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“What Jews Believe about God and Man,” 1904 October 17.

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WHAT JEWS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD AND MAN.

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It is important that the world understand the Jew. It is equally important that the Jew understand himself. We Jews ask the world to understand us; we protest against being misunderstood, but we do not always offer full knowledge concerning Judaism to the world. The age has come when the Jew should cease to be a mystery. The Temple should be the house of instruction - teacher to the Jew and teacher concerning the Jew.

Men and women are out of touch with Church and Temple. They experience no consciousness of God. The Church is forever harping upon the theme and scheme of salvation. The Synagogue is too busy interpreting texts. Men and women are hungering and thirsting for the moral message of life - eager to discover man's true place and work in the world. Church and Synagogue should preach and teach the vital truths concerning God and Man. Then the intellectual would not be in revolt against tradition and teachings and the ignorant would not be altogether indifferent.

In the beginning God - the opening thought of the Bible is the fundamental Jewish declaration. The Bible reveals a development in the God idea, from the patriarchs to the lawgiver, from the earlier prophets to the prophets of the exile - to the rabbins in the schools of Palestine and Babylon - to the philosophers of the Middle ages and to the teachers of modern time.

God is known by many names in the Bible. Ancient Israel revered the name of God. It pronounced Jehovah Adonai. The rabbis in speaking of God would not use any of the names of God, but preferred to say - "the Name", "the Name to be blessed". Here is a lesson to all the world and especially to this generation which uses the name of God so lightly for oath and profanity and for mere emphasis. A deeper reverence for the name of God should possess man, and a truer reverence for the thought of God.

Ancient Israel worshipped Jehovah as against Baal and the gods of Canaan - made sacred the true altar as against the altars built in groves with their images of wood and stone. It taught monotheism as against polytheism and idolatry. After the Babylonian captivity, in the prophetic literature and the Psalms the message is clear, God is law-giver; Israel is God's witness and shall be holy. God is father of all mankind.

False is the interpretation of the Bible and of Jewish literature which declares that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was a family God, God of the clan, a tribal deity, national God and nothing more, never the God universal. The Bible itself teaches Jehovah the God of Israel, the God of all the world. Still more false is the insistent interpretation which contrasts Jehovah, the God of vengeance, with the God of love and mercy, unknown to Jews. The Old Testament clearly teaches God as God of justice and God of love, God of grace who pardoneth. The Old Testament, in unmistakeable language, teaches the fatherhood of God.

What Jews believe about God has been revealed in Jewish life and history and literature. It is interpreted in the Biblical and post-Biblical books, in the discussions and the opinions of the rabbis of the Talmud, in Jewish commentaries and in Jewish philosophical writings, and in our Jewish prayer-book, prayers written a thousand and more years ago, and still prayed everywhere by the Jews of the world. Our traditional service begins with the prayer "Lord of the world", proclaiming God without beginning and without end - the first and the last. Through all the prayers runs the expression of Jewish trust in God, culminating in the closing avocation - "He alone is God, and there is none beside Him", hoping for the day when God will be one and His name one. The Jewish thought of the day emphasizes the fundamental declaration of the old Bible, in the beginning God - God, the first cause of the universe. Judaism insists upon the theistic interpretation of the universe, of all history, and especially of Jewish history.

Judaism is ethical monotheism. The phrase is new, - the thought is old, thousands of years old. God is one, and human duty finds root and basis in God. Through the

centuries Judaism has been monotheistic and against polytheism. It proclaimed the God of righteousness and denounced the idols of lust and licentiousness. God was one; Israel's God was one when the Pantheon was full of Gods. Judaism insisted upon unity as against duality - upon unity as against trinity.

The one-God idea is the distinctive Jewish contribution to the thought of the world. Other nations have had mighty influence upon the civilization of mankind. Israel gave God to mankind and the God of righteousness to civilization. Accepting Jewish thought, mankind believes in God the One, creator and ruler - in a world of moral order, in God the moral law-giver, and again accepting Jewish thought, proclaims true service of God to be justice and love.

What do Jews believe about man? God is, and man is the image of God. Paganism views man as the creature of the gods, subject to their changing whims and caprices. Christianity views man as fallen, lost in sin, needing the vicarious sacrifice and the atoning blood. Judaism knows man as mortal - weak, subject to sin, but made in the image of God. Man is not fallen; he needs no atoning sacrifice. Man is divine, in him is the divine nature. God judges the world in righteousness. Man needs no ameliorator; obedience is better than sacrifice; righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne. Man is child of God, the God relationship is as child to parent. Child shall be like parent, man shall be like God, God asks justice and mercy. Judaism emphasizes the inborn nobility of man.

The world needs a new consciousness of God. Lives are empty and purposeless, ideals are base and ignoble, because ^{God} is not in the hearts and souls of men. Man should know himself a servant of God to hear the call of God, to live the godly and the godlike life.

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