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## **VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER. A ZIONIST LEADER'S VIEW OF JESUS.**

DR. MAX NORDAU, a widely known Hebrew leader, not long since in reply to a question concerning his view of Jesus, wrote the following: –

"The picture of Jesus as we have it given by the synoptic gospels is a vague outline and is a typical and ideal Jewish character. He observed the law; he taught the morality of Hillel – love thy neighbor as thyself – he constantly occupied himself with matters of eternity; he felt himself in spiritual communion with God; he despised that which was mortal in his being and all the accidental things of this life on earth. All these are characteristic peculiarities of the best Jews of the time of the Roman supremacy, especially of the Essenes. And as to his origin and ethical physiognomy, there, too, the language of Jesus was throughout Jewish. For all of his parables, parallels can be found in greater or less abundance in the Talmud. His prayer, the most beautiful that a believer ever formulated, is the quintessence of Jewish ideas concerning the relations between man and his Creator. The Sermon on the Mount is the substance of rabbinical ethics; its figures and comparisons are common among the rabbis.

"Jesus is soul of our soul, as he is flesh of our flesh, and who, then, could think of excluding him from the people of Israel? St. Peter will continue to be the only Jew who will say of this descendant of David: I know not the man! If the Jews have not to the present time paid that tribute of public honor to the exalted moral beauty of the character of Jesus, the ground for this is to be sought in the fact that those who tormented them did so in his name. The Jews concluded what the Master was from the doings of the disciples. This was a wrong, but it was pardonable on the part [R2631 : page 147] of those who were eternally the objects of the never-ending hatred of so-called

Christians. But every time that a Jew went back to the original sources concerning Jesus and learned to study Christ without regard to his followers, he was compelled to exclaim in amazement: Without accepting his Messianic claims, this man is of us! He honors our race and we claim him as our own, as we also claim the synoptic gospels as examples of genuine Jewish literature.

"And the revision of this trial? This had been done long since. The most learned specialists in the department of Jewish legal procedure have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the trial of Jesus, as tradition reports it, could never have taken place before a Jewish court of law. If Jesus was condemned to death, it was done by the Roman judge, and no Jew, faithful to his law, had the least thing to do with it.

"Jesus would never have been condemned to death on the cross before a Jewish court, as this method of punishing criminals was not allowed by the Jewish law; and it never could have taken place on a Friday, the evening before the Passover, as the law stringently forbade any execution on that day. If the Jews had condemned Jesus after the manner reported by tradition, then they would have committed a series of crimes, each of which would have been severely punished by the Jewish law. It is accordingly certain that the whole story of the trial of Jesus can be nothing but an act of vengeance intended to punish the Jews for not having recognized the divine mission of Christ."

This is interesting as showing the change that has come over the people who cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" The Doctor's expression is falling into line with the Prophet's declaration of what must soon be the attitude of the Jews as a people, viz., "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for an exceptional son."

Undoubtedly the best reading matter for the Jew is the New Testament, whose simple Gospel narrative and whose masterful Pauline arguments refer him freely to the Old Testament and show

prophecy and fulfilment, type and antitype. However, we are not to expect Israel's blindness to fully depart before the divinely [R2631 : page 148] appointed time; – when the elect Gospel Church shall have been completed and glorified. Nor are we then to expect their blessing and enlightenment except through the great trouble in which they will share with all others, and out of which they shall be saved and blest by the glorified spiritual Israel. – Rom. 11:25-27,31.

### **METHODISM MORE DEMOCRATIC.**

The basis of the Methodist Episcopal Church is hierarchical, exclusive, all power and authority being vested in the hands of the "clergy." But for some years public sentiment has been growing in favor of a more democratic arrangement, culminating in a demand that the "laity" be granted equal representation and voice with the ministers and bishops in the regulation of the M.E. Church's affairs.

The ministers were loth to part with any measure of their "authority" and power, but finding the "laity" persistent they have with as good grace as possible finally yielded the point, as the following dispatch from the General Conference at Chicago shows: –

"CHICAGO, May 2. – The pulpit and the pew will hereafter share equally in the highest governmental body of the Methodist Episcopal church. Without a dissenting vote the General Conference, which opened at the Auditorium to-day, ratified the action of the annual conferences in extending equal representation to the laity. The 157 provisional delegates were admitted without a contest.

"The step taken makes the Methodist church a democratic body, and the rule of the preacher passes with the century. As the roll was made up to-day there are 356 preachers and 236 laymen on the regular list. At least 50 reserve laymen will close some of the breaches in the delegations."

Radical as this step is, it has little meaning and will have little effect in the affairs of Methodism, and it is because the preachers realize this that they yield the point without special contest. They well know that the *name* and *form* of liberty and power are all that their "laity" care for or know how to appreciate. So long as the preachers can keep "their people" in ignorance on the subject of hell, etc., they can manipulate them just as well in conference as elsewhere.

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A memorial has been drafted for presentation to this General M.E. Conference requesting that the strictures of the Methodist Discipline against dancing, theater-going, etc., be expunged.

The Methodist "tares" know that they have just as much right to such things as the Presbyterian "tares" and the Baptist "tares;" and though they have been enjoying the interdicted amusements for years and intend to continue so to do whether the conference cancels the prohibition or not, yet somehow they would feel just a little more free if the words were not there. Not that their consciences are very tender on the subject, but that it gives some of the "wheat" class an opportunity to upbraid them and seems a curtailment of their "tare" privileges and pleasures.

And why should not the General Conference grant the request and expunge the article so obnoxious to the "tare" element? The Methodist "wheat" need no such restrictions even as the Presbyterian and Baptist and other "wheat" need them not. After all, the "tares" are not "the children of the Kingdom" and why should such restrictions give some of them more of a deceptive appearance of being "wheat"? Let them do what they will – the wider the difference between "wheat" and "tares" the better, and the more speedy the separation, now that the harvest time of separation has come.

***PRESBYTERIANISM STANDS "BEFORE GOD AND MAN WITH A LIE IN ITS RIGHT HAND"***

## SAYS ONE OF ITS ORDAINED MINISTERS.

"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," saith the Lord. And they gnawed their tongues [chewed their words] in pain, but continued to blaspheme [slander, misrepresent] the God of heaven.

The commotion amongst Presbyterians continues – some standing firm for their church creed, others repudiating it and begging to be released from it, but not noble-minded enough to step out into liberty in Christ (as they might so readily do) because of the cost of that liberty in name, salary, etc. Many thus indirectly confess that they despise the chain wherewith they are bound, and have despised it for years, and have realized it to be a lie and a blasphemy against God, and after confessing to this acting and confessing a lie for years they beg to be released without cost or loss either of human or divine favor, and especially without loss of bread and butter.

Note the expression of Rev. Samuel T. Carter in a Presbyterian journal – *The Evangelist*. He says: –

"It must be admitted that if a church is honest, that which stands in its Confession is its faith. It must be acknowledged that what is contained in its Confession is the faith of any honest church. The Westminster Confession of Faith is still the unquestioned Confession of the Presbyterian Church. Is the Presbyterian Church honest in its zeal for purity first and peace afterward?..."

"Be it known, then, to all the world that the Presbyterian Church by its Confession declares that all the heathen perish, that many men are hopelessly lost from all eternity by the decree of God, and that there are infants in hell....In reality the church does not believe these dreadful doctrines. Then it [R2631 : page 149] stands before God and man with a lie in its right hand."

*The Independent*, a high-class religious journal of Westminster proclivities, makes some very sensible remarks on the situation as follows: –

"The time for removal of error is always; and now revision of some sort begins to be exigent. The Presbyterian Church is suffering for it. The arguments for it are those of truth and charity; the argument against it is that it will delay union with the Southern Presbyterian Church, which is not yet ready for revision. But we doubt very much if revision is the best course to be pursued. Let the old Confession remain as a historical document. It expressed the views of the Westminster Assembly. It answered its purpose then. It was a noble but faulty document. It gave forth all the light its makers had. Put it where it belongs, as an expression, not of what we must believe, but of what its makers believed. They did grandly to express their own faith, but they had no right to enslave our faith, any more than God has a right to enslave our will. There is no nobler intellectual work that a man can do than to formulate what he believes about God. Theology is the noblest of the sciences – a man of intelligence ought never to tire of making creeds for himself. He ought to revise his creed every year. A man's conduct, and so his religion, depends on what he believes about the relation between God and man. More evidence, more discovery, more study, more enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, will change his belief, his creed, and so affect his religious duty. We would leave the formulation of a creed to each man's own conscientious study."

We are surprised and gratified to have so able a journal as *The Independent* come forward thus boldly in advocacy of a view we have been seeking to promulgate [R2632 : page 149] for years; namely, that each individual Christian should have *his own* creed, his own faith or belief respecting the things which God has revealed to his people by his spirit through his Word; – and that each Christian should keep adding to his knowledge and his faith daily from the inspired record, the Bible, using all the helps obtainable to this end. This is the thought

of the Apostle when he speaks of *growth* in grace and knowledge and approach to the stature of manhood in Christ. He suggests that the beginner in the Christian way is but a "babe" who needs "the sincere milk of the Word that he may grow thereby," and that when further advanced he will need the "strong meat" of truth which is for the more matured.

With such an arrangement there is no room for the methods in vogue among Christians of all denominations which just now is causing Presbyterianism so much trouble – namely, the fixing by the Doctors of Divinity of each denomination of a creed (claimed to contain all the "milk" as well as all the "strong meat" of God's Word) which each "babe" as it is received is required to swallow, and which it is instructed will supply all the spiritual nutriment proper for it to receive to the end of life. Such doses or pills are administered by every sect – some sugar-coated to conceal the real contents from the "babe," and some like the Presbyterian creed, plain, honest and terribly bitter.

A gentleman in Allegheny related to us his conversation with a Presbyterian pastor before his withdrawal from that church. The gentleman said, "Pastor, I find many things in our Confession of Faith which upon now more mature consideration I cannot endorse nor continue to be identified with, unless you can help me to reason them out." The pastor replied, "My dear brother, you are getting at this matter from the wrong stand-point; our Confession must be swallowed whole or not at all. It is like a Brandreth pill; if you attempt to chew it [reason it out] you can never swallow it."

How strange that the simple and rational way of feeding "milk" and then "meat," which affords both pleasure and nourishment, should have been discarded for the wickedly injurious practice of imposing upon the "babes" doctrinal pills which not only afford no nourishment but which hinder all growth, and as a result has filled Churchianity with "babes" who as respects spiritual things have never had their senses exercised to discern the true from the false and are utterly

unable to follow the Apostle's counsel to "rightly divide the word of truth" and to "try the spirits" (doctrines) whether they be of God or are human fabrications.

### **A SIMPLE CONFESSION NECESSARY.**

However, a simple public confession is necessary to demonstrate who are "babes" in Christ – to distinguish such from "children of this world." But this confession should be very simple – so that the merest "babe" in Christ could comprehend and fully endorse it as his own. **(1)** It should declare faith in Christ as a personal Savior: that he was sent of the Father and gave his life a *ransom* for all mankind. **(2)** A personal acceptance of him as a personal Savior and a determination to forsake sin. **(3)** A full consecration to be a follower of Jesus in every respect and to lay down life itself in his service. Whoever could not confess these should not be esteemed a "babe" in Christ at all – nor be fed as such, nor expected to grow up into Christ in all things.

May we expect the Church nominal to follow this program – or that the voice of the *Independent* will be more potent than our own in bringing to pass such conditions? By no means. Churchianity contains too many "tares" and not enough "wheat" for such suggestions to be impressive. She will soon go down in the great time of trouble; and not until the Kingdom [R2632 : page 150] has been set up need we expect a better general arrangement. Then it will apply not to the elect Church, which will then be completed and glorified, but to the Restitution class, then being developed. – Acts 3:19-21.

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