The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism

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called for is to hallow the intercourse with all things and beings in the life of the everyday.

The first revolt of the *am-haaretz,* the movement of early Christianity, stormed out of the gates of Judaism. Its second revolt, the Hasidic, remained within the borders of Israel. For, in distinction to the first which demanded that one should live as though the Kingdom of God had already dawned, Hasidism affirmed the natural reality of the still unmessianic hour as the material to be hallowed, and thereby it also affirmed the people as such, the great unholy body, which is destined to be hallowed.

CHAPTER III

SPINOZA, SABBATAI ZVI, AND THE BAAL-SHEM

I Thirty-two years before the Baal-Shem-Tov was born, there died within a short space of time two remarkable Jews. Both no longer belonged to the Jewish community, the one, the philosopher Baruch Spinoza, through the excommunication of the synagogue, the other, the "Messiah" Sabbatai Zvi, through conversion to Islam. These two men mark a late-exilic catastrophe of Judaism, Spinoza a catastrophe in spirit and in the influence on the Gentile nations, Sabbatai Zvi in life and in the inner structure. Spinoza has certainly remained without important historical influence on Judaism, but still he belongs in its course of history, and in an essential manner; for as Sabbatai's apostasy signified the historical placing in question of Jewish Messianism, so Spinoza's teaching signified the historical placing in question of the Jewish belief in God. Both thereby conducted to its conclusion a process which had begun with a single historical manifestation, with Jesus. To both a new process provided the reply and the correction, a process which also began

with a single historical manifestation, with that of the Baal-Shem-Tov.

The great deed of Israel is not that it taught the one real God, who is the origin and goal of all being, but that it pointed out that this God can be addressed by man in reality, that man can say Thou to Him, that he can stand face to face with Him, that he can have "intercourse" with Him. Wherever there is man, to be sure, there is also prayer, and so it has probably always been. But only Israel has understood, or rather actually lives, life as being addressed and answering, addressing and receiving answer. Mystery cults at all stages of mankind, to be sure, have wanted to introduce man into an apparently much more intimate interchange with the deity; but, as everywhere where it is a question of an exceptional state of being instead of the lived everyday, in what is felt here as the divine only an image born of man is to be perceived, an image of a partial manifestation of the real God who is the goal and origin of all being.

> The little finger of His left hand
> Is named Pan.

God in all concreteness as speaker, the creation as speech: God's call into nothing and the answer of things through their coming into existence, the speech of creation enduring in the life of all creation, the life of each creature as dialogue, the world as word—to proclaim this Israel existed. It taught, it showed that

the real God is the God who can be addressed because he is the God who addresses.

Jesus—not, certainly, the actual man Jesus, but the image of Jesus as it entered into the soul of the peoples and transformed it—allows God to be addressed only in conjunction with himself, the Christ. Only as borne along by him, the Logos, can the human word now penetrate to Him who is the origin and goal of all being; the "way" to the Father now goes only through him. In this modified form the peoples received Israel's teaching that God can be addressed. It came to pass that they learned to address Christ in His place.

Spinoza undertook to take from God His being open to man's address. One cannot suppose that his *deus sive natura* is "another God." He himself meant no other than Him whom he had addressed as a boy, Him who is the very origin and goal of all being; he only wanted to purify Him from the stain of being open to address. A God who was capable of being addressed was not pure enough, not great enough, not divine enough for him. The fundamental error of Spinoza was that he imagined that in the teaching of Israel only the teaching that God is a person was to be found and he opposed it as a diminution of divinity. But the truth of the teaching is that God is *also* a person, and this is, in contrast to all impersonal, unaddressable "purity" of God, an augmentation of divinity. Solomon, who built the Temple, knew that the whole of the heavens do not reach God and that He nonetheless elects for Himself a dwelling in the midst of those who address Him, that He is therefore both, the boundless

and nameless as well as the father who teaches His children to address Him. Spinoza knew only: person or not person. He overthrew person as an idol and proclaimed the substance existing from itself to whom it would be folly or bad poetry to say Thou.

However little late-exilic Judaism learned from Spinoza, through him something of Judaism entered into the possession of the peoples, and what entered thus cannot be cut off from its origin. Something from the innermost center of Israel, however modified, had once penetrated through Christianity into the Gentile world. It is of great significance that only a Jew could teach men how to do away with it, and a Jew has done so. Spinoza helped the mind of the intellectual among the peoples to liberate itself from that which had penetrated it; the tendency of the Western spirit toward monological life was decisively forwarded by him —and thereby the crisis of the spirit in general since in the air of monological life it must gloriously wither.

The Baal-Shem-Tov probably knew nothing of Spinoza; nevertheless he has given the reply to him. In the truth of history one can reply without having heard; he does not mean what he says as a reply, but it is one. And that the reply of the Baal-Shem did not come to the attention of the spirits who received the speech of Spinoza, also does not diminish its significance; in the truth of history even what remains unknown can be valid.

In order to make clear this first character of reply of the Hasidic message, I must indicate a basic theme of Spinoza's that is closely bound up with that of the

"purification" of God, but seems to belong to a still deeper level of the spirit.

The real communion of man wtih God not only has its place in the world, but also its subject. God speaks to man in the things and beings that He sends him in life; man answers through his action in relation to just these things and beings. All specific service of God has its meaning only in the ever-renewed preparation and hallowing for this communion with God in the world. But there is a danger, in fact, the utmost danger and temptation of man, that something becomes detached from the human side of this communion and makes itself independent, rounds itself off, seemingly perfects itself to reciprocity, yet puts itself in the place of real communion. The primal danger of man is "religion."

That which thus makes itself independent can be the forms in which man hallows the world for God, the "cultic-sacramental." Now they no longer mean the consecration of the lived everyday, but its amputation; life in the world and the service of God run side by side without connection. But the "God" of this service is no longer God; it is the semblance—the real partner of the communion is no longer there; the gestures of intercourse fall on the empty air.

Or it may be the state of the soul accompanying the communion that makes itself independent, the devotion, the intention, the absorption, the ecstasy. What was destined and directed to flow into confirmation in the fullness of life is cut off from that fullness. The soul wants to have to do with God alone, as if God wished that one exercise one's love for Him toward

Him alone and not toward His world. Now the soul imagines that the world has disappeared from between it and God, but with the world, God Himself has disappeared; only it alone, the soul, is there. What it calls God is only an image within it, what it conducts as dialogue is a monologue with divided roles; the real partner of communion is no longer there.

Spinoza lived in an age in which the becoming independent of soul and cult once again combined. Having become aware of its alienation from God, the West did not seek to give its world-life the direction to God, but to enter into a world-free intercourse with God in mystical and sacramental exaltation. The charming fictitiousness of Baroque is the artistic issue of this undertaking. From Spinoza's spiritual attitude it can be seen that such would-be intercourse was what he really held to be impure. Not outside the world, but only in the world itself can man find the divine; Spinoza set this thesis in opposition to the bifurcation of life that had become current in his age. He did so out of a primal Jewish impulse; out of a similar impulse there once arose the protest of the prophets against the sacrificial cults which had become independent. But his attack swung beyond this legitimate object. Along with world-free intercourse, all personal intercourse with God became unworthy of belief for him. The insight that God cannot be addressed apart from the unreduced reality of life because just in it He speaks, was inverted for him into the view that there is no speech between God and man. From being the place of the

meeting with God, the world becomes for him the place of God.

That the Hasidic message may be understood as a reply to Spinoza, even though its speakers and hearers knew nothing of him, arises from the fact that it expressed the confession of Israel in a new manner, one through which, in fact, it became a reply. From of old Israel confessed that the world is not the place of God, rather that God is "the place of the world," and that He still "dwells in" it. Hasidism expressed this primal proposition anew, namely in a wholly practical manner. Through God's indwelling in the world the world becomes—in general religious terms—a sacrament; it could not be such if it were the place of God: only just this, that God transcends it yet dwells in it makes it a sacrament.

This is no objective expression, which can rightly exist independent of the lived life of the human person, still less, to be sure, one which can be enclosed within the subjectivity of the person alone. In the concrete contact with man the world again and again becomes sacramental. That means: in the concrete contact of its things and beings with this man, you, me. The things and beings, in which all the divine sparks dwell, are entrusted to this man that he may redeem the sparks in his contact with them. That one has thus been given charge of the things and beings in their sacramental possibility—this constitutes the existence of man in the world. This world is not, therefore, like that of Spinoza, a world persevering beyond the life that is to be lived and the death that is to be died, mine and

yours, but the concrete world of this moment of personal existence, ready to be a sacrament, ready to bear the real happening of redemption. It is that which is entrusted to us, that which is joined to us, that which is offered us; it is that in which God addresses me and in which He wants to receive an answer from me.

The self-enjoyment of the soul which confounds its entangled self-intercourse with true dialogue in the All-Light is here excluded; God is not indifferent to His creation. But also excluded is the metaphysical construction of the spirit that believes that it can gaze into Being through looking away from the lived situation and imagines that it can talk about God as though He sat as a model for its conceptual images. Such metaphysics misses the God who hides Himself rather in the irreducible particulars of just this moment of thought, a mystery not to be delineated by any concept, yet appearing, addressing, offering itself in the concreteness of the situation—and rejected without answer in metaphysical looking-away.

In this basic attitude, the factual receiving of God in the things, the Hasidic message is a completion and extension of the ancient teaching of Israel. A completion: "Be holy, for I am holy" shows itself in the whole realm of the law not as a command for the hallowing of man away from the things, but for the hallowing of things through man, as his service to creation. But at the same time an extension. Thus the sacrifice in ancient Israel is the cultic sister of the meal that cannot exist without it, thereby hallowing part of just the same organic material the rest of which fell to the

nourishment of men. But in Hasidic life eating itself has become sacramental service: through the hallowed receiving of food there takes place for animals and plants the redemption of the creature through the uplifting of the sparks. If the distinction of the law between pure and impure animals still sets to work here, limiting and circumscribing, so in the extension of the hallowing to all activities, the setting apart of the province of nature fundamentally removed from hallowing is fundamentally overcome: all that is allotted to the human person for his use, from cow and tree to field and tool, conceals sparks that want to be uplifted through this man, that will be uplifted by this man in holy use; and even meetings with strange things and beings in foreign lands means a holy deed.

But it is not merely in the world that there is no longer a basic division: also in the soul of man. As the things and beings which one has to work with have been entrusted to him, so also the apparently strange conceptions, thoughts, wishes that fall into the soul. In all of them vibrate sparks that want to be redeemed by man. Nothing, in fact, is unholy in itself, nothing is in itself evil. What we call evil is only the directionless plunging and storming of the sparks in need of redemption. It is "passion"—the very same power which, when it has been endowed with direction, the one direction, brings forth the good in truth, the true service, the hallowing. Thus there no longer exist side by side in the soul of man the worldly and the spiritual, qualitatively sundered, there is now only power and direction. He who divides his life between God and the world,

through giving the world "what is its" to save for God "what is His," denies God the service He demands, the giving of direction to all power, the hallowing of the everyday in the world and the soul.

In the Hasidic message the separation between "life in God" and "life in the world," the primal evil of all "religion," is overcome in genuine, concrete unity. But a rejoinder is also given here to the false overcoming of the separation through the abstract dissolution of the difference between God and the world. Hasidism preserves undiminished God's distance from and superiority to the world in which He nonetheless dwells. In this distance Hasidism sets the undivided wholeness of human life in its full meaning: that it should receive the world from God and act on the world for the sake of God. Bound to the world, receiving and acting, man stands directly before God—not "man" rather, but this particular man, you, I.

This very teaching of man's being bound with the world in the sight of God, the reply of Hasidism to Spinoza, was the one element through which Hasidism so overpoweringly entered into my life. I early had a premonition, indeed, no matter how I resisted it, that I was inescapably destined to love the world.

II

And the other element—yet basically it is no other, but the same.

What is the meaning of the world's need for redemp-

tion? But what is the meaning of the indwelling of God, "He who dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness"? It is basically the same question. The uncleanness of creation and its need for redemption are one; that God dwells in it and that God wills to redeem it, these too are one.

The uncleanness of creation and not merely of man; the indwelling of God in the world and not merely in the soul; one must proceed from here to grasp what the Hasidic message has to say concerning redemption.

What we call "evil" is not merely in man; it is in the world as the bad; it is the uncleanness of creation. But this uncleanness is not a nature, not an existent property of things. It is only its not standing firm, not finding direction, not deciding.

God has created a world and has called what was created very good—where then does the bad come from? God has created a world and has celebrated its completion—where then does the incomplete come from?

The gnosis of all ages opposes to the good power of God another primal power that works evil; it wishes history to be viewed as the battle between these two powers and the redemption of the world as the victorious consummation of this battle. But we know what has been proclaimed by the anonymous prophet whose words stand in the second part of the Book of Isaiah: that like light and darkness, so good and evil have been created by God Himself. No uncreated power stands in opposition to him.

Then is not the evil, the bad, a nature, an existent

property, after all? But the darkness also is no nature, but the abyss of the absence of light and the struggle for light; and even as such created by God.

The Bible sees evil as penetrating into creation through a deed of the first men; but it knows a non-human creature who insinuates just this deed and is therefore evil, the "serpent." Late Kabbalistic teaching, within the framework of which Hasidism developed, removes the penetration of evil back into the event of creation itself. The fire-stream of creative grace pours itself out in its fullness over the first-created primal shapes, the "vessels"; but they do not withstand it, they "break in pieces"—the stream showers an infinity of "sparks," the "shells" grow around them, the lack, the uncleanness, the evil has come into the world. Now the incomplete cleaves to the completed creation; a suffering world, a world in need of redemption lies at God's feet. But He does not leave it to lie in the abyss of its strugglings; after the sparks of His creative fire fall into the things, His glory itself descends to the world, enters into it, into "exile," dwells in it, dwells with the troubled, the suffering creatures in the midst of their uncleanness—desiring to redeem them.

If the Kabbala does not say so explicitly, still it unmistakably includes in this teaching the conception that already these primal vessels, like the first men, were accorded a movement of their own, an independence and freedom, if it was only the freedom to stand firm in the face of the stream of grace or not to stand firm. The sin of the first men is also, in fact, represented as a not standing firm: all is granted to them,

the whole fullness of grace, even the tree of life is not forbidden them; only just the knowledge of limitation, of the relations of the original purity and the uncleanness that has come to be in creation, only just the mystery of the primal lack, the mystery of "good and evil" God has reserved for Himself. But they did not stand firm before the fullness; they followed the promptings of the element of limitation. It is not as if they revolted against God; they do not decide against Him, only they just do not decide for Him. It is no rebellious movement; it is a perplexed, directionless, "weak-minded," indolent movement, this "stretching out of the hand." They do not do it, they have done it. One sees in them the directionless storming and plunging of the sparks in need of redemption—temptation, turmoil, and undecided deed. And so they "know" the limited, of course, just as man, as men know, as Adam later "knew" his wife; they know the limited, mixing themselves with it, knowing "good-and-evil," taking this good-and-evil into themselves, like plucked and eaten fruit.

A not standing firm, therefore—we know it, we for whom day after day the situation of the first men ever again recurs for the first time; we know this suffering action that is nothing but a reaching out from the directionless whirl; we know about the storming and plunging and self-entangling of the sparks, we know that what moves them is our badness, our need and desire for redemption. And perhaps we know too the other, those mysterious, inconceivable moments, that gentlest breakthrough, the receiving of direction, the decision,

the turning of the swirling world-movement to God. Here we experience directly that self-movement, independence, freedom is accorded us. Whatever may be the case with the rest of creation apart from man, we know of man that in being created he has been set in life as one who, in reality and not in fleeting moments of self-deception, can do two things: choose God and reject God. His ability to fall signifies his ability to ascend; that he can bring ruin on the world signifies that he can work for its redemption.

However narrowly some religions and theologies may wish to understand it (perhaps as the mere capacity to believe or to refuse belief), this concrete receiving of man into power remains the real core of the religious life because it is just the core of human life in general. However narrowly it has been understood, the fact remains that the creation of this creature man signifies the mysterious saving-out of a codetermining strength, a starting-point for events, a beginning. Not at one time only, but at all times does this creature stand free to choose God or to reject Him, or rather to leave unchosen. Does that mean that God has given away a portion of his determining might? We only ask that when we are busy subsuming God under the laws of our logic. But the moment of breakthrough in which we experience directly that we are free and yet now know directly that God's hand has carried us, teaches us from out of our own personal life to draw near to the mystery in which man's freedom and God's determining power, the reality of man and the reality of God, are no longer contradictory.

One can also put the question otherwise. The first men stood in freedom before they fell away from God. Does that mean that God had not willed what they did? How then can something happen that God does not will? No theological argumentation can be of any further help to us here, only the determined insight that God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, that His will cannot be grasped and handled like ours. We may say that God wills that man should choose Him and not fall away from Him; but we must add to that that God wills that His creation not be an end in itself, that His world be a way. Further, in order that this take place in reality, the creature must of himself walk the way, of himself and ever again of himself: the fall must be as real as the redemption. Man is the creature in whom the path of the world is concentrated and represented. As of himself he completes the fall, so he must be able of himself really to work on redemption. Does that mean that God is not able to redeem His world without man's cooperation? It means that God wills not to be able. Does God need man for His work? He wills to need him.

God wills to need man for the work of completing His creation; in this sentence is to be grasped the foundation of the Jewish doctrine of redemption. But that God wills this means that this "needing" becomes working reality: in history as it takes place, God waits for man.

It is not merely in appearance that God has entered into exile in His indwelling in the world; it is not merely in appearance that in His indwelling He suffers

with the fate of His world. And it is not merely in appearance that He waits for the initial movement toward redemption to come from the world—really initiating and not merely in appearance. How it happens that this is not appearance but reality, how something from out of His world, whether it be falling away or returning, can happen to God, the All-powerful and the All-knowing, that is a mystery of God the Creator and Redeemer, not more mysterious to me than that He is; and that He is is to me almost less mysterious than that I am, I who write this with trembling fingers on a rock bench above a lake.

It would be senseless to ponder how great the share of man may be in the redemption of the world. No share of man and share of God exists. There is no "up to here" and "from there on"; there is nothing measurable and weighable here; basically, it would already be false to speak of a working together. That is true, indeed, for all human life and perhaps for all created life. It is senseless to ask how far my own action reaches and where God's grace begins; they do not in the least limit each other. Rather what alone concerns me before I bring something about is my action and what alone concerns me after it has been accomplished is God's grace; the latter not less really than the former, and neither of the two a partial cause. God and man do not divide the government of the world between them; man's effecting is enclosed in God's effecting and is still real effecting.

Thus the lived moment of man stands in truth between creation and redemption; it is joined to his being

acted upon in creation, but also to his power to work for redemption. Rather he does not stand between the two but in both at once; for as creation does not merely take place once in the beginning but also at every moment throughout the whole of time, so redemption does not take place merely once at the end, but also at every moment throughout the whole of time. The moment is not merely joined to both, both are included in it. Creation did not "really" take place once for all, nor is it now merely "carried on," as it were, so that all acts of creation, including this one that now takes place, add up to the work of creation. Rather the word of the prayerbook, that God renews the work of creation every day, is entirely true. The act of creation that now takes place, is thus wholly capable of initiating, and the creative moment of God stands not only in the sequence of time, but in His own absoluteness. As in the realm of creation, in which God alone rules, the moment is thus not merely from somewhere, but occurs out of itself and in itself, so is it in the realm of redemption, in which God grants and demands that His effecting should incomprehensibly enclose the effecting of the human person. Not merely toward the goal of perfection, but in itself, too, the redemptive moment is real. Each one touches directly on the mystery of fulfillment; each not merely borne by the goal but also by meaning; each inserted in the sequence of time, inserted in its place in the great path of the world and there being effective, but each also sealed in its testimony. That does not mean that the moment becomes a mystical timeless now, rather that it is filled

with time: in the wavering fraction of time, the fullness of time announces itself—not as a happening in the soul, but as a bodily happening in the world, out of the concrete meeting between God and man. It is "the down-flowing of the blessing."

The Hasidic message has also expressed in a quite practical way the knowledge, handed down to it in secret and open teachings, concerning this All-Day of redemption. And, in opposition to the enormous apparatus of Kabbalistic instructions, in opposition to the powerful exertions of "him who hastens the End," it has proclaimed in the strongest and clearest manner: there is no definite, exhibitable, teachable, magic action in established formulae and gestures, attitudes and tensions of the soul, that is effective for redemption; only the hallowing of all actions without distinction, only the bearing to God of ordinary life as it comes to pass and as it happens, only the consecration of the natural relationship with the world possesses redemptive power. Only out of the redemption of the everyday does the All-Day of redemption grow.

On this teaching the Hasidic reply to that catastrophe of Jewish Messianism that stands under the name of Sabbatai Zvi is founded—a reply not merely in the truth of history, but also taking place in its reality.

It is a mistake to regard Jewish Messianism as a belief in an event happening once at the end of time and in a single human figure created as the center of this event. The assurance of the co-working strength that

is accorded to man, to the generations of man, unites the end of time with the life lived in this present. Already in the prophecy of the first exile there appears a mysteriously strong intimation of the series of "servants of the Lord," arising from generation to generation, who lowly and despised, bear and purify the uncleanness of the world. In later writings this intimation is supplemented by a secret perspective of world history in which the great figures of Biblical narrative also bear a Messianic character: each of them was summoned, each refused to some extent; the special particular sin of each implied just that refusal before the Messianic summons. Thus God awaits in the generations of men the man in whom the indispensable movement from the side of the creature wins its decisive power. With the deepening of the exile of the world, which is represented by the exile of Israel, those servants who appear in each generation sink from the openness into the hiddenness; they no longer perform their deed in the light of known history, but in the darkness of an inaccessible personal work of suffering, of which no report or only a distorted one reaches the outer world. But the more sorrowful the fate of the world becomes, the fate with which God suffers through His indwelling in the world, so much the more does the life of this man become meaningful and effective in itself. They are no longer mere foreshadowings of the Messianic figure, as it were; rather in them the Messiahship of the end of time is preceded by one of all times, poured out over the ages, and without this the

fallen world could not continue to exist. They are indeed attempts of the creature, forerunners, but still the Messianic power itself is in them. "Messiah son of Joseph appears from generation to generation." That is the suffering Messiah who ever again endures mortal agony for the sake of God.

This Messianic mystery rests upon the hiddenness; not upon a secret attitude, but upon a genuine, factual hiddenness reaching into the innermost existence. The men through whom it passes are those of whom the nameless prophet speaks when he says, in the first person, that God sharpens them to a polished arrow and then conceals them in His quiver. Their hiddenness belongs to the essence of their work of suffering. Each of them can be the fulfilling one; none of them in his self-knowledge may be anything other than a servant of the Lord. With the tearing apart of the hiddenness not only would the work itself be suspended, but a counter-work would set in. Messianic self-disclosure is the bursting of Messiahship.

In order really to understand the relation of Judaism to the appearance of Jesus, one must descend into the depths of this faith, which is not condensed in any creed but can be shown from the testimonies. Whatever the appearance of Jesus means for the Gentile world (and its significance for the Gentile world remains for me the true seriousness of Western history), seen from the standpoint of Judaism he is the first in the series of men who, stepping out of the hiddenness of the servant of the Lord, the real "Messianic mystery," acknowledged their Messiahship in their souls

and in their words.* That this first one in the series was incomparably the purest, the most legitimate, the most endowed with real Messianic power—as I experience ever again when those personal words that ring true to me merge for me into a unity whose speaker becomes visible to me—alters nothing in the fact of this firstness; indeed it undoubtedly belongs just to it, to the fearfully penetrating reality that has characterized the whole automessianic series.

To it undoubtedly also belongs the fact that the last in this series—that Sabbatai Zvi who died in the same year as Spinoza—sank into the deepest problematic, slid over from an honest self-assurance into a pretended one, and ended in apostasy. And it was not a small band that clung to him, like the followers of the earlier men in the series. Rather Jewry itself adhered to him and accepted his statements as legitimate proclamations, statements which they once would have found intolerable and would have taken as evidence against any divine summons. It was, to be sure, a Jewry distraught in an abyss of suffering, but it was still the bearer of a real crisis: the self-dissolution of automessianism. Always before, the people had resisted the proclamations of the "*meshihim*" and its own thirst for redemption. Now that it gave up its resistance this one

* This does not mean that Martin Buber thinks that Jesus himself necessarily saw himself as the Messiah, though he did stand under the shadow of the Deutero-Isaianic servant of the Lord. For Buber's full discussion of this difficult problem see his *Two Types of Faith* (1951), Chapter X. See also below, Supplement, "Christ, Hasidism, Gnosis," Section 2, for a fuller treatment of this problem.—Ed.

time, the catastrophe prepared the end not merely of this one event, but of the whole form of the event: the meeting of a man who had taken the fateful step from the hiddenness of the servants of the Lord to Messianic self-consciousness, with a group who took it upon themselves to begin the kingdom of God.

In order to understand what is at stake here, it is necessary to recognize that it is not a question of what appears self-evident to our age, of the concurrence of two self-deceptions, one of a person and one of a group. It is a question of two real transgressings of a real boundary, a boundary on which man can move only with the anxious responsibility of the trembling needle of a magnet. The occurrences of the automessianic epoch of the Jewish faith in redemption (to which those of baptism in its varied forms correspond on the Christian side) were a mishap, but a mishap that befell the reality between man and God.

The Hasidic message of redemption stands in opposition to the Messianic self-differentiation of one man from other men, of one time from other times, of one act from other actions. All mankind is accorded the coworking power, all time is directly redemptive, all action for the sake of God may be Messianic action. But only unpremeditated action can be action for the sake of God. The self-differentiation, the reflexion of man to a Messianic superiority of this person, of this hour, of this action, destroys the unpremeditated quality of the act. Turning the whole of his life in the world to God and then allowing it to open and unfold in all its

moments until the last—that is man's work toward redemption.

We live in an unredeemed world. But out of each human life that is unarbitrary and bound to the world, a seed of redemption falls into the world, and the harvest is God's.

CHAPTER IV

SPIRIT AND BODY OF THE HASIDIC MOVEMENT