SABBATAI SEBI (1626-1676), Jewish mystic, whose Messianic claims produced an unparalleled sensation throughout the world, was born in Smyrna. He was of Spanish descent and was gifted with a personality of rare fascination. As a lad he was attracted by the mysticism of Luria (q.v.), which impelled him to adopt the ascetic life. He passed his days and nights in a condition of ecstasy. He began to dream of the fulfilment of Messianic hopes, being supported in his vision by the outbreak of English Millenarianism. Christian visionaries fixed the year 1666 for the millennium, and in his appeal to Cromwell on behalf of the return of the Jews to England Menasseh ben Israel (*q.υ.*) made strong appeal to this belief. Sabbatai’s father (Mordecai) was the Smyrna agent for an English house, and often heard of the expectations of the English Fifth Monarchy men. Dazzled by this confirmation of his nascent confidence, Sabbatai for a time found himself the object of suspicion and even persecution. This treatment, so far from extinguishing the flame, eventually converted it into a conflagration. It was in 1648 (the year which Kabbalists had calculated as the year of salvation) that Sabbatai proclaimed himself Messiah, and in Constantinople came across an able but somewhat unscrupulous man, who pretended that he had been warned by a prophetic voice that Sabbatai was indeed the long-awaited Redeemer. Others believed in him, but at first his adherents were a small circle of devotees who kept their faith a secret. He charmed men by his sweet singing of Psalms, and children were always fascinated by him. And now the era of his miracles begins. He journeyed to Jerusalem, and there was the instrument for conferring unexpected services on the community. An oppressive exaction was imposed by a local pasha, and in order to win the succour of Raphael Halebi, Sabbatai repaired to Cairo, being on his route at Hebron hailed as Messiah. His mission was completely successful. At Cairo Sabbatai married. As a boy he had been married and divorced twice—but these were merely nominal unions. Now, however, the romantic story of a beautiful girl (Sarah) was on people’s lips; she was firm in her assertion that she was the destined bride of the Messiah. Sabbatai had, at the same time, announced that in a dream a spiritual bride had been promised to him. At the house of Halebi bride and bridegroom met. The adhesion of Halebi produced many imitators, and with a retinue of believers, a charming wife and considerable funds, Sabbatai returned in triumph to the Holy Land. Nathan of Gaza assumed the role of Elijah, the Messiah’s forerunner, proclaimed the coming restoration of Israel and the salvation of the world through the bloodless victory of Sabbatai “ riding on a lion with a seven-headed dragon in his jaws ” (Graetz). Again 1666 was given as the apocalyptic year. Threatened with excommunica­tion by the Rabbis of Jerusalem, Sabbatai returned to Smyrna (autumn of 1665). Here he was received with wild enthusiasm, and the masses were carried beyond all bounds. With delirious joy the Jews of Smyrna—men, women and children—fell down and worshipped. They prepared for the return. Men left their work to make ready for the start. They fasted, they rejoiced; one hour they chilled themselves in the cemeteries, the next they rushed frantically through the streets singing Psalmic refrains. Nor did Sabbatai’s adherents all belong to the ignorant classes. The Rabbi Ḥayim Benveniste and other men of repute and learning shared the general delusion. It is unnecessary to tell the rest of the story in detail. Many letters are extant, written home to English and Dutch business-houses, in which the marvels of Sabbatai are reported, sometimes with apparent belief in them. From the Levant the Sabbataean movement spread to Venice, Amsterdam, Hamburg and London. Sabbatai was no longer able to doubt the reality of his mission. Day by day he was hailed from all the world as king of the Jews. But his character was too weak to sustain the part. Though he was almost deified by many of his brethren, who at his word agreed to modify their religious observances, yet he was unable to turn the enthusiasm of thousands to any account. Had he boldly led the way to Jerusalem, he would probably have carried every- thing before him. At the beginning of the fateful year 1666 Sabbatai went (or was summoned) to Constantinople. Here

he was arrested, but reports of miracles continued, and many of the Turks were inclined to become converts. Soon he was transferred to Abydos, amidst the almost tragic consternation of his deluded followers. In September Sabbatai was brought before the Sultan, and he had not the courage to refuse to accept Islam. And so the Messianic imposture ended in the apostacy of Sabbatai. The reaction among the Jews was terrible, and a sense of shame was joined to feelings of despair. But the sober- minded among the Jews—these had throughout been the vast majority—seized their opportunity to reclaim those who had been the victims of a terrible wrong. Yet many continued to believe in him, as he from time to time attempted to resume his rôle. In 1676 he died in obscurity in Albania. A sect of Sabbataeans—the Dormeh of Salonica—survived him, and for many a long year the controversy for and against his claims left an echo in Jewish life.

The literature on the life and career of this remarkable man is very extensive. Sabbatai Sebi figures largely in English books of the period. A valuable account is given in particular by Graetz, *History of the Jews,* vol. V. ch. iv. I. Zangwill has a brilliant sketch of Sabbatai’s career in his *Dreamers of the Ghetto.* (I. A.)

SABBATH, the day of cessation from work,@@1 which among the Hebrews followed six days of labour and closed the week.

I. *Observance.—*The later Jewish Sabbath, observed in accordance with the rules of the Scribes, was a very peculiar institution, and formed one of the most marked distinctions between the Hebrews and other nations, as appears in a striking way from the fact that on this account alone the Romans found themselves compelled to exempt the Jews from all military service. The rules of the Scribes enumerated thirty-nine main kinds of work forbidden on the Sabbath, and each of these prohibitions gave rise to new subtilties. Jesus’s disciples, for example, who plucked ears of corn in passing through a field on the holy day, had, according to Rabbinical views, violated the third of the thirty-nine rules,@@2 which forbade harvesting; and in healing the sick Jesus Himself broke the rule that a sick man should not receive medical aid on the Sabbath unless his life was in danger. In fact, as our Lord puts it, the Rabbinical theory seemed to be that the Sabbath was not made for man but man for the Sabbath, the observance of which was so much an end in itself that the rules prescribed for it did not require to be justified by appeal to any larger principle of religion or humanity. The precepts of the law were valuable in the eyes of the Scribes because they were the seal of Jewish particularism, the barrier erected between the world at large and the exclusive community of Yahweh’s grace. The ideal of the Sabbath which all these rules aimed at realizing was absolute rest from every­thing that could be called work; and even the exercise of those offices of humanity which the strictest Christian Sabbatarians regard as a service to God, and therefore as specially appropriate to His day, was looked on as work. To save life was allowed, but only because danger to life “ superseded the Sabbath.” In like manner the special ritual at the temple prescribed for the Sabbath by the Pentateuchal law was not regarded as any part of the hallowing of the sacred day; on the contrary, the rule was that, in this regard, “ Sabbath was not kept in the sanctuary.” Strictly speaking, therefore, the Sabbath was neither a day of relief to toiling humanity nor a day appointed for public worship; the positive duties of its observance were to wear one’s best clothes, eat, drink and be glad (justified from Isa. lviii. 13). A more directly religious element, it is true, was introduced by the practice of attending the synagogue service; but it is to be

@@@1 The grammatical inflexions of the word “ Sabbath ” would show that it is a feminine form, properly *shabbat-t* for *shabbāt-t.* The root has nothing to do with resting in the sense of enjoying repose; in transitive forms and applications it means to “ sever,” to “ put an end to,” and intransitively it means to “ desist,” to “ come to an end.” The grammatical form of *shabbāth* suggests a transitive sense, “ the divider,” and apparently indicates the Sabbath as dividing the month. It may mean the day which puts a stop to the week’s work, but this is less likely. It certainly cannot be translated “ the day of rest.”

@@@2 From the Thirty-ninth was deduced the familiar "Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts i. 12), based primarily, it would seem, upon the com- mand in Ex. xvi. 29. It was a distance of 2000 cubits.