

JESUS FROM A JEW'S STANDPOINT.

We take the following report of Mr. Henry Weinstock's lecture from the "Oakland Enquirer" of August 7th, 1899.

Henry Weinstock, of the firm of Weinstock & Lubin, of San Francisco and Sacramento, yesterday afternoon delivered before perhaps the largest audience that ever gathered in the assembly room of the Y. M. C. A. building, his new celebrated lecture upon "Jesus the Jew."

Mr. Weinstock's address was characterized by breadth of view and catholicity of spirit. He spoke with the ease and grace of one used to public utterance, and held the large audience in rapt attention for nearly three-quarters of an hour.

A RETROSPECT.

Looking back into my early boyhood days, the picture is vividly brought to my mind of the old rabbi under whose instruction I received my religious training.

Though thirty odd years have since passed, I distinctly recall him as he sat at the head of the table, surrounded by Jewish lads between the ages of 7 and 13, his long, flowing locks and white beard giving him the appearance of one of the Biblical patriarchs.

I recall how innocent he was of all worldly knowledge, with what contempt he looked upon secular instruction, and how to him the sum of all human wisdom was confined to the Torah and the Talmud.

The Talmud explains the saying in Joshua: "The words of this Torah shall not cease from thy mouth, and thou shalt meditate thereon day and night," and to my old and pious religious teacher, this injunction left no room for the study of anything but Jewish lore.

THE PASSING OF A PREJUDICE.

I recall, upon one occasion how one of the pupils, in some way, brought into the religious school a book containing the name of Jesus. I remember, when this was made known by some other lad who had noticed it, with what indignation the rabbi spoke, and how he regarded the act as most sacrilegious and deserving of the severest censure.

I found that these were all and their teeth drawn from their jaws; their bodies cast into foul dungeons—how, time and again, they had been put on the rack, subjected to the thumb-screw and burned at the stake, all, all, on account of Jesus.

I remember how aroused and impassioned he became while recounting the frightful sufferings and calamities which had been visited upon the Jews, for all of which, in his opinion, Jesus was primarily responsible.

"How, then," he concluded, "can any self-respecting, loyal Jew take into his hand even a book containing the name of Jesus? How can the name of Jesus be thought of without connecting it in the mind of the Jew with the centuries of inhuman outrage and persecution visited upon him by the followers of Jesus?"

JESUS THE JEW.

For many years these utterances and teachings clung to my mind, and doubtless had their influence in warping my thoughts and coloring my opinions.

I found that the thought of establishing a new belief, or even a new sect, was farthest from his mind; that his aim was not to follow after the heathens, but to seek out the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

I found that his mission seemed to be to uplift the lowly and to expose wickedness in high places. I found that he gave his heart, his soul, and his very being to the poor, to the sick and to the needy.

I found that he was a man of unbounded sympathies and of great moral courage; that he was simply striving to practice and to preach the great moral code established by Moses and the prophets, and to literally put into practice in his daily life the great law-giver's precept of "love thy neighbor as thyself."

I found his teachings consisted chiefly in preaching: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake."

I found that these were all Jewish teachings, reduced to a clear and simple form, which the most orthodox and pious Jew could not but accept as a part of the law.

Why, then, was it that, as the outcome of such ethical Jewish utterances, the Jews should have been so mistreated by the followers of Jesus, and Jesus so much contemned by the Jews? Then followed, on my part, a study of Christianity and the causes which led to Jewish persecutions.

I found it was Paul's heroic qualities which enabled him, despite the severest persecution by Jew and Gentile, to surround himself with a large following, not of Jews alone, but of heathens as well, who became believers in the Jewish God and worshipers of the Jewish carpenter Jesus, whom they accepted as the Son of God sent upon earth to save the human family.

History tells how the followers of Paul were known as Jewish Christians, and how the Jews among them continued to observe all the Jewish forms and ceremonies, and to lead Jewish lives, while the heathen converts were not called upon to practice the Jewish forms or to observe the Jewish rites or dietary laws.

It is true that according to the Gospel of St. Mark Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And in the Gospel of St. Matthew we also find a similar utterance, wherein Jesus, in speaking to his disciples, says "Go ye therefore and teach all nations."

CHRIST CAME TO FULFILL THE LAW.

But it is also true that in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

"For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

"Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven," and later, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, he says:

"I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

"Go not unto the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."

To the reader of the Gospel these contradictions may be difficult to understand. It may not seem clear how the statement of Jesus, that his disciples shall go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, can be reconciled with his opposite statement, wherein he says: "Go not unto the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."

If the disciples were to follow

the one injunction they must certainly violate the other.

When it is remembered, however, that eminent and devout Christian scholars have made it plain that neither Jesus nor his disciples, excepting, perhaps Luke, ever wrote any part of the Gospels themselves, and that the Gospels as we now find them, were not edited until about 150 years after the time of Jesus, and that, meanwhile they were handed down orally from generation to generation, we can readily see how, in these oral transmissions, contradictions could easily creep in.

Their conduct after his death would make plain that he had filled them with the thought that they were to devote themselves to the lost sheep of Israel and not to the Gentiles. They faithfully worshipped in the synagogue and observed all the Mosaic laws and ceremonies in accordance with the injunctions of their master, and made no effort to convert the heathen.

In accordance with the exhortations of the master, James, the brother of Jesus, and the other disciples, were so insistent on the rigid observance of the Mosaic law, that Peter, one of their number, who had permitted himself to dine with the Roman centurion Cornelius, was severely taken to task for eating forbidden fruit, thus violating the Mosaic dietary laws.

THE PREACHING OF PAUL.

Despite the fact that Jesus observed all the Jewish forms and ceremonies, and despite the faithful observance on the part of his disciples of the command not to go into the way of the Gentiles, Paul,—who had never seen Jesus, and who did not become a convert until three years after his death,—in his enthusiasm to proselyte and to spread the belief in the Jewish God and the Jewish teachings, did not hesitate to assume the right to abrogate and to modify many of the Jewish forms, rights and ceremonies.

Judaism never went out to proselyte among strangers. Its followers had so much faith in the truth which it taught, that they patiently waited for strangers, through their own convictions, to come of their own accord and knock for admission

at the doors of Judaism. Not so with Paul. His idea was to unite the whole human race under one belief. He soon realized, however, how hopeless the task, should he insist upon the observance, on the part of the heathen, of the severe and rigid ceremonialism of the Jews. To Paul, the spirit was all in all, the form nothing. Not that Paul loved the letter of the law less, but that he loved the spirit of his religion more.

Paul was willing to let form go, to let circumcision go, to let ceremony go, to let everything go that he looked upon as non-essential, if he could but implant into the Gentile heart the worship of an all-wise, an all-knowing, unseeable God who is Father

of the human, thus lift the heathen slough of moral degradation, and fill their hearts with the thought that, they might be slaves in the flesh, each had a soul beyond the reach of earthly kings, a soul given by God, before whom the meanest among men stands the equal of prince or potentate. It was the love for the spiritual welfare of humanity that gave Paul the courage to defy the authorities at Jerusalem, the disciples of his master, to defy even James, the brother of Jesus, and to go out into the heathen world at the risk of life and limb and invite the hatred and persecution of those high in authority, in order to preach what he believed to be the truth.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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