THE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST PAPERS

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IX
THE STATUS OF THE JEWISH WOMAN
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Five aspects of Jewish thought and life illustrate with striking clarity the need of reinterpreting and recomposing what has been flown so far from the past to the present in the sphere of the Jewish woman. In Jewish tradition, the woman is unconditionally equal in kinship to the man. If the Jewish woman is to contribute her share to the expansion of Jewish life, and if its true Jewish life is to bring out the powers and goals that are in her, the same must be changed. The real action in Jewish law and practice is a position of subjection, a lack of equality with the man in all domains of action. Women's freedom and initiative are curtailed through this one-sided paternalism and paternalism. Whenever the Jewish tradition has sought to elevate her to a higher and more meaningful person, the Jewish woman has been denied the equality due her as a right to which she is fully entitled. The right is exercised not in other civilizations where she is treated as a full-fledged person. There is a consensus that the Jewish tradition should permit her to be in this day and age as though she were a mother, a teacher, or a scholar.

In the Jewish religion, the woman's subordination is not only a matter of custom or tradition, but a real and total subjugation. The modern woman has a right to a full and equal place in the sphere of life. The first step in her progress toward equality is to keep her eye opened to the truth concerning her position in Jewish life and seeking of the past. She must be made aware that this step, as distinct from Jewish tradition, is not only incompatible with but a threat to the basic principles of the Jewish concept of a spiritual person. Too much of what has been said and written about the Jewish woman is not a basis for action or an equal, and yet her mind is not instead of meaning her to an awareness of the standards which are imposed upon her by traditional law. Many of these analyses have been delivered and essays.