

Zionism, Anti-Semitism, Etc.

IS Don Quixote dead? Evidently not, for one sees ever and anon knights of a sorry countenance undertaking the repetition of the famous fight against windmills, formidable enemies of their own imagination. I cannot help saying it, since the polemics against Zionism strike me in this fashion. On the one side there are men to whom Judaism is a mere pretence, whose ceremonies and traditions they have discarded long ago, and who suddenly feel called upon to defend against Zionism that which they have hitherto condemned and spurned. Others develop a new ethno-psychology of their own and evolve new principles of nationalism, patriotism and tutti-frutti of a novel pattern to which no one else could subscribe for a minute; but every stick is good enough to beat a dog with. Happily Zionism is not a dog. It may turn out to be the old lion of Judah, lying so long asleep that people trod upon him with impunity. How many asses thought it wise to kick the dead lion, I leave the reader to count, if he has patience enough for such mathematical problems.

But to return to our Don Quixotes. There are others who also find new views in the old Bible, and show an unwonted and startling love for verses of the Prophets torn from their context and interpreted in a manner of which they would be ashamed to apply to any modern writer, who could then safely institute proceedings of defamation and libel against them. A belief is suddenly engendered in biblical statements, not one of which would be allowed to interfere with the predilections and even frivolous pastimes of those who now so loudly proclaim the supposed or fancied contradiction between this sentence of the Prophet and the aims of Zionism. The old spirit of the Ghetto is more responsible for much that is being said and written against Zionism than any will own, but it is none the less true. At the bottom of the opposition lies the fear of being misinterpreted by our neighbors, the fear of jeopardizing a liberty that exists practically only in name for the majority of the Jews throughout the world, the fear of endangering the position which the modern "Schutzjuden" enjoy. This has to answer for much of the bitterness of the polemics between Zionists and anti-Zionists.

And is not the desire of sharpening one's wits at one's neighbor's expense and of maintaining just the contrary of what the other thinks and believes, part and parcel of the Ghetto spirit and of the Pilpul, which trains the mind to find out and to invent contradictions, even when there is none in existence? But in one point does the anti-Zionist differ from the state of the mind of the old Student (Bachur) of the tradition, in as much as there is no longer the desire to harmonize, to show unity in diversity. On the contrary, he dwells complacently or bitterly on the supposed differences, all, mind, the result of his own imagination. Windmills, and nothing else!

I have been asked to write something on Zionism for the new review devoted to the propagation of this principle, and I find that in spite of all that has been written from our side hitherto, in spite of what has been explained *viva voce* by Zionists, we are in the same position, for the Jews in general are face to face with anti-Semitism. Whatever the Jews write remains for home consumption; their antagonists do not even take the trouble to read and thus to be converted, or at any rate to be shaken in their prejudice and to be weakened in their animosity. Seas of ink have been poured out to defend us from the foul accusations heaped up against us, and with what result? We must confess with none whatsoever. True, it is almost futile to try and convince an antagonist who does not wish to be convinced, who will coolly ignore all that can be advanced against him, and who will repeat the old, stale and over and again refuted statements, as if they were quite new arguments never heard of before and never examined and pulverized before. And yet we ought at least not lay ourselves open to the same charge, that we refuse to listen to the refutation or baselessness of the cause as our anti-Semitic opponents regularly do. The least we ask is patient hearing and careful weighing of the pros and cons and not to be met with prejudice and pusillanimous fear, the most abject remnant of the old Ghetto. I know it is not a spirit of wickedness or malice, no hatred or venomous enmity which closes the eyes and ears of our opponents, as is the case with the anti-Semites. Nothing further from us, even to mention the two in one breath. The anti-Zionists are, we credit

them unreservedly, animated by at least as good intentions toward the majority of their own kith and kin as we are they are; all anxious to help. The only difference between them and us is that we wish to help, not only others, a few or a large number of our brothers in exile, but to reconstruct that unity which knows no distinction between the Jews of one continent and country and those of other continents and countries; we wish to help, not *them*, but *us, all*. We wish to remove the artificial barriers erected during the last fifty or one hundred years between Jew and Jew, and work out *together* our social and political salvation.

It is the most democratic movement the world has seen and it is the most ideal movement the world has seen. No wonder that an age which is gradually weaned from idealism stands and gazes open-mouthed at it; no wonder that those with new vested interests, who have worked in a contrary direction all that time, deluding themselves as to the consequences of their action, should now be reviving Don Quixote by their extraordinary opposition. Fair hearing has thus far been denied the Zionists, and trumpery charges have been advanced against the movement. I cannot call the charges by a better name, for even those who advance them do not believe in them. The best proof is that they shift their arguments from one platform to another, and if one does not answer, another is brought forward.

Lest it be said that I shelter myself behind the plea advanced before, that it is almost useless to try and convince people who refuse to read and to hear and to be convinced at all, and thus give up any further polemics, I will deal here with one of the latest and just as stale arguments that is being paraded again in the press for the purpose of showing the worthlessness of Zionism. I mean the accusation which is coolly advanced that Zionism is the outcome of anti-Semitism.

Assuming for a moment that this is so, what does such an argument prove for or against the value and worth of Zionism? Because a malady is being combated by a new remedy, therefore the remedy in itself is no good. Is quinine less efficacious or less good because it has been used only comparatively recently for the combating of fever? I know I shall be answered quinine is efficacious, it is a proper remedy; not like your remedy, which is a quack nostrum. Agreed. But how did we learn to know the efficacy of quinine? Was it by declamations against it

from the tribune, by phrases and empty words, by the statements such as these: That fever has been rampant for so many centuries and that though a few have succumbed, many were able to drag along in an emaciated form; malaria is not strengthening to the body as a rule. Our old prescriptions proved sufficient to keep mortality low. And have people listened only to the shaking of the heads of the old "medicine men" and for that refused to accept the new remedy? No, quinine was put to the test, and thus its remedial power has been demonstrated to the satisfaction also of those who doubted and wavered.

Has any one as yet put Zionism to the practical test so as to show its futility, nay, its danger? Mere *ex cathedra* statements will not bring us one step nearer the solution, however many "medicine men" would shake their heads. We are told the experiment is dangerous. Our answer is, the patient is so far gone and all your old remedies have failed, that we are justified in giving him stronger doses and attempting a new cure; for it is not an ordinary case in its first stages. We are suffering of physical and spiritual consumption and we prescribe to ourselves the "Open air treatment." Is this so dangerous, unless we cling to the old discarded theories, which saw in hemming in patients the only way for helping them. All the dangers conjured up by fertile brains of opponents are imaginary. None of the dreaded consequences are in any way to be compared with the actual dangers which our people are running all over the world. These are real dangers; the other futile imaginations. Shall I detail those dangers more fully? Paint the future in the colors which the actual situation demands? Those who have eyes can see for themselves what is, or may be, in store in a near future, with the new commercial wars looming largely on the horizon, with the growth of international brutality and egotism and with the disappearance of all idealism and humanity. The fact alone that amidst the settling gloom we are preparing one luminous spot upon earth, ought to ensure us the ready cooperation of all who are not yet quite deaf to the call of the inner voice. It will suffice for the Jew wherever he may find himself to know that there is one place upon earth whither he can turn his steps without fear of finding the door slammed in his face; to give him a different position in the world of nations. We shall no longer merely be "tolerated" or be satisfied to live on sufferance; the equality which we desire to find among the

nations will then be a true one, not one full of mental reservations.

What security shall we have in the new, yet old country? we are asked. The very same we have had for the last two thousand years, the same that we have now all over the world. Who can guarantee the position of the Jew anywhere in the world for the next fifty years? A bold man he would be, indeed, who would venture to prophecy or to guarantee! I do not wish, however, to discuss all the points raised in the controversy, not even to allude to all the honest doubts of many an earnest man. If he be so inclined, let him only read the Bible; that will set his doubts at rest. For argument's sake I have admitted for a moment that the Zionist movement is the result of the anti Semitic movement. In reality, however, they merely succeed one another in chronological order only. The one appeared before and the other assumed a mere tangible shape soon afterward. This does not mean, however, that the one is the product of the other. The difference between superstition and science is that in the former a causal *nexus* is assumed between two events only because they succeed one another. Because a man has killed a crow once and it rained soon afterward, the superstitious mind constructs a causal connection between the two events and reasons that whenever a crow is killed it is sure to bring rain. This is somewhat like the attitude taken by some of the opponents of Zionism, who see the two events succeeding one another and jump to the conclusion that the one is the father of the second. I do not deny that there is a certain connection between the two, but it is the connection between illness and cure. The cure may have existed long before this kind of illness has manifested itself, long before it has been recognized in its virulence and malignant character. And thus it has happened with Zionism. It is an old panacea. That it should appear quite new, that Jews should believe it to be a quack nostrum produced by the virus of anti-Semitism as a kind of attenuated serum, but still partaking of the character of being a new invention or discovery, speaks volumes for the whole intellectual change that has overtaken Jewry. The geographical home of this allegation is of no slight importance. It tallies with that of the home of the new Jews whose knowledge of Judaism has sunk to the lowest ebb, to whom the Bible is known merely as a book with seven seals, representing, as we are told, a past phase in human evolution; who have totally for-

gotten the past traditions, hopes and yearnings of their race, and whose religious conceptions are an emasculated Comteism without his cosmopolitan tendencies. To these Zionism must appear a new-fangled whim, a quack nostrum, a dangerous experiment.

Not so to the millions whose heart still beats in harmony with the old throb of Judaism, to whom the Bible is the open book, the Prophets living messengers of God, the hope and yearning of centuries, the treasure of the past, the sustaining power and the vivifying promise. To them Zionism is the old hope kindled anew, and this explains the sudden enthusiasm with which they rallied round the movement the moment they recognized it to be the old call to self-help, the guide to the old land of their forefathers, the beginning of the realization of old dreams and visions and of the sacred words of the Bible. There was nothing new in Zionism that required explanation. It is merely the announcement that the time has come when the attempt should be made to put into fact what hitherto had been only words. Has no one of the opponents yet asked himself the very simple question: How does it come to pass that so many have joined enthusiastically in the Zionist movement? Are the adherents all men incapable of judging for themselves, at least with as much acumen as those who hold the opposite view? Is wisdom and caution and care the privileged property of the few living in the West, and have the shrewd Jews of the East of Europe suddenly been smitten with blindness and deafness, especially in a case which concerns them in the first place where they would be the first victims to suffer? Do the opponents believe that they alone have discerned difficulties and have found out obstacles that lie in the way of the full realization of the Zionist program? Are all the rest not able to see those self-evident factors in the solution of the problem? Unless people are infatuated with the belief in their own intellectual superiority, and unfortunately many who happen to have lived for a short time in a land of freedom imagine that they really have such a superiority, they must concede that others are at least as capable to judge and to argue and to scrutinize events as they themselves pretend to be, that others can also see dangers and difficulties, but also a way how to overcome them successfully. If they should come to this conclusion, already an important point will have been gained in the controversy.

The moment in which one portion of Jewry,

and especially the one less acquainted with the true Jewish spirit, gives up its pretence of monopoly and hegemony and concedes to the other to have at least as much wisdom and judgment to attend to its own spiritual needs and also the ability to prepare for its own future, much of the unnecessary bitterness imported into the fight will, I hope, disappear. We shall no longer hear of those absurd arguments which had hitherto to do duty in defending an impossible position. For Zionism is the old hope of Judaism which has helped and carried Judaism triumphantly through the ages, and it is applied now to the cure of an almost as old an illness as the remedy, but is now to be put to the test for the first time in a practical manner.

Not that one dreams Zionism could or would remove anti-Semitism. It will cure the patient of that illness ; it will make Jews indifferent to its attacks, immune against its ravages. If it cannot stamp out the plague, it will at any rate heal Judaism.

We who believe in the words of the Prophets, we hold to the tenets of old, we look to a time of greatness for Judaism, when it will again be able to exercise a salutary influence upon the destinies of mankind, when it will prepare a better future to the toiling millions than all the other imitations have been able to offer. We are fully convinced that sooner or later Zionism will be a reality and Judaism truly free.

M. GASTER.

Theodor Herzl

I

'Tis not because Kings to their throne
Have beckon'd thee and honor shown;
'Tis not because of this I lay
Upon thy brow this laurel bay.
But that thy prescient soul designed
A larger plan, and illumined
A people's hopes with star-like ray,
Harbinger of a brighter day—
'Tis for this o' thy brow I lay
This Garland wreath of laurel bay.

II

AS erstwhile in Israel's fold
The prophet-bards and seers of old
In rushing wind and awful flame
God's own mysterious message came,
So to thee the inspired call
Has come to look upon the thrall
Of thy brethren and lead once more
A homeless race to Jordan's shore,
And sow the seed of a field again
That will ripe and yield its harvest reign.

J. FRIEDLANDER.