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Ghetto and Emancipation

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Ghetto and Emancipation

Shall We Revise the Traditional View?

BY SALO BARON

THE history of the Jews in the last century and a half has turned about one central fact: that of Emancipation. But what has Emancipation really meant to the Jew? The generally accepted view has it that before the French Revolution the Jews of Europe lived in a state of extreme wretchedness under medieval conditions, subject to incessant persecution and violence, but that after the Revolution a new era of enlightenment came to the nations, which forthwith struck off the bonds that fettered the Jew and opened up the gates that shut him off from civilized life. Prisoner in the Ghetto, denied access to the resources and activities of Western society, distorted intellectually, morally, spiritually by centuries of isolation and torture, the Jew was set free by the Emancipation. In the words of Graetz: 'The Revolution was a judgment which in one day atoned for the sins of a thousand years, and which hurled into the dust all who, at the expense of justice and religion, had created new grades of society. A new day of the Lord had come 'to humiliate all the proud and high, and to raise up the lowly.' For the Jews, too, the most abject and despised people in European society, the day of redemption and liberty was to dawn after their long slavery among the nations of Europe. It is noteworthy that England and France, the two European countries which first expelled the Jews, were the first to reinstate them in the rights of humanity. What Mendelssohn had thought possible at some distant time, and what had been the devout wish of Dohm and Diez, those defenders of the Jews, was realized in France with almost magical rapidity.'

Emancipation, in the judgment of Graetz, Philippon, Dubnow and other historians, was the dawn of a new day after a nightmare of the deepest horror, and this view has been accepted as completely true by Jews, rabbis, scholars and laymen, throughout the Western world. It is in terms of this complete contrast between the black of the Jewish Middle Ages and the white of the post-Emancipation period that most generalizations about the progress of the Jews in modern times are made. Prophecies as to the future of the Jew are also of necessity colored by an optimism engendered by this view. If in so short a time the Jew has risen from such great depths, is it not logical to hope that a few more years will bring him perfect freedom?

Unfortunately, in the light of present historical knowledge, the contrast on which these hopes are built is open to great qualification. A more critical examination of the supposed gains after the Revolution and fuller information concerning the Jewish Middle Ages both indicate that we may have to reevaluate radically our notions of Jewish progress under Western liberty. A wider, less prejudiced knowledge of the actual conditions of the Jew in the period of their deepest decline*—during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—seems to necessitate such a revision. If the status of the Jew (his privileges, opportunities, and actual life) in those centuries was in fact not as low as we are in the habit of thinking, then the miracle of Emancipation was not so great as we supposed.

I

IN the Jewish "Middle Ages," it is said, the Jew did not have "equal rights." But to say that pre-Emancipation Jewry did not have "equal rights" with the rest of the population does not mean that Jewry was the subject of special unfavorable discrimination. The simple fact is that there was no such thing then as "equal rights." In this period the absolute State, like the medieval State, was still largely built on the corporations. The corporations were legally recognized groups of people belonging to different corporate organizations, each with distinct rights and duties. The corporation of the nobility had its rights and duties, among them that of administration and defense of the country. The clergy was entrusted with spiritual and cultural affairs. While mercenaries and standing armies had to some extent replaced feudal military, and the Church had begun to give way to secular agencies of culture, the traditional powers of both were still

* The Jewish "Middle Ages," as Zunz soundly remarks, are not identical with the "Middle Ages" of Europe. The "Dark Ages" of the Jew are roughly comprised by the centuries immediately preceding the French Revolution, the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the "Dark Ages" of Europe were really a time of relative prosperity and high civilization for the Jew. Until the Crusades a majority of Jewry lived under Islamic rule in relatively good circumstances, while even Western Jewry was far superior to its Christian neighbors in culture and economic status. Only in the last centuries of the European Middle Ages did the Jewish Middle Ages set in. The decline was accelerated and continued during the religious wars, particularly in the countries of the counter-Reformation.

recognized down to the very opening of the Revolution. The urban citizenry (not the peasant or proletarian mass) formed the real third estate, and its chief function was the maintenance of economic life and the replenishment of the State treasury. Below these corporations in large was the peasant body, the vast majority of the population, in many countries held in complete serfdom, and everywhere with few rights and many duties.

It is, then, not surprising and certainly no evidence of discrimination that the Jews did not have "equal rights"—no one had them. Moreover, it may be said that if the Jews had fewer rights than nobles and clergy, their duties were hardly ever greater. Their legal status was comparable to that of the third estate, and, indeed, they were largely an urban group. In some periods they had equal, in some, fewer, in some, more rights than other town inhabitants. At the very opening of the modern period, Jewish rights after a long decline happened to be on the average lower than those of their urban Christian neighbors, yet even then they belonged to the privileged minority which included nobles, clergy and urban citizenry.

Certainly the Jews had fewer duties and more rights than the great bulk of the population—the enormous mass of peasants, the great majority of whom were little more than appurtenances of the soil on which they were born. When the land was sold they were included in the sale. None could move away without the master's consent. Like cattle they were *glebae adscripti*, but less free than cattle to mate. The larger part of their produce went to landlords or to the State. On every important occasion—at a birth, marriage or death—the landlord had rights to be considered. In every legal contest his was the only competent court. Seen by La Bruyère, the peasants in 1689 even in comparatively happy France were "savage-looking beings . . . black, livid, and sunburnt . . . they seem capable of articulation and, when they stand erect, they display human lineaments. They are in fact men. They retire at night into their dens where they live on black bread, water, and roots."

In contrast to this class, the Jews were well off. They could move freely from place to place with few exceptions, they could marry whomever they wanted, they had their own courts, and were judged according to their own laws. Even in mixed cases with non-Jews, not the local tribunal but usually a special judge appointed by the king or some high official had competence. Sometimes, as in Poland, the Jews even exercised influence in the nomination of such a *judex judaeorum* for mixed cases.

The disabilities under which medieval Jewry suffered have been made much of. Jews could not own land, or join most of the guilds, and were thereby effectively barred from certain branches of craft and commerce. But these were, in legal theory, restrictions made on the privileges granted them, and not limitations on any general rule of equal rights. Every cor-

poration had similar restrictions, and in this respect the Jews' case was no different in principle from that of other privileged groups.

True, the Jews were *servi camerae* (servants of the Treasury), but this status can neither in theory nor in practice be compared with that of the peasants, who were serfs of their local masters. If one may introduce a modern legal distinction not thoroughly applicable to medieval conditions, this difference becomes clear. The peasants were really serfs in civil law, that is, they belonged to a private owner as a kind of private property. The Jews were, so to speak, serfs in public law, and as such belonged to the ruler as representative or embodiment of the State, and they were inherited by his successor in office through public law. The man elected to the Imperial throne was their master, and not the private heir of the former Emperor's private estates, or the heir even of those German countries which, like Austria, he could claim on dynastic grounds. Now we ought not to forget that even today we are, in effect, serfs of the State in public law, notwithstanding all theories of personal rights, natural rights of citizens, and the sovereignty of the people. In fact, even more so today than formerly. The State can levy taxes little short of confiscatory; it can send us to war; in democratic countries, and even more so in Fascist Italy or Soviet Russia, it is complete master of all lives and property. This situation, expressed in medieval terminology, is a serf relationship applying to all citizens. The Jew then, insofar as he was *servus camerae*, was in substantially the same position all modern free citizens are in. In a word, the difference in the legal status between Jew and peasant was what David Hume, writing in that period on the condition of ancient slaves, called the difference between "domestic slavery" and "civil subjection." The first, he recognized, is "more cruel and oppressive than any civil subjection whatsoever."

The Jews' status as servant of the Emperor only, which had been opposed in vain by Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent III (these had it that he was the property of the different kings and princes in Christendom), was based on the erroneous theory that the Holy Roman Emperors of the German nation were direct successors of the ancient Roman Emperors and thus inherited the authority exercised over Jewish prisoners by Vespasian and Titus after Jerusalem's fall. Vespasian had levied the *fiscus Judaicus*, and the medieval rulers levied a similar tax—*Schutzgeld* (protection money). In practice, the theory of Imperial overlordship of Jewry was occasionally a disadvantage, as when the argument was made in fourteenth century France that these subjects of a foreign monarch be expelled from the country. But in general it was a profitable theory, for the Emperor often did provide the protection for which Jewry paid, as when he used his considerable power on their behalf in several of the German free cities. ♣

Indeed, the status of the Jew in the Middle Ages implied certain priv-

ileges which they no longer have under the modern State. Like the other corporations, the Jewish community enjoyed full internal autonomy. Complex, isolated, in a sense foreign, it was left more severely alone by the State than most other corporations. Thus the Jewish community of pre-Revolutionary days had more competence over its members than the modern Federal, State, and Municipal governments combined. Education, administration of justice between Jew and Jew, taxation for communal and State purposes, health, markets, public order, were all within the jurisdiction of the community-corporation, and, in addition, the Jewish community was the fountain-head of social work of a quality generally superior to that outside Jewry. The Jewish self-governing bodies issued special regulations and saw to their execution through their own officials. Statute was reinforced by religious, supernatural sanctions as well as by coercive public opinion within the group. For example, a Jew put in *Cherem* by a Jewish court was practically a lost man, and the *Cherem* was a fairly common means of imposing the will of the community on the individual. All this self-governing apparatus disappeared, of course, when the Revolution brought "equal rights" to European Jewry.

A PHASE of this corporate existence generally regarded by emancipated Jewry as an unmitigated evil was the Ghetto. But it must not be forgotten that the Ghetto grew up voluntarily as a result of Jewish self-government, and it was only in a later development that public law interfered and made it a legal compulsion for *all* Jews to live in a secluded district in which no Christian was allowed to dwell. To a certain extent the Ghetto in this technical sense was a fruit of the counter-Reformation, having its origin in Pope Paul IV's Bull, *Cum nimis absurdam*, issued against the Jews in 1555, and in its extreme application it was, of course, obnoxious. In origin, however, the Ghetto was an institution that the Jews had found it to their interest to create themselves. Various corporations in the State had separate streets of their own; the shoemakers, for example, or the bakers, would live each in one neighborhood. In addition to their growing mutual interest as a corporation of money dealers, the Jews wished to be near the Synagogue, then a social as well as a religious center. Furthermore, they saw in the Ghetto a means of defense. Thus, it was the Jews themselves who secured from Bishop Rudiger in Spire in 1084 the right to settle in a separate district and to erect a wall around it. There were locks inside the Ghetto gates in most cases before there were locks outside. The Ghetto, in the non-technical sense, was then a district in which most Jews and few Gentiles lived long before the legal compulsion which came when Christian authority found it necessary to mark the Jews off by residence district, in order to prevent complete social intercourse between them and Christians.

In this Ghetto, before compulsion came and after, Jewry was enabled to live a full, rounded life, apart from the rest of the population, under a corporate governing organization. The Jew, indeed, had in effect a kind of territory and State of his own throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period. The advantages of this autonomy, lost through the Emancipation, were certainly considerable; they must have contributed in large part toward the preservation of Jewry as a distinct nationality.

Again, the terrors of the Inquisition play a large part in all descriptions of the state of medieval Jewry. Its horrors have been fully portrayed, and many assume that whatever normal Jewish life might have been potentially, the constant incursions of the Inquisitor made it abnormal. It should be remembered, however, that the Inquisition was legally instituted only in a few European countries, and even there had no jurisdiction over professing Jews, beyond censoring Hebrew books. Therefore, far from being a special prey of the Inquisition, Jews belonged to a small, privileged group which had virtual immunity from its operations.

In the eyes of a contemporary European, the Inquisition was no more than an ordinary court of justice, proceeding along the ordinary lines of criminal prosecution in cases of capital crime. Apostasy from Christianity, by an old law of Church and State, was punishable by death. To the religious conscience of the Western man it seemed to be a holy task to burn the body of such a criminal in order to save his soul. According to the interpretation of Canon Law prevailing throughout the Renaissance, Maranos (secret Jews) were regarded as apostates. True, the highest Church authorities taught that enforced baptism was criminal, but most of them understood by force real physical compulsion, the *vis absoluta* of the old Romans, and in this sense the baptism of few Maranos could be viewed as enforced, even though a strong *vis compulsiva* existed in the menace of deprivation of fortune and expulsion. Furthermore, many authorities contended that once baptism occurred, even by compulsion, for the neophyte to return to his former faith would be apostasy. (If the sixteenth century Popes permitted Maranos to return to Judaism in Rome itself, theirs was certainly a laxer attitude than that of earlier and later church teachers and jurists.) At least in pure legal theory, then, the Maranos were apostates. They were, therefore, subject to the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, and the governments of Spain and Portugal were acting with strict legality in applying to them the strict interpretation of laws concerning apostasy.

As to the horrible means of procedure depicted with such vividness in the classic histories of Jewry, we must say again, with no effort to justify but in an effort to understand, that they were not extraordinary for their times. The "Inquisition" was a characteristic form of legal procedure, prevailing in civil as well as ecclesiastical courts, in which the judge was at the same time

prosecutor and attorney for the defendant. The use of torture was based upon the belief that circumstantial evidence is insufficient, and that a confession must therefore be extorted. Many also believed that such bodily sufferings were salutary for the soul. Such principles are shocking to the modern mind, but in a period of such draconic secular law as the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*, issued by the enlightened ruler of Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and all the New World, they are hardly extraordinary. Nor is it surprising that Jews were tortured and killed in an age when not less than 40,000 Christian "witches" were burned because they confessed to relations with demons. Regarded by itself or measured by absolute standards, the position of the Jews under the Inquisition was certainly unenviable. But by comparative standards they were, if anything, in a preferred position. For if as apostates or heretics they ran afoul of the Inquisition, they were no worse off than Gentile apostates or heretics, while as professing Jews they were beyond its jurisdiction.

II

LEGALLY and in theory, we have seen, the status of the Jew was by no means an inferior one. But did actual events—persecutions, riots, pogroms, monetary extortions—reduce their theoretical legal privileges to fictions in practice? Even here the traditional answer of Jewish historians does not square with the facts.

First of all, it is certainly significant that despite minor attacks, periodic pogroms, and organized campaigns of conversion, the numbers of Jewry during the last centuries preceding Emancipation increased much more rapidly than the Gentile population.* The Jewish population in the middle of the seventeenth century probably did not exceed 650,000 out of the more than 100,000,000 inhabitants in Europe. In 1900 the Jewish population of Europe exceeded 8,500,000 while the general population was about 400,000,000. That is, the Jewish rate of increase from 1650 down to the beginning of the twentieth century (when the mass of Jewry was still unemancipated)† was three times the rate of Gentile increase. Furthermore, in the same period European Jewry built the great American center.

It may be worth while to analyze in some detail the population increase previous to the Emancipation. From 1650 to 1789, when no Jews were yet

* Pre-Revolutionary population figures given here are by no means certain. I arrived at them after a careful study of all available source material. It is impossible, of course, to give these sources here or to explain the methods of textual criticism and synthesis used in arriving at the conclusions. It has long been apparent, however, that figures given by our classic histories are far from reasonably exact, which is all that mine pretend to be.

† It must be borne in mind that Emancipation did not come to Russia, Roumania or Turkey until the present century, while in Austria (including the Jewish masses of Galicia and Hungary) it postdates 1867.

emancipated, the Jewish population increased from 650,000 to 1,700,000, or more than 160 per cent, while the European general population rose from 100,000,000 to 177,000,000, an increase of only 77 per cent. During the period 1789–1848, when only the Jews of France and Holland (less than 5 per cent of all European Jewry) were emancipated, the Jewish population increased from 1,700,000 to 3,700,000, or about 120 per cent. In the same period the general population increased only 40 per cent. Even more amazing are the figures for France and Holland themselves. The chief Jewish settlement in France (Alsace) increased from 3,300 in 1700 (pre-Emancipation) to 26,000 in 1791 (year of the Emancipation), or about 700 per cent, while in the six decades following 1791 their number rose only to about 40,000, an increase of less than 50 per cent. In Holland the Jewish settlement started in the sixteenth century, developed rapidly during the next 200 years, and when Emancipation came there were about 50,000 Jews in the country. During the first decades of the Emancipation the general population of Holland rose from 1,882,000 (1805) to 2,640,000 (1830), while the Jewish population decreased about 20 per cent. Only about 1840 did it again touch the previous high figure of 50,000. As for Russia, Roumania, Austria and Turkey, to which Emancipation came late, there was a great increase in the Jewish populations century after century. Is it not clear then that, despite the fact that pre-Revolutionary Jewry suffered massacres and other sanguinary persecutions, the population increase went on at least as rapidly before Emancipation as after?

As a matter of fact, a comparison between the loss of life by violence in the two eras—pre- and post-Emancipation—would probably show little improvement since the French Revolution. Between Chmielnicki and Human, the two great pogrom movements of earlier East European Jewish history, more than a century intervened, whereas three major pogrom waves have swept Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1920, despite the coming of Emancipation. And if the Emancipation era did not relieve the Jew of pogroms, it did burden him in addition with the obligation of military service, from which (except in rare and temporary situations of abnormal character) he had always been free. During the continuous wars of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, when even the non-combatant Christian felt the curse of religious conflict, the Jews were neutral and suffered few losses. If they had been combatants they might have lost more than in all the pogroms.*

* It has been pointed out that the sixteenth century knew altogether twenty-five years, the seventeenth only twenty-one years, without big international conflagrations, not to speak of smaller wars. What the effects of those wars were upon the numbers of the population even in such a rich country as France, the leading empire of the world at that time, we see best in a short statement like this: "I estimate," says Hippolyte Taine, "that in 1715 more than one-third of the population, six millions, perished of hunger and of destitution."

WHAT of the economic situation of the Jew? Despite all the restrictions placed on his activities, it is no exaggeration to say that the average Jewish income much surpassed the average Christian income in pre-Revolutionary times. This is hard to prove, and certainly excessive wealth was rare except among high nobles and clergy. But is it not remarkable that the most typical Ghetto in the world, the Frankfort Judengasse, produced in the pre-Emancipation period the greatest banking house of history? And even before Rothschild's day, such Central European *Hofjuden* as the Oppenheimers and Wertheimers, and such West European bankers as the Pintos, Modonas and others, were not far behind rich Christians in their financial power.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the very restrictive legislation proved in the long run highly beneficial to Jewish economic development. It forced them into the money trade, and throughout the Middle Ages trained them in individual enterprise without guild backing, compelled them to set up wide international contacts (the banking house of Lopez was established by five brothers in Lisbon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Antwerp and London), and equipped them with vast sums of ready cash. With the dawn of early capitalism, and the need for ready money for the new manufactures and international trading ventures, the Jew fitted readily into the new economic structure. One need not accept Sombart's exaggerations to see that the Jew had an extraordinarily large share in the development of early capitalism, and received corresponding benefits. For several hundred years before the Emancipation many individual Jews were to profit from the old restriction which had trained them in money economy, and some of those profits were to seep down to the Jewish mass.

There were, of course, many impoverished Jews, particularly in Eastern Europe. But there were not so many of them, even relatively, as there were poor peasants. Their standard of life was everywhere higher than that of the majority of the populace. Particularly in Western and Central Europe the frequent complaints about the extravagance of some Jews, and the luxury laws of certain large Jewish communities, indicate a degree of well-being which is surprising. Furthermore, there existed in the Jewish corporations numerous relief agencies, a whole system of social insurance against need, in startling contrast to the often exposed and defenseless situation of the mass of the population.

Compared with these advantages, social exclusion from the Gentile world was hardly a calamity. Indeed, to most Jews it was welcome, and the Ghetto found warm champions in every age. There the Jews might live in comparative peace, interrupted less by pogroms than were peasants by wars, engaged in finance and trade at least as profitable as most urban occupations, free to worship, and subject to the Inquisition only in extreme situa-

tions (as after the enforced baptisms in Spain and Portugal). They had no political rights, of course, but except for nobles and clergy no one did.

III

WHEN the modern State came into being and set out to destroy the medieval corporations and estates and to build a new citizenship, it could no longer suffer the existence of an autonomous Jewish corporation. Sooner or later it had to give to the Jews equal rights in civil and public law and to impose upon them equal duties in turn. After the French Revolution one state after the other abrogated their economic disabilities, and granted them full freedom of activity. Finally they opened public offices, elective and appointive, to Jews, and made them citizens with "equal rights."

Emancipation was a necessity even more for the modern State than for Jewry; the Jew's medieval status was anachronistic and had to go. Left to themselves, the Jews might for long have clung to their corporate existence. For Emancipation meant losses as well as gains for Jewry.

Equal rights meant equal duties, and the Jew now found himself subject to military service. Political equality also meant the dissolution of the autonomous communal organization: the Jews were no longer to be a nation within a nation; they were to be thought of and to think of themselves as individuals connected only by ties of creed—Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen of the Jewish "Confession." This meant that politically, culturally and socially the Jew was to be absorbed into the dominant national group. Eventually, it was hoped, his assimilation would be complete.

In the face of Emancipation traditional Jewish ideology underwent great revision. The concept of the inseparability of nationality and religion—which had been increasingly abandoned in Europe after the bloody Wars of Religion—had persisted in Judaism down to the Revolution, and after. Now the theory was put forth that the Jewish religion—which the Jew was permitted to keep—must be stripped of all Jewish national elements. For national elements were called secular, and in secular matters the Jew was to avow allegiance to the national ambitions and culture of the land in which he lived. Jewish Reform may be seen as a gigantic effort, partly unconscious, by many of the best minds of Western Jewry to reduce differences between Jew and Gentile to a slight matter of creed, at the same time adopting the Gentile's definition of what was properly a matter of creed. The reality of the living Jewish ethnic organism was to be pared down to the fiction of the Jewish "Confession." Jewish nationality was to be declared dead and buried. Assimilation via Reform was the Jewish destiny, as the nineteenth century European, Jew and non-Jew, saw it.

There emerged at this point the new *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, intrinsically connected with Reformation and Emancipation, a movement of

scholars anxious to assist the completion of the process of emancipation with their learning. Confronted by the general suspicion in which Germany and the modern world in general held the Jew, and convinced of the desirability of complete emancipation, they consciously or unconsciously sought a tool in history and evolved this argument: "The Jews may be bad, but if they are it is because of your persecution; change your attitude, welcome the Jews into the modern State on terms of perfect equality, and they will become good." Ardent advocates of liberalism and democracy, visioning a reformed society guided by beneficent rationalism, believing religiously that the world in general and the Jews particularly could be improved by an extension of rights, it is easy to see how they found it useful to take as black a view as possible of pre-Revolutionary treatment of the Jews. The exaggerated historical picture of the horrors of the "Dark Ages" which we have been examining was the result.

This view of the Jewish past, outlined by the earliest advocates of political and social equality, was seized on and elaborated by advocates of Jewish Reform in the nineteenth century. Eager to widen the breach with the past, to demonstrate a causal relation between the treatment given the Jew and his general acceptability and usefulness to society, Reform advocates proclaimed in unmeasured terms the wretchedness of the age that preceded them. They explained Jewish "peculiarities" as results of oppression. The more radical expounded the idea that to achieve a new, free Jewish religion based on the Bible, the entire literature of the Diaspora must be abandoned. The Talmud, which grew up in the Diaspora, did not reflect Judaism's innermost spirit, they maintained, but was a mirror of the "abnormal conditions" in which Jews had lived.

At the end of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century, this view, originated by the anti-nationalist leaders of Reform, was to find reinforcement, paradoxically, from Zionism. Zionism wished to reject the Diaspora in toto, on the grounds that a "normal life" could not be led by Jewry elsewhere than on its own soil. So, notwithstanding their profound differences, Zionism and Reform both found that their positions were best supported by that view of history which held that before the Revolution European Jewry had lived in extreme wretchedness. They differed only in that the Zionists denounced the post-Revolutionary period as equally bad.

IT should be pointed out at once that this conception of modern Jewish history is indispensable neither to Reform nor to Zionism. Indeed, each has begun to shift its ground. Particularly among the younger intellectual leaders of national Judaism one discovers a note of romantic longing towards the Jewish Ghetto, its life, and its culture. In literature, the revival of Chassidism, at least as a cultural force, in the writings of Martin Buber,

Peretz, Berditchevsky and others, represents the new tendency. The establishment of national Jewish minorities in Eastern Europe has done much to reverse former animosity to Ghetto ideas of Jewish self-government. As for Reform, strong wings of the movement in America and Germany endeavor to reconcile it with Zionism. Even those who do not fully adopt Zionist ideology have become far less antagonistic to Hebrew culture than were their forerunners in the *Sturm und Drang* period of Reform. Thus medieval Jewish life takes on new values for Reform, and the old need for rejection of all that preceded the Emancipation disappears.

Such revaluations of the Middle Ages are part, perhaps, of a general modern tendency in historical studies, reflecting changes in our modern outlook. Liberal *laissez faire* is being more and more supplanted by a system of great trusts, protectionism, Fascism, Sovietism. Growing dissatisfaction with democracy and parliamentarianism has brought about a movement back to a modified medievalism. This is a medievalism on a higher plane, perhaps, but a medievalism just the same, of organization, standardization, and regulation.

That Reform and Zionism have both begun, though timidly and slowly, to reconsider the Jewish Middle Ages is encouraging. The future will certainly not see a reversal toward an obsolete and impossible corporational system. With other national minorities the Jews claimed and are claiming, not without success, the equilibrium between their full rights as citizens and the special minority rights they think necessary to protect their living national organism from destruction and absorption by the majority, a process that has often proved to be harmful both for the absorber and the absorbed.

At any rate, it is clear that Emancipation has not brought the Golden Age. While Emancipation has meant a reduction of ancient evils, and while its balance sheet for the world at large as well as for the Jews is favorable, it is not completely clear of debits. Certainly its belief in the efficacy of a process of complete assimilation has been proved untenable. Autonomy as well as equality must be given its place in the modern State, and much time must pass before these two principles will be fully harmonized and balanced. Perhaps the chief task of this and future generations is to attain that harmony and balance. Surely it is time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe, and to adopt a view more in accord with historic truth.



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