

**THE ENGLISH JEW
AND HIS RELIGION**

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The English Jew and his religion by C. G. Montefiore & Basil L. Q. Henriques

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HIS RELIGION.

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

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FOREWORD.

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

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

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

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

November, 1918.

The English Jew and his Religion.

The Jew and England.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Furnace.

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

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

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

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

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