period of the Massen Täufe—baptisms *en masse*, by which we lost many clever but materialist adherents. Their loss had been greater than ours, for they had lost their ideals and their principles. But the anti-Semitism of the last century, with all its barbarities and all its persecutions, has been to us Jews of some benefit, for it has brought us closer together, and reinstated our belief in the perhaps not " far off Divine event " when Israel shall again be a kingdom. The Diaspora was with us before the destruction of the Temple, and will continue even after the Messiah's advent.

But no serious politician to-day doubts that our people have a political future. And no serious thinker can see anything illogical in our combining a belief in our restoration to autonomy with passionate loyalty to the land of our birth. Our loves for both are no more mutually exclusive that our loves for our father and our mother. One of the most striking phenomena of modern times is the anglicisation of the Jew. A hundred years ago the number of Jews speaking English was certainly less than fifty thousand. To-day it exceeds two millions. In another hundred years it will include the majority of the Jews in all the world. That is one of the results of persecution in Eastern Europe, and liberty and tolerance in England and America. Though Hebrew must ever remain the *lingua franca* of the Jew and his national language, the Jewish literary output must, in the future, inevitably tend to be in the English language, and it behoves our literary societies and our scholars to hold up high and well alight the torch handed to us by the Jewish giants of the past. They, too, did not of necessity always use Hebrew as the language of Jewish thought, but through the centuries they bid us learn and teach and foster our love for a literature which is neither moribund nor without charm.

ASPECTS OF THE HEBREW GENIUS

I

PHILO-JUDÆUS OF ALEXANDRIA

By NORMAN BENTWICH

AS one steps to-day upon the quay of Alexandria, where Europeans, Asiatics, and Egyptians jostle together and the babel of tongues strikes on the ear, one feels that here is a meeting-place of East and West, a centre of different civilisations. And if Alexandria is this in modern times, it was so still more fully and more gloriously in the ancient world. Founded by Alexander the Great at the mouth of the Nile, which has in all ages been one of the highways of the world's commerce, it was inhabited from the beginning by a cosmopolitan populace; for he settled there among the native Egyptians not only a large number of his Macedonian and Greek soldiers, but also a considerable colony of Jews, and bands from his other subjects. The Jews had already under the Persian rule been spread over many countries, and were therefore well fitted to become intermediaries of culture; and in order to encourage their settlement in the destined capital of his Hellenistic empire, Alexander granted them the full rights of citizens as well as

complete religious liberty and autonomy. His general, Ptolemy, who on the break-up of his enormous power made himself master of Egypt and Palestine and founded a royal line which ruled for three hundred years, continued his liberal policy, settled another body of thirty thousand Jews in Alexandria, and handed down the tradition of philo-Semitism to his successors. Thus the Jewish people in the third, second, and first centuries B.C.E. found a ready welcome in Egypt, and when they suffered from the persecutions either of the Seleucid tyrants or of the Sadducee royal house hundreds of Palestinian families migrated to the neighbouring land. At the beginning of the Christian era there was a Jewish population in the country of over one million, of which some two hundred thousand lived in Alexandria, occupying exclusively two of the five divisions into which the city was divided, engaged in handicrafts and commerce, and largely controlling the great corn trade; they formed a semi-autonomous community under their own governor and their own council, who administered their own code of laws. The Jews mixed freely in the economic and political life of the city without ceasing to maintain their separate national customs and culture; they were a people apart but not cut off from their environment, emancipated from external control, but not dissociated from the State. Under these happy conditions the Jews developed a remarkable fusion of culture between their own Hebraic ideas and Hellenic thought. In the fourth century the Greeks had attained to a much higher stage of literary, artistic, and philosophical expression than the Jews; and from the outset the Jewish colony at Alexandria was attracted by their superior intellectual culture and assimilated it.

The Greek tongue became the regular language of the people, and the first literary movement of the Hellenistic development was the translation of the Bible known as the Septuagint, part of which probably dates from the first half of the third century B.C.E. Myth, gathering itself about an event which in the light of its consequences was fraught with such importance for humanity, related that the translation had been made under royal auspices and attended by a divine miracle. Ptolemy Philadelphus, it was said, being anxious to have a Greek version of the holy books of the Jews in the library at Alexandria, had sent a deputation to the high priest at Jerusalem to beg him to send learned men to perform this service. Seventy-two sages were sent, six for each tribe, and each was lodged by the King in a separate house in the isle of Pharos, and not allowed to communicate with the others till he had completed the translation of the five books of Moses. Then the versions were compared, and were found to agree word for word. The truth beneath the tale seems to be that the Jews made the translation for their own use, that they obtained help for the purpose from the Rabbis in Palestine, and that the work soon became the standard rendering of the Bible among the Greek-speaking communities, and was regarded with something of the same reverence as was shown to the Hebrew text.

Little by little the Alexandrian Jews forgot their Hebrew and came to offer up all their prayers as well as to read the Law in Greek, and, more than this, to interpret their Scriptures according to Greek notions. "Things originally spoken in Hebrew," wrote the translator of Ecclesiasticus, "have not the same force when they are translated into another

tongue; and not only these, but the Torah, the prophecies, and the other books of the Bible have no small difference when they are spoken in their original language." As they read the Septuagint version the Jews naturally came to compare their Scriptures with the Greek culture which they had acquired, and to be conscious of its striking differences from the wisdom which others most prized.

The Greek philosophers were much more systematic and more logical thinkers than the Hebrew prophets, and they had developed theories of ethics, metaphysics, psychology, and anthropology, to which there was nothing to correspond in the Bible. Yet the Jews believed that the Bible was the divine revelation and contained the sum of wisdom; and they realised that their conception of God was more sublime than anything attained by the Greek philosophers, and that their law taught a far loftier morality than was practised by the people about them. But apparently there was no ethical science, no cosmology—in short, no philosophy in the Bible; and philosophy was regarded by the cultured classes of the time as the highest form of wisdom. Just as we are apt to venerate science to-day as the highest product of human thought, so at Alexandria people venerated philosophy; and as to-day we demand the establishment of a harmony between religion and science, so then men desired to show a harmony between religion and philosophy; and if Judaism could not be shown to be in accord with philosophy, the cultured classes would have nothing to do with it. The philosophical development of the religion was the more fostered because the Jews at this epoch were an active missionary nation; they fully believed that it was their destiny to be "a light to

the nations," and they acted upon this belief; they attracted the Gentiles to their synagogues, they sent out preachers among the pagans to spread their teachings far and wide, even Jewish slaves brought the tenets of their religion to the knowledge of their masters.

Strabo, the famous geographer of antiquity, who wrote about the beginning of the Christian era, says of them: "They have penetrated already into every state, so that it is difficult to find a single place in which their nationality has not been received and become dominant." But at Alexandria, which was the intellectual centre of the world, if the Jews were to spread their religion among the Greeks and the Hellenised population, and if they were to maintain the hold of the religion over those who were steeped in Greek philosophy, it was necessary to show that the Torah contained not only the highest religious, but also the highest intellectual teaching. How could this be done? How could men show in the simple narrative and in the detailed legislation of the books of Moses theories parallel with those of Plato and Aristotle? The solution was found in allegorical interpretation.

Allegory (meaning etymologically, "saying something else," ἀλλ-ηγορεῖν) is a literary device by which some ulterior purpose—usually a moral lesson—is conveyed in the form of a story; and allegorical interpretation, which is, as it were, the converse of allegory, is a method by which some secondary, usually more philosophical, meaning is read into a story. In an allegory such as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, moral ideas are represented by persons; in an allegorical interpretation, e.g. of the ancient Greek myths, the persons are translated into ideas and their histories into an account of

nature-processes. Now the Greek philosophical teachers at Alexandria habitually used allegorical explanation to show that their doctrines were contained in the poems of Homer and Hesiod, the most ancient and the most venerated of the Greek poets; for at this epoch the excellence of a doctrine was supposed to depend very much on its antiquity, and in distrust of their own reason men looked for the sanction of some authority in the hoary past. The Jews, indeed, had developed traces of the allegorical explanation of Scripture before they came into close contact with Greek thought; but it was from the Greeks that they learnt the systematic kind of allegorical interpretation which flourished at Alexandria.

Taking the Biblical text verse by verse, they sought to show that beneath the literal meaning, which was meant for the common people, there was a deeper sense which appealed to the more educated; beneath the stories of individuals the profoundest philosophical doctrines; beneath the particular prescriptions of the Mosaic law moral lessons of universal value. Similarly the Rabbis expounded the verse in the Psalms: "God hath spoken it: twice have I heard this," to show that there was a double meaning in all the words of the law. And as Maimonides put it for a later age: the Torah was like a golden apple in silver network. Those who stood afar off could only see the silver network; those with greater insight beheld the fine gold within.

It is true that one section of the Jewish-Alexandrian community was opposed to this allegorical explanation, holding that the literal meaning alone was true; others, again, going to the opposite extreme, denied any value to the

literal meaning, and claimed that the Mosaic law need not be observed any more, since they comprehended its spiritual purport. But between these two sections, which have had their counterparts in two attitudes of mind at every epoch of Judaism, there was the section of the conservative intellectuals, who, while eager to acquire the best products of the Greek intellect, and to show the harmony between Hebraism and Hellenism, at the same time held fast to the Mosaic law and the traditional customs of their ancestors.

Of this section Philo is the supreme exponent, as he is also the one great writer of the Jewish-Hellenistic philosophical school. He is the outstanding figure of the Alexandrian-Jewish community, whose function it was to combine the religion of the Bible with the reflective thought of the Greek philosophers, and give to Judaism a philosophical doctrine.

Having dealt now with the general conditions of Jewish life and thought at Alexandria, we may proceed to consider the life and times of Philo himself. Only one period of his life is known in any detail, and the rest of it has to be pieced together from stray allusions and inferences in his writings. He describes himself as past the prime of life in relating this remarkable incident of his career in 30 C.E., and from this it may be gathered that he was born about 20 B.C.E. His life, then, was partly contemporary with that of Hillel of Babylon, who was head of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem during the reign of Herod, and covered the time when Jesus of Nazareth was preaching. The Jewish kingdom at this epoch attained a position of great power, and the Jewish spiritual genius displayed a remarkable activity. The Jews were

recognised as a powerful force, and enthusiasts among them looked forward to the time when the whole world would receive their teaching.

Philo was of a priestly family which occupied the highest position not only in the Jewish, but in the general community at Alexandria. His brother was the alabarch (i.e. the governor of the Delta district), which was a position of great political and financial importance, and he was appointed by Mark Antony the guardian of his daughter, who became the mother of the Roman Emperor Claudius. His nephew was in turn governor of Palestine and Egypt, but was an apostate from Judaism, and, by the manner in which he treated the Jewish rebels in their struggle with Rome, gave his people cause to curse him. Born in an atmosphere of political influence, and endowed with intellectual genius of the highest order, Philo might naturally have been expected to play a large part in public life. But he preferred contemplative to practical activity, and his life's aim was to know God himself and to deepen the knowledge of God for others. He was a mystic, and from his youth aspired to an ecstatic elevation of soul. Describing his early manhood, he says: "I feasted with the truly blessed mind (i.e. God), communing continually with the Divine words and teachings. I entertained no low or mean thought, nor did I ever crave for glory or wealth or worldly prosperity, but I strove to be carried aloft, as it were, in spiritual exaltation and to be brought into harmony with the universal order." In his desire to attain union with God he seems for a time to have deserted human society, and to have sought by solitude and asceticism "knowledge of things worthy of contemplation"; but later he recognised that this flight from the world was a false

method, and that the true service of God demanded the service of man. "For it is not differences of place which determine the welfare of the soul, but God alone who knows and directs its activity howsoever he pleases." Abandoning, then, his more selfish seeking after God, he returned to teach, to preach, and to write for his people. The sermon, or homily upon the Bible text in the vernacular, was one of the great institutions of the Jewish-Alexandrian community. Every Sabbath in the synagogues some leader esteemed for his knowledge would take a passage of the Torah and expound it allegorically in relation to the doctrines of Greek philosophy. And on the week-days, too, the Alexandrian sage would gather round him in the synagogue a band of disciples with whom he would discuss the philosophy of the Law. So while Hillel in Palestine was laying down in the Beth-Hammidrash (the House of Interpretation) the lines of the Oral Law, Philo at Alexandria was formulating in the Synagogue ("the school of divine philosophy" as he regarded it) the philosophical interpretation of Judaism. He was not a great original thinker, and his writings have not the simplicity and directness of the supreme religious genius; but he was pre-eminent as the harmoniser of two systems of thought and as the interpreter of the Hebraic ideas in the terms of Greek wisdom.

During the greater part of his life the Alexandrian-Jewish community lived in tranquillity under the strong rule of Augustus and Tiberius. Yet there was always a certain amount of hostility on the part of the Greek populace, and for a short period, while Sejanus was the minister at Rome, actual persecution took place. But on the accession of Gaius, commonly known as Caligula, a serious crisis arose for the Jews all over the world.

There was, in truth, an inner conflict between the Jewish and the Roman people. The Romans stood for material power and the principle that might was right; the Jews for righteousness and the law of morality. It needed but a small spark to set the two in open hostility. In order to bind their empire together, the first Roman emperors had encouraged the worship of the head of the State, but, recognising the Jewish scruples against the deification of human beings, they had not pressed the introduction of this worship into the Temple and Synagogue. Gaius, however, one form of whose madness was to imagine himself the supreme deity, ordered all his subjects to venerate his image. Flaccus, the governor of Egypt at the time, was no friend of the Jews, and he encouraged their enemies to break into the synagogues and set up therein the statue of the Emperor. Fierce riots followed, and the leaders of the Jewish community were arrested and punished with death or imprisonment. In despair the Jews determined to send a deputation to the Emperor to get the hated order removed and their ancient privileges restored. Philo, who commanded the respect of all classes as one of the profoundest thinkers of the time, was asked to head the deputation. It cost him a struggle to abandon his quiet life and plunge into the sea of politics, but he consented in the hour of his people's need. He prepared an elaborate 'apology,' in which he set out the beliefs of Judaism and argued their reasonableness, and journeyed to Italy. The Greeks of Alexandria had sent a rival deputation to oppose the Jews, which was headed by Apion, a Stoic philosopher, whose calumnies Josephus subsequently exposed in two books still extant. The two deputations approached the Emperor at one

of his country palaces, but he would give them no fair hearing, and dragged them round his gardens while he gave orders to his builders, pausing now and then to vent his imperial coarseness, which passed for humour, upon the Jews. The servile crowd about him added blows to his insults, and the deputation was sunk in despondency. Philo sought to cheer his colleagues by prayer, and they returned to Alexandria with this much consolation, that no decisive answer was given by the Emperor. But when, a little later, he was assassinated, his successor Claudius restored to the Alexandrian Jews their full rights and religious freedom. The enemies of the Jews were put down, and for the remaining space of his days Philo lived in tranquillity. He died probably about 40 C.E., before the crowning horror of a Nero was let loose upon the Roman Empire and the Jews were goaded into that fierce rebellion against Rome which led to their destruction as a political nation.

It is as a philosopher, and not as a leader in action, that Philo desired to be known, and has, in fact, been celebrated. He left a great number of writings, and most of them have come down to us. Indeed, we possess more of his works than of any Jewish teacher of antiquity, so that while we know little of his life we can judge very fully of his thought. Though he knew Hebrew, and was probably acquainted with certain Palestinian traditions, he wrote entirely in Greek; and it is this fact which caused him to fall out subsequently from Jewish tradition and robbed him of any large influence over Jewish thought. Yet he was dominated throughout by a religious purpose. Save for two books about the contemporary history of the Jews and a few philosophical dissertations upon the

customary ethical topics of the Greek schools, all his works are, in one form or another, commentaries upon the Torah, designed either to deepen its value for those Jews who were acquainted with Greek culture and philosophy, or to recommend its teachings to those Gentiles who were sympathetic towards the Jewish faith.

In the first place we have large fragments of a running commentary, in the way of questions and answers, on the five books of Moses, wherein he gathers his allegorical material, and, after explaining the verse in its literal significance, gives a philosophical meaning to each incident narrated. Next we have a more elaborate and literary presentation of the same material, which is divided up into a number of treatises 'On the Creation,' 'On the Lives of the Patriarchs,' 'On the Decalogue,' and 'On the Mosaic Legislation,' in which his aim is to prove that each part of the Pentateuch teaches universal ethical principles. It was an accepted idea of the time that there existed a law of Nature which was superior to all human legislation, and prescribed what was of validity for all times and all peoples. Other philosophical schools sought to analyse à priori what this law was; Philo claimed that it had been revealed once for all to Israel, that, in fact, the divine law was also the law of Nature, and the commandments given to Israel were meant for the whole of humanity. Thus he explained that the laws of the Jews began with an account of the Creation to point this harmony between the natural process and the rules of conduct which were set forth later; and the lives of the Patriarchs were narrated in such detail, because they were 'unwritten laws,' that is to say, they embodied the great principles of moral virtue.

The more strictly philosophical commentary of Philo extends only over the first nineteen chapters of Genesis, but is likewise divided up into a number of separate treatises. The commentary, as may be gathered, is very elaborate, and the text of each verse is used as the pretext for long philosophical disquisitions. Beginning with three books upon the Allegories of the Laws, which deal with chapters II and III of Genesis, Philo continues his interpretation in books which are entitled 'On the Cherubim,' 'On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel,' and so on, after the subject of the text with which they open. Here his object is to reveal beneath the letter of the Bible a system of philosophy more profound than that attained to by any Greek school. Not only is the Jewish doctrine of God more perfect than any other, but the psychology, the cosmology, the theory of knowledge which Moses taught represent a higher truth than that which the human reasoning of the Hellenic sages had achieved. Philo, it is true, takes almost all his philosophical doctrines from one or other of the Greek systems, most from the Platonists, but some also from the Aristotelians, the Stoics, the Sceptics, and the neo-Pythagoreans. He is thus in one aspect an eclectic, drawing ideas from different sources according as they fit in with his religious purpose. But, at the same time, he transmutes the doctrines which he adopts, so as to constitute them a distinctive Jewish philosophy.

In this essay it is impossible to give an outline, however brief, of his tenets, but it may be said that his guiding principle is to develop the Jewish idea of God as the sole reality, the substance of all things, the cause of all being and knowledge, the object of all moral and intellectual virtue; on

the one hand, transcendent above the universe, and in his essence beyond man's understanding; on the other, immanent in man by reason of the divine element in our soul through which we can have communion with him, and immanent again in Nature by that Providence which orders all things regularly for good. Though his method is very different, his general design is very similar to that of Spinoza, "to see God in all things and all things in God." Yet it was impossible for the reflective philosopher to ascribe to the infinite perfection of God constant interference in all the petty acts of human and physical life, or to allow that man could grasp his true nature. "The Perfect Being cannot be conceived, or spoken of, or comprehended by our mind. He is not only not anthropomorphic, but he is not a subject of predication."

It might be thought that in this way Philo removes God from the universe; but, on the other hand, he insists that there are various attributes of the Deity by which he fulfils different aspects of his being; not that God's nature is in reality divisible, but by the limited mind of man it is so comprehended. The Rabbis in Palestine likewise recognised divine attributes, notably the attributes of Mercy and Justice, of which Philo frequently makes mention, interpreting the name Elohim to stand for the first, Jehovah for the second; but the distinctive feature of Philo's theology is the Logos, or the Word of God. Already in the Bible the 'Word of the Lord' is personified as the minister of the divine will, as in Psalm XXXIII., where it is written: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens created; and all their host by the breath of his mouth." And in the Hellenistic development of Judaism it came

to fulfil a very important place. The Hebrew דבר was translated by the Greek Logos, which meant not only *word*, but also *thought* and *reason;* and the Greek philosophical schools, in their search for a Unity behind the multiplicity of phenomena, had found it in the Logos, the principle of Reason which governed all things.

Thus the Logos of the Greeks was a great step from polytheism towards monotheism, and by his development of the Biblical 'Word' Philo was able to adapt their conception to the Jewish idea of God. Throughout his writings the Logos is the active power of God, the immanent manifestation of the transcendental Unity; now the Creator of the universe, now the seat of the 'Ideas' or immaterial patterns after which all things in the world are designed; now the law of Nature binding all things together under its sway by its various forces; now the law of conduct, the holy Torah, which binds the whole of humanity; now the divine part of the soul, which it is man's highest function to cultivate; now the principle of conscience which is placed in us to guide and warn and reprove. Philo, in fact, combines in the Logos the Hellenic conception of a natural law with the Hebrew conception of a moral law, and then personifies the conception as a divine being. It was his way to invest an abstract idea with the colour of personality, and hence he speaks here and there of the Logos as a king, a high priest, and even as the Son of God. He did not mean by this to impair the perfect unity of the Deity—far from it—but rather to bring home that unity to those who found it difficult to realise it. To declare that God is One is simple enough: to have a genuine and full conception of his Oneness requires a long and

continuous effort. In a typical passage Philo allegorises the law about the foundation of the six cities of refuge (Exodus XXXII.) to illustrate the various stages of man's progress towards the knowledge of God. The chief city, the metropolis, is the divine Logos; next come the two chief attributes, Mercy and Justice, and then three secondary powers—the forgiving, the law-giving, and the retributory. "Very beautiful and well-fenced cities they are, worthy resting-places of souls that deserve salvation." Each harbours a different order of the religious mind: when in the first it obeys the law from fear of punishment, when in the second from hope of reward. In the next city it is repentant, and throws itself on God's grace; next it knows God as the Governor of the universe, and then as the universal providence. Above this it comes through the love of perfect understanding to the contemplation of God in his ideal nature, the Logos. In Philo's age the distinction between personality and idea was not carefully maintained, nor was it yet affected with dogmatic import, so that the Logos is represented equally as an instrument and as an agent of the divine will. But subsequently, when the Christians were formulating the belief in the division of the Godhead, the loose poetic language of Philo was seized upon by their teachers as evidence that he agreed with their version of Hebrew teaching, and the Jewish philosopher was made to provide a justification for non-Jewish dogma.

By reason of this perversion of his teachings, as well as by the fact that they were written in Greek, Philo in the second century was neglected by the Rabbinical schools, who established the main lines of Jewish doctrine for the centuries to come, and

dropped out of Jewish tradition. His theology and his philosophical interpretations of the Bible had little direct influence upon Jewish thought—much less than they had upon Christian thought; yet, regarded in and for themselves, without consideration of the ulterior uses to which they have been put, they are fundamentally in accord with Jewish tradition, and they constitute one of the most striking attempts which have ever been made to develop the Hebrew monotheism into an intellectual explanation of the universe.

So much for Philo's theology and philosophy. Not less striking nor less suggestive is his treatment of the law. Here his constant aim is to emphasise the spiritual purpose and the moral principle underlying the detailed precept, and to prove that the effect of the whole code is to bring about the perfect ordering of life, which gives it a claim not only upon the nation to which it was revealed, but upon the whole of mankind. Thus, to take a few examples of his interpretation, the Sabbath is an appeal to man's higher nature, compelling him to desist from material concerns and devote himself to the Divine Power within. "The six days on which the Creator made the universe are an example to us to work, but the seventh day on which he rested is an example to us to reflect. As God on that day is said to have looked upon his work, so we too should contemplate the Universe thereon, and take thought for our well-being."

Again, upon the prohibition to kindle fire upon the Sabbath he comments that fire is the seed of all industry, and we should rid ourselves upon the Sabbath not only of worldly cares, but of associations with them. The dietary laws likewise train the soul to its true function, compelling restraint

in sensual pleasure and thereby fitting it for the higher spiritual concerns. We are forbidden to eat, says Philo, the flesh of the pig, or shell-fish, not because these dishes are unhealthy, but because they are the sweetest and most delightful of all food, and for that reason mark the sensual life which we must resist.

Philo protests against the extreme party of allegorists who, anticipating the antinomian attitude of Paul, rejected the observance of the law, because they claimed to recognise its spiritual meaning. "Such men I would blame for their shallowness of mind. For they ought to give good heed to both—alike to the accurate investigation of the unseen meaning and to the blameless observance of the visible letter. But now, as if they were living themselves in a desert and were souls without bodies, . . . they despise all that seems valuable to the community. Such people the Scripture teaches to give good heed to a good reputation, and to abolish none of those customs which greater and more inspired men have instituted in the past. For because the seventh day teaches us symbolically of the power of the uncreated God and the tranquillity of his creation, we must not therefore abolish its ordinances so as to light a fire or till the ground on it. Because the festivals are symbols of spiritual joy and our gratitude to God, we must not therefore give up the fixed assemblies at the proper seasons of the year. . . . We should have to neglect the service of the Temple (which to Philo, be it noted, was one of the great bulwarks of Judaism) and a thousand other things did we restrict ourselves only to the allegorical or symbolic sense. That sense may be likened to the soul, the literal to the body. Just as we must have a care for the

body as the house of the soul, so must we give heed to the letter of the written laws. It is only by the faithful observance of these that we can clearly recognise the inner meaning of which they are the symbols, and at the same time we shall escape the blame and accusation of the community."

Philo then upholds the observance of the law upon two grounds: (1) because it is necessary for preserving the integrity of the community, and no section has the right to break away from the accepted tradition of the whole body; and (2) because the letter is the embodiment of the spirit, and the two cannot be dissociated. Upon this point Hellenic and Hebraic ideas were at one, since both Plato and Aristotle insisted as strongly as Philo that moral virtue depended on good habit, and that moral virtue was the necessary step to intellectual and spiritual excellence. Judaism, in Philo's idea, was not to be universal by ceasing to be national or philosophical by ceasing to be legal.

Dealing with another aspect of the Mosaic legislation, which was in those days, because of different social conditions, more noteworthy than it is to-day, Philo is at pains to elaborate the large humanity of the law. The prescriptions about the seventh year of release, the Jubilee, and the treatment of slaves are in his view not limited in their scope to the Jews of Palestine, but meant to teach all peoples touching the practice of human liberty and equality. Thus, commenting upon the verse in Exodus (XXI.) which prescribes that a servant who desires to stay with his master after the year of emancipation has arrived shall be nailed to the door by the ear, he explains that it is unworthy of a man to consent to remain a slave; for he should be a servant of God alone, and if he deliberately

rejects freedom for comfort he should wear a mark of degradation. To his *Life of Moses* Philo appended a little treatise 'Upon Humanity,' in which he emphasised this characteristic of Judaism; and he insists many times that the religion has two sides—man's service to God, which is piety, and man's service to his fellow-men, which is philanthropy or charity; he who possesses the one part without the other is imperfect and, as it were, lame. The Romans and Greeks did not recognise charity as a virtue at all, and scoffed at the poor and miserable; and it was one of the greatest moral revolutions which the Jewish influence brought about in the ancient world that it established the duty of helping the lowly.

Summing up the effect of his teaching, Philo declares that the Mosaic law has as its aim throughout "to ensure concord and good understanding, and the harmony of different characters, so that families and nations and countries, and indeed the whole human race, might advance together to perfect happiness. At the present moment this consummation is only a hope, but that it will come to pass I am firmly convinced and facts prove without question, for year by year God increases the harvest of the virtuous." The reign of one God and one Law seemed to Philo a near divine event.

The epoch which followed Philo's life saw the beginning not of the triumph, but of the tragedy of the Jewish mission. Within thirty years of his death Jerusalem and the Temple had been razed to the ground and the national life broken up. At the same time the section of the people who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah separated itself from the general body of the community and formed the Christian Church, which,

starting as a heresy from Judaism, became more and more hostile to the parent body. The need for separation from the Gentiles and for strengthening the religious bond of the scattered Jewish people was forced upon the Rabbis by either event. Now that the political centre, which had before been so potent a factor in holding together the different Jewish communities, was taken away, national and religious disintegration could only be prevented by intensifying the Jewish manner of life, which was the inner bond. Moreover, the Rabbis were the more concerned to make a fence round the law because religious disintegration involved moral degeneration; in the second century the Roman Empire was suffering from the fearful moral and intellectual collapse which finally brought about its downfall at the hands of the barbarians. The development of the Christian heresy again pointed the dangers of communication and compromise with the Gentiles. As it proceeded, it on the one hand transformed more and more the Jewish teachings with which it started by the admixture of ideas taken from Greek mysticism and pagan practice, and on the other set itself in bitter opposition to the national standpoint of the Jews. Hence the active Jewish mission which had been prosecuted with brilliant hopes in Philo's epoch had now to be restricted. It was not indeed in any way abandoned, until the tyranny of the victorious Church made it a capital offence for the Jew to practise conversion ; but the genius of the people was more largely directed towards the inner amplification of the religion than towards its outward expansion. Hillel's maxim had been to love one's fellow-creatures and bring them near to the Torah ; Philo, by combining the excellences of Hebraism and Hellenism, had aspired

to make the Torah the code of all peoples, and Judaism the religious creed of the world. Akiba, a century later, and the schools of the great Tannaim and Amoraim, who followed him, extended and fixed the oral law, and hedged Judaism around from the invasion of foreign ideas. They deprecated the study of Greek wisdom, and cut out from Jewish tradition the Hellenistic development, which included the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature, as well as Philo. In their time Greek philosophy was passing through its last stages of decay; the works of Plato and Aristotle could no longer be understood by the Hellenistic Syrians and Egyptians who tried to interpret them, and were made the basis of the fantastic theosophies of the neo-Platonists and Gnostics. In the decay of national life and the human reason there was such a welter of various cultures, creeds, superstitions, and ceremonies as the world has never seen since. Judaism was the sole national system of life and thought which survived, and its survival was only secured by the enormous efforts of the Rabbis—and at the cost of a certain one-sidedness. Hellenism was rigidly eschewed, because in a degenerate and bastard Hellenism the Rabbis saw danger to their faith. And Philo, forgotten by his own people, became the guide of the Church fathers in their attempt to reconcile Christianity with philosophy. For a time Judaism was cut off from the surrounding culture—if such a confusion of ideas can be called a culture; and the Christian Church succeeded in great measure to its moral mission to the nations, carrying indeed not the whole of the Hebrew teaching, but some of its lessons to the pagans and barbarians. The Christian doctrine has been compared to a salt which dissolves in but

flavours the fluid into which it is put; Judaism is rather a fountain which flows on unceasingly, but so that its waters seem to run away. It is teachers like Philo who at its greatest epochs have led streams from the 'fountain of living waters,' into the soils of other cultures, and fertilising them afresh made them fruitful with Hebraic thought. The profound study of the Law has been a constant ideal of Judaism, which in every age has welcomed the fullest knowledge. But at some periods of its history that study has been narrower, confined within the limits of the national Jewish tradition; at others more liberal, embracing the whole of human wisdom. In these happier times Judaism has produced a philosophy, a large and complete system of thought, as well as a system of life. Philo lived in the heyday of Jewish spiritual expansion, and while his hope was not realised in its entirety, yet through his work the Jewish idea of God and his relation to man entered into the thought of the world; and his spirit is a heritage of every generation of Jews which, being politically and socially emancipated, should strive to be spiritually creative.

A word may be added upon the development of the Jewish genius between the epochs of Philo and of the great thinker who forms the subject of the succeeding essay. Between Philo and Saadiah there is an interval of nearly one thousand years, and during that period the Jews had no philosopher in the ordinary sense of the term. It is true that the Rabbinic Haggadah is full of gnomic wisdom, primitive cosmology and theological fancies, which were more thoroughly Jewish than Philo's allegorical explanation; but there is nothing in the way of a regular and systematic speculation about

the first principles of being and conduct, which is what we understand by mental and moral philosophy. That development of human thought was peculiarly the product of the Hellenic genius, and from the end of the second century onwards the Jews almost entirely eschewed the Hellenic wisdom. Not only was the study of 'external wisdom' discouraged, but the Greek language was unknown to most of the scholars. The codification of the Talmud marks a limit in the progressive development of the tradition, and the beginning of a certain stagnancy of thought which was bound to follow the isolated condition of the Jews. In the eighth century, however, Greek philosophy was again brought to the knowledge of the Eastern peoples through the translation of Aristotle into Arabic by Mohammedan philosophers ; and while Europe was still sunk in the dark ages, culture revived in Asia and Egypt, and human thought was freed from the fetters of dogma and superstition. For a time the Rabbis opposed the study of philosophy and secular knowledge ; but Saadiah, who, by his mastery of the whole of the traditional law, had established his supremacy over all the teachers of his day, and was also master of the Arabic learning, championed the cause of the freedom of the reason, and in his great work upon 'Faith and Knowledge' sought to establish a harmony between Jewish religion and Aristotelian philosophy. Thus, though he may not have known directly any part of Philo's work, he may be regarded as the successor to Philo's ideal, and with him Jewish philosophy begins a new chapter.

II

SAADIAH

By M. SIMON

IN writing of Saadiah as a contributor to Jewish thought, we may take the liberty of making our consideration of his work purely qualitative and not at all quantitative. The distinction in Saadiah's case is important. He was a most prolific author and dealt with an amazing variety of subjects, so that merely to give a *catalogue raisonée* of his writings would of itself take up a whole paper. Much work has been done of recent years in this field, and much remains to be done. But it is hardly possible that anything new we may learn about Saadiah will modify the conception we are already able to form of him as a thinker. We can distinguish clearly his principal from his subsidiary writings, and we shall probably do him no injustice if we judge him entirely from these principal works. In these we can discern one aspect of his activity which we may assume to reveal the deepest workings of his mind and the dominant impulse of all his literary production ; and by confining our attention to this aspect we shall both lighten our task and bring Saadiah into line with other great fashioners of Jewish thought.

Saadiah was, above all things, a student of the Bible, of the whole Bible in Hebrew. His first com-

position, in his boyhood, was the Agron, a vocabulary of difficult biblical words. His *magnum opus*, the work to which he devoted his best energies and the best years of his life, was an Arabic translation of the Bible, with Arabic introductions and commentaries. And his most precious composition, the one on which his fame chiefly rests, was, as will be seen, a natural complement to his biblical exegesis. Both in his life and in his writings Saadiah reveals himself to us as a man to whom the Old Testament was an absorbing interest and a fountain of inspiration. Other writers may have made a profounder study of individual sections or features of the scriptures. Rashi certainly knew the Pentateuch better. Maimonides examined more carefully the anthropomorphic expressions. Modern scholars are better acquainted with biblical archæology. But of the Bible as a single literary monument Saadiah was probably the keenest student that ever lived, and it is perhaps due more to his efforts than to those of any other individual that the whole Hebrew Bible has been preserved and is studied at the present day. It is, then, as a student and interpreter of the Bible that Saadiah chiefly claims our attention; and by defining his attitude towards the Bible at various periods of his life, we shall at the same time both trace his own mental development and be able to appreciate the value of his contributions to literature.

Saadiah was born in the year 892 at Fayyum, in Upper Egypt. His real name was Said ibn Yussuf al-Fayyumi; and it was only after he had attained to distinction that he Hebraised it into Saadiah. We know nothing of his early years; but it is evident from his literary career that his mother-tongue was Arabic, and that he received an Arabic as well as

a Jewish education. To the last Arabic remained to him the most natural medium of expression, and he was an acknowledged master of the language. His Hebrew, on the other hand, was hardly living; it was too much influenced by the phraseology of the Bible, and was stiff and formal. Hence he did not contribute much, directly, to the development of the Hebrew language, and does not rank among the great Hebrew stylists of the Middle Ages.

Saadiah was born at a time when the Jewish people was divided into the two sections of Rabbanites and Karaites. The Rabbanites put themselves in all matters under the guidance of the Geonim, the heads of the Talmudical colleges at Sura and Pumbeditha, in Babylonia, where the Talmud was studied and applied as a practical code of law, religious and secular. The Karaites rejected entirely the authority of the Geonim and the Talmud, and professed to base their conduct directly on the Bible. The Rabbanites were mostly the Jews of Babylonia, an agricultural and industrial population speaking Aramaic. The Karaites had their centre at Bagdad, but were scattered over the empire of the Caliph; they included many rich merchants and financiers, and mostly spoke Arabic.

The Jews of Upper Egypt, where Saadiah was born, were Karaites, but Saadiah seems to have been brought up as a Rabbanite; at any rate, he appears as such in his early literary productions. But it must have been from the Karaites that he derived his interest in the Bible. For the study of the Bible was carried on much more vigorously by the Karaites than by the Rabbanites. These latter were more concerned with the Talmud, by which they regulated their daily life; the Bible (except

for the Pentateuch) was a dead book to them, unless in so far as a knowledge of it was necessary for understanding the Talmud. The Karaites, professing to live by the Bible, made it an object of more minute study, and certainly could give better explanations of it than the leading Rabbanites, who seem to have shunned a contest with them on this ground. Saadiah, by some superb exercise of thought, must have absorbed the Karaite knowledge of the Bible while still retaining his allegiance to the Talmud; and we thus find that, from his early years, just as his inspiration came from the Bible, so his main object in life was to bring the Bible—and the whole Bible—into the scheme of Rabbanite culture, from which it was in imminent danger of being detached.

Guided by this impulse, his first step was to take the Bible out of the grasp of the Karaites by showing that they were attempting to make a wholly wrong use of it. This he did in the work called *Kitab el rud el 'Anan*, "the book of the refutation of 'Anan," composed in his twenty-fourth year. This book is no longer extant, but its character is known to us from quotations and references. In it Saadiah set himself to demolish the foundations of Karaism, as laid down by its founder 'Anan, who had been a Resh-Galutha, or Prince of the Jews, a hundred and fifty years before Saadiah was born. 'Anan had quarrelled with the Geonim of his day, and, being driven from the prince-ship, had proclaimed himself as a religious authority in place of the sages of the Talmud. He went back to the precepts of the Bible and professed to carry them out just as they were written, but, in order to apply them to actual life, he and his successors were forced to attach to them interpretations more arbitrary than

those of the Talmud itself. Saadiah showed conclusively that the Bible was never meant for a code to be applied by the individual to his daily life; that Jewish law was the work of the Jewish people, acting through its authorised heads and representatives, who of course were always bound by the decisions and precedents of their predecessors, going back through the Rabbis, scribes, and prophets to Moses himself; and that consequently the text-book of the Jewish religion, as a matter of daily practice, was not the Bible, but the Talmud. The Karaites had mistaken the whole character of the Bible, which was primarily a literary work, not a collection of precepts; and their religion was neither Judaism nor anything else, but an arbitrary rule, devoid of all justification in reason or logic.

Through this early work Saadiah became engaged in a polemic against the Karaites which kept his pen busy for some time. In the course of this controversy he dealt Karaism blows which eventually proved fatal to it. Up to his time Karaism had contested with Rabbanism the claim to be regarded as the representative Jewish religion. Saadiah arrested its progress, and from his time it began to decline till, in a couple of centuries, it was reduced almost to those narrow limits in which it subsists at the present day. The Rabbanites were not slow to recognise their debt to him, and there was every encouragement to him to proceed along the path which he had commenced to make for himself.

Saadiah's position was peculiar. He had definitely separated himself from the Karaites, but there was no less marked a gulf between himself and the Rabbanites. Like the Karaites, he brought the Bible into his daily life, though in a different

way—not as a rule of action, but as a source of inspiration; and this differentiated him from the Rabbanites, to whom the Bible was practically a dead work, intelligible only through the paraphrases of the Targum and the allusions of the Midrash. He could not live by the Bible alone any more than by the Talmud alone; and his isolation naturally led him to seek a means by which he could unite Bible and Talmud in the scheme of Jewish life, and justify his own attitude to the mass of his contemporaries.

Saadiah was a Rabbanite; but he differed from his fellow-Rabbanites in this, that he had a keen appreciation of the literary value of the Bible. How he had obtained this appreciation it is difficult to say; probably his taste had been cultivated by a study of Arabic literature, which could by that time show many works of no small elegance. But his fellow-Rabbanites were for the most part ignorant of Arabic. Their exclusive attention to the Talmud must have tended to deaden in them all sense of literary form; and the haphazard way in which the Bible is treated in the Talmudical literature, with scant respect to order, connection, or graces of expression, must have further helped to render them impervious to the literary excellence of the Scriptures. Yet to appreciate that excellence was, as Saadiah saw, a vital necessity for the Jewish people. Otherwise they would remain a barbarous and uncouth tribe by the side of the polished Arabs, and a new era of progress and civilisation would have dawned for them in vain.

Under these circumstances the natural course for Saadiah to adopt was to set forth in detail all the excellences that he found in the Bible, so as to enable his contemporaries to give it the same place in

their lives that he gave it in his. Both Karaites and Arabs had certainly before his time written commentaries on the Bible, or parts of it; and these probably indicated to him, to a certain extent, the method to adopt. But, owing to his peculiar position, it is not likely that he entered deliberately into competition either with Arabs or Karaites. He really continues the tradition of the Midrash, between which and himself there was a break of some centuries; but he transfuses the Midrash with a whole culture of which he himself comes before us as almost the first exponent. He wrote throughout as a man who accepted without question the authority of the Talmud, and whose purpose in commenting on the Bible was to widen the horizon of Talmudical students and put them in closer touch with the prophets and wise men of ancient Israel. He possessed, what the Talmudical students did not possess, a conception of a *book* as an ordered sequence of language, with a definite purpose and thread of unity, and having beginning, middle, and end. He applied this conception to the twenty-four books of the Old Testament, accepting at the same time the Talmudic doctrine of inspiration and the massoretic text; and he embodied the results in a series of works of which the remains that have come down to us show what an epoch-making task it was that he undertook.

The language which Saadiah chose for expressing his views on what the Bible meant was Arabic. Several reasons, no doubt, contributed to his choosing this language in preference to Aramaic or Hebrew, and one of the chief seems to have been a desire to convert the Karaites to Rabbanism, to show that Rabbanism was consistent with an enlightened study of the Bible, and that, in fact, the

two went hand in hand. He may also have thought that for the Rabbanites it made little difference whether he wrote in Arabic or Hebrew, because Arabic was the language of civilisation, and one reason why he wanted the Jews to study the Bible was that they might associate with the Arabs on equal terms. Yet it was in one way an error of judgment on his part to write in Arabic. So long, it is true, as Arabic was spoken by the Jews his Arabic works were diligently studied ; but what he wrote on the Bible was never translated into Hebrew, and consequently, when the Jews ceased to understand Arabic, was neglected, and has only come down to us in fragments.

In the course of a few years Saadiah translated all, or several of the books of the Bible into Arabic, and, as far as we can make out, added an Arabic introduction and commentary to each. At any rate, this is the plan that has been followed in two or three books that have come down to us complete (e.g. the Psalms, Proverbs, and Job ; also in the Pentateuch). Not content with merely translating, Saadiah paragraphs the Bible, writing his commentary not on the verse, but on the paragraph. In his introduction he gives his idea of the general purpose and scheme of the book, its authorship, and educational and religious value ; and his commentary develops these ideas in detail.

The Biblical book which has come down to us most complete in Saadiah's version is the Book of Proverbs (in which also he seems to have been at his best). A brief account of this will be the best means of showing how Saadiah treated the Bible and of helping us to assign his place as a Biblical exegete.

Saadiah commences by giving his own title to

the Book of Proverbs. By a bold stroke of insight he, as it were, puts himself outside the book, and sums up its whole contents and purpose by naming it *Kitab talb el 'Hakmat*, 'The book of the research of wisdom.' In his introduction he proceeds to explain how he arrives at this title. Man, he says, has a double nature, a higher and a lower, an intellectual and an animal nature. These natures are perpetually at strife within him, the intellectual nature drawing him towards meditation and self-restraint, the animal nature towards indolence and indulgence. The Book of Proverbs is an instrument by which the higher nature can be given the victory over the lower; and in these victories lies the attainment of 'wisdom.' Every sentence—or group of sentences—in the book is a presentation of two opposites, one the good effects of following the higher nature, the other the bad effects of following the lower nature, wherever a choice has to be made between the two. There is no circumstance in life at which one or other of these sentences will not be found applicable, and if pondered on at the critical moment it will infallibly give the victory to the higher nature, acting, in fact, as a sort of 'categorical imperative' to follow the moral sense. If it be asked, where did this book come from, the answer is: King Solomon was divinely inspired to teach it to the people of Israel at a time when the rank and file of the people began to assert themselves more and they were no longer so completely under the control of their elders and leaders. The reason why the book is called 'Mishle' (translated by us 'Proverbs') is because the most striking feature in the instruction is found in the parables and comparisons ('Mishle') which are scattered through the book.

Saadiah's translation of and commentary on the Book of Proverbs develop the idea which he gives in the title and introduction—that it is a *Book of the Research of Wisdom.* His definition of *wisdom* enables him to deduce from the biblical verses the moral lessons of the Talmud equally with the philosophic speculations of the Arabs. He sees nothing strange in the fact that Solomon should have worked through the problems that were exercising his contemporaries; human nature, human needs, and human relations had not changed in the interval; only the *language* of men had changed, and therefore such a translation and commentary as Saadiah's were required in order, so to speak, to bring Solomon's book 'up to date.' Solomon's maxims had been capable of immediate application by his contemporaries to the conditions under which they lived; it was Saadiah's task to transplant himself mentally to Solomon's time, and to find a corresponding application of the verses to the conditions of his own day. Thus his method of exegesis was essentially *literary*, its distinguishing feature being his endeavour to find the exact point of view of the author, and explain the relation of every passage of the book to some central idea which informed it and gave it a unity and purpose.

As a typical and highly interesting specimen of Saadiah's exegetical powers may be taken his treatment of the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, 'the words of Agur bin Jakeh.' This chapter, as is well known to all biblical students, is one of exceptional difficulty, presenting what appears to be on the first view a collection of riddles. Saadiah regards this chapter (as also the one which follows it) as a sort of appendix to the book of Solomon, com-

posed by a certain Agur (which may or may not be another name for Solomon), who, having been himself a 'searcher after wisdom,' a *philosopher* in the sense of Thales and Pythagoras, gives here the lessons of his life-experience. He finds that with all his efforts he has not been able to solve the mystery of creation, or to explain why it is the nature of fire to ascend, of air to expand, of water to flow, and of earth to sink. These four elemental forces being beyond his control, the utmost that man can do is to study the word of God, which will be a constant protection to him. The student of the Torah is then provided with certain safeguards which will be of service to him in the path he has chosen: first, with a prayer to the Almighty for decent subsistence; secondly, with an imprecation with which to threaten his contemporaries in case they disturb or malign him; thirdly, with an admonition against any breach of morality; fourthly, with a warning not to seek dignities beyond his deserts or abilities; fifthly, with a reminder that there are always further spiritual heights to be conquered; and lastly, with a warning that a king is always to be treated with respect.

This passage of the commentary is exceptionally interesting, as it shows us very clearly Saadiah the man behind the exegete. All that we know of Saadiah presents him to us as just such a 'searcher after wisdom' as he here outlines. He, too, fell back on the Law of God as the best solace for the mind baffled by the mysteries of creation. He, too, ran the gauntlet of detraction and defamation for his unbending adherence to what he regarded as truth, and he also kept an iron curb upon a temper naturally hot and impervious. In taking this course he was borne up by the consciousness

that he was following in the footsteps of the 'searchers after wisdom,' who had been the typical product of the Jewish people from its very inception. In taking 'Agur bin Jakeh' for such a one he was making an assumption which was inherently probable; and, granting this assumption, his interpretation of this chapter becomes convincing; so that, even where his philology is questionable, his literary insight gives us the means of correcting it. He brought to the task of commenting on the Bible a spiritual affinity with its authors which no later commentator possessed, and this more than counterbalances the many imperfections of his commentary on the philological side.

For the material of his commentary Saadiah seems to have drawn equally on the Midrash and on Arabic philosophy, and to have set on the contributions of both the stamp of his own individuality. Ibn Ezra charges him, not altogether unjustly, with having tried to make the biblical texts a peg on which to hang disquisitions on all sorts of subjects—a charge which, by the way, might be laid at the door of Ibn Ezra himself also. It is true that Saadiah tried to make his commentary a sort of encyclopædia of the learning of his day, no doubt in the honest belief that there was no kind of knowledge of which the Bible did not contain at least the hint. As has been suggested above, he did not always draw the line clearly between what he got out of the Bible and what he put into it. But his main purpose, after all, to which he adhered fairly strictly, was to explain the Bible, and his commentary must always be taken in conjunction with his translation and introductions, the three forming parts of one whole. He did more than comment on the Bible—he edited it; and in editing it he

made it a living work, a book to be read by all who made pretensions to culture.

The influence of this edition in the history of the Jewish people has been immense. Whatever may have been its faults and deficiencies, it achieved in the fullest degree one object of surpassing importance. It showed that the Rabbanite Jews who studied and lived by the Talmud were the same people as the Israelites for whom the Bible had originally been written, that they were worshipping the same God, and could derive the same inspiration from the Bible as their ancestors had done. Saadiah created in his contemporaries the sense of historic continuity with the Israel of the past, and this sense was like the infusion of new blood into the veins of the Jewish people, and soon made itself felt by a wonderful revival of the Hebrew language, not in Babylonia, but in Spain. The student of the Talmud, to whom the Bible was little more than a jumble of verses, each of which could apparently be made to mean anything, was taught by Saadiah to read the Bible consecutively with an open mind, to find in it the mirror of his own mind, and to derive from it a national consciousness based on his own affinity to the great thinkers of Israel. And, on the other hand, the Arabic-speaking Jew would be led by Saadiah's commentary to look with more respect on the Talmud, to feel himself more akin to his Aramaic-speaking brethren, and to enter more whole-heartedly into the current of Jewish life. Saadiah's work was ground on which Rabbanite and Karaite could meet and understand one another, and made for peace and union within the Jewish people.

So long as the Jews spoke Arabic, Saadiah's translation and commentary were never superseded

among them. There is much in the commentary also which, as will have been seen from the examples given, was by no means replaced by the Hebrew commentaries written by subsequent scholars, and which would have been of the highest value to the Jews during the period of their cultural isolation in Europe. Looking back on the spiritual and mental life of the ghetto, we may conjecture that the Ibn-Tibbons would have been better advised to translate into Hebrew Saadiah's commentary on the Bible than the philosophical works of the Judæo-Arabic writers, such as the *Moreh Nebuchim*. The philosophical works are meant for the professed student, not for the layman, and it is hardly too much to ask of the professed student to learn Arabic in order to get at works originally written in that language. But Saadiah's commentary, while having a strong philosophical flavour, was yet essentially popular, and would have formed equally good reading for laymen or students. The *Moreh Nebuchim*, as we know, was a violently disturbing factor in the spiritual life of the ghetto, and the good it did in combating bigotry was partly counterbalanced by the harm it did in undermining religion. Saadiah's commentary would have formed a sort of bridge between the Talmud and the philosophical writings, between the fanatics and the enlightened, and there would have been less friction in the intellectual life of the ghetto, less repression on the one hand and less revolt on the other. It is easy to be wise after the event; but one cannot help regretting that the Ibn-Tibbons did not see their way to translate into Hebrew Saadiah's biblical commentaries—or some of them—even if they had had to sacrifice the *Moreh Nebuchim* in so doing.

In our own day the neglect of the Middle Ages has

been partly repaired by the French scholar Joseph Derenbourg, who, before his death a few years ago, had already edited some of Saadiah's commentaries and translated them into Hebrew, and had left his work to be carried on by his pupils. That we have much to learn from Saadiah, in spite of all the labour which has been spent on interpreting the Bible since his day, cannot be doubted. For Saadiah had a view of the purpose and import of the Bible which has been strikingly confirmed by the subsequent course of history, and which, therefore, has a significance to us of which he himself can hardly have been aware. Saadiah had a very vivid conception of the Bible as a civilising and humanising force, a conception sufficiently illustrated both by his setting out to explain it from the fundamental facts of human nature and by his endeavouring to crowd into it a universality of learning. Up to Saadiah's day this civilising and humanising power of the Bible had been exhibited only in the development of the Jewish people and, to a certain extent, of the Moslemised Arabs ; since his time it has proved itself a force of the first magnitude in the history of the nations of Europe. This is an undisputed fact, which more than anything else constitutes the real problem of the Bible, and which Saadiah probably does more to elucidate than any other writer. He reveals to us in the very act a powerful intellect drawing moral and intellectual sustenance from the Bible, and enables us to repeat the process for ourselves. Saadiah approached the Bible with a combination of reverence and freedom equally removed, on the one hand, from the dogmatic servility of the church, with its rigid distinction between sacred and secular, and, on the other hand, from the scientific preten-

tiousness of modern criticism, with its bloodless analysis and dissection. Many others have since approached the Bible in the same spirit, though none with so deep an insight; and it is such men who, in the last resort, have turned the mind of Europe in the direction of enlightenment and progress. Saadiah was the first who showed how the utmost freedom of inquiry could be combined with the greatest strictness of morality; and it is this combination which everywhere has made for progress and enlightenment, as against clerical stagnation on the one hand, and revolutionary licence on the other. If we still require the Bible for this purpose, then Saadiah's commentary has an actual value for ourselves; if we think that the Bible has performed its mission in this direction, yet Saadiah's work remains a historic monument of profound interest, which deserves the loving attention of all who seek to interpret the present through the great efforts of the past.

It might be thought that, in editing and commenting on the Bible, Saadiah had said all that he could say on the subject, unless he subsequently changed his views. But he still found occasion within a few years to compose another book not less important for biblical study than his commentary, and with quite a new purpose. The commentary was fundamentally an educational work, fitted for use in the school or academy. But there was room for another book which should preserve the lessons of the commentary for the pupil after he left the academy, which should put them in a form that he could carry about with him, and to which he could refer for guidance in the press and rush of actual life. It was not enough that the student should know the Bible thoroughly. He

ought so to absorb that knowledge that it became, as it were, part of his mind, gave him a new faculty for judging men and things, and stamped him with a definite individuality.

It was a hard and bitter experience which showed Saadiah that he had not said the last word about the Bible in his commentary (which he completed when he was not more than thirty-five or thirty-six years old). At first fortune seemed to smile on him, and in the year 928, at the early age of thirty-six, he was raised to the Geonate of the Talmudical college at Sura, which had for some time been closed for want of a suitable head. In this position he ranked alongside of the Gaon of Pumbeditha as the spiritual head of the Jewish people. But his dignity was short-lived. In two years he came into violent conflict with the Resh-Galutha, David ben Zakkai, owing to his refusal to decide in his favour a certain case regarding some property which he coveted. After a heated controversy, David ben Zakkai induced the Caliph to depose Saadiah, who retired into private life—if not a sort of imprisonment—at Bagdad.

Saadiah's experience at Sura must have shown him that the fundamental institutions of the Jewish people—the Talmudical colleges themselves—were worm-eaten with corruption, and must, sooner or later, disappear. His residence in Bagdad also must have shown him that there was more pressing work for him in the world than the education of youth. Bagdad was at that time a place of great intellectual ferment. The Arabs, being by nature a disputatious race, and being allowed by the Koran to grant a considerable measure of toleration to the religions of the peoples whom they subjugated, and also to employ members of other faiths in positions of

trust and authority, were naturally led from an early period to the comparative study of religions and to an inquiry into the foundations of faith. In Bagdad at the time of Saadiah were to be found prominent representatives of the Mohammedan, Christian, Jewish, and Magian religions in the service of the Caliph. All these could not come into contact without a great deal of friction, and the question must frequently have arisen for individual Jews in particular, Why be a Jew? entailing the two further questions, What was meant by being a Jew, and How to be a Jew. Saadiah had answered these questions for a limited circle, for the circle of students or men who read the Talmud and Bible. But in Bagdad he came across men to whom his solutions would not apply, men who had not read the Talmud and Bible, and men who had no time or patience to read them. To win the adherence of these men to Judaism was probably no part of Saadiah's intentions originally. The Jewish sceptics of Bagdad were by profession courtiers, men of action and not of thought, and between them and Saadiah, with a nature at once contemplative and imperious, lay a gulf which he can hardly have hoped ever to bridge successfully. Yet during his enforced stay in Bagdad he was practically driven to make the attempt for sheer want of something better to do. And, as a matter of fact, he was in this way, and perhaps consciously, continuing his work in connection with the Talmudical schools. For these sceptics, if allowed to drift, might in course of time become—perhaps already were—the active opponents of the Judaism professed by Saadiah, and might, while retaining the name of Jew, seek to subvert the very foundations of Judaism as he understood it.

At the time of his leaving Sura, at the age of thirty-eight, Saadiah had stood before the world as the representative of the most complete fusion possible between orthodox Jewish belief and practice on the one hand, and Arabic culture on the other. After three years' residence in Bagdad he comes before us in an even more commanding attitude—as a man inspired by the serene assurance that he was in possession of *truth*. In a city like Bagdad, the seat of a powerful and luxurious court and of a great world-commerce, the position of a discredited ex-Gaon was one that might easily have crushed the spirit and broken the energy of an ordinary man. But Saadiah's mind rose superior to circumstance, and drawing strength from disappointments, asserted its independence in a triumphant fashion. With an apparent record of hopeless failure behind him, he confidently maintained that his path had been the right one, and that he had nothing to regret or retract. Taking his stand on the essential features of human nature, he asserted that the ultimate goal of human endeavour was the attainment of *truth*, and that the way to attain truth was by that study of the Bible to which he had devoted himself; and that, consequently, he was so much nearer the goal than his contemporaries that he was in a position to act as their guide and leader, and, if not to promulgate to them a new religion, at least to put new life into a creed which for them had become antiquated and outworn.

This standpoint was developed by Saadiah in the book which is most closely associated with his name, and on which his title to fame chiefly rests. He composed it in Arabic, the language which he wrote most easily and which was most familiar to the

class he wished to address, and entitled it *Kitab el I'tikadat w'el Amanat*, 'The Book of Beliefs and Creeds.' It was published in Bagdad in 933, was translated some two hundred and fifty years later into Hebrew by Judah Ibn-Tibbon, and is familiar to Hebrew readers under the title of אֱמוּנוֹת וְדֵעוֹת. In this book we have Saadiah's most solid contribution to Jewish literature—the only one which the Jewish people has preserved through the printing press up to the present day. And while we may regret that his biblical commentary has been so much neglected, we must acknowledge that his *Emunoth we-Deoth* is in many ways a superior work, and deserves more particular attention at our hands.

The keynote to the book is struck in the invocation with which it opens, after the fashion of Arabic writings of that day, and in which Saadiah praises the God of Israel for having granted to mankind the faculty of arriving at truth. What exactly he meant by truth we gather without much difficulty from the manner in which he proceeds. His first task, he says, before coming to the proper subject of his book, is to explain how doubts arise in men's minds and how they are to be removed. He takes up an attitude not unlike that of Lucretius in the well-known opening of the second book of his *De Rerum Natura*, where he contrasts the serene calm of the philosopher with the tumultuous unrest of the unenlightened mass of mankind. Saadiah's attitude towards his contemporaries was not unlike that of Lucretius, and though he nominally addressed himself to the general public, yet his book was really no less intended for a select circle of congenial spirits than was Lucretius' poem for the philosophic ear of Memmius. For Saadiah

spoke to men who doubted, and doubt implies inquiry, and the mass of men do not inquire into the reasons why they do what they do. Truth to Saadiah meant something in which men could believe after the fullest inquiry and examination. It related, therefore, to something that could be inquired and examined into, something in regard to which arguments could be adduced, on one side and the other, for human reason to weigh and decide between. And where no absolutely conclusive arguments could be brought in favour of any one view, it was sufficient if one set of arguments could not be disproved, while those in favour of any other view were open to fatal objections. In fact, where certainty could not be obtained, probability was to be accepted as truth, especially where it had the sanction of tradition and ancient authority.

Now, on what principle did Saadiah choose the subjects in regard to which truth could be sought and found ? For it is obvious that almost any set of relations in the universe admits of inquiry, doubt, argument, and decision, and is therefore, according to Saadiah's idea, a subject in regard to which truth may be attained. As a matter of fact, Saadiah confined himself to ten subjects, which it will be as well to state before inquiring into the principle on which they were chosen. They are, first, the origin of the universe and all it contains ; secondly, the unity of the Creator ; thirdly, the Creator as a law-giver ; fourthly, the service of the Creator ; fifthly, the merit of this service ; sixthly, the soul and its condition after death ; seventhly, the resurrection of the dead ; eighthly, the redemption of Israel ; ninthly, the ultimate reward and punishment ; tenthly, the best rule of conduct in this life.

On these ten subjects Saadiah professed to communicate the truth, devoting to each of them a special chapter. In each of them his method is much the same—to adduce the view which he favours, with arguments in support of it, and passages from the Bible showing that it was the view of the prophets; then to demolish, if necessary, opposing views.

Now, what was the principle on which Saadiah chose just these ten subjects? This question is important, in order to decide to what class of work the *Emunoth we-Deoth* belongs. It is usually called a work of religious philosophy, which is simply begging the question whether it is religious or philosophical, or, if both, how it manages to combine two apparent opposites. Some parts of it—and those perhaps the most important—are distinctly philosophical in tone. Others are as distinctly religious. But the philosophy works up to the religion, and the religion is based on the philosophy. And the concluding chapter, to which the whole works up, is ethical, with affinities both to religion and philosophy. What, then, is the thread that binds all the chapters together? It seems to be this: that these are the ten subjects of truth-seeking inquiry which are dealt with in the Bible. Saadiah does not state this distinctly; he implies, by his dogmatic fixing of them as the headings of his chapters, that they are the ultimate subjects of inquiry to which all others may be referred; but even if this was his belief, he is more likely to have discovered them in the first instance from a study of the Bible than from an exhaustive abstract inquiry. He did, in fact, for the Old Testament what Mohammedan thinkers did for the Koran by means of their 'Kalam,' or philosophic inquiry

He may be said to have created a Jewish 'Kalam,' under the impulse of Arabic thought; not that he was himself contributing to the Mohammedan 'Kalam,' as some modern scholars seem to suppose. Certain it is that the Bible has much to say on these ten subjects, and that to know what the Bible says on them may be not unjustly accounted an important part of the Jewish religion. Hence we may venture to class the *Emunoth we-Deoth* as a work not of religious philosophy, but of philosophical exegesis, that is, an exegetical inquiry into the philosophic portion of the work explained, namely, the Bible.

By assigning this title to Saadiah's work, we shall better understand its relations to Aristotle. In several places, notably in the first two chapters, Saadiah deals with questions treated by Aristotle and quite in the spirit of Aristotle, though not in agreement with him, and he seems to have a subconsciousness of Aristotle throughout. The works of the Greek philosopher had been already, to some extent, translated into Arabic, and were ardently studied by Mohammedan thinkers. Saadiah also must have been well enough acquainted with them to be familiar with the main features of the Aristotelian philosophy. With regard to the relations between Saadiah and Aristotle, it may be said that the Jewish thinker accepts unreservedly the logical canons of the Hellene, the rules for testing true and false conclusions, but builds up by their means a very different system of metaphysics and ethics, a very different view of the construction of the universe, and the right rule of human conduct. Hence the statement that Saadiah tried to reconcile Judaism with Aristotelian philosophy means little more than this, that he claimed for himself as

a Jew Hellenic *παρρησία*, freedom of thought and speech, though what he thought and said with this liberty was substantially in accord with orthodox Jewish doctrine.

The main object, then, of the *Emunoth we-Deoth* is to point out that there are dealt with in the Bible ten subjects of extreme importance, which are matters of philosophical inquiry, giving rise to doubts, admitting of argument, and providing a *faith* to one who is convinced that he has ascertained the truth with regard to them; that what the Bible says on these subjects is fully in accordance with what reason would lead us to decide, and constitutes a manual of Jewish *faith;* and that the Bible and reason go hand in hand, the views of the Bible being interpreted through the conclusions of reason, and the conclusions of reason being confirmed by the views of the Bible. Let us now see how Saadiah, proceeding on this system, lays down the law on these subjects.

In the first chapter Saadiah essays to prove, or at least to give strong grounds for believing, that there was a time when *no thing* existed, and that, consequently, the universe which we perceive dates from a definite beginning. He nowhere says that the world was created *out of nothing;* his expression is that it became a thing after being no thing; that is to say, that there is a point in time before which nothing existed that is perceptible to the senses or could be imagined by the mind. If this is granted, it follows that before this point of time there must have been a force which brought the perceptible universe into being by an effort of will, or, as Saadiah says, "not from anything," and that it is this force alone which we can conceive of as existing before the commencement of our universe.

This, in brief outline, is the doctrine of what is called by Jewish philosophers חִדּוּשׁ הָעוֹלָם, which may be translated 'the genesis of the universe,' as opposed to the Aristotelian doctrine of קִדְמוּת הָעוֹלָם, 'the pre-existence of the universe.' Saadiah no doubt learnt the term from Arabic philosophers; but he was probably the first writer—or, at any rate, the first of any prominence—who used it in connection with the Jewish religion.

Saadiah had no difficulty in showing that the 'genesis' as opposed to the 'pre-existence' theory of the universe is the doctrine of the Bible. But his attempt to establish his proposition by logic is not so successful. His whole treatment of the subject strikes one as, to say the least, amateurish, though its very naïveté gives it a certain interest. We can almost smile at the simplicity of some of the objections which he meets and of his answers to them when we compare his work with that of Maimonides in the same field some two and a half centuries later. It is like comparing a tiro with a master. But we must remember that Saadiah was a pioneer, and we must give him credit for seizing with unerring precision the exact point where Judaism parted company with the philosophy of Aristotle, and for starting his own system from that point. It is worthy of notice that it was not monotheism, but the 'genesis of the universe,' which Saadiah laid down as the first principle of Judaism; and he was unquestionably right. Monotheism is possible to other religions besides Judaism; but the characteristic of Judaism is that it arrives at monotheism through the idea of 'genesis'; otherwise it is not genuine Judaism, and contradicts an essential principle of the prophetic teaching.

The second chapter of the *Emunoth we-Deoth*

tries to show that this force which is behind the perceptible universe, and which we call God, is *one*, and that the unity of God includes the ideas of *living*, *omnipotent*, *wise*, and *incorporeal*. Saadiah here had an easier task than in the first chapter, and his logic is more satisfactory. But he now stumbles on another difficulty in having to explain away a large number of expressions in the Bible which seem to conflict either with the unity or the incorporeality of God. Here again he broke ground which was afterwards gone over more thoroughly by Maimonides; but he has the advantage of being more concise and compact on this matter than the younger writer.

Just as in the first chapter Saadiah had differentiated Judaism from philosophy, and in the second from Christianity, so in the third he shows its cleavage from Mohammedanism. This he does by bringing in the principle that the creation of the universe is an act of kindness on the part of the Creator, and that this same kindness has furnished man with an instrument for attaining to the perfection of happiness and well-being. This instrument is the voice of God to man in the way of command and prohibition. That this command and prohibition is confined to the Jewish people, or that there is the same law for every man, Saadiah nowhere affirms. But he does assert that the Hebrew prophets are the only channel through which the voice of God has reached man, and that consequently the divine command and prohibition are to be learnt from their writings. How we know that the Bible, as we have it, is in its entirety the Word of God is a question which Saadiah has unaccountably omitted to consider, though he does discuss at some length whether the old Law has

been superseded by a new. It was this omission which Jehudah Halevi set out to rectify in his *Kusari*. And yet this must have been one of the 'doubts' which agitated the mind of Saadiah's contemporaries, as we know from the case of the Jewish sceptic Chivi Habbalchi, who is frequently mentioned by Saadiah and Ibn Ezra. Perhaps Saadiah thought he had sufficiently dealt with this matter in his polemic against Chivi, which he neglected to refer to in the *Emunoth we-Deoth* through an oversight.

Having thus in these three chapters, as it were, individualised Judaism as against the three competing systems of Philosophy, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, Saadiah proceeds in the rest of the book to develop the consequences to the individual of the acceptance of Judaism as defined by him. The essential feature of his Judaism is that it at once brings the individual into personal relations towards God, and impresses him with a full sense of his complete responsibility for his own conduct. The attempt to analyse this responsibility leads Saadiah into a discussion of the nature of the soul and the state after death. He speaks with a good deal of dogmatic assurance on these subjects, and supports himself at every step with quotations from the Bible; and, indeed, the chief value of these chapters is that they give a connected view of the teaching both of the Bible and the Talmud on this matter, and help us to understand what the prophets and the sages really had to say on it. It is worthy of note that a man like Saadiah, who was so intimately acquainted both with the Bible and the Talmud, affirms without any hesitation that both these books proclaim the resurrection of the dead, the ultimate redemption of Israel, and the

final distribution of reward and punishment. According to Saadiah, these are fundamental articles of Jewish belief, which follow logically from the principles laid down in the first three chapters.

The greater part of the *Emunoth we-Deoth*, as is natural, is taken up with the relation of the Jew to God; but to make his work complete, Saadiah concludes with a chapter on the relation of the Jew to his fellow-men, which he entitles "What it is good for a man to do in this world." For, since the foundation of Jewish ethics is the acceptance by the individual of full responsibility for his own actions, such an individual cannot steer his course in life either by the public opinion of his circle or by a fixed written rule, but must be guided by principles which appeal to his reason and which admit of universal application. Without such principles he cannot translate his faith into action, and may easily be betrayed into courses which will react injuriously upon his faith. Saadiah, therefore, in this chapter seeks to lay down and develop a principle of conduct which is most compatible with the Jewish faith that he has outlined in the previous nine chapters. He recognises that the two main factors in human conduct are the forces of attraction and repulsion, or the sentiments of love and hatred. In the regulation and direction of these sentiments he finds the true course of life, which might almost be defined, according to him, to consist in liking the right thing at the right time and place. His ethical system, in fact, reminds one strongly of the Book of Ecclesiastes (which he quotes largely in this chapter), with this difference, that it rests on a background of faith which does not distinctly assert itself in the moralisings of the Preacher.

Such, in brief outline, is the *Sefer Emunoth we-Deoth*, which is one of the standard works of post-Talmudical Jewish literature, and which is Saadiah's chief contribution to Jewish thought. It is a difficult and almost tantalising book to read—rugged and harsh in style, frequently obscure in expression and connection, full of crudities and imperfections, and showing in many places an unequal struggle between language and thought. It is often most dogmatic where it is weakest in argument, and obtrusively polemical throughout; in fact, it exhibits in a marked degree the deficiencies of a first attempt. For the credit of Jewish thought it had practically to be rewritten; and so it was in the course of a couple of centuries or so—the ethical side by Bachya in his *Duties of the Heart*, the psychological side by Jehudah Halevi in the *Kusari*, and the metaphysical side by Maimonides in the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Each of these writers said what Saadiah ought to have said in these particular sections, what perhaps he would have said if he had had the advantage of their education and environment.

And yet Saadiah's work fully deserves to be ranked by the side of the other three, if not even above them. If it has the weakness, it has also the strength of a first attempt, in that it is in touch with an older world, and preserves echoes of an intellectual life which it was itself helping to supplant. The composition of the *Emunoth we-Deoth* was to Saadiah more than the writing of a book; it was a religious exercise, comparable to the outpouring of the heart in a *piyut* (liturgical poem) or a *techinnah* (supplication). The college of Sura, where Saadiah studied and taught, was sanctified by the memories of a long line of Geonim and Amoraim

who had laboured there. The recital of the Talmud in such surroundings was not merely study, but a higher and more intense form of prayer. It was in the spirit of such study that the Amoraim had expanded the Mishnah and the Geonim issued their responses; and a touch of that same spirit can be discerned in Saadiah composing his *Emunoth we-Deoth*, although he was in Bagdad and writing in Arabic.

Hence there is a certain flavour about Saadiah's book which we miss in later works of the same stamp, and which, in fact, we find in no other writer after him, unless it be in Rashi on the Pentateuch. There is a sureness of touch in his fixing of the essential in Judaism, a certain authoritativeness, which is equalled only by Rashi. Saadiah's arguments in the *Emunoth we-Deoth* are weak; but the attitude he took up is, from the Jewish point of view, invariably right, and no change was made in it by those who went over the same ground. He was guided, in fact, by a faculty deeper than reason, by a certain intuition, which attuned him to all the past intellectual life of his people and gave him an unerring insight into the inmost purport of the prophetical writings. Hence it was that he was able to give the Jewish people not merely a philosophy, but a *faith*. We must remember that Saadiah lived in a community which for centuries had been drawing its material sustenance from the same soil. The Jewish community of Babylonia traced back its history to the first captivity, and could still show monuments dating from nearly the beginning of that period. The fifteen centuries, it is true, which had elapsed since that time must have changed out of all recognition the people to whom Jeremiah wrote and

Ezekiel spoke ; yet enough of the original features may have been left to enable a man like Saadiah to bring himself into close touch with the ancient prophets, and to endow the prophetical writings with an actuality for him such as they can have possessed for no subsequent writer.

Hence Saadiah's statement of the biblical or prophetical point of view, however dogmatically made, is worthy of the highest respect and consideration. The *Emunoth we-Deoth* might, in fact, be described as a presentment of the prophetical *Weltanschauung* ranging over metaphysics, psychology, and ethics. Saadiah himself was weak on these subjects, but he knew exactly what line the prophetical teachings prescribed to him to take up with regard to them. The value of his book lies in his clear marking out of that line, not in his justification of it, which was done much better by his successors. Hence the *Emunoth we-Deoth* is an essential part of Jewish philosophical literature and indispensable for a correct appreciation of Jewish thought ; it is also a contribution, indirect but of the highest value, to biblical exegesis, indicating the standpoint of the biblical authors and transplanting the student at one bound, as it were, into the biblical atmosphere.

If we ask, in conclusion, what Saadiah has done for the Jewish people, we may answer in one word that he has given it liberty to philosophise. Any Jew who wishes to indulge in philosophic speculation can claim a charter of right in the *Emunoth we-Deoth ;* and, broadly speaking, it may be said that all Jews who have been persecuted for philosophising have brought their trouble on themselves through not sticking to their *Emunoth we-Deoth.* ' Orthodox ' Jews may find matter of charge against

Maimonides; but, be they never so obscurantist, they can hardly banish the work of a man who sat in the chair of the Amoraim and Geonim. Whether this liberty has now any more than a historic interest is another question. Philosophy perhaps, it may be thought, within the limits laid down by Aristotle, has had its day, and is now only a matter of academic concern. If so, Saadiah suffers in good company. But, in any case, his historical importance in Judaism is immense. He is the real founder of the Spanish School, which the Jews still look back upon as the aristocracy of the Dispersion, and to which they owe whatever they still possess in the way of communal organisation. He was the spiritual father of all those Jewish writers who, from Avicebron to Spinoza, have introduced a leaven of Jewish outlook into the speculations of the non-Jewish world. And, finally, by his method of biblical exegesis he brought a new force into the life of nations, a new kind of mentality, which, after centuries of subterraneous spluttering and rumbling, at length burst the fetters of pontifical repression, and wrought the great upheaval which is known to us as the Reformation.

III

MAIMONIDES

By the Rev. H. S. LEWIS

IT was said by Francis Bacon that he took all learning to be his province. This proud claim might have been made equally well by Maimonides. Nowadays learned men, however talented and industrious they may be, are obliged to specialise, because the bounds of knowledge have spread so extensively in every direction. In the twelfth century it was possible for a man of genius to be an admirable Crichton. At the same time, width of knowledge by no means implied shallowness of knowledge. The Jewish student, who sat at the feet of the Rabbis and of the Arabic philosophers, was the residuary legatee both of Palestine and of Greece: he became conversant at once with the Talmud, with the works of Aristotle, the thinker, and with those of Galen, the physician. The career of Maimonides and the encyclopædic range of his works show how effectively these opportunities could be utilised. His books on medicine were of little importance, but his commentary on the Mishnah, his Code of religious law, and his *Guide of the Perplexed*, i.e. of perplexed Jewish metaphysicians, were the products of a master-mind. Written over seven hundred years ago, they have exerted a practical influence upon Judaism, even upon the

liberal Judaism of to-day. Naturally our interest in the works of Maimonides is now chiefly historical. The touchstones which we apply to religious doctrines are no longer those fashioned by Aristotle or even by the authors of the Pentateuch and their Rabbinical interpreters. Maimonides did not succeed in attaining to final results, and, indeed, philosophy and religious systems must always remain tentative. Even inspired men, writes Maimonides himself, do not, whilst on earth, enjoy the steady light of assured truth ; they can only hope for bright flashes which come and go. But if the conclusions of our sage often appear unsatisfactory, there is yet much that we may learn from the spirit in which he writes, for he shows a disposition to test every opinion by the light of reason. He rebukes intellectual levity, and tells us not to decide questions by the first idea that suggests itself to our mind, but rather to wait patiently and to advance step by step.

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It is no part of my present task to attempt a biography of Maimonides, except so far as is needed to understand his intellectual development. He belonged to a family of distinguished Rabbis, his father having been the *dayan* of Cordova, a learned Talmudist, whose opinions are several times quoted in his son's works. In the fourteenth year of Maimonides' life (1148) his family was driven from Cordova by Mohammedan persecution, and had to live a wandering life for about seventeen years, during part of which period they were obliged to conform outwardly to Mohammedanism. Ultimately they escaped to the East and settled at Cairo, where Maimonides resided for the rest of his life.

Although his main interests were literary and philosophical, neither circumstances nor his own tastes permitted him to be a mere recluse. Soon after his arrival in Egypt he was left penniless through the death of his brother, a jeweller, with whom he was in sleeping partnership. He was not willing to live as a paid Rabbi, for he held that the Torah must not be made an axe to chop withal. He tells us that a learned man must not accept remuneration for services rendered to the congregation, and he loved to recall the examples of the sages of the Talmud, who supported themselves as artisans by the labour of their hands. Being unwilling to derive profit from his religious learning, he became a physician and gradually built up a lucrative practice. Ultimately he was appointed physician-in-ordinary to Alfadhel, the governor of Egypt under Saladin, and he obtained much court influence, which he sedulously employed for the benefit of his co-religionists. Thus he succeeded in saving the Jews of Arabia from persecution and in lightening their heavy burden of taxation. At the same time he exerted a strong religious force upon Jewish congregations far and near. At Cairo itself the whole community waited upon him for instruction every Sabbath. He gradually collected around him a band of disciples, who spread his influence throughout Egypt and the surrounding countries. His books circulated even in Western Europe, and letters reached him from the most distant regions of the dispersion, soliciting his advice and guidance on religious questions. Thus he acquired some of the qualities of a man of affairs as well as those of a student; he learned that a religious writer should address himself to the practical needs of his generation. Further,

the free intercourse with Mohammedans, enjoyed by Maimonides throughout his life, gave him a breadth of outlook, which was indeed rare in the dark ages. He endeavoured to give reason its due share in the government of life and thought.

But what is this 'due share' of reason? Maimonides is sometimes represented as an absolute rationalist, notably in a recent essay of great ability by 'Achad Ha'am.' Now I do not believe in the existence of absolute rationalists, least of all in the Middle Ages. As to Maimonides, his reason was so greatly influenced by authority that he was often unable to arrive at independent conclusions. As a follower of Aristotle, he accepted many metaphysical propositions which were absolutely unverified and unverifiable. As a student of medicine, he declared himself unwilling to make statements which he could not trace back to their original source. As a theologian, he rejected a few Rabbinical absurdities and superstitions, he explained away some unpalatable narratives of Scripture and Talmud by heroic exegesis; but the precepts of the Torah, as interpreted by the Rabbis, were obeyed by him as divine. To regard the most insignificant narratives of the Pentateuch as anything less than a transcript of God's voice was to him an abominable act of unbelief. Doubtless he reconciled this submission to authority with the claims of reason, but his intellect was only an advocate, called in to justify conclusions already reached. He made every effort to present the sacred literature of Judaism in the most reasonable light, but he would never have admitted that the essential truth of these documents, when rightly understood, was open to question.

Like many religious writers, Maimonides was too

apt to 'prove' the authority of Revelation by assuming the accuracy of the narratives in which it is conveyed to us. Thus he grounds his belief in the eternal validity of the Mosaic law on the fact that all Israel at Sinai heard the voice of God. The truth of revelation did not depend upon miracles, which might have been open to suspicion, but upon the evidence of their own senses. "Standing before Sinai," declares Maimonides, identifying Israel in all ages with the generation of the Exodus, "our eyes saw and no stranger, our ears heard and no other, the fire, the thunder, and the flames, the approach of Moses to the thick darkness, and the Voice speaking to him." A large assumption indeed, or, at least, it seems so to us ; but Maimonides here makes a statement which would have appeared axiomatic to his contemporaries—Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans alike. He was, in fact, affected by the spirit of his age, and for this reason, if for no other, he was a rationalist with limitations.

Maimonides was himself aware that his beliefs did not depend on reason alone. In his elementary treatise on logic he includes, amongst axiomatic propositions, "received truths communicated to us by honourable persons." Such propositions are not, he remarks, common to all humanity, for we do not find that the same facts of history are everywhere accepted. In short, they are not capable of exact proof. Yet many of our most cherished ideas stand on no other basis. Maimonides further informed the sages of Marseilles that there are three sound grounds for belief—intellectual proof, the evidence of the senses, and revelation ("those things which we have received from the prophets and the righteous"). Thus it appears that Revelation is needed to supplement the teachings of the

intellect. At the same time, Maimonides tried to reconcile the claims of reason and revelation so far as he could. In his essay on the resurrection he criticises adversely those Rabbis who delight in the multiplication of miracles. He tells us that his own aim is to find a natural explanation of all phenomena so far as is possible. He only considers an event to be miraculous when this is clearly proved to be the case. He therefore interprets metaphorically the promise that, in the Messianic age, the lion will lie down with the lamb. In his *Guide of the Perplexed* he explains the stories in Genesis about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, as philosophical allegories. He even declares that he would have reconciled the statements of Holy Writ with the Aristotelian theory of an eternal *prima materia*, if such a proposition had been clearly established. To Maimonides, Reason was not independent of Revelation, nor was Revelation independent of Reason. He rejected neither. He was too logical to allow Judaism and the Aristotelian philosophy, which he adopted in the main, to remain in separate water-tight compartments of his brain. He tried rather to build up a harmonious system, in which each should play its part. Nor was his work wasted. It is true that few of his conclusions have stood the test of time. Alfachar, a hostile critic of his philosophy, was right in declaring that " the earth could not bear " the systems of Moses and Aristotle " to dwell together." Yet Maimonides' influence on many generations of readers has been powerful and healthy; it has enabled them to combine their Judaism with intellectual honesty and self-respect.

The open-mindedness of Maimonides was indeed remarkable. He was faithful to the maxim, " Ac-

cept the truth, whoever utters it." He quotes with approval the action of the Rabbis who abandoned their own views on astronomical questions after hearing the arguments of Gentile sages. They acted rightly, "for every one should treat speculative matters according to the results of his own study and should accept that which appears to him established by proof." Accordingly, we find that Maimonides welcomed free discussion and took care to be on terms of personal friendship with Arab scholars; he praises "the excellent philosopher Abu-Bekr Ibn Alzaig, one of whose pupils was my fellow-student." Also he is careful to treat his readers with perfect candour and to be honest with himself. "I will not deceive myself," he writes very nobly, "nor consider a sophism as a proof. The sophism is worse than nothing, for when we understand the sophistical nature of a pretended proof, our belief in the proposition itself is shaken. It is better to accept something as axiomatic or based on authority than to support it by a fallacious demonstration."

It was a peculiar merit of Maimonides that he used logical faculties, acquired through philosophical studies, in his Talmudic writings. His commentary on the Mishnah and his code of Jewish law both derive much of their value from this fact. In the former he introduces the more difficult subjects by a comprehensive introduction, giving a useful summary of the main principles upon which the conclusions of the Mishnah are based. Thus such complications as those connected with the laws of sacrifices and purifications are disentangled by a master-hand. Indeed, Maimonides sometimes shows himself less concerned to comment on the Mishnah than to build up an organised system of law. But

it is in his Code that Maimonides more fully systematises the Talmud; indeed, his commentary on the Mishnah appears to have partly served as a preliminary study for this production of his riper genius. We may perhaps say, without exaggeration, that the very conception of this great work would have been impossible to any other Jewish author, ancient or modern. Jewish legal literature—whether in the Bible, the Mishnah, or the Talmud—is exceedingly unsystematic. "Many sections of the Torah," as R. Akiba already noticed, "adjoin one another and yet are poles apart in meaning." The laws and historical narratives of the Pentateuch are often thrown together, seemingly at random. This fact is not explained by a simple statement that the Pentateuch is a compilation of documents, edited and re-edited repeatedly. If so, why did the editors fulfil so imperfectly the task of arranging their material? The answer is simple. It probably never occurred to them that law and history should be written systematically. They were Hebrews, and had the defects of their qualities. A similar remark applies to other masterpieces of Jewish literature. When Maimonides tried to trace a logical sequence in the treatises of the Mishnah, his attempt was an obvious failure. In the Talmud confusion reaches an extreme limit. Legal discussions are interrupted by exegesis, legend, ethics, and folklore. The laws themselves are curiously scattered; many important injunctions are propounded incidentally in the midst of dissertations on quite other subjects. To codify the contents of the Talmud was a feat quite beyond the powers of a mere Talmudist. Maimonides succeeded in doing so, because his studies and the natural bent of his mind had given him a sense of

harmonious form and of scientific classification. He was also assisted by his talent for succinct expression. "I would not summarise the Talmud in two chapters," he said, "if I found one chapter sufficient."

Whilst the other chief works of Maimonides were written in Arabic, he composed his Code in simple and concise Rabbinical Hebrew, modelled on the style of the Mishnah. He steadily refused the requests made to him to translate it into Arabic, because "all its grace of style would vanish"; he was anxious that it should be possessed in common by all Jews, whatever their vernacular. With the confidence of genius, he looked forward to a time when his brethren, in Christian and Mohammedan countries alike, would eagerly study his Code, to the exclusion of all other books that deal with the traditional Law. In the first instance he may have aimed at providing an aid for beginners, who were puzzled by the complexities of the Talmud; but before his work was published he believed that it would serve a far wider purpose. In the preface of the Code he distinctly claims that it will, for the ordinary person, supersede all previous works, including the Talmud itself. The student will pass at once from the perusal of the Pentateuch to that of the Code of Maimonides. In strict consistency with this design, Maimonides omits mention of authorities, except in the most general terms. Talmudic discussions are entirely omitted, and their results only are recorded. With all his submission to the authority of the Talmud, the subtle refinements of its dialectic were little to his taste. They were but

> Tricks to show the stretch of human brain,
> Mere curious pleasure or ingenious pain.

When his pupil, Joseph ibn Aknin, proposed to open a house of study at Aleppo, Maimonides advised him to confine the curriculum to the summary of practical rules compiled from the Talmud by Isaac Alfasi, and to the Code of Laws written by Maimonides himself. "Do not spend your time," he added, "in explaining and discussing the Gemara. Those things which I have omitted are a waste of time and profit little." It seemed to him that it was more important to study philosophy, and he succeeded in persuading himself that the old Rabbis shared this view. We find references in the Talmud to esoteric doctrines connected particularly with the biblical account of the creation and with the angelic visions of Ezekiel. These deep subjects were only communicated to the elect; it was a far higher privilege to be initiated into these than to gain acquaintance with the discussions of Abaye and Rava, the masters of Talmudic dialectic. We need not here consider the real nature of these esoteric doctrines of the Rabbis, but Maimonides supposed them to be concerned with the principles of natural science and metaphysics, so that these subjects were an important element in religious knowledge. It was impossible, he perceived, for the ordinary man to master them thoroughly, but certain leading facts should be placed within the reach of all. Accordingly, the Code of Maimonides is a digest not only of Talmudic law, but of the leading principles of Aristotelian philosophy, so far as they have bearing on faith and morals.

Whilst the Code of Maimonides was addressed to the Jew in the street, his *Guide of the Perplexed* was intended for those who aspire to enter the temple of divine philosophy. It covers a wide range, and discusses the deepest questions that can

engage the human mind—the nature of God and of the universe, the method in which the divine will is revealed to man, the problem of evil, the purpose of life, the destiny of the soul. These wide subjects of speculation are universally interesting; although the mind of man can never attain to them, it will not abandon the quest—it is 'weary yet pursuing.' In every age there are new spiritual perplexities, or rather the old perplexities reappear transformed and disguised; from time to time men of genius arise to disentangle the difficulties of their generation. The general problem, as it presented itself to Maimonides, was that of reconciling the Jewish religion with the system of philosophy which was current in his day. He aimed at a synthesis which should render philosophy Jewish and Judaism philosophical.

To explain the philosophy of Maimonides a whole treatise would be needed. In the present paper I must content myself with giving some brief notes on a few characteristic features of his system. I will first select for discussion his teaching respecting the nature and attributes of the Deity. Now the anthropomorphisms in Scripture must present difficulty to all theological students, even those ignorant of non-Jewish philosophy. Whilst some passages in the Bible declare that God is eternal, self-existent, and incorporeal, there are many verses in which bodily organs and affections are attributed to him. These verses had been explained as allegorical by Jewish writers anterior to Maimonides. Nachmanides, in his letter to the French Rabbis on the writings of Maimonides, has no difficulty in producing an imposing list of authorities who are in substantial agreement upon this point. But Maimonides by no means reproduced the views of

the earlier Jewish and Arabic philosophers. The latter were attributists; that is, they predicated of God certain qualities which they considered to be part of his essence. According to Bachya, these essential attributes are existence, unity, and eternity; some of the Arab philosophers were agreed on four—life, power, wisdom, will. Maimonides, on the other hand, will not admit that any positive attributes can be affirmed of God except such as give an idea of his actions and not of his essence. When we call God merciful, we simply mean that he performs acts which are performed by men under the influence of a certain emotion and tenderness called mercy. So also, when God's dealings towards mankind involve their destruction, we speak of him as jealous or wrathful. In reality, however, his actions are in accordance with the guilt of those who are punished; they are not the result of any emotion, for he is above all defects. We cannot even assign to him the attribute of existence. Existence is an accident appertaining to all things—an element superadded to their essence. We can conceive them as first non-existent and then coming into existence, so that existence is not an essential quality inherent in them. In God alone existence is absolute. This train of argument leads Maimonides to the conclusion that "God exists without possessing the attribute of existence." He would almost have agreed with the Gnostic Basilides, who carried the negational theory to such an extent that he termed the Deity *οὐκ ὄντα*, i.e. non-existent according to any possible human mode of thought. God differs from us not only in degree, but also in kind; we cannot apply to him any positive quality. The only essential attributes that can be ascribed to

God are negative ones which throw light on his essence indirectly. Thus we say that God is the first, in order to express the truth that his existence is not due to any cause. Similarly we may speak of God's power, wisdom, and will, by which we mean that he is free from all kinds of imperfection. Our knowledge of God is inevitably insufficient, but the more things we can negative in relation to him the nearer we approach to a realisation of his nature.

It has been urged by Graetz that Maimonides erected, instead of the God of revelation (who is in complete sympathy with the human race, with the Israelite people, and with every individual), a metaphysical entity, who exists in cold seclusion and elevation. Yet this conclusion is not supported by experience. Maimonides and his followers had the most active faith in a living God whom man can love with all his might. They were firmly convinced that it is possible to enjoy communion with God, although God is incomprehensible. This conviction bridged over a gulf which might have appeared impassable. In fact, the gulf *is* impassable to the intellect; but faith has its intuitions, which enable it to trust where it cannot know. But this last statement would have been passionately denied by Maimonides, who detested all forms of mysticism. He feels called upon, therefore, to explain the tie that unites God to man and renders it possible for man to love God. In order to understand his meaning, we must say something about his views on providence and on the nature of the human soul. We shall, however, save ourselves from disappointment if we remember that his analysis of ultimate beliefs may not explain why they are really held by any one—even by himself.

We have seen that God is conceived by Maimonides as unconditioned and devoid of emotion. How can such a Being control a world that is in a constant condition of flux without himself undergoing change of state and feeling? This difficulty was felt by the Neo-Platonists, and they tried to solve it by a method which has been widely adopted by their conscious and unconscious disciples—Gnostics, Kabbalists, and the rest. It consists of interposing, between the world and the remote fundamental principle of Absolute Unity, a demiurge or creator and orderly disposer of the Universe, who is an emanation of the Supreme. Thus there is only an indirect connection between God and the material world. Maimonides makes a limited use of this conception. God has created the Universe, but he delegates a share of its control to ten intelligences (called 'angels' in Scripture). These beings are composed of form without substance, and are therefore unchanging. Nine of the intelligences govern the motion of the heavenly spheres. The tenth intelligence is the active intellect or creative reason (the world-soul), which governs the sublunar sphere; it awakes man's intellectual powers and gives form to all earthly things. Thus a stream of causation, starting from God, filters through the intelligences and the spheres until it descends to the earth and affects each being upon it. But the intelligences only form, after all, a mechanism for God's government of the Universe. We have to inquire how this machinery acts. Does God, acting through the intelligences, control, and if so to what extent, the course of events? In other words, what is the correct theory as to Providence? Does everything depend on chance, or does nothing depend on chance? Or shall we agree with those philosophers

who assert that God's knowledge is limited to universals, so that he watches over the species which never varies, but not over the individual which exists but for a time? This latter view would have squared best with Maimonides' idea of God's transcendency. By a happy inconsistency, however, he rejected it. He could not admit that Providence was as little concerned whether a prophet was devoured by a lion as whether a mouse was eaten by a cat. With regard to animals, he actually did agree that God cares only for the species: it is not Providence, but chance, which decides whether a certain spider shall catch a certain fly. Yet Providence watches over the individual man, because man has been endowed with the rational faculty denied to other animals. If it be asked why the Creator has selected mankind as the exclusive object of his special providence, or, in other words, why man alone has been endowed with intellect, Maimonides can only reply that such was the will of God.

Like all those who have thought and written about Providence, Maimonides was faced by two difficulties. The first is the problem of evil: Why does an Omnipotent God allow his creation to be disfigured? Maimonides does not give the true answer, which is, 'We do not know.' Instead of making this simple confession of ignorance, he solves his problem by asserting that there is no problem. He holds that there is no such thing as evil, which is merely a term used to express the absence of good. Evil only exists relatively. Thus for man death is evil; death is his non-existence. Similarly sickness, poverty, and ignorance are evils for man; they are privations of qualities. Evil is not the creation of God; for evil is the absence of

creation. We can only attribute it to God in that he has willed the existence of a corporeal element, always connected with negatives and the source of all destruction. But this earthly matter is itself really good, for it causes the permanence of the type, although its presence in the individual is unstable. Genesis can only take place through destruction, and the death of the individual is necessary for the preservation of the species.

After all, the most perfect system of metaphysics will not reconcile us to the painful facts of human experience. Maimonides must have felt this, so he proceeded to argue that the existence of evil does not constitute so acute a difficulty as is sometimes supposed. The ills that flesh is heir to are exceptional; as a rule, man can achieve happiness if he will. If he fails to secure this boon, it is generally his own fault, because he allows his passions to enslave him. The calamities inflicted by man on man are more numerous than natural evils, but they also are exceptional. They are only common when great wars arise, but these scourges of humanity are infrequent. Nor must man attach overmuch importance to the evils that beset him. If he regards the universe impartially, he will convince himself that his existence is not the object of creation. The angels and the heavenly spheres are quite free from imperfection; man is but 'a drop in the bucket'—mean, indeed, compared with the glorious beings above him. The universe exists in accordance with God's will, the exercise of which is not arbitrary, but is guided by perfect and inscrutable wisdom. Thus Maimonides rejects the doctrine of final causes, as did Descartes. "We shall not stop," said the latter, "to examine the ends which God has proposed to himself in creating

the world, and shall entirely reject from our philosophy the search for final causes ; for we ought not to be so presumptuous as to believe that God has chosen to take us into his counsel."

We must now proceed to consider another difficulty connected with Providence. Granted that God's work is untainted by evil, what is the nature of his knowledge ? How can we believe in his omniscience without denying the moral responsibility of man ? It is the evergreen problem—

> Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,

in which countless theologians have 'found no end, in wandering mazes lost.' Maimonides was greatly fascinated by the subject, and refers to it repeatedly. Like all Jewish thinkers, he emphasises human responsibility, in the absence of which the laws of revealed religion would be unmeaning. At the same time he is equally clear that God, being free from imperfection, has a foreknowledge of all things.

God's knowledge differs from human knowledge, for it does not include any plurality or change, as the objects of his knowledge change. To his comprehension past, present, and future are all one ; to think otherwise would be to suppose that God himself changes. The foreknowledge of God does not, according to Maimonides, conflict with the free will of man ; his knowledge of the realisation of one of several possibilities does not affect that realisation. A 'wandering maze' of words indeed, as Maimonides himself was partly aware ! After some chapters about freewill in his Code, he concludes his metaphysical subtleties by warning his readers that the ways of Providence are in-

scrutable. One cannot refuse a measure of sympathy with the criticism of R. Abraham ben David: "This author does not carry out the practice of the wise, who never commence what they cannot complete. He raises questions and difficulties without solving them, so that, after all, he has to make the acceptance of sound doctrine depend upon faith." But, after all, metaphysics possess a fatal fascination. After criticising Maimonides for attempting to analyse the unknowable, R. Abraham ben David proceeds immediately to undertake the same hopeless task. He has, however, the good sense to recognise his own failure.

Let us now assume that Maimonides has established on an intellectual basis his belief in freewill and in a beneficent Providence that extends to each individual man. We pass on to the consideration of his views on man's nature and destiny. Man's body only exists as a tool to be employed by his soul in its quest for perfection. The soul possesses five faculties, but only one of them is distinctive of humanity. He shares with plants and animals the faculty of nutrition; with animals, the additional faculties of perception, imagination, and emotion. The intellectual faculty is peculiar to man, and by making use of it the soul can transform itself completely. The intellect, in its active form, is outside man. He begins by possessing the potentiality of knowledge, and not knowledge itself; his mind is a blank tablet on which the impressions of the active intellect can be recorded. By acquiring true ideas about God and the universe, the formless substance of our mind takes a permanent shape and we gain immortality. Unless the mind receive its form, its existence is wasted. Thus Maimonides concludes that the soul is only potentially im-

mortal. Man must become superman in order to inherit eternity.*

It appears, then, that man, according to Maimonides, gains eternal life through the cultivation of his intellect. The practice of morality is only a means towards a higher end. Still, morality is essential, for two reasons. First, it is needed in order to secure the welfare of the world. Man is by nature social, and he can only attain to intellectual and spiritual perfection by living as a member of a well-ordered community. Secondly, moral perfection is a necessary condition of intellectual perfection; by the practice of virtue we prepare the vessel into which is poured the heavenly spirit. We must refine our character and subdue our desires if we would attain to the knowledge of God. Thus there is no immortality without virtue.

Another question now suggests itself to the student of Maimonides' works. Would he admit that immortality can be attained by the simple believer who is ignorant of metaphysics? Samuel David Luzzatto and 'Achad Ha'am' would have us answer this question in the negative. They point out passages, particularly in the commentary on the Mishnah, where Maimonides declares that all things on earth exist for the benefit of those who have acquired true ideas. The rest of humanity were only created to minister to these chosen spirits. In one place he actually tells us that a certain generation might conceivably include but one man who gains immortality. But I think that these critics of Maimonides are mistaken. In his Code he declares that righteous men, including non-Jews, will enjoy a share in the world to come. "God requires the heart," he writes in one of his

* See additional note on p. 86.

letters, "and the pious of all nations have a share in the world to come, if they have attained a fitting knowledge of the Creator and have trained themselves to live a moral life." * It must be admitted that Maimonides would not have included amongst the righteous those whose ideas of God were desperately erroneous. Still, he thought that a candidate for the Kingdom of Heaven was not required to reach a very high standard of intellectual achievement. All Israel have a share in the world to come, he tells us, if they give a reasoned acceptance to the fundamental doctrines of Judaism, as contained in the thirteen articles of belief which he propounded. True religion, according to Maimonides, requires an intellectual effort, but not such an effort as is beyond the strength of an ordinary man.

Alkifti, in his *History of the Physicians*, tells us a curious story about a certain Yousouf, who is probably to be identified with Joseph ibn Aknin, the favourite pupil of Maimonides. One day Alkifti said to Yousouf, "If the soul be immortal and knows, after death, the state of all that exists outside itself, then let us agree that whoever dies first shall visit the survivor." After Yousouf's

* The following curious passage in the Code of Maimonides (*Hilch. Melachim*, Chap. VIII, Sec. 11) must, however, be noted: "Those who accept the seven Noachite precepts and observe them are amongst the pious men of the nations, who have a share in the world to come. This presupposes, however, that they fulfil these precepts because they have been so commanded by God in the Law of Moses, who announced that these obligations had been imposed upon the sons of Noah. If they carry out these precepts at the dictate of their own reason they are not proselytes of the gate nor included in the pious and wise men of the nations of the world." This statement is not as intolerant as it appears at first sight. It implies that pious Christians and Mohammedans, both of whom accept the divine origin of the Mosaic law, will inherit the next world. But what is to happen to Aristotle, whom Maimonides considers only second to the prophets?

death Alkifti waited for several years, but finally saw his old friend during sleep. The latter was seated in the outer court of a mosque, dressed in fresh white garments. "Doctor," said Alkifti, "did we not agree that you should visit me, that I might know what befell you?" The spirit turned his face, smiling, whereupon Alkifti seized him by the hand and said, "It is absolutely necessary that you tell me what has befallen you and what is the state of man after death." "The universal," he replied, "joins itself with the universe, and the particular remains in the part." Alkifti at once understood what was meant: the soul, which is universal, had returned to the universal world; whilst the body, which is particular, had remained in the part, even in the centre of the earth. This story illustrates a perplexity which Maimonides' theory of the hereafter may well cause. Some scholars have argued that he denied personal immortality altogether. According to his view, the 'acquired intellect' of the elect unites with the 'active intellect' or world-soul. Does not this imply a kind of Nirvana in which all human personality is absorbed into a larger whole? Some philosophers have held that all souls are one in the spiritual world; must we not reckon Maimonides amongst their number? It is, however, dangerous to judge the nature of an ancient thinker's views by mere inference, for our logical methods might have seemed to him quite illogical. It is far better to study his own words. Maimonides must have used language in the most misleading way if he intended to deny personal immortality. No subject stirs him to such eloquence as that of the future life, where the righteous will escape from the dark prison of matter, will live a purely spiritual existence, and

gain a grasp of ultimate realities. Extinction! That is, for Maimonides, the sole penalty inflicted on the wicked. Is it to be supposed that he held Paradise and Gehenna to be identical? No; Maimonides followed his Greek and Arab masters to a certain point, but he developed their theories in his own way. His views as to prophecy illustrate this same originality. In common with Alfarabi and other philosophers, he holds that prophecy is not a gift from without, but the outgrowth of natural predispositions and acquired knowledge. But if this were the whole truth, we could no longer believe in the unique inspiration of Scripture: a man of genius, in any age, might train himself to become as genuine a prophet as Moses or Isaiah. In order to avoid such a conclusion, Maimonides is led to think that, whilst all prophets are naturally qualified for their office, some persons so qualified are supernaturally excluded from its exercise. The miracle is not that prophets have arisen, but that they now appear no more.

The views of Maimonides on the future state met with much opposition, both during his lifetime and afterwards. The chief charge made against him was not connected with his doctrine of conditional immortality. It was said that he denied the resurrection of the body. He certainly accepted this dogma with reluctance, and actually omits mention of it in his Code. Unlike the immortality of the soul, it appeared to him to be incapable of philosophical proof. Still, he could not reject it entirely, because there is such a weight of Talmudic authority in its favour. He therefore held that the righteous would live a second life on earth during the Messianic period. They would enjoy a happy temporal existence in the flesh, terminated by death. On the

other hand, immortality would be enjoyed in the world to come, the home of disembodied spirits. All the Talmudic stories about the material pleasures of the righteous in heaven are explained allegorically by Maimonides. Such enjoyments would have been out of place in the paradise of a metaphysician.

No part of the *Guide of the Perplexed* has led to more discussion than the chapters where Maimonides attempts to assign reasons for the precepts of the Mosaic law. Some of these laws have an obvious motive; they promote social stability, bodily well-being, and, above all, spiritual truth. Thus we can easily understand why we are enjoined to believe in God's unity, to refrain from vengeance, and to love our fellow-men. We are told to be pure and holy, in order that we may attain to the knowledge of God; we are to be moral, because morality leads to wisdom. But Maimonides was gravely concerned by the thought that many of the Mosaic ordinances have no obvious purpose. He did not think of these ordinances as proceeding from men, whose outlook on life was widely different from ours, but as the pronouncement of eternal wisdom. Nor is it enough to obey; Israel must obey with knowledge, for are they not called upon to be "a wise and understanding nation"? With characteristic self-confidence Maimonides claims that he can explain the general purpose of every precept, even such as is most obscure. He is obliged, however, to admit that no reason can be assigned to many details connected with the ceremonial law.

The commandments of the law are considered by Maimonides to include some elements that are a concession to human weakness. Ancient Israel had been accustomed to idolatrous worship, and were weaned gradually from their false conceptions of

divine service. God did not violently uproot existing customs, but gradually improved them. Hence the retention of sacrifices in the Mosaic law with suitable modifications. Although sacrifices are only valuable to those Jews who are in danger of falling into idolatry, they form part of God's eternal law, which does not take exceptional circumstances into account. Its operations are like those of nature, in which the various forces produce general benefits, but injury in some solitary cases. This theory of Maimonides about sacrifices contains an element of truth. It cannot indeed be reconciled with his belief in a divine unchangeable Law, in which the existence of antiquated observances is unthinkable. It does help us to understand how the spirit of man is guided by God to refine barbarous institutions, such as sacrifice, so that they gradually lead him towards a higher religious life.

One still often hears the assertion that the Jewish dietary laws were based on sanitary considerations. This view was first expressed by R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam), but was independently held and popularised by Maimonides. Pork, he declares, contains too much moisture and fat. Blood and the flesh of animals that have died of themselves are indigestible. And so forth. Mr. Israel Abrahams remarks that this "theory explains only a part of the facts." But this is too favourable a criticism. Whatever may have been the result of the dietary laws on Jewish physique, it is certain that their original purpose depended upon a much more primitive order of thought. Curiously enough, Maimonides does not attempt to rationalise the Mosaic laws about leprosy. He adopts the Rabbinic view that this disease is a punishment for slander; it is a miraculous visitation, like

that which results from the ordeal of a faithless wife.

The treatment by Maimonides of the *lex talionis* is peculiar. In his Code he explains "an eye for an eye" in accordance with tradition, and declares that the penalty exacted is not mutilation, but compensation in money. In the *Guide of the Perplexed* he writes that the offender must lose his own eye. "You must not raise an objection," he adds, "from our practice of imposing a fine in such cases. I explain the reasons for the precepts mentioned in the Law, and not for that which is stated in the Talmud. I have, however, an explanation for the Talmudic interpretation, which will be communicated verbally." It is difficult to resist the conclusion that he is depreciating the Talmudic interpretation, more especially in view of the unusual mystification in which he indulges. Possibly, however, he means only that the natural penalty of those who maim their fellows is a similar mutilation, according to the literal meaning of Scripture. Whilst, however, the Law allows no ransom to be paid by the convicted murderer, money compensation is accepted from those who deserve in strict justice the actual infliction of mutilation.

Maimonides takes a view which is decidedly utilitarian about many precepts of the Law. Thus he thinks that one of the objects of religious festivals and pilgrimages is to encourage pleasant gatherings and to promote good-fellowship. The law of restoring lost property to its owner conferred a mutual benefit, for if a person does not return another man's property he cannot expect to recover the things which he himself loses. The precept concerning the "breaking of the neck of a heifer," in the case of an undetected murder, is

useful, for it tends to make the offence known and to elicit evidence. The land where the ceremony is performed must not afterwards be cultivated; hence the owner will use all possible means to find the murderer, lest his own land be rendered useless.

Maimonides makes some curious remarks on the ethics of punishment. He thinks that the severity of judicial penalties should depend on four considerations: (1) the greatness of the crime, as estimated by the harm it causes; (2) the frequency of the crime; (3) the amount of temptation; (4) the facility of doing the thing secretly. He astonishes us by saying that the greater the temptation the greater must be the punishment, so that it may act as an adequate deterrent. It is noteworthy that he appears to regard penalties exacted by man as exemplary and deterrent, rather than as a means of reforming sinners.

Maimonides, like Aristotle, holds it to be a leading principle of ethics that virtue is the golden mean. Purity is midway between lust and absence of sensation; courage between cowardice and foolhardiness; contentment between love of money and torpor; kindness between churlishness and a foolish disregard of self; modesty between shyness and impudence. Men who are merely wise follow accurately the middle way; pious men go somewhat beyond it, and, as the Talmud expresses it, act "within the strict line of justice." The extreme abstinence practised by certain of the prophets was either intended to cure defects in their moral character or to enable them to avoid the contamination of human society in an evil generation. To separate from the congregation is only legitimate when its influence is distinctly bad. Most ascetics make such an error as that of one who should use a drug for food,

because doctors prescribe it as medicine. We are not to lead an unhealthy life of asceticism and isolation, but to enjoy material blessings in moderation. Some men practise asceticism in order to strengthen their spiritual forces, but the restrictions imposed by the Law are sufficient for this purpose. Maimonides quotes from the Palestinian Talmud a saying which he regards as wonderfully apposite: "Do not the prohibitions of the Law suffice thee, that thou wouldst regard other things as forbidden ? "

All men are imperfect ; they cannot attain the middle way without effort. Even Moses, the greatest of men, fell into the sin of anger and incurred punishment. Indeed, so dangerous is the quality of anger that we should not be satisfied with following the middle way between excessive wrath and an absolutely peaceful disposition. We should retain our self-control under the most extreme provocation. If it is necessary to inspire with awe our household, or a congregation over which we preside, in order to check their evil propensities, we should make a show of anger, but remain in reality perfectly calm. Similarly, we should shun every vestige of pride. Moses is described as not merely meek, but very meek. The Talmud considers the haughty man to be virtually an atheist, and denounces those who possess this quality in the smallest degree. Maimonides differs from Aristotle, who considers humility to be an excellence during youth only. Notwithstanding his excessive admiration for knowledge, he declares that the fear of God is more important, and the fear of God is only possessed by the humble.

Although Maimonides objected to asceticism, his theory of life was stern. He pronounces mercy on sinners to be cruelty to the rest of mankind. We

are to cultivate a certain insensibility: "the successes and mishaps of life should be regarded with indifference by a true philosopher." But we cannot be all "true philosophers," and most of us ordinary folk will agree with Nachmanides that natural expressions of feeling should not be suppressed. That Maimonides could not train even himself to acquire this philosophical stolidity is evident from a letter on the death of his brother, which is still extant. This document is unique; for it reveals Maimonides as a man of warm and tender feeling.* Usually, however, he retained an unruffled demeanour, and so secured at least one admirable result. He learned to meet malicious charges without excitement or resentment. "I regard my own character and self-respect," he wrote, "as far more important than a victory over fools." Less admirable was his opposition to all forms of amusement as unworthy of rational men. He regarded dancing as a trivial pursuit, "unless indulged in for the sake of digestion." He had no appreciation of nature, and therefore considered village life as obviously inferior to town life. He thus reminds us of Socrates, who said that "in the city he could learn from men, but the fields and the trees could teach him nothing."

The reading of Maimonides was extraordinarily wide. He did not care for poetry, even for religious poetry, nor for "such books as are current amongst the Arabs about their history, their lineage, and the administration of their kings, containing no wisdom or bodily profit, but only leading to waste of time." On the other hand, he studied comparative religion with a zeal most unusual in the Middle Ages. He was acquainted with astronomy, so far as that

* See *Maimonides*, by David Yellin and Israel Abrahams, p. 48.

science can be studied in Ptolemy's Almagest; and many passages in his works display a considerable knowledge of mathematics, physics, and anatomy. He even possessed some notion of the value of experimental methods; we once find him conducting an independent investigation into the relative densities of wine, water, wheat, and flour. His favourite philosopher was, of course, Aristotle, but he did not agree with the wise old saying: "Aristotelem non nisi ex ipso Aristotele intelliges." On the contrary, he recommends his disciples to study not the books of Aristotle, but rather the best commentaries upon them. It is also noteworthy that Maimonides was quite uninfluenced by the Jewish philosophers who preceded him.* As for his Greek and Arab masters, he respected them, but retained his own independence of spirit.

It was, indeed, natural to Maimonides that he should not rely overmuch on his predecessors. His was a great and somewhat lonely spirit, that dared to dwell apart from the world. He presents before us his whole character, its greatness and its limitations, when he describes the purpose of his philosophical writings: "When I have a difficult subject before me, when I find the road narrow and can see no other way of teaching a well-established truth, except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools, I prefer to address myself to the one man and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude." † A royal-minded man indeed!

* Except possibly his older contemporary Abraham ibn Daud, whose work, however, he nowhere mentions. Maimonides' *Ethical Testament*, containing an extravagant panegyric of Abraham ibn Ezra, is a palpable forgery.

† I quote from Dr. Friedlander's translation, to which I am indebted in several places.

Note on Conditional Immortality (p. 75)

Maimonides' theory that the soul is a mere faculty has been traced back by some authorities to the ancient Rabbis. There was a discussion between the schools of Hillel and Shammai whether it would or would not have been better for man not to have been created. According to Joseph Albo (*'Ikkarim*, IV. 29), this discussion turned upon the nature of the soul. If it has actual existence from the first, it would prefer to remain free from the contamination of the body. If, however, it is originally a mere faculty, then life on earth alone enables it to attain perfection. R. Tsebi Chajas cites a passage from Genesis Rabbah (chap. 100), where two Rabbis are explaining the verse 'Know that the Lord is God; He hath made us, and not we ourselves.' One Rabbi explained, 'we have not made our souls'; the other, 'we have not perfected our souls.' Chajas holds that the second Rabbi considered the soul to be at birth a mere faculty, which becomes an actual entity through the practice of virtue, although divine assistance is required to perfect the process.

IV

JEWISH CODES AND CODIFIERS

By Dr. SAMUEL DAICHES

THE completion of the Talmud marks a most important epoch in the history of the Jewish people. What the destruction of the Second Temple was for the material life of the nation, the final stroke of the pen of R. Ashi meant for its spiritual life. Spiritually productive Judaism survived the fall of the Jewish State for nearly five hundred years. The body was torn into pieces, but the spirit was still alive. The darkened Jewish sky was illumined by the flashing lightnings that came from Israel's wonderful mind. Jerusalem fell, but Jabneh was saved. The Torah, the real source of our life, continued to give us life. The great schools of learning continued to cultivate the Torah and to give new life to it by further developing the unwritten Law. Life created new laws which had their source on Mount Sinai. The Written Law grew, as it were, with the Oral Law, and the Oral Law received its life-power from the Written Law. The oral traditions were the common property of the nation. It was not necessary to write down the laws regulating the life of Israel. Can a living spring fail? So it was for centuries during the national existence of Israel in its own land, and so it continued to be after its political

independence was gone. Why commit the great traditions to writing ? They were a part of Israel's very being. There was only one writing—by the finger of God. The rest was—life. To write down with a human hand all that constitutes Israel's world of ideas, would have been to doubt its life-power. But it was not very long before the results of the great change began to be felt. The life-power seemed to become weaker, and the spring seemed to be in danger of being dried up. The spiritual treasures began to be forgotten, and the life-elements of the nation not recognised as such. The great men in Israel soon saw this, and they at once tried to find a remedy for this dangerous evil. If this state should continue, the Torah might be forgotten in Israel. They became more aware of Israel's downfall. They saw that the verbal transmission of the Law and all the great traditions was not any more sufficient. It must be put in writing, so that every son of the nation may read it and see what he requires for a good life. With an aching heart the sages decided to do this, but it had to be done. And so the Oral Law in all its ramifications began to be written down. Men like R. Akiba and R. Meir were untiring in their efforts to systematise all the vast material of tradition, and R. Jehudah Hannasi finished this great work, and thus created the Mishnah.

The written Mishnah is the first sign of Israel's becoming conscious of its growing spiritual weakness, but also the first and foremost means of preserving the past creations. The Mishnah was the first Jewish post-Biblical code of laws. But Israel was still, though in a much lesser degree, productive. It was still alive. When a stone is set rolling it goes on for a while even after having met an

obstacle on its way. Jewish vitality resisted the Roman conqueror. And so the spiritual activity continued after the completion of the Mishnah. Upon the Tannaim followed the Amoraim. The mere taking-in of the material of the Mishnah was not sufficient for them. They wanted to create. They felt there were still problems unsolved in the Mishnah awaiting solution at their hands. And, while explaining the old material of traditions, they added new material, new ideas, new life-elements. A great number of the Amoraim had to leave their sacred native soil and migrate to the land of exile, to Babylonia. But they carried their treasures with them. They continued to create in Babylonia as well as in Palestine. The new surroundings seem even to have stimulated them still more, and with a desperate love for life they went on producing new Jewish values, drawing from the ancient treasures new vitality. They thus further developed the traditions, and through their work the Written Law assumed partly a new character. The life-work of these men we call the Talmud. The Talmud covers a period of over three hundred years. It is not only a commentary on the Mishnah, but has also new life-elements. It is not a code of laws but a life-book, a book in which we hear Israel's heart beat. It beats at times with difficulty, at times with more ease. But it beats. Israel still lives, still creates, still produces. The stone is still rolling. The productive life had, however, lasted too long after the great national catastrophe. It was a miracle, it was a result of Israel's wonderful vitality. But it could not last much longer. Another struggle, another spark of life going up, another attempt to live fully. But the end had to come. Rabina and R. Ashi saw that there was no hope of

a continued creation, and they decided to seal up the work of the Talmud. There should be no mistaking of shadowy existence for real life. We believe we see the tears of these two great men, we believe we see the whole tragedy of the Jewish people expressed on their faces in the hour when they had to take the pen in their hand and write under the gigantic book the word "ended." The life ebbed away, the rolling stone at last stopped. First the Temple, then the Talmud, first the body, then the mind, first the loss of the independent national, then the loss of the free, creative spiritual life. The giant Israel lay on the ground.

But this was not to be the end of Jewish history. If the Jewish independent national life was gone, the Jewish nation still remained; if the independent creative spiritual life was gone, the Jewish soul still existed. A body torn into pieces, and a soul deprived of its divine glory, but both refused to vanish. Exist they must. If we cannot create, we will preserve; if we cannot produce, we will remain beside the products of the past; if we cannot bring forth new treasures, we will guard the old ones. A people that created such life-values cannot die, nay, must one day live again. Now we must preserve and persevere. These must have been the thoughts of the generation that followed the close of the Talmud.

And the men that came at once began the work of preservation.

The Saboraim, who followed the Amoraim, began to order the vast material of the Talmud, and gave it its final redaction. The period of the Saboraim lasted most probably over one hundred years. Some traces of their work are found in the Talmud. They felt themselves to be the successors of the

Amoraim, and wanted to add new elements to the Talmud. But their efforts were in vain. The creative power was gone. They had to hand over the Talmud almost as they received it, only in a better order, to their successors—the Geonim. With the Geonim the real period of preservation begins. They began the registration of the material. The creative genius ceased to work, but every day's life went on. People wanted to know how to live, wanted to know what was allowed, what forbidden, what was moral and what immoral, what legal, what illegal, what was a duty and what was no duty. And they turned to the heads of the schools. But the heads of the schools could not give them their own decisions, founded on *their* views and *their* conceptions of the traditions. They had to see what decision was given in the Talmud, and this decision they communicated to the questioner. The Talmud was studied in the academies. The Geonim, the heads of these academies, interpreted it to the students and the people. That was all they could do, all they felt themselves authorised to do. For practical purposes, therefore, the Talmud became a law-book. But it was not a convenient law-book. The final decisions had to be cut out from the long and often complicated discussions. The Geonim, the scholars, could do it. But it was often wearisome work. And the Geonim or other scholars could not be reached at any moment. It was, therefore, soon felt that a collection of laws was required. This meant nothing more than a short, almost verbal extract of the final decisions of the Talmud. *This was the beginning of the codification of laws after the close of the Talmud.* Many collections of this kind must have existed. The three most important collections that have become

known to us are the *Halachoth Pesukoth*, the *Halachoth Gedoloth*, and the *Sheïltoth*. The first book was written by the Babylonian Gaon R. Jehudai, in the middle of the eighth century. Only a part of this book has come down to us. It contains short decisions from the Talmud in the language of the Talmud. It is arranged according to the order of the Mishnah. A much larger collection of laws is the *Halachoth Gedoloth*, written by R. Simon Kayyara, a Babylonian scholar who lived after R. Jehudai Gaon, most probably at the beginning of the ninth century. It contains not only the 'decided' Halachoth, but also the sources of and proofs for the correctness of the decisions. The third is not written as a compendium. It contains one hundred and ninety-one lectures in connection with the weekly portions of the law, the main object of which, however, was to give halachic decisions. This book was written by R. Ahai in the eighth century in Palestine, whither he migrated from Babylonia. R. Simon Kayyara founded his *Halachoth Gedoloth* on R. Jehudai Gaon's *Halachoth Pesukoth* and R. Ahai's *Sheïltoth*. It is interesting to note that a collection of laws attributed to the pupils of R. Jehudai Gaon, based on his *Halachoth Pesukoth*, also bears the title *Hilchoth Re'u*, "Halachoth 'see' or 'look up,'" because it was only a question of 'looking up' the decisions in the Talmud. Worthy of note is also the fact that they collected only those laws which had a practical value. So they left out, for instance, the commands that can be fulfilled only in Palestine. Some more collections of laws were made at that time, some of them only for certain branches, as, for instance, laws dealing with oath and property, as R. Hai Gaon's *Laws of Oaths* and *Book of Buying and*

Selling. From Saadiah we have a *Book of Legacies.* But the most important collections were the three mentioned. And the most important one of those three was, as I have said, the *Halachoth Gedoloth.* For a few hundred years it remained the standard work. Of a systematic codifying of the laws there is no sign yet. As long as the Geonim existed, the necessity for it was not felt so strongly. They were the judges and deciders. All the Jewish communities in Asia, North Africa, and Spain turned to them with questions. It is interesting to observe that their advice was sought not only in religious and legal matters, but also in historic and linguistic difficulties. The most famous questions are those asked by the community of Kairuan in North Africa. The most famous answer, or collection of answers, is the epistle of R. Sherira Gaon, that wonderful document which has become the main source for our knowledge of the history of that time.

But the Geonim, too, soon ceased. The once famous academies in Babylonia fell into decay, and causes from within and from without brought about the decline of Jewish learning in the land of the two rivers. With the death of Hai and Hezekiah the end of the Gaonate came, and with it the end of the Babylonian schools and the study of the Talmud. A storm swept over the plain of Mesopotamia and uprooted all that the Jews had planted there since the time of Ezekiel. The Jewish life that had pulsated there for fifteen centuries was suddenly cut off. But before the end came in Babylonia, centres of Jewish learning arose in other countries. In the North of Africa and the South of Europe Jewish communities began to grow, and the questions to and answers by the Geonim show that the develop-

ment of Jewish thought soon followed. North Africa soon became the seat of Jewish learning. It even sent a Gaon to the Academy of Sura (Saadiah). The community of Kairuan grew in importance and had a great number of scholars. At the beginning of the eleventh century it produced the great Talmudist R. Hananeel. He devoted himself mainly to the study of the Talmud, but also wrote a halachic compendium, called *Sefer Hammikza'oth*. The first codifier in North Africa was most probably Hefez ben Jazliach (*c.* 1000). He wrote a book in Arabic, called *Sefer Hammizwoth*, which was a code containing moral, religious, and legal commands from the Bible and the Talmud. The most important codifier of the North African school was R. Isaac b. Jacob Alfasi. He was born in 1013, at Kala't Ibn Hammad, near Fez, and was a pupil of R. Nissim and R. Hananeel. After the death of these two great Kairuan scholars, he became the greatest exponent of the Talmud in North Africa. The want of a code comprising the whole of the halachic material of the Talmud, and giving the final decisions, was felt more and more. Some compendia which had appeared up till then, by R. Hai Gaon and others, only dealt with small parts of the Halachah. The only work that could claim to be a complete code, namely, the *Halachoth Gedoloth*, was not quite complete either. And then, since the time of R. Simon Kayyara, the material had grown. In the Responsa of the Geonim a great amount of new material had accumulated (through new interpretation of passages in the Talmud). Questions that remained undecided in the Talmud were decided by Talmudists in North Africa through new expositions. And so new codification became more and more necessary. Alfasi undertook to

supply this want; and he composed a work, which he modelled on the *Halachoth Gedoloth*. His *Halachoth*, however, follow the Talmud still more closely. He has the same order, the same treatises, sections, and Mishnajoth (with few exceptions) as the Talmud. Like the Talmud, he puts the Mishnah first and then lets the discussions follow, but—and herein the importance of his work lies—only so far as is necessary for the genetic presentation and definition of the norm. Everything else he omits. He marks an opinion as a norm by mentioning it, and he rejects an opinion by ignoring it. He was especially great in arriving at rules determining the Halachah. In this way he cleared up many doubtful points. The opinion of the Geonim he sometimes accepts and sometimes rejects. A new feature in his codification is his following the Talmud Jerushalmi when the Talmud Babli gives no decision. That his great work was meant to serve practical purposes is shown by the fact that he left out all those treatises which have no practical value.

So another great work of codification was completed. But it was not a code. It did not contain a systematic presentation of the halachic material. It was, in fact, for practical purposes, less of a code than the *Halachoth Gedoloth*. The reader had still to wind himself through all the Talmudic discussions, though shortened. It was, in fact, a shortened Talmud. When, however, Alfasi died at the age of ninety at Lucena (in the year 1103), in Spain, whither he had fled from Fez in the year 1088, his work was not superseded by any other work.

The man who was destined to produce the first great post-Talmudic Code was not born yet. But, as by intuition, Alfasi designated the place in which

that genius was to be born. When Alfasi fled to Spain he went first to Cordova, the city in which, forty-seven years later (thirty-two years after Alfasi's death), Maimonides saw the light (1135). In the time of Alfasi, however, other codifiers were active in Spain. Isaac b. Jehudah Ibn Ghayyat, of Lucena (1030–89), compiled a compendium of ritual laws for the feast and fast days. As in the time of the Geonim, certain branches of the Halachah were treated separately. In the branch selected by Ibn Ghayyat (regulations for the sacred days), he extracted the decisions from the Talmud and the Responsa of the Geonim. But his work did not mark any progress in the field of codification. Another contemporary of Alfasi, Isaac b. Reuben Albargeloni (1043–1103), followed the example of Hai Gaon (whose treatise on *Buying and Selling* he translated from Arabic into Hebrew), and made a collection of laws referring to the oath. At the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century, a fellow-townsman of Isaac b. Reuben, R. Jehudah b. Barzillai, distinguished himself as codifier. Although his writings in this field have been lost, with the exception of a few fragments, it is evident from quotations by a great number of authors who lived after him that he codified the whole law, ritual and civil. The parts of his *Book of Times* containing regulations for Sabbath have been published lately. This book seems to have included all the material dealt with in the first part of the *Tur*. The part of his codex which dealt with marriage laws is quoted as *Seder Nashim* (*Order of Women*), or *Jichus She'er Basar* (*Degrees of Relationship*). The civil law was contained in the part called *Sefer Haddinim*. A part of this was published by Halberstam in 1898. From what has

become known to us, we see that Jehudah b. Barzillai was a most important link between the codifiers who lived before him and those who came after him. But the fact that most of the writings of Jehudah b. Barzillai have been lost shows that they did not fulfil the requirements of those times. The *Halachoth Pesukoth*, the *Halachoth Gedoloth*, the *Sheiltoth*, the partial codes of the Geonim and the Responsa of the Geonim and other scholars, the *Halachoth* of Alfasi and the collections of his contemporaries, were all very important, very useful, and were consulted in all religious questions. But it was a mass of material without order, without systematic arrangement. They were more or less Talmudical extracts. And as the Talmud was not intended to be a code, the imitation of its order meant disorder. The great want, therefore, of the twelfth century was a really scientific code, free from the dialectic form of the Talmud, presenting the entire field of Halachah in a systematic and original form. The time demanded it, and the time produced the man who was able to undertake that gigantic work. Moses, the son of Maimon, was that man. The man who brought Judaism into a closer relation to science was the first scientific codifier of the entire halachic material.

Moses b. Maimon had greater ambitions. His should not only be a code by the side of other codes, not even by the side of the Mishnah. His code should supersede all previous codifications, except the Torah. The Torah, the source of all the laws, stands first. And then should come his book. It should contain the whole Oral Law, the traditions and interpretations of the Geonim and other great men from the conclusion of the Talmud up to his time. He therefore called his work *Mishneh Torah*,

the 'second Torah.' The 'written Torah,' and his, the 'second Torah,' should be regarded as the 'Jewish law,' the Torah. It was not out of pride that he undertook this work. He did it in order to enable those who could not get through the whole of the tremendous literature to study the Torah 'written and oral' and to know the law in each case. We thus see that the motive of Maimonides was a double one: theoretical as well as practical. This double motive explains the construction of his great work. As it had to have also its theoretical value, he did not confine himself to those laws that are of practical value, but included in his treatment those laws that are of value only in a Jewish State in Palestine. It also includes the fundamental doctrines of the Jewish religion which the Mishnah does not contain. It also contains all Halachoth concerning the liturgy. In a word: it should represent a system of the whole of Judaism—ethical and ceremonial. This grand artistic conception could only originate in a mind that embraced the entire Jewish tradition and penetrated into the manifold branches of Greek science. It is the most brilliant work of codification and the most wonderful piece of construction in the whole Rabbinic literature. The *Mishneh Torah*, or, as Maimonides' admirers called it, *Jad Hachazakah*, is divided into fourteen books. Each book represents a group of commandments, and is divided into sections (*Halachoth*), chapters, and paragraphs. It would lead us too far to enumerate here the names of the books and to deal with each of them separately. Suffice it to say that the grouping of the laws under fourteen headings was a great progress. The order of the treatises of the Talmud is abandoned, and a new order introduced. And so

we find laws that are dealt with in the Talmud in the same treatise treated by Maimonides in different books. The first two books, *Book of Knowledge* and *Book of Love*, on the knowledge and love of God, which deal with the ethical and religious foundations of Judaism, serve as an introduction to the rest of the work. The other twelve books may be divided into three groups. One group deals with the ceremonial and ritual law; one with prescriptions no longer in force; and one with rabbinical jurisprudence. The style is short and lucid. He gives no sources. Now and then he gives general definitions and definitions of his terminology. He made use of the whole literature, Babylonian and Palestinian, but mentioned no authority. It must also be remarked that Maimonides wrote this great work in the Hebrew of the Mishnah, not in the Aramaic of the Talmud, so that all should be able to read it. A word may be said about Maimonides' principle of dividing the whole material into fourteen books, as this is a most important innovation. It seems to me that it arose in this way. The Mishnah was divided into six orders. Maimonides took over this division and made some sub-divisions and added one or two books. So we find in the *Mishneh Torah*, *Zera'im* in *Sefer Zera'im* (vii), *Nashim* in *Sefer Nashim* (iv), *Nezikin* in *Sefer Nezikin* (xi), *Taharoth* in *Sefer Taharoth* (x). *Mo'ed* Maimonides calls *Sefer Hazzemannim*, because it deals not only with the Sabbath and Feast-days, but also with the Fast-days. His desire for precision made him alter the title. *Kadashim* he split up into three books: *Sefer Korbanoth*, *Sefer 'Abodah*, and *Sefer Kedushah*, because he could not treat the *Mizwoth* that are still in vogue and those that depend on the existence of the Temple in

Jerusalem in the same book. Then he had to distinguish between the Temple sacrifices and individual sacrifices. For the same and similar reasons he split up *Nezikin* into four books, *S. Nezikin, S. Kinyan, S. Mishpatim,* and *S. Shofetim ;* and *Nashim* into *S. Nashim* and *S. Haphla'ah.* He also treated many laws under different headings than the Mishnah. So he treated part of the laws which are dealt with in the Mishnah in the order of *Nashim* in the book of *Kedushah,* a very fine alteration indeed. The order of the *Mishneh Torah* would, compared with that of the Mishnah, therefore, be this : *Mo'ed=Zemanim ; Nashim=Nashim, Haphla'ah,* and part of *Kedushah ; Kadashim*=part of *Kedushah, 'Abodah* and *Korbanoth ; Zera'im= Zera'im ; Taharoth=Taharoth ; Nezikin=Nezikin, Kinyan, Mishpatim, Shofetim.* The first two books deal with subjects that do not take up much room in the Mishnah, and are scattered here and there. So Maimonides could not see why the laws contained in *Berachoth* should be treated under *Zera'im* (in the Mishnah *Berachoth* is a part of *Zera'im*) and he put them under a different heading. He therefore gave the first two groups of the *Mishneh Torah* new titles. In this way, I think, the principle of division and naming of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* is explained. One might, therefore, say that, on the whole, he followed the principle of division of the Mishnah, of course with alterations, necessitated by his new method of classification of the laws.

Thus a new code, a new 'Oral Law,' was created for the use of every man. All other books could be dispensed with except the Torah. But this was not to be. Maimonides soared too high. His *Mishneh Torah* did not look like a collection of laws that

existed before, but like a book of laws made by one man. No source was given, no authority mentioned. Verification was therefore not easy. Maimonides even sometimes deviated from the Talmudic decision, and did not say why. It did not encourage study and free research, and the Jew loves study and independent investigation. After suffering many attacks from a great number of scholars, he became an authority of the first importance on ritual decisions. But his book did not become the people's code, *the* code. One may say, in short, it became a 'strong hand,' that was felt and had to be reckoned with by every future authority. But it did not become a 'second Torah.' The study of the 'Oral Law' and the whole Rabbinical literature was as necessary as before, and was continued. The *Mishneh Torah*, on the other hand, on account of its shortness, became itself the object of many commentaries. A great stride was made in codification. But it was not the book the people longed for. In a sense, the *Halachoth Pesukoth* and the *Halachoth Gedoloth* were more practical than the *Mishneh Torah*. Maimonides emancipated himself from the order of the Talmud, but his order was not sufficiently clear, and the decisions could not be found easily. And then it contained all the laws that are of no practical value. Maimonides' *Jad Hachazakah* could therefore not be accepted as the final codification of the halachic laws. The demand for a clear and condensed manual still existed. And the demand was to be fulfilled. But not so soon. For the time being the *Mishneh Torah* gave work (by way of attacking and defending Maimonides) to the scholars. Then some other conditions had to be fulfilled before the new Code was going to be written. And to look for these

conditions we must cross the straits of Gibraltar, pass the border of the Pyrenees, and pitch, for a while, our tent in more northern countries, in France and Germany.

For centuries Jewish communities had existed in France and Germany. At the beginning of the second millennium we find there well-known Talmud schools (as the schools in Mainz, Worms, and Speyer). At that time (1040–1105) lived the greatest commentator on the Talmud, Rashi. Rashi (R. Solomon b. Isaac) was born in Troyes (Champagne) and studied in the famous schools of Mainz and Worms, and then returned to Troyes. He was the greatest Talmudical authority of his time. He did not write any compendium of laws. But innumerable laws and decisions are contained in his commentary and his responsa. From all parts of France and Germany questions were addressed to him. It is also probable that collections of laws were made by his pupils (as the Machsor Vitri shows, by his pupil R. Simchah). But for Rashi and his school the main thing was the explanation and interpretation of the Talmud. It was a new way of explanation. The explanation of the Geonim, for instance, was an elucidation of the opinion expressed in the Talmud. Rashi also explained the grounds of the view held by this or that Tanna or Amora, and by comparing the views of the different Tannaim or Amoraim expressed in different places found room for manifold questions and answers. When Rashi explained one passage in the Talmud, he had in mind the whole of the Talmud. In this way Rashi paved the way for the Tosaphists, who existed in France and Germany for over two hundred years. The Tosaphists in a dialectical way of arguing wrote glosses to the Talmud, and thus

created new norms. They gave new life to the Talmud. The Talmud was, as it were, enlarged by the Tosaphists. This naturally gave rise to new discussions, and consequently to new decisions in many cases. And the time of the Tosaphists was very fruitful in responsa and in compendia dealing with several branches of the Halachah. But a new code could not be written yet. New material was continually added. The new fruit had to be gathered in. And so many partial compendia were written. One of the first compendia was written by R. Eliezer ben Nathan, of Mainz (*Raban*), who flourished in the first half of the twelfth century and was the great-grandfather of the 'Rosh.' He called his work *Eben Ha'ezer*. Another important compendium is that of R. Isaac b. Abba Mari. He was born in Provence about 1122, and was a pupil of R. Tam. His compendium was called *Ittur* or *Ittur Soferim*, and contained most of the (1) civil, (2) dietary, and (3) feast and fast laws. The influence of the Tosaphist school is much to be felt in this work. The influence of the Tosaphist school is also felt in the *Sefer Hatterumah*, by R. Baruch b. Isaac, a pupil of R. Isaac b. Samuel. It deals with a certain number of dietary and marriage laws, Sabbath and some other laws. Whole passages from the Tosaphoth are to be found in the *Sefer Hatterumah*. A pupil of this R. Baruch was R. Moses of Coucy. He lived in the thirteenth century, and wrote about 1250 a great work called *Sefer Hammizwoth Haggadol*, or shortened *S'mag*. In this work the African-Spanish and Franco-German schools meet. His model was Maimonides, but he also made use of the Tosaphoth. It is divided into two parts: positive and negative precepts. The biblical law comes first, and then

the deductions found in the Talmud and the views of the Geonim, Alfasi, Maimonides, Rashi, and the Tosaphists are recorded. This work already leads to a new period. A similar work to the *S'mag* was the *S'mak* or *Sefer Hammizwoth Hakkazer*, also called *'Ammudé Haggolah*, written in 1280 by R. Isaac b. Joseph of Corbeil. It is in fact an abridgment of the *S'mag*. It is divided into seven parts according to the seven days of the week, so that the whole book might be read through once a week. The *S'mak* was very popular on account of its religious tone. One sentence from the preface of the *S'mak* may be worth quoting: (he undertook to write this book) " because through the sins the Torah is being forgotten, and I am afraid that even the Rabbis do not know well the explanation of the laws which are incumbent upon us." Another compendium which is based on the work of the Tosaphists is the *Sefer Hammanhig*, written at Toledo at the beginning of the thirteenth century by R. Abraham ben Nathan of Lunel, who had come from Provence to Spain. The *Rokeach*, by the Kabbalist, R. Eleazar b. Jehudah, of Worms (1160–1230 ?), also deserves mention. Another compiler of laws of this school was R. Perez b. Elijah, of Corbeil, whose compendium was only recently discovered. He was a pupil of R. Jechiel, of Paris. With the work of the Tosaphists a great change came about in the treatment of the Talmud and the entire halachic material. The German school was entirely dominated by the North French school. But Spain, too, could not withstand the effect of French teaching. More than one hundred years after the *Mishneh Torah* scarcely any work of codification appeared in Spain. The *Mishneh Torah* was the guide for legal practice, in spite of much opposi-

tion. But during this time the new teachings from the North penetrated into Spain and gained a hold over the leading authorities. Perhaps, despite their will, they had to pay regard to the new creations of the school of Rashi and the Tosaphists. Creations can never be put aside. They claim the right that every life-product claims : to be reckoned with. And so the Spanish authorities had to reckon with the results of the Northern dialectics. A return to the time of Alfasi and Maimonides was impossible. And any compendium written after the time of the Tosaphists could not be a second *Halachoth of R. Isaac Alfasi*, or a second *Mishneh Torah*. It had to be something different. So we find already in the works of the great Spanish Talmudist of the thirteenth century, R. Moses b. Nachman, the combination of the Spanish and French methods. But we see it still more in the great halachic work of his pupil, R. Solomon ben Adret, of Barcelona (1235–1310). His *Torath Habbajith*, which was to cover the entire field of the Halachah, deals, so far as it exists, with the dietary, purification, and Sabbath laws. It is a masterly work, unique in its way as the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides. And still it is different, in fact it is a counterpart of the *Mishneh Torah*. He begins with the source and then gives the different opinions with their proofs, in such a way that the rule takes shape before the reader. He gives also the results of the studies of his teachers. The division of the work into 'batim' and 'she'arim' is similar to the division of the compendia of R. Hai Gaon. But it is only an external similarity. Internally it was such a work as could be written only at the end of the thirteenth century. A similar work to the *Torath Habbajith* was the *Sefer Hatterumoth*, by

R. Samuel ben Isaac Hassardi (1230–1300), similar in its way of treatment. But it deals with a different branch of the Halachah. It is a detailed civil code and is a model of lucidity of presentation and depth of thought. It became the basis of the code of civil law of R. Jacob b. Asher, fourth part of the *Tur*. In Germany, too, halachic compendia were written in the thirteenth century. An important work was the *Or Zarua'* by R. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, who learned at the schools of Germany and France. It is a ritual code and commentary at the same time. It exercised a great influence on the religious practice of the German-Polish Jews.

A pupil of R. Isaac was R. Meir, of Rothenburg (1215–93). He studied in the French and German schools, and was the greatest Talmudical authority of his age. He also devoted himself to codification, but very little of this part of his work has been preserved. But the future codification was greatly influenced by his school, which produced the two great scholars, R. Asher b. Jechiel and R. Mordecai b. Hillel. The latter collected the halachic material and attached it to Alfasi's Halachoth. He quotes about three hundred and fifty authorities, whose works and written or verbal communications form the substance of his book. The results of the Tosaphist schools are summed up in the *Mordecai*. He became a great authority among the German Jews. The former, who was the most prominent pupil of R. Meir of Rothenburg, was destined for a greater work. R. Asher b. Jechiel (1250–1327) felt that all the material that had accumulated during the last two centuries, especially since the completion of the *Mishneh Torah*, had to be put together and judged. The decisions resulting from the work of the Tosaphists, affecting everyday Jewish

life, had to be collected. But the new work was done by way of explaining the Talmud. What was therefore necessary was a new abstract of the Talmudic laws, a new Alfasi. But it had to be more than Alfasi's work. It had to take account of the work done since the time of Alfasi. The views of Maimonides and other codifiers, and the opinions of the Tosaphists, had to be recorded. His work is therefore a summary of the practical laws of the Talmud, and the decisions of all authorities that lived before him. Within a very short time it superseded the work of Alfasi. And as Alfasi paved the way for a new code, that of Maimonides, so did the work of the 'Rosh' invite the writing of a new code. The Talmud was viewed in the light of the new interpretations. The halachic material thereby affected was again reviewed. Now a new code of the entire halachic material was necessary, but not a theoretical code. A practical code was required. The compendia and the responsa of the last two centuries in France and Germany dealt with the laws that were kept in the diaspora. Not without reason did the author of the *S'mak* call his code '*Ammudé Haggolah*, 'The Pillars of the Diaspora.' But what was wanted now was one pillar of the diaspora, one to whom all could turn for advice. R. Asher b. Jechiel prepared the ground for this, and he who erected the building was one of the sons of R. Asher. The same son, who compiled a list of the decisions found in R. Asher's work, wrote the new code. Before we speak of the great work of R. Jacob b. Asher, mention may be made of a compendium of the civil law, called *Sefer Mesharim* (1334), and a work on most of the practical Halachoth, by R. Jerucham ben Meshullam, of Provence, a pupil of the 'Rosh.' His halachic

work has the interesting title of *Sefer Tol'doth Adam we-Chava*, 'Book of the Generations of Adam and Eve,' and is divided into two parts. The first part contains all the laws which may apply before one marries, and the second part all the laws that become applicable at and after one's marriage. R. Jerucham mainly wanted to remedy the defects of the *Mishneh Torah* with its lack of sources. He quotes all the authorities before him, especially his teacher, R. Asher. The book of R. Jerucham may be signalised as an attempt at new codification. But it failed. The new code was the work of R. Jacob b. Asher. Of no little influence on the method of R. Asher and his son, R. Jacob, may have been the fact that, having been trained in the German schools, they migrated to Spain. They thus combined the dialectics and systematics. R. Jacob b. Asher (1280–1340) divided his code into four parts, which he called *Turim*, 'rows.' In the first part, which he called *Orach Chajim*, 'the path of life,' he deals with all the laws that find application during every day and the laws concerning Sabbath, Feast, and Fast days. One may say that the *Orach Chajim* of R. Jacob contains what the first three books of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* contain, only in a more practical arrangement. The second part, which he called *Joreh De'ah*, 'it teaches knowledge,' contains all the dietary and other ritual laws. One may say that *Joreh De'ah* is identical with part of book 5, with book 6, and book 10 of *Mishneh Torah*. The third part, which he called *Eben Ha'ezer*, 'the Stone of Help,' deals with all marriage (and divorce) laws. It is identical with book 4 and part of book 5 of *Mishneh Torah*. The fourth part, which he called *Choshen Mishpat*, 'the shield of judgment,' deals with all the civil

law. It is almost identical with books 11, 12, and 13 of *Mishneh Torah*. Books 7, 8, 9, and 14 are not represented in the *Turim*, because they deal with laws which cannot be applied in the Diaspora. Following Maimonides, R. Jacob does not give sources or proofs for the laws. But he generally quotes post-Talmudic authorities.

From the way in which he contrasts dissenting opinions, one can gather the opinion of R. Jacob. Each book is divided into different Halachoth, and each Halachah into different *simanim*, sections. Many Halachoth—divisions—were created by R. Jacob. *Thus the first practical code for the use of every Jew was produced.* But we cannot yet leave R. Jacob ben Asher. A few words must be said about the arrangement of his work, its divisions and their names. I am afraid that I cannot solve the problems connected therewith. But I should like to point out these problems. The main problems are: (1) How did R. Jacob come to divide the book into four parts? (2) According to what principle did he give each part its name? (3) Why did he call them *Turim?* The four parts of the *Shulchan 'Aruch*, and their names, are now so familiar to us that we are inclined to forget that it is easier to use these divisions and names than to invent them. Were they invented by R. Jacob, or did he take them, wholly or partially, from his predecessors? And who were his predecessors? He certainly learnt a great deal from the *Mishneh Torah*. But he did not take the divisions and names from the *Mishneh Torah*. Neither could he have borrowed them from the *Torath Habbajith* of R. Solomon b. Adret, although he may no doubt have learnt a great deal from this masterly book. I believe that one of the precursors of R. Jacob in the division

of the material was R. Jehudah b. Barzillai, whom we mentioned above. The three parts of his code, of which we know, contained the laws which are treated in *Choshen Mishpat*, *Orach Chajim*, and *Eben Ha'ezer*. R. Jehudah called them *Sefer Ha'ittim* (*Book of Times*), *Seder Nashim* (*Order of Women*), and *Sefer Haddinim* (*Book of Laws*) (cf. book 3, book 4, and book 13 of *Mishneh Torah*). There must have existed a fourth part. Here we would have the four parts of the code of R. Jacob. Another work which may have influenced R. Jacob is the *Orchoth Chajim*, a compilation of Talmudic laws and decisions by R. Aaron Haccohen of Lunel or Narbonne, who was a contemporary of the author of the *Turim*. The first part of the *Orchoth Chajim* deals with the laws with which R. Jacob's *Orach Chajim* deals. The second part, edited seven years ago by the *M'kize Nirdamim*, deals with laws belonging to *Joreh De'ah*, *Orach Chajim*, and *Eben Ha'ezer*. The divisions and the titles are very similar to those of the *Tur*. The title *Orchoth Chajim* may have influenced R. Jacob in calling the first part of his code *Orach Chajim*. R. Eliezer b. Nathan's book *Eben Ha'ezer* (mentioned above), on the other hand, has scarcely anything to do with the title *Eben Ha'ezer* for the third part of the *Tur*, that title being suggested by the author's name and being given to the whole compendium. But R. Jehudah b. Barzillai and, perhaps, also R. Aaron Haccohen seem to show us that the division of the material and the naming may have been borrowed by R. Jacob from some of his predecessors. Another compendium which may have influenced the *Tur* in the division is the *Ittur* of R. Isaac b. Abba Mari. What guided R. Jacob in giving (or in selecting from previous titles) the names to the

four parts may have been this: the laws contained in the first part must be followed by every Jew on his path of life. Every day, every Sabbath, every festival, every fast day brings its laws with it. The part, therefore, dealing with all those laws that must come into application as time passes by, is called 'the path of life.' Those laws which do not necessarily occur in the life of man, but are most likely to occur, fall into several parts. The most frequent of these laws are the dietary and other ritual laws. Here questions may occur in abundance, and it is knowledge, a clear answer, that is required, that may be required every day. A book giving these answers, therefore, teaches knowledge. The exact title *Joreh De'ah* was then certainly suggested by Isaiah xxviii. 9. The adoption of the title *Eben Ha'ezer* for the part dealing with marriage-laws was no doubt suggested by Genesis ii. 18, 20. The title of *Choshen Mishpat* for the part dealing with judgments, with the civil law, was suggested by Exodus xxviii. 15. Now it seems to me that through the last title R. Jacob was led to call the four parts of his book *Four Turim*. The *Choshen Mishpat* of the High Priest had four rows of stones (Ex. xxviii. 17). Once R. Jacob had adopted this title for one part of his code, the similarity of the four parts of his work and the four rows of the *Choshen Mishpat* in the Pentateuch struck him, and he called the four parts of his code *Four Turim*. Whether the *Eben* in *Eben Ha'ezer* came about through the same association of ideas (Ex. xxviii. 17) it is difficult to say. The last two titles are therefore taken from the Pentateuch, and the second (*Joreh De'ah*) from Isaiah. The first is the outcome of a general observation of the nature of the laws of that part. This is

an attempt to explain the external arrangement and naming of the Code. Later the Code was called in short the *Tur*. *And the Tur soon became the standard Code of Laws in the Jewish Diaspora, and it is practically our code to-day.* The long-felt demand was supplied, and the man who supplied this demand must be reckoned among the greatest men the Diaspora has produced. It is strange that Graetz was not able to do justice to the author of the *Tur* (*v.* Graetz, *Gesch. d. Juden*, vol. 7, 2nd ed., pp. 327–9). It would lead me too far to show how the comparison that Graetz makes between Maimonides and the *Tur* is based on a misconception of the *Tur*, and how, therefore, his remarks about the *Tur* become pointless. A truer appreciation of the *Tur* is to be found in the *Monatsschrift für Gesch. d. Wiss. d. Jud.*, vol. 13, p. 254 (in an excellent essay by Dr. Buchholz), of which Z. Frankel fully approves (*v.* note 1, *ibid.*). He there regrets the judgment of Graetz on the *Tur*. *The Tur is in fact the first and last practical code of laws.*

The collection of groups of laws did not, however, cease. Some collections were made simultaneously with the work of R. Jacob. Some collections were made after him, partly for the sake of greater convenience, partly because the *Tur* left in many cases room for doubts as to the final decision. The latter cause was mainly responsible for a good number of new compendia. Two hundred years passed away since the completion of the *Tur*, and the material again increased greatly. New questions arose, partly through altered conditions of life, which required new answers, and many old answers seemed doubtful. Differences of opinion also arose among the Ashkenazic and Sephardic

Jews as to many laws and customs. And in course of time a new sifting of the material and a new summing-up became necessary. The most important compendia during the two centuries were the *Aguddah* by R. Alexander Suslin, of Frankfort (middle of the fourteenth century), *Sha'arê Dura* by his contemporary R. Isaac Düren (both on dietary laws), the *Kolbo* (most probably an abridgment of the *Orchoth Chajim*), the *Agur* written in Pavia about 1480 by R. Jacob b. Jehudah Landau (based on the *Tur*). Mention may also be made of *Pirké Halachoth*, by R. Isaiah b. Elijah di Trani (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). It was the first ritual compendium produced in Italy. Other Italian compendia are *Ears of Gleaning*, by R. Zedekiah b. Abraham Anaw (in Rome, in the fourteenth century), *Tanya* on liturgy, most probably also in the fourteenth century, and *Sefer Hattadir* by R. Moses b. Jekuthiel de Rossi (end of fourteenth century).

The man who took upon himself the new sifting of the material and the new summing-up was born almost one and a half centuries after the death of the author of the *Tur*, and died eighty-seven years later. It was R. Joseph b. Ephraim Caro. He was born in the Pyrenean Peninsula only four years before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and thus did not remain there very long. When he was at the age of four the whole family migrated to Nicopolis in European Turkey, where Caro lived for some time. About 1520 he settled in Adrianople. About twelve years later he emigrated to Palestine and settled at Safed, where he lived the remaining forty years of his life. Interesting details about the life of Caro are to be found in Schechter's excellent essay, "Safed in the Sixteenth Century," in his

Studies in Judaism (second series). Caro began his work in Adrianople and finished it in Safed. But how was this work to be done? The *Tur* was almost perfect as a Code. A new Code was unnecessary. Caro therefore resolved to do his work in the form of a commentary on the *Tur*. And this he did. There he led back every law to its origin, examined the views of all the authorities quoted in the *Tur* and of those who lived after the *Tur*, weighed all the arguments produced, and then gave a final decision. So Caro settled many questions which the *Tur* left undecided. One of the rules which he established for himself for giving a final decision was this: he accepted the opinion held by any two of the three authorities, Alfasi, Maimonides, and R. Asher, the father of the *Tur*. All the material existing, Talmudic and Rabbinic, was used by Caro for his work. And so the *Beth Joseph* came into being. It took him over twenty years to complete that great work. But in spite of all its greatness the *Beth Joseph* remained only a commentary. To look up the law, the decision in the *Beth Joseph* would have been too inconvenient. Caro, therefore, in his old age, made what we may call a new edition of the *Tur*, to which he added the results of his work *Beth Joseph*. The *Shulchan 'Aruch* has the same arrangement as the *Tur*. Only every *siman* is sub-divided into small Halachoth, called 'branches' (after the example of the *Mishneh Torah*). And every *siman* has also a heading stating its contents. The *Shulchan 'Aruch* is practically nothing more than a reproduction of the *Tur*, with an extract of the final results of the long discussions in the *Beth Joseph*. For this reason, too, Caro gave it the unassuming title of *Shulchan 'Aruch*, 'the prepared table.' He did not provide

the food. The food was there before he came. He only made the food more accessible, and, we may say, added some new elements to it which made it more tasty. He merely decked the table. And as we all like a decked table, the prepared, the decked table, the *Shulchan 'Aruch* became *the* code of the Jews. But R. Joseph Caro is not a codifier in the truest sense of the word. He sifted, arranged, and improved, but did not produce an original code. The *Shulchan 'Aruch* is R. Jacob's Code with certain modifications. It is, by the way, worthy of note that all the great codifiers, in the stricter and less strict sense, either were born or lived in Spain. Alfasi lived near Spain and spent the last years of his life in Spain. Maimonides was born and lived for some time in Spain. The 'Rosh' wrote his great work in Spain. His son, R. Jacob, composed the *Tur* in Spain, and R. Joseph Caro was born in the Pyrenean Peninsula. The Spanish love of system may have had a great deal to do with their work of codification.

But the fact that all these codifiers were, let me say, Sephardim, or lived among Sephardim, had a far-reaching effect. The Ashkenazic Jews felt that not sufficient regard was paid to their authorities. This feeling became very strong in the sixteenth century, when the learning among the German and Polish Jews largely increased, and they had many distinguished Talmudists. This feeling found expression soon after the publication of the *Beth Joseph* and *Shulchan 'Aruch*. A great opposition against the predominant Sephardic views in the latter works arose, especially in Poland. And one of the leading scholars of that time, R. Moses Isserles, of Cracow, at once wrote a book against

the *Beth Joseph*, in which he criticised Caro's work and put the Ashkenazic views and customs against the Sephardic opinions, with the result that he arrived at more strict decisions. An extract of the glosses is embodied in his notes, which now form a part of the *Shulchan 'Aruch*. The *Shulchan 'Aruch* was attacked by many scholars, the most important of whom are R. Mordecai Jaffe, the author of the *L'bushim*, and R. Joel Sirkes, the author of the *Bajith Chadash*. But all the attacks were in vain. About the middle of the seventeenth century the authority of the *Shulchan 'Aruch* was established. *It became the standard code of Judaism.*

So, about one thousand years after the completion of the Talmud, the halachic material received its final code-form. No other code has been written since then. No new code was necessary. In many cases new views were put forth and accepted. But the books in which they were laid down took the form either of a commentary or of a supplementary contribution to halachic research. The two most important commentators on the *Shulchan 'Aruch* are R. David b. Samuel and R. Sabbathai b. Meir. Their views are very important for the fixation of the Halachah. Many halachic books were written in the last three centuries by Polish and Russian Talmudists. But they deal only with certain branches of the Halachah, or attempt to modify the decision in certain instances on the ground of their new investigations in the Talmud and Rishonim, or try to find answers to questions that arise from the changed conditions of life. *But the code remains the Tur-Shulchan 'Aruch.* The work of halachic research is still going on. Hundreds of rabbis in or from Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Palestine, who make the study of the Talmud and

the rabbinic literature their life-work, are adding daily new material to the *Shulchan 'Aruch*. New questions arise and answers have to be found. The responsa literature, which has scarcely been interrupted since the time of the Geonim, has enormously increased in the last one hundred years, a fact that shows that halachic research is still being done. Of the late productions I will only mention the works of the late Kovno Rabbi (R. Isaac Elchanan Spector), and the important compendium, *S'dê Chemed*, by the late H. H. Medini, which contains many responsa. The works of R. Ab. Danziger, *Chajé Adam* and *Chachmath Adam*, of the beginning of the last century, in which an attempt to codify the new material is made, show that a new code is impossible. They are, in fact, unimportant manuals.

We are still working, still investigating in the field of Halachah. But we have no new codes and no new codifiers. All we do is—we carry on the work of preservation; all we can do is—preserve. A millennium passed by before our forefathers penetrated into the meaning of the spiritual creations of our nation. More than four hundred years have passed away since the completion of that millennium, and we still feel that all we can do is—preserve, preserve the past creations of our race, preserve the love and admiration felt by our ancestors for these creations through all these trying centuries, preserve the spirit that animated our great men and that speaks to us from every page of their books, preserve the great learning that was acquired by our great codifiers and is laid down in their great codes, preserve through the medium of these works the soul of our nation. Preserve!

But the question necessarily comes to our lips:

when shall we create, when shall we produce again, when shall we live, when will our heart beat again and our soul regain its divine glory ? When shall we be a living creative nation again ? When shall we have again men in whose actions we feel the working of God, and in whose words we find the most perfect combination of unrivalled beauty and fathomless thought ? When we shall have a world of our own. When will that be ? We have only to desire that it should be. Until then, until the spirit of God comes over us again, we have to continue to preserve and persevere. And how to do this we can best learn from our Codes and Codifiers.

V

ARISTOTLE AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH THOUGHT

By Dr. A. WOLF.

THE very title of this paper may seem strange to some. For the outside world seems to be mostly impressed by the tribalism of the Jews—their exclusiveness, their shrinking from alien influences as so many dangers likely to disintegrate their corporate existence. But that is only one side of the picture. There is another. Jewish observers, strange to say, are mostly impressed by the marked tendency of the Jewish people to mix with other peoples, and to learn the ways of the world. Incompatible as these impressions seem to be, they are not altogether wrong. From earliest times these opposite tendencies—the centripetal and the centrifugal—may be observed side by side in the history of the Jews. On the one side we find Jews whose sense of loyalty to the mission of Israel inclines them to shun all contact with alien civilisations as so many dangers to their true allegiance. On the other side there are Jews in whose eyes one of the most remarkable aspects of Jewish history consists in this, that Jews have always been present at the principal centres whence have emanated the grand influences that have shaped the world's complex civilisation,

and have thus been able to acquire the highest products of human genius at all times and in all places.

Philosophy constitutes one of these acquisitions. It was not indigenous in Palestine. To the Jews philosophy is exotic, it is one of the results of the centrifugal, assimilative tendency. The genius of Judea was essentially religious. Now, in the first place, the more satisfying a religion is to its adherents, the less will they feel the need of an independent, philosophic solution of the riddle of existence. The very merits of the Jewish religion thus stood in the way of the development of a Jewish philosophy. And in the second place religion and philosophy, to judge by their actual history, do not seem to go together very well. Even Socrates deprecated the study of natural philosophy as an unbecoming attempt to pry into the secrets of the gods, and the Athenians, taking him at his word, despatched him from earth to heaven, because he had brought philosophy down from heaven to earth. Still, it is unwise to rely on a priori reasoning alone. Though the native hue of Jewish thought was essentially religious, philosophy, too, had its Jewish votaries as soon as the Jews came in contact with the Greeks. Ancient Hebrew literature already bears traces of the influence of Greek philosophy, and in neo-Platonism we see a striking result of the nearer contact between Jews and Greeks at Alexandria. It is difficult to say what strides philosophy might have made among the Jews in the centuries immediately following, if circumstances had been favourable. But the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews, and the subsequent history of the "tribes of wandering

foot and weary breast," were scarcely calculated to foster the cultivation of philosophy. They tended, rather, to produce an aversion to everything foreign, and to accentuate the centripetal tendency of the Jewish people. Not until the decline of the Byzantine empire, and the subsequent improvement of the Jewish lot under Moslem rule, did the Jews enjoy that measure of freedom and leisure indispensable to the cultivation of philosophy.

It was the Arabian culture of Islam that first stimulated the Jews, in the tenth century, to revive their interest in science and philosophy. Not content with the mere conquest of countries, Islam also endeavoured to master the culture of its conquests, devoting special attention to the Greek philosophers, whose writings were translated into Arabic either direct from the Greek originals, or from the Syriac renderings of the Nestorians. And the Jews, whether in Bagdad or in Cairo, in Cordova or Toledo, were no whit behind their Moslem neighbours in assimilating eagerly the accessible remains of Greek philosophy and science. Numerous as were the Mohammedan schools and sects produced by this introduction of Greek thought, every one of them was reflected in contemporary Jewish thought. Traditionalism and anti-traditionalism, rationalism and dogmatism and mysticism, fatalism and voluntarism, Platonism and Aristotelianism—all these and other tendencies of Moslem thought had their Jewish counterparts, and almost every Moslem philosopher of repute had his Jewish double. It would be hasty to conclude that this parallelism of Jewish and Moslem thought was the result of sheer imitation. Much of it was probably due to Jewish susceptibility to the same

influences that were felt by their neighbours. For instance, Maimonides is often described as the Jewish Averroes, on account of the close resemblance which his philosophy bears to that of the leading Moslem Aristotelian; yet it seems morally certain that Maimonides had not read Averroes before the completion of his *Guide of the Perplexed.*

The extent to which Jews came under the influence of Arabic culture is perhaps best shown by the fact that Saadiah (892–942) found it necessary to translate the Bible into Arabic. The translation of the Hebrew Bible into the vernacular by a Jew for Jews is full of significance. Three of the most important turning-points in the history of Jewish thought are marked by such translations. The first was the Greek translation known as the Septuagint, associated with the Hellenic influences at work among the Jews of Alexandria; the third, in order of time, was the German translation by Moses Mendelssohn, marking the influences of the German enlightenment; the second, in the order of time, was Saadiah's Arabic translation. This translation, I repeat, was significant. On the one hand, it proves the existence of a considerable number of Jews to whom Arabic was more familiar than Hebrew. And on the other hand, the translation itself actually became a potent instrument for the further spread of Arabic culture among the Jews. This latter aspect may be illustrated in a somewhat amusing manner, by means of a sentence occurring in a Jewish will of the twelfth century. It was customary in those days to incorporate as much good advice as possible in one's last will and testament. And among the counsels given by the father to the son,

in this particular will, is that he should read the Bible lesson in Arabic so as to enrich his Arabic vocabulary! It may be stated at once that nearly the whole philosophical literature of the Jews of the Middle Ages was written in Arabic.

A few extracts from contemporary Jewish literature may help to make clear the Jewish love of learning in the period under review. In a didactic poem of the eleventh century, by the Gaon Hai, the following advice is urged: Make every effort to buy books for your children, and provide them with a teacher from their youth; pay the teacher well, what you give him you give your children; know that your happiness is enriched through your children, and that their welfare is yours; . . . study philosophy, but if it passes your understanding, then study, at least, mathematics and medicine. In the testament already referred to, the following passages occur: "I have procured for you many books" (writes the father to the son), "so that you need borrow none. Most students, as you see, go about looking for books, and cannot get them. But you, D. G., can lend to others, and need not borrow from anybody. Of most books you have even two or three copies. I have provided you, too, with books on all the sciences. . . . I have also made wearisome journeys to distant lands, and brought for you a teacher of the secular sciences, counting neither the costs nor the dangers of the journey. . . . You have also seen how distinguished scholars have taken the trouble to come from distant lands for the sake of my intercourse and instruction, and to see my library. . . . Make your books your companions, let your bookcases and bookshelves be your gardens and pleasure-grounds. Pluck the fruit that grows therein; gather the

roses, the spices, and the myrrh. If your soul be satiate and weary, change from garden to garden, from furrow to furrow, from sight to sight. Then will your soul renew itself, and your mind be satisfied with delight." Again, the courses of study prescribed and outlined in various contemporary documents are truly encyclopaedic. No doubt, these represent exceptional cases. Maimonides, writing from Cairo in the twelfth century, gives a somewhat sombre picture of the state of learning among the Jews in the East. But his standard must have been too exacting. The average Jew of those days probably had a better education than the average Christian or Moslem. For every Jew could read and write. And that is more than can be said of the average non-Jew of that period. At all events, in Spain and in Italy the standard of culture among the Jews was high. The school-curriculum was very comprehensive, including mathematics, physics, medicine, astronomy, logic, and metaphysics—and that without regard to the ultimate intentions of the students. Those were still the happy days when students could take all knowledge for their province. Merchants and financiers, doctors and rabbis went through the same course of literary, scientific, and philosophic instruction.

Some may remember the tribute which Lecky paid to medieval Jewish culture. "While those around them were grovelling in the darkness of besotted ignorance; while juggling miracles and lying relics were the themes on which all Europe was expatiating; while the intellect of Christendom, enthralled by countless superstitions, had sunk into a deadly torpor, in which all love of inquiry and all search for truth were abandoned, the Jews

were still pursuing the path of knowledge, amassing learning, and stimulating progress with the same unflinching constancy that they manifested in their faith. They were the most skilful physicians, the ablest financiers, and among the most profound philosophers; while they were only second to the Moors in the cultivation of natural science." Apropos of this last remark, it may be pointed out that the new astronomical tables completed in 1252, under the patronage of King Alfonso X of Castille, were prepared under the direction of two Jews. They were held in high repute, and for three hundred years they were considered to be the best planetary tables.

The school-curriculum in physics, logic, and metaphysics consisted mainly in the study of Arabic adaptations of the writings of Aristotle, coloured or modified in various ways by neo-Platonic doctrines. Aristotelianism and neo-Platonism were the dominant philosophic influences of the time, though neo-Pythagoreanism, too, played some rôle among the Kabbalists. At the beginning of our period, that is, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, Aristotelianism and Platonism enjoyed about equal favour. In the course of the twelfth century Aristotelianism steadily outstripped its rival, enjoyed almost undisputed supremacy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and only declined with the general decline of philosophy in the century immediately following—when the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal, and had other things to think about. Israeli (? 850–950), the author of a treatise *On the Elements*, and of various medical books; Saadiah (892–942), the author of *Faith and Philosophy;* and Bachya Ibn Pakuda (? 1000–1050), the author of a *Guide*

to the Duties of the Heart, are the chief Jewish representatives of the first period of medieval Aristotelianism. Ibn Daud (1110–80), author of *The Sublime Faith*, represents the second period —that of the growing preference for Aristotle. Maimonides (1135–1204), the codifier of traditional Judaism, and author of the *Guide of the Perplexed* and of the *Eight Chapters* (on Ethics), and Gersonides (1288–1344), author of *The Wars of the Lord*, represent the climax of Aristotle's influence on the Jews. Crescas (1340–1410), the author of *The Light of the Lord*, and Albo (1380–1444), the author of a treatise on *First Principles*, represent the decline of Aristotelianism. It is noteworthy that the two most important Hebrew poets of the period show only slight traces of Aristotelian influence. Apparently the poetic temperament is akin to the mystic temperament, and loves the romance of twilight. Gabirol (? 1020–70), also known as Avicebron, the author of *Fons Vitæ* and of *The Improvement of Character*, was the chief Jewish neo-Platonist of the Middle Ages. His *Fons Vitæ* may be said to have reintroduced Greek philosophy into the West, though its Jewish origin was not suspected for several centuries. The other poet, Jehudah Halevi (1085–1140), in his *Kusari*, tried to philosophise against philosophy in general, and against Aristotle in particular. He represents those interesting scholastics, who did not trust human reason, and never tired of adducing reasons why reason should not be trusted. In reality, it was only other people's reason that they distrusted, not their own. However, Aristotelian conceptions are to be found even in Gabirol and Halevi.

The first mention of Aristotle by a medieval

Jewish writer occurs in the so-called *Twenty Chapters* of David Ibn Merwan (*c.* 900). The book deals with the leading ideas of Judaism, but the first chapter is devoted to the Aristotelian Categories. Aristotle is referred to as 'the philosopher'—a mode of designating Aristotle that was very common in medieval Jewish and other literature. Saadiah shows a considerable knowledge of Aristotle, though he does not refer to him by name. Maimonides describes Aristotle as 'the chief of philosophers,' and again as 'the greatest philosopher'; mentions his name scores of times, and makes numerous references to his works. "Aristotle," says Maimonides, "supplanted all his predecessors. The thorough understanding of Aristotle is the highest achievement to which man can attain, with the sole exception of the understanding of the Prophets." Indirect evidence of the high esteem in which Aristotle was held by medieval Jews may be seen in the amusing stories which were current among them. According to one account, Aristotle was a disciple of Simon the Just. Another account makes him a plagiarist of King Solomon. "When Alexander (the Great) went to Jerusalem, he appointed Aristotle as custodian of the books of Solomon. It was from these books that Aristotle derived his philosophy. He translated these books into Greek, and called them by his own name." Yet another story-teller goes one better, and makes Aristotle a Jew by birth, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, and born at Jerusalem! The absurdity of these legends is mitigated somewhat by the fact that the oldest Græco-Jewish literature already contains references to Aristotle's acquaintance with Jews, that medieval Christians and Moslems also

believed in Aristotle's dependence on Hebrew wisdom, while even Greek literature contains various stories about some of the wisest of the Greeks having travelled to the East in order to learn wisdom there. Even those medieval Jews who repudiated his philosophy show a warm appreciation of Aristotle's genius. Jehudah Halevi, for instance, expressed his admiration of Aristotle, although he was opposed to his, and to all philosophy. And here again legend bears witness in its own quaint fashion. It was related, namely, that in his last letter to his pupil, Alexander the Great, Aristotle announced a complete revolution in his opinions. He was dying, he wrote, and before the letter reached its destination he would be no more. Let Alexander destroy all his (Aristotle's) works, and not be misled by false ideas. "If it lay in my power, I would collect all my writings and destroy them, for God has opened my eyes, and I see now that the law of Moses is the only truth." Thus both parties strove to have Aristotle on their side. Those who agreed with his views tried to affiliate him, or his philosophy, or both to Judaism; those who disapproved of his philosophy still tried to procure his support by representing, or rather misrepresenting, him as having recanted his philosophy and embraced Judaism just before his death.

Telling as these direct and indirect compliments certainly are, yet the highest form of flattery is—imitation. And the most convincing proof of the reality of Aristotle's influence on medieval Jewish thought is to be found in the wholesale adoption of Aristotelian ideas by medieval Jewish writers. Now it would not be a very difficult matter to enumerate the fundamental doctrines characteristic

of Aristotelianism, and to trace each of them in the Jewish philosophical literature of the period under consideration. But such detailed treatment would fill a volume. I must confine myself to the very broadest features of the subject.

Aristotelianism represented a certain mental attitude, as well as a body of doctrines; it represented a certain trend of ideas greater, one might almost say, than the ideas themselves. That attitude or tendency may be summed up in a single word—rationalism. Let me explain briefly what I mean by rationalism, for it is used in different senses in different contexts. I mean rationalism as opposed to dogmatism and to mysticism; I do not mean rationalism as opposed to empiricism. Dogmatism denotes a mental attitude in which doctrines are accepted solely on the strength of authority, that is to say, they are accepted not because they have been proved, or seem reasonable in themselves, but simply because they have been prescribed by authority. An extreme form of dogmatism is represented by the scholastic argument that certain dogmas have been revealed, and are therefore true, just because they seem absurd to human reason, which consequently could not have discovered them without supernatural aid. Here the very unreasonableness of a doctrine is made indirectly the ground of its acceptance. Now rationalism is the very opposite attitude. Human reason, it maintains, may not be able to discover everything; but whatever is opposed to it is certainly false. Then, again, rationalism is opposed to mysticism. Mysticism loves the twilight, when in some indescribable way it communes with the invisible Infinite; and so impressed is it by the supreme worth of

this mysterious mode of apprehension that the ordinary modes of sense-perception and thought seem vain, illusive, worthless. In opposition to this mystical attitude, rationalism loves the light of noontide, it insists on the reliableness and worth of our normal waking consciousness, it treats our perception of individual objects as the very starting-point and bedrock of all knowledge. It has faith in human reason, and in the reality of things seen, and of things unseen to which human thought reasons from things seen. The things clearly seen and understood, it maintains, are certainly real, though there are realities which are neither seen nor understood clearly. (It is at this point, one might add, but only at this point, that rationalism may approach mysticism.) From these points of view Aristotle is a rationalist, Plato a mystic. Unfortunately, however, rationalism is also used in an almost opposite sense, namely, as the antithesis to empiricism. In this antithesis, empiricism indicates the attitude of mind which relies on observation or experience for the suggestion and verification of theories, while rationalism denotes the mental attitude which is content to build castles in the air, instead of on the solid ground of experience, and, so far from taking observation as a test of theories, contemns it as concerned with the transitory, illusive, unreal. From this point of view Plato is a rationalist, and Aristotle an empiricist. It should be clear now that in describing Aristotelianism as rationalism I mean rationalism only as contrasted with dogmatism and mysticism—a rationalism which, from another point of view, is also a form of empiricism.

The medieval conflict between Aristotelianism and neo-Platonism was a conflict between ration-

alism, on one side, and extreme dogmatism and mysticism, on the other. The heated controversies between nominalists and realists constituted but one instance of this general warfare. The whole dispute may appear to be much ado about nothing. But that would be to misunderstand the essence of the struggle. The reason why the Church authorities took the side of realism with such fervour was this. According to nominalism, general names, as such, were only names, and denoted no realities other than the individual objects of our experience. Now this doctrine was harmless enough when applied to class-names only. The danger consisted in this. Nominalism seemed to offer an easy transition to the view that the individual objects of experience, and just as they appear in experience, were the only realities, and that the names of all non-perceptible or 'ideal' objects of thought were mere names, no more. If so, why then, the very world and the flesh against which the Church had been fighting for centuries would be set up as the highest realities, nay, as the only realities, while the ideas and ideals which the Church preached and for which she asked millions of men and women to sacrifice the world and the flesh, these ideas and ideals would be regarded as mere names, no more. Here lay the great danger. And that was the reason why the controversy was so heated, and why the Church fought nominalism so bitterly. One ought to appreciate this sense of danger on the part of the Church even if it is believed that the whole attitude was based on a misconception, and that the nominalists were really nearer to the truth than were the realists. The Jews, it is interesting to observe, were thoroughgoing nominalists. Of course, in the Synagogue, as in the

Church, there were not wanting people who smelled danger in Aristotelianism. Aristotelianism, in fact, had to fight its way slowly, and was sometimes opposed with stubbornness and passion. But it prevailed in the end. And this triumph made the Jews, for several centuries, the chief custodians of rationalism in Europe.

Aristotelianism, then, spelled rationalism. It is important to remember this, if we are to understand the real character and significance of the philosophical literature of the medieval Jews. Of the writings that have come down to us only a few deal with philosophical questions in a purely secular spirit. Israeli, Gebirol, and Gersonides are the best-known representatives of those who wrote on philosophy pure and simple. Most of the other Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, or, at all events, most of those whose writings have been preserved, were essentially religious philosophers. They wrote with a motive—though a most honourable motive. What that motive was may be best understood by glancing at the intellectual conditions of their age. A Moslem poet of the tenth century complains that the world is divided into two classes: unintelligent believers and intelligent unbelievers. This complaint is re-echoed by his Jewish contemporary, Saadiah, and recurs time and again in the Jewish literature of the period. Now the motive that inspired most of the medieval Jewish philosophers, from Saadiah onwards, was this: partly to enlighten the eyes of the unintelligent believers, partly, perhaps chiefly, to strengthen the faith of wavering intellectuals, and partly to reclaim the intelligent unbelievers. This triple motive naturally resolved itself into an attempt to harmonise Biblical and

Talmudic doctrines with philosophy, that is, with Aristotelianism, or neo-Platonism, or a blending of the two, according to the several writers' point of view. Now the very need for such efforts to reconcile and to reclaim shows, I think, how widespread philosophic, and especially rationalistic, that is, Aristotelian views were among the rising generation of medieval Jewry. Young rationalists are like young puppy dogs, they love to tear everything to pieces. We hear of Chivi Al Balchi, in the ninth century, attacking the Bible and revelation, and arraying two hundred arguments against them. And Chivi seems to have had a considerable following of ardent disciples who eagerly and openly spread his heresies far and wide. Perhaps these extravagances were not altogether without their use. The so-called Higher Criticism of the Bible was certainly started soon afterwards by Ibn Ezra (1100–67), in guarded hints, it is true, but still in hints that were not lost on Spinoza afterwards, nor on others before him. In any case, we hear denunciations of "philosophasters to whom philosophy is the handmaid of scoffing." No doubt this kind of scoffing is not a desirable form of rationalism, any more than superstition, astrology, and magic are desirable forms of mysticism. But then, in the general conflict between rationalism and mysticism, the crude forms of the rationalist tendency may, let us hope, serve some good purpose in fighting the crude forms of the mystic tendency, though the highest form of rationalism, as represented by Aristotle, for instance, is not altogether devoid of a touch of the higher form of mysticism.

The aim, then, of the medieval Jewish philosophers was the same as that of their Alexandrian

predecessors, namely, to harmonise traditional Judaism with Greek philosophy. Such an undertaking may not look very promising for philosophy. It is all very well assuming that human reason and divine revelation cannot or should not conflict. In practice it is not likely that human reason will be allowed to override what purports to be divine revelation; and thus philosophy seems doomed from the first to be the mere handmaid of theology. This is what actually happened in Christian scholasticism. Among the Jews, however, philosophy did retain a much higher degree of independence. Although, in theory, primacy was claimed for the Bible and tradition, yet, in practice, it was philosophy that often took the lead. This was comparatively easy in Judaism. For, in the first place, there was no authoritative interpretation of Scripture among the Jews, or any prescribed articles of faith; and, in the second place, the religious literature of the Jews, in consequence of the many centuries, and the innumerable minds that shared in the making of it, contains the most diverse views on the most important religious and philosophical problems. Hence, on the one hand, individual writers were free to interpret Scripture in accordance with their own views; and, on the other hand, they could always find some verse in the Bible, Talmud, or Midrash in support of their view. They could thus think out their philosophy with comparative freedom, and find their religious authorities afterwards.

The practice of reading philosophy into the Bible was regarded not only as permissible, but as necessary to the due understanding of the teaching of Scripture. Both Maimonides and Gersonides, for instance, insist on this most emphatically.

And it was just in this connection that those curious legends relating to Aristotle's dependence on Jewish wisdom may have been of service. For if Aristotle extracted his philosophy from Hebrew literature, it was only quits for Jews to read his philosophy back into their literature. Levi ben Abraham ben Hayyim (1245–1315) actually said as much.

Then again, there was no lack of courage among these medieval Jews. They were not easily intimidated by heretic-hunters. Even Maimonides, whose position was one of great responsibility and required no little circumspection, so much so that he hesitated at first about writing his *Guide* at all, writes, nevertheless: "When I find the road narrow, and can see no other way of teaching a well-established truth except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools, I prefer to address myself to the one man, and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude."

The arbitrary way in which Scripture was often 'explained' by these philosophical and allegorical interpreters was, of course, out of all harmony with modern views on literary criticism and interpretation. Spinoza was one of the first to protest against it, and rightly so. But then, it should not be forgotten that the conception of evolution was unfamiliar then. The idea of a *progressive* revelation, and of an *increasing* purpose running through the ages; the notion of truth only gradually evolving out of error, partial errors, and approximate truths—these helpful ideas were still unknown. Under the circumstances, this kind of allegorical interpretation, arbitrary and fanciful though it often was, and liable to various abuses,

still performed the very useful and necessary function of mediating progress in religious and philosophic thought. Moreover, it was through the medium of such 'interpretations' that Aristotelian ideas reached a wider circle of Jewish readers whose studies were confined to the Bible and its commentaries.

In support of my contention for the real primacy of reason with the Jewish philosophers, I will only point out that Saadiah explicitly says the allegorical interpretation of Scripture is admissible whenever a text conflicts with facts or with reason, while Maimonides remarks quite openly that "those passages in the Bible which, in their literal sense, contain statements that can be refuted by proof, must and can be interpreted otherwise." When discussing the rival views of Creation and the Eternity of Matter, which was the chief point of difference between Aristotle and most of the medieval Jewish philosophers, Maimonides explains his attitude as follows: "We do not reject the Eternity of the Universe simply because certain passages in Scripture affirm the Creation; for such passages are not more numerous than those in which God is represented as a corporeal being; nor is it impossible or difficult to find for them a suitable interpretation. . . . We should perhaps have had an easier task in showing that the scriptural passages referred to are in harmony with the theory of the eternity of the universe, if we accepted it, than we had in explaining the anthropomorphisms of the Bible." He did not accept the doctrine of eternal matter simply because, to his thinking, Aristotle had not proved his case. "If," he added, "Aristotle had a proof of his theory, the whole teaching of Scripture would be

rejected, and we should be forced to other opinions." Maimonides actually cites Hebrew authorities that might be invoked in support of a belief in the eternity of the universe. As a matter of fact, Gersonides, whose astronomical training may have predisposed him that way, actually did maintain the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the universe. His book, called *The Wars of the Lord*, was consequently dubbed, by the more conservative, *The Wars Against the Lord.* For all that, Gersonides did not stand alone. Isaac Albalag (1250–1300), and Joseph Caspi (1280–1340) also maintained the eternity of matter.

That Jewish authors should deliberately abandon the belief in a *creatio ex nihilo*, in favour of the view of the eternity of matter, speaks volumes for the potency of Aristotle's influence over them. And there are, at least, two other changes of attitude noticeable in medieval Jewish philosophy, which are almost equally remarkable as symptoms of Aristotelian influence. I mean (1) the abandonment of the anthropocentric view of the universe, and (2) the subordination of moral perfection to intellectual perfection as the *summum bonum* of human life. Both these views are distinctly taught by Maimonides. "The universe," he says, "does not exist for man's sake, but each being exists for its own sake, and not for the sake of some other thing." Like Aristotle, or even more so, Maimonides protested, at the same time, against the excessive tendency to explain all things teleologically, that is, by reference to some final purpose which each thing was supposed to serve, instead of by reference to the conditions that have produced it. Teleological explanation has so long obstructed the progress of science that scientists have come to

hate it, and almost to overlook what truth it embodied. It will be remembered how that arch-cynic, Voltaire, parodied the abuses of the teleological method of explanation: the reason why we have noses, he suggested, is that we might wear spectacles! Now Maimonides was remarkably modern in this respect. "We must be content," he protested, "and not trouble our mind with seeking a certain final cause for things that have none, or have no other final cause than their own existence."

Again, just as man is not the end of the cosmos, so the final object of human existence is not the possession of wealth or of titles, not mere physical strength, not even moral perfection, but the perfection of human reason. To it all else is subordinate and preparatory; and it alone links man to God, and makes him immortal. Here we have the closest approximation to the higher rationalism of Aristotle. Maimonides is not the only Jewish representative of this close approximation to Aristotelian intellectualism. And the subject teems with interest.

Prima facie it seems plausible enough to contrast the discursive rationalism of the Greeks in general, and of Aristotle in particular, with the moral intuitionism of the Hebrew; and there is, of course, much truth in the consequent contrast of the scientific genius of the Greek with the religious genius of the Hebrew. But such contrasts are only true within limits. The spirit of free inquiry has received no inconsiderable homage in Jewish literature, in spite of the predominant sway of religion; while the Greek love of free inquiry has not been without its religious checks, or its religious inspiration. When comparing, say, Maimonides

with Aristotle, the usual contrast between Hellenism and Hebraism indicates a difference of starting-point, rather than a difference of goal. Ultimately their total attitude seems almost the same, though allowance must naturally be made for differences of time and place. To Aristotle human reason appears as man's highest possession, in the full and free exercise of which man realises his highest self. Aristotle's rationalism, however, is not of that shallow and barren kind which rests content with the mere unmasking of myths and fancies, and pointing out the simple phenomena underlying them. Though starting from such simple, transitory facts, it does not end there. It passes from the finite to the infinite, from the mortal to the immortal, until reason itself seems transported by religious emotion, and rationalism is transformed into a higher mysticism. "Let us not listen," says Aristotle, "to those who tell us that as men and mortals we should mind only the things of man and of mortality; but so far as we may we should bear ourselves as immortals, and do all that lies in us to live in accord with that element within us, that sovereign principle of reason, which is our true self, and which in capacity and dignity stands supreme." Aristotle might here be said to start from reason and end in religion. Maimonides started from the side of religion, and ended by exalting the perfecting of human reason as the highest form of religious service. For in the eyes of Maimonides, and of many of his contemporary co-religionists, religion was not exhausted by the mere belief in God, or a blind acceptance of dogmas, or even by good works. A man might, of course, attain to a high degree of worth by living a good life. But to the highest

form of human perfection even moral perfection is only preparatory. "In Judaism," insists Ibn Daud, "knowledge is a duty." "No one," re-echoes Ibn Caspi, "really knows the true meaning of loving God, and fearing him, unless he is acquainted with natural science and metaphysics." "I do not say," he carefully adds, "that all men can reach this intellectual height, but I maintain that it is the degree of highest excellence, though those who stand below it may still be good." Maimonides is equally emphatic. "Man's love of God," he maintains, "is identical with his knowledge of him"; and he speaks with disdain of those "simple and idle people, whom it suits better to put forth their ignorance and incapacity as wisdom and perfection, and to regard the distinction and wisdom of others as irreligion and imperfection, thus taking darkness for light, and light for darkness."

Jewish rationalism was, in large measure, the result of Aristotelian influence. Still, there is also some truth in the saying that every man is *born* either a Platonist or an Aristotelian, and no man is converted. People do not assimilate what they have not, to some extent, been predisposed and fitted for. The Jews seem to be rationalists by nature. Platonism and mysticism never took complete possession of them. Philo and Gabirol, it is true, were Platonists of considerable eminence. But what influence they exercised was chiefly exercised not on Jews, but on Christians. Aristotelianism, on the contrary, has taken a real hold on the Jews, who were its staunchest supporters during the Middle Ages. Averroes, the leading Moslem Aristotelian, had many more Jewish than Moslem readers. That is why some of his writings

are only extant in Hebrew manuscripts, while of others there are scores of Hebrew copies for one in Arabic.

The Jews not only were the rationalists of the Middle Ages, but seem to have been recognised as such by their neighbours. This may be illustrated, in an interesting way, from Dante. In the *Paradiso*, Canto V, Dante denounces the greed of the priests who traffic in dispensations for broken vows; and he denounces the superstition of the masses that makes such traffic possible. Now the noteworthy feature in this denunciation of the unholy barter and superstitious folly is the manner in which Dante appeals to his readers' sense of shame—"lest the Jew in your midst should scoff at you!" The Jew is evidently regarded as a kind of rationalist who looks through popular superstitions and priestly devices, and is not easily hoodwinked by them.

I hope that I have indicated sufficiently the extent of Aristotle's influence on medieval Jewish thought. It only remains for me to explain briefly that this admiration for Aristotle never degenerated into a blind acceptance of what Aristotle had said, simply because Aristotle had said it. Medieval followers of Aristotle unfortunately did show an inclination to worship the letter and kill the spirit of Aristotelianism, by substituting the mere authority of Aristotle for that freedom of inquiry, and reliance on actual reasoning, which Aristotle preached and practised. It was this kind of extravagance that eventually provoked the antagonistic extravagances of Bacon and others. With the Jews it was not so. Aristotle probably never had a greater admirer than he had in Maimonides. His book on logic, his *Eight Chapters* on ethics, and his *Guide*

of the Perplexed all bear the stamp of Aristotelianism. We have also seen in what complimentary terms he refers to Aristotle. Still, he only follows Aristotle because, and in so far as, he agrees with his views; he does not follow him blindly, nor in everything. For instance, he differs from Aristotle on the question of *creatio ex nihilo*, also (owing to some misapprehension) on the question of divine providence over individuals, and as regards personal immortality. He makes every possible allowance for Aristotle's attitude on these and similar questions in dispute; he differs most respectfully; but he differs all the same. "A truth," he says, "once established by proof neither gains in certainty through the consent of all scholars, nor loses in certainty through general dissent." And he speaks contemptuously of those "who believe themselves philosophers" and follow Aristotle blindly; who "consider it wrong to differ from Aristotle, or to think that he was ignorant or mistaken in anything." Maimonides had learned the master's lesson too well to let the shadow of Aristotle's sheer authority usurp the place of the light of Aristotle's rationalism.

Maimonides exercised considerable influence even outside Judaism, notably on Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. But among his own co-religionists his position was simply unique. "If," exclaimed an enthusiastic admirer of Maimonides, in the course of the controversy that raged round the works of Maimonides during the thirteenth century, "if Joshua, the son of Nun, arose to forbid the Provençal Jews to study the works of Maimonides, he would scarcely succeed. For they have the firm intention to sacrifice their fortunes and even their lives in defence of the

philosophical works of Maimonides." For several centuries Maimonides was the recognised authority among the Jews. And his espousal of Aristotelian rationalism influenced, to some extent, all subsequent Jewish thinkers. Most of them learned, and some still learn, their first lesson in philosophy from Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed.* Spinoza bears evident traces of its influence ; Moses Mendelssohn jestingly attributed his hunchback to his assiduous poring over the *Guide ;* Solomon Maimon, one of the first critics of Kant's critical philosophy, actually adopted the name of Maimon in token of his profound reverence for the author of the *Guide.* The actual reasoning employed by Maimonides had mostly become obsolete long before Spinoza, or Mendelssohn, or Maimon had appeared on the scene ; but what impressed them, and what still impresses the student of medieval Jewish philosophy, is the spirit of the higher rationalism which the *Guide* breathes so amply—that faith in human reason, that exalted conception of the place and function of human thought, that hallowing of intellectual effort, in which Maimonides, and so many other Jewish thinkers, followed the lead of Aristotle.

LITERATURE

The preceding account is, I believe, the first attempt to deal with the subject separately. The following books, however, contain abundant material for the further study of the subject :—

M. Eisler: *Vorlesungen über die jüdischen Philosophen des Mittelalters* (1870–83).

J. Guttmann: *Die Religionsphilosophie des Saadia* (1882); *Die Scholastik des 13ten Jahrhunderts* (1902).

M. Joel: *Die Religionsphilosophie des Maimonides; Lewi ben Gershon als Religionsphilosoph; Don Chasdai Crescas' Religionsphilosophie* (in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1876).

S. Munk: *Mélanges de Philosophie Juive et Arabe* (1859).

A. Schmiedl: *Studien über jüdische, insonders jüdisch-arabische Religionsphilosophie.*

For a general account of the intellectual atmosphere of medieval Jewry the following works may be consulted :—

I. Abrahams: *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages.*

M. Güdemann: *Das jüdische Unterrichtswesen während der Spanisch-arabischen Periode.*

VI

JEWISH MYSTICISM

By H. SPERLING

MYSTICISM is generally defined as the immediate communion of the individual with the Deity, the merging of the part into the whole. Deep within the recesses of man's heart are vague yearnings after union with the infinite, which can only find expression in semi-obscure utterances, and, being an elemental state of the mind, like love, hate, sadness, joy, anger, are difficult of analysis. They can, however, fitly be compared to that invisible chain that binds husband to wife, parents to children, relation to relation, friend to friend, social unit to social unit. Without these lesser mysticisms society would dissolve into its first atoms; without the larger mysticism man would break away from his Maker and be flung into nothingness. Further, we must conceive of mysticism as that primordial mass of human internal experiences which, as man advances, splits up into religion, ethics, and philosophy; or, to put it shortly, mysticism is the raw material of religion.

While customs change, institutions crumble, and various religious beliefs disappear, the mystical element which originates in the heart of the individual remains for ever. Amidst all the changes

and chances of religious upheavals, it remains the plastic yet steadfast material, ready to be cast in any shape and form impressed on it by climate, general conditions, and the particular genius of any nation. In the course of religious development, the purely mystical foundation becomes too often overlaid with outward ceremonies, mechanical formalisms, whether religious or social. The religious core is then choked up and petrified, with the result that all the mental and social activities of the nation, from lack of nourishment, break into fragments, lose all vitality, and finally perish to make room for fresh religious beginnings on the part of vigorous individuals, who, with a ruthless hand, prune away the withered leaves from the vine, weed out the weeds from the garden, and start afresh a new growth of religion pure and undefiled. Thus a study of the founders of religion is a study of mysticism in its purest form.

The further religion gets removed from its origin, the more it degenerates, on the one hand into perverted mysticism, and on the other hand into materialism. By perverted mysticism is meant that kind of action and thought which is not content with drawing inspiration from the mysterious and the unknown, but permits the mysterious and the unknown to pervade the whole of life, covering it with a thick cloud of symbol and metaphor, a sort of deaf and dumb language. On the other hand, conditions may prevail which bring down the elevated and spiritual to the level of the sensual and material. Prayer, sacrifice, and all religious performances become only means of obtaining personal favours, are the equivalents for goods to be delivered by the invisible power that sits behind the scenes of the universe, manipulating its affairs.

It is against this materialistic conception of life that the Hebrew prophets declaimed; but, although the mental attitude of the prophet was certainly a mystical one in its most characteristic trait, namely, direct union with the Deity, yet the prophetic message was concerned with moral precept, political honesty, universal justice, religious purity, censure of idolatry and superstition, and all such teachings as bore on the moral and practical life of man, and only required the glowing heat of the prophetic vision to burn them indelibly into the hearts and minds of the people. Nor need we be detained long over the state of mind in which the soul pours itself out in song and praise, in prayer and supplication, pleadings and confidings, such as we find in the Psalms. However neatly and methodically the psychologist or religious experimentalist may classify this complex process according to its simplest elements, the man who never felt these religious experiences will not come nearer realising them by any definitions. On the other hand, the prayerful soul, however humble, realises this process, and responds readily and spontaneously to the utterances of the Psalmist in all their variety of mood. So far we have only examples of mysticism as a state of mind. When the prophet is overwhelmed by the vision of the Lord, he undergoes an uncommon experience, of which the ordinary experiences of seeing, hearing, and so forth, can only give us a faint idea. Again, it is the state of mind of the Psalmist which concerns us, and with which we may become more intimate; for at some time or other we cannot help being carried away by the poetical strains of such verses as: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps. XXIII. 1); or, "As the hart

panteth after the water brooks, my soul panteth after Thee, O God " (XLII. 1).

When we come to the post-exilic Prophets, we seem to notice greater complexity in their visions. The Jewish nation gets more and more solidified; their past history, the national customs and laws, the temple service, their hopes and aspirations do in various proportions make up the subject-matter of the post-exilic Prophets. I am speaking of Ezekiel with his chariot-vision and temple-vision, and of Zachariah with his visions of the four builders, four horsemen, and so forth. The chariot vision will become later on a text for a fruitful development of a number of mystical doctrines; the visions of the temple and four builders, etc., show rudimentary signs of mystical ideas underlying the temple, and whatever is connected with it, the Jewish nation and its history.

As yet there is no mystical sect or mystical school of ideas, no specially mystical doctrines held by specially disposed persons. It is very interesting to point out the entire absence of mysticism from the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Energy, courage, patriotism, intense religious zeal, are there in abundance; but pervasive of all that there is an even prosiness which moves one to compassion. The fact is that the nation has not yet discovered its soul. We speak of the Persian period. Ezra's successors, the scribes, the Great Synod, were occupied in fixing the text of the Torah, in the promotion of its study and the observance of its laws amongst all the members of the community, and in various ways in making it a national book in the true sense of the word. Ezra, like a second Moses that he was, took the Children of Israel again to school; he and his assistants taught them the elements

of reading, writing, and behaving. The time for metaphysics had not yet arrived. But henceforward Israel and the Torah have become one; they grow and expand together; whatever Israel does or suffers it sees reflected in the Torah. Henceforward, Israel is guided by the Torah, and the Torah is interpreted by Israel. Judaism definitely discovers its soul when it compares souls with the Greeks. And here we come to the Greek Period.

Trials and persecutions abound. There is a splitting into sects. On the one hand the Sadducees, materialistic in manner of life and in the interpretation of the law; they gradually disappear entirely. On the other hand, there are the Essenes, mystical and ascetic; they try to find the inner soul of the Torah, so to speak, and thus anticipate the later Jewish mystics whom we will come to know by the name of Kabbalists. These extremists, the Essenes, are in time reabsorbed in the central party called Pharisees, who try to keep between the body and the soul, between the letter and the spirit. The Therapeutes, in Egypt, a sect kindred to the Essenes, and Philo and his followers, some of whose doctrines will reappear later among Jewish mystics, can well be left out, as they lie outside the track of Judaism proper, and as their influence is indirect. To keep to the main road we must search for mysticism in the Talmud and Midrash.

But it is no more by messages from the Lord to the people that mysticism appears here; nor does it appear in spontaneous outbursts of song and supplication. The inner spring of religious thoughts is still fresh and pure, but the voice that gives utterance to them is harshened by long years of struggle, both bodily and mental. In short,

we have now to do with mystical theology; it forms a branch of the Agadah. The Agadah in its handling of Scripture could not help touching upon such questions as the why and the how of the creation of the world, and the relation of the Creator to his creatures, which have always exercised the minds of philosophers or religious meditators. The Agadah was not allowed to go beyond popular expositions; the Mishnah forbids public lecturing on the chapter of Creation and that of the Chariot (Cosmogony and Theosophy). It is therefore impossible to know what were their Creation and Chariot expositions. The few glimpses permitted us of those *Sithré Torah* (hidden things) only reveal to us expositions of a mystical nature; that is to say, they were apprehended by the inner mind, when in a state of deep meditation, but not by the outer mind; they are the result of a mental exercise which was vague, indefinable, elusive; they were quarried out from the inner depths of religious yearnings. Thus when R. Samuel bar Nachman says with regard to the creation of light that the Lord covered himself in a white garment and caused the splendour of his majesty to shine from one end of the world to the other, it is futile to look for rational interpretation. The study of those subjects, then, was considered a purely religious exercise, an exercise, moreover, of a most daring kind; a plunge into the deep ocean of infinite mystery, very exhilarating and beneficial to the mentally and religiously strong, but dangerous to the common individual. The general attitude of the Jewish doctors towards speculative thought, mystical or otherwise, may further be gathered from the following excerpt (from *Chagiga*): "Four entered into *Pardes*" (i.e. 'garden,' a

metaphorical term for speculative thought), " Ben-Azzai, Ben-Zoma, Acher " (' the other one ') * " and Rabbi Akiba. Ben-Azzai, having looked, died; regarding him Scripture says: ' Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his pious ones '; Ben-Zoma, having looked, was injured; regarding him Scripture says: ' Hast thou honey, eat no more than is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith and vomit it.' Acher cut off the plants. Rabbi Akiba went out unhurt."

The phraseology of this citation is quaint, but the sense is obvious. It is a warning against intrusion into the *Pardes* of the inner mysteries of Heaven. The Law regulates life, and keeps it in proper balance. Mysticism, on the other hand, is a free lance, it possesses an inordinate inquisitiveness; the bare and natural sense of the scriptural text does not suffice it; it delves and digs and pierces into the inner and most hidden sense. The Law, indeed, gains thereby in reverence and awe, since it is seen to be founded not upon simple human considerations, but upon eternal verities. Nevertheless, the mystic is exposed to the twofold danger of lawless mysticism and rigid rationalism; since in the mind there is no clear-cut division between religious meditation and philosophical speculation. The mystic, in trying tracks unbeaten and ways untrodden, acquires a mental independence, either on the side of pure feeling and emotion, or on that of pure reason. In the first case, he forms a personal acquaintance with the Deity, receiving direct communications from above as to the path he should walk in; he obeys the Law not in a servile but in a filial spirit, and feels justified in interpreting it in a way all his own. To

* i.e. R. Elisha b. Abuyah.

put it shortly, being prone to allegorism, he may sometimes allegorise away some law. Then again, from sheer mental exercise, he may develop reasoning powers, a tendency to resolve things to first principles, and go to the other extreme of treating reverence and obedience as the outcome of an illusion.

Judaism, being stamped from the very first with the stamp of practical morality and obedience to law, looked with disfavour upon any tendency to weaken those characteristics. But, life being larger than organised religion, the manifold mental activities of man not being subject to outside control, there are bound to arise in each generation men like Rabbi Akiba, Ben-Zoma, and the others, men who cannot overcome their inner strivings to peep through the *Pargod* (partition) that divides this from the other world. They could not therefore be rejected entirely. Place had to be made for them somehow. Such isolated conclusions about metaphysical and supernatural ideas as were within the purely national creed were, if not too involved, expressed and promulgated in Agadic phraseology; ideas beyond the ordinary comprehension were included within *Ma'asé Bereshith* and *Ma'asé Mercabah*. Thus all the mental activities of the nation were classified and labelled, so to speak. Over and above the Halachah and the Agadah there was now a third class, labelled *Ma'asé Bereshith* and *Ma'asé Mercabah*, or *Sithré Torah* (hidden things of the Law), which label was equivalent to a signal of a dangerous crossing where one ought to ride with caution.

Besides the two subjects above mentioned, the Talmud and contemporary literature abound in passages concerning angels, future punishment,

pre-existence of souls, and so on, subjects which in time became incorporated in various mystical systems; but as in the Talmud itself these subjects are treated from the side of mere folk-lore and popular belief, it is better to pass them over now and to come to the next period, namely, the period of the Geonim.

It is not until we come to the later days of the Geonic period that we begin to meet with a special variety of Jewish literature. The Talmud has been closed, the colleges of Mesopotamia have been broken up, a new power—the Islamic—has arisen in the East, the colleges are re-established under the guidance of the Geonim. The Jews get more and more dispersed over a wider area, and although the chief centre of learning is still Mesopotamia, there is a relaxation of vigilance on the part of the teachers of the Law. The revival of learning under the Abbasside Caliphs reacts greatly on the receptive mind of the Jews. There is a disturbance of the equilibrium, new studies of interest are discovered. The Karaite revolt is not a mere surface agitation, but an index of a deep-seated turbulence right in the depth of the heart of the nation. The sensitiveness of the Jew made him share with his surrounding neighbours their voraciousness for knowledge. A fresh point of view was thus gained; all the inherited literature, all the treasured possessions were made objects of fresh inquiry. There being no supreme authority to compel obedience, and draw all the literary activities into one channel, different views with regard to the national aim and purpose obtain among different sections. In the main, they divide into three classes. The Karaites, the Jewish nonconformists, repudiate the greater part of rabbinic law, look for guidance mainly to

the written word of the Bible, cultivate grammar, philology, philosophy, and history. Then there is the old rabbinic section, which by and by joins to Talmudical learning all the learning of the age. Finally, the supernatural element in the old Midrashic literature, the mysteries of creation, the existence of angels, spirits and demons, the nature of the soul, the relation of God to man, the most sublime objects that agitate man's mind, also the strange and the bizarre, the fantastic and the marvellous, as astrology, magic—all these begin to precipitate in various books, each of which is devoted more or less to a single subject. They claim for their authors such ancient and great names as those of Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakkanah, and Rabbi Akiba, all of them Tannaim, teachers of the Mishnah who lived during the first century. The claim is difficult to establish, but certain it is that they belong to a date not later than the beginning of the ninth century C.E. Here follow descriptions of some of the books referred to above.

The *Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba* can best be described by saying that it is a playful and ingenious commentary on the names of the letters of the alphabet. Each name is split up into its constituent letters, which in their turn are treated as initials of a sentence containing a moral maxim. Thus, *Aleph*, which is spelt in Hebrew *Aleph*, *Lamed*, *Pe*, is converted into a sentence meaning 'teach your mouth to speak the truth.' Special significations are also given to the forms of the letters. It is hardly necessary to point out that this is not a mystical book in the strict sense of the word. In fact, it has been conjectured that the book was intended for an elementary school-book, having for its object to impress upon the child the names

and forms of the letters of the alphabet, and at the same time to inculcate a number of moral and religious maxims.

The next book to claim our attention is called *Hechaloth* (Halls or Palaces). It belongs to the *Mercabah* mystical books—that is to say, it treats of visions similar to that described in the first chapter of Ezekiel or the sixth chapter of Isaiah. R. Ismael, the reputed author, prescribes the forms of songs and prayers to be used by the man who wishes to behold the throne of the Lord, and to be brought into his presence, so as to be raised above time and place, and to be endowed with prophetic vision, being able to see what is happening in the uttermost parts of the earth as well as all that is going to happen in the future.

During the same period—about the ninth century —we meet with the *Sefer Yezirah* (Book of Formation). It is the first philosophical book written in Hebrew. To get some idea of its contents it is best to cite a few sentences. Thus we read at its beginning: "By thirty-two wonderful paths the Eternal, the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, the living God, the King of the world, the merciful and gracious God, the Glorious One, he that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is high and holy —has created the world, in three forms, number, letter, and speech (*S'for*, *Sefer*, *Sippur*); ten numbers *belima* (self-contained); and twenty-two letters, of which three are fundamental elements, seven doubles and twelve simple ones. Of the ten numbers self-contained, one is the spirit of the living God, blessed and praised be his name, which is the life of the world. Sound and Spirit and Word, it is the Holy Spirit; his beginning is unsearchable and his end unlimited. . . .

"These are the ten numbers self-contained: (1) the Spirit of the living God, (2) the spirit of the Spirit, (3) water from the Spirit, (4) fire from water, and the six geometrical directions: height, depth, East, West, North, and South."

The Sefer Yezirah follows the Mishnah in style, language, division of chapters and paragraphs. It is of small compass, consisting of six chapters and thirty-three paragraphs. It is a book unique in Hebrew literature, forming, like the Books of Job and Ecclesiasticus in their own branches, a class by itself, without any forerunners or any direct and genuine successors. As to its contents, the uncritical mind will ask what it all means. Could it really be contended that the ten elementary numbers and the twenty-two letters of the alphabet were the instruments by which the Almighty created the world? Now the value of the Sefer Yezirah does not consist in its solution of the riddle of the Universe, but in its attempt to solve it. The true predecessors of the author, on the side of pure thought, are the ancient Greek thinkers, who hazarded guesses as to the origin of the Universe.

The fact is that the human mind cannot hold isolated facts for long. At a definite stage of man's development he puts himself seriously to the task of arranging facts and fancies, dreams and realities, into tribes, classes, families, until he arrives at what he thinks the first parent out of which the whole universe proceeded. Thus one of the wise men of ancient Greece chose for himself water as the origin of the universe; everything, according to him, was a larger or smaller modification of water. Another chose fire, yet another air. Pythagoras, who lived in the sixth century B.C.E., thought such

elements as fire, water, and air, too material and gross to account for the world of matter and that of mind. He, therefore, chose number as the basis of all existence, since number is seen to enter into all relations of natural phenomena, which act and react upon each other in definite mathematical relations. Not that Pythagoras could give an intelligible account of his system to the unconvinced inquirer; such modes of thinking belong to the twilight period in the development of the human mind; the mind then sees but dimly, but after staring at vacancy long enough it gets used to the scene, and constructs an artistic universe, which is visible to itself, but not to the mind that looks in the full light of day. Now it must be added that the necessity to construct a philosophical system to account for the existence of the universe is weakened wherever there exists an organised national religion. First, the mind is engaged elsewhere; secondly, religion has a habit of explaining things piecemeal, dealing with each case as it occurs, and thus engendering a habit of mind not given to systematic thought.

Coming back to the Sefer Yezirah, we are now in a better position to assign it its place. It stands on the border of three territories—those of Jewish national religion, mysticism, and philosophy: hence its vagueness, obscurity, and enigmatic character. It suffers the fate of all such books; it becomes a text book for divergent schools of thought, each seeing in it its own reflection. Thus, its first commentator was R. Saadiah, religious teacher, philosopher, but no mystic. Indeed, for the next few centuries religious mysticism could make no progress; such formidable rivals as poetry, science, mathematics, philosophy could not but put her in

the shade. Mysticism commences to revive somewhere in the twelfth century; it appears simultaneously in Spain and in Germany. In both countries it is absorbed by and assumes the name of *Kabbalah*, a vague and therefore very convenient name, covering a multitude of mental attitudes, beliefs, claims, pretences, practices. On the whole, it works harmoniously with the national religion, great doctors of law, such as Nachmanides (Ramban), and Rabbi Solomon ben Adret (Rashba), deeming it the most sublime knowledge, to be attained only by men of the highest sanctity and integrity. But the Kabbalah is sometimes refractory, defying all authority and assuming a mastery of its own, as in the case of Abraham Abulafia and his following, who claimed prophetic and even Messianic powers, to the scandal of the sane and sober-minded sections of the community. Yet there is still a freakish kind of Kabbalah which makes league with philosophy, trying to represent that if philosophy and Kabbalah would only know each other, they would not lose a minute, but would embrace each other and live happy ever after. The first Mystico-Kabbalistic productions in Provence and Spain took the shape of commentaries on the Sefer Yezirah, though really they were not so much commentaries as developments of the author's system.

The history of the Kabbalah in Spain is rooted in the political, religious, and intellectual history of the time in which it arose. We must turn then to Spain at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Jewish philosophy has already passed its zenith. The works of Jehudah Halevi, Ibn Gabirol, Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, have become parts of our national treasury. True, there are

still to be born such original thinkers as Ralbag, Crescas, Albo, but they will be only the last flickering of the candle before it finally goes out. There is now a revulsion of feeling. An excess of rationalism produces an excess of mysticism. The national instinct of self-preservation feels that it is already saturated with foreign thought, and unless that be checked a disintegration of the national religion will set in. The struggle over Maimonides' books was symptomatic of that spirit. But the questions opened up by the various schools of philosophy, as to the essence of God, creation, providence, revelation, the doctrine of angels, the soul—all these questions could not be cast aside and forgotten; there was a general mental expansion. So much philosophy withdrawn, so much something else must take its place. That something else was the Kabbalah. Hence the Kabbalah had to assume a philosophical garb, at least in Spain. The reputed father of the Kabbalah is Isaac the Blind (about 1190–1210), son of Rabbi Abraham ben David (Rabad) of Posquières, who wrote strictures on the Code of Maimonides. R. Isaac wrote a commentary on the Sefer Yezirah. We know very little of him, so we go on to his disciple, Rabbi Azriel (1160–?) of Valladolid in Spain. He wrote an explanation of the ten *Sefiroth* by way of questions and answers. It must be explained that the term for 'numbers' used in the Sefer Yezirah is *Sefiroth*, the plural of *Sefirah*, referring presumably to the ten natural numbers. But the term *Sefirah*, as well as the whole cosmogonic and cosmological system of the Sefer Yezirah, undergoes a gradual change, until later there is evolved a whole complicated system of emanations, and worlds, which is a long way removed from that of the Sefer Yezirah. Instead

of explaining the whole system at each stage, it is best to follow it first to its completion.

One of the foremost men to accept the doctrine of the Kabbalah was the famous Nachmanides or Ramban (1195–1270). He was born in the kingdom of Aragon, in Gerona, but he came very early under the influence of the French Rabbis, called Tosaphists, delighting in their dialectical skill, and, although trained in the sytematic thought of the Jewish Arabic philosophers, he looked upon philosophy as a foreign growth. Whilst he evinced the deepest reverence for Maimonides, defending him against the attacks of the French Rabbis, yet in his commentary on the Pentateuch he rejects Maimonides' rationalistic opinions regarding astrology, magic, and so forth. Whereas Maimonides was a great Talmudist and philosopher, Nachmanides was a great Talmudist and Kabbalist. He dispenses his Kabbalistic ideas very scantily and sparingly, hinting at many more by some such expressions as : "There is a great mystery here, which is not permitted to be written down"; or "One cannot dwell long over such matters in writing, the mere hinting at them is productive of much harm." Nevertheless, his great fame for Talmudical scholarship lent a powerful prestige to the study and promotion of the Kabbalah, and thus, with the decay of the influence of Aristotle, enters the Kabbalah.

Leaving Spain for a while, let us cast a glance at what is doing yonder in Germany and Northern France.

As is well known, Judaism in Germany developed on lines independent of that of Spain. Whilst the Spanish Jews, enjoying religious and political freedom, revelled in the highest learning of the age,

in Germany the Jews fell a prey to the ignorance, superstition, and persecuting mania of their surroundings. The *piyutim* of medieval times ring with the poignant and heart-breaking cries of the Jews. The Crusades struck terror into the hearts of the Jews; the blows which they then received have left their marks deeply graven in the character of the Jew even to this day. No wonder that he withdrew within himself, within his past, within his own literature, finding there his sole hope and his sole sustenance. What he lost in general culture, he gained in the cultivation of his own national literature and learning, without any dissipation of his energies. Naturally all energy was concentrated on the study of the Talmud and its dependencies. Compendia of Laws, books on Synagogal ritual, were written in profusion. It is in the midst of such influences that we meet with that singular man, Rabbi Jehudah Hachasid (the Pious) (?–1216). He was born in Speyer, somewhere in the twelfth century. He was mystic, philosopher, and altogether above his age. He studied the Talmud not so much for the edification which is bound up with mere study, but for the practical end of knowing the final law. It is said that R. Samuel, his father, said to his brother, R. Abraham, "Know that you will be a Rosh-Yeshibah (College Professor) all your life, but as for your brother Jehudah, he will know what is above, and what is beneath; he will be a Ba'al-Shem (Master of the Name)." His pupil, R. Isaac of Vienna, relates in his name that a certain great Rabbi was punished in the other world for having ordered his disciples not to take much time over prayer, on account of his great eagerness for study. In those days the Rosh-Yeshibah had to cut short

his prayers in the Synagogue in order to commence early his *Shiur* (lecture). R. Jehudah Hachasid, on the other hand, raised prayer by means of mystical and symbolical interpretations, enjoining the concentration of thought on the hidden meaning which is concealed behind the numerical value of the letters.

The German Kabbalah travelled all the way from Babylon to Italy, and thence to Germany. It is related that a certain Abu-Aaron came to Italy about 870. The reason for his wandering was that a lion killed the mule that turned his father's mill. Abu-Aaron struck the lion and made him turn the mill. His father then upbraided him for subjecting the king of animals to such menial work, and decreed upon him to go into exile for three years as a penance. From southern Italy he went to Lucena, where he initiated R. Moses the Elder into the secrets of the Kabbalah. R. Moses and his sons moved to Mayence (917), and introduced there the Kabbalah, which was handed over from father to son as a private possession until it reached R. Jehudah Hachasid, who in his turn taught it to R. Eleazar (author of the *Rokeach*) (?–1238), and he wrote down in books all the oral teaching that he had received from his teacher, and spread it abroad in conformity with the latter's will. The German Kabbalah differs from the Spanish, in that it does not, like the latter, soar to high philosophical flights; it does not deal with the mysteries of creation, but with the relation of God to man, the mysteries contained in the sacred names, the power of prayer and such-like subjects.

Now let us return again to Spain. We left the Kabbalah there in league with the Talmud. When we come back, however, we find it getting out of

hand: it becomes independent, threatening to undermine the old foundation of Jewish law and order. The stormy petrel is Rabbi Abraham Abulafia (1240–?). Abulafia was an original and daring man, a great thinker, a quick brain and very versatile, but prone to dreamings and reveries; a great religious enthusiast, possessed of an individual spiritual craving, difficult to satisfy. His first teacher was his father, who taught him Scripture, grammar, and some Mishnah and Talmud, up to the age of eighteen years, when he died. Abulafia was then seized with a desire to set out on an expedition for the river Sambation, and to seek for the lost ten tribes; but on account of the war then raging between Ishmael and Esau (between the Christians and Mohammedans) he was obliged to return. His travelling enlarged his mental horizon, for, in spite of his reveries, he had an insatiable thirst for all sorts of knowledge. At the age of thirty years he placed himself under the tuition of the famous philosopher, Rabbi Hillel of Verona, who taught him philosophy, to which he applied himself with all zeal, so that he repeated the *Moreh Nebuchim* many times, and gave instruction in it to those who were willing to learn. Finding then that his mind was not satisfied with philosophy, he rejected it, and took up the study of the Sefer Yezirah with its commentaries; the Kabbalah then absorbed all his mind, and he devoured all the Kabbalistic books, which were then produced in Spain in great profusion. But the Kabbalah as he found it did not claim his allegiance for long either; its philosophical terms and its rigid systems left him cold. He set out to find for himself the 'point of truth,' as he quaintly calls it. Neither philosophy, nor Talmudical science, nor medical

knowledge, could reveal to him the secret which he always inwardly sought. But at last, when he had reached (these are his own words) "to the names, and had untied the knots of the seal, the Lord of all appeared unto him, revealed him his secret, and made known to him the end of the *galuth* (exile) and the time of the commencement of the deliverance." What then was that secret that conferred upon him the power of prophetic vision? Abulafia did not introduce anything new; he simply disregarded all the elements of the Kabbalah except one, which was the corner-stone of the German Kabbalah: namely, the method of treating the letters of the Torah as so many symbols, and the names of angels as elementary forces which are behind the machinery of the moving world—are, in fact, the instruments of creation. The various letters, again, may be combined, permuted, in various ways which can only be known by persons of spotless integrity, of an intense religious spirit, who are clothed in white, clad the whole day in a Tallith and Tefillin. Such persons can, by pronouncing the ineffable name, cause the holy presence to rest upon them, and thus become endowed with prophetic vision. His doctrines scandalised the great men of the times, and he was hunted from town to town. He everywhere attracted to himself a following who believed his claim to messianic powers, which he made in Italy in the year 1279. In the following year he came to Rome, where he conceived the idea of converting to his creed Pope Nicholas III, who was then staying in Suriano. In spite of the Pope's command to seize him and to burn him at the stake, he somehow evaded the vigilance of the guards, and no sooner did he enter the town than the Pope's

sudden death was reported. He was subsequently seized and imprisoned, but after a month he was released. Among his disciples may be mentioned Joseph Gikatilla, author of *Ginnath Agoz* and *Sha'aré Orah*, wherein he develops the doctrine of the divine names, assigning to each its proper virtue.

Another of the school of Abulafia was Moses ben Shem-Tob de Leon, who was at any rate immediately concerned in the springing upon the world of the since famous book called the *Zohar* (Splendour)—a book which occasioned endless controversies concerning its authorship and the sources of its contents, controversies which will probably never be settled. Its alleged author is Rabbi Shimeon Ben Jochai, one of the doctors of the Mishnah, who lived in the second century; and it is given out that it was all the time hidden in the cave where he was in hiding from the Romans for thirteen years, and that it was providentially brought to light, and came into the hands of Moses de Leon, who, besides writing original books on the Kabbalah, set himself now the task of multiplying copies of the *Zohar*. The *Zohar* soon caught on, to use a common expression, not without protest, it is true; but it permeated through all sections of the community; it was soon recognised as an ancient branch of Jewish literature, nay, as the most important one, the one which gives expression to all the sublime truths that are only implied and hidden away from the eyes of the vulgar in Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, and the national observances. Moreover, it was thought that the coming to light of the *Zohar* was not a mere accident, but the fulfilment of a predestined arrangement that from a certain day the hidden things should no more be the privilege of a few elect, but the common

possession of all, to be shared by each according to his capacity. The *Zohar*, which assumed the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch, did not appear all at once in its entirety. It appeared in parts, and a number of supplements and independent books got incorporated with it, each occupying separate columns or parts of columns under a separate name.

To give an adequate account of the contents of the *Zohar* would take up too much space. It is largely made up of old Midrashim, and wherever we turn we are more likely than not to meet with our old friend the Agadah, only how changed! Allowing for the change of language (which is now Aramaic), it is difficult to tell at first where the change comes in. But we are at once struck by a change of tone, accent, point of view, and general tendency. The hierarchy of angels, the doctrine of the soul, the existence of spirits, which are only outlined in the Midrash and the Talmud, are here allowed to come out in all their fulness.

The *Zohar* is at once a religion and a philosophy. The religion is the same old and ever new religion of Israel, only a little modified. The philosophy is rather an oriental importation, a mixture of Hindu, Chaldean, and Greek thought, made suitable for Jewish acceptance.

The religious part consists of elaborate expositions, in the form of positive beliefs, of the various Jewish notions concerning such matters as the essence of man, stripped of his mere animality, the existence of higher intelligences, such as angels, and their divisions, the existence of malignant spirits and their functions. Your Kabbalist then is a general decipherer of hieroglyphics. Nature is full of hieroglyphics. The scientists have puzzled

out a few for us. But what is existence? Existence is existence, that is all we know. When did existence commence? or, what amounts to the same thing, at what time of the clock did time commence? Such trifles as the formation of the earth's crust, the origin of species, he leaves to a Lyell, a Lamarck, a Darwin; his concern, when he is at his highest, is the more wholesale one of establishing a complete system of the universe, a complete cosmogony. The principle of that cosmogony can be explained thus. The accepted meaning of the Hebrew word *bara* is 'creation,' producing something out of nothing. One second there was not, and the next second there was; it baffles the intellect. Acting on suggestions which travelled all the way from somewhere in the East, through Alexandria to Spain, and helped by the terminology of the Sefer Yezirah, the Kabbalah, keeping within Jewish belief, substitutes for the term *beriah* that of *aziluth*, commonly translated 'emanation' or 'flowing out.' The universe was all the time latent within the first cause, until out of the plenitude of the infinite there was gradually evolved the related. Another problem to be solved is this: there being nothing in common between spirit and matter, between the infinite and the finite, how could the latter be produced from the former? The Kabbalah replies thus: True, when you look at opposite ends of the scale, you find the absolute and infinite at one end, the related and finite at the other; but cast your eye along the scale, and you cannot tell where one leaves off and the other begins; it is all a matter of degree, of more or less; an angel is a man rarified, a man is an angel materialised.

For the First Cause the Kabbalah has no name,

since a name only expresses relation, which is absent from the First Cause, it being beyond any human conception. For divine names in Scripture only express the manifestations of the First Cause. By convention the First Cause is alluded to as *En-soph* (no end), the unrelated, the unmanifested.

So far so good. But then the Kabbalist becomes more involved. Probably to assist the human mind, he elaborates a detailed scheme of gradated emanations and worlds. Within the world of *Aziluth*—that is, within the world immediately emanated from the *En-Soph* (the unrelated) there are ten emanations, each lower, less refined than the other, called *Sefiroth* (numbers, enumerations, gradations). Each Sefirah is given a special name, expressive of its essence. From this world of Sefiroth (emanations) there proceeds the world of *Beriah* (creation), with its ten grades of archangels; next comes the still lower world called *Yezirah* (formation), with its ten grades of angels or higher intelligences. Finally comes our humble world, the world of matter, that of *'Asiah* (acting). The emanations or Sefiroth are the archetypes, the ideas, of all that exists in this world, so that every object must be related, according to its nature, to one or other of the Sefiroth. The whole scheme looks somewhat mechanical and arbitrary. But the Kabbalist never set out deliberately to elaborate cosmogonies. Such elaboration lay along the route of his meditations, and he was gradually drawn into it. Then, as I stated above, the speculative in the Kabbalah is intimately connected with the religious and spiritual. The above scheme is thus the outcome not of an intellectual conceit, but of a moral and spiritual impulsion. The greatest and last achievement in the divine

evolution is man. For corresponding to the downward gradations in the conceptual and ideal world, there is an upward gradation in the actual and material world; beginning with the mineral kingdom, up to the vegetable, higher still to the animal kingdom, culminating in man, who realises in himself all the lower orders, and is endowed over and above with a soul, which is part and parcel of the first and highest emanation. Seeing that this world is only a gross and material counterpart of that which immediately emanated from the First Cause, and seeing that man, like the ladder in the vision of Jacob, is planted with his feet on the ground, but his head reaching into heaven, it is obvious at once what a far-reaching moral application is involved in the Kabbalistic cosmology. A man by his action and thought may make or mar, build or break the upper worlds, which in their turn react on this world of ours. Every command in the Torah, every custom in Israel, yea, every particle of a custom, a mere accessory—the way in which the fringes are held in the hand during the reading of the *Shema'*, the way in which the cup of *Kiddush* is held in the palm—all these are so many modes of influencing the mysterious machinery of the universe; they are of far-reaching effect in the sum-total of infinite energy.

The soul, then, according to the *Zohar*, is not of this world, but is a portion of the Deity, as the later Kabbalists express it. Before she descends to this world she is clad in light and is floating in the region of the Sefiroth, enjoying the splendour of the Shechinah. When the time comes to descend, she puts off her garment of spiritual light, and takes up her habitation in a gross and material body. When the time for moving again comes,

the angel of death arrives to strip her of the body-garment; and the soul of the worthy man is covered again in her native garments, but the soul of the wicked descends into the Gehenna to be cleansed from her sin and impurities.

The problem of evil occupies a large place in the *Zohar*, which splits up the universe into two corresponding halves, one the abode of goodness, mercy, light, truth, holiness, the other the abode of wickedness, cruelty, darkness, treachery, and defilement. There are fifty gates of holiness in the one, the abode of the ministering angels; correspondingly there are fifty gates of defilement in the world of darkness, the abode of Satan, the malignant angels, and loathsome spirits. The world of darkness and sin is conceived as surrounding the world of goodness, like the husk that surrounds the grain, or the shell the kernel. The Serpent that tempted Eve, Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, the Roman Empire, every oppressing power, are the outer shells, or *sitra achara* (the wrong side). Israel and all the righteous belong to the right side.

The coming of the Messiah is repeatedly referred to in the *Zohar*, which works out the end of the *galuth* (exile) by means of the initials and numerical values of certain Biblical phrases.

The doctrine of metempsychosis (return of the soul) is an accepted doctrine in the *Zohar*. The soul of a man who has failed to accomplish his task in this world has to return again and again until the allotted task be finished. R. Isaac the Blind, the reputed father of the Kabbalah, as mentioned above, could tell by merely looking at a man's face whether his soul was a fresh beginner or an immigrant from another body. It is even believed by some that a man's soul, as a penance for certain

sins committed, re-enters this world, being clothed in the body of an animal, the kind of animal in some way corresponding to the nature of the sin. Thus R. Menachem of Recanati believed that the soul of a man who sings profane songs in company with women is doomed to inhabit an ox.

The above subjects only touch the fringe of the *Zohar*, which cannot be exhausted by the extraction of the ideas contained in it. It is a book unique, and therefore not to be judged by any standard. There is in it a certain range of ideas, revolving round and round kaleidoscopically, combining together the most heterogeneous subjects. There is no distinction made between fact and reality, and in reading it one has the impression of alternately waking and dreaming without being fully conscious of the change. There is a certain number of people with a certain number of places always turning up, without your being able to give an intelligible account of when and where it all happened. You hear the discourses in heaven on a point of spiritual interpretation which is simultaneously discussed here on earth by R. Simeon and his disciples. Elijah always turns up at the psychological moment. Beautiful prayers, pleasing anecdotes, appear in the most unlikely places to captivate the mind and arrest the attention. No wonder that this book soon became the text book of all the mystically inclined. Henceforward the *Zohar* and the Kabbalah become identified.

Nearly the first to quote the *Zohar* was R. Menachem of Recanati in Italy (1320). The soil of Italy not being congenial to the growth of mysticism, he remains a solitary example of an Italian Kabbalist, at least during the thirteenth century. There is no letter in the Torah, according to him, which

is not charged with mountains of meaning. He wrote a commentary on the order of prayers, and a book called *The Reason of the Mizwoth.*

The expulsion from Spain could not but be of tremendous influence upon the spiritual life of Jewry, and the Kabbalah must be credited with a great deal of the resisting force displayed by the Jewish population. The sum and substance of the Kabbalah was that the Torah was the all in all of the true wisdom and reality which lay behind phenomena. Martyrdom is the outcome of belief, not of mere philosophy. Mysticism now widens, deepens, retires more and more within itself, and both suffers and profits as a result. It is Turkey, especially Palestine, which offers a haven of refuge to mystical studies. There, in Safed, we meet with such well-known names in the Kabbalah as R. Moses Cordovero and R. Isaac Luria.

R. Moses Cordovero (1522–70) was of a philosophical and speculative turn of mind. He was the first to write a commentary on the *Zohar.* His *Pardes Rimmonim,* 'Garden of Pomegranates,' is very obscure and involved. It is an attempt to methodise the Kabbalistic material. He discusses the names applied to the Sefiroth, the mystery of the Throne and the Shechinah, the primeval Tohu and Bohu, the unknown darkness. A special chapter is devoted to the subject of the soul, discussing the region from which it emanates, its purpose in this world, the profit of its creation, its superiority over the angels, its divisions, and the good and evil angel accompanying each human being.

If R. Moses Cordovero was the speculative Kabbalist, R. Isaac Luria (1533–1572) was the practical one. He laid great stress on *Kavanah*

(concentrated devotion) during prayer, or during performances of Mizwoth. By this *Kavanah* man breaks through the wall of separation, looks into the invisible, and becomes holy and spiritually wise. To the same school in Safed belongs Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488–1575), author of the famous code called *Shulchan 'Aruch*. Mysticism takes hold of him very early in life. His is a double personality. With great dialectical skill and logical acumen he cuts his way through all the legal authorities that preceded him, puts in an orderly battle array all their arguments, and extracts the final law either by a majority of votes or by a casting vote, so to speak. So far we only see R. Joseph Caro the great lawyer and codifier. Now follow him into his sanctum sanctorum, into his innermost chamber; there is a small still voice communing with him; it is the voice of the Mishnah (the first Jewish code, compiled by Rabbi Jehudah Hannasi in the second century); it appears to him in the shape of a guardian angel, looking after him, directing him, warning him, and encouraging him. It accompanies him for the space of fifty years. The first words of the embodiment of the Mishnah to R. Joseph Caro were: "I, the Mishnah, am speaking through your mouth, I am the mother chastising her son, I am called Matronitha (matron); cleave only unto me and my fear and my teaching. I will grant you the privilege of going up to *Erez Israel* even this year. I will grant you the privilege of being burned *'al Kiddush Hashem* (a martyr's death)." It is well known how Caro longed for such a glorious death. Sometimes the voice of the Mishnah warns him not to eat meat except once or twice a week, not to drink too much water, not to stop even for one moment from meditating on the

Torah. If he knew how many worlds go to ruin through one moment's interruption of study, he would choose death rather than life. Sometimes it reproves him for having enjoyed this world just a little too much. It also enjoins upon him to study the Kabbalah at least twice a week.

The mysticism of Caro lay along the line of asceticism and intense piety. The man who had the most powerful influence over his mind was Solomon Molko (about 1500–1532), a most singular personality, whose life reads more like that of a reckless adventurer than that of a mystic. Had we properly organised schools for the study of Jewish history, there would not be a child in Israel that did not know the year in which Solomon Molko was born; the day when he was burnt at the stake—the most glorious day in his life (if such a paradox be permitted), the day for which he longed —and how he frustrated for a long time the plans of the King of Portugal to establish the inquisition there, by interceding with Pope Clement VII. Whilst the bloodhounds of the Inquisition were looking for him up and down Rome, he was holding intercourse with the Pope, praying him to stay the hand of the enemy against the Jews. He was a gifted orator, and cardinals came to the synagogue to hear him. He wrote books on the Kabbalah. He had a powerful influence on Caro, who expressed the wish that his soul might be united to Molcho's.

In Poland, again, the spread of the Kabbalah is exemplified by the fact that in Posen the communal Rabbi had to be thoroughly grounded not only in Talmudical knowledge, but also in the Kabbalah. From the number of Polish Kabbalists there stands out the name of R. Isaiah Horowitz (1570–1630)

commonly known as the Shlo, from the initials of the name of his book, *Shné Luchoth Habrith*. This book is a sort of popular encyclopædia of the written and oral law, on a Kabbalist basis. It is held in great esteem among the Jews, and various abridgments of it have been made.

This brings us to the end of our paper, though not to the end of our subject. From the short history here outlined it can be seen that mysticism is a struggle of the inner life against the trammels of the outer life. It wants to break through customs and conventions to the higher and deeper reality. In the early days, when the nation is still plastic, as in the time of the Prophets, mysticism appears at its purest. Subsequently, after the crystallisation of a number of national and religious customs, mysticism appears in the shape of an attempt to pierce through these customs and to use them as symbols for the higher truths sought, as it was in the Middle Ages. In the attempt to interpret Holy Writ mystically, grammar may be atrociously handled, logic outraged, philosophy perverted; but there comes a time when you are tired by grammar, bored by logic, sick of philosophy, and you say to yourself: I do not want all this, I want to break through all this, I want to fly on the wings of imagination, to see the chariot of Ezekiel's vision; I want to commune with the angels, to hold converse with the Seraphim and Cherubim, the Ofanim and Chaioth Hakodesh. You may fly as high as you wish, but when you are again enabled to descend to earth remember that it is the Jewish law that has saved you from being lost in the infinite. Mysticism has its charms as well as its dangers; and Judaism will look indulgently on a great man here and there yielding

to dreams and reveries, to mystical visions and speculations, by way of varying the daily routine of the law. But let those dreams become of undue frequency or importance, and Judaism will rudely repudiate them, bringing to bear upon them all the rigour of the law. For there is in Judaism a wholesome synthesis of legalism and mysticism, which has saved it from becoming either a visionary castle in the air or a petrified body of formulas.

VII

THE JEWISH NEW LEARNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By M. H. SEGAL

BY the term New Learning I designate the historico-critical literature on Judaism produced by the Jews in Central Europe during the nineteenth century. This New Learning differs from the Old Learning not only in its modern scientific methods, but also in its aims and tendencies. The Old Learning studied the Torah mainly in order to know how to regulate the life of the Jew in the present. Its interest in the past extended only so far as that past had any direct bearing upon the present and the future. Or, more correctly, the Old Learning did not draw any sharp distinction between the past and the present. The two formed one continuous, indivisible, living whole. The New Learning, on the other hand, sharply distinguished the past from the present. The former belonged to a period now fully terminated. It had, indeed, transmitted some of its possessions to the present, and consequently had also a direct connection with, and a great importance for, the present. But, nevertheless, the chief and primary interest of the New Learning in the study of the past was of an historical, one might almost say of an archæological, nature.

I have purposely avoided the use of the term 'Jewish Science,' by which the New Learning is commonly known. I consider this term to be not only incorrect and misleading, but also absurd. 'Jewish Science' can only mean science as pursued by the Jews, just as the corresponding terms 'English Science,' 'German Science' only mean science as pursued by the English and the Germans in their own characteristic methods. Nor is the more original expression 'Science of Judaism' much better. The study of Judaism embraces not one science only, but an innumerable host of independent sciences. Judaism is co-extensive with human thought, and to speak of a 'science of Judaism' is just as absurd as to apply the term 'Science of Germanism' to the study of things relating to the past and present of the Germans. The term 'Science of Judaism' is not permissible even in the narrow sense of Judaism as the Jewish religion. For nobody could speak of a 'Science of Christianity' or a 'Science of Mohammedanism.' I have been obliged, therefore, to avoid the expressions "Jewish Science" and "Science of Judaism" as incorrect, in spite of their obvious convenience. With this prefatory remark I will now pass on to my proper subject.

The eighteenth century was in Jewish as in general history a period of transition. It witnessed the decay and gradual termination of an old epoch in the life of the Jews and Judaism, and the beginning of a new one. The mighty convulsion produced by the compound of mysticism and nationalism, which in the previous century had shaken the whole Jewish world to its very foundations, I mean the pseudo-Messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi, continued to be the dominant force in the

Judaism of the eighteenth century. This force manifested itself in the life of that noble but erratic genius, Moses Chaim Luzzatto, at the beginning of the century, in the conflict between Emden and Eybeschütz, and in the Frankist movement in the middle of the century, and, in a purified and ennobled form, in the Chassidic movement at the end of the century. Its violence had, indeed, been spent before the commencement of our century, and it worked no longer openly and manifestly, but rather in an underhand and surreptitious fashion, yet it was still active everywhere, moving the minds of men in active sympathy or arousing bitter opposition. Sabbataism was finally suppressed in the West of Europe by the rise of another force equally violent, but far more powerful by reason of its wide extent, I mean the great intellectual and social movement which culminated in the French Revolution, and in the East of Europe by two mutually hostile Reform movements within Judaism itself, Chassidism, which destroyed Sabbataism by absorbing its permanent elements, and the New Rabbinism introduced by the Gaon of Wilna, which removed the ground from under Sabbataism by its sane and robust intellectualism. A time of such mental agitation and restlessness is not favourable to the production of a literature of a permanent and abiding value. It can only reflect its own agitated and unsettled mind, its wavering between the past and the present, between the old and the new, and at the same time sow seeds, the fruit of which will only come to maturity in a more settled and a happier future. This is, on the whole, the character of Jewish literature in the eighteenth century. The old and the new, the decayed and the vigorous appear in this literature

side by side or mingled together, often in one and the same author. Thus in the domain of Talmudical studies we have the old casuistical Novellae and the fictitious Responsa side by side with the sane and critical annotations of an Elijah Gaon ; in the domain of theosophy the old charlatan, miracle-mongering Kabbalah, together with the intense and profound ethical mysticism of M. Ch. Luzzatto, and later of the Chassidim. The voice of Hebrew song, which had long been silent, suddenly broke forth in a truly noble and almost classical note in the same Luzzatto, a note which found no worthy response till almost our own day. Grammar and exegesis revived in Zalman Hanau and Solomon Dubno, and promising changes were to be observed also in other fields.

But whilst this literary and intellectual activity was proceeding within the bosom of Judaism, drawing its whole vitality from Jewish soil, there arose another movement also within Judaism, which, however, drew its force and driving power entirely from the outside. I allude to the movement for the occidentalising of the Jews and Judaism, the beginnings of which are usually, and with some justice, associated with the name of Moses Mendelssohn. This movement produced in Judaism the only great fundamental change since the fall of the Jewish State. The change was primarily of a political character, but of so radical a nature that it involved either a complete break with the whole past, or, if possible, a readjustment of Judaism to the new life. Throughout the centuries that lay between the fall of Bar Cochba and the French Revolution Judaism existed and developed on the lines laid down by the rabbis of the school of Jabneh. The underlying political

principle was that the dispersion was of a temporary character, and that the restoration of the national polity might be expected at any moment. Hence the Jews looked upon themselves everywhere merely as temporary settlers in the countries in which they happened to live, and as forming not an integral part of the inhabitants of those countries, but rather a compact unit distinct and separate not merely in religion, but also in social, cultural, and, if one may apply this term to the Middle Ages, in national character. Thus Judaism adapted itself easily and without the least difficulty to every age and to every country. Jews sometimes felt the need of harmonising their religion with new philosophical conceptions, but never and nowhere did they feel the need of harmonising their religion with social and political conditions. Whether in Babylon or in Spain, in Germany or in Poland, the Jews ever proved themselves capable of fully observing and cultivating the religion and literature which they had brought with them from Palestine; because in all ages and in all countries they continued to remain the same people, with the same individuality, and with the same consciousness. But from the French Revolution onwards Jews began in ever-increasing numbers to regard themselves no longer as temporary sojourners, but as permanent citizens, in the countries in which they lived, and as forming an integral and inseparable part of the nations of those countries. Their ancestors had, indeed, come from Judea, but the ancestors of their fellow-citizens also had come originally from some remote region in the East. Having been settled in these countries for generations, Jews had as much right to regard themselves as real sons of these countries as their non-Semitic

neighbours. This, then, was in short the great change in the political basis of Jewish existence effected by the end of the eighteenth century.

The causes which produced this change were primarily the disappointment and the despair in the hopes of a national restoration, which followed the Sabbatai Zevi *débâcle*, on the one hand, and on the other, the spurious cosmopolitanism and the shallow scepticism which spread in the middle of the eighteenth century from Paris over the whole of the Continent, and made an easy prey of the Jewish youth in Germany. The part played in this movement by Moses Mendelssohn has been grossly exaggerated by his admirers, as well as by his opponents. He did nothing more than accelerate a change which was bound to come as a historical necessity, and of which he himself was but a product. He did not create the new era, but he ushered it in. He was both the first and the most typical of modern Jews. Mendelssohn was the first Jew who identified himself with another nation and yet remained a Jew. The best part of his life's work was devoted to the service of the German nation. He became one of the creators of the literary language of modern Germany, and one of the founders of her national literature. Yet for all that he remained all his life a warm-hearted and pious Israelite, sincerely devoted to his religion and to his people. Before his time Jewish scholars brought the learning which they had acquired from external sources to their own people, incorporating it into Judaism and thereby enriching and developing the intellectual wealth of their own nation. Mendelssohn, on the other hand, brought the products of his great mind and of his fine taste not to the Jews, but to the Germans, enriching not

the literature of Judaism, but that of Germany. The Germans he taught philosophy and literary criticism, the Jews he taught to translate the Pentateuch. Judaism, which hitherto had embraced the whole mental activity of the Jew, secular as well as religious, had thus been narrowed down by Mendelssohn into a mere religion, in the strict sense of the term. He introduced into our life a dualism which was contrary to the whole spirit of Judaism. He dissolved the old synthesis into its component parts, and separated the man from the Jew. In our activities as men we share the life of Germans, French, or English, as the case may be, and only in our relations to God are we Jews. This was the new teaching which Mendelssohn exemplified in his life and in his work.

Now this kind of life was perfectly easy for one with Mendelssohn's gifts of mind and heart, who, moreover, had been trained in the old Jewish synthesis. But to Mendelssohn's followers, to his children, disciples, and imitators, who possessed neither his intellect nor his virtues nor his training, such a dual life became extremely difficult, if not actually impossible. Traditional Judaism did not easily lend itself to be compressed and squeezed down into a small bundle, which you could keep quietly in a convenient corner of your bosom, making use of it only when and where you pleased. It claimed precedence over everything else, and demanded possession of the whole man, body, soul, and mind. And so Mendelssohn's followers experienced the conflict between Judaism and Germanism at every step and every moment of their lives. The two forces were apparently incompatible. One had to be given up, and naturally the easier and more convenient course was to give up

Judaism and retain Germanism. Thus it came about that practically all the followers of Mendelssohn threw up the burden of Judaism and exchanged the master's dualism for the German unity. But it was not to be thought that Judaism, with its wonderful vitality and pertinacity, would allow itself to be wiped out by any force, however powerful. Unable to stem the tide of Germanism, Judaism sought to effect a compromise, and to devise a *modus vivendi* whereby both Judaism and Germanism might abide together in one and the same heart. So the period of the Great Apostasy, following on the death of Mendelssohn and the French Revolution, was itself followed by a period of Religious Reform, or the readjustment of Judaism to the new conditions of Jewish existence. The different tendencies of thought ultimately resolved themselves, about the middle of the nineteenth century, into three distinct schools: the Neo-Orthodox under the leadership of Samson Raphael Hirsch, the Radical Reformers under the leadership of Abraham Geiger, and the Moderates or Evolutionary Conservatives under Zachariah Frankel. These schools, however widely they differed in doctrine and practice, were to all intents and purposes at one in accepting the new political principle of Jewish existence which I have described above, viz. that the Jews formed an integral part of the nations among whom they lived, and that Judaism was nothing more than a religion in the strict sense of the term.

But Mendelssohn's influence upon modern Judaism was displayed also in another direction through the efforts that he made to improve Jewish education. To this end he issued a German translation of the Pentateuch, accompanied by a Hebrew

commentary called *Biur*, written partly by himself and partly by other scholars under his supervision. This work, though it possesses little or nothing of permanent value, was yet a notable performance for that time, and its influence upon Jewish education was very great and far-reaching. It spread beyond the confines of Germany, and penetrated into Galicia and Russia, where it sowed the seed of a new literary revival. To the German Jews Mendelssohn's Pentateuch served mainly as a means of transit away from the Ghetto, with its disfigured jargon, into the wider German world, with its pure speech and its young and flourishing literature. To the Eastern Jews, too, the Mendelssohnian Pentateuch opened up a new world, but one which by the nature of their surroundings they had to incorporate into their own old Jewish world, thus widening the confines of the latter and introducing into it a fresh, life-giving atmosphere. Now Mendelssohn addressed himself in his educational work not to the intellect, but to the feelings. He did not seek to introduce among his brethren scientific and critical methods of study, but he sought to develop their taste, and to awaken in them a sense for the simple and the beautiful in language and in thought. Hence also his followers and his imitators confined themselves exclusively to linguistic and purely literary pursuits. Thus there arose a school of translators and exegetes, or 'Biurists,' and of writers in prose and verse who introduced into Hebrew literature new themes and a new style—the 'Meass'phim.' Their writings possess no intrinsic value whatever, but they served in their time a useful educational purpose in drawing away the minds of the Jewish youth from the dry casuistical studies of the *Yeshiboth*. Still, the eager and

subtle intellect of the Polish Jew could not be satisfied for long with the puerilities and the platitudes of the 'Meass'phim.' It soon craved for something more solid and more nourishing than the wretched verses and the empty, bombastic rhetoric offered to it by those *littérateurs*. To satisfy this craving the Polish Talmudist returned to his native studies, and began to apply to them the system and method which he had acquired through the agency of the Mendelssohnian school, and thus he evolved the new critical and historical study of Judaism.

The founders of this Eastern or Hebrew school of modern Jewish scholarship were the two Galician Jews, Nachman Krochmal and Solomon Löb Rapoport. Krochmal (1785–1840) was the older and the greater of the two. He was a typical Jewish student, modest, gentle, shy, and reserved to a fault. To him study was an object in itself, a great and holy object, which alone made life worth living. Equipped with a profound and all-embracing knowledge of the vast range of Jewish literature and thought of all ages, and deeply versed in the modern systems of German philosophy and logic, Krochmal set himself the great task of tracing the development of Jewish thought and of constructing a philosophy of Jewish history. His dread of publicity and his want of confidence in his own powers kept him back from committing his thoughts to writing, and it was only at the repeated and urgent requests of his friends and disciples that he began, late in life, to jot down his ideas. Before his death he ordered his children to send his notes to Zunz, and, after the lapse of ten years, the latter succeeded in presenting to the world a slender Hebrew volume, entitled *The Modern Guide of the Perplexed*. The

book contains a series of philosophical studies in the history of Judaism, on the age and character of several biblical books, on the Jewish sects, on Gnosticism and Jewish Alexandrian philosophy, on the character of the Agadah, and kindred subjects. The book is worthy to stand side by side with its great namesake—the *Guide* of Maimonides. That its influence upon Jewish thought has not been commensurate with its greatness is due partly to the overpowering influence of Rapoport and Zunz on the development of Jewish studies, and partly to the ever-growing estrangement of the Jewish public from Hebrew literature. But the great mind of Krochmal left its impress upon modern Judaism not so much by his writings as by the direct and personal influence which he exercised upon a select band of young friends and disciples, all of whom became prominent in Jewish literature, and all of whom owed their first inspiration, as also their subsequent intellectual acquisition, to the shy and delicate Sage of Zolkiew.

The greatest and the most renowned of Krochmal's young friends was Solomon Jehudah Löb Rapoport (1790–1868). Unlike his master, Rapoport was of a frank, lively, sociable, and enthusiastic disposition, and this was the cause of many of his troubles at the hands of the Chassidim and other fanatics. After dallying for some years with poetry and general literature, as was the fashion of the age, Rapoport began in 1829 a series of biographies of Jewish worthies, which laid the foundation of the school of historical research. These little biographies were perfect models of style and arrangement, but their chief value lay in the critical notes appended to them. In these notes Rapoport sought to substantiate the statements in the text,

and to show how he had arrived at his novel and striking conclusions, and in doing this he had to collect all the historical data, scattered pell-mell over an immense range of unexplored literature, which had any connection, however remote, with his main subject. These data he had to disentangle, to arrange, to classify, and to elucidate ; he had to submit them to a critical examination, distinguishing the gold from the dross, the real from the apparent, the true from the fictitious, and the historical from the legendary. To this herculean task Rapoport brought an erudition, a power of systematisation, a critical acumen, and a genius for combination of a truly extraordinary character. Unlike the philosophic Krochmal, who was mainly interested in broad and general principles, Rapoport revelled in the small details and the minutiæ of history, and, by his critical treatment of these seemingly trivial but really very important details, he opened up a pathway in the hitherto chaotic and labyrinthine field of Jewish history, and became both the guide and the model of all subsequent investigators. The five little biographies, covering but a few dozen pages of Hebrew print, are referred to by Zunz in his book on Jewish Homilies, published one year later, no less than one hundred and ten times. Of Rapoport's other productions the most notable is his עֵרֶךְ מִלִּין, a cyclopædia of which only the letter א has been published.

But Rapoport and his friends were not bookworms, dry-as-dust scholars whose chief interest lay in the dead past, and who were oblivious of the present and its needs. On the contrary, their chief interest was the present, and it was for the illumination of the present that they delved for precious

stones in the deep quarries of the distant past. These Galician scholars were מַשְׂכִּילִים, or humanists, men whose great object in life was to bring to their people the הַשְׂכָּלָה, or enlightenment, and to dispel the darkness and superstition and ignorance in which their contemporaries were steeped by revealing to them all that was good and noble in other nations, and, more especially, in their own great past. Unfortunately, the salutary influence of their labours did not extend to the broad masses of Austrian Jewry. The Haskalah movement in Austria was throttled between the bigotry and the fanaticism of the Chassidim on the one side, and anti-Jewish Germanism on the other side. Yet within a narrow circle the scientific Haskalah produced a rich harvest of goodly and delectable fruit. It produced men like Isaac Hirsch Weiss, the author of דור דור ודורשיו, a stupendous work on the history of the Oral Law; Meir Friedmann, the learned and acute editor of the Halachic Midrashim; Solomon Buber, the industrious and erudite editor of the Hagadic Midrashim; and a large number of other scholars, who, however, did not always preserve the Hebrew traditions of their masters, but wrote their works in non-Jewish languages. Moreover, the influence of the Galician Haskalah did not remain confined to its native country, or to the narrow circle of professional scholars. It crossed the border into Russia, and there, in conjunction with the Berlin Haskalah, it produced the great Hebrew revival which still flourishes in unabated and ever-increasing force and vigour. Space does not permit me to dwell on the history of Russian Haskalah, or on its character, tendencies, and aims. One remark must suffice. The Haskalah literature in Russia was, from its very beginning, of a more

general and more comprehensive character than the literatures of the Berlin or the Galician Haskalah. It appealed to a wider public, and took, therefore, deeper roots in the life of the Jewish people, so that it has gradually become truly national and regenerative; and this explains its great vitality and its undoubted success.

With this eastern school of Jewish scholars must also be counted the small but talented group of Italian scholars and writers, the greatest of whom was Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–65)—a man distinguished alike for his wide and profound learning, and for his strikingly original conception of Judaism. He was pre-eminent as critic, as philologist, as Bible commentator, as editor of medieval Hebrew poetry, and, above all, as an independent Jewish thinker. He adorned everything that he touched. His commentary on the Bible is, with the single exception of Geiger's *Urschrift*, the only lasting contribution made by nineteenth century Judaism to biblical science, just as his linguistic studies form, with the exception of Barth, the only serious contribution of modern Jews to Semitic philology. But greater even than these services was the service that he rendered to Jewish literature by his discoveries and editions of medieval Hebrew classics. It was he who made the treasures of the Spanish period accessible to the modern world. Living, like most Jewish scholars, a life of poverty and privation, he denied himself and his family the barest necessaries of life, in order to gather together a rich store of ancient Hebrew manuscripts, which he either edited himself, or bestowed freely, together with his guidance and advice, upon any one who showed the least inclination or ability to publish them. His great object in life was to

serve the cause of Judaism by promoting Jewish learning. He was at the beck and call of every one, whether great or small, who sought his help and assistance. His extensive correspondence with all and sundry fills many volumes in Hebrew and Italian, and forms a rich mine of information on every conceivable subject connected with Jewish learning, besides presenting a graphic picture of this remarkable personality and of his learned correspondents. A fearless and independent critic who shrank from nothing in his eager search for truth, Luzzatto nevertheless retained all his life a profound and ardent faith in traditional Judaism. He was passionately attached to everything truly and genuinely Jewish. He cultivated the Hebrew language with loving care and devotion, believing this to be the only safeguard against assimilation. The eagerness of his contemporaries for emancipation, and their readiness to sacrifice to it so much of their Jewishness, he stigmatised as downright treachery to Judaism. Luzzatto conceived Judaism as a system of ethics and morality which alone could make mankind truly happy. Atticism, by which he designated the Hellenic spirit, which served only to gratify the intellect or the senses, was the abhorrence of his soul. The vaunted progress of modern civilisation was to him but a sham and a lie, inasmuch as it only ministered to our physical comforts and rendered us more sensuous and more selfish. His ideal Jew he found in the simple, sincere and pious Franco-German Jews of the type of Rashi. He savagely attacked Ibn Ezra and Maimonides for introducing Hellenic speculation into Judaism, and he did not even spare his beloved Jehudah Halevi, with whom he had so much in common. Such, in brief, was Samuel

David Luzzatto, the greatest Jew in an age so peculiarly rich in great Jews. His contemporaries loved and adored him without understanding him. He was an enigma to his friends, an anachronism in his age. Only we of a later generation can begin to comprehend him and to appreciate the real greatness of the man and his place in Jewish thought.

The task which the Eastern School set before itself was a comparatively easy one. Writing exclusively in Hebrew, its members addressed themselves solely to their own brethren, and particularly to those who were still attached to and familiar with the national language and literature. They sought to humanise the Jews and to modernise their studies by introducing new ideas into Judaism, and by applying modern critical methods of research to the elucidation of the Jewish past. The Western or German School, on the other hand, had a far more complicated problem to deal with. In the one short generation which followed on the death of Mendelssohn the whole of German Judaism was transformed beyond recognition. The *Yeshiboth*, which had been maintained by the Rabbis in every congregation, were closed, the *Batê Midrashim* deserted, and the study of Hebrew and Jewish literature fell into desuetude. The intellectual youth of the Ghetto flocked to the German universities, and became estranged from everything Jewish. Almost everybody looked down upon Judaism as an antiquated relic of a barbarous age, quite useless, and even harmful, to a German of the nineteenth century. The highest perfection, which the modern Jew should seek to attain, was to be indistinguishable from his non-Jewish neighbour, and the greatest and noblest prize, which he should strive with all his might to acquire, was

civic and political equality. Assimilation and emancipation were to be the final goal of all Jewish existence. The German nation, however, did not take at all kindly to this sudden zeal for Germanism displayed by their Jews. They repelled the overtures of the Ghetto with redoubled hatred and disdain. Moreover, it was not easy for every Jew to shake off completely the whole inherited past. Some of it, at least the most essential and permanent elements, had to be retained, though in a form compatible with Germanism. But what elements in Judaism were essential and permanent, and what non-essential and transient? Only a scientific and critical examination of the whole of Judaism, as revealed in its entire history and literature, could offer a satisfactory answer to this great question. Hence Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), the father of the German school of the New Learning, set himself to perform this threefold task: to regain the love and devotion of the Germanised Jews for their ancestral faith and literature; to reveal to the German world the real character of Judaism, and thus secure their respect for, and their goodwill to, their Jewish fellow-citizens; and, lastly, to ascertain for Jews themselves, as well as for their rulers, on what lines Judaism could be successfully reformed from within and from without. In addition to these three objects, Zunz conceived the noble ambition of establishing what he termed a 'Science of Judaism,' which should take its place in the German universities as a recognised mental discipline alongside of classical and theological studies. Now there are fundamental differences of character between these four objects, and consequently different methods must be pursued in order to attain them. The first two

belong to distinct branches of Apologetics, the third belongs to practical politics, and the fourth to strict and abstract science. Each of these has to be pursued separately along its own lines, and in accordance with its own methods. Zunz, however, thought that he could attain all these four objects at one and the same time, and by one and the same method. He was a great idealist, and had strong faith in the power of abstract truth. He had only to proclaim to the world the bare, unadorned and unalloyed truth regarding Judaism, and the Jews would immediately hasten to restore their former love and allegiance to the old faith; the German nation and its rulers would immediately acknowledge the greatness and nobility of Judaism, and would hasten to embrace the despised inhabitants of the Ghettoes as their honoured brothers; and the haughty, supercilious German universities would immediately establish chairs for the cultivation of the new Science of Judaism. Alas, none of these miracles has yet come to pass. However, such were the aims and objects of the New Learning as laid down by Zunz, and such they have remained to this very day.

In what follows, I must confine myself to a very brief and, I fear, a very inadequate sketch of the literary activity of the chief exponents of the German school. Zunz, as I said, was the founder of this school. He was a man of encyclopædic knowledge, of astounding industry, of wonderful powers of systematisation, of an exact and painstaking precision, and withal a man of wide and generous sympathies, and master of a chaste, noble, and almost classical style of expression. He started his scholarly career in 1818 with an essay, entitled *Etwas über die Rabbinische Literatur*,

wherein he laid down the lines on which the edifice of the 'Science of Judaism' was to be raised, and which served him as a programme for his long and noble career. In 1822 appeared, in the pages of the organ of his unfortunate 'Culture Society,' the now classic biography of Rashi. Forestalled by Jost in the writing of a general history of the Jews, Zunz devoted himself entirely to the study of their inner life, in particular of that of the Franco-German and Italian Jews, to the history of Jewish literature, Jewish worship, and Jewish ethics. In 1832 appeared his epoch-making book, *Die Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden.* This work was occasioned by the prohibition by the Prussian authorities of German sermons in Jewish worship, and was written, ostensibly at least, in the interests of the Reform movement, of which Zunz was in his youth an ardent supporter. Zunz set out to prove in this book that sermons in the vernacular were not a revolutionary innovation in Judaism, and at the same time to describe the nature and character of Jewish homilies in general. But the book does much more than this. It really gives a history of Jewish homiletical, ethical, and devotional literature from the Babylonian captivity down to his own day, with a series of minute disquisitions on kindred subjects. In 1845 appeared *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, a series of detached studies in the inner history and the literature of Franco-German and Italian Jewries. His last three great books deal with the Jewish liturgy and liturgical poetry. They are: *Synagogale Poesie* (1856), *Ritus* (1859), and *Literaturgeschichte der Synagogalen Poesie* (1865). It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the work of Zunz for the history of Judaism, or to overestimate its influence upon the subsequent develop-

ment of Jewish studies. His books form an inexhaustible mine of the most precious information on everything connected, however remotely, with the religious, social, and literary history of the Jews. Each of his studies has become the forerunner and the originator of a long series of books and dissertations by later investigators and disciples. There is not one among the host of scholars and workers in the vast field of the history of Judaism and its literature who does not owe the best part of his knowledge and his enthusiasm for his studies to the noble, pious, and modest Leopold Zunz.

While Zunz has exercised this potent influence upon modern Judaism solely through the medium of his books, another of his great contemporaries has wielded an equally potent influence through the medium of his literary work combined with the direct and immediate force of his personality—I mean Zachariah Frankel (1801–1875), the founder and for twenty years the director of the first Jewish Theological Seminary. Frankel was a great man in more than one sense. He was, at least in Western Europe, the last representative of a long line of great Rabbis, who were not only scholars, preachers, and teachers, but also the secular and political leaders of the community. This is not the place to describe the important part which Frankel played in the history of Jewish emancipation, or in the religious movements of his day. I can only say here a few words about his literary activity. How extensive this activity was may be judged from the fact that a full list of his writings prepared by his pupil and successor, Dr. M. Braun, contains no less than three hundred and twenty-five items, including a goodly number of large volumes. Frankel was the founder of the scientific study of the Halachah

and Jewish jurisprudence. Like Zunz' great book on *Jewish Homilies*, Frankel's first important work, *The Jewish Oath* (*Die Eidesleistung der Juden*), published in 1840, was called forth by the political exigencies of the time. The government of Saxony forced the Jews to take the oath for the constitution in the degrading and barbarous form known as 'more Judaico.' Frankel, who was at that time Chief Rabbi of Saxony, protested energetically against the humiliation to which the Jews had thus been subjected, and the invidious distinction made between them and other citizens. In vindication of the credibility of the Jew, and of the sanctity of the Jewish oath, he wrote a critical history of the Jewish oath from the earliest Biblical times down to the *Shulchan 'Aruch*, and its relation to the oath in other systems of jurisprudence. His other works in the same field are his epoch-making *Jewish Law of Evidence* (1846), *Principles of Jewish Marriage Laws*, *Mosaic Law and Hindu Law* (1860), and a number of minor studies. To the field of Halachah belong the three great works which he wrote in Hebrew: דַּרְכֵי הַמִּשְׁנָה (1859), a book which called forth such fierce attacks from S. R. Hirsch and other representatives of ultra-orthodoxy; מָבוֹא הַיְרוּשַׁלְמִי (1870) and his very fine commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud, modelled on the commentary of Rashi on the Babylonian Talmud, which unfortunately extends only to the first three tractates.

In these fields Frankel found a goodly number of followers who continued, extended, and supplemented his studies and researches, such as Weiss, Oppenheim, Brüll, Hoffmann, Schwartz, and others. But of another important branch of Jewish learning Frankel, among modern Jews, was not only the first, but, to our shame be it said, he has also re-

mained the only exponent; I allude to the study of the Septuagint. The three books which he devoted to this subject are still, after the lapse of sixty years, of the utmost importance to the student. His work on the text and history of the Septuagint has, of course, been superseded in many respects by the researches of later Christian scholars, but his contributions to the elucidation of the exegesis and the Halachah of the Alexandrian Pentateuch still remain our only source of information on this important subject.

Frankel further rendered an inestimable service to Judaism by the two great institutions which he established and which he conducted till the day of his death: the Breslau Seminary, which trained most of our able scholars of the second half of the nineteenth century, and the *Monatsschrift fur die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which for more than fifty years has been one of the chief depositories for Jewish learning.

Space does not permit me to refer, even briefly, to the other pioneers of modern scholarship, such as the historians Jost and Graetz, Solomon Munk, the discoverer of the Jewish Arabic philosophical literature, Steinschneider, Jellinek, Sachs, Güdemann, Levy, and others. But I cannot forbear from making mention, however brief, of one of the principal figures in nineteenth century Judaism, and one of its most gifted and most original scholars, viz. Abraham Geiger (1810–74). I can only allude here to two aspects of Geiger's many-sided literary activity, an activity which extended over the field of Bible, Talmud, and medieval literature, over history, theology, philology, exegesis, poetry, and polemics. First, Geiger was the founder of the modern scientific Jewish theology. His life-

long struggle against orthodoxy and ceremonialism compelled him to subject Jewish theology to a historico-critical analysis. The conclusions at which he arrived, though not free from personal bias or controversial partisanship, proved, nevertheless, fruitful and stimulating both to friends and to opponents. Secondly, Geiger was one of the very few modern Jews who have permanently enriched the science of Biblical Criticism. His *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel* (1857) will for ever remain a monument to his vast learning, to his wonderful subtlety and acuteness, his keen and penetrating criticism, and above all to his daring, dauntless, almost audacious, spirit. But the *Urschrift* will also remain a perpetual warning to scholars never to carry a pet theory to its full limits. Geiger had a theory that the whole course of the post-exilic history of Judaism had been dominated by the internal struggles between the Zadokite priestly aristocracy, the Sadducees, on the one hand, and the popular or democratic party of the Pharisees on the other. As this struggle began presumably even before the destruction of the first Temple, traces of it ought to be found in biblical literature. But Geiger was not satisfied with discovering mere traces. He explains by his theory all the textual and other difficulties to be found in the Bible, and where no difficulties exist, Geiger creates them in order to solve them again by his master-theory. I believe I am correct in asserting that Geiger received his first inspiration from Ferdinand Christian Baur, the founder of the famous Tübingen school of Christian Theology. Baur sought to explain the internal difficulties and inconsistencies in the New Testament and other early Christian literature by the theory that they reflected the struggle between

Paulinism, Judaistic Christianity, and Gnosticism. He wrote many years before Geiger, and the latter, who was a keen student of Christian theology, must have been familiar with Baur's theory before he set to work on his *Urschrift*. There are important elements of truth both in the Tübingen theory respecting the New Testament, and in Geiger's theory respecting the Hebrew Bible, but both these theories were carried by their respective authors to extravagant lengths. The influence, however, of Geiger's theory upon the study of the Bible and of earlier Jewish history has been as great and as far-reaching as that of Baur upon the study of the New Testament and early Christian history. But among Jewish scholars Geiger's *Urschrift* found no followers. Its very boldness and audacity deterred Jews from engaging in the critical study of the Bible. So that the *Urschrift* is, to my mind, responsible, in some measure, for the lamentable fact that modern Biblical Science has become the exclusive monopoly of Christian scholars.

This, then, must conclude my sketch of the rise of the New Learning, and of its principal exponents. The time has not yet come for forming a correct estimate of its effects upon Jews and Judaism. But so much may be said: its immediate results have not realised the great hopes of its founders. The great literary activity of the nineteenth century has failed to reach and to influence the general Jewish public. Its results are not to be seen in life, but in the libraries. The modern Jew of to-day still remains estranged from Judaism, and indifferent to its demands. If signs of an improvement are to be detected here and there, this improvement has been produced not so much by the New Learning as by the New National-

ism. Further, no one can be so bold or so sanguine as to assert that the attitude of the Christian world towards Judaism has materially improved during the nineteenth century. No doubt there are to be found here and there a few Christians who entertain a genuine respect and admiration for Judaism and for Jewish virtues. But this was also the case in the eighteenth century. The general attitude of the non-Jewish world towards Judaism continues to-day, as a century ago, to be that of mistrust and depreciation. Finally, the problem of how to harmonise traditional Judaism with the new political principle of Jewish existence still remains unsolved, and is daily becoming more difficult and more complicated. The fact is, as I have pointed out before, that the New Learning attempted to do too much at the same time. The combination of Apologetics and Science has led to confusion, and has proved harmful to both objects. The educated layman has been frightened away from this literature by its technical and scientific character, while the professional Christian scholar has distrusted it as presenting merely a subjective and biased picture of Judaism. How far this distrust has reached may be seen from the fact that a *savant* of such undisputed eminence as the late Professor Lazarus felt it necessary, in the introduction to his *Jewish Ethics*, to take a solemn oath that all the statements in his book were in strict accordance with the truth. In the interests, therefore, of both, Apologetics and Science should in the future be kept strictly separate and distinct. But above all, it is of supreme importance to the future of Judaism that the New Learning should, like the Old Learning, bestow greater attention on the urgent demands of the present. Jewish scholarship should not

strive so much for the recognition and approbation of Christian scholars as for the attachment and devotion of the broad masses of the Jewish people. If Judaism is to become again, as of old, a real and active power in the life of the Jews, then the study of the Torah must first be restored to its former place of honour as the most vital and most sacred avocation of every Jew, whether Rabbi or layman. The Torah must cease to be the exclusive possession of the professional student, and must become again, as it had always been, the common property of the whole Jewish people. It is the sacred duty of the modern representatives of Jewish learning to bring about this consummation. They have become the guardians of a precious trust. Let them see that they fulfil loyally their sacred obligation.

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