

born into it and cannot extricate himself from it even by the renunciation of his faith, which would but render him an apostate Jew. This condition exists, because the racial community formed, and still forms, the basis of the religious community. It is birth, not confession, that imposes on the Jew the obligation to work and strive for the eternal verities of Israel, for the preservation and propagation of which he has been chosen by the God of history.

7. The truth of the matter is that the aim and end of Judaism is not so much the salvation of the soul in the hereafter as the salvation of humanity in history. Its theology, therefore, must recognize the history of human progress, with which it is so closely interwoven. It does not, therefore, claim to offer the final or absolute truth, as does Christian theology, whether orthodox or liberal. It simply points out the way leading to the highest obtainable truth. Final and perfect truth is held forth as the ideal of all human searching and striving, together with perfect justice, righteousness, and peace, to be attained as the very end of history.

A systematic theology of Judaism must, accordingly, content itself with presenting Jewish doctrine and belief in relation to the most advanced scientific and philosophical ideas of the age, so as to offer a comprehensive view of life and the world ("Lebens- und Weltanschauung"); but it by no means claims for them the character of finality. The unfolding of Judaism's truths will be completed only when all mankind has attained the heights of Zion's mount of vision, as beheld by the prophets of Israel.¹

¹ See Schechter: *Studies in Judaism*, Intr., XXI-XXII; p. 147, 198 f.; Foster: *The Finality of the Christian Religion*, Chicago, 1906; Friedr. Delitzsch: *Zur Weiterentwicklung der Religion*, 1908; and comp. Orelli: *Religionsgeschichte*, 276 f., and Dorner: *Beitr. z. Weiterentwicklung d. christl. Religion*, 173.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS JUDAISM?

1. It is very difficult to give an exact definition of Judaism because of its peculiarly complex character.¹ It combines two widely differing elements, and when they are brought out separately, the aspect of the whole is not taken sufficiently into account. Religion and race form an inseparable whole in Judaism. The Jewish people stand in the same relation to Judaism as the *body* to the *soul*. The national or racial body of Judaism consists of the remnant of the tribe of Judah which succeeded in establishing a new commonwealth in Judæa in place of the ancient Israelitish kingdom, and which survived the downfall of state and temple to continue its existence as a separate people during a dispersion over the globe for thousands of years, forming ever a cosmopolitan element among all the nations in whose lands it dwelt. Judaism, on the other hand, is the religious system itself, the vital element which united the Jewish people, preserving it and regenerating it ever anew. It is the spirit which endowed the handful of Jews with a power of resistance and a fervor of faith unparalleled in history, enabling them to persevere

¹ For the origin of the name Judaism, see Esther VIII, 17. Compare *Yahduth*, Esther Rabbah III, 7; II Macc. II, 21; VIII, 1, 14, 38; Graetz: *G. d. J.*, II, 174 f.; Jost: *G. d. Jud.*, I, 1-12; *J. E.*, art. Judaism. Regarding the unfairness of Christian authors in their estimate of Judaism, see Schechter, l. c., 232-251; M. Schreiner: *D. juengst. Urtheile u. d. Judenthum*, p. 48-58. Dubnow, Asher Ginzberg and the rest of the nationalists underrate the religious power of the Jew's soul, which forms the essence of his character and the motive power of all his aspirations and hopes, as well as of all his achievements in history.

in the mighty contest with heathenism and Christianity. It made of them a nation of martyrs and thinkers, suffering and struggling for the cause of truth and justice, yet forming, consciously or unconsciously, a potent factor in all the great intellectual movements which are ultimately to win the entire gentile world for the purest and loftiest truths concerning God and man.

2. Judaism, accordingly, does not denote the Jewish nationality, with its political and cultural achievements and aspirations, as those who have lost faith in the religious mission of Israel would have it. On the other hand, it is not a nomistic or legalistic religion confined to the Jewish people, as is maintained by Christian writers, who, lacking a full appreciation of its lofty world-wide purpose and its cosmopolitan and humanitarian character, claim that it has surrendered its universal prophetic truths to Christianity. Nor should it be presented as a religion of pure *Theism*, aiming to unite all believers in one God into a Church Universal, of which certain visionaries dream. Judaism is nothing less than a message concerning the *One and holy God* and *one, undivided humanity* with a world-uniting *Messianic goal*, a message intrusted by divine revelation to the Jewish people. Thus Israel is its prophetic harbinger and priestly guardian, its witness and defender throughout the ages, who is never to falter in the task of upholding and unfolding its truths until they have become the possession of the whole human race.

3. Owing to this twofold nature of a universal religious truth and at the same time a mission intrusted to a specially selected nation or race, Judaism offers in a sense the sharpest contrasts imaginable, which render it an enigma to the student of religion and history, and make him often incapable of impartial judgment. On the one hand, it shows the most tenacious adherence to forms originally intended to preserve the Jewish people in its priestly sanctity and separateness,

and thereby also to keep its religious truths pure and free from encroachments. On the other hand, it manifests a mighty impulse to come into close touch with the various civilized nations, partly in order to disseminate among them its sublime truths, appealing alike to mind and heart, partly to clarify and deepen those truths by assimilating the wisdom and culture of these very nations. Thus the spirit of separatism and of universalism work in opposite directions. Still, however hostile the two elements may appear, they emanate from the same source. For the Jewish people, unlike any other civilization of antiquity, entered history with the proud claim that it possessed a truth destined to become some day the property of mankind, and its three thousand years of history have verified this claim.

Israel's relation to the world thus became a double one. Its priestly world-mission gave rise to all those laws and customs which were to separate it from its idolatrous surroundings, and this occasioned the charge of hostility to the nations. The accusation of Jewish misanthropy occurred as early as the Balaam and Haman stories. As the separation continued through the centuries, a deep-seated Jew-hatred sprang up, first in Alexandria and Rome, then becoming a consuming fire throughout Christendom, unquenched through the ages and bursting forth anew, even from the midst of would-be liberals. In contrast to this, Israel's prophetic ideal of a humanity united in justice and peace gave to history a new meaning and a larger outlook, kindling in the souls of all truly great leaders and teachers, seers and sages of mankind a love and longing for the broadening of humanity which opened new avenues of progress and liberty. Moreover, by its conception of man as the image of God and its teaching of righteousness as the true path of life, Israel's Law established a new standard of human worth and put the imprint of Jewish idealism upon the entire Aryan civilization.

Owing to these two opposing forces, the one centripetal, the other centrifugal, Judaism tended now inward, away from world-culture, now outward toward the learning and the thought of all nations; and this makes it doubly difficult to obtain a true estimate of its character. But, after all, these very currents and counter-currents at the different eras of history kept Judaism in continuous tension and fluctuation, preventing its stagnation by dogmatic formulas and its division by ecclesiastical dissensions. "Both words are the words of the living God" became the maxim of the contending schools.¹

4. If we now ask what period we may fix as the beginning of Judaism, we must by no means single out the decisive moment when Ezra the Scribe established the new commonwealth of Judæa, based upon the Mosaic book of Law, and excluding the Samaritans who claimed to be the heirs of ancient Israel. This important step was but the climax, the fruitage of that religious spirit engendered by the Judaism of the Babylonian exile. The Captivity had become a refining furnace for the people, making them cling with a zeal unknown before to the teachings of the prophets, now offered by their disciples, and to the laws, as preserved by the priestly guilds; so the religious treasures of the few became the common property of the many, and were soon regarded as "the inheritance of the whole congregation of Jacob." As a matter of fact, Ezra represents the culmination rather than the starting point of the great spiritual reawakening, when he came from Babylon with a complete Code of Law, and promulgated it in the Holy City to a worshipful congregation.² It was Judaism, winged with a new spirit, which carried the great unknown seer of the Exile to the very pinnacle of prophetic vision, and made the Psalmists ring forth from the harp of David the deepest soul-stirring notes of religious

¹ *Erub.* 13 b.

² *Neh.* VIII, 1-18; *Ez.* VII, 12-28.

devotion and aspiration that ever moved the hearts of men. Moreover, all the great truths of prophetic revelation, of legislative and popular wisdom, were then collected and focused, creating a sacred literature which was to serve the whole community as the source of instruction, consolation, and edification. The powerful and unique institutions of the Synagogue, intended for common instruction and devotion, are altogether creations of the Exile, and replaced the former *priestly* Torah by the Torah *for the people*. More wonderful still, the priestly lore of ancient Babylon was transformed by sublime monotheistic truths and utilized in the formation of a sacred literature; it was placed before the history of the Hebrew patriarchs, to form, as it were, an introduction to the Bible of humanity.

Judaism, then, far from being the late product of the Torah and tradition, as it is often considered, was actually the creator of the Law. Transformed and unfolded in Babylonia, it created its own sacred literature and shaped it ever anew, filling it always with its own spirit and with new thoughts. It is by no means the petrification of the Mosaic law and the prophetic teachings, as we are so often told, but a continuous process of unfolding and regeneration of its great religious truth.

5. True enough, traditional or orthodox Judaism does not share this view. The idea of gradual development is precluded by its conception of divine revelation, by its doctrine that both the oral and the written Torah were given at Sinai complete and unchangeable for all time. It makes allowance only for special institutions begun either by the prophets, by Ezra and the Men of the Great Synagogue, his associates, or by the masters of the Law in succeeding centuries. Nevertheless, tradition says that the Men of the Great Synagogue themselves collected and partly completed the sacred books, except the five books of Moses, and that the canon was made under the influence of the holy spirit. This holy spirit remained in force also during the creative period of Talmudism,

sanctioning innovations or alterations of many kinds.¹ Modern critical and historical research has taught us to distinguish the products of different periods and stages of development in both the Biblical and Rabbinical sources, and therefore compels us to reject the idea of a uniform origin of the Law, and also of an uninterrupted chain of tradition reaching back to Moses on Sinai. Therefore we must attach still more importance to the process of transformation which Judaism had to undergo through the centuries.²

Judaism manifested its wondrous power of *assimilation* by renewing itself to meet the demands of the time, first under the influence of the ancient civilizations, Babylonia and Persia, then of Greece and Rome, finally of the Occidental powers, molding its religious truths and customs in ever new forms, but all in consonance with its own genius. It adopted the Babylonian and Persian views of the hereafter, of the upper and the nether world with their angels and demons; so later on it incorporated into its religious and legal system elements of Greek and Egyptian gnosticism, Greek philosophy, and methods of jurisprudence from Egypt, Babylon, and Rome. In fact, the various parties which arose during the second Temple beside each other or successively — Sadducees and Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots — represent, on closer observation, the different stages in the process of assimilation which Judaism had to undergo. In like manner, the Hellenistic, Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature, which was rejected and lost to sight by traditional Judaism, and which partly fills the gap between the Bible and the Talmudic writings, casts a flood of light upon the development of the Halakah

¹ See M. Bloch: *Tekanot*, and art. *Tekanot* J. E. Regarding inspiration see J. E.; *Sanh.* 99 a; *Meg.* 7 a; *Maim.*: *Moreh*, II, 45; comp. *Yerush. Ab. Zar.*, I, 40; *Horay.* III, 48 c; *Levit. R.* VI, 1; IX, 9; and *Yoma* 9 b. The laying on of hands for ordination (*Semikah*) implied originally the imparting of the holy spirit, see J. E., art. *Authority*.

² See Geiger, *J. Z.*, I, p. 7.

and the Haggadah. Just as the book of Ezekiel, which was almost excluded from the Canon on account of its divergence from the Mosaic Law, has been helpful in tracing the development of the Priestly Code,¹ so the Sadduceean book of Ben Sira² and the Zealotic book of Jubilees³ — not to mention the various Apocalyptic works — throw their searchlight upon pre-Talmudic Judaism.

6. Instead of representing Judaism — as the Christian theologians do under the guise of scientific methods — as a nomistic religion, caring only for the external observance of the Law, it is necessary to distinguish two opposite fundamental tendencies; the one expressing the spirit of legalistic nationalism, the other that of ethical or prophetic universalism. These two work by turn, directing the general trend in the one or the other direction according to circumstances. At one time the center and focus of Israel's religion is the Mosaic Law, with its sacrificial cult in charge of the priesthood of Jerusalem's Temple; at another time it is the Synagogue, with its congregational devotion and public instruction, its inspiring song of the Psalmist and its prophetic consolation and hope confined to no narrow territory, but opened wide for a listening world. Here it is the reign of the *Halakah* holding fast to the form of tradition, and there the free and fanciful *Haggadah*, with its appeal to the sentiments and views of the people. Here it is the spirit of *ritualism*, bent on separating the Jews from the influence of foreign elements, and there again the spirit of *rationalism*, eager to take part in general culture and in the progress of the outside world.

The liberal views of Maimonides and Gersonides concern-

¹ Aboth d. R. Nathan, I; *Shab.* 30b with reference to Ezek. XLIII-XLIV.

² See Geiger: *Z. D. M. G.*, XII, 536; Schechter, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, p. 35.

³ See J. E., art. *Jubilees*, Book of. Very instructive in this connection is a comparative study of the Falashas, the Samaritans, especially the Dosithean sect, and the still problematical sect discovered through the document found by Schechter, edited by him under the title *Fragments of a Zadokite Sect*.

ing miracle and revelation, God and immortality were scarcely shared by the majority of Jews, who, no doubt, sided rather with the mystics, and found their mouthpiece in Abraham ben David of Posquieres, the fierce opponent of Maimonides. An impartial Jewish theology must therefore take cognizance of both sides; it must include the mysticism of Isaac Luria and Sabbathai Horwitz as well as the rationalism of Albo and Leo da Modena. Wherever is voiced a new doctrine or a new view of life and life's duty, which yet bears the imprint of the Jewish consciousness, there the well-spring of divine inspiration is seen pouring forth its living waters.

7. Even the latest interpretation of the Law, offered by a disciple who is recognized for true conscientiousness in religion, was revealed to Moses on Sinai, according to a Rabbinical dictum.¹ Thus is exquisitely expressed the idea of a continuous development of Israel's religious truth. As a safeguard against arbitrary individualism, there was the principle of loyalty and proper regard for tradition, which is aptly termed by Professor Lazarus a "historical continuity."² The Midrashic statement is quite significant that other creeds founded on our Bible can only adhere to the letter, but the Jewish religion possesses the key to the deeper meaning hidden and presented in the *traditional* interpretation of the Scriptures.³ That is, for Judaism Holy Scripture in its literal sense is not the final word of God; the Bible is rather a living spring of divine revelation, to be kept ever fresh and flowing by the active force of the spirit. To sum up: Judaism, far from offering a system of beliefs and ceremonies fixed for all time, is as multifarious and manifold in its aspects as is life itself. It comprises all phases and characteristics of both a national and a world religion.

¹ See Yer. Hag., I, 76, and elsewhere.

² *Ethics of Judaism*, I, 8-10; Geiger: *J. Z.*, IX, 263.

³ See *Pesik. R.*, V, p. 146; *Midr. Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, Wayera 6 and Ki Thissa. 17. Comp. the legend of Moses and Akiba, Men. 29 b.

CHAPTER III

THE ESSENCE OF THE RELIGION OF JUDAISM

1. We have seen how difficult it is to define Judaism clearly and adequately, including its manifold tendencies and institutions. Still it is necessary that we reach a full understanding of the essence of Judaism as it manifested itself in all periods of its history,¹ and that we single out the fundamental idea which underlies its various forms of existence and its different movements, both intellectual and spiritual. There can be no disputing the fact that the central idea of Judaism and its life purpose is the doctrine of the One Only and Holy God, whose kingdom of truth, justice and peace is to be universally established at the end of time. This is the main teaching of Scripture and the hope voiced in the liturgy; while Israel's mission to defend, to unfold and to propagate this truth is a corollary of the doctrine itself and cannot be separated from it. Whether we regard it as Law or a system of doctrine, as religious truth or world-mission, this belief pledged the little tribe of Judah to a warfare of many thousands of years against the hordes of heathendom with all their idolatry and brutality, their deification of man and their degradation of deity to human rank. It betokened a battle for the pure idea of God and man, which is not to end until the principle of divine holiness has done away with every form of life that tends to degrade and to disunite mankind, and until Israel's Only One has become the unifying power and the highest ideal of all humanity.

¹ Comp. Geiger: *Nachgel. Schr.*, II, 37-41; also his *Jud. u. s. Gesch.* I, 20-35; Beck: *D. Wesen d. Judenthums*; Eschelbacher: *D. Judenthum u. s. Wesen d. Christenthums*; Schreiner, l. c., 26-34.