Judaism as creed and life

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

AMELIA JOSEPH
The view of Judaism set forth in the following pages is one likely, I believe, to commend itself to a large number of English-speaking Jews. It lies midway between the orthodoxy which regards the Shulchan Aruch, or at least the Talmud, as the final authority in Judaism, and the extreme liberalism which, setting little store by the historic sentiment as a factor of the Jewish consciousness, would lightly cut the religion loose from the bonds of Tradition.

The present volume, then, may fairly lay claim to novelty. Almost all the expositions of Judaism which have hitherto appeared in England have been written from the rigidly conservative standpoint. Of these the two handbooks of my much-respected teacher Dr. M. Friedländer, are notable examples. Something, though far less, has been done to familiarise the public with the conception of Judaism which stands at the other extreme. It has found an able champion in my friend Mr. C. G. Montefiore, whose essay, entitled *Liberal Judaism*, was published almost on the very day that this book was finished. But
prehensive account of Jewish belief and practice as they are conceived by men of moderate views. That the aim I have set myself is not superfluous will, I think, be generally admitted. Whether I have been fortunate enough to realise it, is a question for the public to decide.

In writing the book, I have kept in view the requirements of two classes of readers. In the first place, there is the large section of my own co-religionists who would desire to see worked out in detail a definition of Judaism which they have already formulated for themselves, though only in broad and perhaps vague outline. To these I would demonstrate the possibility of reconciling respect for the claims of modern thought and life with loyalty to traditional Judaism, of being at one and the same time a faithful son of Israel and a true child of the progressive age in which we live. But I have also not forgotten that there is a considerable general public to whom the Jewish religion is a subject of deep and increasing interest. If I have afforded some measure of enlightenment to either class of readers, I shall be amply repaid for the time and labour which I have devoted to this book. It has been written intermittently, during a period of several years, in the brief and irregular intervals of leisure allowed me by an exacting vocation.

But Judaism consists of something more than theology and religious practice. Its morality is an integral and
ethics. In my treatment of this section I shall certainly have the sympathy of all my Jewish readers, whatever the school of religious thought to which they belong. Upon the ethical teachings of their religion all Jews are in virtual agreement, and all alike are interested in seeing those teachings adequately formulated. No previous work by an English writer has, I believe, dealt with this important subject, in its practical aspects more particularly, on an equally extensive scale.

From what has been said it will be evident that what I am here presenting is only one view of Judaism. As a consequence, I have left out of account certain doctrines and prescriptions which are irreconcilable with that view. But I cannot therefore, I submit, justly be charged with onesidedness. The book is not a history of Judaism, but a description of a certain phase of it. Judaism is the growth of thousands of years, and countless minds have contributed to its evolution. It is the task of the modern Jew to establish a *modus vivendi* between this necessarily heterogeneous product and the great intellectual and social movements of his age. He can do this only by selection. And what he selects will obviously be the best things. Nor is it he alone who feels the stress of this necessity. The most conservative exponent of Judaism experiences it. It would be impossible to write a book, however orthodox, on the Jewish religion in these days which should include all the utterances of all the authorities who
others are admittedly out of harmony with modern ideas. Every attempt indeed to adapt a religion to a new environment necessarily means selection. The Christian would find it difficult to frame a consistent and practical scheme of religion which should take in all the doctrine of the Church Fathers.

Thus much in reply to the possible charge that I have given a mere anthology,—that I have provided a collection of elegant extracts at the cost of ignoring the less attractive teachings. I have certainly made many quotations, especially in the section on Ethics. But I have done so intentionally. My aim has been to give some idea of the nobility of thought which characterises the Jewish doctrine of post-Biblical times. The passages I have cited are but specimens of the vast moral and spiritual wealth to be found in the Talmudic and medieval literatures.

In my attempt to provide for Jewish wants I have not lost sight of the requirements of the young. Experience has brought home to me the need of a manual of instruction suitable for Jewish boys and girls of Confirmation age. I have attempted to supply this need, and the fact will explain the somewhat homiletical tone which is to be discerned here and there. Desirous of making my book useful to readers at the formative period of life, I have deemed myself justified in employing the language of exhortation and appeal, which never fails to evoke a
which will have little or no meaning, save for persons of mature years. These are printed between asterisks.

That I have laid many writers under contribution will be abundantly evidenced from the footnotes. These will be considered, I trust, sufficient acknowledgment of my general indebtedness. But there are two works from which I have derived especial assistance, and which I must therefore single out for especial mention. They are Hamburg's indispensable *Real-Encyclopädie des Judenthums*, and Suvalski's book on Jewish life under the Talmud, in both its Hebrew and German editions. From these works I have borrowed many illustrative extracts from the Talmud and the Midrashim to supplement those which I have collected in the course of my own reading. And here I may add that all my quotations have been carefully verified by reference to the originals. I have also supplied, when quoting from the Midrashic literature, the chapter and verse of the Scriptural text upon which the passage is based.

Another and a larger debt I have to acknowledge. It is my debt to my friend Dr. Schechter, lately Reader in Rabbinc in the University of Cambridge, and now Principal of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. To him I owe much of the inspiration that has made this book possible. It is a matter of deep regret to me that Dr. Schechter's removal to the United States has prevented him from fulfilling his kind promise to read my
It remains only to express the hope that this book may, under the Divine blessing, prove helpful to some of my brethren who are desirous of gaining a clearer insight into the significance of their religion and a firmer grasp upon its truths. And even those who are unable to accept my theological standpoint may, I trust, find something in these pages to interest and instruct them. From all my readers alike I bespeak a generous reception for an effort which, whatever its shortcomings, is at any rate sincere.

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