

VIEW FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

BLINDNESS BEGINNING TO TURN FROM ISRAEL.

AREMARKABLE lecture was recently delivered before the "Council of Jewish Women" at Philadelphia by Rabbi K. Kohler – on "The New Testament in the Light of Judaism." It illustrates the new attitude of Jewish thought toward Christianity, and indicates the first stage of fleshly Israel's recovery from the gross blindness of the past eighteen centuries. – Rom. 9:31-33; 11:7,10-12,20,25-29.

The following extracts were the Doctor's most favorable references to Jesus and Christianity, and might be misleading, did we not explain that, while making these remarkable admissions and concessions to Christianity, he attempted to offset them and neutralize their effect by claiming that our Lord's most forceful teachings were merely a fresh presentation of the sentiments and sometimes the very phraseology of the Jewish teachers who preceded him. His criticisms of the Epistles of Peter, James and John are in similar strain. These, he claims, were all Jews and merely restated or rehashed Jewish doctrines and precepts. All the seriously anti-Jewish and anti-Law teachings are charged to the Apostle Paul.

The Doctor fails to see the *point*. Biblical Christianity makes no claim of being in antagonism to ancient Judaism. Quite to the contrary, it claims that "holy men of old [Jews] spoke and wrote as they were moved by the holy spirit." It claims, however, that the real *force* and the true *meaning* of those inspired words were not appreciated, nor intended of God to be understood until, the antitypical sin-offering having been presented by "the Lamb of God," the holy spirit was granted to all consecrated believers. For instance, we heartily assent that the Golden Rule in "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" – was delivered to Israel as a part of the Law sixteen centuries before our Lord repeated it (Lev. 19:18); and our

Lord quoted it, not as an original saying of his own, but as a teaching of the Law. (Matt. 19:19.) What we claim is that those words were never *understood*, never comprehended, until our Lord Jesus, the great Teacher sent of God and illuminated with the holy spirit, expounded them by his example and teachings. More than this, we claim that the Jews and the majority of professed Christians do not understand these words now; – that only such as have consecrated themselves to the Lord and have received the holy spirit are able to "*comprehend* the lengths and breadths and heights and depths" of this and other "deep things" of God's teaching. If any man will *do* my Father's will, *he shall understand the teaching*. – John 7:17; 1 Cor. 2:7-12.

Respecting the writings of the Apostle Paul, not only the Jews, but all others, in proportion as they come into close accord with both the letter and the spirit of the divine Word, will find in them the keys of the mystery of God – supplied to the Church by the Lord that they may be "all taught of God" – "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work;" – revealings of "the whole counsel of God;" capable of *elaboration* under the spirit's guidance, but quite "sufficient" for such elaboration. – John 6:45; 2 Tim. 3:17; Acts 20:27.

The extracts referred to follow: –

"There was a time when you and I were taught not even to mention the name of Jesus the Christ in order not to transgress the Law, which says: 'Ye shall not mention the name of other gods, neither shall it be heard upon your mouth.' Nor need we wonder at that. It was little short of idolatry which a paganized church made herself guilty of in her worship of Jesus and his mother. Christianity has advanced since toward the light of Jewish monotheism. It is Jesus as a Man, as **[R2419 : page 20]** an ideal of humanity, that is now held up for adoration and emulation by Christian theology, in spite of the Trinitarian dogma. Both art and literature portray him no longer as a

God, but as a wondrously gifted teacher and healer of men, who appeals to our human sympathy. Nay, more. His Apollo face gave way to the historically more correct type of the Jews. He is recognized as one of Israel's great sons, whatever the restriction in the flesh may amount to. Should we then, as Jews, not also gladly and proudly own him as one of our noblest of men and accord to him the proper position in our own history?...Ought we, notwithstanding all difficulties, not learn to appreciate the exquisite sayings and teachings contained in the New Testament, if only from a literary and humanitarian point of view?

"There is but one answer: Find the right focus, and the colors and shades of the object in view will lead you in the direction of the one light. We need no clear sky to see the sun rise on the Eastern horizon. The clouds reveal rather than hide the dawn of light. So do the myths or legends that gather round a popular hero disclose rather than obscure the existence of a personality impressing the people with its charm and power. It must not needs be exact historical truth what we are told concerning Jesus. Those beautiful and strange tales about the things that happened around the Lake of Galilee show that there was some spiritual daybreak in that dark corner of Judea of which official Judaism had not taken sufficient cognizance, that a movement was inaugurated then which did not receive its impulse or its sanction from the regular authorities or schools. It matters not whether we accord to Jesus the claim and title of Messiah or Christ or not, whether the people and authorities of Judea did or not, or whether he himself assumed it at any moment of his life....

"It is one of the most interesting historical and psychological studies of Judaism to follow this movement through all its phases from the moment the cry of the coming – "the Kingdom of Heaven" – was heard on the shore of the Jordan among the humble Baptists until the fishermen of Galilee carried the good tidings or good spell (gospel) as the watchword of a new faith triumphantly out into the wide world. All the written and unwritten records point in unison to

John the Baptist as the starter of the movement, the prophet-like preacher of righteousness whom, according to Josephus (Ant. xviii, 52), Herod the Tetrarch feared for the mighty power he wielded upon the multitudes following him to the Jordan to purify themselves of their sins. Of course Josephus, writing for the Romans, took heed not to allude to that Messianic message of his – the cry: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near;" that is to say, the kingdom of Rome, the satanic power of Edom, has reached its end. All New Testament reports agree that Jesus was among those [R2420 : page 20] who received the consecration of baptism from that popular saint of the time. Still, between the simple Messianic hope and promise of John the Baptist, with his fasts and ablutions and prayers and the bewildering faith of the Christians that the Messiah has appeared, and, tho crucified, has risen from the tomb, now to sit at the right hand of God as his son – there yawns a wide chasm which no ordinary reasoning of either Jew or Gentile could easily bridge over....

"Beneath the thick crust of the second century hatred which endeavored to malign the Jew in order to court the favor of Roman rulers, we can still read the true story of Jesus' tragic end from his own lips as he, on the road to Jerusalem, announces his fate to his disciples, saying that "He shall be delivered to the high priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and deliver him to the heathen to mock and to scourge and to crucify." (Mark 10:33; Matt. 20:18; Luke 18:32.) The priestly Sadducees and not the people and their Pharisean leaders were interested in having Jesus brought to trial for his open attack on the priestly misrule, and from fear lest the Romans might hold them responsible, as Caiaphas, the high priest, actually says in the older record in John's gospel.

"All the anti-Jewish utterances are the work of the Pauline school....Every word uttered by Jesus was the ring of Jewish sentiment and betrays the originality of a religious genius....

"We cannot close our eyes to the one great fact that this man Jesus must have made a wonderful impression upon his hearers by the thousand and one sweet and beautiful things he said, no matter by whom they were uttered before or after, or else he could not have been made the author of all these a generation or two after he lived....

"Suffice it to say that his greatness consisted in belonging to no school. He was a man of the people. ...'Christianity,' says Leroy Beaulieu, 'produced saints; Judaism, sages.' I say: Christianity gave us Sisters of Mercy; Judaism, noble types of wives and mothers."

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That Doctor Kohler is not merely giving expression to views of his own far in advance of the general trend of Jewish thought, is evidenced by the following comments on his lecture by the editor of *The Jewish Exponent*: –

"Dr. Berkowitz, in discussing the lecture, said that it could not have been delivered in other times, because the lecturer's life would have been imperiled thereby. There was another reason why this was true; which is, that there would have been no one to listen to it. Christians, of course, would have objected, and to the Jews the New Testament was forbidden fruit. Our ancestors regarded the reading of the New Testament books as next door to apostasy itself. That Jewish mothers should wish to be acquainted with its contents would have been unheard-of perversity.

"All this has largely changed. The Jews have gone out into the world; they meet Christians on equal terms. The dread of the Christian religion has disappeared with the effort to forcibly convert Jews. They have gone out into the full tide of Christianity, and behold, they have not been swept away. On the contrary the love of their own faith has grown. It is an evidence of strength that leads the Jew to wish to ascertain the true character of that literature so intimately connected with his own and yet so widely different; so world-embracing in its

influence; so potent in its effects upon his neighbors, so freighted with consequences for himself. When before would rabbis have been found who would have invited their people, and [R2420 : page 21] especially the women, under any circumstances or conditions, to read the New Testament? Yet here it was done. It need hardly be said, however, that such reading must be conducted with care, and, if possible, under conditions which, if not favorable to Judaism, will be at least not hostile thereto....

"But, however the Bible is read, with whatever preconceptions, it is extremely difficult to escape the pervasive influence of its purity, its strength, its exaltation both of Deity and humanity, its powerful plea for righteousness. Its influence in the Christian world is incalculable; not so much in making Jews of Christians, as in refining and purifying Christianity of its dross and bringing it nearer to the pure stock whence it sprung. In every reformation of Christianity the testament of Israel has been the starting point and the great foundation for the religious enfranchisement. The trend of enlightened Christianity of to-day is towards a return to Israel's simple and pure religious conceptions. Not a little of the antagonism felt towards the Jews and their scriptures is due to the fears of Christian reactionaries, who would crush every attempt to elevate and purify the church under the opprobrious epithet, 'It's Jewish.'

"What, then, would be the effect of the study of the Christian Testament in the light of the Jewish scriptures as indicated by Dr. K. Kohler? Certainly it will have an important influence. It will not only disclose beauties of its own, but also open Jewish eyes to treasures in their own scriptures, to which, with the indifference of inherited spiritual wealth, they have been hitherto oblivious."

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This means the opening of the New Testament to the Jews – not willingly upon the part of the Rabbis, but by force of circumstances, the growth of intelligence and the fact that the best people of the world

have drawn their inspirations from it. It was this same force of circumstances that *compelled* the Roman Catholic Council of Baltimore some years ago to grant Roman Catholics *residing in the United States* liberty to own and to read the Bible.

Surely this removal of the Jewish ban from the New Testament will mean the reading of it by the purest and best of that long blinded people. And the reading of the New Testament will mean the gradual turning away of their blindness. So far as our observation goes, nearly all the Jews who have ever gotten their eyes opened to see Christ as Messiah have been converted by reading the New Testament and not by tracts or other treatises – altho other writings are as necessary to them as to others as helps in understanding the divine plan of the ages, after they have accepted Jesus as Messiah.

Is not this the beginning of the fulfilment of our Lord's words, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him [Compare John 5:45-47]: the word that I have spoken [directly and through the apostles] the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.) Are we not entering the Millennial period – "the last day?" – and are not the blinded ones getting ready for the eye-salve? They are still proud, and their words are still stout against Jesus as the Messiah – it is merely their race-pride perhaps which now leads them to acknowledge the great Teacher's greatness, because he was a Jew. But in the great time of trouble near at hand, which will include "Jacob's trouble" as well as "Babylon's" fall, the honest and humble ones will *look* unto him with the eye of faith and shall *see* him thus, and then will be fulfilled Zechariah 12:10.

ZIONISM MAKING PROGRESS.

Zionist Jews – those Jews who are identified with the recent movement for a resettlement of Palestine by the Jews – report that the cause so near their hearts is not languishing. Their leader, Doctor Herzl, has recently had interviews with the Sultan and the Pope, and with four prominent compatriots was present at Jerusalem at the time

Emperor William visited that city and were kindly received by him. Dr. Herzl is reticent respecting the amount of encouragement given by these potentates; but as one result of his visit to the Sultan he bears a badge of the *Order of Mejidie*, which would seem to imply that the man and his plea were not disdained. That the door of Palestine will open to the Jew, and that shortly, we have no question; altho it has been effectually closed for now nearly seven years – no Jew being permitted to enter it except as a *visitor* whose period of stay is expressly defined and limited.

Respecting Doctor Herzl's efforts, etc., Rabbi S. Wise, Hon. Secy. Amer. Fed. Zionists, writes: –

"The exact tenor of the Kaiser's courteous reply, spoken in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Von Bulow, has not been disclosed. Enough is known, however, to enable us to predicate that the Kaiser is prepared to vouchsafe his benevolent sanction to the Zionist movement, calculated as it is to foster the agricultural life of Palestine under the acknowledged sovereignty of the Sultan. The members of the deputation have since returned to Vienna and have practically made this declaration, altho they have couched their interviews, which appeared in the official organ of the movement, in terms of becoming reserve....

"We do not ask that the holy places be committed to our exclusive keeping; let these remain, as they are now, in the hands of those who guard and cherish them. Surely the Christian world requires no assurance on our part that every spot which Christians hold in reverence will be precious to us. The Jew shall not cease to honor true devotion to an ideal – least of all in the land which his past has hallowed for all time.

"Not in vain do we place our reliance upon Kaiser and Sultan. Help and deliverance have come to us before through the grace of 'stranger kings.' Two [R2420 : page 22] historic instances recur to us of Israel marvelously saved and prospered with the help of reigning

kings. In the year 538 of the pre-Christian era Cyrus took Babylon and graciously permitted the Babylonian exiles to return to their fatherland.

"The momentous results which followed from the reestablishment of the Judean Commonwealth are part of – and the largest part of – the world's history. A tree of two great branches flourished in time on the soil which the former captives by the rivers of Babylon began to cultivate with all the ardor and assiduity of their nature – two branches, the one the religion of Ezra and the latest prophets, of Hillel and the rabbis, the other, the faith of Jesus, later become the Christianity of his countless followers. And all this came to pass, as Dr. Max Nordau has aptly pointed out, owing to the hardihood of a handful of the earliest Zionists, who, availing themselves of the rights accorded them by Cyrus, the noble, chose to give up their peaceful and secure residence in Babylon in order to live and labor in Zion and rebuild its waste places. The second exile is soon to end. In the words of Josephine Lazarus, 'once planted again upon native soil, "taking root downward," as Isaiah has it, who can tell what "upward flower and fruit" the immortal branch may bear – what new birth of the spirit, the undying spirit of Israel may give to the world?'

"Another King there was, greater even than Cyrus, who, like him, befriended the Jews. In the course of his victorious marches Alexander visited Jerusalem in the year 332. Legends in great number have been woven around this visit, picturing the manner in which this youthful Prince, who had come to scoff, remained to pray. Whether it be true, as rabbinic tale has it, that Alexander was so deeply impressed by the visage of the venerable High Priest Jaddua and the priestly train that he was moved to bow in humility and adoration before these whom he had set out to conquer, and that he even caused sacrifices to be offered up to the Most High in the Temple of Jerusalem, we cannot tell. We do know, however, that this Macedonian ruler, far from despoiling and violating the shrine, as had been and continued to be

the custom of earlier and later invading princes, openly befriended the Jews and treated them with the utmost consideration and generosity."
