

## **WHAT WE JEWS BELIEVE**

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of the

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

and the

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

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# What We Jews Believe

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To

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE BROTHERHOODS, WHICH HAS SET FOR ITSELF THE TASK OF DEEPENING THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE ADULT MEMBERS OF OUR CONGREGATIONS, THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED IN THE HOPE OF HELPING FELLOW-JEWS TOWARD A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING AND A WHOLE-HEARTED APPRECIATION OF THE IMPERISHABLE VALUES OF OUR FAITH.



## *F*OREWORD

WHILE we possess a number of primers dealing with Judaism, for children, and several scientific works for scholars, we can point to very few presentations of our religion, in English, for the adult layman. It is this deep-felt need that the present volume seeks to satisfy. It is not designed as a manual for pre-confirmation or confirmation classes. Neither is it written for those technical students, whose interests lie in archeology and in the tracing and comparing of documentary sources. It is planned for men and women, who, while unacquainted with the origins and history of Judaism, are willing to read and to think, and who do not expect to absorb knowledge without mental effort. Avoiding all technical details, the book aims to present in a plain and straightforward manner and with the utmost objectivity the salient facts about present day Judaism in its various phases and manifold expressions. It deals with the beliefs of the Jewish people. The no less important phases of Jewish worship and ethics do not come within its scope.

Nine chapters of this book were written as monthly installments for *The Jewish Layman* (1930-31). In response to a request from the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, these chapters, together with new material, are herewith printed in revised and enlarged form.

## *Foreword*

In the preparation of the volume, the author utilized a number of paragraphs from his essay on "Religious Ideas of a Union Prayer Book," published in the *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Vol. XLI (1930), as well as from the second part of Rall and Cohon's *Christianity and Judaism Compare Notes* (The Macmillan Co., 1927). To the latter work the reader is referred for a more detailed definition of "What Is Judaism?"

To facilitate the use of this book in Study Groups, a list of Topics for Discussion has been appended to the volume.

Cincinnati, O.,  
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September 11, 1931.

## *CONTENTS*

	PAGE
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Introduction: Religion in the Modern World</b>	<b>3</b>
 <b>RELIGION</b>	
<b>I. REVALUATION OF RELIGION</b>	<b>11-23</b>
Religions and Religion	11
Origin of Religion	14
The Religious Consciousness	17
The Holy	20
The Function of Religion	22
 <b>JUDAISM</b>	
<b>II. JUDAISM AS A RELIGION</b>	<b>27-39</b>
Why Religions Differ	27
Defining Judaism	31
History of Judaism	33
Characteristics of Judaism	36
<b>III. DIVISIONS IN PRESENT DAY JUDAISM</b>	<b>40-55</b>
East-European Judaism	40
1. Hasidism	41
2. The Opposition to Hasidism	43

West-European Judaism	45
1. Reform	46
2. Orthodoxy	48
3. Neo-Orthodoxy	49
4. Conservatism	50
American Judaism	53
 IV. THE CORE OF JUDAISM	 56-64
The Threefold Path	56
Creedal Elements	58
The Maimonidean Creed	61
Revisions of the Creed	62
  ISRAEL	
 V. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL	 67-77
Judaism and the Jewish People	67
National Consciousness	69
Conflicting National Ideals	71
The Chosen People	72
The Mission of Israel	73
The Congregation of Israel	75
 VI. ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS	 78-89
Jewish Proselytism	80
The Messianic Hope in the Bible	81
Supernatural Messianism	84
Messianism in Jewish History	86
Changed Outlook of Reform	88

<b>VII. ISRAEL TODAY</b>	<b>90–102</b>
Jewish Nationalism	90
Zionism	92
Opposition to Zionism	95
The Jewish Will to Live	98
What Makes a Jew	99

## TORAH

<b>VIII. THE TORAH OF ISRAEL</b>	<b>105–117</b>
The Jewish Legacy and Heritage	105
Meaning of Torah	107
1. Torah of the Priests	107
2. Torah of the Prophets	107
3. Torah of the Sages	109
The Written Torah	109
The Oral Law	113
Modern View of Torah	116

## GOD

<b>IX. THE GOD OF ISRAEL</b>	<b>121–129</b>
Growing Knowledge of God	121
The Idea of God in Judaism	123
<b>X. WAYS OF KNOWING GOD</b>	<b>130–141</b>
Revelation and Inspiration	130
Reason and Intuition	133
God and the Gods	138

<b>XI. THE COSMIC GOD</b>	<b>142-152</b>
Mechanism and Intelligence	143
Transcendence and Immanence	148
The Newer Scientific Outlook	149
<b>XII. THE PERSONAL GOD</b>	<b>153-164</b>
The Idea of Personality	154
Unity of God	155
Divine Law and Love	157
Positive and Negative Attributes	160
God in Human Life	162
 MAN	
<b>XIII. THE JEWISH VIEW OF MAN</b>	<b>167-186</b>
What Is Man?	168
Man As Animal	171
The Humanity of Man	174
Man a Co-worker of God	176
The Soul of Man	178
Immortality	180
<b>XIV. GATHERING THE THREADS</b>	<b>187-194</b>
Topics for Discussion	195

# *INTRODUCTION*



## RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD

AMONG the agencies that have moulded human life and directed the upward course of civilization, religion has played a giant role. Professor James Henry Breasted writes: "There is no force in the life of ancient man the influence of which so pervades all his activities as does that of the religious faculty. It is at first but an endeavor in vague and childish fancies to explain and to control the world about him; its fears become his hourly master, its hopes are his constant mentor, its feasts are his calendar, and its outward usages are to a large extent the education and the motive toward the evolution of art, literature, and science. Life not only touches religion at every point, but life, thought, and religion are inextricably interfused in an intricate complex of impressions from without and forces from within." (*Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 4.) As in antiquity, so throughout the Middle Ages and, to a somewhat lesser extent, to our own times, religion has been the axis on which civilization has turned. It has built empires and it has also torn them down. In its purity it has been the torch-bearer and the vanguard of progress, the inspiration of the arts and sciences, and the life-breath of morality. When put into the service of bigotry, religion has been the scourge of humanity, the stumbling block of science, and the death knell of the searching intellect. For good or for evil, religion has been

## *Introduction*

the imperious mistress of the hearts and minds of men. No form of culture and no system of science or philosophy, no ideal of ethics or cause of human betterment has called forth the self-sacrificing devotion and the death-defying zeal which religion has evoked in the hearts of men.

A significant change has come over religion in the modern world. Under the influence of the critical spirit, which is one of the glories of our age, signs of revolt against religion have appeared everywhere. The historical sciences have stripped religion of much of the glamour of legend which it enjoyed. The physical sciences have undermined many of its positive assertions regarding the origin and nature of the world and of man. And modern philosophy has forced new constructions upon life's age-old values. From the field of discussion, the critical attitude toward religion has moved into the direction of popular morals and politics. It has become fashionable in smart sets to expose religious ideals, beliefs, and standards to ridicule. Religious observance calls forth the pity of the superficially clever folks in Jewry no less than in Christendom. Open warfare against religion is no longer a novelty. Communism in Russia has set itself up as a rival of the historical religions and strives by all the force within its control to drive them from the hearts of men. Radicals outside of Russia are no less zealous to discredit all religion as a relic of superstition, as the catspaw of bourgeoisie governments, and the tool of capitalist exploitation. Ignoring the wars which the prophets of religion have ever waged against injustice, cruelty, and inhumanity, they point only to

## *Introduction*

the sword which religious fanatics have wielded against infidels and to the fires of the inquisition which church politicians have kindled for the destruction of their enemies. By ignoring the light which religion radiates and by concentrating upon the shadows which fall from certain churches, the radicals seek to discredit all religion as hostile to human progress. Religion, they claim, has passed its zenith and is now on the downgrade. Science has inherited its place of authority in modern life. In their view, religion is a spent force. It is but a matter of time before it will fade out of the consciousness of men.

The enemies of religion appear to be rejoicing a bit prematurely. During the French Revolution, too, the death of religion was loudly proclaimed and "Reason" was enthroned as the new goddess. Subsequent events proved that the corpse was very much alive. While the various substitutes of religion have had their day, religion continues to claim the hearts of men. H. P. Liddon, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, observed: "If religion has many enemies in the predominant tendencies of the modern world, she certainly has steady and inalienable allies in the permanent circumstances of human nature." As long as man will remain human, religion will continue to flourish as the noblest flower of humanity.

Despite the jeremiads about the decline of and the apathy to religion in our age, few subjects arouse greater interest and more animated discussion than religion. And hardly another subject is debated with such a sense of finality and with so little information. Some men seem to fear that more light on the subject and less heat

## *Introduction*

would put them at a disadvantage. The subject is peculiarly near to our lives. Most people—even those claiming to be irreligious—are vitally affected by the eternal verities of religion. Their modes of feeling, of thought, and of behavior are infected with religious restraints, inhibitions, and incentives. While for large numbers of men, religion has lost its force, for numerous others religion is as vital as ever. In the very pursuit of science some men feel the need of being heartened by the inspiration of religion. Albert Einstein, discussing the interrelation of "Religion and Science," writes: "I assert that the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and the noblest driving force behind scientific research. No one who does not appreciate the terrific exertions, and, above all, the devotion without which pioneer creations in scientific thought cannot come into being, can judge the strength of the feeling out of which alone such work, turned away as it is from immediate practical life, can grow. What a deep faith in the rationality of the structure of the world and what a longing to understand even a small glimpse of the reason revealed in the world there must have been in Kepler and Newton to enable them to unravel the mechanism of the heavens in long years of lonely work!"

"Any one who only knows scientific research in its practical applications may easily come to a wrong interpretation of the state of mind of the men who, surrounded by skeptical contemporaries, have shown the way to kindred spirits scattered over all countries in all centuries. Only those who have dedicated their lives to similar ends can have a living conception of the inspira-

## *Introduction*

tion which gave these men the power to remain loyal to their purpose in spite of countless failures. It is the cosmic religious sense which grants this power." (*Cosmic Religion*, pp. 52-53.) The age of faith is still on. Men still seek to guess the riddle of the sphinx, to find the meaning and purpose of life. Houses of worship are not only being built but are often thronged by men and women eager to raise their minds and hearts to the living God.

Far from fearing modern knowledge and social idealism as mortal foes, religion may welcome them as friends. If a little science and philosophy is dangerous to religion, the remedy is to be found in more science and philosophy. "The signet ring of God," say the Rabbis, "is truth." Whatever advances the cause of truth, advances the cause of God. How can we consider systems of thought hostile to religion when they are engaged in serious investigations of life's ultimates? To the extent to which they enhance life's values, they enrich religion. Rabindranath Tagore felicitously remarks: "Science is man's intellectual probity in our knowledge and dealings with the world, and such conscientiousness has a spiritual quality that encourages sacrifice and martyrdom." (*Hibbert Journal*, July 1930.)

However menacing science and philosophy may appear at first sight to the traditional faiths, they ultimately serve—though in different ways—the same end of enriching and ennobling human life. The new knowledge which they present, therefore, comes as a challenge rather than as a mortal blow to religion. By accepting the challenge, religion may be immeasurably enriched.

## *Introduction*

In the light of their teachings regarding the world and man, religion may grow in power and effectiveness and regain much of its lost radiance. The real danger which threatens religion today is not that of its total disappearance from the hearts of men, but of its attenuation, of its taking a shallow course and becoming a trivial and superficial affair. Religion is in danger of being divorced by some from the currents of life and of being reduced by others to a mere shadow of the past or to a pale form of nationalism, patriotism, philanthropy, or social service. Modern scientific research helps to bring out the specific nature of religion as a fundamental element in human life, of a primary and not a derived character. A careful revaluation of religion may do away with many of the popular objections to it and reveal it in its true light as a profound and ennobling force in the lives of men.

With a view to such a revaluation we shall endeavor to re-examine the nature of the religious phenomenon in general. We shall then seek to find fitting answers to the questions: Wherein does Judaism differ from other religions? What are the divisions in present-day Judaism? What do we believe about Israel, Torah, God, Man, his Soul and its destiny? These beliefs are of more than academic interest. They serve as the foundations of our ethical obligations as well as of our conduct and worship.

Rooted as our faith is in our past, we shall freely draw upon Jewish history for our answers. However, our primary purpose is to define as clearly as possible the ideas, convictions and doctrines, which we deem essential to the present practice of our faith.

# *R*ELIGION



# *A REVALUATION OF RELIGION*

## **RELIGIONS AND RELIGION**

**W**HAT a motley variety and confusion confront us as we look into the world of religion! Worship of the most primitive type claims our attention by the side of the most advanced religions. Fetishism, voodooism, phallic worship, cults of dead ancestors, veneration of demons, of sacred animals, of fire, and other elements exist by the side of Buddhism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Judaism. In the United States alone the census for 1926 lists 213 religious divisions, mostly Christian. The beliefs and rites of this Babel present such contradictory character that it is hard to include them under the same name of religion.

The presumption naturally comes to most people, who cherish their particular faith, to regard all others as mere caricatures of religion. Their own religion is "true"; all others are "false." To the Catholic "true religion" is Catholicism; to the Christian Scientist it is Christian Science. Similar claims are made by the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Mormon, etc. There was a time when Christians refused to recognize any other religion than Christianity as in any sense real. Mohammedans and Jews—with noted exceptions—similarly condemned all religions other than their own as products of falsehood. The growing neighborliness of humanity has removed the one-sided provincial ideas about re-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ligion. The study of Anthropology has brought to light almost as many religions as there are tribes of men. Not a group has been discovered without some elements of religion, no matter how primitive. Even tribes as backward as the wild bushmen of Australia have their objects of reverence and adoration, rules governing marriage and kinship, dietary laws and regulations, and ceremonies at initiations, marriages and funerals, and other important occasions.

We hear of the high stage of development attained by certain species of animals. The building operations of the beaver, the family life of the gorilla, and the intelligence of the elephant, the bear, and the dog fascinate us. Animals communicate by sounds; some of them have governments and rudimentary arts; but never do we see them rising to the notion of the Divine. According to the fancy of the Rabbis, the Torah or religion was not given even unto the angels. Of all creatures man alone has been endowed with the religious feeling. Like speech and reason, religion is the exclusive birthright of man, present alike in the most retarded as in the most advanced society.

Obviously to take the religions of the Zulus, Red Indians, and Eskimos at the same valuation as the religions of Mohammedans, Christians, and Jews is as sensible as to overlook the difference between a piece of charcoal and a diamond. There are gradations of higher and lower in religion as in love, in friendship, in government, in art, and in culture. However, even the humblest strivings of the lowest savages cannot be condemned as "false." To the degree to which they serve the spiritual

## *A Revaluation of Religion*

needs of their people they possess value. Longfellow reminds us that "in all ages every human heart is human," and that

" . . . in even savage bosoms  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings  
For the good they comprehend not;  
(And) the feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened."

One of the profoundest words in the Bible is that of the prophet Malachi. Speaking of the worship of the heathen, he declares: "From the sun's rising to its going down, My name is great among the nations, and in every place offerings are presented unto My name, even pure oblations; for My name is great among the nations, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Ch. I: 11.) In modern words the prophet seems to say: the sincere worship even of heathens is accounted as worship of the true God. No people ever worshipped stock or stone, dog or cat, ibis or crocodile as such. In their limited mental endowment, men of all lands and races, have deified material objects because they believe that somehow or other these objects are endowed with mysterious power capable of influencing their lives. Indeed, even those who worship idols, in reality seek to worship the living God. In the lower religions, we may seek the possibilities of the higher, as the seed which, under favorable conditions, may blossom and yield fruit.

## *What We Jews Believe*

### ORIGIN OF RELIGION

Before attempting to find a common denominator of the vast variety of religions, let us ask ourselves: How was religion born in the heart of man, and how does it function in human life? The Orthodox have found an answer to this question in the belief that religion was directly revealed by God to man. Sometime in the past God showed Himself to chosen individuals, known as prophets, and commissioned them to declare His will unto the people. While this explanation, in its different forms, accounts for the higher religions, it leaves out of consideration the religions of the uncultivated savages who lay no claim whatever to prophetic revelation. How did religion appear among them? A more comprehensive explanation, therefore, must be found for this universal phenomenon.

Rationalists have sought to answer the question by claiming that religion is an invention of crafty priests for the purpose of exploiting the masses, both for their own interests and to the advantage of the ruling classes. Attractive as this theory appears to some radicals, it has no leg to stand on. The records of history show that religious rites and institutions existed before regular priesthoods were established. Instead of being the creators of religion, priests are generally its creatures. Indeed, priests may have been used as tools of many a state and may have retarded instead of advanced the cause of religion. At all events, they are not the originators but only the guardians and conservators of religion.

## *A Revaluation of Religion*

Modern science departs from the answers of both the Orthodox and the Rationalists. It looks for the birth of religion not in external agencies but in the inner life of man. Religion like morality, art, culture, and science grows out of human needs and develops through human experience.

For the conditions under which religion arises, we must turn to the ways in which man struggles for his existence. Speaking generally, man has been fighting on three fronts simultaneously:

First, there is the *physical struggle*. He faces storms, floods, droughts, earthquakes, pestilence, famine, etc., and must overcome them if he is to live. Fighting for shelter, food, and sex—which represent the chief means of his self-preservation—man has acquired skill and knowledge. He developed the sciences. With their aid, he has harnessed the forces of nature to propel his chariot of progress, and has built up the civilization in which we live.

While facing the dangers of his physical environment, man has been drawn into a second conflict. The *social order* has provoked diverse kinds of friction of man against man, of tribe against tribe, and of nation against nation. Humanity has been blighted not only by physical pests but also by evils of human origin, by personal jealousies and feuds, tribal wars, race hatreds, slavery, oppression, exploitation. On this front of battle man has slowly gathered the tragic fruit of experience for the construction of his moral standards, laws and governments for individual and social welfare.

While fighting the physical and social dangers, man

## *What We Jews Believe*

has been harassed by a war on a third front. His *personal life* is filled with discords, which impair the welfare of his body and mind. The passions rage within him, threatening to rend the frail tabernacle of the flesh. Torn between forces that pull toward higher standards and toward the level of the beast, and divided between the conflicting claims of body and mind, of momentary pleasure and permanent good, and of personal gratification and the well-being of the group, man cries out after the integration of his warring emotions, after inner unity and peace.

This most significant conflict in which man is engaged leads to religion. Out of his inner straits, he reaches after deliverance and salvation. Wrestling with his own flesh, he discovers that his life is not merely material but that it partakes of something non-material and invisible, which we designate as mental and spiritual. This life of the spirit he senses not only within himself but also in all parts of nature around him. It underlies the whole phenomenal world and gives it reality, form, and meaning. This ultimate, invisible, and immeasurable power appears to man not only as analogous to something within himself, but as something with which he actually communicates. By cultivating the spiritual phase of his life and by his adjustment to the requirements of this larger spiritual life, man not only finds inner peace but often turns failure into success and frustration into fulfillment on the other fronts of his struggle for existence.

# *A Revaluation of Religion*

## THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

What is the exact nature of the religious consciousness under discussion? Here we meet wide differences of opinion. Some take it to be *fear*. Anti-religionists have grasped this theory with avidity as a weapon against religion. As the supposed product of morbidity, religion is discredited by them at its source, as a mental aberration. While some religious practices border on the pathological, only wilful perversion of facts can permit the claim that all religion is an insane delusion. Aside from its own healthiness, religion stands sufficiently justified by the fruitful rôle which it has played in the drama of the higher life of humanity, as mother of the arts and of the sciences.

The edge of this devastating criticism of religion is partly blunted by the consideration of the function of fear in human life. This emotion stands condemned in the eyes of a generation raised on the notion that the chief virtue of man is fearlessness. It is at least open to question whether insensibility to danger is in itself a mark of either physical or moral excellence. The disregard of fear may be a form of whistling to keep up courage. Unless we resort to the game of the ostrich, we cannot but feel that fear is very much present in our lives. It is not often enough recognized that if fear served no purpose in human evolution, it could not have survived so long. Furthermore, if the fear paroxysm represents a kind of mental disease, the milder forms of fear may serve some useful purpose. James observes that "a certain amount of timidity obviously adapts us to the

## *What We Jews Believe*

World we live in." (*Psychology*, p. 411.) Fear has been characterized as a form of pain, with reactions similar to those of pain. Like pain, fear may appear as a normal, protective force. It rings the alarm at possible dangers ahead, warning man and rousing him to look for means of safety and self-defense. As we have noticed above, fear of physical and social perils, has stimulated man to take forethought and has served as a goad driving him to labor, to persevere, and to achieve, to cultivate the sciences, and to produce the means that lead to health and to victory. If fear when left unchecked makes cowards of us, paralyzing the mind and will, when properly controlled and harnessed to useful ends, it may lead to increased well-being and achievement.

It is, therefore, hardly discreditable to religion to recognize fear as one of its sources. Fear of spirits or of the ghosts of departed ancestors, heroes or kings—which is far more common to this day than most people care to admit—has helped to awaken man to the thought of immaterial reality. Fear of death and fear of life have contributed much to softening human nature and to seeking deeper levels of value. Fear of visible dangers and fear of invisible forces alike have driven man to find peace of soul in some form of faith. Out of their straits men often call unto the Lord. From the state of fear and anxiety, they reach out after security and confidence. Fear as the expectation of painful consequences is replaced with hope, which is the anticipation of good.

However, humanity has been governed by other emotions besides fear. And these must somehow be reflected in religion, which is the expression of human nature in

## *A Revaluation of Religion*

its totality. It has been pointed out that in religion man is drawn toward the spirits, ghosts or deities, whom he worships, in love and in joy no less than in fear. If there are no religions wholly free from fear, neither are there religions without *love*. It has also been argued that the primary religious feeling consists in *expectancy*, in *hope*, and in *desire* to escape obstacles, hardships, and frustrations, and to secure the advantages, satisfactions, and joys that enrich life. What binds man to the Divine is the yearning for a fuller and more satisfying life. It has also been maintained that the root and essence of religion consist in the feeling of *dependence*. Man poignantly feels his own feebleness and inability to achieve his aims without aid from on high. The religious consciousness has also been identified with the feeling of *awe*, of *wonder*, and of *cosmic citizenship* and with the ultimate *faith in mind*, i.e., of conscious will being the source of all forces and order in the world.

While evidence of some sort may be secured for the identification of the religious feeling with any one of the above mentioned emotions, in the interest of truth it is best not to limit the great tree of religion to a single root. Darwin found all of these emotions as constituents of the religious consciousness. He writes: "The feeling of religious devotion is a highly complex one, consisting of love, complete submission to an exalted superior, a strong sense of dependence, fear, reverence, gratitude, hope for the future, and perhaps other elements." (*Descent of Man*, pp. 95-96.) Though this judgment presents a much broader view of the situation, it stands in need of an important modification. We must note that none

## *What We Jews Believe*

of these emotions may be considered specifically religious. Fear by itself, love by itself or any one of the others taken by itself, in no sense produces religion. Neither do they acquire a religious character by being added together. Their transformation takes place only when they are directed to religious ends and agencies, to spirits, gods, or God. In other words these emotions take their place in the religious experience by the side of the *sense of the holy*, the unique quality which gives to religion its distinctive character and significance.

### THE HOLY

The holy or sacred, as Professor Rudolf Otto has emphasized, in his profound work on *The Idea of the Holy*, is the innermost core of every religion. "Without it no religion would be worthy of the name." While in advanced religions the holy came to include absolute goodness and righteousness, its essential nature must not be confused with the purely ethical. It *possesses an extra something, above and beyond goodness, truth or beauty*. Professor Otto invented for this overplus the term "numinous" (from the Latin *Numen*=divinity). The mental state described by this term is more readily suggested than described in exact language. In this regard the intrinsic quality of the holy resembles beauty and music which, if not experienced, can never be fully grasped through verbal presentations.

The consciousness of the holy is admittedly vague. However it may be characterized as a direct awareness of the presence of the invisible reality as "objective and

## *A Revaluation of Religion*

outside the self." This awareness calls forth a sense not merely of dependence, but of self-abasement and humility. One feels overwhelmed by the might, majesty, and mystery of the invisible, ineffable, infinite, ultimate, and tremendous. The holy is thus accompanied by the feelings—to which we referred above—of fear, awe, wonder, faith, love, fascination, ecstasy, etc. The value of this consciousness consists not so much in any relation that it may have to reason as in its *superrational* and *supernatural* quality.

While the holy cannot be identified with either personal or social ethics, it carries within itself the seed of ethics. The consciousness that the ground upon which we stand is holy ground and that we face Divinity enriches human life with a transforming quality, and evokes and stimulates noble behavior. To the degree in which one senses the holy within oneself, he recognizes it also in his fellowmen. In the higher religions, all human life is thus glorified as sacred. It appears as an end in itself and is protected by useful restraints and laws. Furthermore, while non-rational, the sense of the holy, through its elements of fascination and wonder, may stimulate the quest after the nature of the holy object and of its manifestations. Through the application of intelligence, the holy is enriched with thought content and with consistent standards of moral conduct. Religion thus came to hold within itself the ripening self-discipline and self-knowledge of the group and has served as the fertile womb of morality, law, education, art, and of much of philosophy and science.

The holy, representing the sense of a binding relation

## *What We Jews Believe*

between man and the Divine, involves some kind of belief in the nature of the Divine. This belief, as James Bisset Pratt remarks, may be explicit or implicit. "In one way or another, then, religion always and necessarily involves some sort of theology, some sort of belief about the ultimate Determiner of Destiny. Religion is not merely a feeling, it is as Professor James says, 'a postulator of new facts as well.' It takes itself seriously, and is not satisfied with being simply comforting and 'useful'; it means to be also true." (*The Religious Consciousness*, p. 7.) The more advanced the religion, the more prominent is its intellectual content.

The religious experience may now be reduced to the following factors. Its driving force is the need of overcoming the inner discords and frustrations of life. It expresses itself in the consciousness of the holy or sacred, and it seeks to direct the human spirit toward the holy in thought, will, and deed. Accordingly, every fully developed religion manifests itself in a fourfold character of: (1) Creed—a body of beliefs, doctrines or principles concerning the holy; (2) Code of Conduct—a body of ethical obligations growing out of the sense and the idea of the holy; (3) Cult—a body of organized ritual and ceremony in keeping with the notions of the holy; and (4) Congregation, i.e. a social bond uniting into one single community or church all those who adhere to the particular beliefs, obligations, and rituals.

### **THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION**

In the light of both psychology and history, religion appears as an essential element in human life, growing

## *A Revaluation of Religion*

out of deep needs and striving after the noblest aims. It awakens within us the intensest feelings, unfetters our energies and mental powers, kindles our strongest loyalties, rouses our ethical idealism and directs our hearts upward. Religion enhances life by investing it with meaning and with sanctity, by adding discipline and law to freedom, by setting up worthy goals for personal and social striving, and by crowning our fleeting existences with the hope of deathlessness. It is begotten of inspiration and of aspiration. However crude or barbarous the religion of a people may seem, it functions—though often in a blundering way—as a power that lifts burdens, that emancipates from crushing fears, and that replaces the moral and mental chaos with light and with order. The more developed the people's state of general culture, the nobler is its religious expression. In all stages, religion represents the Sabbath of the soul, dispelling the drabness of the surroundings and filling the hearts of men with the light and joy that come of faith, hope, and courage. As in the dream of Jacob, religion has functioned in the lives of men and of nations as the mystic ladder which links earth with heaven. And it has served also as the *Shir Hamaalot*—the Song of Ascents—to the accompaniment of which humanity has been rising ever higher on the tortuous road of progress.



# *JUDAISM*



# *JUDAISM AS A RELIGION*

## **WHY RELIGIONS DIFFER**

**H**OWEVER different the religions of humanity appear, their essential oneness is apparent to unbiased observers. Their kinship may be traced in their outreachings after the holy, in the sense of ethical obligations springing from these outreachings, and, to a degree, even in the worship in which they are expressed. Beneath their bewildering variety, all religions, and particularly the more advanced of them, exhibit a striving after the ultimate or cosmic source, a straining to understand and to follow the cosmic way, and an effort to realize the cosmic goal of humanity. Many are the religions of man, but they are only variations of the same consciousness of the sacred, which for us Jews as for Christians has come to mean "the life of God in the soul of man."

Why, then, do religions differ? The Jewish philosopher, Joseph Albo (1380–1444), suggests the answer. He debates the question: "Can there be more than one revealed religion?" He argues that from the standpoint of God, the giver of the Law, only one religion is possible. However, from the standpoint of the recipients of the Law, there must be more than one, owing to the different geographic, economic, and psychic factors which enter into their lives. A religion suitable to a group of people living in a desert may not fit people who live on a fertile island. The differences between one religion and the

## *What We Jews Believe*

other will, therefore, consist not in their vital essence, which is the same for all men, but rather in the secondary elements which grow out of the local and temporal variations of the characters of the groups. "Accordingly," Albo concludes, "two revealed religions may exist simultaneously among two different peoples, each leading its adherents to human perfection or salvation, though in different ways, corresponding to the character of each religion." (*Ikkarim*, I, Ch. 25.)

The principle laid down by Albo has come to be the foundation of all modern scientific study of religion. Religion may be compared to language. All men are endowed with the faculty of speech. Yet each nation expresses itself in a language peculiar to itself. Even so religion, the language of the heart, though inherent in all humanity, has manifested itself in dialects and jargons as varied as the communities and nations of humanity. The diverse physical environments in which the families of man live, their special racial characteristics, their political vicissitudes affect their whole mode of life and imprint themselves upon their religious ideals, beliefs, and conduct. The conceptions of life and duty, thus arising, and their forms of worship become part of the heritage of the group, and may be continued long after the group has changed its environment.

A contributing factor to the differentiation of religions is the genius of personal leadership. As in general progress from barbarism to civilization so in religious development, intelligent leadership has played a decisive rôle. Men of vivid and poetic temperament, of social vision, and of insight into human nature have held everywhere an important place. Medicine men, soothsayers, and di-

## *Judaism As a Religion*

viners are familiar figures in all primitive religions. Priests stand at the helm not only of the religions but also of the cultural and sometimes even of the political life of the advanced nations. In the great religions, prophets appear to champion higher values of faith and morals. Next come the sages who add knowledge to faith, and wisdom to holiness. These gifted individuals, while building upon the traditions of their peoples, greatly enrich and modify them with their original ideas or with ideas adopted from other peoples.

A number of religious geniuses so impressed their personalities and views upon their old faiths as to have created virtually new religions. Through their own zeal as through the zeal of their followers the new religions were forced upon peoples far away, with whose life roots they may have had no connection. By virtue of the kinship of all religion, the new faiths came to be part of the lives of the converted nations. This has been the case with Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism. However, even where the conversion seemed complete, the old traditions of the nations did not wholly die out. Beneath the surface of the new religious professions and forms course the deep currents of the old national customs, moral practices, and beliefs. Under the cloak of the Christ, some Nordics still adore the warlike Thor. Many another national, pagan deity has been retained as a Christian saint. Consequently, while Christianity knew how to adapt itself to the ways of the nations, and continuously compromised with their former beliefs and rites, it never quite fully incarnated itself into their lives. It can point to hosts of individuals whose lives represented the true Christian spirit, but it cannot point to a

## *What We Jews Believe*

single nation that has ever truly lived the Christian life. The whole history of Christianity presents a continuous split into secular churches which made peace with the life of the nations, and into an ascetic monasticism, which, like Buddhism, fled from the world which it set out to save. Not being the fruitage of the racial experience of the nations, it has remained somewhat foreign to them. Furthermore, instead of realizing the original inspiration of its founders of becoming the one universal religion of humanity, it has grown into at least as many denominations as there are ethnic and political divisions in Christendom.

Far from deprecating these differences between the world's religions, we must recognize them as the condition of spiritual life. It is just as natural for religions to differ as it is for the languages of the nations, for their arts, and for their cultures. And it is as logical to expect all religions to be replaced by one universal religion as for all languages to be replaced by one universal language. Thus far the Esperantos, whether of language or of religion, only constitute additions of artificial creations to the existing natural ones. As long as the physical backgrounds, climates, races, and temperaments will differ so long will their spiritual reflections differ.

In short, while the seed of all religion consists in the consciousness of the sacred, in the process of its growth from seed to flower, religion branches out into innumerable forms. Its diversity, as we have seen, is not something accidental, but rather a condition of its life, and hence a part of its essence. Without assuming individual forms, religion cannot exist at all. We never meet with

## *Judaism As a Religion*

religion in the abstract but always in some definite shape, interfused with the multitudinous elements of the life of a particular people. Moreover, it is through its individualized manifestations that religion acquires its power and richness in the life of man.

### DEFINING JUDAISM

The various religions appear as so many paths laid out by the races of men in their search after the Divine. The nature and the direction of these paths have been determined by diverse environments, social, political, and psychological factors. Judaism is the Jew's path to the Holy. It is the form which the consciousness of the sacred assumed in the life of the Jewish people.

At the outset, we must note that the term Judaism is subject to various interpretations. It was originally coined, when the Jews came into contact with the Greeks, to designate the Jewish mode of life and belief as distinguished from that of the Greeks, i.e., of Hellenism. Accordingly every expression of Jewish life, whether in folk ways and folk lore or in ethics and philosophy, whether in literature, art, and music or in science and mathematics, is as much a phase of Judaism as religion. Hence some persist in regarding Judaism as the culture or civilization of the Jewish people, in which religion plays an increasingly dwindling rôle.

In the light of history we may claim that while religion is not the exclusive content of Judaism, it represents the keystone and the crown of its edifice. Though clothed in rich cultural forms, Judaism, for the vast

## *What We Jews Believe*

majority of our people, is first and last the Jewish religion. It is with Judaism as a religion, whatever else it may represent, that we are concerned in our present discussion.

What are its distinguishing characteristics? Wherein does it differ from other religions, such as Christianity, etc.? Obviously, to answer this question satisfactorily it is not sufficient to single out the elements which Judaism possesses in common with other religions. To define its nature we must discover those elements which are peculiar to itself. An analogy may make the point clear.

Suppose that we were asked to distinguish the Hudson from the Mississippi. Would it be enough to point to the water which both of them contain? Or would it suffice to subject a quantity of water from each river to a chemical analysis for the discovery of their constituent properties? The chemist would find hydrogen and oxygen in both, and he would probably find some other elements besides. The water of one river may appear muddier than the water of another river, and consequently less pleasant to taste. Whatever the results of the test, this procedure will hardly convey to us any idea whatsoever of either the Hudson or the Mississippi. To gain a proper picture of either river, we have to learn something about its sources, about the length, width, and depth of its current, about the countries which it traverses and about the various uses to which it is put.

A somewhat similar method is necessary to describe religious streams. It is altogether inadequate to show the parallels in their doctrines and forms. To be sure, all religions are based on the consciousness of the sacred

## *Judaism As a Religion*

and all of them seek to sanctify the lives of men. These two elements constitute the oxygen and the hydrogen of which every religious stream is composed. However, despite their essential kinship, religions, as we have pointed out, necessarily assume distinctive characters through their connections with different bodies of men. In the case of Judaism its uniqueness is derived from its union with the Jewish people. To define its character we may profitably resort to the method applied to the description of the rivers, viz., discover its sources, trace the lands in which it developed, and present the peculiar forms, which it assumed in the course of the ages, and the special beliefs and institutions in which it has been embodied.

### HISTORY OF JUDAISM

Judaism may well be compared to a mighty stream. While its sources go farther back into the past of the Semitic race, it made its descent some thirty-five centuries ago from the mountain summits of Sinai, where, under the leadership of Moses, the newly emancipated slaves dedicated themselves to the worship of God. Thence it flowed with accelerated current through Palestine, where it was deepened by historical circumstances, and by the genius of our prophets, priests, and sages. There, too, it received many tributaries from the nearby cultural centers of Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece. During this formative period of its history, Judaism brought forth its noblest fruitage, which is embodied in the Hebrew Bible. Externally it was bound up with the

## *What We Jews Believe*

agricultural life of the people of Israel and Judah and with the sacrificial cult.

When, in the year 70 of the present era, the Roman legions, which shook the earth from center to circumference, obstructed its course, the stream of Judaism was divided in two. Its waters branched out into the gentile world, where they mingled with various national pagan traditions, and appeared as the distinct religion of Christianity. The mainstream of Judaism seemed lost for a time. But like the Nile, which loses itself in the desert sands and breaks forth in full flow at some distance, so Judaism when almost wasted in Palestine reappeared in full force in other lands. It was cultivated with special zeal in the academies of Babylonia, where it produced the Talmud, the stupendous body of Jewish lore and law. The stream of Judaism spread over distant regions. In Arabia, Mohammed used its living waters to quench the spiritual thirst of his desert tribesmen. Adjusting Jewish teaching to the Arabic heritage of custom and rite, he launched the great religion of Islam. Thus Judaism produced two great world religions which form the foundation of a most important part of the world's civilization. The mainstream of Judaism flowed on. It spread to European lands. In Spain, it experienced a golden period of renewed strength. In Germany and France, too, it witnessed a rich unfoldment. Though frequently ravaged by both Church and State and occasionally harassed by the Mosque, Judaism ever grew in volume and in depth. It absorbed Greek and Arabic thought and science, and produced its own imposing systems of law, philosophy, and mysticism. When its

## *Judaism As a Religion*

course was checked in Spain, it turned to other lands, east and west, to Turkey and Poland, Italy, Holland, and America. In other lands and continents, as well, Judaism has been a living force.

In the course of its development from the days of Sinai to the present, Judaism has seen many changes and has weathered many storms. It has seen the rise and decline of empires and has watched the birth and death of civilizations. Judaism itself has undergone many changes. Its beliefs, ethical ideals, forms, and institutions have been greatly transformed. The consciousness of the sacred, which at first expressed itself in the religious life of Israel in ritual prohibitions and restrictions, in forms of "separateness," was gradually invested with ethical import of the highest order. Nurtured in Palestine and attuned to its seasons and climate, Judaism accompanied the wanderings of the Jewish people to all parts of the world. The Temple of Jerusalem with its sacrificial cult was replaced by the Synagogues of the Diaspora with a worship of prayer, meditation, and reflection. The language of prayer also has been partly altered. The Hebrew of the old Synagogue has been supplemented by the vernacular in Reform houses of worship. Many an old rite and custom have likewise made room for new ones. These changes at no time marked a complete break with the past. They rather represent the steady growth of Judaism and its adjustment to ever changing lands and conditions. In this readiness of adjustment to altered circumstances we may find one of the secrets of the survival of Judaism.

## *What We Jews Believe*

### CHARACTERISTICS OF JUDAISM

Judaism is not only a historic religion, but also a religion in which *history ranks as a vital part of faith*. The recollections of the momentous events of the past, whether in Palestine or in the diaspora, have been deeply engraven on the Jewish heart and have called forth both the sweetest songs and saddest laments. Our hymns and prayers re-echo the Exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, the rise of the prophets, the record of the Davidic monarchy, the Exile, the Restoration, the Maccabean victories, the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple, the dispersion of the Jewish people over all parts of the globe, their martyrdom and their aspirations. These happenings deepen the Divine consciousness within us. To the eye of faith they reveal the hand of God working on the loom of time. Jewish history thus became sacred history, an essential part of the Jewish heritage of faith. It has entered into our devotions and into our ceremonies and customs. It has affected our conceptions of God and of His relation to humanity. The history of the past became part of the present faith and the spring of future hope. Our history, without overlooking our human failings, has shown itself as the record of the self-consecration and self-dedication of our people unto the Holy One.

The historical and national character of Judaism made it *impossible for any one individual to become the center of its life and ideals*, let alone to receive divine honors. This fact is imprinted upon the very name Judaism. It is derived from the Jewish people rather than from any

## *Judaism As a Religion*

one personality, as Buddhism from Buddha or Christianity from the Christ. Indeed, at the head of our religious history stands Moses. He deepened the faith whose more distant beginnings may be traced to Abraham, and, by placing it upon a moral foundation, gave it a new direction. Hence the Torah is associated with his name. But historical research shows that while the Torah began with Moses, it reached its classic form through the efforts of numerous nameless spiritual giants. We cannot evaluate the genius of Judaism without taking into account the labors of his followers, the prophets, priests, sages, psalmists, rabbis, philosophers, mystics, and saints of our people.

Our religion is not Mosaism, or even Prophetism, or Rabbinism. It combines all of these and other expressions of our spirit. Because of the social or national character of Judaism, its *holy days* are not connected with the anniversary of the birth or death of Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, or any other personage, as is the case with Christmas, Easter, and other sacred days in Christianity. They are rather linked with the destinies and ideals of the Jewish people. We observe *Pesah* in commemoration of Israel's birth to freedom; *Shabuot* in memory of our dedication to the Torah; *Hanukkah* and *Purim* in remembrance of our deliverance from the danger of extermination. Even the thanksgiving festival of *Sukkot* and the humanitarian day of rest, the *Sabbath*, are connected with the national events of the Exodus. Likewise the supremely religious days of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* derive their ceremonial and symbolism from Jewish experience.

The steady connection between Judaism and the Jew-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ish people made for a *healthy view of morality* in both its social and individual forms. Being co-extensive with life, Judaism aims at no flight from the world. It does not deny the senses and does not condemn the body as evil. The material and the spiritual alike are means to the realization of the holy. Judaism accepts human life as good, and as an expression of the Divine. Work is a way of co-operation with God. And human relations, whether in the family or in society, are avenues for the service of God. This absolute union of religion and morality is one of the glories of Judaism. It does not set itself up as a religion of the parlor, of the Sabbath, or of the Temple only, but as an everyday faith, regulating the life of the kitchen, work room, and market place as well. "In all thy ways know thou Him" (*Prov. III: 6*)—is a verse appropriately selected by an ancient master as a summary of our religion. Judaism emphasizes God-consciousness in personal and in public life. The individual realizes his ends by identifying his interests with those of his fellowmen. Religion thus sanctifies both the nation and the individual and holds them together.

*Though national in character, Judaism is of universal significance.* The light of its inspiration has not been confined to the Jewish people only. Its inner core has appealed to large portions of humanity. The classic ideas of the Holy which it evolved have quickened the consciousness of men of other faiths as well. Its conceptions of God and of the godly life have carried conviction to the hearts of non-Jews as of Jews. As was stated above, Christianity and Mohammedanism derived much of their spiritual and moral teachings from Judaism. The sacred

## *Judaism As a Religion*

writings of Judaism also became part of the Bible of Christianity. The institutions of the Sabbath and of worship and the ideals of the family and of social justice have become part of the Christian and Mohammedan heritage. By mingling with the heritages of the world's nations, the original character of the Jewish message has naturally been modified, but something of its spirit abides.

In a word, Judaism is Jewish life at its highest. It is the Jew's response to the sacred, his way of outreaching after the Divine. It constitutes the conscious spiritual selfhood of the Jewish people, its conscience, and its convictions. Growing out of Jewish experience, it is reflected in Jewish literature, and is bound up with Jewish customs and laws, social and personal ideals, and institutions. It represents the spiritual fatherland and bond of union of the dispersed people. As ancient as the Jewish people, whose soul it is, it is also as modern. Rich in customs and ceremonies that had their birth in the distant past, it is as young as the Jewish heart and as fresh as its ever new visions.

## DIVISIONS IN PRESENT DAY JUDAISM

THE stream of Judaism, flowing from the summits of Sinai to the present, reveals the miracle of identity of essence amid continuous change. Tenaciously preserving its inner spirit and individuality, it also reflects something of the local color, the political conditions, and cultural standards of the ages and lands in which it has functioned. Thus Babylonian Judaism, while identical in essence with that of Palestine, presents to the discerning eye of the student vital differences in custom, ritual, and general outlook. The forms which Judaism assumed in Spain clearly distinguish it from those of Germany and of Poland. Whereas in Spain it expressed itself in poetry, science, philosophy, and speculative Kabbalah or mysticism, in Germany and Poland it expressed itself in simpler piety, in Talmudic learning, and in practical Kabbalah.

### EAST-EUROPEAN JUDAISM

Most significant for the understanding of the make-up of modern Judaism is the division which arose in Eastern Europe, during the 18th century, between the *Hasidim* and the *Mitnagdim*. This division grew out of historical and sociological as well as out of psychological causes. The economic ruination of Polish Jewry during the period of the decline of the old Polish Kingdom and the rise to power of the Cossacks strongly

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

affected Jewish cultural and religious conditions. The communal and educational institutions of Polish Jewry, which had reached high standards of efficiency in the days of prosperity, were seriously crippled by the Cossack massacres of 1648–1658. The tragic fiasco of Sabbatai Zevi's messianic delusion robbed the harassed and ruined people of a dream which had promised them deliverance. The mental depression of the Jewish people in all lands and of Poland in particular reached the lowest depth. In parts of Poland the old standards of learning were maintained, though with great difficulty. Some men still found solace and strength in Talmudic lore. This was the case in the large Jewish communities, especially of Lithuania and White Russia. There, scholarship continued to be identified with godliness. The *talmid hacham*, or scholar, enjoyed the esteem of the people and was regarded as the rightful leader in communal as in religious and educational affairs. The smaller settlements and villages presented a different picture. There, learning was on the decline, and a deep spiritual void made itself felt among the masses. In the southern regions, in Podolia and Volhynia, the Jewish people, living in squalor and misery amid a hostile peasantry, sank ever deeper into the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and hopelessness. All that Judaism meant for large numbers among them was the mechanical and spiritless observance of some traditional rites and ceremonies.

### I. HASIDISM

It was in this atmosphere of gloom and wretchedness that the light of Hasidism shone forth, ushering in a

## *What We Jews Believe*

new spring-time. The founder of the movement was Rabbi Israel of Medzhibozh (1700–1760), a warm-hearted and pious man of the people, of extraordinary spiritual gifts and radiant personality. Without any special claims to learning, Rabbi Israel began his career as a healer and miracle worker. By means of medicinal herbs, secret kabbalistic incantations and amulets (*Kameot*), and above all of prayer, he healed the sick and the despondent. Unlike other healers, he distinguished himself by his genuine sympathy for human frailty and suffering and by his personal saintliness. He, therefore, acquired the name *Baal Shem Tob*, the “Good Master of the Name” (abbreviated *Besht*, i.e., the man who with the aid of the Name of God performs miracles of healing). Soon, the healer of sick bodies became the healer of sick spirits as well. Men eagerly listened to his preaching of simple piety (*Hasidut*), implicit faith in God, and joyous worship. The message that even without Talmudic learning men may attain communion with God came like rain to a thirsty land.

The Besht contemplated no separatist movement in Judaism, nor did he introduce any changes in religious law or practice. As historians of Hasidism have shown, instead of reforming Judaism, the Besht strove to reform the individual Jew, to regenerate his spiritual life and to arouse his heart to the Divine. What may be considered new in early Hasidism, was a new method of worship, whereby the individual, whether learned or ignorant, may be brought into joyous communion with God. It stressed enthusiasm in religious devotion and regard for the inner spirit of the practices connected

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

with religion. It emphasized that true piety calls neither for the mortification of the body nor even for excessive minuteness in religious observances, or for Talmudic learning. All that it entails is the turning of the heart unto God in gladness.

What ultimately distinguished Hasidism as a separate movement was the prominence which it gave to the "healer of souls," the *Zaddik*, i.e., "the perfectly righteous man." Following the old Jewish mysticism, Hasidism maintains that between God and man there is a continuous interaction. Not only does God influence the life of man, but, in turn, man affects the will and disposition of God. By virtue of the highest degree of piety which he reached, the *Zaddik* is specially close to God. He is the mediator between God and the common people. His blessing and his prayer may bring them not merely spiritual satisfaction but also health, progeny, and material prosperity. Through the teaching of the successor of the Besht, Rabbi Baer of Mezherich and his disciples, *Zaddikism*, i.e., a blind faith in and adoration of the religious leader, came to be the chief characteristic of Hasidism.

### 2. THE OPPOSITION TO HASIDISM

The extraordinarily rapid growth of Hasidism, toward the end of the 18th century, alarmed the representatives of Rabbinism. The Hasidic houses of worship with their noisy, ecstatic services, the disregard of the traditional time limit for morning prayers, the merry assemblies and occasional drinking bouts and the practice of some Hasidim to dress in white on the Sabbath, thus presum-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ing extra piety, appeared not only strange but scandalous to sedate Jews. Furthermore, their departure from the accepted ritual and adoption of the prayerbook of the Kabbalist Isaac Luria (1534–1572), and their slight deviations in the mode of slaughtering animals marked them as dissenters. Particularly vexatious was their root doctrine that piety is a matter of personal faith rather than of Talmudic learning, a doctrine which ran counter to the fundamental convictions of Rabbinic Judaism. Most annoying of all was the growing cult of Zaddikism, which appeared as a dangerous rival to the dignified institution of the Rabbinate.

Consequently as soon as Hasidism reached Lithuania and White Russia, where Rabbinism was still strongly entrenched, the opposition to the movement took on organized form. The leader of the opposition was the Rabbi Elijah Gaon of Wilna (1720–1797), one of the foremost Talmudists of all ages and the idol of Lithuanian Jewry. “A spiritual aristocrat,” remarks Prof. S. Dubnow, “he was bound to condemn severely the ‘plebeian’ doctrine of Hasidism. The latter offended in him equally the learned Talmudist, the rigorous ascete, and the strict guardian of ceremonial Judaism, of which certain minutiae had been modified by the Hasidim after their own fashion.” (*The Jews in Russia and Poland*, Vol. I, p. 236.) A “holy” war was now waged against the “godless sect.” The Hasidim were to be ostracised socially, intermarriage with them was to be avoided, and their dead were to be denied burial. Persecution of the “heretics” and “schismatics” became the order of the day. Those who came out against Hasidism were named

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

*Mitnagdim* or "opponents." The positive phase of the program of the Mitnagdim consisted in a redoubled effort to spread Talmudic learning among the people. The *Yeshibah* (academy) established at Volozhin by Rabbi Hayyim, a disciple of Rabbi Elijah of Wilna, served as the spiritual center of Rabbinism. The bitter struggle between the two camps continued long into the nineteenth century, when both of them sensed a common danger in the enlightenment movement (*Haskalah*), which hailed from Germany and gained an ever growing following among the Jews of Eastern Europe. Gradually the hostility of the two warring bodies toward one another cooled off, and in its place ensued a measure of understanding and even of co-operation. To this day the Jews of Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, and a large portion of the Jews of Hungary as well as most of their brethren who migrated to Western Europe, Palestine, and America class themselves as either Hasidim or Mitnagdim, though for large numbers of them the names have been emptied of real meaning.

### WEST-EUROPEAN JUDAISM

Whereas in Eastern Europe, during the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries, the Jews remained in a state of intellectual and cultural as of social isolation, in Western Europe they were gradually drawn into the general life current. The French Revolution and the political upheavals which followed it throughout Europe, sweeping away the feudal order and the union of church and state, brought emancipation to the Jewish people. Freed

## *What We Jews Believe*

at last from the painful and humiliating thraldom, many Jews began to feel that the old Messianic hope of restoration to Palestine no longer expressed their aspirations. The industrial revolution, which was of even more momentous character in transforming the life of nations in Europe and America, shattered the social structure of Jewry as well. Not only institutions like the Sabbath and the Holy Days but the entire institution of daily worship in the Synagogue began to suffer from the pressure of the economic demands of the new age. No less momentous was the effect upon Jewry of the philosophic and scientific revolutions, associated with the names of Kant and Darwin. The new viewpoints, which they held out, undermined some of the conceptions upon which Judaism even as Christianity had rested. The authority of the Bible and of the Talmud was most seriously endangered by the new teachings. Judaism found itself at the crossroads. Which way to turn became the burning question of the hour.

Four alternatives presented themselves to Western Jewry. These have come to be known as the ways of Reform, Orthodoxy, Neo-Orthodoxy, and Conservatism. Reform accepted the challenge by frankly advocating a complete adjustment to the demands of the new age. Orthodoxy and Neo-Orthodoxy seemingly defied the new age. Conservatism compromised with it half-way.

### I. REFORM

The leaders of Reform recognized the futility of either ignoring or resisting the changing order of things, whether

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

in the spheres of politics and economics or in the realm of general thought. With a deep faith in progress, they rather hailed it with joy. At the same time they recognized to the full the consequences of the changing world order upon traditional Jewish practice and belief. To the young generation, struggling for emancipation, for success in business and social life, and for advancement in culture and knowledge, the ways of the fathers who lived under ghetto conditions, appeared narrow and forbidding. They seemed to segregate the Jews from the rest of the world as by artificial walls of ancient customs and of a special dialect, Yiddish-Deutsch. "Down with the Bastille of the Ghetto!"—was their cry. Inasmuch as their ideal was absolute equality with their neighbors, what was more logical than to adopt the ways of the neighbors not merely in dress, manners, and speech, but, as some thought, in religion as well? The process of assimilation was to be complete.

At this point men of the stamp of Israel Jacobson (1768–1828), stepped forward to distinguish between the self-adjustment and self-destruction of the Jewish people. They were determined to adapt the historic faith to the changed conditions in order to stem the tide of apostacy and to direct Judaism along the lines of healthy growth. To this end, reforms were undertaken in the field of Jewish education, along the lines formerly advocated by Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Hartwig Wessely (1725–1805). The liturgy of the Synagogue began to be reconstructed with the view to express the sentiments of men and women of the new age. Irksome elements in Jewish ceremonial and in matrimonial law were likewise

## *What We Jews Believe*

removed. And under the leadership of scholars, like Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), Holdheim (1806–1860), Einhorn (1809–1879), Samuel Hirsch (1815–1889), I. M. Wise (1819–1900), and Kaufmann Kohler (1843–1926), the fundamental principles of Judaism were reformulated so as to harmonize with the convictions of cultured people of the age.

Reform, as Dr. Kohler stated, has wanted “to be nothing else but Judaism revitalized—Judaism translated into the language, the spirit, and world-view of our age.” It does not set itself up as a new religion, cut off from the past, fixed and finished for all times to come. “Reform constitutes no break with the past, but asserts that the principle of Reform and Progress, which it accentuates, was ever a potent force inherent in Judaism, only working *unconsciously* in former ages and now *consciously* applied in our age of historical research.” (*Menorah Journal*, vol. II, pp. 9–10.)

### 2. ORTHODOXY

As in Eastern so in Western Europe, many Jews continued to live in a state of cultural and intellectual isolation, despite the revolutionary changes around them. Yiddish remained the language of their Synagogues and schools as of their homes. Their educational system was similarly old fashioned. European methods, languages, and literatures were foreign to them. They saw the danger of “schismatic” Reform, without being in a position to sympathize with its underlying motives. They stoutly opposed the Reform movement as being an “imi-

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

tation of the gentiles," and advocated unswerving loyalty to the beliefs and observances that have come down from the past. This opposition to Reform came to be designated as Orthodoxy (i.e., the correct doctrine or the standard faith), a term strangely borrowed from Christian usage.

### 3. NEO-ORTHODOXY

While the representatives of old-fashioned Orthodoxy refused to take cognizance of the modern spirit, the leaders of Neo-Orthodoxy were ready to adjust themselves to it, however, without sacrificing a jot or tittle of traditional Judaism. The leader of the movement, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), combined in himself a thoroughly modern culture and a passionate love for traditional Judaism. His program included the establishment of modern schools for Jewish youth, where the German language and literature as well as modern science were to be taught, but where the aim of the instruction was to raise a generation of Jews that shall be faithful to the Torah. He assailed those in the camp of the Orthodox who content themselves with inherited observances, kept, "as a mechanical habit, without spirit; they bear it in their hands as a sacred relic, a revered mummy, and fear to rouse its spirit." He, therefore, took the position that while "Reform in Judaism is necessary," "its only object, however, must be the fulfillment of Judaism by Jews in our time, fulfillment of the eternal idea in harmony with the conditions of the time; education, progress to the Torah height, not, however, lowering the Torah to the level of the age, cut-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ting down the towering summit to the sunken grade of our life." (*The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uzziel*, pp. 170 ff.) He pleaded for a reasonable Orthodoxy, which shall be rooted in the Torah and shall express itself in the faithful observance of the ceremonial law as part of the will of God. The earnestness of Hirsch's appeal carried conviction to large numbers of people, and endowed their opposition to Reform with an ideal philosophy.

### 4. CONSERVATISM

The Conservative movement in modern Judaism dates from the dramatic departure of Dr. Zecharias Frankel (1801–1875) from the Frankfort Conference of Reform Rabbis in 1845. This profound scholar had, during his rabbinate at Teplitz, Bohemia, sponsored a number of innovations in the Synagogue service, such as the abrogation of the *piyyutim* (i.e., the poetic supplements to the older liturgy, composed for the most part in an obscure style) and the introduction of a boys' choir. In the controversy, which arose in connection with the publication of the revised Hamburg Prayerbook (1842), Frankel, while criticising the historical and theological inconsistencies of this Reform ritual, definitely stated that changes in the traditional prayer-book are permissible. However, Reform, in his opinion, was justifiable not by the clamor of the laity for innovations but by the sound judgment of Jewish scholarship.

He came to the Frankfort Conference, which was to consider the entire question of the revision of the traditional prayer-book, in the hope of winning over the

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

assembled rabbis to his platform of moderation. As soon as the question of the prayer-book was raised, Frankel made an impressive appeal that before taking any action the Conference formulate the principles by which the work of Reform is to be guided. Reliance upon the spirit of the times is insufficient; for the spirit of the times is as changeable as time itself. True Reform is constructive, and must, therefore, approach present problems in the light of past experience. Instead of going its own way, the Conference should consider the entire body of "positive-historical Judaism." "The positive forms of Judaism are intertwined with its innermost essence; they constitute part of its life, and, on this account, must not coldly and heartlessly be thrown aside." The Rabbis present, without a single dissenting voice, expressed themselves in complete accord with his plea, and, therefore, considered it needless to enter into a discussion of first principles. They proceeded with the order of business, viz., the revision of the prayer-book. The first point of discussion concerned itself with the place of Hebrew in public worship. On the first phase of the question, i.e., whether legally only Hebrew must be used, Frankel voted—though with some hesitation—with the majority in the negative, on the ground of the Talmudic law that prayer may be recited in any language. The second phase of the question was whether it is necessary that Hebrew should be retained on other than legal grounds. When the majority (by a vote of 15 to 13, with three not voting) resolved that it is advisable to retain Hebrew out of consideration for the feelings of the older generation, Frankel seceded from the Con-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ference. He objected both to the fact that such a question should have ever come to a vote before a conference of Rabbis, and to the use of the term "advisable" (*rathsam*) in the resolution, which suggests that in course of time Hebrew may be completely abandoned. Such a tendency was alien to his spirit. In his view Hebrew was all-important for public worship not because of any demand of the *Shulhan Aruck*, but because it is the language of the Jewish spirit, and as such, forms an essential of Jewish devotion. Only Hebrew can impart to worship the specifically Jewish tinge. (*Protokolle u. Aktenstücke d. 2 ten Rabbiner-Versammlung*, pp. 18 ff, 86 ff.)

In view of the fact that twelve other members of the Conference voted with him, the righteousness of Frankel's withdrawal is open to question. While criticized by the Reformers, his step gained wide applause among their opponents and placed him at the head of the growing party of Conservatism, whose motto he formulated as "positive historical Judaism." Subsequently, as president of the Breslau Seminary, he raised many disciples who popularized his viewpoint and gained for it a wide and influential following. As to what is to be understood by the term "positive historical Judaism," writes Prof. Louis Ginzberg, one of his admirers, "or, in other words, what was Frankel's conception of Judaism, it is remarkable to note how little clearness there exists concerning it." (*Students, Scholars and Saints*, p. 202.) His opponents from both the camps of Orthodoxy and Reform regarded his standpoint as one of compromise. His interest in and encouragement of critical scholarship endangered the foundations of traditional Judaism. Hence he was strongly

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

attacked by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and other leaders of strict Orthodoxy. In their eyes he stood condemned as a Reformer. On the other hand, Frankel's refusal to apply the results of research into practice, when they run counter to established Jewish usage, made him appear in the eyes of the Reformers as an inconsistent sentimentalist, who divorces knowledge from life.

### **AMERICAN JUDAISM**

All the divisions of Eastern and of Western Judaism have been transplanted to America. The story of each of them on the American scene cannot be told here. Only a few observations about them may be made in the limited space of this chapter. In America the distinction between Hasidim and Mitnagdim has been reduced to practical insignificance. Both phases of Judaism, which they represent, merge into what is commonly known as Orthodoxy. By the side of the German and Russo-Polish congregations there are a few Spanish and Portuguese (*Sephardim*) Orthodox congregations. Here, too, the impregnable rock of Orthodoxy has been considerably undermined by the industrial, commercial, and cultural conditions of the land. Free intercourse with the neighbors in business and in politics, and to a lesser extent in social life, and the free Public School and the non-denominational college have made it impossible for Orthodoxy to maintain its historic attitude of intellectual and spiritual isolation. The sheer struggle for self-preservation prompts it to adjust itself, no matter how reservedly, to the changing conditions of the new world.

## *What We Jews Believe*

The tendency accounts for the signs of revival of Orthodoxy which have shown themselves in recent years in the large centers of American Jewry, and especially in the progress of the Yeshibah of Yitzhak Elhanan of New York (1896) and of the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago (1921), and of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (1898). Thus Orthodoxy is being transformed into Neo-Orthodoxy.

Conservative Judaism in America centers in the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York (1886), and is composed of numerous and well-organized congregations, federated into the United Synagogue (1913). Despite the strong efforts of Isaac Leeser (1806–1868), Sabbato Morais, Alexander Kohut, and Solomon Schechter (1847–1915), this middle party in American Judaism has thus far not crystallized itself into a set form. Some Conservative congregations are virtually Orthodox, while others are practically Reform. Occupying a middle position between Orthodoxy and Reform, it meets with the opposition of both. Orthodoxy regards with apprehension a movement which openly recognizes freedom of critical investigation of the Torah and the need of certain changes in religious practice, no matter how moderate. Reform Judaism, on the other hand, sees in the Conservative method of dealing with the present day religious situation a timid halting between two opinions that cannot satisfy for long the needs of American Jewry.

Reform Judaism established itself more firmly in America than in other lands. The very lack of deep rooted traditions and local customs in the new cities of this New World favored the spread of Reform Judaism.

## *Divisions in Present Day Judaism*

Organized into a Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1873) and centering in the Hebrew Union College, of Cincinnati (1875), (both the creations of Isaac M. Wise) and more recently also in the Institute of Religion of New York, Reform has grown not only in numbers but also in spirit. Welcoming the advance in modern science, Reform has been able to adjust itself, more readily than the two other movements, to present-day life, without damage to the eternal spirit of Judaism.

Differing as these parties of Eastern and Western Judaism do from one another, they all represent important aspects of the living stream of our historical faith. They are products of different economic, political, and cultural surroundings, and they appeal to different types of mind and temperament. Under existing conditions, there is still need of all of them. Furthermore, each has much to learn from all the others. With justice we may, therefore, apply to them the words spoken of the ancient conflicting schools of Hillel and of Shammai: "Each of them contains the words of the living God."

## THE CORE OF JUDAISM

THE inner consecration of man to God, his dedication of will, heart and mind to the service of the Holy One is true vital religion. The forms which this self-dedication to a life of holiness assumed, not alone in the lives of the prophets and saints but also in the life of the entire people of Israel, constitutes Judaism. Historical, economic, and cultural circumstances have produced a variety of Jewish religious expression. However, the divisions in present day Judaism must not obscure its essential unity. Deeper than its divisions is the historical oneness of Judaism.

### THE THREEFOLD PATH

The simplest analysis of Judaism, presents it as a three-fold path to the holy.

Its primary path is *mystical*. With the speculative forms, which it assumed in the course of history, we need not deal in this connection. Here we only consider its psychological aspect. Mysticism stresses the immediacy and the nearness of God. The wings of the *Shechinah* (God's Presence) seem to touch the souls of the believers. The way to know God is to love Him, to trust in Him, to cleave unto Him, and to rejoice in Him. All of life is a revelation of the Divine. With Him is the fountain of life, in His light men see light. The world, despite its hardships and evils, is made radiant by the

## *The Core of Judaism*

splendor of God. Faith thus becomes the atmosphere of the soul. It is the direct experience and realization of the Divine. To behold the beauty and the pleasantness of the Lord constitutes the highest wish of the enraptured worshiper. From the pages of Hosea and Jeremiah, from the hortatory sections of Deuteronomy and the Psalms to the *Haggadah* and *Kabbalah* and to the popular movement of Hasidism this mystic path runs unbroken and gives the prayers, hymns, and meditations of Israel their richness and their glow.

By the side of mysticism, runs the path of *Halachah* (rule of conduct). The love of God spells duties for man. It teaches him the way to live in the conscious presence of God, how to avoid evil, iniquity, and sin. Under the ancient conceptions of revelation, the manifold duties of man appeared as the direct commandments of God. In the Pentateuch, the Rabbis found six hundred thirteen *Mitzvot* (commandments), which in turn served as the foundations for all other laws of Judaism. The Halachah in its entirety was thus conceived as God-derived. As a divinely revealed legislation, it was not only binding upon all the children of Israel, but it showed the special love of God for His people. The Halachah itself is thus permeated with mystic fervor. Whenever the danger of excessive legalism appeared in Jewish life, mysticism manifested itself as a corrective. The Law was consequently ever revered as both the manifestation of God and as the means of communion with Him. It forms the basis of Orthodoxy, whether of Eastern or Western types.

Out of the mystic and halachic paths there branches

## *What We Jews Believe*

out the rational way to the holy. Inherent in both mysticism and law, rationalism developed as a separate discipline in response to the questioning mind and to the frequent need of defense of Judaism against the attacks of hostile systems of belief and thought. Through its own insights and with the aid of Greek and Arabic philosophy and science, the Jewish mind interrogated reality in order to strengthen the Torah. The intellect came to the aid of the heart. Reason hastened to justify the dictates of the will and the cravings of the emotions. Science was invoked to fortify conscience. Though occasionally clashing with mysticism and the Halachah, Jewish philosophy ultimately reinforced their fundamental aims through its clear analysis of the thought contents of Judaism. By bringing the religious ideas of Judaism into the open light, philosophy endowed them with new strength. By the side of *Mitzvot*, or the ethical and ceremonial laws, philosophy placed the *Ikkarim*, the fundamental principles, doctrines or dogmas, which explain and justify them. The intellectualistic tendency, while prominent in Orthodoxy and Conservatism, assumed a dominant place in Reform Judaism.

### THE CREEDAL ELEMENTS

Judaism is the essence of living Jewish tradition and not a mere system of beliefs. Its three-fold path to the holy embodies itself not only in a *Creed*, but also—as is the case with every other religion,—in a *Code of Conduct*, *Cult or organized worship*, and *Congregational union*. This consideration does not minimize the impor-

## *The Core of Judaism*

tance of creed in Judaism. Indeed, each division of Judaism, whether past or present, has derived the justification for its existence from its particular interpretation of what is fundamental and what is secondary not only in halachic matters of ceremonial but also in the creed.

Anti-theologic prejudice has led men to declare from the pulpit as from the printed page that Judaism is free from creed, or that it has but a minimum of creed. Claims of this sort, though sometimes made in the supposed interests of religion, are as mischievous as they are unfounded in historical fact. Every religion, worthy of the name, sets up definite *standards of belief* as well as of practice for its followers, certain *views* of reality as well as *ideals* of personal and social welfare, and clear *goals* of human endeavor. These beliefs, views, ideals, and goals represent the stuff of which creeds are made.

The process and condition of creed building as well as the content of the creed naturally differ in the various religions. In essence, however, the creed of any religion is naught but the crystallized body of convictions and spiritual ideals that have recommended themselves, in the light of experience, as essential to the religious life of the group. Creeds are generally presented as truths "eternal and unchanging," but upon examination each of their constituent beliefs appears to be the product of historical growth. They may be considered as centers of relative "constancy in a changing world of experience."

As a positive faith, Judaism naturally contains a well defined body of beliefs. Up to the XIIth Century, the creedal or dogmatic elements of Judaism existed in a somewhat fluid state. As among other ancient peoples,

## *What We Jews Believe*

so in Israel religion began its organized career with a body of ritual, and only slowly evolved a body of ethical precepts and of beliefs. This was the contribution of the prophets and sages, whose interests lay primarily in the ethical and spiritual elements of religion.

The Torah, as we shall have occasion to show later, though not formulating a systematic creed, is arranged on a doctrinal basis. It opens with the declaration of God as the creator of the world and as the Father of man, and emphasizes that He rewards and punishes men in accordance with their deeds, that He called Abraham, and that He revealed His will unto Moses, etc. Other doctrines about the Messiah, resurrection, etc., are announced in other portions of the Bible. When the Jewish people came into contact with Greek philosophy, they were drawn into discussions about the nature of their religion and its underlying principles. Philo Judaeus, Josephus, and others restated the beliefs of Judaism in a form that might appeal to men of philosophic turn of mind. The Talmud, too, despite its chief concern with religious practice and law, occasionally discusses the beliefs of Judaism.

The creedal elements of Judaism were given prominence in the worship of the Synagogue. At first the Decalogue (*Exod.* XX: 2-7) and later the *Shema* (*Deut.* VI: 4-9; XI: 13-21; *Numbers* XV: 37-41) came to hold the central place in the liturgy. Rising to worship God, the Jew was thus led to give expression to the cardinal principles of his faith.

## *The Core of Judaism*

### THE MAIMONIDEAN CREED

It was left to Maimonides (1135–1204) to supply the Jewish people with a definite creed. He set out to show which beliefs a Jew must hold in order to form part of “the general body of Israel” (*Klal Yisrael*). Taking as his literary model the number thirteen from the enumeration of the attributes of God in Exodus XXXIV: 6–7, he formulates his creed in thirteen articles.

The first five deal with the conception of *God*, affirming His (1) existence, (2) unity, (3) incorporeality, (4) eternity, and (5) sole worthiness to receive the worship of man.

The next four deal with *Revelation*, viz.: (6) the reality of prophecy, (7) the absolute supremacy of Moses as prophet (i.e., his authority has not been superseded by either Jesus or Mohammed), (8) the divine origin of Israel’s Torah, and (9) the immutability of this revealed Torah (i.e., it has not been replaced by either the New Testament or the Koran).

The remaining four are concerned with *Retribution*, viz.: (10) omniscient providence, (11) reward and punishment in this world and in the hereafter, (12) the coming of the Messiah, and (13) the resurrection of the dead.

The Maimonidean creed not only supplied the Jew with a concise statement of what to believe but also furnished him with a weapon of defense against the attacks of Christians and Mohammedans as well as of the sectarians within Judaism. Embodied in the *Ashkenazic* (German) ritual, and versified in hymns, like the *Yigdal*,

## *What We Jews Believe*

the Maimonidean creed practically expresses the convictions of Orthodoxy.

### **REVISIONS OF THE CREED**

Of the numerous revisions of the Maimonidean creed, that of Joseph Albo (1425) deserves special attention. In his judgment, not all of the thirteen articles are of equal importance. The "roots" of Judaism, as of every revealed religion, are three: *The Existence of God, Revelation, and Retribution*. The special character of each religion shows itself in the "stems" and "branches" that grow out of the "roots." In the case of Judaism, the first root of God's Existence produces four stems: *unity, incorporeality, timelessness, and perfection*. The root of Retribution has two stems: *divine omniscience and providence*. In addition to the three roots and eight stems, Judaism has six branches, or beliefs, which, while not fundamental to Judaism, every Jew is expected to believe. They are: *creatio ex nihilo*, superiority of Moses over all prophets, eternity of the Torah of Moses, possibility of attaining to human perfection through the proper observance of even one commandment, resurrection, and the Messiah. With keen insight Albo recognized that the belief in the Messiah, while pivotal to Christianity, holds a subordinate place in Judaism.

Of more than theoretical significance is the revision to which the Jewish creed was subjected by the leaders of Reform Judaism. The doctrinal changes of early Reform did not affect the first principles of Judaism.

## *The Core of Judaism*

Albo's three "roots": God's existence, revelation, and retribution remained basic for Reform. Not even the "stems" were touched in official pronouncements of Reform and in its books of devotion. The changes were largely affected in the "branches" such as the belief in the Messiah and the Resurrection, and in other traditional views, which while part of Judaism cannot rank among its fundamentals. The changes were dictated by the *Zeitgeist* of the Emancipation period and by the need of readjustment to western life and thought. Under the further influence of the comparative study of religion and of modern philosophy and science not only the "branches" and "stems" but also the "roots" of Judaism began to undergo a revaluation.

In the meantime the growing interest in history tended to raise a latent element of Judaism to first rate importance. It became increasingly evident—as was pointed out above—that beyond all creeds, codes of conduct, and cults is the congregation or people. Though hardly included in the creeds, whether of Maimonides or of Albo, the Jewish people represents the foundation of Judaism. Out of its life and genius grow all the values which we designate as Judaism. Consequently, a satisfactory restatement of the beliefs of Judaism must place Israel in the center, the Torah as Israel's way of outreaching after the Divine, and God as the goal of Israel's striving. We may, therefore, adopt for our formulation of the principles of Judaism, the statement of the Zohar as reformulated by Rabbi Israel Besht: "Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One Blessed be He are one." The con-

## *What We Jews Believe*

sciousness of this indissoluble unity offers a spiritual basis for the life of the individual and a program for the sanctification of his life.

Our beliefs about Israel, Torah, God, and Man will form the subject of the remainder of this book.

*ISRAEL*



## THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

### JUDAISM AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

WE HAVE defined Judaism as Jewish life at its highest spiritual level. More specifically we referred to Judaism as the Jew's response to the sacred and as his path to the divine. What bearing has this conception upon Jewish life today? What significance does it possess for Jewish duty and destiny? To answer these all-important questions, we must turn to the general experience of humanity as well as to the history of our own people.

Religions, as we have already indicated in a previous chapter, spring from the inner needs of man and are shaped by the general circumstances and environmental conditions under which the tribes and nations live. In other words, religion, though manifested in the individual consciousness, is not a purely individual phenomenon. In its complete form religion is a social force. August Sabatier concludes that "the historic source of the religious life is the religious society." Creeds, codes of conduct, and cults evolve out of the experience of the group and are fostered by the group. They grow into full power only when they are incorporated into the life of a community of believers.

We may distinguish between two main types of religious fellowships. The Christian type constitutes an *Ecclesia* or *Church*. It may be defined as an organized association of men, drawn either from one nation or from

## *What We Jews Believe*

many nations and races, and held together by a common bond of faith, forms of worship, and discipline. The Catholic Church claims to transcend the barriers of nationality, race, language, and political divisions. The Protestant Churches, similarly claiming universality, are more limited to particular nations, races, and countries, as illustrated by such bodies as the Anglican Church, the Church of Scotland, Protestant Episcopal Church of the U. S. A., Old German Baptist Brethren, Negro Baptists, Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, etc. The second type of religious fellowship is represented by Judaism. It consists not of a church, based upon an accepted creed and forms of worship, but of the entire Jewish *people*.

Unlike a church, a people is not a mere aggregate or association of individuals. A subtle bond of connection between them exists, which reveals itself in their modes of life, habits, thoughts, language, etc. It has been correctly observed that, "The connection between the generations of a people is just as intimate as that between the generations of a family. The soul of a people and the soul of the family belong equally to the individual." Like the individual so the historical group or nation possesses its *psyche*, which distinguishes it from all other peoples. It links the past and present of the people and accounts for the people's rôle in the drama of history.

The psyche of Israel has expressed itself clearest in Judaism, in the spirit and ideals of religion, morality, and general culture which have dominated our people from its distant beginnings to the present. Judaism is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob. Its future as its past

## *The People of Israel*

is linked with the destiny of the people that gave it birth and that preserved it through the ages. Without the Jewish people there can be no more Judaism than there can be Christianity without the Church.

### NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The key to the religious nature of the Jewish people may be found in the Jewish past. Our history began like that of any other Semitic people. Coming to life in Babylonia, groaning under the burden of slavery in Egypt, and regaining the freedom of the desert, young Israel did not differ essentially from other nomad groups. What marked the beginning of Israel's distinction was the covenant formed at Sinai with Yahweh, when Israel dedicated itself to the worship of Yahweh and declared itself chosen by Him as His people. This very union between a people and a god was characteristic of all ancient groups. The gods were believed to be literally the kin of their tribes or peoples. Religion served to unite them into effective social and spiritual bodies. The "sacred" and "divine" on the one hand, and the "secular" and "human" on the other, blended into a common unity. Even the element of voluntary choice of a deity was not unknown to other ancient peoples. The unique experience of Israel consisted in the ethical character which was ascribed to Yahweh by Moses and other men of religious genius. So felicitous was this union between race and religion that, whereas among other peoples it turned religion racial and narrow, in Israel it turned the race religious.

## *What We Jews Believe*

The consciousness of a united Israel dawned rather late in our history. Practically all through the periods of the conquest of Canaan and of the Judges, the tribes maintained their separateness. Absorbed in their own needs and jealous of their own prerogatives, they refused to unite even in times of distress. Only through the organizing skill of David were the tribes consolidated into a national unity. But the political union was of short duration. Following the expensive splendor of Solomon's reign, Israel or the northern tribes separated from Judah of the south. A spirit of hostility filled the two rival kingdoms until the year 721 B.C.E., when Israel was destroyed by Assyria and Judah alone survived.

The consciousness of a united Israel was fostered with special force by the representatives of Yahweh. The Nazarites and priests, strengthening the hold of the national god upon the people, created a sense of kinship among the various groups and tribes. Above all, the prophets, in their uncompromising devotion to Yahweh strengthened the bonds of national union. Samuel was greatly instrumental in founding the monarchy. And long after its disruption, Elijah appears to have regarded Israel as still united spiritually. He built his altar at Mt. Carmel with twelve stones, corresponding to all the tribes of Israel. Amos of the Judean town of Tekoa upheld the idea of unity before Yahweh when preaching at Beth El in the north. For Hosea the House of Judah and the House of Israel were one. In the vision of Isaiah, Israel included Judah. The preaching of Jeremiah and Ezekiel held out the hope of restoration and union to the broken nation following the fall of Jerusalem in 586

## *The People of Israel*

B.C.E. The remnants of Northern Israel and Judah would be reunited as one people. Such, too, was the hope of other prophets and of the Psalmists.

### CONFLICTING NATIONAL IDEALS

While both the heads of the state and the leaders of religion vigorously advanced the cause of national consciousness, they were not always at one as to the direction which this consciousness was to take. Samuel and Saul began together, but soon fell apart. A bitter conflict almost steadily raged between the great prophets and the kings. Under the new political order of kingship, Israel ceased to be the oppressed nation, and not infrequently took the part of oppressor. Ambitious to make Israel like all other nations, the kings, like temporal rulers of all countries, laid the greatest stress upon the nation's physical strength, territorial expansion, and material prosperity. To attain their goal, they maintained standing armies, waged offensive as well as defensive wars, drafted the freemen for state service, and levied back-breaking taxes upon the people. The time-serving or "false" prophets, who drew their inspiration from expediency rather than from right and truth, accepted the new order of things as both natural and proper. But the men who were truly dowered with the spirit of God, who had the moral courage to cling to their God-given ideals were impelled to denounce sin, wickedness, and corruption in places high and low. These undaunted champions of liberty refused to reconcile themselves to the new slavery of Israel. They refused to believe that God had deliv-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ered Israel from Egyptian bondage, only to surrender it to the new bondage of its own kings and tyrants. They who, in patriotic fervor, called the monarchy into being, found themselves compelled to fight the very institution of their creation. One of their number, Ahijah of Shiloh, fathered the secession of the Northern tribes from the oppressive rule of Solomon. The historians of the Bible reflect the later opposition of the prophets to the tyranny of kingship, when they present Samuel quarreling with Saul, the man whom he himself had chosen king, and bitterly denouncing the very institution of kingship as being an act of rebellion against God, who alone is the supreme Ruler in Israel.

Through their incessant struggle against the ruling class and against the people at large the prophets became the keepers of the nation's conscience. Their patriotism was purged of blind passion and became the lever of highest morality. In their minds a new spiritual ideal was formed for the nation. Opposing the popular view that Israel's position in the world depended either upon brute force or material resources, they proclaimed the truth, which subsequent history amply verified, that Israel's life depended upon spiritual ideals of consecration to God and of promotion of the causes of justice, humanity, and peace.

### THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

The conflict between the ethical and materialistic national ideas may be seen, in all clearness, in the traditions of Elijah and Ahab, and may be read in the words

## *The People of Israel*

of the literary prophets from Amos to Malachi. The prophets, like the rest of their countrymen, proceeded from the conviction that Israel is the people of God. But instead of permitting this belief to remain the chief article of national vanity and selfishness, they transformed it into a high ideal of duty. *Noblesse oblige!* Because Israel experienced in a special measure the guidance and the blessing of God, heavy obligations devolve upon Israel. The belief in the choice of Israel does not render Israel a superior or favorite nation, entitling it to trample upon other nations. The kindness extended to Israel, God extends also to all oppressed peoples. If Israel is to be justified in regarding itself the chosen of God, then must it choose to serve God in truth and to excel in justice, in loving kindness, in compassion, and in faithfulness. Nations are but instruments through which God's purposes are worked out among men. The glory of nations, therefore, is not the strength of their arms but their faithfulness to their God-given life-purposes. Rather than see Israel victorious over enemies, the prophets wished to see it free from iniquity, and transformed into a kingdom of priests and a holy people.

### THE MISSION OF ISRAEL

As the prophets themselves had reason to expect, their words fell on deaf ears. The people sided with their political leaders and approved of their imperialistic politics. But the collapse of the Judean state in 586 B.C.E. roused the anguished people to deeper reflection. Humiliated by defeat and chastened by the sorrow of exile,

## *What We Jews Believe*

they turned to the words of the prophets for consolation. In those stinging rebukes they found guidance, hope, and courage. What they refused to hear from the mouths of Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, they eagerly accepted from the so-called Second Isaiah (whose prophecies are embodied in the book of Isaiah, chapters XL-LV). His ideal for Israel, they now welcomed as their own: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and have taken hold of thy hand, and kept thee, and set thee for a covenant of the peoples, for a light of the nations; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (XLII: 5-7.)

The final triumph of the prophetic ideal of nationalism gave Israel a definite part to play on the world stage. Israel was no longer to live aimlessly, and in heathen-like fashion, seek to satisfy its own material wants only, even if it be by crushing others. As the servant-people of the Eternal, in whose heart is His law, Israel must have as its life-mission the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, the practice and the championing of righteousness, in personal and social as in national and world relations. The ideal of the spiritual mission of Israel has shone like a beacon light unto the nations. Among the chosen spirits of other peoples, which base their faith upon the religious foundations derived from Israel, the consciousness is steadily growing that it is not enough to build up their own national strength and to expand the sway of their armies over distant lands, but that their supreme task as civilized nations is to establish justice among the warring classes and to bring the light

## *The People of Israel*

of knowledge, help, and salvation to the weak and oppressed nations—to establish the world in righteousness.

### THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL

The fall of the Judean state in 586 B.C.E. introduced important changes into the character of the Jewish people. No longer an independent political unit, the people, especially those living in ever increasing numbers outside of Palestine, were held together by purely religious bonds. Ezekiel registers the change that came over the Jewish people. Unlike the earlier prophets, he does not deal with a political entity but with a flock or community of believers. Similarly the Priestly legislation—which in all probability, comes from post-exilic times—deals with the *Adat Yisrael*, the congregation, i.e., with a “company assembled together by appointment, or acting concertedly.”

Alongside this development of Israel as a religious community, we notice the emergence of the individual. In the older religious life, the center of gravity was the nation. God had chosen Israel as His people—so ran the popular creed. God’s dealings were primarily with the people. The individual was a mere cog in the tribal or national machine. Even in his relation to God the individual counted only as a member of the nation. In the teachings of Deuteronomy (discovered in the year 621 B.C.E.), of Jeremiah and of Ezekiel we note the reversal of the relation between the individual and the people. The individual came into his own right. In 586 the nation fell, but the individual Judeans or *Jews* remained.

## *What We Jews Believe*

Even when the spirit of life passed through the dry bones and a semblance of nationhood was restored, the individual continued to grow in importance in religious life and thought. Problems of the individual more and more agitated the thinkers. The sages and notably the author of Job and some of the Psalmists were confronted with the question of Divine justice as applied not only to Israel but also to the individual person. Not even the temporary establishment of the Jewish state under the Maccabees could stop the progress of individualism. The Sadducees, with their emphasis upon the state, may have upheld the older standards of nationalism. The Pharisees, on the other hand, stressed the prominence of the individual before God, as shown by their emphasis on personal Providence, personal resurrection, and personal bliss in the hereafter.

The second destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E., by the Romans, and the subsequent dispersion of the Jewish people over all parts of the world marked the consummation of this development. The hope of the future restoration of Israel in Palestine indeed lived in the hearts of the people. But the logic of reality taught the religious leaders to look upon the Jews no longer as a nation like the other nations but rather as a *Kenes-set Yisrael*, the congregation or religious fellowship of Israel. Bereft of country and political state, and even of a common vernacular, they still continued as a unique people, a *sacred Brotherhood*. They were held together by common ties of blood, by historical memories and future hopes, by religious beliefs and ethical ideals, by social institutions and ceremonial practices, and by edu-

## *The People of Israel*

cational standards and the Hebrew language as the medium of Torah and prayer. Saadia Gaon accurately describes the status of the Jewish people in the days following the fall of Jerusalem in his famous statement: "Our nation is a nation only by reason of its *Torahs*" (i.e., the written and oral Laws, *Emunot V'deot*, III, 7). Similarly Bahia ibn Pakkudah states that God has distinguished us from the rest of the nations through our worship of God. (*Duties of the Heart*, Ch. III, 3.) And the poet-philosopher Jehudah Halevi speaks of the Jewish people as the heart of humanity, because of the religious currents that extend from it to the other peoples. (*Kusari*, I, 103.)

Living among the nations and adopting their languages, philosophies, and arts, the Jewish people have refused to become like the nations in matters spiritual. Even in countries in which they enjoyed political rights and economic advantages, they constituted a community apart, "hopelessly at variance with every species of gentile worship." This condition contributed to the gravity of the problem of Jewish self-preservation, but it also supplied the moral justification for the continued Jewish separateness.

## ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS

THE historic drama of Israel falls into two parts. The first act was staged in Palestine. There the people grew into political nationhood and developed its distinctive spiritual and cultural individuality. The catastrophic fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E. marked the opening of the second act of the Jewish historic drama. Though physically crushed by the Roman legions, the Jewish people retained their will to live. Like the legendary phoenix they rose from the flames which devoured their homeland to renewed life. As a *Kenesset Yisrael* they now took their place among the nations in whose midst they lived.

Stript of political and geographic unity, the Jewish people were thrown upon their spiritual resources to hold them together. External pressure tended to accentuate their consciousness of unity. Israel among the nations, say the rabbis, is like a sheep among wolves. More exactly Israel may be compared to a flock of sheep or deer, whose only safety consists in holding together. "All Israelites are responsible for one another" came to express the new sense of Jewish unity. The individual Jew or Jewish community that broke away from the *Klal Yisrael* was lost. On the other hand, the consciousness of collective unity and of a common purpose gave strength to the individual Jew. The conviction was strong in the hearts of the Jewish people that whithersoever Israel is exiled the Shechina, i.e., the Divine Presence,

## *Israel Among the Nations*

follows. Jewish life was now concentrated in the Synagogues which had begun to spring up throughout the Diaspora and in Palestine itself in the centuries preceding the fall of Jerusalem. Jewish idealism and knowledge were cultivated on an unprecedented scale in the schools and academies of Palestine and Babylonia, of Spain and Germany, etc. Autonomous Jewish centers appeared in non-Jewish environments, where the light of Judaism continued to shine.

Indescribable hardships obstructed the way of Jewish self-preservation. The dominant Church and, to a lesser degree, the Mosque, left no weapon untried in their endeavors to bend the stiff-necked race and to break its loyalty to its religious heritage. In each generation some grew faint-hearted and wavered. As a people, however, Israel remained unmoved by either the threats or enticements of its antagonists. Though confined in ghettos, restricted in their rights as human beings and as citizens, economically boycotted and socially ostracized, the Jewish people have not swerved from their sacred trust. They joyfully lived and readily died for their faith. It is the perseverance of the Jewish people in their faith that has rendered them indestructible. Claude G. Montefiore felicitously remarks: "It is not an Ibn Gabirol or a Maimonides, still less a Spinoza, who fulfilled the Jewish mission most truly, or rendered the greatest service to the Jewish cause. No. It was the many little obscure Jewish communities through the ages, persecuted and despised, who kept alive the flame of purest Monotheism and the supremacy of the Moral Law." (Bevan and Singer, *The Legacy of Israel*, pp. 515-516.)

## *What We Jews Believe*

### JEWISH PROSELYTISM

Amid their perilous surroundings, the Jewish people gathered strength from a twofold hope. The first and oldest phase of this hope was the prophetic ideal of the mission of Israel. The post-Exilic prophets had voiced the belief that the religious truths revealed to Israel were not to remain the exclusive possession of Israel, but that ultimately they would be shared by all mankind. "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One and His name One." (*Zechariah XIV: 9.*) This conviction in the future universality of their religion had made the Jews a missionary people. R. Eliezer b. Pedat interpreted the very *Galut* or Exile of the Jewish people as intended by Divine providence for the purpose of gaining converts to Judaism. Similarly Rabbi Hoshaiyah stated that "the Holy One, blessed be He, did an act of righteousness to the Jewish people in scattering them among the nations." (*Pesahim 87b.*) Being dispersed, it became harder for their enemies to destroy them; and at the same time they could more readily win over their neighbors to their faith. Wherever the Jews established themselves they attracted the admiration of their neighbors through the purity of their family life, their home ceremonies, and moral ideals. As before the year 70 so thereafter the Jews made many conquests for their faith in Rome as in Alexandria, Damascus, Antioch, etc.

Only the final triumph of Christianity as the state-religion of Rome paralyzed the active proselytism of the Jewish people. To quote Prof. G. F. Moore: "Christian

## *Israel Among the Nations*

emperors made conversions to Judaism a crime in itself, with increasingly severe penalties both for the Christian convert and the Jew who converted him. The net of the law is spread wide; it takes in adherents to Judaism and its teachings, frequenting the Synagogue, and calling oneself a Jew; thus including not only male proselytes, who were also liable to the laws prohibiting circumcision, but to women proselytes in the strict sense, and to the looser adherents of Judaism. The penalty was at first arbitrary with the magistrates; then the law added confiscation of property and the inability to make a will. For the proselyte-maker the legislation went on to equate the crime to *Laesa maiestas*, and finally made it simply capital, whether the convert was freeman or slave. Against all such attempts of pagan or Christian rulers to shut up Judaism in itself and prevent its spread, the Jews persisted in their missionary efforts to make the religion God had revealed to their fathers the religion of all mankind." (*Judaism*, Vol. I, pp. 352-353.) That their persistence met with some degree of success is attested by the records of history. The sad experience which they encountered dampened their missionary ardor and made them cautious—sometimes overcautious—with regard to admitting proselytes into the fold. However, the doors of both the Orthodox and Reform Synagogue have ever remained open to all who voluntarily sought admission.

### THE MESSIANIC HOPE IN THE BIBLE

The ultimate conversion of humanity to the religious beliefs of Israel formed part of the Jewish Messianic

## *What We Jews Believe*

hope. Messianism represents the undying belief of the Jews that through God's aid they will be restored to their land under the leadership of a scion of the house of David, by whose means the kingdom of God will be inaugurated on earth. In this hope, product of dire national need and of exuberant fancy, we recognize two stages of development. The stage reflected in the Hebrew Bible expresses the natural longing for deliverance from oppressive foreigners and from intolerable social conditions. Upon examination, Biblical Messianism appears to combine the conflicting national ideals of political and material grandeur on the one hand and of moral and spiritual progress on the other.

The secular side of Messianism centers in the institution of kingship. It is from this realm that the term *Messiah* (Hebrew *Mashiah*) is derived. Its original meaning is "anointed" and is rendered in Greek by the word *christos*. Anointing of kings, and even of high-priests, and, in some instances, of prophets, signified their *consecration* for their offices. The ceremony of pouring sacred oil upon the head of the king was supposed to transform him into a new person. He became God's *vicegerent* on earth, ruling Israel in God's name and bearing testimony to God's greatness among the nations. As the "anointed of the Lord," he was held inviolable. No one could lay hands upon his body without incurring the wrath of God. The title *M'shiah Adonai*—the anointed of the Lord—is used in no supernatural sense throughout the Hebrew Bible. It is applied to Saul, to David, and to other kings of Israel, in the same sense in which we speak of a king as "crowned." That the term

## *Israel Among the Nations*

referred to no unique and mysterious personage of the perfected kingdom of the future may be seen from its application by a prophet to a gentile king like Cyrus. (*Isa.* XLV: 1.)

While there were many “anointed” kings in Israel, David came to hold a place of special favor in the minds of the people as the model ruler of men. To see on the throne a worthy descendant of David was the natural hope of the people. The ideal king was to bring them not only deliverance from oppression but also triumph over their enemies, material prosperity, and undisturbed security. The prophets, while not ignoring the national ideal, sought to endow it with ethical values. Isaiah (in Chapters XI and II) looks to the appearance of a scion of David, upon whom shall rest the spirit of God, of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of might, of knowledge and true religion, who shall rule equitably and judge righteously. Under his rule the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid shall rest together. That is, social oppression and exploitation shall cease. Not alone in Israel but throughout the world justice and peace will abound. All nations will flock to Mt. Zion, and, receiving the word of God, will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. “Nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Sometimes (as in *Psalm LXXII*) the political and spiritual ideals of kingship combine in the picture of a Jewish monarch who will rule the nations with a rod of iron and save the poor and needy.

## *What We Jews Believe*

### SUPERNATURAL MESSIANISM

Beneath the various portraiture of the ideal king as sponsor of a perfected social order, we discern the interest of the Bible authors in the Jewish people. The king was only the representative of the people. Their hopes in his triumph in reality expressed their expectation of their nation's triumph over their enemies. With the overthrow of the royal house of David in the year 586 B.C.E., the hopes centering in the king were gradually transferred to the people. (*Isaiah* LV: 3-5.) In a few Bible passages collective Israel is personified not only as God's "first-born" but also as His "anointed." The great prophet of the Exile, as we have stated above, pictures Israel as the servant of God, whose mission it is to bring light and faith unto the whole world, and whose very suffering is to serve as the means of the universal salvation of humanity. (*Isa.* LII: 13-LIII.)

During the last days of the Jewish commonwealth when the Maccabean like the Davidic dynasty was exterminated, when the throne was held, through the aid of the Roman legions, by the blood-thirsty Herod, and when the people were kept in the grip of abject wretchedness, the bleeding heart of the people cried out again for a true *mashiah*, a king who like David of old would free them from their hated oppression, drive the Herodians from power and the Romans from the land, and restore peace to the suffering nation. While some patriots endeavored to resort to physical strength to secure national liberty, others recognizing the futility of it, could look for salvation only to God. As all earthly help

## *Israel Among the Nations*

seemed to have vanished, the hope of the people was transferred to the heavens, and a new, unreal, mysterious, and supernatural type of Messiah appeared on the clouded horizon of the Jewish people.

In their yearning for deliverance from foreign oppression and misery, they fell back upon the Biblical passages that spoke to them of a brighter future. Their hopes mingled with fantastic otherworldly dreams. The better days promised in God's name by the prophets had not been fulfilled in the past. Will they not come to pass in due time? Taking the words and figures of the prophets literally as the Divine promises of future salvation, the Jewish people evolved the belief in the Messiah as the supernatural ruler of the coming kingdom of God. Especially after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70, popular imagination ran riot in picturing the glory of this mysterious person. He was presented now as Isaiah's prince of peace and then as the world conquering ruler of the second Psalm. He was also portrayed as a priest-king with supernatural endowment. He was viewed as the suffering servant of the Lord, as the Son of Man (originally intended as a symbol of Israel) of Daniel, and as a celestial being pre-existent and eternal, kept by the side of God until the time appointed for his appearance on earth to establish God's universal dominion.

Of the various presentations of the character and mission of the Messiah, Prof. Schechter writes: "They fluctuate and change with the great historical events and the varying influences by which they were suggested. But there are also fixed elements in them which are to

## *What We Jews Believe*

be found in the Rabbinic literature of almost every age and date. These are:

"1. The faith that the Messiah, a descendant of the House of David, will restore the kingdom of Israel, which, under his sceptre, will extend over the whole world.

"2. The notion that a last terrible battle will take place with the enemies of God (or of Israel) who will strive against the establishment of the kingdom, and who will finally be destroyed. 'When will the Lord be King for ever and ever? When the heathen—that is, the Romans—will have perished out of the land.'

"3. The belief that the establishment of this new kingdom will be followed by the spiritual hegemony of Israel, when all the nations will accept the belief in the unity of God, acknowledge His kingdom, and seek instruction from His law.

"4. The conviction that it will be an age of material happiness as well as spiritual bliss for all those who are included in the kingdom, when further death will disappear and the dead will revive." (*Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 101–102.)

### MESSIANISM IN JEWISH HISTORY

The idea of a personal Messiah as world savior appeared in Israel like a rainbow on a cloud-laden sky, displaying a wealth of harmony and color. Then followed the sad spectacle of rational people pursuing the variegated colors of the rainbow, a spectacle, which, in some quarters, may be seen to this day. In tragic seriousness, men

## *Israel Among the Nations*

devoted themselves to searching Scripture for hints of the right time of the promised advent of the redeemer. This belief partly served a good purpose of endowing the despondent people, in the course of many dark centuries, with hope and courage. The Jew braved the storms that overtook him with the declaration as voiced in the Maimonidean creed: "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and although he may tarry, I daily hope for his coming."

But the picture also has its sombre and mischievous side. A series of men appeared, each claiming to be the God-sent Messiah. The story of Jesus marks the beginning of Christianity. Most of the others sought to re-establish the Jewish kingdom in Palestine and to deliver mankind from wickedness and from error. The means which they employed were for the most part innocent enough: performance of miracles, long fasts and other ascetic rites, and religious reforms. Some of them were victims of their own delusions, while others were plain impostors, who exploited the credulity and ignorance of the masses. Their appearances created feverish excitement among the people, and were generally followed by the saddening disappointment and exhaustion that grow out of disillusionment.

That the illusory character of the Messianic belief was not completely unrecognized may be seen from the following statement of Rabbi Hillel II (3rd century). In an age when the Messianic belief was firm in the hearts of the people and when scholars strained their minds in computing the exact time of the arrival of the Messiah, this descendant of Hillel the Elder, boldly de-

## *What We Jews Believe*

clared: "Israel may expect no (future) Messiah, for Isaiah's prophecies were concerned with the age of King Hezekiah." (*Sanhedrin* 99a.) The full significance of this isolated statement became clear only in modern times.

### CHANGED OUTLOOK OF REFORM

The French Revolution marked the beginning of the dissolution of the medieval union of Church and State. Under the changed idea of the political state, men of different religions came to be equal citizens of their native or adopted lands. Similarly the idea of the racial unity of the state began to crumble. In some instances numerous nationalities have come to form part of one and the same political nation. Citizenship has been divested of religious and racial bonds and has been turned into a purely legal and political relationship.

Taking advantage of the changing political and social order in Western Europe, the Jews who had come under the influence of the enlightenment movement bent all their energies in the direction of securing full civic equality with their neighbors. In their eyes the expectation of the ingathering, under the leadership of the Messiah, of the dispersed of Israel unto Zion and of the subsequent restoration of the sacrificial cult clashed violently with their cherished hopes of political emancipation and of the progress of enlightened faith. The belief in a personal Messiah appeared to them not only fantastic and irrational but also subversive of their most cherished ambitions.

After considerable agitation in Europe and America,

## *Israel Among the Nations*

the Reform wing of Judaism frankly announced its conviction that: "The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all the children of God, so as to realize the unity of all rational creatures and their call to moral sanctification." (D. Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, p. 354.) Definitely rejecting the belief in a personal Messiah, Reform Judaism reaffirmed instead the prophetic ideal of the spiritual mission of Israel to labor for the inauguration of the hoped for age of universal knowledge of God, of brotherhood, justice, and love among men.

The mission of Israel, as interpreted by Reform Judaism, involves no aggressive methods of proselytism among other people. It rather upholds the glorious ideal for the Jewish people themselves so to live as to make their spiritual and moral convictions universally esteemed and emulated. In keeping with progressive religious thought, Reform Judaism does not ask the world to adopt its *creedal formulations and forms of worship*. As products of Jewish experience these have value primarily for the Jewish people. But their underlying religious and ethical ideals, which constitute the heart of Judaism, are of universal value. It is this message of living faith in God, in the sanctity, dignity, and worth of man, in righteousness, in good-will, and in peace that Reform Judaism would safeguard for the world at large, to be cultivated by each religious fellowship or nation in accordance with its needs and to be expressed in forms best suited to its own standards and tastes.

## ISRAEL TODAY

### JEWISH NATIONALISM

WHILE Reform Judaism accentuated anew the conception of *Kenesset Yisrael*, of Israel as a *historic and ethnic religious community*, new forces revived the radically different interpretation of Israel and of Israel's destiny. By the side of and in reaction to the roseate dreams of cosmopolitanism, the XIXth century witnessed the birth of the idea of racial and political nationalism. In part this movement followed in the wake of the Napoleonic conquests. Deep, elemental forces were stirred by them in the hearts of the slumbering nations. Historical memories, dreams of regeneration, renascence of ancient languages and cultures began to rouse them to new life. Greece, Italy, Rumania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria secured their independence. The struggling German states emerged as a unified Germany. Poland and numerous other oppressed nationalities began to break the shackles of their political slavery.

The awakened national consciousness, while expressing itself in vigorous cultural and spiritual creativeness, not infrequently manifested itself also in bigoted, self-centered exclusiveness, in militarism, and in hostile rivalry of other nations. The dislike for the unlike was bolstered up by reactionary theories which would make the political state consist of a homogeneous nation, united by a common language, history, and racial origin.

## *Israel Today*

The twin spirit of racial nationalism and political reaction exerted a powerful influence upon the Jewish people both negatively and positively. Though in Western lands they had won political equality with their Christian neighbors and had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the cultural life of their respective lands, they obviously could not lay claim to racial equality. In blood they were not Aryans, but Semites. To the exaggerated racial self-consciousness of certain of their Aryan neighbors, especially of the military and aristocratic classes, they appeared as undesirable aliens. Toward the last quarter of the XIXth century, this feeling of hostility to the Jewish people was embodied in the new movement of Anti-Semitism.

This sinister movement was fed by numerous other sources. There was the economic factor, the resentment felt toward Jewish competition in business and professional life. Above all, this movement was nourished by the ancient intolerance of the Church toward the stiff-necked people that steadily refused to be converted to the Christian faith. Anti-Semitism soon translated itself from thought into deed. It took on virulent forms in political melodrama in Germany, in the spectacular scandal of the Dreyfus trial in France, in bloody pogroms in Russia, and in economic boycotts in Poland.

The brutality of Anti-Semitism, while destroying the will to live as Jews in the hearts of many, called forth the resistance of numerous other Jews. Under the influence of awakening nationalism, the Jews too had experienced a renewed interest in their past history and achievements. And now the insult and menace of Anti-

## *What We Jews Believe*

Semitism stimulated even the indifferent ones among them to a deeper consciousness of the present and to a reconsideration of their place and role in a world maddened by hatreds and prejudices. The shock was especially severe for those who were not buttressed by the historical traditions and values of the ancestral faith. Their new-born sense of solidarity thus rested upon a racial rather than upon a religious basis. Men who had fallen away from Jewish observances and who openly disavowed the cardinal beliefs of Judaism, began to regard and to profess themselves inseparable from the Jewish people and devoted themselves to the purely secular phases of Jewish life, to its cultural and intellectual elements.

Differences of outlook led the awakened Jewish nationalists to different programs of action. Some were content with an intensified national self-consciousness expressed in the upbuilding of autonomous Jewish cultural and communal centers wherever Jews live in considerable numbers. Others looked for a genuine Jewish revival only in Palestine, the ancient home-land of the Jews, which ever lived in their Messianic hopes, dreams, and prayers as the land of their future. These aspirations crystallized themselves in the Zionist movement.

### ZIONISM

Zionism, in part, grew out of ancient Jewish Messianic hopes and in part out of the resentment of the Jewish people to Western civilization and its bastard offspring, Anti-Semitism. Accordingly its aim has been a double

## *Israel Today*

one: to free the Jewish people from the intolerable conditions of the diaspora and to restore it to a creative life in its historic home-land. With this aim in view the "Lovers of Zion" (*Hobebe Zion*), following the Russian pogroms of 1881–1882, undertook colonization work in Palestine, seeking to establish Jewish settlements where Jewish life might develop in freedom. Men like Eliezer ben Yehudah devoted themselves to the re-creation of Hebrew as a spoken language in order to restore to the Jewish people one of the chief attributes of nationhood.

Though with the financial aid of Baron Edmond de Rothschild the colonies planted by the Lovers of Zion met with a degree of success, it became evident that small colonization work on a philanthropic basis cannot solve the problem of Jewish economic distress and political disability. Ahad Haam, therefore, advanced the view that Zionism should aim at solving the spiritual rather than the material phase of the Jewish problem. He looked to the creation in Palestine of a cultural reservoir of all Jewry, a center where the Hebrew language, Jewish literature and art, and Jewish ethical idealism may flourish and serve as the means of a complete Jewish renaissance for the Jews of all parts of the globe.

What the Lovers of Zion hoped to gain in the end, Theodore Herzl set up as the prime condition of the rehabilitation of Palestine. In 1897 he launched a movement for Political Zionism whose objective was the establishment in Palestine of a legally secured home for the Jewish people. His program aimed at founding, with

## *What We Jews Believe*

the guarantee of political powers, a *Judenstaat* that the Jewish people might again take their place as a political entity among the nations. In consequence of the World War, Herzl's political dream was carried into the sphere of practical politics. The Balfour Declaration (1917) promised the upbuilding in Palestine of a national Jewish home under British control.

The Revisionists would carry the Herzlian program to its logical consequences. They would create in Palestine a Jewish majority, by means of military measures if need be, to the end of realizing to the full the political aspirations of the nationalist wing of Jewry.

For the actualization of these objectives the various parties in Zionism pin their hopes to the diverse political and economic forces that operate in the world today, from British imperialism to awakening Arab nationalism, from democracy to socialism, and from insurgent fascism to communism. Accordingly the means to which they seem ready to resort for the realization of the Zionist ideal vary from militancy to pacifism and from co-operative colonization to competitive individualism. However they differ in viewpoint and plan, the various parties in Zionism unite in the conviction that the rehabilitation of Palestine will serve as a cohesive force for all world-Jewry, as a way to renewed Jewish self-respect and consequently also to Jewish spiritual regeneration. Furthermore, renascent national Jewish life in Palestine is destined, in the view of the Zionists, to benefit not only the Jewish people but the world at large. As an ideal state that will combine the best in Jewish tradition with the best of European thought and science,

## *Israel Today*

the Jewish home-land will serve as a beacon to the whole Orient.

### OPPOSITION TO ZIONISM

The manifold character of the Zionist ideal has attracted heterogeneous elements, representing Jews of all lands and of all shades of religious belief and unbelief. It likewise has roused the antagonism of vast numbers of other Jews. The opponents of the movement, like its supporters, have come from the ranks of Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform as from those of non-believers. It must be noted, however, that the opposition to Zionism never has been formed into a definite party or movement. In fact, the creation of the Jewish Agency (1928) serves as an indication of the readiness of many non-Zionists and even of anti-Zionists to co-operate in the economic and cultural rehabilitation of the land so closely connected with Jewish tradition and sentiment.

Indeed, every party in Judaism cannot but welcome a settlement of Jews in Palestine, as in any other land, on a sound material and spiritual basis and under proper political safeguards. From the development of a healthy Jewish life in Palestine, Reform like Conservative and Orthodox Judaism may expect to derive certain positive benefits. The renascent cultural activities, such as the revival of Hebrew and its literature, of Jewish art, etc., may tend to invigorate Jewish life in all other parts of the world.

On the other hand, Zionism possesses points of danger and of real concern for religious minded Jews. Its ideol-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ogy runs counter to both Orthodoxy and Reform. Orthodoxy cannot see in the possible re-establishment of a *Judenstaat* in Palestine the consummation of the Jewish Messianic hope. Nor can it reconcile itself to the upbuilding in Palestine of a Jewish society and culture on a secularist basis as the fulfillment of the prayers for redemption. The ties that bind Orthodoxy to Palestine are religious. The position of historical Judaism is strikingly voiced by Prof. Schechter. While regarding Zionism as "the Declaration of Jewish Independence from all kinds of slavery, whether material or spiritual," he protested against its dangerous tendency to independence of religion. Emphasizing that "Israel is not a nation in the common sense," he writes: "The brutal Torah-less nationalism promulgated in certain quarters, would have been to the Rabbis just as hateful as the suicidal Torah-less universalism preached in other quarters. And if we could imagine for a moment Israel giving up its allegiance to God, its Torah and its divine institutions, the Rabbis would be the first to sign its death-warrant as a nation." (*Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 105-106.) For Reform Judaism no less than for Orthodoxy, stripping the Jewish people of its religious character and reducing it to a secular racial or political nationality amounts to depriving it of its historic uniqueness and to consigning it to ultimate extinction. What justifies Zionism in the eyes of religious Jews, like those of the Mizrahi, etc., is the hope that the physical regeneration of the Jewish people in Palestine will lead to a spiritual renaissance. The mere preservation of Israel on biological or racial grounds does not seem to fire their imagination.

## *Israel Today*

Furthermore, from the religious standpoint Palestine cannot have the same value for Reform that it has for Orthodoxy. For Orthodoxy, Palestine is indispensable. Only there can all the provisions of the Torah, regarding agriculture, sacrificial worship, etc., be restored. On the other hand in the view of Reform Judaism these laws and requirements do not appear binding upon Jews to-day. They represent a passing phase of Jewish religious practice, quite alien to modern ideas of religion and worship. Palestine, therefore, is not deemed essential to the full practice of Judaism. Though cradled in Palestine, Judaism has lived and flourished—despite great odds—for more than two millenia in various other parts of the world. Wherever Israel went, the Divine Presence, the *Shechinah*, followed. Judaism has lived wherever Jewish hearts have been alive to their faith and duty. Judaism appears narrowed when its survival is made dependent upon one country, even if that country be so intimately associated with Jewish experience as Palestine. Judaism may not be reduced to a mere geographic concept. The transfer on the part of secular Zionists of loyalty from Torah to land and from religion to politics, even under most ideal conditions, seems, from the standpoint of Judaism, a step backward.

Leaders of Reform Judaism have registered further objection to the implication of Zionism that in countries outside of Palestine Jews are in *Galut*, or exile, i.e., strangers. Such views were logical before the civic emancipation of the Jewish people. Having won political equality with the fellow citizens of other faiths in most countries, they would be courting disaster by voluntarily

## *What We Jews Believe*

renouncing their hard won gain and declaring themselves strangers everywhere save in Palestine. Such a step would amount to a retreat and surrender to Anti-Semitism. Individual Jews, in numbers large or small, may prefer to settle in Palestine and develop an ideal form of communal life that shall gain the admiration of their brethren of other lands. But their possible creation of a Jewish home-land for themselves must not prejudice the endeavors of their brethren to make themselves fully at home in whatever country they enjoy the privilege so to do.

### THE JEWISH WILL TO LIVE

Though wide differences exist in the mind of present day Jewry with regard to the path of Jewish duty and to the vision of future destiny, all parties variously affirm the Jewish will to live. Their very existence as active factors in Jewish life constitutes an emphatic negation of so-called "assimilation," in the sense of complete obliteration of all differences between the Jews and their neighbors to the point of loss of Jewish identity. The Zionists of all religious and political shades refuse to limit the drama of Jewish history to the first two acts hitherto staged. To the acts of Israel in Palestine and of Israel among the nations, they strive to add a third act of Israel's restoration as a political nation in Palestine. Non-Zionist religious Jews are equally resolved to preserve the identity of the Jewish people for the service of humanity and of God. Allowing for some exceptions, they are firm in their conviction that Judaism "denational-

## *Israel Today*

ized," i.e., divorced from the people that gave it birth and that has preserved it through thirty-five centuries, would be reduced to a mere ghost of its former self. Paul's attempt at "denationalizing Judaism" resulted in a wholly new religious creation. It is doubtful whether in the material world of today Judaism can function without a *Kenesset Yisrael* better than it could nineteen centuries ago.

Claude G. Montefiore, while advocating denationalization of Judaism, writes: "The Jews must preserve their religious identity and separateness; they must preserve, that is, their peculiar form of Theism. And being a tiny minority in every nation or state, they can only do this if they marry fellow Jews, or proselytes to Judaism. Their refusal to marry any others has a religious basis." (*American Israelite*, January 15, 1931.) Judaism and the congregation of Israel are inseparable even in this extremist view. Furthermore this union does not brand Judaism as a "national" religion in the narrow sense of the word, because Israel's nationhood is in itself of a spiritual character. While sponsored by the Jewish people, Judaism has indeed been "supernational and humanitarian" and hence *universal*. Its prophetic vision has ever embraced all races and nations.

### WHAT MAKES A JEW

Historical circumstances have made Judaism the religion of but one people. Jews are accordingly united by ties of blood as well as of faith. Inasmuch as the religious fellowship of Judaism consists of a nation, conversion to

## *What We Jews Believe*

Judaism has meant not only adoption of certain beliefs, moral standards, and ceremonial practices, but also entrance into the *Kenesset Yisrael*. It constitutes at once a conversion to the Jewish faith and a "naturalization" in the Jewish nation. Though considerable additions have been made from time to time to our ranks from the outside, the unity of our household has remained undisturbed. The converts are from the standpoint of Judaism the absolute equals of those born in the faith. Symbolically this equality is expressed by considering the proselyte an adopted child of the father of the Jewish people, of Abraham. Through intermarriage the converts have been completely absorbed into the Jewish body and are indistinguishable from the rest of the Jews.

While emphasizing the need of preserving the Jewish race, Philo of Alexandria appealed for a warm-hearted welcome to strangers who seek the God of Israel and His laws. "Kinship," he writes, "is in truth not reckoned merely by blood: it is rather doing the same actions and seeking the same ends." In the view of the Rabbis, too, the Jewish bond was not purely racial but also spiritual. To the question: "Who is a Jew?" an ancient master replied: "Whoever confesses the Divine Unity." And the modern theologian Morris Joseph similarly defines a Jew as a person "consciously living his life under the influence of Jewish ideals."

The name Jew has thus come to have a twofold meaning. On the one hand it signifies religious affiliation, and on the other it denotes descent from the Jewish people (*Yehudi*). In the past, the two meanings were seldom distinguished in those who were born in the faith. Mem-

## *Israel Today*

bership in the Jewish household naturally implied affiliation with the Jewish religion, even as adherence to the religion meant membership in the Jewish household. Consequently as soon as a person broke with his faith, he *ipso facto* broke with his people, and was generally considered outside of the Jewish pale. With the rise of secular nationalism among the Jews the situation has changed. Men who have alienated themselves consciously from the Jewish religion sometimes claim pride in their Jewish descent and cheerfully join the ranks of Zionists and other nationalists. Nevertheless, in a restricted sense, faith still constitutes the chief determinant of Jewishness. The Rabbis taught that "an Israelite who has sinned is still an Israelite." Though in bad standing, he remains a Jew. Dr. Moses Gaster, the former head of the Orthodox Sephardi community of London, himself an ardent champion of Jewish nationalism, voices the sentiment of all divisions of Judaism when he states that faith "is the common ground on which Jews are united. There may be degrees in the strength and quality of the faith which each one acknowledges as binding on him. But we have no inquisition. As long as a Jew has not publicly renounced his faith and embraced another, he belongs to the Jewish nation. It is of extreme importance to realize that this alone constitutes a Jew—that the nationality of the Jew depends on his faith: for Judaism is a national religion. It does not teach only abstract principles of ethics, but is intimately bound up with the history of the people, and leads the people on to a renewal of its historic life."

We have been the "bearers of the Ark of the Cove-

## *What We Jews Believe*

nant." While bearing it we have also been borne by it through our long historical pilgrimage. The historian Graetz exclaims: "What would the Jew be without Judaism? The body without the soul, the Levitical bearers without the Ark of the Covenant." (*Jewish Quarterly Review, old series*, Vol. II, p. 269.) Our religious consecration has rendered us an "eternal people," with an ever living spiritual message for humanity. Our religious heritage has been our badge of honor and our source of life.

*TORAH*



## THE TORAH OF ISRAEL

### THE JEWISH LEGACY AND HERITAGE

THE Torah is Israel's source of life and badge of honor. The prophet addressed Israel in God's name as "the people in whose heart is my Torah." Similarly Mohammed referred to the Jews as the "People of the Book." Since the destruction of the Jewish political state and geographic center, the Torah has been our spiritual fatherland. Saadia Gaon as we have mentioned above, stated that "Our nation is a nation only by reason of its *Torahs*" (i.e., the Written and Oral Laws). Paraphrasing earlier rabbinic teachings, Maimonides writes: "Israel has been adorned with three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty. Whereas the crown of priesthood is the exclusive possession of Aaron and his seed, and the crown of royalty that of David and his house, the crown of Torah belongs to all Israel, as Scripture states: 'The Torah which Moses commanded unto us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.' Whoever wishes may take possession thereof. Should you think that the other crowns are more important than that of Torah, the sage declares: 'By me (i.e., by wisdom or Torah) kings reign, and princes decree justice.' This teaches that the crown of Torah is greater than the other two." (*H. Talmud Torah*, III: 1.)

That this high valuation of Torah was not mere rhetoric is demonstrated by the history of the Jewish people.

## *What We Jews Believe*

The Jewish past is glorified by the double effort to create and to preserve the Torah. Prof. Ludwig Blau observes: "In all probability there never was another people, except possibly the Brahmans, that surrounded its holy writings with such respect, transmitted them through the centuries with such self-sacrifice, and preserved them with so little change for more than 2,000 years." (*Jewish Encycl.* article "Torah.") The external forms of the Torah were surrounded with a halo of sanctity. Its language was regarded as "the sacred tongue," *Leshon Hakkodesh*; its very alphabet was considered to have descended from on high, and its text was believed to have been delivered by God to Moses at Mt. Sinai in the presence of the assembled multitude. Extravagant claims were made for its origin. It is supposed to have existed before creation. Like all things celestial the Torah was pictured as fiery, inscribed in "black letters of flame upon a white ground of fire." The Torah served God Himself as a plan of creation. Despite the protests of the angels, God entrusted the Torah to Israel as a priceless possession. Though given to Israel, the Torah was intended for all mankind. It is to serve not only as a "bond of unity to conserve the people of Israel" but also as a bond of union for all humanity. Its appeal is to man as man. Hence it was revealed in seventy tongues that all the nations of the world might hear and take to heart its life-giving precepts. Furthermore, the Torah was delivered in complete and perfect form for all times and for all races, so that no substitute for it may be expected. The immutability of the Torah forms one of the articles in the Maimonidean creed: "This Torah will not be

## *The Torah of Israel*

changed nor will any other Torah be given by the Creator, blessed be His name."

### MEANING OF TORAH

From these exuberant expressions regarding the transcendent importance of the Torah in the consciousness of the Jewish people, let us turn to the simple meaning of Torah. The frequent identification of Torah with Law (i.e., with a legalistic system) has no better support than anti-Jewish bias and ignorance. Law, whether civil or ritual, constitutes but one of the numerous phases of Torah. Probably derived from the Hebrew root *YRH*, "to throw" (i.e., the lot for oracular purposes), "to direct" or "to teach," Torah signifies divinely revealed instruction.

#### I. TORAH OF THE PRIESTS

In charge of the oracle (or *Urim* and *Tummim*), the priest was consulted by the people with regard to ritual matters, such as the proper forms of sacrificial worship, clean and unclean, sacred and common, etc., as well as with regard to civil and moral issues. A decision or judgment thus obtained was known as Torah. The word Torah also applied to a whole body of such decisions or judgments. In course of time it came to designate also a written code of religious law.

#### 2. TORAH OF THE PROPHETS

By the side of the Torah of the priests looms the Torah of the prophets. Prophecy was from the first "the heart-

## *What We Jews Believe*

throb" of the religion of Israel. The prophet (*Nabi*) was a spokesman of God, an interpreter of His will, a herald or messenger in the sphere of religion. In the words of Micah, he was "full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of justice, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." (III: 8.) By virtue of his spiritual endowments, he clearly perceived and boldly proclaimed religious and moral truth. As a man of deeds as well as of words, he exemplified in his life the ideals he proclaimed. He published his message not only through preaching but also through songs, praising God for the manifestation of His might in the life of Israel. The prophet resorted also to the art of the story teller to narrate for the generations to come the events of old.

As the champions of the divine order of righteousness and as the keepers of their people's conscience, the prophets expanded and deepened the law of the priests. They spiritualized the established institutions of the Temple and its worship and of the Sabbath, the feasts, and fasts. A Jeremiah looked to the day when the law would be set in the inward parts of the people and inscribed on their hearts. (XXXI: 31-34.)

The prophetic utterances sounded the loftiest views of morality and the noblest conceptions of religion. Beginning as spoken words, they were treasured by the people and with the general advance of culture were committed to writing. They were carried forward by the rising level of Hebrew literature and assumed most impressive forms in the elaborate addresses of the great prophets.

## *The Torah of Israel*

### 3. TORAH OF THE SAGES

In addition to the Torahs of the priests and the prophets there developed also the Torah of the sages, i.e., of teaching based upon worldly wisdom, ordinary observation and experience. Utilizing the form of the proverb and parable, the Torah of the sages became a powerful medium of religious instruction.

Whatever its original meaning, Torah came to represent divinely inspired teaching as embodied in the records and traditions of the Jewish past. Whether in the form of historical testimony, priestly legislation, prophetic preaching or admonition of wisdom, Torah holds out commandments for man. In details these varied forms may occasionally clash, but they are united in their purpose to direct the thought and conduct of man along the paths of faith and integrity. Torah may, therefore, be considered the legal, idealistic, and intellectual expression of Judaism. As the inspired creation of Jewish men of genius, the Torah gives character to the Jewish past and offers guidance and direction for Jewish life today and tomorrow.

### THE WRITTEN TORAH

While the Torah represents the unbroken chain of Jewish cultural and spiritual creation, tradition distinguished between its Written and Oral forms. The Written Torah (*Torah Shebiktab*) is identified with the *Pentateuch*, the five-volume work which heads the collection of our sacred literature commonly known as the Bible or Scriptures.

## *What We Jews Believe*

Though it opens with "Origins" (*Bereshit*-Genesis), its theme is not primarily the saga of ancient heroes or even the history of the people of Israel, but rather the Law of God. Whatever historical material it contains is but incidental to this main theme of instruction in the knowledge of God and of His ways with nature, with mankind, and with Israel, and in the laws which He was believed to have commanded unto Israel.

Its object being religious rather than historical, the Torah begins with the account of creation. With a poetic sweep of marvelous beauty, it presents order emerging out of chaos. By His creative word, God calls the vast cosmos into being and crowns His efforts with the formation of man. While utilizing the knowledge of his day, the unknown author of the story of creation conveyed a spiritual rather than a scientific view of the world. He pictures man, the child of dust, as endowed with the spirit of divinity. He proceeds further to show the kinship of the human race. All mankind has descended from the same pair of ancestors. The racial divisions known in his day: the Semites, Aryans (Japhet), and Negroes (Ham) are traced back to the common ancestor, Noah. The author seeks to bring the existence of evil, pain, and death under the scheme of Divine Providence. He further illustrates the retributive justice of God in the story of the flood.

Tracing the diversity of human speech and the racial subdivisions of mankind, he prepares the stage for the appearance of Israel in the drama of universal history. In tracing the rôle played by Israel, the author's chief interest is again religious. He dwells particularly upon

## *The Torah of Israel*

the covenants with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, upon God's help in Israel's liberation from bondage through Moses, and upon the theophanies at Sinai, at Kadesh Barnea, and in the plains of Moab.

The historical framework forms a fit setting for the laws of Israel. A large portion of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus, most of Numbers and of Deuteronomy are devoted to law. Furthermore, the narratives, poems, and addresses, which mingle with the law, have been edited in such manner as to enforce the primary object of the law.

The Pentateuch combines records and traditions of different ages, which were current in the North of Palestine and in the South, with the genealogies, accounts of institutions, like the Sabbath, circumcision, etc., and rules of diet and priestly ritual, and casts them into the mould of prophetic idealism. Thus the Written Torah constitutes the foundation of Judaism.

The Torah or Pentateuch is followed by the *Nebiim-Prophets*. This order of the Bible comprises eight volumes of two distinct types. The first four (Joshua, Judges, Samuel I and II, and Kings I and II) continue the history of Israel which was begun in the narrative portions of the Torah. They deal with events subsequent to the death of Moses down to the Babylonian Exile in such manner as to illustrate the religious teachings of the prophets. Hence they are designated as the *Nebiim Rishonim*—Former Prophets.

The remaining four volumes contain the written sermons of the prophets of Israel from the eighth to the third century before the common era. They are known as

## *What We Jews Believe*

*Nebiim Aharonim*—Latter Prophets, and include the three large books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—the so-called “Major Prophets”—and the collection of the twelve other prophetic books, which, because of their brevity, are called “Minor Prophets.” They are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The third division of the Bible, known as *Ketubim* or *Writings* (Hagiographa), is composed of eleven books of miscellaneous character. The first three are grouped as the books of *EMeT* (Truth), composed of the initials of their Hebrew titles read in the reverse order; Tehilim (Psalms), Mishle (Proverbs), and Eyob (Job). These three great works of poetry and wisdom are followed by the five scrolls or *Megillot*: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The remaining books are: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles I and II.

These three divisions of the Bible have not enjoyed equal authority in the life and thought of Israel. By virtue of the popular belief that it was given by God to Moses, the Torah or *Pentateuch* held the place of supreme authority. From the days of Ezra’s Reformation (c. 444 B.C.E.) it has formed the pivot of all Jewish religious endeavor. It constitutes the foundation of all law and doctrine as well as of Synagogue worship. The *Prophets* and *Writings* have occupied a subordinate position in the Jewish consciousness. They are classed as “words of tradition” (*Dibre Kabbalah*), but since they were believed to interpret, supplement, and reinforce the Torah they were considered parts of the Torah.

## *The Torah of Israel*

### THE ORAL LAW

Despite the commanding character of the Torah it was the first to experience the effects of changing conditions in Jewish life. The orations of the prophets, the prayers and hymns of the Psalmists, the wisdom of the sages, and the great stories and histories remained the imperishable possession of all the ages. The Torah, on the other hand, aiming through its detailed regulations to direct the life of the people, did not cover the emergencies of the growing ages. A careful examination of the Pentateuch shows a surprisingly limited number of laws by which the awakened piety of the individual in the days following Ezra's Reformation could be nourished. While the Jews in Palestine still could be governed by the priestly laws, the Jews in the ever widening diaspora had extremely few precepts in the Pentateuch by which to guide themselves.

The sense of inadequacy of the old Law served as the leaven of a most remarkable religious development. In the conviction that the Law as embodied in the Pentateuch represented the word of God, the men of piety, in the age after Ezra, bent all their efforts to discover in the Law provisions for the new circumstances. "Turn it and turn it for all is in it"—represented their view of the written Torah. As the word of God it must contain all that is necessary for human guidance. It only demands special skill in searching the Scriptures to discover their hidden levels of truth. Ingenious rules of interpretation were adopted by the learned in order to draw out of the text of Scriptures the new rules required by life or

## *What We Jews Believe*

to justify new departures in personal or national experience. This process of interpretation is known as *Midrash*.

Gradually there developed a two-fold body of Law. By the side of the Pentateuch, i.e., of the Written Torah there appeared the Oral Law (*Torah Sheb'al Peh*) which took care of the growing needs of the people. Despite the protests of the official priestly guardians of the Torah (the Sadducees), the sages of Israel (or Pharisees) proceeded to extend the Oral Law as the authoritative guide of conduct.

With the fall of the Temple and cessation of the sacrificial cult, the Pentateuchal law became, for the most part, inoperative. However, by that time the Oral Law had grown sufficiently strong to provide for the emergency. The humble Synagogue now took the place of the Temple. Worship in the form of prayer was established for week days and festivals. The study of Torah was made the basis of the changing social and religious order. And the practice of charity was raised above the offering of sacrifices at the altar.

After several centuries of steady growth, the body of traditional law was codified into the *Mishnah* or "Oral Teaching" by the influential and saintly Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, a descendant of Hillel. (c. 220 C.E.) There was much opposition to reducing the "Oral" Law to writing, for fear that it would supplant the Written Torah. Rabbi Judah, through his personal prominence and dignity as Patriarch, overcame all objections. His work, covering all branches of ritual, civil, and criminal law, became the standard and authoritative text book in

## *The Torah of Israel*

all Jewish academies. The discussions and elaborations of the Mishnah in the schools of Palestine and Babylonia are known as the *Gemara* (i.e., the expository supplement). The *Gemara* of Palestine plus the *Mishnah* represent the Palestinian Talmud. The *Gemara* of the academies of Babylonia plus the *Mishnah* constitute the Babylonian Talmud.

The vast body of the Talmud, representing a thousand years of religious development, is composed of two distinct types of material. A large portion of it is purely inspirational, seeking to edify the people and to imbue them with faith, with hope, and with courage. This is known as *Haggadah* (Lore). By the side of the poetic, fanciful, and homiletical strata there is the *Halachah*, i.e., the rule of conduct or law, which aims to direct, to legislate, and to govern the religious, civil, and social life of the Jews. It is the *Halachah* in particular that has regimented the Jews of all ages and of all countries into a unified people. For loyal Jews, the Talmud represented "an actual continuation of the revelation made at Sinai, an unassailable authority." The Bible itself was read in the light of Talmudic interpretation. Embodied in the Rabbinic codes, especially in the *Shulhan Aruch* ("arranged Table") of Joseph Caro (16th century), Talmudic law has served as the foundation of Jewish religious life.

The Jewish heart and mind were not content with the *Haggadah* and *Halachah* alone. They hungered for wider knowledge and for more emotional and artistic expression. This they found in the rich philosophical, *kabbalistic* (mystical), ethical, and poetic writings of the mas-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ters of the Synagogue. Though embodying much of Greek and Arabic thought and form, these products of the Jewish genius likewise rested on the foundations of the Torah and are considered parts of the Torah.

### MODERN VIEW OF TORAH

The modern temper has effected a revaluation of the character of the Torah. Its supernatural claims cannot be maintained in the light of modern scholarship. Like the sacred writings and traditions of the other religions, so the Torah of Israel can be understood only as the manifestation of the human spirit, as the product of human needs and aspirations. Instead of being the miraculous revelation of God to man, the Torah is viewed as the natural aspiration of man after God. Consequently neither the Written nor the Oral Torah can maintain itself as absolutely authoritative for all times and all places. Reform Judaism frankly disregards many of the provisions and viewpoints of the Torah as no longer tenable. Its ceremonial and civil laws are for the most part honored in the breach rather than in practice by Conservative Jews and even by large numbers of Jews who class themselves as Orthodox.

Nevertheless, in a restricted sense the Torah is still the guide and inspiration of all Jewry. From the standpoint of the present it may be possible to find in the Bible certain human failings, imperfections, and moral deficiencies. But taken all-in-all—and especially when making allowance for the time of its composition—no similar body of religious writing may be found so potent

## *The Torah of Israel*

to stimulate heart and mind, to awaken ethical ideals and spiritual consecration. Like the Scriptures so the Oral Torah holds for us the perpetual light of Judaism. The Torah defines our beliefs and convictions. It unfolds the lofty ethical goals which Judaism has sponsored through the ages. And it further prescribes the practices and observances which have lent strength and beauty to Judaism.

While recognizing the transient character of much of the Torah, we cannot overlook its permanent elements which reveal the spirit of man struggling to unite with the Divine. *For us Torah is living and dynamic religion. It is Judaism embodied in our literature and tradition. It constitutes the ideal stream of Jewish religious creativity and the norms of moral and spiritual living.* As an inspiration and a discipline it has shaped Jewish life and destiny. It still forms the bond of Jewish union and its vital message to the higher life of humanity.



*GOD*



## THE GOD OF ISRAEL

ISRAEL'S chief contribution to the world of religion is its unique doctrine of *ethical monotheism*, of the One and Only God who is the ultimate cause of reality and of righteousness. Forming the beginning, center, and end of the Torah, it represents the crowning glory of Judaism. No other belief has had such far-reaching and beneficent an effect upon the higher life of mankind. It has irradiated human life and endowed it with an imperishable faith and hope. It has moulded Israel into a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," and has given to the daughter religions of Judaism, to Christianity and to Islam, the moral and spiritual lever for the uplift of the nations.

### GROWING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

No word in the human vocabulary is freighted with greater importance than the word "God." Around it center the most significant philosophies of all races of men as well as their religions. An American philosopher has observed that while we understand next to nothing about the nature of God, we can hope to understand nothing in nature without God.

The ideas which humanity forms about God represent not only its ethical idealism but also its interpretations of the mystery which envelops the cosmos. They are the products of the ceaseless quest after ultimate reality. As

## *What We Jews Believe*

the quest progresses and improved means for its pursuit become available, the results are enriched and the conceptions of God change.

Modern science has accustomed us to regard all knowledge not as something static, fixed and final, but as a process of steady growth. For instance, looking backward to Bible times we find man's view of the world quite limited. Only the Mediterranean basin was known, and even there the inhabitants of the eastern coast knew nothing of the existence of a western coast. Gradually men grew conscious of the existence of the vast continents of Asia, of Europe, and of Africa, and only much later of America and of Australia. The process of exploration has not yet drawn to an end. Though the earth has been the same during the past few thousand years, man's comprehension of it has steadily grown and changed.

This is typical of the entire physical universe, and is representative of its invisible laws. Gravitation, we assume, has operated from the beginning of creation, but the understanding of its laws first came with Newton. Similarly radio-activity was always in nature, but it is only in our times that men have grown aware of its existence. The age of the world runs into myriads of years, but our knowledge of it is still very new and only in its incipient stages.

Even so God is the same today as He was yesterday and as He will be tomorrow. In the language of our poets, we may speak of Him as the unchangeable Rock of Ages, who abides though all else comes and goes. Over Him eternity passes "like an image in a glass."

## *The God of Israel*

But man's knowledge of Him, far from being eternal and unchanging, has undergone radical transformations with the progress of time.

### THE IDEA OF GOD IN JUDAISM

Something of the idea of growth in the Jewish conception of God appears to have been dimly recognized by the authors as the Torah itself. Moses is represented as informed by God: "I am *YHWH* (the Lord), and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), but by my name *YHWH* I made Me not known unto them." (*Exod. VI: 2-3.*) A name means a conception or attribute of God. This statement, therefore, seems to announce that God as known to Moses was not yet known to the fathers of Israel. A further examination of the records of the Bible corroborates the view that, contrary to popular opinion, the idea of God in Judaism has undergone striking changes.

The first notions of deity among the peoples in whose midst Israel was born are extremely vague. The most widely diffused name for deity in ancient Semitic dialects is *El*, which some scholars derive from a verb meaning "to be strong" and others from a verb meaning "to be in front." It would thus mean "mighty one," "governor," or "leader." By the side of *El* we have the plural noun *Elohim*, which seems to be a form of "plural of majesty" or "Eminence." Not more definite is the name *El Shaddai*. In the verse which we quoted above, it is rendered, "God Almighty." However, it has been construed also as "mountain God," i.e., Most High, as

## *What We Jews Believe*

"the Storm God," "destroyer," or as "scorching sun-god."

While the explanations of the names for deity are hypothetical, the names themselves bear an unmistakable polytheistic character. They apply to nondescript spirits or deities, and appear to be personifications of natural forces. The El was in the first place the spirit or *numen* of a particular location. Under the influence of advancing culture the El came to designate a local, tribal, or national deity.

Of wholly different character is the four lettered Hebrew name *YHWH* (known as the Tetragrammaton). Instead of being a general term for deity, it is always employed in a specific sense as the particular God of Israel. Its transliteration in English literature as "Jehovah" grew out of a misreading of the vowel points of *Adonai* (Lord) that were early applied to the Tetragrammaton. Its proper pronunciation seems to be *Yah-weh*. The etymological significance of this name has puzzled men from most ancient times and the question of its origin has been one of the moot points in modern scholarship. The Biblical writers were already divided on these questions.

One Pentateuchal document considers the name *Yah-weh* of greater antiquity than either Moses or the patriarchs, claiming that it began to be invoked in the days of Enosh, the grandson of Adam (*Gen. IV: 26*). Another document asserts that it was first revealed unto Moses, and that the patriarchs, at most, worshipped Him under another name. This document uses the name Yahweh by the side of Elohim and explains it by a play on the root *Haya*—"to be." Yahweh is supposed to mean "I am that

## *The God of Israel*

I am," or "I will become what I will become," i.e., essentially unnameable, inexplicable, (*Exod.* III). It may also mean "He who will become," i.e., "the God of progressive revelation." The priestly writer refrains from using the name Yahweh until he gives an account of its revelation to Moses in Exodus VI: 3, but subsequently uses it freely, without furnishing an explanation of its meaning.

Like the meaning, so the origin of Yahweh is veiled in obscurity. Whether brought by the fathers of Israel from Mesopotamia, or derived from the friendly tribe of Kenites in the neighborhood of Sinai, Yahweh was the God of Israel from the very beginning. Israel found itself when it found Yahweh. At Sinai a covenant between the deity and Israel was formed, which expressed itself in the words of the Decalogue, "I am Yahweh thy God" and "Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me." (*Exod.* XX: 2-3.) He was conceived as the deliverer of Israel from Egyptian bondage, as the provider of their food and drink, and as their guide through the wilderness on their way to the land of promise. Protected and shielded by His aid, the people felt themselves bound to serve Him and to carry out His will. "I shall be your God and you shall be My people" summarized the relationship of Yahweh and Israel.

During the stormy days of the conquest of Canaan, the tribes of Israel looked to Yahweh as their champion and helper. In their imagination He loomed as "a man of war," fighting their battles and giving them victory over their foes. He was their god as Kemosh was the god of the Moabites, Milkom the god of the Ammonites, Dagon

## *What We Jews Believe*

the god of the Philistines, and as the Baalim were the gods of the Canaanites. Only He was stronger and more resourceful than they. The poet exclaims, "Who is like unto thee, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, extolled in praises, working wonders?" (*Exod.* XV: 11-12.)

Popular conceptions pictured Him as both *like and unlike man*. He possesses hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouth. He speaks with chosen individuals, responds to their entreaties, and shares in their joys and sorrows. He delights in the worship which men offer him, and he resents their disobedience and disloyalty. He is concerned with both ritual and morality. He demands not only that a Sabbath be set aside in his honor, but that his worshippers honor their parents, and abstain from murder, adultery, and theft, from bearing false witness against their neighbors and from coveting the possessions of their neighbors. At the same time Yahweh's superhuman qualities were stressed. He was conceived as fiery and as dwelling not only on a mountain or in a temple but also in the skies. He moves upon a cloud, speaks with the voice of thunder, and signals through the flash of lightning. Though pictured in definite form, He is not material. The second commandment, prohibiting the worship of other gods, was elaborated to read: "Thou shalt make unto thee no molten or graven images of anything which is in the heavens above, which is on the earth below, or which is in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them." (*Exod.* XX: 4-5.) God is spirit and not flesh. Though inaccessible to the human sight and touch, He is real in

## *The God of Israel*

the life of man and of nature. He is the invisible agent behind all phenomena, the power behind the works of the physical order, and the source of moral law for the individual, tribe, nation, and humanity. He rewards those who love Him, and punishes those who hate Him.

For the progressive, religious thought of Israel, Yahweh could not remain one god among many others, and become the One and only God. Accordingly the name Yahweh ceased to serve as the personal designation of deity as worshipped in Israel, and came to be regarded as the ineffable name of the universal God. In the prophetic and especially in the post-exilic parts of the Bible, the name Yahweh is used as equivalent to *Ha-elohim*, the God, and to *Adonai*, the Lord. To avoid using this name, the Tetragrammaton is pointed with the vowels taken from the word *Adonai* and is pronounced *Adonai* or *Hashem* (the Name).

The idea of monotheism gradually led to the identification of Yahweh with the moral will which orders the universe and with the power making for the harmonious working of nature's laws. Yahweh the god of Israel was transformed into the universal Father of mankind. Originally connected with Sinai or Horeb, and subsequently with Mt. Zion, He was proclaimed as the Lord of Hosts (*Adonai Zebaot*), whose glory fills earth and heaven. He was further acclaimed the fashioner of the spirits of men and the creator of the universe.

Ethical monotheism largely grew out of the earnestness and moral insight of the prophets of Israel rather than of their speculative reasoning. It was particularly after Judaism came into contact with Greek thought

## *What We Jews Believe*

that its doctrine of ethical monotheism was profoundly affected by philosophic arguments. The Greek thinkers had arrived at a form of monotheism by contemplation of the world order. Under their influence the masters of Judaism, during the Greek period, especially in Alexandria, and later on during the Arabic period of Jewish history, sought to effect a synthesis between the idea of God as the source of righteousness and the idea of God as the source of cosmic order. This synthesis became indispensable for Judaism if God's righteousness was to be brought into harmony with His omnipotence. The almighty God, who rules justly, must somehow master recalcitrant nature and bring it under the sway of His will.

In the course of its development the idea of God in Judaism was shaped by the varied economic and political as well as by the intellectual temper of the Jewish people. The new conceptions which were thus formed are crystallized in the attributes that have been applied to God. From patriarchal society we have the tender concept of *Divine Fatherhood*, still so rich in its appeal to the heart of the worshipper. From tribal times we have the attribute of *Judgeship*. The pastoral economy of ancient Israel is stamped in the Divine attribute of *Shepherd*. Monarchic conditions contributed the *King* idea, symbol of the sovereignty of law in the relations of the world and of men. Reflective thought yielded the striking figures of *Mekor Hayyim* and *Bore umanhig*—Fountain of Life, Creator of the World, Providence, the All-Seeing Eye, the All-Hearing Ear, etc.

The idea of God in Judaism shows continuous develop-

### *The God of Israel*

ment. The great prophets arrived at new conceptions of God, unknown to the patriarchs. The philosophers and mystics of later times, utilizing the knowledge and the insight of Greek and Arabic thinkers, at least in some respects, went beyond the prophets. The enlarged experience of humanity, the continuous ordering of modern knowledge, and the steady advance of thought furnish the basis for new visions of the Eternal. In the light of the new standards of science and philosophy we must readjust our approach to the problem of God.

## *WAYS OF KNOWING GOD*

**W**HILE some phases of the Jewish conception of God have grown obsolete, its fundamental emphasis on ethical monotheism has retained its freshness and vigor to our day. With the leading aspects of this idea of God we shall concern ourselves in the remainder of this section of our book.

Before we deal with them specifically we must survey some of the ways in which Israel reached out after the Divine. Without going into details, we must observe at the outset that the few glimpses into the ways of God which humanity cherishes have not been disclosed to man supernaturally as the final and unalterable truth at either Mt. Sinai or elsewhere, but have been secured gradually through the agency of human personalities. Man is an active seeker after the truth which he finds. The restless mind of man refuses to remain inactive. It has steadily striven to pierce the veil that hides the mystery of things. As it succeeds in penetrating into the dark chamber, it may yet behold the King in the fullness of His beauty. Advancing truth, far from being a danger to religion, holds out to it the promise of greater value and usefulness.

### **REVELATION AND INSPIRATION**

The process by which humanity has grown conscious of God, according to Biblical tradition, is that of *revelation*.

## *Ways of Knowing God*

tion. With *Torah min hashamayim*, i.e., with revelation as a disclosure of the divine will to man, we concerned ourselves in our discussion of Torah. Here we must limit ourselves to the *self-revelation* of God, to "the manifestation of the divine presence" (*Gilluy Shechinah*). Dr. Kohler defines this form of revelation as the "appearance of God upon the background of the soul, which reflects Him like a mirror." (*Jewish Theology*, p. 35.) It figures frequently in the Bible and assumes child-like anthropomorphic forms. God is pictured as a magnified person whose seat is in the sky, on Mt. Sinai, or in the Temple at Mt. Zion. From there He descends on earth and appears to men in visible form, speaks to them in human voice, or inspires them with visions and shows them signs and wonders. He reveals Himself to chosen individuals and communicates to them His purposes in accordance with their ability to perceive them. Of Moses it was said that God spoke to Him "face to face, as a man speaks to another." (*Exod.* XXXIII: 11.) He also manifested Himself dramatically to the whole people of Israel at Mt. Sinai amid thunder and lightning, declaring to them His laws of righteousness.

With the progress of general knowledge the mechanical conception of revelation could not maintain itself. Instead, revelation began to recommend itself as a psychological process. Like all truth so the truth of religion first dawns in the minds of gifted individuals. They are the lightning rods which are first struck by the fire of God. Their minds are sensitized to receive the impressions of divine justice, love, and holiness. Kindled with the light of God, these flaming spirits illumine the paths

## *What We Jews Believe*

of life for others. Their personal inspiration serves as a revelation to their fellowmen.

The concept of revelation as a process whereby the Creator's activity, thought, and purpose are disclosed to and apprehended by some of the pure-souled and spiritually gifted creatures remains pivotal in modern as in ancient Judaism. The very idea of God implies that, despite the unfathomability of His nature, at least something about Him or His ways may be grasped by man and turned into a source of influence in human life. God still reveals His secrets unto His servants, the prophets. But this revelation is no more and no less mysterious than the general disclosure of truth or beauty to men of genius.

Though men of religious genius—the prophet souls—are rare, they are not essentially different from their fellow-men. A Christian theologian remarks: "Behind the prophets and the psalmists of the Old Testament there was the inspired Hebrew nation." The religious consciousness of the people, their spiritual needs and yearnings, found expression in the lives and teachings of their gifted sons. Accordingly the poet philosopher Jehudah Halevi regarded Israel as especially dowered with the gift of prophecy. Abraham Geiger writes in the same spirit. "The Greeks were not all artists; each one of them was not a Phidias or a Praxiteles, but yet the Greek nation alone was capable of producing such great masters. The same was the case within Israel. Surely not all of its men were prophets, and the exclamation, 'would that all the people were prophets' was but a pious wish; the other: 'I shall pour out My spirit upon all flesh,' is a

## *Ways of Knowing God*

promise; it had not become the reality. Nevertheless, Israel is the people of revelation within which the favored representatives appeared; it is as if the sparks of light had been scattered and had been gathered into a blaze in the more favored ones." While the consciousness of the sacred is shared by all men, the Jewish people have been endowed with special genius for religion, with a primordial power that made them "see deeper into the higher life of the spirit," to "feel more deeply and recognize more vividly the close relation between the spirit of man and the Supreme Spirit." Geiger concludes, "Let us not hesitate to speak the word—it is *Revelation*, and that too, as manifested in the whole nation." Hence Judaism "does not claim to be the work of individuals, but that of the whole people. It does not speak of the God of Moses or of the God of the prophets, but of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of the God of the whole race, of all the patriarchs who were equally endowed with the gift of prophetic vision, the genius of revelation which was latent in the whole people and found concentration and expression in individuals." (*Judaism and Its History*, p. 46 ff.) Israel has thus been a prophetic or God-revealing people. And Israel's history has served as a channel of Divine revelation.

### REASON AND INTUITION

While modern psychology may interpret prophecy as a natural human phenomenon, the ancients regarded it as supernatural in character. The prophets considered themselves as organs and mouthpieces of God. Dowered with

## *What We Jews Believe*

an extraordinarily high moral sense, they succeeded in establishing the religion of Israel on an ethical basis and in making their visions of God and of the moral order the foundation of world-religion. Despite their commanding position in the sphere of religion, their methods were of limited applicability. "It was their characteristic that, instead of reasoning and conjecturing, they announced and commanded. Each of them spoke as if he was commissioned to publish the laws of heaven in the language of earth, as if his mind was a medium for the transmission of the white light of eternity." (Strahan, *Hastings' Encycl. Religion and Ethics*, VII: 348.)

Men of rational turn of mind have reached out after the knowledge of God more directly. As to the material world, so to God they have come with their unaided intellects. Through their power of observation of phenomena and through speculative reason they have sought to discover something of the nature of God and of His purposes. This has been the way of philosophy from Job in the Bible, and Plato and Aristotle in Greece to Maimonides, Spinoza, and Kant, and their followers of the present. However the philosophers have differed in their methods and in their results, they have been at one in the conviction that the search after God may be rewarded with at least glimpses of His reality. To what degree are they justified in the belief that their conceptions may correspond to reality?

H. L. Goudge writes: "The question whether anything can be known must be decided, as Bacon says, not by arguing, but by trying. Religion starts with the assumption that God is to be known, as science starts with the

## *Ways of Knowing God*

assumption that the world is to be known, and both are ultimately justified by the fruitfulness of the results obtained. Of course, it is always possible to suggest that *our apparent knowledge may not be real knowledge*, since it is necessarily relative to the mind which claims it. But, if we reject such scepticism in the sphere of physics, we ought also to reject it in the sphere of religion. The instinct of the mind is to believe itself in touch with reality, and there is no reason for setting this instinct aside." (*Hastings' Encycl. Relig. and Ethics*, X: 746.)

On the other hand, there are those who deny that God can be found "by searching." He is too vast for the human mind to grasp. Furthermore, if so grasped He would not be God, for then He would be inferior to the mind that masters Him. Not by nimble intellectual scrutiny, it is argued, may "the secret of the world" be found but by a perceptive heart "that watches and sees." And what it ultimately perceives is but a fragment of the glory of God. Santayana, for example, in his plea for faith, writes:

"Oh, world, thou choosest not the better part.  
It is not wisdom to be only wise,  
And on the inward vision close the eyes;  
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.  
Columbus found a world and had no chart  
Save one that Faith deciphered in the skies;  
To trust the soul's invincible surmise  
Was all his science and his only art.  
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine  
That lights the pathway but one step ahead

## *What We Jews Believe*

Across the void of mystery and dread.  
Bid then the tender light of Faith to shine  
By which alone the mortal heart is led  
Into the thinking way of the thought Divine."

From this viewpoint the way of intuition affords us a truer notion of God. It gives a "direct and original insight" into the nature of things and thus bares something of the Divine. This is the mystic's way to God. This is also the poet's way. Of Wordsworth, for example, we are told that he saw, "as very few have ever seen that an incessant apocalypse is going on in Nature, which many of us altogether miss, and to which we all at times are blind; and that, in the apprehension of this—which is a real disclosure of the Infinite to the finite, as constant as sunrise, or as the ebbing and flowing of the tide—we find the basis of Theism laid for us." (Knight, *Aspects of Theism*, pp. 3-4.) In the same manner Browning sings:

"I but open my eyes—and perfection,  
    No more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me;  
    And God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh,  
    In the soul and the clod.  
And thus looking within and around me,  
    I ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul which in  
    Bending upraises it too)  
The submission of Man's nothing—  
    Perfect to God's all-complete,

## *Ways of Knowing God*

As by each new obeisance, in spirit,  
I climb to His feet!"

Intuition and inspiration are inter-related. They are vital not only for religion and art but also for science. Professor Einstein testifies to his belief in both. "At times," he says, "I feel certain I am right while not knowing the reason. When the eclipse of 1919 confirmed my intuition, I was not in the least surprised. In fact, I would have been astonished had it turned out otherwise. Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research." (*Cosmic Religion*, p. 97.)

Whatever the process by which men secure knowledge of God, it is essential to bear in mind that this, like every other kind of knowledge, comes to us through the chosen few, the prophets, poets, saints, and thinkers. The rest of us can only accept from them the reports which they make of spiritual reality much in the same way in which we receive the truths of mathematics or physics from men especially qualified. In this sense, tradition and authority must ever be accorded a commanding place in religion.

Furthermore, between the man of genius and the object of his study there is always a thick wall which he must break down if he is to reach his goal. Hence even the prophets of the ages have not always beheld absolutely clear visions. Being only human they suffer from human limitations. Our senses are not sufficiently refined

## *What We Jews Believe*

to permit us to comprehend reality. Through their narrow windows it is even harder to envisage the spiritual than the material order. Tennyson well stated:

“And the ear of man cannot hear,  
And the eye of man cannot see;  
But if we could see and hear,  
This vision were it not He?”

Due to defective vision even the noblest of men have been able to catch but “broken gleams” and stifled splendor,” often mistaking projections of their own shadows for reality, and constructing confused ideas of the Divine. F. Max Mueller observes: “Man devised means as varied as nature herself to express the idea of God within him.” Nevertheless, with the poet of the Synagogue we venture to say: “Though men imaged Thee in many visions, Thou art One in all likenesses.”

### GOD AND THE GODS

The consideration of the growing nature of the knowledge of God and of some of the processes whereby this knowledge has been obtained equips us for a truer appreciation of the abiding convictions of Judaism regarding God. Though the idea of God has not always been the same in Judaism, its development exhibits a certain unity of tendency. Jewish thought has ever regarded God as the Holy One, the Father of man, and the Sovereign of the world. Within this general trend there has gone on a process of deepening of concepts, of their refinement,

## *Ways of Knowing God*

and of their harmonization with streams of thought coming from far and wide. With advancing science and conscience some notions of God were found crude and unworthy of Him who represents the highest perfection. These had to be discarded in favor of more suitable ideas.

The cast-off views have not been completely discarded. Ours is a tradition of three-and-a-half millenia, which reflects the varied thoughts and aspirations of our people. The Bible alone mirrors the life, the ideas, and the dreams of Israel in the course of more than a thousand years. Primitive views of God appear in it by the side of the most advanced prophetic conceptions. As we have pointed out in a previous chapter, He is naïvely pictured in human likeness, in the earlier strata of the Bible, and as the fashioner of heaven and earth who makes for righteousness in its later parts. Consequently unless we learn how to read that great body of religious literature intelligently we fail to understand its real teachings about God. The same applies to post-Biblical literature. To obtain the great wealth which it contains, we must master the art of disengaging the pure gold from the dross.

Neither is this a problem of purely theoretical character. It vitally affects present day thought and life. The primitive and backward views of God have not wholly vanished. In the minds of some He still figures as a magnified man, with white flowing beard, seated on a sapphire throne on high, and hurling His thunder-bolts of wrath at the sinners who fail to worship Him aright on earth. For others His picture suggests a large blur,

## *What We Jews Believe*

bewildering and confusing. As in Bible times, some deify natural forces and set up the physical world order as God. Others extol as gods the creations of man, mere figments of his imagination, projections of his mind. Still others deify the spirits of their respective nations, glorifying as God a celestial John Bull, Uncle Sam, or Israel. There are also those who magnify the abstraction called "Humanism" and pay it the worship due to the living God.

In our days, therefore, as in the days of the prophets, we must clearly discriminate between the different uses of the name God. With Jeremiah we say: "Not like these is the portion of Jacob; for He is the former of all things." The true God is objectively as well as subjectively real. He is the "living God and the everlasting King . . . He that hath made the earth by His power, that hath established the world by His wisdom." (X: 2-16.) We have been taught to pray to the "Lord our God and God of our fathers . . . the great, mighty and awe-inspiring, the most high God, who bestows loving kindness and possesses all things." He is both our God and the King of the Universe. We address Him with Isaiah: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." (*Isa. VI: 3.*) With the poet we extol Him: "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside Thee; neither is there any rock like our God." (*1 Sam. II: 2.*) We adore Him as the Lord of All: "Who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. The seat of His glory is in the heavens above, and the abode of His might is in the lofty heights. He is our God; there is none else." His is

## *Ways of Knowing God*

the Kingdom and to all eternity will He reign in glory.

Utilizing the concepts of our day, when we speak of God we think of the living and creative essence of the universe, the ultimate ground of all existence, the unique One who unifies the multiplicity of warring natural phenomena, the self-conscious intelligence whose workings are discernible in the net-work of law which holds the universe together. For us God is the mysterious source from which all things derive their being, the power eternal expressing Himself in solar systems and in the tiniest atom and electron, in organic matter and in human life. He is self-existent, limitless in power, infinite in resources, wondrous in manifestations. He reveals Himself in baffling phenomena and in ordinary processes of nature. The microscope no less than the telescope displays His wonders. The tiniest living cell or drop of water is charged with the mystery which overwhelms us when we gaze upon the stars.

## THE COSMIC GOD

FROM our brief sketch of the development of the idea of God in Judaism and of some of the ways in which men have sought to comprehend Him, we turn to a more detailed survey of the distinctive phases of the Jewish conception of God. These have been indicated in the creedal formulations of Judaism with which we dealt in a previous chapter. They represent the Jewish convictions regarding the essential nature of God and His relationship to the universe and to mankind. In accord with the questionings of the modern mind, we shall group them under the heads of: (1) The Cosmic God, and (2) the Personal God.

Foremost in the Jewish idea of God is the emphasis on His being the Lord of the universe—*Ribono Shel Olam*. Our Torah begins with the declaration of God as Creator of heaven and of earth. Speaking historically we may say that our people came to know of God through their national and personal experience before they learned to perceive His presence through the philosophic contemplation of the phenomena of nature. But once they mastered this vital message of nature, they cherished it as the guiding light and law of their lives. Since the dawn of reflective thought, even before their contact with Greek philosophy, they have endeavored to approach God through the highest and truest in nature and through the noblest and deepest within themselves. Both of these paths to God are indicated in Psalm XIX. “The heavens

## *The Cosmic God*

declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." By the side of the cosmic is the moral message: "The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul." Kant similarly spoke of two things which filled him with perennial wonder: the starry sky and the moral law. The revelations of the heavens and the dictates of conscience alike direct man's thought to God.

### MECHANISM AND INTELLIGENCE

In the thousands of years that have passed since the composition of the opening chapter of the Torah the knowledge of the universe has gone through remarkable transformations. Science has accomplished wonders. It has unveiled a limitless world of vast spaces and of time, of myriads of stars and of planets of gigantic dimensions. The enlargement of cosmic proportions has only magnified the cosmic mystery. We are baffled by the immensities, the marvels, and the potentialities of this bewildering pageant. As we endeavor to penetrate this thick darkness and to understand the scene of our life, alternative viewpoints suggest themselves. We can think of the world in terms of either *quantity* or *quality*.

The quantitative view of the world readily recommends itself to man who may be considered naturally predisposed to materialism. Receiving his reports concerning the outside world through his five senses, he comes to trust them implicitly. So-called common sense leads him to regard things that he can see, hear, and touch as the only realities. Science generally encourages him in this prejudice. Its main business is with the study

## *What We Jews Believe*

of the quantitative side of reality, with its physical properties, with extension in time and in space, and with mass and motion. It seeks to enumerate, measure, and classify them and to discover the laws that govern them.

Deeper reflection leads man to recognize that the quantitative view of things does not exhaust their meaning. For instance, looking at a volume of Faust and examining its size, appearance of binding and of paper, and form of print, and the number of its sentences, words, and letters, we hardly get an inkling of Goethe's immortal work. To evaluate this product of genius, we must penetrate to its inmost essence, its underlying idea, its philosophic depth, its poetic artistry, and its significance in German and in world literature. The spirit of this masterpiece is wholly independent of the outward forms of its various editions.

Obviously we have no such key to the inner meaning of nature as we have to Faust. It is clear, however, that the picture which we secure of the physical universe, of its appearance, size, duration, etc., does not give us a complete and satisfactory conception of reality. It must be supplemented by the endeavor to fathom the uniqueness of things, their significance, value, inner relations, and purpose. Though most difficult to discover, the qualitative side cannot be dismissed as a mere human invention. It is in the general scheme of things. Man discovers it even as he discovers the physical world.

The physical or quantitative side of nature is made known to us through our senses. Its qualitative side reveals itself to us through our conscious intelligence. Though, for the most part, nature remains a closed book

## *The Cosmic God*

to us, it displays here and there signs that are akin to intelligence. Its phenomena respond to human manipulation. It further displays harmonious relationships which seem to belong to its very essence. Possibly, the universe has come to consciousness of itself and of its immanent values in the mind and conscience of man. Latent in inorganic matter and in the simple forms of organic life, these values may have come to full expression in man. From a state of potentiality they have been translated into actuality.

The universe does not yield its secrets until it is approached from its qualitative side. If the quantitative view gives us a materialistic picture of the world, the qualitative yields a spiritual conception of the world, which is essential for religion.

Materialism is an ancient philosophy which came to new life under the influence of the growing physical sciences in recent centuries. It rests on the same assumption on which the medieval theologians based their beliefs in a *deus ex machina*, viz., that the mind of man knows all about the way the universe behaves in all its parts. The vast world according to this view, is in reality a simple affair which may be compared to a large machine. It is an aggregate of physical forces which operates with undeviating regularity. It is a world of atoms and chaos, or as some conceive it, "a universe of fiery globes moving on to impending doom." However tremendous and complete it may be, nature in all its parts may be reduced to matter and force. Even such things as consciousness, mind, will, love, conscience, personality, etc., are but products of matter.

## *What We Jews Believe*

Picturing the world as a colossal automatic engine is naturally congenial to the thinking of men in an age that witnessed the greatest triumphs of the machine. To numerous minds it has recommended itself as a common sense view which does away with much of the fog that has enveloped reality. The difficulty with this picture is its over-simplicity. Harry Emerson Fosdick writes: "This particular bit of picture thinking is obviously inadequate to describe even a crab, much less a cosmos. Nobody doubts that there is a profoundly important mechanistic aspect to a crab, but after all a crab is hardly a machine; he grows from the conceptual egg to maturity, and a machine does not; from inward energies he can reproduce amputated members, and a machine cannot; he can spontaneously adjust himself from within to new situations, and a machine cannot; he propagates his kind through the mystery of generation, and a machine does not. None of the most characteristic functions of a living organism does a machine perform, so that what it means to call even a crab a mechanism is not clear—much less what it means so to describe a man. Can a mechanism remember, think, distinguish between right and wrong, fight for ideals, fall in love, and worship God?" (*Adventurous Religion*, p. 65.)

Furthermore those who resort to the symbol of the machine frequently overlook one of its important characteristics. No machine is self-originative. Our engines, even if they be automatic, are the products of human minds that designed them. The locomotive, the automobile, the watch—they are all manifestations of the mind that invented them. Consequently the measure of

## *The Cosmic God*

the machine for the universe fails to carry out the real intention of the materialists. It does not wholly do away with creative thought. Any other picture of the world that may be substituted for that of the machine must reflect not only the quantitative side of reality but also its qualitative side, its order and beauty as well as its size and power. It must include not only inorganic matter, but also consciousness and intelligence.

It is important to note that leaders in the very field of experimental science are leading an offensive against the idol of mechanism, and are turning to idealistic philosophy and to religion for help in their explanations of reality.

Dr. Robert A. Millikan concluded his presidential address before the American Society for the Advancement of Science (Dec. 29, 1930) with the rhetorical question: "has not modern physics thrown the purely mechanistic view of the universe root and branch out of its house?" His viewpoint is shared by other outstanding representatives of the world of science like Einstein, Eddington, Whitehead, Pupin, Compton, Michelson, etc. Sir James Jeans ventures to state: "Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not of course our individual minds, but the mind in

## *What We Jews Believe*

which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts. . . .

"We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds—not, so far as we have discovered, emotion, morality, or aesthetic appreciation, but the tendency to think in the way, which, for want of a better word, we describe as mathematical. And while much of it may be hostile to the material appendages of life, much also is akin to the fundamental activities of life; we are not so much strangers or intruders in the universe as we at first thought. Those inert atoms in the primeval slime which first began to fore-shadow the attributes of life were putting themselves more, and not less, in accord with the fundamental nature of the universe." (*The Mysterious Universe*, pp. 158–9.)

### TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

What form did the conception of the Cosmic God assume in Judaism? The first article of the Maimonidean Creed affirms the existence of God as Creator and Ruler (*Bore Umanhig*) of all other beings, and as the active cause of their existence. The great hymn of the Synagogue, the *Adon Olam* ("Universal Lord"), similarly sings of Him in transcendental terms.

"The Lord of all did reign supreme  
Ere yet the world was made and formed.  
When all was finished by His will  
Then was his name as King proclaimed.

## *The Cosmic God*

And should these forms no more exist,  
He still will rule, in majesty.  
He was, He is, He shall remain;  
His glory never shall decrease.

And one is He, and none there is  
To be compared or joined to Him.  
He ne'er began, and ne'er will end,  
To Him belongs dominion's power."

Whether creating the universe *out of nothing* or *out of eternal matter*, God was conceived as working from the outside. He fashioned the ordered world in the manner in which the potter moulds his pots out of clay. At the same time Jewish thought refused to regard creation as ended. The Hebrew prayer reads: "In His Goodness He continues daily the work of creation." Operating uninterruptedly in nature, the transcendental Creator came to be regarded as also *immanent*. Though He is above the universe, He dwells within it and directs it from within. He is the condition of universal existence, the life that animates and the mind that directs all. The universe with its myriads of stars, is His "living garment." Though it may be worn out, He shall abide forever. All nature is but His transient shadow, ever changing and assuming new forms. He is from eternity to eternity.

### THE NEWER SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

Representative men of science appear to incline toward the immanent conception of the Divine. For example, Sir Arthur Keith (*The Forum*, April, 1930) observes

## *What We Jews Believe*

that the modern man of science "finds the creative force pervading all matter, living and dead. It is as extensive as space. New worlds are coming into existence; others are dying. The machinery of the universe is automatic; the forces which control its movements are inherent in the constitution of matter. To discover how matter became thus endowed is beyond the scientist's reach, but he must take facts as he finds them. It is enough for him to know that the earth, life, and man are still in the throes of creation." Prof. Millikan in the address referred to above, speaks of the possible existence of "an integrating or building-up process among the physical elements, as well as in biological forms." In his cosmic rays and atom-building process, he inclines to find "perhaps a little bit of experimental finger-points" in the direction of the continuous activity of the Creator.

The human brain, Sir Arthur Keith continues, is a poor instrument to solve the ultimate problems as to the meaning, origin, and purpose of human life. "We have to recognize its limitations. Yet it perceives how well ordered all things are and how wonderful are the inventions of nature. Design is manifest everywhere. Whether we are laymen or scientists, we must postulate a Lord of the Universe—give Him what shape we will. . . .

"I cannot help feeling that the darkness in which the final secret of the universe lies hid is part of the Great Design. This world of ours has been constructed like a superbly written novel: we pursue the tale with avidity, hoping to discover the plot. The elusiveness of the chase heightens our ardor, until the search becomes part of our religion. For the secret of secrets recedes as we run."

## *The Cosmic God*

The late John Burroughs was even more emphatic in his belief in Divine immanence. "The world-old notion of a creator and director, sitting apart from the universe and shaping and controlling all its affairs, a magnified King or Emperor, finds no lodgment in my mind. . . . The universe is a democracy. The whole directs the whole. Every particle plays its own part, and yet the universe is a unit as much as is the human body, with all its myriads of individual cells, and all its many separate organs functioning in harmony. And the mind I see in nature is just as obvious as the mind I see in myself, and subject to the same imperfections and limitations. . . .

"I am persuaded that there is something immanent in the universe, pervading every atom and molecule in it, that knows what it wants—a cosmic mind or Intelligence that we must take account of if we would make any headway in trying to understand the world in which we find ourselves. When we deny God it is always in behalf of some other God. We are compelled to recognize something not ourselves from which we proceed, and in which we live and move and have our being, call it energy, or will, or Jehovah, or Ancient of Days. We cannot deny it because we are a part of it. As well might the fountain deny the sea or the cloud. Each of us is a fraction of the universal Eternal Intelligence."

Transcendence and immanence do not contradict, but supplement each other. Aristotle expressed this twofold aspect of the Cosmic God by asking whether God is related to the world as the "order" is to the army, or as the "general" is to the army. And he replied by saying

## *What We Jews Believe*

that "in a certain sense" God is *both* the "order" of the world and the "general," "although rather the general." (*Metaphysics*, XII, 10.) Transcendence, like spirituality, ubiquity, eternity, and infinity, upon which our creedal formulations insist, appears as a phase of Divine perfection. Transcendence suggests itself by the contemplation of God by Himself, whereas His immanence suggests itself by the contemplation of His manifestation in the universe. R. J. Campbell treats them as "two modes of God—the infinite, perfect, unconditional, primordial, being; and the finite, imperfect, conditioned, and limited being of which we ourselves are expressions. And yet these two are one, and the former is the guarantee that the latter shall not fail in the purpose for which it became limited." (*The New Theology*, p. 23.)

## THE PERSONAL GOD

JUDAISM is not a philosophy but a practical religion. It is vitally concerned with the interpretation of the world in terms of Theism because of the aid which this interpretation offers to the religious life. The consciousness of the sacred, which is at the basis of Judaism as of every religion, gains strength from the conviction that the Holy One is the immovable Rock of Ages. God, as conceived by Judaism is not only the First Cause, the Creative Power and the World Reason, but also the living and loving Father of men. He is not only cosmic but also personal. The *Adon Olam* follows up the proclamation of the Lord of all with the confident affirmation:

“He is my God, my living God.  
To Him I flee when tried in grief;  
My banner high, my refuge strong,  
Who hears and answers when I call.”

Judaism has guarded against confusing God with any of nature's forces in the manner of polytheistic religions, and of identifying Him with nature as a whole in the fashion of pantheistic philosophies. In its view God is in all, but all is not God. He is conceived as the principle upon which all the universe rests, but at the same time He is clearly distinguished from the universe. In other words, Jewish monotheism thinks of God in terms of definite character or personality, while pantheism is content with a view of God as impersonal.

## *What We Jews Believe*

### THE IDEA OF PERSONALITY

Josiah Royce calls attention to the lateness of the concept of personality in the history of human thought and to its "decidedly unstable" character. He writes: "The idea of personality is, if possible, more difficult to define than any other fundamental idea" (article "Monotheism" in *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*). A few general thoughts may here be ventured.

Life as applied to God cannot mean something less than what it means for us, but rather more. It is hardly conceivable that the properties of a drop of water are absent from the vast ocean. Similarly the qualities which we discern in finite man can hardly be alien to the Infinite One. It rather seems likely that what in man is partial, conditional, and limited, is in God complete, absolute, and perfect. Our endowments of consciousness, intelligence, will, and freedom cannot be absent in Him. In other words, He may be regarded as a Personality. On the alternative hypothesis that the principle of the universe is impersonal or unconscious, personal consciousness in finite creatures appears inexplicable.

To be sure, the predicate "personal" as applied to God presents serious difficulties. To the popular mind it suggests corporeality. The masses still think of God as a human-like being of enlarged proportions. Against such *anthropomorphic* views of God, Judaism has registered its protest since the days of the prophets. For thinking people personality refers not to the physical part of man but to his inner essence, psychical, rational, and moral. We cannot wholly rid ourselves of the taint of anthropo-

## *The Personal God*

morphism. As human beings we naturally think in human terms. All that we can do is to guard ourselves against the lower or corporeal anthropomorphisms and think of God in terms of our highest personal gifts. Of the essence of human personality are not only *unity* and *self identity* but also *rationality*, which consists of the power to know and of the freedom to choose between alternatives, and of *purposiveness*, i.e., acting with a goal in view. In man the elements of personality are limited. Of God we may think as the supreme, absolute, and unconditional Personality, since He alone may be thought to possess the unlimited power and wisdom to execute His designs.

### UNITY OF GOD

Of the essence of personality is Unity. This indeed is one of the distinguishing elements in the Jewish doctrine of God. In a world of paganism, Judaism announced: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One." This declaration has served as the watchword of our faith and has grown in depth of meaning with the progress of the centuries. Originally it may have expressed the thought that the God of Israel, unlike Baal or Ashtoreth, etc., cannot be considered as being plural, and presiding over different localities and different departments of nature, but that He is one and indivisible. It further denoted the idea of God's uniqueness, "representing Him as God in a unique sense, as the God with whom no other 'Elohim' can be compared, as the only Deity to whom the true attributes of the Godhead really belong." (Driver, *Deut.* p. 90.)

## *What We Jews Believe*

The belief in monotheism carried the denial of the reality of the gods of the ancient pantheons, whether of Canaan, Egypt, and Assyria-Babylonia or of Greece and Rome. The gods of the nations are idols. They are the creations of human hands, whereas the living God is the creator of all things. In sharp contrast to the Persian belief in two opposing Divine principles of good and evil, Deutero-Isaiah exclaims in God's name: "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form light, and create darkness,—I make peace, and create evil" (XLV: 5-7). Uncompromising monotheism differentiated Judaism from the Christian teaching of God which, while professing the unity of God, interpreted Him as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Absolute unity appeared to the Jewish masters as the corollary of absolute perfection of the Godhead. The religions which admitted the existence of many gods did not consider any one of them equal to the cosmic role expected of God. The doctrine of Divine unity thus recommended itself as an indispensable supplement of the belief in His existence. The second article in the Maimonidean creed declares that "the creator blessed be His name, is a Unity, and that there is no unity in any manner like unto His and that He alone is our God, who was, is and will be." The philosophers of Judaism interpreted monotheism not only as referring to God as One in number, but also as unique in character. He is incomparable to anything in nature. He is the *Life and Mind Principle* of all existence, the cause of all law and development in nature, and the source of all the energy which sustains the suns

## *The Personal God*

and stars in their heavenly courses. The unity of God thus makes for the unity of the cosmos.

The Supreme Power manifests Himself as the Unifier of warring phenomena, as the Creator of harmony out of discord. He also appears as changeless and constant Being amid the sea of change and dissolution. He alone is real in a world of passing phenomena; He is dependent on nothing other than Himself and confers reality to all things. Thereby He also bestows meaning to otherwise blind forces and energies.

### DIVINE LAW AND LOVE

Next to *unity* and *rationality*, personality implies *ethical consistency and purposiveness*. In Judaism this aspect of the Divine character was given special prominence from the very beginning, and was carried to the highest significance in the teaching of the prophets. This emphasis gives to the Jewish doctrine of monotheism its characteristic attribute of "ethical." To harmonize the idea of God as righteous with the idea of God as the source of cosmic order, represented—as we indicated in an earlier chapter—one of the chief interests of the philosophic interpreters of Judaism.

The ancient view of nature permitted a conception of God operating in disregard of natural law. At His will, He interferes with the workings of nature. He manifests His mighty hand and outstretched arm by dividing the Red Sea to permit His beloved to escape from the pursuing Egyptians. In various other miracles, wrought in

## *What We Jews Believe*

behalf of His people, He shows His might and glory. Miracle has been characterized as the darling child of faith, which readily appeals to the childlike mind. The progress of Jewish philosophy and of modern science has placed a different construction upon the relation of God to nature. W. Bousset remarks: "Miracles are no longer the bulwark of faith; it is faith that must support miracles."

The transcendent and immanent God is a God of law. His creative power operates upon chaos, dark, confused, and formless. He subdues, organizes, and fashions it into an ordered whole, into a universe. The whirling of suns and stars as of the earth and its denizens along the path of evolution reveals the working of law, calculable by the human mind and consequently related to it. Though we cannot divine its purposes, it appears to us as akin to human intelligence or mind. The operation of law is not limited to the physical world. It may be seen also in the life of man. The power deeply embedded in the structure of the universe, which continually moulds chaos into cosmos and formlessness into forms is ever at work also in the human realm. "These forms, or patterns, belong to the spiritual as well as to the physical plane of reality. A scale of values, an ethical system, a philosophy of life appear to be as 'natural' and inevitable a part of the web and woof of that strange and inexplicable phantasmagoria that we call the universe as are crystals, corals, or living embodiments of the form-producing force in the plant or animal body." This orderliness in human life we designate morality. In other words, to the faith of the scientist that the universe is

## *The Personal God*

intelligible, the religionist adds his belief that it offers a home for the realization of moral values.

Though His garment is the iron law of nature, He manifests signs of tender mercy. Animal life shows ferocity, but it also shows tenderness. If the jungle is dominated by tooth and claw, it is also ruled by the mother instinct. Particularly in man does the gentler element blossom forth in noblest forms. In him it develops into ethical ideals of mercy and love as well as of justice. Man emerges from the fierce combat with the forces of nature transfigured and radiant. Indeed, humanity ever struggles "upwards into a world of moral, individual freedom," to an orderliness, justice, and love which seem to be at the very heart of the universe.

We, therefore, look for God not only in law but also in love and goodness, in purity and in light, in beauty and in holiness. As in the vision of Moses, God appears to us in moral attributes: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and unto the fourth generations." (*Exod. XXXIV: 6-7.*) The attributes of justice and of love combine to make for a moral universe.

Where law rules, we expect to find actions, which fit into the cosmic scheme, more successful than those which conflict with it. Compensation, indeed, seems to form part of the natural order of things. The soil and the ele-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ments combine to reward the earnest worker and to punish the shiftless one. Wickedness carries along its penalty, and virtue its reward. Though the detailed application of the law of retribution to all human conditions—as the author of Job has shown—leads to moral confusion, it works in a general way and may not be ignored by those who would not permit their lives to end in failure.

### POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

Though we think of God in terms of our highest nature, we are aware that between our concepts of Him and His real nature there gapes a wide disparity. While we consider Him akin to ourselves, we recognize that in a sense He is “wholly other” than man, different from our whole nature. Inaccessible to human reason, He ever remains incomprehensible, unnamable, mysterious. Even the attributes that appear best suited to Him are mere approximations of His nature. Thus the predicate “personal” may be employed as a mere symbol and not as an actual transcript of reality. It were indeed more proper to speak of Him as super-personal.

Religious thinkers generally have been reluctant to describe God in positive terms, since each positive statement implies a limitation. On the other hand negative attributes may serve as the symbols of ideas which are pre-eminently positive. For example, Philo teaches: “God is invisible, for how can eyes that are too weak to gaze upon the sun be strong enough to gaze upon its maker? He is incomprehensible; not even the whole universe,

## *The Personal God*

much less the human mind, can contain the conception of Him. We know *that* He is; we cannot know *what* He is. We may see the manifestation of Him in His works, but it were monstrous folly to go behind His works and inquire into His essence. He is hence unnamed, for names are the symbols of created things, whereas His only attribute it to *be*." (Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 245.)

This method appears best suited to convey to the mind the idea of God's uniqueness. Far from dissipating faith, negative attributes tend to purify and to strengthen it. With their aid it becomes possible to arrive at a more satisfactory conception of God. Maimonides, championing this "negative theology," reluctantly admits the three positive attributes of *yachol*, *hacham*, and *rotze*—*power, wisdom, and will.* (*Guide for the Perplexed*, 1, ch. LVIII.)

While thinking of God in terms of law, of creative intelligence, and of life, we must recognize the limitations of our conceptions. In the words of Job: "These are but few of His ways, but the thunder of His might, who shall understand?" (XXVI: 14.) What we think we know of Him is infinitesimally small by the side of what we do not know. We, therefore, speak of Him as *super-natural* in the sense of transcending any natural analogy that the mind may form of Him. Superlatives help somewhat to suggest His inexpressible character. Contrasts and negations come nearer still. He is not matter. He is, therefore, not subject to time and space. He is Infinite, One, and Unique. He is above the stellar universe, yet He is in it. His marvels and His law are

## *What We Jews Believe*

manifested in the stars on high and in the tiny atom, in physical nature and in the life of man. He is eternal and omnipresent, the Lord of all worlds and the God of the spirits of all flesh.

### GOD IN HUMAN LIFE

God lives. In and through Him the Universe exists. As parts of the universe we too live through Him. We are related to Him, possibly as the leaf on the tree is related to the root, or as the flower is related to the sun. Manifestly, this is a plunge into the mystic deep. But this is the way in which the spiritual hunger of man is satisfied. The scientist, the mathematician, and the philosopher may be content with Einstein "to contemplate the mystery of conscious life perpetuating itself through eternity, to reflect upon the marvelous structure of the universe which we can dimly perceive, and to try humbly to comprehend even an infinitesimal part of the intelligence manifested in nature." The religious person seeks to establish a relationship between himself and the Creative Reality. The nature of the sun and the laws governing it represent the concern of the astronomer. The enjoyment of its light is indispensable for the health of every man. Similarly our conceptions of God must translate themselves into general human values if they are to be religiously fruitful.

"Religion is the response of man to the divine in the universe." It is his consciousness of the sacred. William James writes: man when dealing with his inward life

## *The Personal God*

at its best "becomes conscious that his higher part is coterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck." (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 508.) Religion grows into power when God is felt as an ever present reality in our lives.

This is what religion means by stressing communion and fellowship with God. It expresses itself in (1) *an enrichment of feeling*. Life appears glorified by a new radiance, by increased dignity and joyousness. It translates itself further into (2) a *higher standard* of conduct. The consciousness of the Divine, while not exclusively ethical, embodies itself in noble ethical relationships. Ascent unto the mountain of the Lord is possible only for those of clean hands and pure hearts. Faith in God evokes confidence in goodness, truth and justice. Belief in God also makes for (3) *enlargement of mental vision*. In God's light the world with all of its enigmas assumes new meaning. It ceases to be the scene of disorder and confusion, of raging evils, of suffering, and of death. Though the purpose of the noxious weeds in the garden of life continues to baffle us, we feel more content. Evil loses its absoluteness and tyranny. Above the void and chaos is the spirit of God. Though He is, as the prophet states, a God who hides Himself, He is a God who saves. Fellowship with God satisfies the "yearning for mental security of a spiritual home."

## *What We Jews Believe*

This is the sum and substance of faith. "The everlasting God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (*Deut.* XXXIII: 27.)

Ever present in all experience, God manifests Himself to men as the invisible yet intimate guide and savior, as redeemer and friend. As the Mind that thinks world thoughts, He comprehends all things and happenings. Speaking symbolically, He is the Eye that sees, the Ear that hears, the Heart that feels, the Conscience that judges, the Will that determines and executes. *Omniscience* and *Providence* are the two attributes that fairly describe His relation to the cosmos and to man. Responsive to human as to other world needs, He appears to us as the *God who hears prayer*. "The Lord is near unto all who call upon Him, unto all who call upon Him in truth." He is indeed a sun and a shield. He gives strength unto His people; He blesses His people with peace.

*MAN*



## THE JEWISH VIEW OF MAN

THE idea of ethical monotheism is the noblest product of Israel's spiritual striving. Embodied into the Torah and translated there into a program of ethical deeds and ceremonial practices, this idea, in turn, has served as the supreme goal of Israel's life and thought. The Holy One has been the source of holiness for Israel. He is spoken of in our prayers as *Mekadesh Yisrael*, He who sanctifies Israel.

While centering in the *Kenesset Yisrael*, Judaism is not limited to it. As a religion its appeal is to the individual as well as to the *ecclesia*. At the conclusion of our presentation of what we Jews believe, we must, therefore, show what Judaism has to say about the individual. What bearing has ethical monotheism upon the Jewish view of man?

The wisdom of the East and the philosophy of the West have exhausted themselves in the effort to solve the eternal question, "What is man?" A large portion of modern science, from biology to anthropology and medicine, and from psychology to sociology and philosophy, makes man the chief subject of study. For religion, as for ethics and the arts, man is the supreme object of concern. If God is the apex of the religious pyramid, man forms its base. In the truest sense religion is a *Torat haadam*—a system of "humanism," not of the limited type which robs man of the Divine, but of the broader kind which conceives of man as the child of

## *What We Jews Believe*

God. Ben 'Azzai found the leading principle of the Torah in the opening words of the fifth chapter of Genesis: "This is the book of the generations of man; in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him." The precepts of the Torah are of a character that "if man observe them, he shall live by them." Religion seeks to enrich human life by endowing it with a divine quality. Judaism may be regarded as a *kiddush hashem* and a *kiddush hahayyim*—a sanctification of God's name and a sanctification of the life of man. Indeed, every religion at its truest and best has no loftier goal than the cultivation of the consciousness of the sacred in man.

### WHAT IS MAN?

Judaism is, therefore, vitally concerned with the question of the nature of man. One of the earliest considerations of this problem we find in the Bible. Man is conceived there as a duality. In the stories of creation we are told that God fashioned man out of the dust of the earth, and then breathed His own spirit into his nostrils. Thus man became a living soul. Two elements thus enter into the make-up of man: body and spirit. This simple, almost child-like view did not rob the ancient thinkers of the sense of mystery and of wonder which surround man. The author of the eighth Psalm, for example, conveys to us something of this mood. We can see this shepherd-poet lying on a hill-top in the stillness of the night, gazing at the grandeur of the pageant of the skies, watching the dance of the twinkling stars in the vast im-

## *The Jewish View of Man*

mensity of the dark blue space, and reflecting on the lowly place which man, the child of dust, occupies in the world as compared with these marvels of creation. "When I behold Thy heavens," he exclaims, "the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

The contrast between man and the world, the tiny creature and the vast scheme of nature, impressed itself upon the Psalmist despite the limited view of the universe, and the exaggerated notion of man that prevailed in the old world. When this sublime poem was written it was commonly believed that the earth formed the center of creation, that the sun was a kind of light and heating plant, and the moon and stars mere fixtures in the dome of heaven to adorn and illumine the earth by day and by night, and that the earth with all its luminaries was built solely for the purpose of man, the darling of creation. This belief was current in ancient and medieval times, and in some quarters still prevails to this day. It formed the dogma upon which not only religion but science and philosophy rested. Whoever dared doubt that the earth and the heavenly spheres existed solely for man was branded an atheist. The world, therefore, looked with consternation at the impiety of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, who through their discoveries dared to upset the accepted order of nature and to shatter man's over-confidence by denying that his dwelling-place, the earth, forms the center of the universe. Man felt himself expelled once more from a cosy Garden of Eden. But the telescope remained heedless to the disappoint-

## *What We Jews Believe*

ments of man, whose illusions were shattered by the new discoveries, and continued to disclose new earths and new heavens. The advance of astronomical science showed that our earth holds no place distinguished from that of other planets by virtue of its superiority of size, and that the universe contains myriads of worlds some of which are infinitely greater than the one in which we live. These facts were naturally applied to the question of man's place in the universe.

“Who is man, and what his place?  
Anxious asks the heart, perplexed  
In the recklessness of space,  
Worlds with worlds intermixt:  
What has he, this atom creature,  
In the infinitude of Nature?”

The discovery that there is an infinite number of worlds in the universe led some scientists to affirm the existence of human life on other planets than our own. They still adhered to the old conviction that the universe was created entirely as a home for man. A representative of nineteenth century science argued: “A house without tenants, a city without citizens, presents to our minds the same idea as a planet without life and a universe without inhabitants. Why the house was built, why the city was founded, why the planet was made, and why the universe was created, it would be difficult even to conjecture.” This argument implies that the purposes of nature are clear to man, but the ancient’s challenge sober us: “Who stood in the council of God?” The author of Job exclaims: “Canst thou find out the deep

## *The Jewish View of Man*

things of God? Canst thou attain unto the purposes of the Almighty?" (XI: 7.) And he represents God addressing man: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth. Declare if thou hast understanding." (XXXVIII: 4.) It were indeed presumptuous for man to claim the possession of definite knowledge as to why the universe was created. Contradicting previous notions, modern Astronomy, according to Alfred Russel Wallace presents the verdict that "our earth is the only inhabited planet, not only in the solar system but in the whole stellar universe." (*Man's Place in the Universe.*)

In line with this and similar statements of other astronomers, we may conclude that modern science does not seem to be ready to reduce man into an insignificant denizen of a tiny sphere whirling in infinite space, amid myriads of blazing worlds. Harry Elmer Barnes is reported to have remarked that, "astronomically speaking, man is almost totally insignificant." To this George Albert Coe retorted, "Astronomically speaking, man is the astronomer." "Quite so!" Fosdick adds, "There is no sense in claiming that astronomy belittles man when the astronomical universe, which man marvels at, is alike the discovery and the construct of man's mind." (*Harpers Magazine*, July, 1930.)

## MAN AS ANIMAL

If astronomy by enlarging the physical universe, appears, in the judgment of some, to have reduced man to comparative insignificance, biology has assigned him a more modest place in the order of nature. The old pre-scientific

## *What We Jews Believe*

ideas placed man apart from the rest of creation. Modern science has shown to the contrary that man, insofar as his physical being is concerned, in no ways differs from the rest of the animal world. To be sure, this discovery does not appear palatable to many people. One of the characters in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Suicide Club" joined that society because Darwin's discovery of man's kinship to the ape robbed him of all that was worthwhile in life. To open-minded people this discovery rather constitutes one of the greatest contributions to human welfare. Through it medicine, anatomy, physiology, and kindred sciences have been enabled to grow and to work wonders. Together with the rest of the animal kingdom man is literally riveted to the earth. He depends upon mother earth for the maintenance of his body. Its varied fertility and resources, its differences of climate, vitally affect the physical and the moral well-being of man. Scarcity or abundance of food may change the moral character of the individual. Deprived of food and shelter a man may be transformed into a brute. The incident of the woman who cooked her own child in famine to satisfy her hunger, as it is related in the Bible, while rare, is not impossible. Under stress men have been known to resort to cannibalism. Criminals are human beings little different from ourselves. Their careers of crime in many instances, started with want, with unsatisfied desire for food and for shelter, or with various other hungers and urges. To a considerable degree, the criminal is a product of his environment, of the vice-breeding agencies that infest our communities, and of the lack of wholesome discipline and worthy ideals. A change in sur-

## *The Jewish View of Man*

roundings may change his character. Help the desperate man to a better hold on life, supply him with opportunities for work and with means of securing his sustenance, give him good company and open his mind to things worthwhile, and you may transform him from a social menace into a social asset.

In his dependence upon physical nature man differs very little from the plant and the animal. Still more important similarities between man and beast may be pointed out. Looking at the skeletons of the larger Simians and of men, as exhibited in our museums, it is sometimes hard to distinguish between them. We are assured that the chemical constituents of the human and the animal bodies are identical. Their functions are the same, their structures alike. "Bone for bone, muscle for muscle, ganglion for ganglion, almost nerve-fiber for nerve-fiber, his body corresponds with that of higher animals." (Leconte, *Evolution*, p. 305.) On the basis of these comparisons, all that can be said is that man holds a high place in the realm of biology. Darwin writes: "Man in the rudest form in which he now exists is the most dominant animal that has ever appeared on this earth. He has spread more widely than any other highly organized form: and all others have yielded before him." (*Descent of Man*, p. 7.)

There are those who take the view of Ecclesiastes that "man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." Not as strong physically as the larger animals, he surpasses them in cunning. He is the biggest killer in nature. He has exterminated numerous species of other and much stronger living beings. Excelling in the power of destruction, he

## *What We Jews Believe*

holds all living things in his control. He is dominated by savage passions. "The inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth," says Scripture itself. He is dominated by lust, greed, brutality, and selfishness. The bloody record of humanity makes us shudder. Whereas animals prey upon members of other species, man murders his own kind. The very triumph of his mind he turns into an engine of destruction. The World War with its terrific loss of life, running into the millions, is but a poignant example of the brutal tendency in man's nature. He is actuated by deceit, by desire to exploit and to enslave his fellowmen. Though advanced in the scale of civilization, savagery still clings to him. Schopenhauer once remarked that the more he sees the actions of man the more respect he has for his dog. From this viewpoint the old question, "What is man?" has acquired a defiant note.

### THE HUMANITY OF MAN

Though there is no gainsaying of these facts, there is also a sunnier view of human nature. The very results of biology seem to tell a different story as well. One of the high priests of the temple of science of the last century, Thomas Huxley, discussing *Man's Place in Nature*, wrote: "I have endeavored to show that no absolute line of demarcation wider than that between the animals which immediately succeed us in the scale can be drawn between the animal world and ourselves; and I may add the expression of my belief that the attempt to draw a psychical distinction is equally futile,

## *The Jewish View of Man*

and that even the highest faculties of feeling and of intellect begin to germinate in lower forms of life. At the same time, no one is more strongly convinced than I am of the vastness of the gulf between civilized man and the brutes, or is more certain that whether from them or not he is assuredly not of them. No one is less disposed to think lightly of the present dignity or despairingly of the future hopes of the only conscious, intelligent denizen of this world." (*Man's Place in Nature*, p. 109.)

If man's bodily being is related to the world of animals, there is something within him that distinguishes him from them. In the view of Judaism, the body itself is not considered necessarily corrupt and evil. He that created the stars on high has also moulded the body of man. "The soul is Thine, and the body, too, is Thy handiwork!" the poet exclaims. Fashioned by God, the body was considered by Judaism as the instrument of the spirit. By the side of the primitive instincts which often rage within it there also emerge the humane tendencies. The inclination toward good (the *yezer tob*) is no less real than the inclination toward evil (the *yezer ra*). The one comes as a corrective of the other. In the opinion of the Rabbis, even the *yezer ra*, which they generally identify with the passions, is not absolutely evil. It, too, may be turned into good.

Any adequate view of human nature, while not ignoring the elements of kinship between brute creation and humanity, must not ignore their vital differences. All other living creatures are guided by the law of instinct. They are endowed with certain urges and forces that

## *What We Jews Believe*

guide and protect them. Man is more highly dowered. He has been endowed with speech and with reason. He is thus in a sphere by himself intellectually. As a thinking being, man has become the master of nature. He is the *builder of sciences*. He analyzes the structure of physical reality and utilizes this knowledge for far-reaching ends. He invents arts and creates civilizations. All progress may be considered the result of man's mental outreachings. Man is also an *ethical being*. He establishes relationships between himself and his fellowmen. While struggling for self-preservation, he occasionally sacrifices himself for others. The Father Damiens and the Florence Nightingales are not unknown to humanity. Philanthropy in its literal sense of love of one's fellowmen, is not an unknown human quality. Some men and women derive genuine happiness through serving others, through identifying their well-being with that of their fellow human beings. Men have cast their lives away in order that righteousness may live. Man is a *religious being*. Of all creatures, he alone senses the sacred and crowns his life with its glory. As in the sphere of ethics and of science, so in religion there have been martyrs to testify to their faith in the divine ideal. Indeed, man lives not only in the material tracts of the body but also in the spirit. Man is the builder of the golden city of righteousness, of truth, and of holiness.

### **MAN A CO-WORKER OF GOD**

The two conflicting views of human nature are more than mere theories. They appear as a challenge to man's

## *The Jewish View of Man*

moral life. In the religion of the Persians they are dramatized as cosmic forces in eternal opposition. Good and evil are pitched in eternal battle against one another. The God of goodness and the God of evil divide the whole domain of the visible and invisible world. In this eternal conflict man is called upon to play his part. He cannot remain a bystander. He must take the side of Ahriman and his hosts of darkness, or of Ormuzd and his ministers of light. In Judaism this eternal battle within the heart of man assumes a less spectacular but nonetheless real form. Life is the scene of struggle between savage and humane forces, between the inclination to the good and the inclination to evil (the *yezer tob* and *yezer ra*). The Torah states: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. . . . I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, choose life." (*Deut.* XXX: 15 ff.) Man is called upon to act as the co-worker of God in the promotion of goodness. His intelligence affords him freedom of self-direction. He may move to the right or to the left. Within his heart are the issues of life.

As a member of the animal race, man may indeed live on the plane of the animal. His concern may be solely with the gratification of his bodily needs, with his food, sexual cravings, and acquisition of property. However, he may rise to a higher plane. He may discover that he cannot reach even his material happiness by living for himself, and may, on purely utilitarian grounds, cultivate an interest in others, in his mate, his children, his kinsfolk, and friends. Their misery renders him miserable,

## *What We Jews Believe*

and their happiness brings happiness into his life. He may mount still higher to find that both his own well-being and the well-being of his dear ones are bound up with the welfare of his community and nation, with their economic, political, moral, and cultural advance. He may learn further that all nations are inter-linked, that his people depend upon the rest of the world, and that his personal happiness is ultimately inseparable from the happiness of humanity at large. His awakened reason and conscience spur him on further to recognize his dependence, as well as the dependence of all mankind, upon the mysterious world around him, and upon the multitudinous forces that control it. He may then seek to establish proper relations with the cosmic whole. He may further learn to sense the ultimate beyond the fleeting phenomena of nature, the abiding and all-significant foundations of the world of change, the final ends and goals of passing things and events. Growing conscious of the Holy One, of the sacred, whether through emotional reaction, through intuition, through reason, or through tradition, he derives from Him the rules which he needs for the guidance of his life, the light for the illumination of the darkness of his soul, and the courage with which to face the stubborn facts of nature.

### THE SOUL OF MAN

The dawn of the religious consciousness in man changes his entire outlook. He begins to regard himself no longer a mere animal but endowed with a divine spirit. If regard for the body alone keeps him on the plane of the

## *The Jewish View of Man*

beast, the care for his spiritual nature—for his soul—links him with the Divine. The life of God which flows in all things and in all creatures receives its finest expression in the life of man. There it becomes pure spirit, self-conscious, self-determining, rational, and moral. "Man," says Emerson, "is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason. It is not mine nor thine nor his, but we are its property and men. . . . The currents of universal being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God." Similarly Carlyle exclaims: "We are—we know not what;—light sparkles floating in the ether of deity!" God is the unknown source of life, the unresolved mystery of the universe, and the soul that is within us appears as a fragment of the Divine life.

The soul or self can have meaning for us only as being identical, at least in part, with the ultimate principle of being. Is it straining too much to conceive of its relation to Ultimate Reality, as that of the ray of light to the sun, or of the color of the rose to the light of the solar orb? Take away the sun, and light will vanish from the world, and color and life from the flower. So the self or soul is conceivably a fragment or "mode" of divinity. And if with the philosophers we speak of the soul in terms of reason, we may regard it further as an individualization of divine thought or creative intelligence. As God is believed to exist beyond eternity, so the soul may partake of His indestructible nature. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes," was spoken of the body,

## *What We Jews Believe*

not of the divine spirit within man. Death marks the end of our bodily being, but not necessarily of our soul-life. The great hymn of the Synagogue voices the confidence which this belief brings to the heart of man:

“My spirit I commit to Him,  
My body too, and all I prize;  
Both when I sleep and when I wake,  
He is with me, I shall not fear.”

### **IMMORTALITY**

“For religious purposes,” says Canon H. P. Liddon, “the soul must always be incomparably of the highest importance, as being the very man himself, the man in the secret recesses of his being, the man at the imperishable center of his life, the man as he lives beneath the Eye, and enters into relation with the heart of his infinite Creator.” (*Some Elements of Religion*, p. 119.) While in most religions the hope of immortality occupies the center, in Judaism its position is secondary. Paul could say to the Corinthians, “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” (*I Corinthians XV*: 16–20.) Religion from this standpoint is not so much a means of living a holy life, as of acquiring blessed immortality. The dominant interest of Judaism is the sanctification of this life. Its spirit is voiced in the words of the Psalmist: “As for me,

## *The Jewish View of Man*

the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Thy works." (*Ps. LXXIII: 28.*)

Judaism's historic career began with a war on the cult of dead ancestors and every form of animism and totemism. For the first thousand years the hereafter did not figure as an ethical-religious lever in the religion of Israel. The prophets unfolded their world-moving thoughts without resorting to the belief in the beyond. Only during the Greek period of Jewish history did the hereafter come to the front of Jewish religious thought. Despite Sadducean opposition the beliefs in *Immortality and Resurrection, the Judgment, Gehenna and Gan Eden* (Hell and Heaven) rooted themselves in the Jewish consciousness. When the Pharisees placed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body by the side of the belief in the *Divine Unity and of Revelation* as a cardinal principle of Judaism, they combined it with the belief in *Retribution*, both national and personal, as a stimulus to moral progress. The moral government of the world expressed itself in the Messianic hope of Israel's restoration in this world, and in the reawakening of the individual dead for judgment in the world to come.

In other words, the hope in the hereafter, in the view of Judaism, serves to enrich the life of man in the here. It tends to strengthen the consciousness of man's fellowship with God. "I shall walk before the Lord in the lands of the living." (*Ps. CXVI: 9.*) This fellowship, which is the supreme glory of the religious life while on earth, is carried over into the Beyond. The consciousness of immortality further grew out of the desire to rectify

## *What We Jews Believe*

the anomalies of Providence. The final accounts of Good and Evil are not drawn in the present scene. The wicked, who trample upon virtue, must tremble at the thought of final judgment. The belief in immortality has further aimed to satisfy the reflective mind which refuses to submit to the law of "dust to dust and ashes to ashes." The law of conservation of energy in the physical universe may have its analogue in the realm of the spirit.

Under the influence of modern thought the confidence in the resurrection of the body and in the retribution in the hereafter has faded out of many minds. Reform Judaism has eliminated them from its creed. Instead, it stresses the immortality of the soul.

While to some minds a view of the soul's destiny that is not connected with either the resurrection of the physical body or of final judgment may appear unsatisfying, others find it manna for their hungry hearts. In the mystic union with God the soul attains its highest reward, whether it retains consciousness of individuality or not. The drop has joined the ocean. The spark has merged into the radiant light. In the words of the *El Male Rahamim*, it is "sheltered under the wings of the Shechinah." Without pressing further into the realm that is enveloped in mystery, the lover of God rests satisfied. With the Jewish poet he says, "Thou livest, God, I live in Thee." "The essence of the hereafter," says Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, "is the consciousness of His divinity." The highest aspiration is voiced in the prayer of Rabbi Shneor Zalman of Liadi, "Lord of all the world! I gladly forego my reward in the hereafter and my portion in Gan Eden. Only one thing do I ask for and

## *The Jewish View of Man*

seek: Thee, Thee!" In this spirit, too, Jehudah Halevi exclaimed, "When I am afar from Thee, my death is my life; when I cleave to Thee, my life is my death." With these sentiments of Jewish mystics and saints we may associate the thought of the American philosopher Josiah Royce: "Just because God is One, all our lives have various and unique places in the harmony of the divine life. And just because God attains and wins and finds this uniqueness, all our lives win in our union with Him, the individuality which is essential to their true meaning." (*Conception of Immortality*, p. 75.) God, in the words of Emily Brontë, is indeed "the steadfast rock of immortality."

"Though earth and man were gone,  
And suns and universes ceased to be,  
And Thou were left alone,  
Every existence would exist in Thee."

Immortality thus figures as a corollary to the belief in the living God. It forms part of the Divine order of nature. The hope of immortality is nourished by purely human considerations as well. It represents man's revulsion to total extinction. Appalled at the thought that complete annihilation awaits us and our loved ones, we cry out for life beyond the grave. This craving for life is not the expression of a childish wish. It is rather the product of deep experience. We feel the life of the past generations throbbing within us. Both physically and spiritually, our forebears have not been blotted out. Their bodies are reproduced in us; their blood flows within our veins. Their thoughts direct our minds; their

## *What We Jews Believe*

sentiments cheer our hearts; their standards govern our conduct. Their strivings and achievements in the arts and sciences, in ethics and religion constitute the culture and civilization in which we live. For good or for evil they continue in the life of the present. Soul-life seems to persist even after the mortal coil has been cast off.

Paul Carus writes: "The spirit empire of mankind is like unto a temple that is in building, whose stones are human souls. Each stone retains its own shape and is a little unit in itself, yet serves at the same time as an integral part of the whole structure. Thus every personality remains itself and loses nothing of its peculiar character or idiosyncracy; and yet all of them are welded into an indissoluble union,—a union more intimate than chemical combinations, which are the most complete blending of substances that is possible at all in the world of bodily existence." (*Whence and Whither*, pp. 124-5.) By adding to the welfare of the world, man shares in imperishable values. "In the memory of virtue," said the Jewish sage, "is immortality" (*Wisdom of Solomon* IV: 1). When the body of man is laid in the grave, his spirit, clothed in good deeds, lives on. "Righteousness goeth before him," and renders his memory a blessing. Immortality, in this sense, consists in the perfect realization of life's ethical and spiritual possibilities, of the sanctification of the self and its complete surrender and dedication to the All-just, the All-good and the All-holy.

For generous natures this conception of immortality serves as a high incentive to noble conduct. George Eliot has expressed it in the great poem "The Choir Invisible."

## *The Jewish View of Man*

"O may I join the choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence: live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
For miserable aims that end with self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven:  
To make undying music in the world,  
Breathing as beauteous order that controls  
With growing sway the growing life of man . . .

This is life to come,  
Which martyred men have made more glorious  
For us who strive to follow. May I reach  
That purest heaven, be to other souls  
The cup of strength in some great agony.  
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,  
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,  
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense!  
So shall I join the choir invisible  
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

In the religious outlook of Judaism, man is not only the creature of earth, but also the child of heaven. In him are united dust and star, flesh and spirit, body and soul. His life presents an arena where beast and angel wage incessant struggle for sovereignty. Passion and reason are ever active in him. He thinks of good and of

## *What We Jews Believe*

evil. The way of life and the way of death lie open to him. His prerogative consists in his ability to choose one or the other. Freedom of will, though limited in form, is part of his nature. His mind is his lamp to illumine his way. The more clearly he sees the way of life and the more firmly he clings to it, the higher and nobler is his character. The more he tames the beast and refines his conscience, the truer child of God he becomes. The sense of beauty, of honor and of truth, the love for the ideal, the pure and the upright, the craving for wisdom, knowledge, and God, constitute his divine heritage, his birthright as a child of the Almighty. The light of reason, the sense of duty, and the power of self-determination render man but little lower than the angels, give him dominion over nature, and crown him with glory and honor. Through his longing for eternity man may bridge the chasm created by death. He dreams of eternal values and is thereby linked with them. His soul is fixed on an eternal object, and thus partakes of eternity. Living in the eternal presence of God, he grows conscious of immortality.

## *GATHERING THE THREADS*

**W**HAT are the general conclusions of our survey of Jewish beliefs? Important differences in the valuation of vital details in the Jewish religious heritage exist among the various parties in modern Judaism. However, their agreements on essentials are even more significant.

In the face of the present day challenge to religion, all Jewish parties call for renewed faith in the basic convictions of Judaism, for increased devotion to its standards, and for courage to embody its truths into life. Never was there greater need for an intensification of religious loyalties than at present, for never before has religion faced such formidable foes as it does to-day. In consequence of the triumphant advance of scientific knowledge and of its application to the modes of production and to the standards of human behavior, multitudes of Jewish as of Christian origin have come to regard religion as a mere survival of the pre-scientific age. The more radical elements consider it their duty to remove religion from the hearts and minds of men in the interest of economic and political reconstruction. The "illusion" of religion they would replace with the "reality" of materialism as the source of inspiration for the future.

Will they succeed in their warfare on religion? Will God be substituted by the machine in the new civilization which is evolving in the world to-day? This is the

## *What We Jews Believe*

supreme question of the hour. Can it be that the human spirit will welcome chains in place of garlands? Will humanity be content to let the Juggernaut of mechanization and industrialization crush out its love of ideals, of faith, and of dreams? Will a glorified, materialistic determinism be permitted to deprive man permanently of his personal freedom? Will bigger and better machines bring us nearer to the golden city of righteousness dreamed of by the seers and prophets of the ages?

If human experience has any lesson for our day it is that man does not live by bread alone. Inadequate as a philosophy of the universe, materialism is intolerable as a religion and ethic. It is growing steadily apparent that scientific progress—indispensable as it is for man in his struggle with nature—will not of itself remove the sources of social and personal friction from which man suffers. Science may be harnessed to engines of destruction as well as of construction. If it is to help us build a better world of increased human welfare, science must be hitched to the star of ethical and spiritual idealism. It can serve man best by helping him to establish harmonious relationships with the cosmic whole, with the ultimate principle behind the fleeting phenomena, with the source of all perfection, with the Holy One.

Though some creeds may crumble and certain moral standards may falter, we reaffirm the reality of religion. In the light of the historical sciences we have come to recognize religion not as something that has come to man from the outside but rather as the rich fruitage of his own spirit. As all art grows out of man's feeling

## *Gathering the Threads*

for beauty, and as all science develops from his sense of truth, so religion—in its manifold forms—evolves from his consciousness of the sacred. Imbedded in the human emotions, religion unfolds in human life as naturally as flowers and fruit on trees. In its noblest forms, religion represents man's love for and devotion to all that is of supreme value, to all that is sacred in the universe and in his own life. As one of the chief attributes of humanity, religion cannot be discarded without impoverishing the spiritual nature of man. Without the religious spirit, all progress in knowledge and all readjustments in the economic and political realms will not still the hunger of the human heart. Reason must not be divorced from conscience and from faith. We, therefore, continue to bear witness to the spiritual basis of human life and to uphold the banner of religion as a sanctifying force, possessing the power to enrich and to ennable life and to turn man into a child of the All-highest.

<sup>1</sup> We further affirm the value of Judaism. While in scientific and philosophic discussions it is possible to deal with religion in the abstract, in the world of reality we find religion only in some concrete, definite expression of the spirit of a particular body of men, constituting an *ecclesia* or a people. Each religion functions within a certain social group. It is bound up with the experience of the group, with its customs, laws, arts, and culture. As a personal and social force, religion gathers unto itself the best thought and skill of men, and, with the aid of its prophetic insights, blazes the way for moral and spiritual progress. Judaism is the

## *What We Jews Believe*

expression of the religious aspirations of the Jewish people and of their consecration to all that is highest, truest, and best.

Judaism has been characterized as a "creed and life." From the standpoint of our analysis, it appears more correct to describe it as a *life colored by creed*. The beliefs of Judaism sprang from the life of the Jewish people. Doctrine for doctrine and institution for institution may be traced back to the Jewish past and explained in terms of Jewish experience. Having grown to maturity, these doctrines and institutions became the moulds which shaped the developing life of the people.

The present day divisions of Judaism in Eastern and Western Europe, in Palestine, and in America represent the various adjustments of the Jewish people to the tides of the spirit. While the vast majority still finds satisfaction in some form of Orthodoxy, others seek to bring their religious heritage into accord with the modern temper in science and philosophy. Reform or Liberal Judaism appears to them not as a revolutionary break with the past, but rather as the evolutionary product of the historic faith. It is the ancient religion in its modern expression.

Judaism as a religion, centers around Israel, Torah, God, and Man. This is the consensus of all parties, however they differ from one another in the particular constructions which they place upon these foundations. They unite in affirming the centrality of Israel in Jewish life and thought. Out of Israel's life and in response to Israel's needs have grown the values which we associate with Judaism. In the future, too, it is inconceivable

## *Gathering the Threads*

for Judaism to survive and to function without a *Kenes-set Yisrael*. Israel's historic distinction has consisted in bearing the ark of the covenant. In the conviction of the religiously minded—as distinguished from the secular nationalists—it is still Israel's prophetic task to witness to God before all men.

Judaism as the religion of the Jewish people is embodied in the written and the oral Torahs. While Orthodoxy upholds the beliefs in the Divine origin and in the inerrancy of the Torah, Reform Judaism affirms its human character. Not spectacularly and supernaturally at Sinai but gradually and naturally have the truths which we cherish manifested themselves to man. They have not come to us wholly from the outside. Man takes an active part in their discovery. But whether of extra-human and supernatural or of progressive, human origin, Revelation is indispensable for Judaism. We, therefore, still hold to the principle of Torah, i.e., of Revelation and of Law. "The Law alone can make us free." There is no freedom save through moral discipline or Law. Though the Law in its fulness and purity is still being written in the human heart, the Torah helps us to comprehend something of its majesty and its imperiousness. Our Bible and religious tradition serve as means of stimulating within us the consciousness of the Divine. Their importance consists not so much in the compulsion of their logic as in the manifestation of the insights and illuminations that have been born of religious reflection and meditation and of communion with God. Their appeal is not primarily to the inquiring reason but rather to the faith and conscience of the believer.

## *What We Jews Believe*

| The Torah, in its modern as in its ancient construction, holds out to Israel and to all mankind its two tables of the covenant. One directs the eye of faith to God; the other points to human obligations. Religion and morality, however distinct their distant origins may have been, have come to be fused into an indissoluble unity in the prophetic teachings of Judaism. Religion, as we have emphasized, is man's response to the Divine as apprehended in the world and in the heart and conscience of man. While it has assumed many diverse and, sometimes, even grotesque forms, religion in its true sense appears wherever the spirit of man turns toward its source and goal. The religions which have commanded much of the higher life of humanity represent the out-reaching of the human spirit to the mysterious source of all existence, to "the higher than self," and the endeavor to establish ever closer communion therewith as "with an all-comprehending intelligence," upon which man may rely.

| For every phase of Judaism as a religion, the most vital fact in the religious life is the relation of man to God. The affirmation of Divine Unity voiced by the *Shema* forms the imperishable foundation of Judaism. In the beginning, middle, and end of things is God, shaping and moulding chaos into an ordered cosmos, fashioning also the lives and spirits of men and crowning them with beauty and glory. Where the consciousness of man's relationship to the Holy One ceases, religion is emptied of its content. Without belief in God, Judaism may survive for a limited time as a racial culture, but forfeits its honored place as a religion. Throughout its history

## *Gathering the Threads*

Judaism has been synonymous with ethical monotheism. Atheism is both alien and hostile to its spirit. The counterfeit and self-contradictory nature of "Atheistic Judaism" is not disguised even by the pretentious label of Humanism.

Unlike physical phenomena, God is not subject to laboratory analysis. His essence may not be weighed or measured. Neither His being nor non-being may be demonstrated by the usual processes of scientific procedure. His reality is a postulate of our highest spiritual and moral nature. It satisfies best our aspirations after truth, goodness, and holiness and offers the most consistent conception of the cosmos. In our thinking, God continues to be the world's Creator and the Father of men, the Holy One and Unique Spirit, transcending time and space and yet dwelling in all things. We believe in His guidance of the order of nature and in His providential care of all creatures. He reveals Himself in the universe and in the life and thought of man. He manifests Himself especially through the prophet-souls, not alone of Israel but of all races, and through their martyrdom in the cause of the ideal.

The consciousness of the sacred translates itself into confidence and faith, which invest life with strength and beauty. Faith in this sense means more than intellectual assent to the belief in God and in His Providence. It rather represents a way of living in the conscious presence of God. It is the immediate experience of the idea of God and the direct realization of all that is conceived as godly in human conduct. From this standpoint religion appears not so much a philosophy about God as

## *What We Jews Believe*

a way of godly living. Its supreme concern is to translate the idea of the holy into modes of holy living.

The table of the covenant which deals with God is thus vitally connected with the table dealing with human obligations. Judaism affirms not only the deathlessness of the soul of man but also the sanctity of his earthly life, the moral worth, dignity, and perfectability of his nature. Despite man's inevitable limitations, it is within his power to range himself on the side of goodness, to exterminate sin, wickedness, hatred, brutality, and disease, and, through the application of intelligence, of constructive imagination, and of faith, to usher in the hoped-for era of good-will, of righteousness, and of moral as well as of physical health. As in personal so in national and international relations good may be made to triumph over evil. If men but will, they may establish the reign of justice on earth, annihilate war and misery, and enthrone God in their lives.

Judaism, growing out of Jewish travail and earnest aspiration, contains a saving message for the world to-day. To humanity "drifting toward the rapids," to nations "racing with catastrophe," and to men sinking into gloom and despair, it proclaims ever anew its eternal affirmations of faith in the Divine order of nature and in the sanctity of human life.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

### INTRODUCTION

- Has Religion a future in the modern world?  
Must we choose between Religion and Science, or can we have both?  
Is Religion bound to the existing order in Economics and Politics?

### CHAPTER I

- Is Religion the product of priest-craft?  
Is Good-Will between Religions attainable?  
Is Uniformity in Religion desirable?

### CHAPTERS II-IV

- Is Judaism a Missionary Religion?  
Will Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism ever unite?  
What may these divisions in Judaism profitably learn from one another?

### CHAPTERS V-VII

- Can Judaism survive without the Jewish people?  
Can the Jewish people survive without Judaism?  
Can the Jews and Judaism survive without Palestine?  
Can they survive without anti-Semitism?  
Is all assimilation undesirable?  
Is Zionism compatible with Orthodoxy? With Reform?  
When is a Jew not a Jew?

## CHAPTER VIII

What place does the ideal of Torah hold in Jewish life today?

How can religious education be vitalized in our communities? Among the young? Among adults?

Why is not the New Testament included in our Bible?

What is the permanent value of the Bible? The Talmud?

## CHAPTERS IX-XII

What are the agreements and disagreements between Judaism and Christianity regarding the belief in God?

Is Judaism reconcilable with materialism? Atheism? Agnosticism? Humanism? Pantheism?

What is the value of Faith in God?

How does the idea of Faith differ in Judaism from that in Christian Science?

## CHAPTER XIII

Have men freedom of will?

Why does Reform Judaism stress the belief in Immortality in place of the belief in Resurrection?

Is Immortality desirable?