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# The English Jew and his Religion

BY  
C. G. MONTEFIORE  
AND  
CAPTAIN BASIL L. Q. HENRIQUES

WADSWORTH & COMPANY  
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## FOREWORD.

The history of the following pamphlet is this. The first named of the two authors upon the title page wrote a paper which was submitted to, and re-cast by, the second. The result was then revised by both.

Some things in the result might have been somewhat differently expressed if it were not a joint composition; yet is there nothing in it which either writer does not accept. The whole was written some months before the close of the war. The sentences which indicate this have, however, not been changed.

It should be added that the type or phase of Judaism to which both writers pay allegiance, the first prefers to call Liberal, the second prefers to call Reform, Judaism. But by these two different words both the writers mean essentially the same thing.

C.G.M.  
B.L.Q.H.

November, 1918.



# The English Jew and his Religion.

## The Jew and England.

The English Jew is a fortunate being. And when we speak of the English Jew, it is perhaps scarcely necessary to add that we include the Jew of the great Dominions beyond the seas, as well as the Jew of the United Kingdom.

He is, or rather, he can be, most fortunate, because, on the one hand, he is a citizen of England and of the British Empire. To this country he can give his love, his strength, his life. It is here that he can make his home, and the home of his children and grandchildren. It is here where he can live the full life and realise himself. That, on the one hand. And, on the other, he is fortunate because his religion is Judaism—a great and a true religion, capable, moreover, of becoming greater and truer yet, as the years roll on; a religion with a noble past, and, it is to be hoped, with a still nobler future.

A citizen of England, and a Jew by religion! This is a real and workable combination. It is also a right, a happy combination, for passionate loyalty to England and passionate loyalty to Judaism go well together. They strengthen each other, for these two loyalties, loyalty to our country and loyalty to our religion, are needed for a full and happy life.

What, then, does this loyalty to England demand of us? It demands service—not a passive obedience or a negative service, which merely does not do wrong, but a positive service, which strives actively towards the country's progress. It demands the willingness and the desire to serve England in peace and in war. It demands the sharing of its ideals and the readiness to give of one's utmost towards their realisation. Full citizenship, not merely in its legal sense, but in the



higher sense of service, of devotion, of undivided love and allegiance, is half, perhaps more than half, of a man's higher nature. Until he becomes a citizen, he is only half a man. But apart from what he is to gain as a mere man by a true loyalty to England, this loyalty is owed to England by the Jew. It is the just recompense of her even-handed justice. England has given to the Jew liberty, equality, fraternity. One's blood boils if these great gifts are not answered by a single, an undivided and a complete allegiance; if the loyalty paid towards England is other than profound and pure. One's blood boils with indignation, if there be any shirking of responsibilities, any cowardly shrinking away from the burdens of citizenship in the hour of danger.

England is, indeed, willing to give a temporary home to a certain number of aliens and birds of passage. Such persons have neither the rights nor the duties of citizenship. But it is clear that every State must desire, and even legitimately demand, that the vast majority of those who seek the hospitality of its borders should turn themselves as rapidly as possible into citizens—should become one with the rest of the population in the duties, the responsibilities and the aspirations of citizenship. Either England is to be the permanent home of the immigrant or she is not. If she is not, the sooner the immigrant can leave her the better for the immigrant, because until he becomes a citizen, he is only half a man; the better for England, because she wants permanent citizens, on whose complete and passionate loyalty she can rely, upon whose unwearied service she can count. Let, then, the Jewish, like other, immigrants quickly choose. If they cannot give their undivided allegiance and love to England, then let them select another land and another home, of which the climate and the citizenship may be more to their liking and their taste. But if they choose England as their home and their country, they need



not be afraid of anti-Semitism. Englishmen of the Jewish religion who desire to serve England will not be rejected by her. She will deal fairly and squarely by the Jew, if the Jew deals fairly and squarely by her. She will not allow differences of religion to prevent fellowship, citizenship, friendship. Every citizen has the right to adhere to whatever religion will guide him and inspire him to lead the best and the fullest life, to make the greatest use of his powers and faculties, to mould his nature into its finest shape. If his religion can do that—and unless it can, it is surely worthless and meaningless—and if Judaism is the religion which a man adopts as most capable of doing it, as being most near truth, then the State will neither impede nor interfere, for the State recognises that just as a man without citizenship is but half a man, so a man without religion is without one of the best endowments of human nature. The fullest and best personality is likely to be that man who has a country which he loves and a religion which he adores, and who serves both with full and unquestioning allegiance. A religionless man may lead a noble life, and many doubtless do. But a religionless man, who calls himself a citizen of England and also a Jew, is a contradiction in terms, whilst a religionless man who calls himself a Jew and who lives in a country, but does not seek to be an active citizen of that country, tends to be a most unattractive creature, and to be disliked and despised both by the citizens of the country and by those whose religion is Judaism. On the other hand, the better citizen the Jew becomes, the purer will become his conception of Judaism; and the better he is as regards his religion, which means the keener his love of God, the better citizen will he become. These two sides of his life deepen and purify each other. He requires both, and he cannot do without the one or the other.

## The Furnace.

A book has recently appeared of absorbing interest. It is called "The Church in the Furnace." But it is not only the Church of England which is in the Furnace. Every religion is in the furnace, or if it is not, it should be. If it is not, it must be outside the world, this throbbing world at war; it must be in a corner: it cannot be greatly affecting men's lives. But it is not only religions which are in the furnace, but the old order of things altogether, and it is not only the old institutions, but man himself. Men are asking everywhere for truth, for fundamentals, for realities. They want to get rid of shams. They have little use for trimmings and trappings *if* these conceal emptiness. They need essentials. Surely something better, finer, nobler is to come out of the flames. The demands for self-sacrifice, for courage not only under shell fire, but in sorrow and anxiety, for effort and perseverance, for good fellowship and charity, for the suppression of lives of emptiness and selfishness, demands so nobly met and lived up to, cannot leave us as they found us. We shall emerge with a higher conception of life, of our duties towards the State and towards one another.

The questions might be asked: Will religion be wanted any more? Has it lived its day? Has it become bankrupt? Is it incapable of taking its share in the great rebirth? Surely not. Religion is too fundamental a fact in human life to be uprooted even by any amount of new knowledge or bitter experience. The need of it, the value of it, the reality and the truth of it, are always being manifested, maintained and championed again and again. The difficulties of believing in God were never greater than now, but yet, on the other hand, the nearness, the reality of God were, probably, never more intensely felt. Service to man has intensified and sanctified the joy of service to God. The utmost evil has been shown, but also the utmost heroism. And the heroism proves and

manifests God more than the evil negates Him. We do not admire true beauty any the less because we see ugliness, nor, because there is evil, can it make us cease to love and adore righteousness. The goodness and love displayed by man, justify and support a belief in a Divine goodness and a Divine love. And if God be indeed a true reality, then we need Him not a little, but very much.

But religion, if it is to aid and inspire man, must be compatible with the ideals which will have been fashioned in the furnace. It must be something real to him, it must have a grip on him, supplying the passion and the hope to persevere towards the realisation of his ideals. It must be a religion which will serve him not merely now in the present struggle of war, but which will serve him in the coming struggles of peace, a peace, as we suspect that it will be, not of rest and of calm, but of turmoil, a peace in which the new order will struggle to the birth. A religion will be required which will serve man's whole life, which will be related to, and influence, all sides of his life, all its troubles and all its strifes.

Whatever the particular religion may be, it must be a living and an effective religion. Its test must be: "Does it result, or does it tend to result, in impelling and helping men to lead lives of courage and truth; of humility and self-sacrifice; of righteousness and love? Is it vital, is it effective?" If you can feel the presence of God without you and within you; if you are free from hate, whether of the rich or of the poor; if your religion has aided you in truth, in purity, in honour, then it has stood the test. In order to help us in this way, it must be a religion which will bring unity into our lives, and supply a driving force and motive power for all that is best in us and highest. It must contain no discord with our English citizenship, but must promote it; it must contain no discord with our growing knowledge, but must be in accord with it. It



must be the spirit of, and supply the strength and sustainment to, social service. It must aid us in our struggle for purity, for freedom from prejudice and passion; it must help us to be humble. It must liberate us from conceit. It must make us eager for duty. Can Judaism be such a modern, vital and effective religion? Can it be a religion for modern England?

### **The First Essential of Religion.**

In the first place, the centre of such a religion must still be God. In the hustle and bustle of life, in the turmoils and changes which are imminent, in the social conflicts which may soon be upon us, we shall want God to be very real and near to us. We shall want a belief in a living righteousness, a ruling love. We shall want a God who cares, in whom we can trust, with whom we may have communion. We shall want a Father, a Shepherd, a Guide. We shall want a God who is changeless and eternal, who influences us, who helps us and works with us. Our help in ages past, our help to-day and evermore—and our help because there is a kinship between His nature and our own.

Such a God is the God of Judaism. A belief in such a God is the central, the cardinal doctrine of Judaism. Judaism believes that there is one God, the Creator of the world, that He is the source and the fountain of all the goodness and beauty and love and righteousness in the world, that He has made man and breathed into him a part of His own spirit, thereby making man capable of goodness and of love, and thereby guiding man towards goodness and love. Judaism believes in the kinship and the relationship between man and God. It adores God, not only because He is wonderful and glorious, but also because He is near and loving, caring for each individual, understanding each different man, ready to help every human being who calls upon His name. Such is the

nearness of the God of Judaism to those whom He has created that they have for Him a love so deep and passionate and burning that for His sake they are willing to act, to serve, and to sacrifice themselves. He is the great impelling force in their lives. He is their just, their merciful, their compassionate Father. They are His humble, His persevering, His loving children.

To this extent, then, Judaism is surely fitted to be a religion for to-day and a religion for to-morrow.

### **The Second Essential of Religion.**

But so far we have only reached what we might call a purely private and individual religion. Man wants such a religion. He wants a private, individual communion with God: but he wants something more as well. He is a social being, and he finds and realises himself in social work, in living among and for his fellows. The experience which he obtains in living with and for his fellows enriches himself. It is only through our intercourse with others that our very soul's life, even the inner life, is fed and brought to maturity.

But religion has also to do with society, and manifests itself in society and in our social life and experiences. Just as man realises himself, and puts forward his qualities, in social endeavour and in living with his fellows, so too in religion he gains experience through combining and associating with others. Public, institutional religion and private, individual religion can help each other. The average man, at any rate, needs both, and without both, his religious life is likely to be poor and starved.

Man is so essentially social a creature that he can scarcely possess a vital religion in the highest degree unless it is a *shared* religion. It will be vitalised, strengthened, deepened, by giving and taking, by joining in the religious life of his fellows, by helping and being helped.

We need to worship God in public as well as commune with Him in private. The reasons for this are threefold.

(i.) For most people, religious feelings, experiences and emotions are gained and strengthened by religious exercises and ceremonials, which are mainly performed in groups, whether the smaller group of the family (a most important and permanent religious as well as social group) or the larger group of the religious community.

(ii.) Religion is an inheritance, and man inherits and shares, to a large extent, the religious views and even the religious practices of his group.

(iii.) In the Army, though the Regiment or Battalion is only a small part of the whole, it is nevertheless *in* the regiment and *through* the regiment that the individual has the opportunity to express himself. The pride in the traditions of the regiment, and the desire to add fresh glory to these traditions, stir the individual soldier to make the utmost effort for the good of the regiment, and through the regiment for the good of the whole army and of the British Empire. So too is it that the group, represented by the church or the synagogue, although only a part of the whole, enables the individual to express himself, by inspiring him, through his loyalty and allegiance, to give his utmost to, and to do his utmost for, the cause towards which the church or the synagogue, as part of the whole, is striving, the cause of humanity. This reason, it would appear, is especially true of the Jewish Church with its special mission for which, as we believe, the Jews have been called by God.

Apart, therefore from the private religious life, prayer to, and communion with, God, there is the communal religious life, the prayers and other ceremonial acts which are performed in groups—although even individual prayer may be accompanied by ceremonial acts, as for example, when the Jew lays his



*tephillin*, wears his phylacteries. These ceremonial acts may be looked upon as specifically religious acts, in the sense that they are acts which have no other purpose outside themselves, and which are seemingly unconnected with the broad religious life as we have defined it.

Why is it not enough, it may be asked, if religion impels us to social service, if it drives us on to diminish social wrongs and injustices, to increase social well-being? Surely, to "do justice and love mercy" is religion, and still more is it religion if it is done with the thought of God and the desire to serve Him in our minds! What more do we need than to commune with God in private? What have these specifically religious acts to do with leading the highest social life?

The soldier too might similarly ask, why is it not enough if I am strong and brave and cool, if I can shoot well and use my bayonet? Why should I spend many hours in learning to form fours and how to salute an officer? What have such acts to do with making me into a good fighting man?

The answer to both questions is that these things are needed, because they strengthen us in our human weakness, and because the experience of generations has shown with some conclusiveness that such acts are necessary and essential.

But with these specifically religious acts, there seems to be this further justification. Man expresses himself in thinking, in feeling and in doing. Hence in his life with God, in his specifically religious life, he needs to think and feel and do. Private prayer and communion supply the opportunity for thinking and feeling. These specific religious ceremonials supply the material for doing. Furthermore we may say that their beauty, their distinctiveness, their value, lie in their apparent purposelessness outside themselves. They are done for God's sake, and for the sheer pleasure of them, and for no other reason or purpose whatever. These religious

actions are purely ideal actions. But they must be subordinated to, they must only be an aid for, the main work of religion, such as we have defined it.

Judaism provides for the public and the social side of religion in its public worship and its group ceremonials, through its synagogues and its institutions and its social communal life. Judaism too provides for the specific religious acts in the many laws and customs of the Bible and of Tradition. Few religions have so many outward ceremonials as Traditional Judaism, and it is because these outward ceremonials are so peculiarly liable to be degraded, and to take a wrong place in our conception of religion, becoming the main and primary, instead of a secondary and complementary, work, that it is necessary to say a few words about their history. We may then be better able to estimate them at their true value and importance.

### **The Jewish inheritance.**

Though a religion only lives in its adherents, who are actually alive, it is not created by them. They may carry it forward and develop it, but they have not fashioned it themselves. They enter upon an inheritance: they adopt, at best adapt, they take over, perhaps improve, or perhaps disfigure. What we receive is much greater than what we add. What we accept is much more than what we transform.

How then was that created, which we have received? The full story of a religion's antecedents can never be recorded; yet we know that in each historic religion, there are great formative periods, in which distinguished men—spiritual heroes—have played important parts and made exceptional contributions. Judaism, as we are all aware, affords a peculiar example of such an illustrious period of formation. Men lived in the thousand years between, shall we say, 1200 and 200 B.C. who were, as we may fitly believe, not untouched by the spirit of God, inspired

men as we often call them, men who rose above the level of their generations in spiritual insight and in religious power. These great men either wrote themselves as well as taught, or they left their impress upon others who wrote about them and their teachings. Parts of the varied literature of this long formative period have been preserved to us, and the collection of it we call the Bible. The Hebrew Bible comprises Prophecy, History, Stories, Legends, Religious Songs, Proverbs, Laws. Written by a very large number of different people in very different ages, it reaches many different levels of religious value and religious maturity and religious truth. Other religious works followed, of lower originality, of lesser worth, but yet of great importance in the history and development of Judaism. We allude to the vast Rabbinical literature.

In this literature and in the Bible are to be found :

(a) Statements concerning the nature, character and will of God, as many minds of many ages conceived them.

(b) The history and nature of the institutions in which it was thought that the religious life of the people and the community might and should be expressed.

(c) Some of the highest ethical teachings of some of the greatest and most inspired minds.

(d) Some of the prayers and thoughts and aspirations and ideals of deeply spiritual men of many different ages.

(e) The history of some of the saints and martyrs of the religion.

(f) The story of the formation of the Jewish consciousness, of a mission, a charge, entrusted to it by its Divine Master.

(g) In outline, the great fundamental principles of the Jewish religion—principles which each succeeding generation has received from the Bible as well as from its predecessor.



Such then is the inheritance which has been handed down to us. When the question was asked, Can Judaism be such a religion as we have seen to be wanted by the modern man in modern society?, we were not asking a meaningless question. It might be argued: If we are feeble and selfish and conceited; if we are bad citizens; if we are filled with class prejudices and prepossessions, all that is *our* fault. Let us blame ourselves; let us not blame Judaism. The religion is not at fault; the fault lies rather with those who do not live up to its teachings, its aspirations, its ideals. This answer is true up to a certain point. But it is not the whole truth. It is not merely true to reply, "The religion is all right; all depends upon its adherents." Something depends upon the adherent, but something also upon what the adherent receives. He may receive something which he cannot use for the purposes to which religion, in our modern society and in the near future, is to be put. He may receive something which he no longer can hold as beautiful, as sanctifying and as right. The result then may be discord, a lack of harmony, a pulling both ways. If he inherits something which does not harmonise with his modern aspirations, something in the man will suffer. It may be that in his eager aliveness, in his social enthusiasm, in his passion for knowledge and truth, he will gradually reject the religion, even reject all religion, and regard it as obsolete, thereby losing that fine unity of character, that noblest and master passion, which only religion can supply. The best citizen, stirred and prompted to his citizenship by the love of God, helped and sustained in his citizenship by the inward life with God, would then be wanting. You may get a noble citizen, or you may get, perchance, a love of God and a private religious life, but if the religion is at war with certain sides of life upon which the man sets high store, with knowledge, with citizenship, for example; if it cuts athwart essential values in his deeds and his ideals, you

cannot get that best combination of all : the passionate loyalty to country and the passionate loyalty to religion.

Religion has to unite the various sides of life together, fashioning them into a spiritual harmony, and shedding light upon, and infusing warmth into, them all. Much depends upon the individual, his ardour, fidelity, resolve. Much too may depend upon his willingness and capacity to develop and carry forward. But beyond a certain point, he cannot go. For there are religions which may be incapable of such transformation and development, and which may, in some respects, even impede a man's life or obstruct it.

### **The two groups of Jewish thought.**

We who write these lines are Jews by conviction as well as by inheritance, because we hold that Judaism can help us, can influence and inspire our whole life : that it is capable of being developed and carried forward. Nevertheless, we have to admit frankly and squarely that the religion in which we believe is not in all respects the Judaism of the majority of Jews in this country, or of the majority of Jews in the world. It is the Judaism of a particular group within the larger group of Jews as a whole. Doubtless the religion of each individual Jew or of each individual man assumes a particular and separate line : it is *his* religion, and if really his, he ought to, and he will, give it a particular flavour of his own. But in our case, it is also a religion of a group, and the group calls its particular kind or type of Judaism, Reform or Liberal Judaism. Much as we may dislike having to use any qualification or adjective, much as we would prefer to call ourselves purely and simply 'Jews,' yet we must recognise the fact that the innumerable individual conceptions of Judaism run off into two distinct groups—Orthodox or Traditional Judaism and Reform or Liberal Judaism. These two groups have very much in common, but they are in some

respects at variance with one another. Every Jew believes that *his* Judaism is the right and true Judaism, the Judaism of the future, the Judaism which will survive. But in so far as there are substantial differences in the points of view of the two groups, it seems that it is necessary to use an adjective to differentiate between them. Just as an Ulsterman, although he is an Irishman quite as much as a man from any other part of Ireland, yet on many occasions likes to call himself an Ulsterman, in order to show that his point of view is different from the point of view of other Irishmen, so a Reform Jew feels it necessary on many occasions to call himself a Reform Jew, although he is no less a Jew than the Traditional Jew.

Judaism has been handed down to us, and inherited by us, in a continuous religious literature, from the Bible down to our own time, and Judaism, therefore, whether Traditional or Reform, is an historical religion.

History is a sort of spinal chord providing consistency and continuity. Without it, a religious group would come and go, appear and disappear: the experience of one age would not serve for the enrichment and instruction of all the generations that are to follow. History must be a steadying and guiding force, but it must not be a burden. The adherents of a religion must be free to interpret and to criticise, free to judge and to select.

Conscience and reason, the highest gifts of God, impress upon us, and upon every generation in its turn, the duty and the right, the responsibility and the trust, informed by all the knowledge we can obtain and by the highest standards of truth and righteousness to which we can reach, to examine, to criticise, and to judge, the records of the past preserved in books, as regards their worth and their truth, as regards their present day value and usefulness. Men to-day are going to exercise and claim this right, even though they are not learned scholars.



This freedom towards its records, its teachings, its institutions; this right of judgment and of appraisal, and of any action which may thence ensue, Judaism possesses in the highest degree—but only, as we believe, one phase of Judaism:—Reform Judaism. Herein lies one of the most important differences between Reform and Traditional Judaism. But yet it is this very freedom which will be required of religion in the future, so that it may prevent the primary from becoming secondary, and the secondary from becoming primary, so that it may freely take stock of the past, and adjust the secondary according to the needs of the present.

In a religion like Judaism where so much has been, and is, contained in, and where so much is due to, a given religious literature, it is more than ever necessary to take up some attitude towards the various problems which it raises, to try to find the true valuation of its teachings and to decide how much of them is applicable to our modern times and life. This is true to some extent as regards the Rabbinic literature: it is much more true and much more imperative as regards the Bible. Where, too, as in Judaism, the formative literature includes a series of laws, institutions and ceremonials, which are supposed to have been enjoined by the will, or at the order, of God, this attitude becomes very urgent. For whether all these laws are or are not to be observed, or whether they are to be modified, varied or altered, depends (1) upon our conception of the *manner* in which they were originally given, and (2) on the purpose for which they were so given and imposed.

### **The authority for the outward ceremonials.**

Men are beginning to think for themselves. They are going to seek for essentials, for fundamentals, for realities. They can no longer be satisfied to perform the outward ceremonials of their religion without

examination and enquiry as to their purpose and their value. They will ask themselves why they refrain from doing such things as, for example, not smoking or riding on the Sabbath, or not eating rabbits or unkosher food. The fact that their fathers and grandfathers refrained from doing these things before them will not satisfy them. They will want to know the use, the purpose, the religious value, of such prohibitions or ordinances. They will want to know and to believe in the authority for these ceremonial laws and institutions. Are they to take them at their face value? Are they to believe the record which declares about all the Biblical laws that they were dictated to the lawgiver by the Divine Being Himself, that they were and are due, if not to His own voice ("and the Lord spake unto Moses saying")—perhaps this idea is no longer believed by anybody—then at all events to His direct and immediate instigation and inspiration? Such questions are of importance: it is impossible for modern man to shirk or to evade them.

The two groups of Judaism, the Traditional and the Reform, answer these questions in two broadly different ways. Traditional Judaism tends to make the ceremonial laws and institutions of the Bible and of the Talmud ends in themselves, fixed and unalterable. It tends to see in them the absolute decrees of God. "Here," it says, "is the inspired code, accept it as a whole, or reject it as a whole. You have no right to examine it, or to choose from it. It is the law of God, the all-righteous. All that you must do is unquestioningly to obey it." Reform Judaism, on the other hand, tends to make these laws and institutions means and instruments, liable to change, transformation, curtailment or cessation. It tends to see in them the creations of man, even though more or less impelled and guided by the spirit of God. "Here," it says, "is religion as it was revealed to the minds of some great and inspired men of many ages. Yet only those things which we

believe to be true for all ages and true for all men can be the absolute decrees of the God who is Truth, who is both eternal and universal. Let us be guided in our treatment of these laws and institutions by the same spirit which impelled and guided those who made them, by our reason and our conscience, the most glorious of God's gifts to man. Let us sift out the divine from the human, the good from the less good, the eternal from the temporary. Let us adopt and adapt and transform. Let us make use of that which will help or inspire. Let us discard that which impedes or retards."

The one group of Judaism stands, then, as regards these laws and institutions, in a position of unquestioning and loving obedience: the other group of Judaism stands towards them in a position of respectful liberty. How this difference has come to be, and what is the full justification of the new attitude, cannot here be discussed. It must be studied elsewhere.

### **The causes and dangers of the growing neglect of Judaism.**

Many faithful adherents of Traditional Judaism deplore the growing tendency to neglect the ceremonial enactments. Let us seek to set forth some of the causes of this growing neglect among English Jews. Doubtless the causes on which the faithful adherents of Traditional Judaism would chiefly dwell are true causes, so far as they go. Indifference, slackness, laziness, dislike of restraint and discipline; the difficulty of observing many of these enactments outside the ghetto, and an unwillingness to do, or to put up with, the disagreeable and the difficult. All these causes are doubtless, to some extent, true. All operate. But they are not the only causes. They do not fully account for the situation. If men still *believed* as their grandfathers believed, their actions would more closely resemble their grandfathers' actions. Hence we have



to look for deeper causes than those which have just been enumerated. Such causes are :—

(i.) The doubt whether God *did* directly order these ordinances, or whether He wishes us still to observe them.

(ii.) A growing suspicion that the observance of these ordinances, in their totality, is incompatible with modern, occidental, citizen life, in peace as well as in war.

(iii.) A doubt whether the series of these enactments and observances really constitutes religion. A certain impatience with the character and triviality of many of them : a certain conviction that religion must be something deeper, more spiritual, more inward.

There are three dangers which are to be feared for the English Jew of to-day. The first is that there are many, who, being under the impression that there exists only one type of Judaism, and only one group of Jews—the group which maintains that the religion cannot be modified and developed—do not believe that Judaism is a religion which can cohere with, and be the driving spiritual force for, the best and most ardent English citizenship. Such persons may either abandon Judaism altogether, or allow it gradually to drop out of their lives.

The second fear is lest the abandonment of Judaism may lead such persons to the abandonment or depreciation or false estimate of religion as a whole.

The third fear is lest others may cling to Judaism, but not thereby obtain a religion which is compatible with, and will drive them on to, the best and fullest citizen life.

In this last case it is to be feared that both the Judaism and the citizen life, which, as we have shown, should react for good upon one another, with an influence passing and repassing from one to the other, may suffer in degree or in quality. The danger, therefore, is that English Jews, in the stirring and difficult

times that are upon us and that are ahead of us, may either be not such good and keen citizens, or not so ardent and fervent in their Judaism, as they might and should be. Either alternative is sad to forebode, and all the sadder if it be needless. It is needless, for one kind of Judaism, at least, is capable of doing and being all that is required. That is the Judaism which takes up the attitude of respectful freedom towards the religious rites, institutions and ceremonials of the past and of the present, regarding them as means and not as ends, as secondary and not as primary.

Judaism cannot supply that force which will impel and urge a man on to the best and most active citizen life, unless it is something essentially other and more than a mere observance of ritual ordinances and ceremonials, unless these things are secondary and something else is primary. But surely, like every other religion, Judaism *is* essentially something else! Like every other great religion, Judaism is essentially a view and an interpretation of life and of the world. Judaism gives us an outlook upon life and interprets it. It is a spirit, explaining, colouring, impelling. It provides us with our beliefs about God and man, this life and the next. It makes man, not a lonely individual seeking after his own ends, but a child of God, guided by Fatherly love, a member of the brotherhood with God's other children, for whose service he must live and strive. It is this view and interpretation of life, this spirit and spiritual power, this emotion and passion, which are primary and which are essential.

### **The Purpose of the outward ceremonials.**

But besides this, Judaism also includes the observance of ritual ordinances and ceremonies, which it has inherited; it supplies us with the secondary and complementary side of religion, and those specifically religious acts, which have been already mentioned. In order to estimate their value, we not only want to

satisfy ourselves about the manner in which they were originally imposed, but also as to their purpose. Let us, therefore, enquire what are the spiritual and religious purposes for which the various institutions and ceremonials were presumably ordained or maintained. It may be asked: if these purposes and ends are part of the Jewish view and interpretation of life, can or should we not maintain all the ritual ordinances in the old way? Even if we have the right to change or cancel, is there any need to do so, if the purpose of these ordinances is always desirable?

Yet let us note that though the end and purpose may be excellent, the means may not necessarily be excellent as well. Each age may have to vary the means, though the purpose may remain the same. Judaism, in a secondary degree, does largely consist of a number of ritual ordinances and ceremonials. But if, as is possible, some of these ordinances conflict with the exigencies of modern citizenship, with the demands on our social service and social life; if some of them are not observable except at a cost which may be incommensurate with the result, they stand condemned from the modern point of view both of religion and of citizenship.

The purposes roughly fall under nine heads:—

1. Sheer OBEDIENCE. If these ordinances are given by God, they are His will, His command. It is not for man to question the decrees or the will of God, who is perfectly wise and perfectly good. What He orders must be good. Man has only to obey and to obey gladly, willingly, adoringly. But if we no longer believe that these laws were ordered by God, that He did so command us not to eat rabbits and lobsters, not to partake of meat and milk together, and not to kindle fire upon the Sabbath, then clearly we can no longer observe these ordinances merely from the point of view of sheer obedience.

2. To promote SEPARATENESS—a dubious purpose in our modern life and for our modern citizenship.



It is true that, in order to maintain our religious distinctiveness, so that the Jews may remain a separate brotherhood, chosen by God to fulfil a certain mission, it is necessary for Jews and Jewesses only to marry among themselves or to marry proselytes to Judaism. It is quite arguable too, that, for a similar reason, the rite of circumcision should be retained. But apart from marriage, social intercourse between Jews and Christians is eminently desirable, and any ritual observances whose *sole* purpose is to hinder such intercourse are retrograde and out of date.

3. To promote SANITATION and hygiene. This was a purely utilitarian purpose. But with the growth of science and the development of medical knowledge, and because of the fact that we are now living in a western and not an eastern country, this purpose, like the second, is necessarily obsolete, except where it would promote a cleanliness which, for example, through lack of education or through bad housing, might otherwise be lacking.

4. To obtain merit and REWARD. Here we have risen religiously above the purpose. To do an act in order to obtain merit and reward is to deprive the act of any value or beauty. It is to deprive it of any moral or religious worth. We have already spoken of certain religious actions having their distinctiveness and their value in that they have no purpose outside themselves. If done for reward, the bloom is rubbed off. The value is gone, while the very idea of reward for ritual actions is to us moderns grotesque.

5. To maintain NATIONAL continuity. This was not a religious purpose at all, but, like the second, was to promote separateness by the retention of national customs and characteristics, regardless of their relationship to God, until the Jews be re-established in a land of their own. It is obvious that such a purpose, which is a negation of English citizenship, is obsolete and valueless to the Englishman of the Jewish faith to-day.

6. For DISCIPLINE. That was a fine purpose. With it we enter the moral sphere. To have to do certain things at certain times, or to be careful to refrain from doing other things, may have a useful disciplinary effect upon the character. The actions themselves may be petty or outward, yet the results of them may be spiritual and inward. If their effect be spiritual and inward, then for the purpose of discipline some ceremonies should be retained in the private life of the individual. They would be like the hair shirt of the mediæval friars, a form of asceticism which would be an aid to a higher life.

7. To promote HOLINESS—again a fine idea and a fine purpose, closely connected with the last. Ritual enactments give a certain sanctification to ordinary life. To the drab of every day they offer a religious transfiguration, sanctifying our most familiar tasks. The traditional prayer book contains blessings for almost every action in our daily life, and thus even the most trivial of our doings may be consciously done to the glory of God.

8. To provide RELIGIOUS opportunity and joy. We can, we think, be in full general agreement with this purpose. Man is composed of body and soul. Material actions suggest spiritual reflections. Through the ladder of ritual action we can mount up into the presence of God. If, however, the decrees ordering these outward ceremonies are not believed to be of directly divine origin, they must lose a great deal of their religious value. But we have to remember that even if they are believed to be the immediate expression of the divine will, they are dangerously liable to perversion. They are liable to be thought the whole of religion when they are but a part, a secondary part. They are liable to become mere outward acts, the merit or essence of which is thought to reside in the doing of them, and not in the spirit which should sanctify them. They are liable to become cheapened and perverted and degraded themselves, and to cheapen, degrade and

pervert religion as a whole. They may become a caricature of religion, and do both it and those who perform them great injury.

9. To maintain historic CONTINUITY, and to link together the communities of our faith all over the world. This purpose is mainly connected with public worship and communal institutions. We have already touched on the need for, and the importance of, outward ceremonials in this connection, and with our attitude towards historic continuity. We, as Jews, as God's chosen brotherhood, do need, and want to strive after, the ideal "one equal temper of heroic hearts." These traditional ceremonials should help us towards this. We shall progressively deepen their spiritual meaning. We may have occasion and necessity to abandon some. But we must, and we shall want to, maintain (perhaps with modifications) the remainder.

All those laws and practices of outward ceremony which we believe to be still desirable and good for us to-day, we must endeavour to carry out in joy and adoration. We shall retain those ceremonials which are, or which are capable of being made, beautiful, and which are, or are capable of being made, suitable to our modern western, aesthetic and religious ideas. We shall delight to practice those which help us to sanctify our lives and daily actions, which remind us of our sacred mission, which unite us as a religious brotherhood, and which act as a bridge, and not as an obstacle, towards the realisation of our highest ideals of religion and of citizenship. The same principles will be involved in our public and congregational ceremonies and institutions.

### **Perverted Judaism.**

There are some who would argue: "Divinely ordered or mere tradition—in either case these enactments and their observance *are* Judaism." A fatal mistake, but ten thousand times more fatal, if it is not believed that they were divinely ordered. No



wonder that there is a dropping off from Judaism, if a mere observance of ritual enactments is thought to be Judaism. These enactments are not religion. Just as the Bible is only the source of a particular conception of God and of the world, of men and of their relation to each other, but is not the conception itself, just as it contains only the chronicles, the charters of our religion, from which we may still draw inspiration as well as information, but is not religion itself, so these enactments, at the best, are only the instruments to the production of religion, actions in which the religious spirit may express itself for its own occasional delight. They may be, and should be, a sanctification and an inspiration to those who lovingly perform them. But if regarded as meritorious actions, as obligatory performances, which receive a reward, they may be a positive hindrance and impediment. They are necessary and required by all institutional and historic religions, but they are not religion.

The calamity is that both the observers of the ordinances and the neglecters of the ordinances too often think that they are, or that they constitute, Judaism. Both observers and neglecters too often think that men are good Jews, because they practise the ceremonial enactments, and bad Jews because they disregard them. A man who performs all, or as many as he can, of the ritual ordinances of the Bible and of the Rabbinic law is very often held to be a "religious" man or a good "Jew," quite regardless of whether he believes in and loves God, whether he is generous, noble, upright or sincere, quite regardless of his inward moral life, quite regardless of whether he is a good man. A Jew who honestly believes that all the ritual enactments were divinely ordered may be the better Jew in every way for lovingly obeying them. But though the believing Traditional Jew may be a better Jew for lovingly obeying all the ceremonial enactments, he is not primarily a Jew, or even primarily a good Jew,

because he does so. He and all other Jews are Jews and good Jews, if and because they have a certain intense faith through which and by which they nobly live. He and all other Jews are keen Jews, if through their faith in this interpretation of life, they win certain spiritual experiences and emotions. It is the inward, the spiritual, which makes the Jew. This inward, this spiritual faith and convictions, will express itself in actions. Some of these actions may be ceremonial actions, and these ceremonial actions may cause joy and happiness, and even increase the faith from which they spring. But they are not themselves the faith. They are not primary. They are secondary. And if a man has this vital faith, sanctifying him, and impelling him to noble deeds of service and sacrifice, of rectitude and love, he is a Jew and a good Jew, whether this faith includes that special belief which urges him lovingly to fulfil all the ceremonial enactments of the codes, or whether it does not, whether, for example, he refrains from eating rabbits or eats them, whether he refrains from smoking upon Saturday or smokes.

No wonder that there is a dropping off from Judaism, if the observance of ritual enactments is thought to be Judaism! But this dropping off is still less to be wondered at seeing that, out of the furnace of the war, the conviction is growing, both among Jews and Christians, that religion is, must be, and will more and more become, something spiritual, some vital faith within the soul, expressed, so far as it is outwardly expressible, in deeds of service and of love. Unfortunately several Jews and several Christians have come to believe that Judaism is really not this living faith about God, Humanity, Israel, and the Human Soul, or that this faith is secondary and that ritual enactments are primary. In some minds, both Jewish and Christian, it has almost come to this: to supposing that Judaism is something else than a religion; that it is a series of enactments, a family tradition, a racial pride, a national heritage, but not just purely and grandly a religion.

What has to be fought for, emphasised and taught is that this awful divorce between Judaism and religion is both inaccurate and harmful. It is inaccurate, because Judaism has its own interpretation of life, its own conceptions of God and man, its own high motives for action, some of which are doubtless common to it and to other religious groups, but which, in their combination and harmony, are emphatically its own. It is harmful, because it tends to lower the personal religion of any individual Jew who suffers from this supposed divorce. It is harmful, because it tends to lessen the place and dignity of Judaism in the eyes and judgment of the world.

### **The Religion of the Modern English Jew.**

Let us get rid, then, once and for all, of the fatal idea that the religion of a modern English citizen cannot be Judaism. And, on the other hand, let us get rid of the fatal idea that Judaism cannot be full, developed, keen and passionate, and still be his religion.

The modern man, who, in spite of all the sadness and the evil and the sins, sees so much righteousness and beauty and goodness in the world, still believes that God, the source and fountain of all righteousness, is a true reality. The kernel of the Jewish religion is faith in God; it is the keen consciousness of God, of His unity, His Fatherhood, His nearness, His love. All this is the most essential chapter in Judaism, and it makes the most important and essential portion of the Jew.

Man requires a God with whom he may commune, a God who cares, who influences, who impels. Such prayer and answer, such kinship and love, are possible between man and God as He is conceived by Judaism—a Shepherd no less than a King, a Father no less than a Master.

As a social being, man requires a religion which has a public as well as a private side. This double aspect of religion is recognised and provided for by Judaism.



In his weakness, man has need of specifically religious ceremonies to help to supply the spiritual force for the best and most active life, to build up the ladder leading to the presence of God. Judaism possesses many enactments and ceremonials, the observance of which may tend to strengthen, sanctify and beautify his life.

But all these things, the outward ceremonials, the public institutions, the private communion, the ideals as set forth in, and developed from, the Bible, are only means and props and guides, leading up to, and culminating in, the true and full Jewish life, the life which sanctifies our every thought and our every deed, which brings God and goodness and love into all our actions and all our aims, which makes life itself a glorious communion with the Spirit of Justice, Mercy, Charity, Wisdom, and Righteousness, which impels and inspires each man to be at one with God.

“What does the Lord thy God require of thee?”, said the old prophet Micah. And he replied, “To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” A famous reply. We need a new Micah as well as to remember the old one. And the new Micah might ask, What is that religion which God has given to you as a charge and an inheritance? What is that religion which you are called upon to maintain and diffuse? As the old Micah said that religion was not burnt offerings or sacrifices, neither thousands of rams nor thousands of rivers of oil, so the new Micah will reply that it is not thousands of observances, that it is not rules of food or rules of weekly rest, but that it is to love God and to feel His presence, it is to realise His unity in His manifold richness and His richness in His unity; it is to serve your country, and to love your neighbour; it is to carry God with you into your daily life, so that through your faith this daily life may be coloured, ennobled and transfigured.

Happy, indeed, is the man who is an English Jew. He can have a country to which he may give his love,

his strength, his life, through which he may realise his highest nature. He can have a religion, which will not conflict with his citizen ideals, but on the contrary will help him, inspire him, and impel him, to express them in action. And, in so far as she possesses such Jews, England will be grateful both to them and to their creed.

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Those who wish to hear more about Reform Judaism should communicate with the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism, 18, Hill Street, Park Road, Regent's Park, N.W.1., or with the West London Synagogue,  
34, Upper Berkeley Street, W.1.

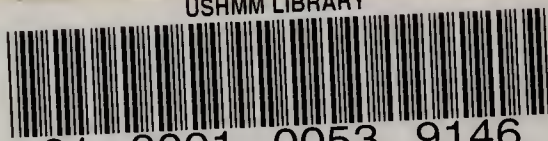
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NOTE.—There are two Reform Synagogues in London.

- (1) The West London Synagogue of British Jews,  
34, Upper Berkeley Street, Portman Square,  
W.1.
- (2) The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, Hill Street,  
Park Road, Regent's Park, N.W.1.

The first writer is a member of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, and both the writers are members of the West London Synagogue of British Jews, but the mention of it here is made without the authority of the Wardens or the Council of that Synagogue.

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