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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERAL JUDAISM IN GERMANY FROM 1870 TO 1914

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
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## INTRODUCTION

If we survey the religious history of the Jewish people from the Talmudic period to the present time, we will find that there has been less change in religious conception and ideology in the many centuries prior to the nineteenth than has occurred in the comparatively short span since Moses Mendelssohn. It is remarkable that in spite of the greater freedom of thought permitted in Jewish religious life even during the so-called Jewish middle ages sectarianism was limited to rather small proportions, and resulted in complete separation in one case only, that of the Karaites.

The common denominator which united the Tannaim with the members of the Council of the Four Lands was their belief in the revelation of the Jewish law, written and oral, and their conviction that this law had universal applicability for all Jews in all climes and at all times. The life of the people centered around fulfillment of the law. All intellectual energy not applied to the pursuit of business was absorbed in thorough study of the law. Any infringement was looked <sup>upon</sup> askance and was surely going to be the cause of punishment either in this world or

in the next. The hope in the coming of the Messiah was likewise an indispensable portion of their common faith. It was within these limits that Jewish religious life carried on through the millennia. In spite of the encroachments on the mediaeval world picture of the Jew by Arabic philosophy, in spite of almost daily contacts with the non-Jewish environment, the unity of faith, culture, and social life was never broken until the nineteenth century.

The changes that occurred in the religious outlook of the Jews at that time are without precedent in their long history. Any comparison with the past would be misleading in this respect. It is true, Rabbinic Judaism was not static, yet it never departed from its halakic basis. Liberal Judaism, however, presents an entirely different aspect. The ideological content of religion is emphasized, whereas the law is relegated to a position of secondary importance, to say the least, if it is not totally rejected. The Jewish people is transformed into a religious community, whose major task consists in exemplifying and propagating its ideals. (1)

The two main factors responsible for this development are the civic emancipation of the Jews in Central and Western Europe and the emergence of modern science and philosophy as a serious challenge to well-established religious doctrines. More important even than the political rights granted to the Jews was their absorption of a modern, secular education, a process which was facilitated by the introduction of compulsory schooling for all citizens. It had been realized from the beginning of the struggle for emancipation

by Jews and non-Jews alike that much more than the equalization of status was involved. The life of the Jew had to approximate that of his Christian neighbor if he wanted to secure personal recognition from him. External customs as well as ideas had to be adapted to new conditions. (2)

A very practical problem arose from the gradual achievement of emancipation, when the internal autonomy of the Jewish community was abrogated step by step. As all cast privileges as well as restrictions were abolished, the Rabbinic jurisdiction in civil cases necessarily would fall victim sooner or later to this standardization. While this in itself did not destroy the authority of the Rabbi, it did make a serious dent in the structure of Jewish life, because the law actually had two foundations, divine revelation and the acquiescence of the secular authorities in the exercise of these separate rites. Whenever one of these pillars was removed, the whole fortress was in danger of collapsing, especially if we bear in mind that the religious basis for the law was to come under fire from another quarter. Furthermore, the free enjoyment of the newly-won rights, which included the right to acquire and to reap the rich harvest of a liberal education, was bound to produce doubt and confusion as Jews for the first time participated in the cultural life of their environment. Never before did such a strong movement of assimilation take hold of them.

If we consider the contrast between the great strides which the arts and sciences and philosophy made in Germany in the end of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries and the stagnant and

sterile rigidity of the representatives of Rabbinic Judaism, it becomes quite clear to us that once European culture was opened to the Jew, large defections from tradition would be an immediate result. The prevalence of deism also helped to break down the belief in accepted religious conceptions. It was the irony of fate that the same forces in Christian society which had sponsored Jewish emancipation were to contribute more than their share in destroying old orthodox tenets. For it was the elimination of all sectarian dogmas on the part of the deists, which on the one hand put all religious groups on an equal footing, but on the other hand threatened to deprive them of their individuality.

Moses Mendelssohn, the first Jew to come under the spell of modern culture and its philosophy, who at the same time remained a Jew, was still strongly entrenched in his traditional Jewish faith, so that he followed the pattern of Moses Maimonides in devising an apparent synthesis between his religion and his philosophy. In his system of deism, the law has a definite place. In fact, Judaism is revealed law. The purpose of the law is to set the Jews apart so that they will be able to preserve the truths of deism for generations to come. (3) Whatever we may think of the consistency of such a doctrine with the facts of history, the important point here is Mendelssohn uncompromising orthodoxy.

Mendelssohn's successors were of a quite different stamp. If they were still Jews and had not forsaken their ancestral faith, the world of their ideas was dominated definitely by contemporary

thought. Although they might still consider themselves good Jews, they would measure the totality of Jewish life and experience almost solely in terms of contemporary values. If Mendelssohn identified Judaism with deism, but still maintained all the prescriptions and statutes that had bound the Jew in the past, later thinkers were less inclined to arrive at such a reconciliation, whose inner contradiction was intolerable to people schooled in strict systems of logic.

Men like Salomon Formstecher, Samuel Hirsch, and Salomon Ludwig Steinheim had already been educated outside of the ghetto, a fact which influenced their outlook tremendously. Their first allegiance was definitely to what ever philosophic fashion had caught their fancy. The content of Judaism would be molded into these new forms, and anything which did not quite fit into these casts would be discarded as being unimportant to the central theme of Judaism, the perfection of man through belief in God and respect for his fellow man. This was not only a shift of emphasis from law to dogma, but actually it was thought that in modern times the knowledge of the straight and narrow path through the acceptance of a philosophic system could well serve as a substitute for the observance of the law. (4) For the law, it was argued, was after all only a means to an end and not the end in itself.)

The accomplishments of science which seemed to show that man's progress was proceeding so rapidly that perfection was just around the corner also built up man's confidence in himself. The resultant optimism which characterized the philosophy of the eighteenth century



was carried over into the nineteenth , and the Jews especially could never forget that it had been the rationalist movement which had made the first inroads into the structure<sup>of</sup>/discriminatory legislation against them. All this combined, the emancipation, the advantage of becoming assimilated to the environment, and the general trend of thought, necessitated fundamental changes in their religious life.

Liberal Judaism evolved in the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany. It was by no means without opposition that this process took place. A tradition which could look back to almost 2000 years could not be overthrown overnight. The struggle which went on in every Jewish community was very spirited and seemed many times to threaten the unity of organization. The struggle which went on in the open forum of the synagogue was reproduced in the mind of every thinking Jew, for gradually all Jews entered the compass of general education, and it was difficult to relate their Jewish heritage with their secular training. Different tempers brought about diverse reactions.

The reformers mentioned before tried to construct a theoretical system which although utilizing essentially Jewish ideas would adhere to the philosophy of their choice. This might have been satisfactory theory, but the practice had to look quite different. Reforms in ritual observance were much more difficult than reforms in general principles. The factor of habit played a very significant part in the retention of many a custom which might not be able to stand the test

of reason otherwise. Thus, there are not always clear lines between reformers and traditionalists, for some who might be radical in principle would be more cautious in practice, as Abraham Geiger, for instance.

When the practical reforms are discussed, it is usually forgotten that aside from the very important reorganization of the service another reform of Jewish life, which was wrought with even greater consequences, occurred. This was the substitution of the vernacular for the special Yiddish dialect still current among the German Jews until the early part of the nineteenth century. With it went a widening of the interest beyond the narrow religious sphere, as Jews began to make the culture of their environment their own. This development appears to us the most revolutionary among all the changes that we associate with the transformation of the mediaeval into the modern Jew. At the same time, of course, the knowledge of Hebrew assumes a much less prominent place in their life.

Yet, this reform did not have to be made consciously, for it took place in such a natural way in Central and Western Europe that not even the most orthodox believer could put a stop to it. Therefore, the attention that is devoted to the reform of the service by men like Israel Jacobson and Israel Bresselau is in reality far out of proportion to its actual import. But most of the conflicts within the Jewish community characteristically enough did not center around the almost wholesale departure from the old type of life dominated by Rabbinic law, but rather about a small segment of Jewish life, the

religious service, and a few customs intimately connected with the life of the individual, as circumcision, marriage laws, and burial rites. While on the one hand Mendelssohn's advocacy of modern education found a ready response in nearly all Jewish circles, so that every Jewish village teacher only a few years after Mendelssohn's passing wanted to be able to pride himself that he taught the Pentateuch in German, precisely the same way as the great master had done, (5) the problem of ritual changes caused much more controversy. As far as the large mass of the people ~~was~~ concerned, it was not a matter of ideology, for in this field it was not so difficult to trace the relationship of the old Judaism to the modern age, but it was rather the external arrangement of the religious service which demanded a thorough revision. Thus, men like Jacobson and Bresselau believed themselves to be in complete agreement with Jewish tradition, when they introduced the organ and German sermons, prayers, and hymns into their services. Bresselau emphatically rejects the insinuation that he intends to temper with the theology of Judaism in doing so.

(6) The fact that the area of conflict was confined to the reform of the service, carries with it the tacit admission on both sides that Judaism was conceived as religion only, or that at least the narrow religious aspect was the most significant. For even the most uncompromising traditionalist in Germany, Samson Raphael Hirsch, defined his program as Torah im derech eretz, reaffirming his devotion to the entire body of Rabbinic law, but at the same time permitting secular knowledge as long as it was not directly opposed to tradition (7).

The struggle for the renewal of Judaism accordingly went on on two planes. Among the theoreticians, the issue might be formulated as between divine revelation and historical evolution. It was the same conflict which divided the fundamentalists from the modernists in the Protestant Church. The instrument that was of greatest use to the reformers in Judaism was its scientific study. The pioneer effort in this direction was Leopold Zunz's *Gottesdienstliche Vortraege der Juden*, which beyond its scientific value had a very practical purpose. In this work the author ~~took~~ to prove that the introduction of the sermon in the vernacular was no innovation, but was based on sound precedent in Jewish history. (8) All later studies of men like Geiger and Holdheim were motivated by the desire to demonstrate the gradual development of the Jewish tradition. Even a more conservative figure like Zacharias Frankel did not hesitate to explore his people's past without prejudice to hallowed beliefs in his Darke ha-Mishna.

While the theoretical investigation seems to point to evolution rather than to a unique unalterable revelation, the very age of the Halacha prevents the religious leadership, even in the reform wing, from applying scientific principles to all situations. Only too often, reforms which life has made a reality to most Jews even before they are recommended by their authorized spokesmen receive their final seal of approval not until after some Biblical or Talmudic example has been cited, which a lenient interpretation of the law might consider as sufficient warrant for such changes. Wherever possible the reformers feel themselves on safer ground when they can utilize

the Rabbinic methods to adjust religious practices to modern times. Although science has become the new dogma, the reformers even are still too much rooted in tradition to disregard it. Therefore, we find a curious mixture of these two elements represented in the decisions of the Rabbinical Conferences in the middle of the century and of the two Synods around 1870. (9)

By 1870 the picture the religious life of German Jewry presented had assumed rather clear outlines, which were not changed very much anymore by subsequent developments. From now on, a process of crystallization set in, as religious controversies subsided and other issues came to the front. While the questions that time had raised for the German Jews were not answered to the complete satisfaction of everyone concerned, each group, extreme Orthodoxy, moderate Conservatism, and modernist Liberalism, had taken on a characteristic shape which was not to be modified considerably for a long time to come.

Since the emancipation had been all but completed by that time, and since the process of acculturation had likewise come to an end, a certain stability could take hold of the people. Now the gains of the past century had to be preserved. The cry for progress, which had been sounded in the previous period, had lost much of its purpose, for there seemed to be only a few bastions to be conquered. True, the civil service and the officer's career were still largely closed to the Jew, but these were comparative minor matters, the main objective had been accomplished, and the fruits of victory were

to be enjoyed to the full.

The cultural development of assimilation imparted the Jewish community a new semblance of homogeneity. When formerly much of the difficulties in religious questions had been caused by the varying speed of assimilation, all groups had achieved a common background once more, i. e. a thorough German education supplemented by a rather fragmentary training in Judaism, if judged by earlier standards.

Another important factor in the religious situation was the general decline of interest in religion, as the corrosive effects of an untempered rationalism began to claim its toll among the faithful. As the results of political liberalism belatedly make themselves felt in increasing self-government, political and social problems divert the attention of all thinking people from the intangibles of religion.

This then is the picture of German Jewish religious life at the time of the unification of the German Empire. The task of this thesis is to trace the development of the Liberal wing in Jewish religious life from this period up to the first World War.

Although this is probably the most prolific epoch in Jewish literature, quantitatively speaking, there is unending repetition of ideas. Therefore, we shall confine ourselves to the most important events and literary works only to prevent losing the thread of our account.

The aim of this exposition is to bring out the most significant

trends of religious thought by examples from the most representative writers and thinkers of the age. Historical completeness is not part of our plan. For historical studies should be reserved to larger themes. To call the ever-recurring controversies about the inclusion or omission of certain prayers or ceremonies history would do violence to that term. The lack of systematic treatment this period has received in the past is largely due to the fact that scholars have considered it extremely unproductive as compared to the previous episode. (10) Nevertheless, even the decline and process of thinning out of a great idea is worth recording, as new challenges cross the path of man's striving.

I. THE SYNODS OF LEIPZIG AND AUGSBURG AND THE FOUNDING OF THE  
LEHRANSTALT FÜR DIE WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUMS

It has been said very often that the proof for the genuine need of reform may be deduced from the fact that changes in ritual and ceremonial were initiated by the layety without the benefit of theological support, and the rabbis did not lead in the reforms, but rather followed the laymen. (11) Since reform was based on the needs of the day at least as much as on tradition, it was obvious that close contact had to be maintained between rabbis and laymen, if the demands of the time combined with the eternal spirit of tradition were to produce adequate results in a progressive religious life.

Therefore, it was felt that the cause of Liberalism could be served best, if the periodic Rabbinical Conferences would be supplemented by Synods, which would be attended by representatives of the layety as well. (12) Such an institution analogous to the bi-annual Councils of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations might have raised the interest of the Jewish public in Jewish matters. But it seems that the outcome did not justify the expectations, for the attendance at these two Synods, the one at Leipzig in 1869, the second at Augsburg in 1871, was rather small, and the rabbis continued to wield greater influence on the proceedings and discussions, as matters of little import consumed most of the time of the two Synods.



In his address of welcome to the delegates to the Leipzig Synod A. M. Goldschmidt links the Synod to the first Rabbinical Conferences in the 'forties, at which certain reforms had been attempted. He explains the long interval between the Rabbinical Conferences and this Synod as a result of the political upheavals of 1848 with its consequent reaction. Only now, when political circumstances have taken a turn to the better, we can continue the important work of our predecessors. (13) The inclusion of the laity in the Synod is justified characteristically enough from a traditional motive. The rabbis and teachers in Israel always derived their authority from their congregations. (14) Other addresses repeat the old theme of adjusting traditional practices to modern life, in order to forestall complete indifference among the youth. (15)

These statements are interesting in so far as they show to what extent the Jews feel themselves dependent on events and movements outside of the Jewish community even in their religious progress. The reaction after 1848 had indeed delayed the complete consummation of emancipation, and only the organization of the North-German Confederation under the leadership of Prussia in 1867 established more or less equality for the Jews. Would this have to mean that enthusiasm for religious reforms would be in direct proportion to the civic advancement of the Jew? This is very significant to the problem of religious development during the Empire, when the anti-Semitic reaction undoubtedly led to a certain reserve in regard to religious change.

The reason for lay representation, while invoking traditional

usage, would not satisfy a traditionalist, as a layman in order to have any influence in Rabbinical councils at all would have to be versed thoroughly in his heritage. Yet, the Synod claims broader authority because of its larger compass.

Aside from a very short declaration sponsored by Ludwig Philippsen reiterating Judaism's identity with the principles of modern society, which demand the equality of all men and religions, principles first enunciated through Mosaism and developed by the Prophets, (16) the Synod hesitated to pass any more specific set of principles upon which modern religious ideas might be based. But some of the decisions concerning practices shed some light on the temper of the delegates.

In its decision on the nature and character of religious instruction, the Synod forbids critical treatment of Biblical stories in school, but it recommends that the results of scientific research should be utilized in teaching to prevent doubts in the minds of the young later on. (17) The original version of this passage had stated that miracles might be explained in a natural manner, but the truth of the Biblical narrative should never be denied. (18)

A very important part of the discussions was devoted to the revision of the prayerbook. We read about the sorry state of German Jewry where too many reform rituals are in use. The Synod realizes that it cannot devise a prayerbook acceptable to even all the more Liberal congregations, as they differ in size and degree of Liberalism. Yet, some general directives were issued. Restoration of animal sacrifice is excluded from the prayerbook, as are all references to

the return to Palestine and a personal Messiah. In its stead, the prayerbook is to emphasize the religious mission of Israel and "the great principles of Judaism, namely the continuous development, the future dominance of the knowledge of God..." (19)

Here the Synod does not hesitate to include the great principles of general Liberalism, which it identifies with Judaism, into its ritual. This was typical of the whole movement. With all its passion for science, with its reliance on the historical method and on the critical approach, it could be just as subjective, unhistoric and uncritical as the staunchest traditionalist to whom the whole body of Jewish law was revealed on Mt. Sinai. This has been the Achilles heel in the ideological structure of Liberal Judaism. Too much emphasis has been laid on transient ideas, which were represented as being eternally woven into the texture of the Jewish religion. Yet, it seems to be the way of every new movement to try to find support in the past. This in itself shows a healthy respect for established ways of thought and action. The leaders of Liberal Judaism in Germany were versed well enough in Jewish lore to appreciate the past, but they were also closely tied to the current of European culture. In all probability they felt more at ease in their modern environment than in the Jewish element of their life, for the impact of the world was too strong upon them, there were no more ghetto walls to preserve the Jewish heritage on the one hand and to keep out modern views on the other. Thus, the idea of progress became a dogma of Judaism.

The second Synod was held in Augsburg in 1871. Owing to the excitement created by the Franco-Prussian War and the consequent unification of Germany, the attendance at this gathering was even smaller than at Leipzig. This factor may have been responsible for the greater amount of work which this conference accomplished, if compared with its predecessor. It dealt sensibly with the problems of marriage and divorce rites, abolishing Chalizah and the prohibition of marriage during the Sefirah period. While reaffirming the importance of circumcision, the Synod declares that an uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother is to be considered a Jew in every respect. Significantly enough, Rabbinic authorities are cited to substantiate this decision. (20)

Yet, with all this important work, the Synod was not blessed with a great deal of self-confidence. Moritz Lazarus, who had presided at the Synod of Leipzig, again stood at the head of the meeting. This great leader, one of the best examples of the combination of the German culture with the Jewish spirit, who was highly respected by all parties, was acutely disappointed in the failure of the Leipzig Synod to find the necessary resonance within the Jewish communities. He, the systematic thinker, had set his heart on solving the religious problems which beset his people in a logical manner. A synod seemed to be the best way. In his opening address at Augsburg he castigates the Jewish communities for having failed to accept the accomplishments of the Leipzig Synod. (21)

That Lazarus's misgivings were not unfounded can be best demon-

strated by the general decline of interest, which manifested itself in the complete abandonment of the synods following Augsburg. For again, the Synod had tried to evade the most basic issues by not defining its attitude toward the Jewish law. Wherever possible, changes are justified on the basis of Biblical or Rabbinic authority. If not, the exigencies of the present age will furnish the same proof. Such an arbitrary attitude could not raise the prestige of the Synod as an instrument toward true reform. For in reality, it ratified belatedly certain changes which had occurred in Jewish life without the benefit of ecclesiastical indorsement. Thus, the ~~xxx~~ polarity between modernism and tradition was never resolved, as expediency guided the decisions of the Synods.

On the other hand, one should not expect clear-cut formulations, when so many diversified opinions were presented. A middle ground was much safer. At the Augsburg Synod, a resolution to revise the Shulchan Aruch does not come to a vote, as there is too much opposition from both sides. Yet, the discussion of this resolution emphasizes the spirit of the Synod once more. Wassermann, who introduced this resolution, criticizes the Shulchan Aruch because it does not contain moral laws. It is in perfect harmony with Jewish practice to appoint a commission for the revision of the code. Amram Gaon and Isserles are cited to prove that legal decisions to be effective have to be acknowledged first by the layety. Therefore, the layety is the source for all law. It has the right to delegate its power to the experts.

It is absolutely necessary to remove the difference between theory and practice in Judaism. Such a revision would bring about the desired result. The opposition to this resolution from the conservative camp denies that the Shulchan Aruch ever was binding on the Jews, but simply represented the development of the law until that time. It is superseded by any recognized decision in later periods. Thus, the resolutions of the Synod in practical problems revise the law of the older code. The reformers object on the ground that any codification was undesirable, for religious sentiments cannot be expressed in legal form without doing violence to them. The reform movement should reject any crystallization of religious ideas into codes, for this is at the root of all religious evils. On the contrary, instead of revising it, the Synod should abrogate the Shulchan Aruch altogether. Any revision would be a recognition of this work. (22)

In retrospect, it was probably a very wise thing not to attempt to rewrite the Shulchan Aruch. For as Wassermann had said, the work would have been without value, unless it had been recognized by the Jewish communities. Yet, strangely enough, it is hard to believe that the communities with all their interest in reform would have accepted such a revision as genuine. The general response to the Synod, whose proceedings incidentally were not published until two years after its meeting, was rather apathetic. People did not wait for a revision of the Shulchan Aruch to ignore its prescriptions. It seemed as if the Synod was moving in a vacuum.

Since these Synods were unable to influence the course of events, they stand out primarily as an indication of the general temper of German Jewish leaders. For they did represent all the important progressive elements that were active in German Jewry. Still, the failure of being recognized hurt very much, especially Moritz Lazarus, who had expected so much from them. In later years, when people could evaluate their strengths and weaknesses calmly and dispassionately, we learn of some interesting insights into the true nature of German Jewry at the time.

Ludwig Philippson, one of the most prominent leaders of the Leipzig Synod, perceived clearly enough that the Synods did not fulfil their function, for the presence of the laity could not hide the fact that they were actually Rabbinical assemblies, for only detailed matters of the ritual were discussed, forcing the laymen into complete dependence on the rabbis. Therefore, the laymen were absolutely out of place at these gatherings. He also realized the lack of originality in their decisions, as nearly all these problems had been dealt with by previous Rabbinical Conferences and had been brought to a practical solution in many congregations already. Furthermore, the influence of the Jewish Theological Seminary, founded by Zacharias Frankel in 1854, was making itself felt, because its graduates true to their master were extremely hesitant about disturbing the "historical continuity" by reforms, although they were all modern in spirit. Thus, Philippson felt that the Synods had little to offer to

German Jewry, also that many of the most prominent leaders, such as Abraham Geiger, Leopold Loew, and Julius Fuerst, who passed away shortly after the second Synod, could not be replaced by competent and authoritative figures. (23)

This account, which was to be a justification for Philippon against Moritz Lazarus, who had accused him and others for their lack of initiative in calling a third Synod, almost summarizes for us the situation in which Judaism found itself in Germany after the first wave of reform had stirred it a generation before. The prospect of winning over many of the Orthodox and Conservative elements was growing dimmer and dimmer. At first the reformers had been in the advantage, because they had fought and successfully overcome the old Rabbinical system. The traditionalists had been on the defensive all along the line during the first half of the century. As modern education had broken down the barriers of the spiritual ghetto, reforms had to be undertaken in even the most Orthodox congregations. In many respects the leaders of Orthodoxy showed that they had grasped the situation much better than the Reform theoreticians. Learning from the experiments of Jacobson and Bresselau, they knew that the most urgent change needed was the more esthetic arrangement of the religious service, but that theological scruples did not agitate the broad mass of the laity. On the contrary, rewording of prayers was the least important part of Reform to most people. It was rather the introduction of a well-trained choir, of the German sermon, and possibly of the



organ which would attract people of a modern environment. The Conservatives, not uninfluenced by these trends themselves, were ready to grant such concessions, which in themselves did not mean a surrender of tradition.

The nature of the leadership also changed. Instead of the old Rabbis, who did not have any secular education, we find that the new leaders who opposed Reform were all men equally trained in modern thought as their Liberal colleagues. Isaac Bernays and Samson Raphael Hirsch could measure themselves with any Reform representative in this respect. Zacharias Frankel, who was less stringent in observance than these two, became the father of a new generation of spiritual leaders, who all had a profound reverence for their heritage, precisely because their teachers, Frankel and Heinrich Graetz, combined with the love of their people's lore a thorough scientific spirit.

It might be argued that even this spirit of conservatism was just as much in consonance with the contemporary climate of opinion as the crusading spirit for reformation had been toward the end of the eighteenth century, when the ideas of rationalism were gradually being diffused among larger groups of people. For there were two definite tendencies which characterized the thinking of the nineteenth century: one was the striving for freedom from all conventions, that strong spirit of individualism, which seemed to erase all other distinctions between man and man, and which made people look down on all

ages in which freedom had been abridged. From now on man was to be the master of his destiny, as optimism and the belief in progress gained a firm hold. The emancipation of the Jews was based on this principle. If only the Jews would be granted all opportunities, there would be no difficulties about fitting them into modern society. Yet, there was another, equally important trend of thought which shaped the course of events in the nineteenth century just as much. This was the romanticist and nationalistic turn of mind which revealed itself again and again, alternating with the drive toward individual freedom. In fact, there was a definite action and counter-action during the past century, raising one movement over the other at different times. Each revolutionary upheaval, no matter whether that of the end of the Napoleonic Wars, which put a stop to the French Revolution, or of 1830 or 1848, was followed by a period of reaction. These reactions were not only directed from above, but they also had within them the nationalistic tendencies which the Napoleonic period had brought about.

This is very important to the understanding of Jewish thought in the nineteenth century, for we think of it only too often as the age of reason and liberalism and regard any other ideas as reactionary and therefore insignificant. But this is far from true. The romanticist and nationalist ideas have as much positive content as those of liberalism, even though Jews regarded them with suspicion because they did not want to be reminded of their past with all its legal disabilities. They feared all nationalism, because they did not feel

secure as yet in the communities in which they lived.

The movement toward unification of all the German states engendered the feeling of nationalism once more. This was also the time when historical studies were being made to show the antiquity of the German nation and to impart a feeling of pride in their past. In the Jewish field the same applied. Although the Science of Judaism was intended originally to justify Reform, at the same time it followed the same pattern of German studies in its attempt to glorify the Jewish past. Graetz's History of the Jews is an outstanding example.

Neo-Orthodoxy and Conservatism were based very largely on such ideas, which made tradition palatable even to a modern mind. An important figure, who typifies this attitude, is Michael Sachs, the Conservative Rabbi in Berlin, who died in 1864. A consideration of his personality will show us to what extent past and present, which superficially seen appear irreconcilable, can be fused into one indivisible unit by the spirit of romanticism. Significantly enough, it was his personal friend, Moritz Lazarus, the Reformer, who analyzed this peculiar trait in a eulogistic preface to Sachs's "Stimmen vom Jordan und Euphrat", which was published his death in 1867.

Lazarus, who opposed Sachs in his religious views, believes that his Conservatism was due to his poetic spirit. His romantic idealism made him preserve all the heritage of his people, because it was dear to him if for no other reason than for its antiquity. His "poetic deceptions" are blamed for his failure to see the need for any changes

in Jewish ritual. His beautiful rendering of the Piyyutim, which after all lack in beauty of form, is best evidence of how he was able to see poetry where there was only prose. (24)

What Lazarus offers here as a mild criticism of a great representative of modern traditionalism, could be applied not only to many other Jews of the time, but also to many non-Jewish scholars, whose devotion to the particular period of history they were studying influenced their opinion on contemporary problems. Mention may be made here of the great historian Theodor Mommsen, whose Roman History was definitely partial to the Empire. Ancient precedents were revived to explain present situations. It was about this time also that statues were erected to the unnamed hero of the battle of the year 9, when according to Roman historians the whole Roman army under the General Varus was annihilated by German tribes, and to the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa on Mt. Kyffhaeuser where according to legend he was supposed to reside after he had died on a crusade in 1189.

These examples are cited here only to show that the Jews were not alone in their love for the past, for the creation of the new German Empire occasioned a new spirit. The values of the past were to reinforce those of the present. That ulterior motives by reactionary groups played a certain role cannot be denied. But this is not the problem for us. The main thing is the emergence of an antidote to unbridled liberalism and individualism, which was reflected likewise in the development of Jewish religious life,

as greater emphasis was put on traditional observance by the rabbis leaving the Seminary of Breslau.

For this reason probably the Synod of Leipzig resolved to call into being the *Lehranstalt fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The purpose of this institution was to cultivate a free scientific knowledge of Judaism, to investigate its spiritual power and to gain for it adequate influence on the general spiritual development. (25) Although nothing is mentioned of the training of rabbis in this resolution at least, this was taken for granted as all higher courses would lead to a Rabbinical degree. Abraham Geiger, who had been excluded from the direction of the Breslau Seminary by the choice of Frankel, whom the trustees of the foundation thought to be a man of the middle of the road and therefore acceptable to the largest group of German Jews, was teacher at the *Lehranstalt* for two years before his death, as this institution had been opened in 1872.

It is interesting to note that the Liberal group organized its seminary after the Conservatives. For this was really only a compromise solution. Originally they had contemplated to establish a special faculty of Jewish theology at one of the German universities. This would have assured the Jews equality as a unit as well as for individuals. In addition it would have raised the prestige of Jewish studies among Jews and non-Jews alike. The former may have been even more necessary than the latter. For as education in its higher aspects became identified more and more with the universities, any subject not covered by them did not appear worthy of consideration

to the young Jews who were so eager to acquire whatever culture they could at the universities. The only way in which Judaism could be made a legitimate field of attention to the cultured person was to have it represented in the authorized dispensaries of education. For it was in the very nature of the period of Jewish emancipation and assimilation that the approval of the non-Jewish world was held to be an important and decisive measuring-rod for the Jewish community. Whether we like it or not, we have to admit that this became an increasingly potent factor in the Liberal movement especially. When Moritz Lazarus opened the Synod of Augsburg, he had to face the fact that the Jewish communities had failed to react favorably to the decisions of the Synod of Leipzig. Yet, he did have encouraging signs to report. The most significant to him was the favorable comment received from some highly placed Christian statesman, who remains unnamed. (26)

To the innocent by-stander such commendation would appear to be totally irrelevant, for the Synods were planned to help the Jewish communities solve their problems. That should be the sole criterion for their success. Yet, here one of the most thoughtful leaders of the movement believes that he can justify the Synods on the ground that they have been approved by non-Jewish authorities. It is obvious that the Jews, who wanted to become part of the general world, would have to make the acceptance by that world one of the most important norms of conduct for themselves. Liberal Judaism, which was founded very largely on the assumption that

the Jews would have to adjust to the condition of modern life after their emancipation, had to include therefore within its doctrine the demand that the good will of the outside world always had to be cultivated. Orthodoxy was much more self-sufficient in this respect. It could exist even under the most unfavorable circumstances. But Liberal Judaism depended definitely on the close contact with the non-Jews. For it recognized always that it was fed by two sources, Jewish tradition and modern thought. If one of these was taken away, the whole system would collapse. We have seen already how this fact applied practically to the ups and downs of Reform in the nineteenth century, when periods of general reaction, which retarded the emancipation, coincided with a slackening of interest in the new movement.

If we summarize the results of the era of the Synods, we find that they tended further to differentiate between the Orthodox and Liberal movements in Judaism. The founding of the Lehranstalt was further evidence of this crystallization. It also showed how far the civic problems of the Jews were from solution, since they were unable to secure full recognition of their religion from the State.

The two other factors which were to shape the course of Liberal Judaism in Germany up to the World War were anti-Semitism and Zionism. For the religious questions were solved for the adherents of the movement at least. One might say that no new genuine religious problems were posed. The systematic treatment of Judaism during this period only varies slightly from earlier dispositions.

## II. LIBERAL JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

Whenever Judaism has come into contact with other philosophies, it had to redefine and rethink its whole program in order to meet the foreign influence adequately. The examples of Philo, Maimonides and the other mediaeval Jewish philosophers are evidence enough that such a process was not unique to Liberal Judaism. The greatest exponents of this development in the nineteenth century were Formstecher, Samuel Hirsch, and Steinheim. Every one of these wrote his particular exposition before our period. This is one more proof why our period offers little challenge to the investigator, since whatever systematic work was done was repetition of previous attempts.

Nevertheless, the analysis of some of these writings will shed some more light on the climate of opinion in which Liberal Jews moved. One of the most extensive studies of this type was made by Leopold Stein, the Reform Rabbi in Frankfurt a. M. (27) He divides his work into three parts, dogma, law, and ethics. In the first part he treats of God and Man. The author finds it necessary to tell us that the rationality of the Bible is by no means disturbed by the references to anthropomorphism. (28) He is also very sensitive about the Cabala, which he rejects as being foreign to Judaism, since it originated in Greek philosophy. Although he admits that it in-



fluenced Talmudic literature considerable, he opposes it as un-Jewish, unmindful of the fact that his system likewise is not completely Jewish in origin. (29) His version of the Messianic age, which he gives after making a historical survey of the idea, is simply the pinnacle of human progress. Maimonides is quoted to show that both Christianity and Mohammedanism are all pointing to the coming of the Messiah. Stein is sure that we are moving ever closer to the goal. As means of communications improve, we can be sure that people will gradually know one another more and respect the stranger. We should stress the common ideas in our religions and not the differences. (30) Israel has a special mission, to affirm the unity of God in a unified humanity. Whereas other nations rise and fall, the Jewish people is eternal. God has placed it among the nations to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. There can be no return to Palestine, since this would be making nature run around in circles, which is not worthy of the people of the spirit. The author realizes a definite change that has taken place in Israel's task since the emancipation. In order to accomplish our work among the nations, we have to drop many of the religious forms which separate us from the rest of humanity. (31)

In the transition to the second part devoted to a discussion of the Jewish law, Stein motivates the separatist laws beginning with Moses as necessary to prevent the Jews from associating with the pagans. While these laws were relatively simple in the time of Moses, they had to be reinforced during the Greek and Roman period through the Talmudic legislation, in order to bring about some

equilibrium between the great physical and intellectual power of Greece and Rome on the one hand and the rather small impotent Jewish community on the other hand. But now we live in a different age. The nations among whom destiny has placed us have ideals similar to our own. Therefore we do not have to keep ourselves apart from them, for on the contrary, we can learn from them as well. Yet, we have to preserve our integrity as a religious group, so that some separatist laws are still necessary. (32)

The fact that the second part of Stein's theological system deals with the law is proof enough that he had not abandoned the concept of religious law. In his introduction he states that Judaism is the religion of law. (33) But this law is thoroughly reasonable. Whenever a law loses its validity because of a change in conditions, it must be discarded. The Talmud is wrong when it invests the Gesserot with authority, even if we do not know for what purpose they have been given. Philo had much greater insight into the law of Moses, when he showed how humane it was; but the Talmud reduces God to the position of an Oriental despot, who tests man's loyalty by his fulfillment of commandments not in consonance with reason. The Talmud is at fault also when it permits the exercise of the commandments without the proper attitude. The great number of the laws that have to be observed likewise do not add at all to man's devotion to God, since they destroy piety. The expulsion of the Jews from Palestine, which resulted

in the diminution of the number of laws, is not a calamity to us. As a matter of fact we are glad to know that we were separated from the soil and from the ritualist Temple with its sacrificial service because now we can devote our strength to the furthering of progress. Even if we would return to Palestine, it would be quite unlikely that we would abide by the laws of ritual purity for instance. Yet, there are some laws whose sense it is not difficult to comprehend, like the commandment of the Sabbath and the holidays. These should be observed even today. (34)

The Talmudic exegesis of the Bible on which many of the later laws are based is likewise extremely loose and does not at all conform to the original meaning of the Bible. The Biblical dictum, <sup>ye</sup> ~~you~~ shall not add, <sup>34a</sup> is cited to prove that the Talmudic explanation of the Bible is altogether unjustified in many cases, so here in the matter of Terefah. (35)

The chain of tradition enumerated at the beginning of Pirke Abot is incorrect. The Prophets cannot have been the carriers of the law, they were much more interested in the development of the religious spirit. Outside of the observance of the Sabbath there is hardly any other mention of the commandments in the Prophets. Ezekiel is the only exception, but he was a priest originally. There was a definite decline from Prophecy to Rabbinism. The poetic feeling of the Prophets turned into the casuistry of the Rabbis. (36) A special historical table with an account of the events from the Babylonian Captivity to the destruction of the Second Temple is

added to compare the actual historical sequence with Rabbinic tradition. (37)

This and many other examples are presented to prove the inadequacy of Rabbinic historiography, which invalidates the claim to authority. Esra's strictness in the observance of the law is deplored, although the Jubilee Year was discontinued under Nehemiah. This is an indication that the leaders of the people had a certain amount of balanced judgment, and that they were honest in their devotion to the law. (38)

The same cannot be said of the Rabbis, who evaded the provisions of the Sabbath year, when it became impossible to keep them, by means of the Prosboul, which was equally as devious as our present-day custom to sell the leavened bread on Pesach. (39)

In this tenor the history of the law is continued with the intent to show how unscientific and therefore illegal the whole procedure of the Rabbis was in expounding the Mosaic law. The Talmud is scored because of its obscurantism, since it prohibits secular studies. (40)

The Shulchan Aruch likewise is singled out for attack. Even more laws are added to the many existing ones. With this code Judaism stops being a religion, it becomes law court. (41) Superstition furthermore was perpetuated by this code, as it recommends as cures the belief in demons. It does not even shrink from snake charming and sorcery. (42)

At the end of his treatment of the law, Stein offers a suggested code of practice for modern Jews. Here he reaffirms that Judaism is the religion of law and that the Bible is the unique divine source of this law, which is primarily of a moral nature, and is based on reason. The oral law has only temporary validity; its relevance depends on ex-

ternal circumstances. While it is true that some of the post-Biblical authorities created some very worthwhile institutions, such as the Synagogue and Chanuka and the Prayerbook, we accept only those ordinances which help to raise the dignity of our religion. The dietary laws, which were promulgated by the Rabbis to erect a wall of separation between Jews and non-Jews, must be removed now since we are trying to come into closer contact with our non-Jewish neighbors. But the Biblical version of these same laws with their prohibition of the eating of certain animals and blood are a moral impulse for temperance and sanctification. Then follows a careful distinction between Rabbinic and Biblical dietary laws. (43)

Circumcision and the Sabbath are the two main bases of Mosaic law. The rewards of Sabbath observance cancel out the loss in business. Rabbinic rest laws of the Sabbath are unnecessary; the only criterion for prohibited work should be the degradation of the Sabbath to an ordinary week day. All holidays are to be observed for only one day. All fastdays connected with the destruction of the Temple have been abolished already by Zechariah (8:19). (44)

Our prayer on Sabbath and holidays must reflect our true mood. Therefore, all those prayers referring to our low estate must be discarded, since they are untruth, stupidity, and sinful ingratitude. Petitions for the restoration of the bloody sacrifice likewise must be excluded; for how can we ask for such a condition in the time of the Messiah? The Messianic age does not refer to the rule of one man, but to the Kingdom of God, in which justice, truth and peace will triumph.

The religious service itself is to be rendered partly in Hebrew, but most sections should be said in the vernacular. All repetitions should be avoided, so that the service does not last too long and proper attention is given to the sermon. Since the lighting of the Chanuka lights was commanded by the Rabbis and not by God, we have to change the blessing before this religious act to conform with the truth. There is no Biblical statute providing that at least ten men have to attend a service to make it valid. Mourning customs like growing of the beard and tearing one's garments are not worthy of God's children. The Jahrzeit light, however, should be lit, and Kaddish should be said, it being clearly understood that the Kaddish prayer does not secure salvation for the dead, but is simply an expression of the sanctification of God. (45)

The last passage typical of this whole attitude is as follows: "The Synagogue itself should stop mourning in our time, since especially the fate of Israel seems to indicate the dawn of an age of freedom and justice among men; for God has turned to His congregation, Israel, with great mercy. Edifying song and joy-awakening effects of music should glorify our house of prayer, which, combining the great past of Judaism with the greater future of Israel and humanity, shall show itself worthy more and more to be called 'a house of prayer for all peoples'." (46)

The third part of Stein's work deals with Jewish ethics. Ironically enough the sources for this Jewish ethic are found in Rabbinic literature. Thus, the same Rabbis whom the author attacks

in his discussion on Jewish law become his witnesses for the greatness of Judaism. Here he stresses the good life by examples from Talmud and Midrash.

An analysis of the author's point of view as evidenced in his evaluation of Jewish history, his curious code of practice, which in reality is a combination of basic doctrines and practices, and his reverence for Rabbinic ethics, makes him a typical representative of his time. His naivete and his feeling of superiority over the benighted lawmakers of the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch may amuse us, but we must bear in mind that the Jews removed only a few generations from the ghetto detested everything that even bore the remotest resemblance to the Middle Ages. There was no doubt that this was the closest to the millennium, casting anything prior to this time into deep shadows.

True, the Jews did have a great tradition, even though it had been infected with the spirit of the ghetto. The only thing to do now was to salvage those portions which could be utilized in this great age that lay ahead. The eternal verities of Judaism consisted in its moral law, whereas the ceremonial law had only conditional significance. Divine providence for Israel seemed to point the path to the future. The sudden improvement of the spirit of mankind, which manifested itself especially in the changed fortune of the Jews, imposed upon the latter a unique obligation to carry out their mission. This was the correct interpretation of the Messianic promise. In the meantime Israel must continue to maintain its soli-

darity by observing such ceremonial laws as will promote the spirit of religion amongst them.

Another attempt to present Judaism systematically was made by Moritz Lazarus. His Ethics of Judaism according to its title limits itself to one phase of Jewish teachings. Nevertheless, the whole development of the theme in this large work is indicative of the author's views. An important difference between Stein and Lazarus is the fact that the latter is a trained philosopher, who is careful to have everything fit neatly into his system, whereas Stein as a rabbi does not seem to be always so consistent and logical and will be ready much more often to give vent to his personal feelings in his writings. Lazarus is much colder, and it is therefore somewhat more difficult to discover the spirit behind his writings.

Whereas Stein's work is a combination of historical and systematic discussion, Lazarus is strictly systematic. Like Stein, he draws heavily on the Talmud for the material from which his system of Jewish ethics is derived. Yet, in spite of the more dispassionate tone, we must admit that he approaches his task with hardly less prejudice than Stein. To him the moral law likewise is the center of the Jewish religion. Ceremonial laws also have ethical significance, for they discipline man, and steel his will; incidentally, Kant also has emphasized the importance of will for doing good. The yoke of the law furthermore tends to bring about the crystallization of personality into a unity. Individual and social ordinances solidify the individual and society. (47)



All of Jewish history seems to move about the categorical imperative. The liberation from Egypt as well as the destruction of the State ~~gxxx~~ had beneficial consequences of like nature, they ethicized the Jewish people. We find no second example in history of a people just from freed/slavery which built for itself a new culture and achieved such a unique freedom as did the Jews. Jeremiah's prescription to the exiles of 597 shows also how new elements were added to the ethic of the Jews, that their point of view was broadened to include loyalty to the country of their residence. Lazarus does not forget to cite similar declarations of loyalty adopted by the Leipzig Synod, which was mentioned above, and by later Rabbinic and lay organizations. (48)

It appears to us that in a systematic work of this nature such license is out of place. For one thing the homiletical interpretation of the Exodus cannot be used as proof for the workings of the categorical imperative in hoary antiquity. Besides, Lazarus was fully familiar with the political problems of the Jews of his day to refer to these declarations of loyalty, which although undoubtedly sincere were dictated by expediency to a very large extent, as further evidence of the workings of Jewish ethics.

It is true, the investigator will find much material in Bible and Talmud to substantiate his belief that in spite of its lack of system its ethic conforms largely to that of Kant. A typical example is the Rabbinic interpretation of Deut. 22:3. The addition of "Thou mayest not hide thyself", while not adding anything to the law, means that man should not shirk his duty, another indication of its identity

with the categorical imperative. He also finds Kant's autonomy of morality in the Talmud. (49)

In the chapter, "Sanctification is Ethicization", a much more fundamental departure from Jewish lore is attempted. Lazarus here wrestles with the problem of holiness, and with its relation to morality. He distinguishes two kinds of holiness. The one is ritual in character, the other moral. Whereas ritual holiness is only symbolic, since the process of sanctification is an external one and does not carry with it any real spiritual change, ethical holiness is real. Ritual holiness by itself can never be complete, for it is not enough that something is declared holy, man himself has to invest such an object or person with the dignity of his own holy feeling, which again is ethical in character. Thus, holiness receives its validity for us only where it furthers the ethical purpose. The absolute of Judaism is ethics. Its ideal of God is primarily ethical. The ethical attributes of God like the active intellect in Mediaeval philosophy provide the only link to man. Religion becomes subservient to ethics, a classic doctrine of Kant. (50)

This supremacy of ethics over religion does not quite conform to the doctrine of Judaism, since God is the source of ethics and everything else, but not a creature of ethics. The first commandment states nothing about the ethical nature of God, it simply establishes His existence. Although ethics has played a much larger role in Judaism than in any other ancient religion, God is the focal point of all striving. The good life is only a means. Yet, Lazarus could

see the Jewish religion only through the eyes of a modern philosopher, reading into it ideas foreign or at least far away from the original proclaimers of its doctrines.

The criticism which Lazarus's Ethics of Judaism had to undergo from the Neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen shows how a younger contemporary reacted to his uncritical erection of a system composed of passages from Bible and Rabbinic literature selected at random. (51) Nevertheless, Cohen himself realized certain affinities between Kantian philosophy and Judaism. (52)

The attempts to present Judaism systematically in our period were carried out more or less successfully to reconcile Jewish tradition with modern thought at the expense of the former. The motivation behind these systems was to raise the esteem of the Jewish religion in the eyes of Jews and non-Jews alike and to establish a cultural connection between the Jewish and the non-Jewish world.

### III. ANTISEMITISM AND ZIONISM

With the unification of Germany in 1871 a new spirit took hold of the country. The pride in this great accomplishment wrought important changes in the mood of the people. Although the political liberals had originally advocated this step and had been blocked by the reactionary groups supported by the dynasties, it was precisely the latter that made this dream a reality. The prestige of the military and conservative groups in the country was therefore greatly enhanced. Bismarck, to whom much of the credit for the final consummation of this policy must go, was much freer now in his dealings with his parliament.

Aside from the romanticist and nationalist feeling engendered by this good fortune, which we mentioned above, the rising industrialism brought about a feeling of insecurity, which bode ill for the ideas of liberal progress. When in 1873 an economic crisis occurred as a result of too much speculation after the Franco-Prussian War, the Jews being prominent in commerce and banking were blamed. At the same time the conservatives could make use of this libel in blackening Bismarck when he relied <sup>on</sup> ~~for~~ the liberals <sup>for</sup> ~~on~~ support. The famous German historian, Heinrich von Treitschke, summarized the feeling of some of these circles, when he wrote in 1879: "The Jews

are our misfortune." In the meantime Bismarck had shifted to the Conservative party in the Reichstag. Anti-Semitic agitation increased as political parties with anti-Semitism as their main plank entered the field. Among the leaders of this movement were beside some rabble rousers a few highly regarded scholars, such as the great Orientalists Paul de Lagarde and Adolf Wahnsmund and the court preacher Adolf Stoecker. These men interspersed their valuable scholarly writings with attacks on the Jews, thus influencing the younger academic generation, which already began to feel Jewish competition, in an unfavorable way. Aside from the usual accusations charges of diluting the German spirit with their sudden entry into cultural life were leveled against them. The extent of this movement may be gauged by the fact that in 1880 over 250,000 signatures were affixed to a resolution to limit the Jews in cultural and economic life.(53)

It was obvious that this avalanche of assailments would force the victims into a defensive position, and that they would do everything to preserve the great gains previous decades had conferred upon them. But for the Liberal Jews this was not only a threat to their physical existence, it challenged the whole philosophy upon which they had based their reforms. If the German spirit and Judaism were incompatible, all efforts of synthesizing them were doomed to failure from the start. Therefore, the leaders of Liberal Judaism were to be found in the forefront of the fight against anti-Semitism. In fact they diverted much of their strength in this direction, because to them it was as much of an ideological battle as the one against

Orthodoxy. The Liberal version of the Messianic doctrine, which transferred the destiny of the Jews amongst all the nations, met here great obstacles. If the Jews were not recognized as Germans, they could hardly begin to fulfil their divine mission.

One of the first to enter the lists in defense of his brethren was Moritz Lazarus. In 1879 he gave a lecture on the subject, "Was heisst national?", significantly enough at the annual meeting of the Lehranstalt. Here he analyzes the meaning of nationality and emphasizes that the Jews are Germans. For nationality is determined by language, culture and loyalties. In all these the Jews do not differ from the rest of the German people. (54) The admixtures of different races and tribes are beneficial to a higher culture. The meeting of these different levels and ideals produces the higher good. Indeed, it was divine providence that has dispersed the Jews among the nations to accomplish these great things. Because of the uniquely ethical nature of Judaism, the Jews can make a special contribution to the culture of each nation, since at the same time they are completely immersed in the lore of their non-Jewish environment. (55)

Hermann Cohen likewise found it necessary to speak for his people. He, too, was a leader of the Liberal movement and realized the direct danger threatening it because of the anti-Jewish agitation of his time. His first statement on Judaism is contained in a pamphlet entitled "Ein Bekenntnis in der Judenfrage", which was an answer to Treitschke's attack on the Jews because of difference in race.

In addition to his attack on the Jews as a race, Treitschke had stressed the difference between Judaism and Christianity, asserting that Judaism was the religion of a nationality foreign to the Germans, whereas the sectarian differences among the Christians were more in the nature of family quarrels.

Cohen maintains in the face of these statements that there is in reality no distinction between Jewish monotheism and Protestant Christianity. The characteristic features of Judaism consist in the spirituality of God and in the Messianic promise. The Jewish law here is simply ignored. Christianity has some additions from the Greek spirit, but otherwise it does not differ much from Judaism.

A telling proof for the ability of the Jews to amalgamate with the Germans is seen in the ready adherence of many Jews to Kantian philosophy during a period when they were still excluded from most of Christian society. (56)

The important role apologetics played in Liberal Judaism may best be illustrated by some of the presentations of Judaism which were made in the beginning of the twentieth century. The outstanding example is Leo Baeck's "Wesen des Judentums", whose very title made it a counterpart to Adolf von Harnack's "Wesen des Christentums". He also emphasizes the ethical character of Judaism. As a minority the very existence of the Jews testifies to the superiority of the idea over mere number. While the Jews strive to conquer the world for their ideas, all victories won over them have been due solely to the use of brute force. (57)

All these reactions against the anti-Semitic movement stem from the Liberal Jewish point of view. Whereas in the early Reform, the attention had been turned toward the traditionalists, now the enemies of Judaism had to be refuted. The struggle between the two factions within the Jewish community had died down, as general religious interest decreased and each group had become self-sufficient because of practical compromises. But anti-Semitism proved a much more formidable challenge, which had to be met in order to safeguard the Jewish community in general and Liberal ideology in particular.

Another important issue which faced Liberal Judaism toward the end of the century, and which was to affect its whole outlook on Jewish life profoundly, was the emergence of the Zionist movement. Like anti-Semitism Zionism was a problem standing somewhat outside of the narrower religious sphere. Originally conceived as a practical solution of the Jewish social and economic problems, it assumed wider ramifications, as time went on. It is true that its interpretation of Messianism was quite apart from the views of Liberal Judaism. This, incidentally, was the first reason given by the Board of the German Rabbinical Organization against participation in the First Zionist Congress at Basel. The formulation is not according to the Liberal views, since both Conservative and Liberal rabbis signed this declaration. The objection here is founded on the departure from the "Messianic promises of Judaism as they are contained in Scripture and later sources of religion". The second point deals with the problem of double loyalties, stating that Judaism "obligates its adherents to serve that country to which they belong with



all devotion and to further its national interests wholeheartedly". (36)

Although this statement was issued jointly by the two religious parties, the point of view definitely reflects Liberal Judaism. To this extent the Conservatives had followed their opponents. For it is difficult from the strictly Orthodox point of view to make patriotism a Jewish doctrine, especially when it is interpreted in such an exclusive manner. On the other hand the Liberal Jews appear quite traditional, when they wait for the Messiah to save them from their misery.

An interesting sidelight on the attitude toward Zionism on the part of some Liberal leaders is a declaration by Sigmund Maybaum and Heinemann Vogelstein. They believe that the Zionist movement was no threat to Judaism as long as the Zionists wrote Hebrew, but now that they are publishing a magazine in German, the danger is becoming real. This time no religious arguments are advanced at all. They simply refer to the harmful effect of Zionism on the final accomplishment of equality, because the Jews should differ from their neighbors only in their religion. Jewish history for the past 18 centuries has decided against nationalism, a fact established by the Science of Judaism. (59)

The fact that only reasons of expediency are cited shows the hollowness of the whole position. Apparently it is also very fortunate that German Jews have forgotten Hebrew, so that they can be spared from the pernicious influence of the heretics.

The thinker who exposed the falsity and the emptiness of this attitude was Martin Buber. Nobody could accuse him of lack of re-

ligious feeling. If we include him here among Liberal Jewish leaders, this is done advisedly. Although he does not belong to any particular school, he always has acknowledged historical development in Judaism, and has likewise preserved complete freedom from traditional observance. In all these respects he partakes of the heritage of Liberal Jewish thought.

In his "Drei Reden ueber das Judentum" he tries to give the answer to the question what the Jews really constitute in our time and what should be their destiny. In his discussion of the Jews as national and religion he unmasks the "religiosity" of our day, whose devotion to "tradition" is nothing more than the stubbornness of inertia, and whose "adaptability to modern conditions" is a completely emptied concept of generalized humanitarianism. What we lack is true religion, the consciousness of the existence of God. Thus, we have no right at the present time to think of ourselves as a unique religious group. On the other hand, there is no doubt that we do consider ourselves separate as a social and national entity. We pride ourselves in our national tradition. If we compare the position of our nation with that of other peoples, we will realize our weaknesses. But this may be the first step toward our improvement. If we see the suffering of our people and feel it as if it affected ourselves, then we will be real Jews again. The task of the Jew is not to talk of a monotheism which has no real meaning to him, but to restore the unity of his inmost nature and the reality around him. Then the Messiah will have arrived. (60)

Here we meet for the first time an entirely different answer to the problems of Jewish existence, of which the Jews had been aware to some extent since their emancipation. Although this not belong anymore to Liberal Judaism, it does provide a conclusion, in which the ideas of Liberal Judaism had had <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ part. Buber als recognized the need for a Jewish reform, but his program and aim was of quite another kind.

Thus, we see how anti-Semitism and Zionism introduced new elements into the development of Liberal Judaism. This movement had now to defend its position against the realities of life, which pressed upon it very hard. From its inception, it had prided itself in its reasonableness. Now, this argument was being challenged from all sides. Clearly seeing its dangers, the movement tried to develop a line of apologetics which justified its claims. Yet, it was unable to understand the new world that was in the making, just as the old Orthodoxy had been completely unaware of outward change a century earlier. Liberal Judaism used the same weapons and arguments against every and all opponents for the period under consideration. This was its tragedy.

#### IV. THE LITURGY CONTROVERSIES AND THE "RICHTLINIEN"

Although many new ideas were current in German Jewry, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the old problems were still very much in the foreground. However brave the resolutions of Leipzig and Augsburg, the execution of the practical recommendations as to ritual ~~were~~ not followed uniformly. A number of factors combined to prevent radical reforms. One of the reasons given by the reformers was the Austrittsgesetz, a law passed in Prussia at the instigation of Samson Raphael Hirsch, which permitted Jews to resign from congregations without ceasing to be Jews. Under this law it was possible for extreme Orthodox groups to sever their connection with the community and organize their own congregations. Outside of Berlin and Frankfurt a. M. only a few separate Orthodox congregations were started, but in many cases the threat of bolting a congregation was enough to prevent the introduction of further reforms. (61)

This, however, would account only partially for the lag in ritual reform. For if the desire for it was strong enough, such obstacles should not have stood in the way. Besides in most larger communities, where there was more than one synagogue, so that each religious party was free to do as it pleased, the situation was not much different. In fact, the most striking distinction between the

two services was the use of the organ among the Liberals. The liturgy itself being for the most part in Hebrew did not show wide variations. Only prayers referring to the restoration of sacrifices, to the personal Messiah, and to the enemies of Israel were omitted or reworded in the Liberal prayerbooks. In most other matters the two services were alike.

Nevertheless, occasional controversies still occurred about the liturgy especially in smaller communities, in which Liberals and Conservatives were in the same congregation. In 1894 Heinemann Vogelstein edited a new prayerbook for the congregations of Westfalia. It contained the usual modifications found in all other Liberal prayerbooks. In his introduction the editor states that he based his changes on the principle that no petition should be uttered which did not correspond to the true desires of the worshipper. (62)

Shortly after its publication a violent controversy broke out, as the Orthodox scholar Adolf Berliner attacked it sharply in a pamphlet, and the Association of Orthodox Jews in Frankfurt a. M. published the opinions of fifty rabbis condemning the prayerbook. Both Berliner and the rabbis charge that this prayerbook denies basic doctrines of Judaism by eliminating passages which refer to the election of Israel among the nations (63) and all references to angels as well as the blessings for the washing of the hands and the Messianic hope. (64) This was followed shortly afterwards by another collection of opinions favorable to the prayerbook. (65)

Ten years later similar attacks were leveled against a

prayerbook that was to be published by the Council of the Jews in Baden. Again opinions and counteropinions were collected and published with the result that it was not introduced into any of the congregations in Baden because of the opposition of the Orthodox group. Significantly enough the defense of the prayerbook was based largely on traditional precedents. (66) But all this did not avail because the traditionalists felt strong enough to block any reform.

Although really very little was involved in these struggles they are symptomatic for the defensive position of the Liberals in this period. The reason for this may be found in the fact that although numerically they were stronger than the Orthodox, the latter always displayed greater interest in the community. It ~~was~~<sup>is</sup> in the very nature of religion that reform movements can maintain themselves only, if continuous enthusiasm animates their adherents. Otherwise, the old customs, which are so strong in religion, are restored.

To revive interest in the Liberal movement the Association of Liberal Rabbis of Germany was founded in 1898. In 1908 the Association for Liberal Judaism appealed to the Liberal laity for support. An international congress on Liberal Judaism was to be held, but could not meet because of the World War. (67)

In 1912 a new set of principles called "Richtlinien" or Directives toward a Program for Liberal Judaism was adopted by the Rabbinical Association and approved tentatively by the lay group. This new program repeats the ideas of Liberal Judaism, as they had been current for the past century, adding a suggested code of minimum

practice. On the whole it shows much greater maturity than any previous attempts in this direction. For one thing, all ~~genuine~~ polemics with Orthodoxy are carefully avoided. While ethical monotheism is reaffirmed, the mission of Israel is not nearly as much emphasized as previously. Another important characteristic of this program is the attention paid to the development of the inner religious faculties in man through home observance and study. The following religious practices are recommended: the observance of Sabbaths and festivals in home and synagogue, daily home prayers, circumcision, confirmation, religious weddings, and last services to the dead. The program for the religious services is about the same as was already accepted in most Liberal congregations. The declaration closes in these words: "The Association of Liberal Rabbis of Germany is filled with the holy conviction that this will be the only way to reconcile the handed-down religion with the thinking and feeling of our time, to work for the edifying basic truths and moral ideals /of our religion, to keep awake its understanding that Judaism has its necessary position in the present and its immovable importance for the future, thus to overcome the lack of participation in religious activities and the estrangement from Judaism and to inherit to coming generations the fidelity proved for thousands of years." (68) This final statement along with many other references to the historical development of Judaism shows definitely how much a link with the past was desired. It is not anymore a question of tearing down, but here constructive efforts

are attempted to strengthen the loyalties of the Jewish people.

The promulgation of the "Richtlinien" is the fitting climax to our story. Liberal Judaism here expressed itself simply to deepen the religious spirit of its adherents without any ulterior motives. In this respect it was the first honest statement on the subject. The preceeding half century had been filled with the concluding phase of the struggle for emancipation and with the new threat of anti-Semitism. Franz Rosenzweig refers to this period as the one in which the German Jews had reached a saturation point, which was not really attacked until the coming of the Zionist movement. (69)

In the meantime everything had to serve in fighting the enemy outside the gate, whether anti-Semite or Jewish nationalist, with the same weapons, which had been used to attain the emancipation and the original religious reform; for the creative religious genius was dormant at this time.

Thus, there is very little in which the Leipzig Synod and the "Richtlinien" differ, except for the greater earnestness and sincerity of the latter. But the "Richtlinien" had the disadvantage of being forty years after the Synods, when the same ideas had been rehearsed over and over again for any and all occasions, thus making them a commonplace and consequently almost meaningless. In this way we might speak of a downward development of Liberal Judaism in Germany from 1870 to 1914.



# NOTES

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  29. *ibid.* I, p. 272x 117-120.
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  31. *ibid.* I, p. 37B. ffx
  32. *ibid.* I, p. 379ff.
  33. *ibid.* II, p. 3.
  34. *ibid.* II, p. 15-31. 34 a. Deut. 4:2.
  35. *ibid.* II, p. 47-57.
  36. *ibid.* II, p. 73 ff.
  37. *ibid.* II, p. 89.
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