

the Jewish Religion shall be disabled, and is hereby made incapable to purchase, either in his or her own name, or in the Name of any other Person or Persons, to his or her Use, or in Trust for him or her, or to inherit or take by Descent, Devise, or Limitation, in Possession, Reversion, or Remainder, any advowson or Right of Patronage, or Presentation, or other Right or interest whatsoever of, in, or to any Benefice, Prebend,⁴ or other Ecclesiastical Living or Promotion, School, Hospital, or Donative whatsoever, or any Grant of any Avoidance thereof; and all and

singular Estates, Terms, and other Interests whatsoever of, in, or any Benefice, Prebend, or other Ecclesiastical Living or Promotion, School, Hospital, or Donative, which, from and after the said First Day of June, shall be made, suffered or done, to or for the Use or Behoof of any such Person or Persons, or upon any Trust or Confidence, mediate or immediately, to or for the benefit or Behoof of any such Person or Persons, shall be utterly void and of none Effect, to all Intents, Construction, and Purposes whatsoever.

NOTES

1. Enacted by Parliament in May 1753, this act, in face of the energetic opposition by Christian merchants of London, was repealed a year later.

2. The reference is to the Plantation Act. See document 5 in this chapter.

3. This paragraph was intended to allay fears

that the granting to Jews of civil rights would obscure the social boundaries separating Jew and Christian.

4. Part of revenue of a cathedral or collegiate church granted to canons as a stipend.

CHRISTIAN WILHELM VON DOHM

8. Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews (1781)¹

What might be the reasons that induced the governments of almost all European states unanimously to deal so harshly with the Jewish nation? What has induced them (even the wisest) to make this one exception from the laws of an otherwise enlightened policy according to which all citizens should be incited by uniform justice, support of trade and the greatest possible freedom of action so as to contribute to the general welfare? Should a number of industrious and law-abiding citizens be less useful to the

state because they stem from Asia and differ from others by beard, circumcision, and a special way—transmitted to them from their ancient forefathers—of worshiping the Supreme Being? This latter would certainly disqualify them from full rights of citizenship, and justify all restrictive measures, if it contained principles which would keep the Jews from fulfilling their duties to the state, and from keeping faith in their actions within the community and with single members of the community; and if hatred against those who

Source: Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin, 1781); a sequel appeared in 1783. In *Readings in Modern Jewish History*, ed. Ellis Rivkin and trans. Helen Lederer (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1957), pp. 5-7, 9-22, 50-81. Reprinted by permission of Dr. Ellis Rivkin.