



GIFT OF

Mrs. Joseph L. Baron

BACKWARDS OR FORWARDS?

A SERIES OF

7.

DISCOURSES ON REFORM JUDAISM.

DELIVERED BY

DR. K. KOHLER,

MINISTER OF TEMPLE BETH-EL.

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"See, I have set thee . . . to pluck up . . . and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."—Jeremiah i. 10.

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Rev. Dr. K. Kohler, Guigou House, Pine Hill, N. Y.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:—The series of lectures delivered by you at our Temple, prior to your summer vacation, on the aims and objects of Reform Judaism, have elicited the warmest interest and approbation amongst the members of our Congregation and no less amongst the friends of progressive Judaism in this country generally.

The Board of Trustees, in compliance with many solicitations, has decided to ask your consent to have these lectures printed for distribution, and I beg, therefore, if this meets your views, to request you to kindly translate them into English for publication.

Trusting to receive your early and favorable reply, I remain,
with friendly regards, Yours very truly,
M. BERLINER, *Pres't.*

MY DEAR SIR:—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of July 20th, and, while thanking you heartily for the appreciative sentiments expressed in the name of the Board of Trustees, I herewith gladly comply with your request to forward to you the manuscript of my discourses for publication.

You are aware, I presume, that part of these appeared in our local Jewish press, but, I regret to say, accompanied by editorial comments unjust and unfriendly to such an extent as to make the want of a proper enlightened Jewish Reform organ more than ever sorely felt.

It was all the more gratifying to me to learn that my words found a hearty response both within and outside of our Congregation. And let me add, I felt particularly pleased and encouraged to be signally assured by you that our Congregation

to-day realizes, more than ever before, the necessity of decided Reform measures, for the sake of stemming the tide of appalling skepticism, and of rousing anew the interest and active zeal of our young people for the sacred cause of Judaism. For it is their support and whole-souled co-operation on which I must rely, in contemplating and carrying out the measures of Reform demanded in our mode of worship and our system of instruction, in order to make our sacred religion what it should be—the pride and glory of every Jewish soul.

I need not say that, in taking up the gauntlet cast at Reform, I meant no offence to the representatives of orthodoxy. I simply claim for our advanced views, for our no less sincere religious convictions the same respect we are willing to accord to theirs. We cannot allow our cause to be represented as a matter of mere convenience and frivolity. Indeed, I felt that, if I had kept silent at the unexpected and entirely uncalled-for denunciation of Reform Judaism by “one who had just come to sojourn with us and will needs be a judge,” I would not have been true to my trust as rabbi of Temple Beth-El, and still less so to the traditions of the pulpit once occupied by the matchless Reform champion, Dr. Einhorn, whose outspoken and unfaltering fealty to the Reform principles commanded for him the respect and admiration of friend and foe.

We cannot restore the past except at the sacrifice of our future and at the risk of entirely alienating our children from our sacred heritage.

Only as pioneers of Progress and Enlightenment can we hope to lead mankind to the pure faith in the Only One God.

We shall certainly in the future, as we did in the past, endeavor to maintain peace and harmony, not only among our own members, but carefully avoid any schism in our ranks, any isolation and separation from the entirety of Jewish-American Congregations.

We want Union. We want co-operation in all matters pertaining to the common interests of Judaism in America and the world over. But we cannot allow any interference with our religious progress by Rabbinical anathemas.

The watchword of the hour is not: “Backwards to Egyptian darkness!” but “Forwards towards light and truth, towards the promised kingdom of divine love and righteousness on the entire globe!”

“Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward!”
Hoping that these lectures will work blessing throughout the Jewish camp, and redound to the honor of God and of Israel, I am, with the assurance of my highest regards,

Yours,

DR. K. KOHLER.

GUIGOU HOUSE, PINE HILL, August 1st, 1885.

M. Berliner, Esq., Pres. Congreg. Temple Beth-El.

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BACKWARDS OR FORWARDS?

FIRST DISCOURSE.

"It is neither the voice of them that shout for victory, nor the voice of them that cry for being defeated, but the noise of vociferation do I hear."—Exod. xxxii. 18.

THE confirmation solemnities being over, and the Sabbath schools having finished their work for the season, what attraction can the pulpit offer to a fastidious audience that craves for dainties in place of wholesome food? Shall I speak on the new Bible translation? How many Jews to-day care to read the Bible, or take interest in that piece of antiquity? There is a novelty offered to our New York Jews in the appearance of a new rabbi of renown who, with laudable courage and independence, gives free utterance to his rigid conservatism, boldly challenging Reformed Judaism by the open declaration, that he who disowns the statutes and ordinances of Mosaico-Rabbinical Judaism on principle has forfeited the name of Jew. Of course, the novelty of the learned speaker's notions and attitude creates a stir and a welcome sensation throughout the Jewish circles of New York, and an opinion about the influence to be exercised by the new rabbi, for whom I cherish the highest regard, both as an eminent scholar and as a most sincere and earnest advocate of conservative Judaism, would be rather premature. Personally, I gladly and heartily wish him the greatest success, and I have little doubt that, being supported and encouraged by our *exclusively* conservative local press, he will exercise a wholesome influence upon the consolidation and the right coalition of the different elements of our congregations, which are at present too often brought together without unity of purpose and principle.

But the gauntlet thrown into our face must be taken up at

once, and I to-day simply propose to ask the question, "Are we progressing, or ought we to retrograde? Has Reformed Judaism come upon a sand bank, so that we require Talmudical orthodoxy to set us afloat again, or are we still strong enough to stand at the helm and steer American Judaism towards its lofty goal?"

Mark well. Mere cant and bombastic phraseology will do us no good. Gibes and sneers cast at orthodoxy or at reform by opponents will not solve the question. Even our much-vaunted progress is far from being an undisputable fact. History has its constant ups and downs, its luminous and its dark epochs. Upon every exertion and exhaustion of the intellect follows a reaction of the heart. Periods of rationalism give way to periods of mysticism and dark superstition. Upon the sunny days of Jewish learning and independent research in Spain came the frantic vagaries of the Cabbala. Maimonides' name was beclouded by the holy Zohar and Rabbi Isaac Loria. And, indeed, he who knows how to read the signs of the time may, without being a Daniel, well foretell the coming reaction, which may render the twentieth century less intellectual than ours. There is even in our midst an increasing shallowness of thought visible everywhere, whilst the emotional is pressing forward to take the lead. Still the question of the hour is, "Retrogression or progress?" Must we, after having dropped the obsolete observances of by-gone days, after having for thirty-five years in this country worked for the emancipation from the yoke of Mosaic-Talmudical Judaism, again bend our neck to wear it in order to be complete Jews in the sense of orthodoxy, or may we persist in claiming, as we did thus far, to stand on a far higher ground, whilst discarding a great many of the ceremonial laws of the Bible and tradition, and placing ourselves on the standpoint of prophetic Judaism, with the Messianic aim as its world-embracing goal?

Mosaic-Rabbinical Judaism is retrospective. It has not the courage to stand on its feet. It subsists on the merits of our forefathers זכרם לצדק. Its very ritual, its whole mode of worship, it considers only as a feeble substitute for the temple sacrifice. It longs for the restoration of temple and State in Judea, hoping for the restitution of the entire Mosaic system of social, political and religious life. It clings to the maxim, "If we are common men, our ancestors were angels; and if they were but common men, we must rank among the brutes." Reformed

Judaism, on the contrary, looks forward with hope for a far brighter future, beholding in the Messiah the ideal of mankind to be realized by the Jewish people through all the factors and agencies of civilization and progress, and in the temple on Zion's hills the house of prayer to be opened on all spots of the globe for all nations to worship the Most High as the Father of all men. Its goal era lies not behind, but before us. Which of the two views is more in congruity with the drift and spirit of our age and of the progress of human history? Which are we to espouse? The one that turns the dials of the time backward, or the one that proudly points to the forward move of history? The one that wails over the ruins of the past, over the decay of ritualistic religion, over the downfall of creeds and blind authority-worship, or the one that hails the rising faith in all that is divine in man, the building up of a religion which already our prophets of yore proclaimed to be as broad as man and as wide as the globe?

The question is, in fact, a threefold one: Can we, or must we, believe exactly what our fathers believed concerning Revelation and the Law, Resurrection and the Messianic future? Must we, or can we, believe that the tablets of the covenant were expressly made, and the Ten Words engraved on them by the very hand of God, because the Bible says so? Can we, or must we, believe that all the laws and narratives given in the books of Moses have been dictated to the very letter of God? Suppose we have, by tracing the origin of all the Biblical narratives about the primeval ages, received the strong impression or gained the firm conviction that they are but traditions and legends transmitted by men of primitive culture. Or suppose we have, by closely examining all these laws attributed to God, found them to contain many traces of rude barbarism, which our reverential love of God forbids us to ascribe to Him as author. Ought we on this account no longer consider ourselves as standing within the pale of Judaism? No. I do not believe that the Mosaic statutes about the sacrifices, the incense, and the priestly apparel, or the sanitary and criminal laws, are unchangeable ordinances of God dictated from heaven. I distinguish in the Bible the kernel from the husk, the grain from the chaff, the spirit from the temporary form. Just as the infant requires a different kind of nourishment from the grown man, so the Bible, as the revelation offered to an uncouth and uncivilized age, contains another

pabulum for the soul than what is demanded by a cultured age. Having outgrown the guiding-strings and swaddling-clothes of infancy, man to-day, with his self-consciousness, wants to walk on his own foot. Must I, then, because I cannot accept the traditional beliefs—take, for instance, only the belief in the resurrection of the body, the only immortality belief Mosaico-Talmudical Judaism owns and offers—renounce Judaism because one rabbi, or five hundred orthodox rabbis, say so? Since when is it a Jewish maxim: "Happy are the poor in intellect, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven?" Nay, let me ask in good faith: Is it advisable, in the light of modern enlightenment and progress, to check and suppress free thought and research in Judaism, and leave it to non-Jewish pulpits to preach a faith as broad and as bright as the heavens? Shall the intelligent and thinking class of Jews henceforth go to a free Christian church, there to hear the truth hitherto preached from every Jewish reform pulpit all over the land: that reason is the light of God in the soul of man; that there is no contradiction between God's revelation in nature and God's revelation in the law of man's conduct; that divine revelation is not a matter of the past, no absolute and complete system, but a constant unfolding of truth and knowledge, ever to grow in breadth, and depth, and width, until the earth is full of knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea? No. The Jew, having in the very night of mediæval darkness been trained by his Maimonideses and Gersonideses to think, shall not go back and stop thinking in the bright daylight of intellectual culture.

The next question is: "Must we, or can we, observe the ordinances and statutes bequeathed to us by Mosaico-Rabbinical Judaism? Must we, in order to be real Jews, keep all the *rites and ceremonies* prescribed by law and tradition? Let us consider one moment: What is the entire Mosaic law? Without inquiring into its origin and history, without even pronouncing an opinion about the time when it was first introduced as foundation of Jewish religion and national life, it was certainly intended and given for the purpose of fashioning and training the Jewish people for its high mission as a people of God in the midst of an idolatrous world, prone to most cruel vices and abominable superstitions. It was a system of education fit for a still childish and semi-barbarous nation in an age of rude barbarism and unmitigated polytheism. This alone explains the attitude of Mosaism

towards slavery, polygamy, retaliation and bloody penalties, the cruelty of which it endeavored to assuage. All these laws, however, Rabbinical Judaism, at the downfall of temple and State, transformed into walls of a fortress or a citadel around the Jews, to shield them during the exile against absorption in the multitude of nations. Seclusion and distinction became the prominent feature of every Jewish rite. To look for other reasons was deemed superfluous, if not sinful. Take, for instance, the law forbidding the wearing of garments woven together of wool and linen. It undoubtedly was, like so many other ordinances, instituted as a safeguard against a heathen practice connected with the lascivious Canaanite worship of Baal and Astarte. In the rabbinical system it became a divine ordinance, which must be obeyed without asking for the reason. The same is the case with all the ritual and, particularly, the dietary laws of Moses. Our latter-day representatives of conservatism fail to see that they deviate from both Rabbinical and Biblical Judaism in trying to find *sanitary* provisions in the prohibition of things declared as *unclean* for Jews as a *holy* people.

So are four kinds of plants ordained in the Law as symbols of gratitude, to be carried in solemn procession on the harvest-booth festival before God. What they were, we do not know exactly. Rabbinical Judaism has fixed form and names of these for all times and climates, no matter whether they are products of the land or not. In like manner, tradition has fixed form and standard for every religious practice, for every step of life, without regard to fitness of time and surroundings. Out of one single Biblical ordinance, Rabbinical Judaism has brought forth hundreds of such, and being derived from the very mouth of God and transmitted from Moses on Sinai to the succeeding teachers, an alteration or abolition is out of question. Of course, that which comes from God can neither be reformed nor improved. Beyond the law of God progress is an impossibility. Consequently all conservative Jews cling tenaciously to every law and tradition of the past, denying the very title of Jew to any one who deviates on principle. But, as reformed or enlightened Jews, we humbly ask: Can we, or ought we to observe all those obsolete and meaningless practices of the past, or should we not rather replace them by forms more adequate to the age, more expressive of, and impressive with, the awe of holiness? Is Judaism to be only a sacred mummy, or a fountain of life? Is it a bucket-

ful of stale water carried along from the Sinai wilderness, or a perennial spring flowing down from the rock at the bidding of the Moses-staff, still lifted by all those who as heralds voice the religious consciousness of the age? Must we still be cowed down by fear of the thunders on Sinai and obey the law as slaves yoked to the letter, or may we discard the very idea of religion being a mere *legality*, and, like any of the prophets, mount the hill-top of God in the proud consciousness that we are sons of God, and that God reveals Himself to us in as loud and as distinct words of admonition and guidance as He did to our fathers of yore?

And, finally, can we, or must we, expect, with Rabbinical Judaism, to have the bloody sacrifices as the only mode of worship, the cruel dealing with idolaters and criminals as the only way of meting out justice, the entire Jewish State, with its temple and priesthood, restored? Or may we believe that, as the Mosaic law has been substituted by Rabbinism, so will Rabbinism be replaced by a higher and purer shape of religion; that, as from the flames which swallowed up the temple, Judaism has risen, phoenix-like, to a loftier and more spiritual form, so will, from the very ruins of Ghetto-Judaism, the foundation be laid to a temple of God spacious enough to embrace all sects and races and rally them around the uplifted banner of the One God? Our reform movement may have, and indeed has, committed mistakes, which I shall point out in another lecture. We have been altogether too hasty in discarding the old, while anticipating the new. But back to Judea, back to the Ghetto we shall not go. It may be, and I doubt it not for a moment, that those who yet sincerely cling to the old views and practices are much happier and more satisfied with their fixed standard of religion than we are to-day in our transitory state. But having once eaten from the forbidden fruits of universal knowledge, seeing the golden gates of Paradisiacal childhood irrevocably shut behind us, shall we be also driven out of the gates of Judaism, because we cannot accept and recognize its Mosaico-Rabbinical tenets as our own? No. We are honest enough to confess that we do not believe in the authority of the letter and of tradition, and yet claim to be as true, as sincere, as fervent and whole-souled Jews as any; nay, we claim to hold the ground on which our great seers stood when predicting the triumph of Israel's truth.

Freedom, says the Midrash, חרות על הלכות אלקרי חרות אלא חרות was the word engraved with letters of fire upon the tablets of the Law. Yes; freedom from the bondage of the letter, freedom from the yoke of mere *legality*, freedom from blind authority-belief; freedom for all the neglected and excluded; freedom for woman, whom Mosaico-Rabbinical Judaism deprived of her divine rights and privileges as child of God by placing her on a level with the slave and the imbecile; freedom from all restrictions which curb the minds and encroach upon the hearts in their craving for all that is beautiful, good, and true, and because truly human, also divine; freedom from all fences and hedges which prevent the unfolding of the full truth; freedom from all rust and mould of the past, which disfigure and obscure our bright heritage before the world and check its wholesome growth—this is what we demand and insist on as upholders of the Law. Well, then, backwards or forwards? This is the issue. Certainly with the deepest gratitude and piety we look backward upon what both Mosaic and Rabbinical Judaism have accomplished, upon what they have done for the world, and what they have so wonderfully achieved for us. But in gazing backward, our mental eye discerns Mount Zion towering high above Mount Sinai. On its pinnacle no thunder is heard, no fire, no cloud, no smoke is seen. The prophets alone, and among them the greatest of prophets, utter truths which will never perish; the psalmist sings forth in strains which never die away. And around it the nations are gathered to listen to God's anointed, Israel, the priest, and martyr, with him in unison to bow before the Most High in truth, while building the kingdom of justice, of love, and of peace, which blends heaven with earth, the human with the divine. For this kingdom we work, we hope, we live. Amen.

FORM OR SPIRIT.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

"And Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron: This is it that the Lord spake, saying; I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me."—Leviticus x. 1-3.

OUR text relates the sad fate of priests who brought strange fire upon the sacred altar of God. We are all warned by this lesson to be on our guard, whenever matters of religion are at stake. We must beware of the lurid fire of fanaticism and intolerance, and no less of the strange, unholy zest of selfishness and quarrelsomeness. To keep and cherish the sacred flame of religious devotion undefiled by any profane fire of passion, is the duty of all of us.

Far be it from me to allow impure, selfish motives to enter into the present debate between Reform and Orthodoxy.

"A controversy started for the sake of God and truth will always be of lasting good; a controversy entered into with selfish motives will end in ridicule."

Reformed Judaism has been challenged by the declaration, recently made from a neighboring Jewish pulpit, that "a reform which seeks to progress without the Mosaico-Rabbinical tradition is a deformity; that he who turns away on principle from the standpoint of the validity of Mosaico-Rabbinical tradition, such a one has banished himself from the camp of Israel, writes his

own epitaph, 'I am no Jew, no adherent to the faith of my fathers,' has ceased to be a Jew, and is a Karaite." This is as much as to say that Geiger, Einhorn, Holdheim, Aub, Stein and Wechsler, or the still living pioneers of Reform, S. Hirsch, Philippon, and S. Adler, and all of us, their pupils and followers, with the ten thousands of Jews in Europe and the great majority of Jews in this country who have Reform inscribed on their banner, are with one stroke of the pen to be deprived of the title of Jews, because they cannot on principle recognize the validity of the Law and tradition. In vain then did Dr. Geiger labor for forty years in the Old, and Dr. Einhorn, I. M. Wise and others in the New World for the triumph of the Reform principle, which declares that the entire Mosaic system of laws, with its Levitical, ceremonial and prohibitory ritual statutes, was applicable only to by-gone ages prone to idolatry and vice, only the moral statutes being unchangeable and perpetual; that the so-called Rabbinical tradition was itself a reform, instituted by the Pharisean rabbis in contradiction to the letter-worship of the Sadducees, the original Karaites, and that, while Talmudical Judaism was good enough as a wall of seclusion and protection for the Jew in the gloomy Ghetto, the Jew in the midst of modern civilization demands different forms of religion, more expressive of the grand, world-redeeming truths Judaism is to represent and to teach.

All respect and honor to the man who conscientiously adheres to every minute ordinance of the Talmud! All reverence before our great and glorious past which has produced a race of heroes and martyrs which forms the wonder of history! I can fully sympathize with the rabbi whom love and piety prompt to spare no effort in trying to uphold this past in the face of modern progress and enlightenment. But in the name of hundreds of thousands of Jews who no longer believe in the divine origin of the entire Mosaic law and its Rabbinical superstructure; in the name of all those who are honest enough to say: "I avoid everything unclean, but I do not think that to eat oysters or pork is a sin that can in any way compare with lying or cheating," or "I believe in the Sabbath as a law of God, but I do not accept any of its minute and often cruel Mosaico-Rabbinical applications;" in the name of those Jews who believe in the divine working of the spirit of God upon and through men, but in no supernatural revelation, I claim the name of Jew for all who, while standing

on the platform of reformed or enlightened Judaism, discard on principle all ritualism of the past and seek for better and more adequate forms of religious devotion and life.

For what is Judaism but the law of life, a living truth, a tree of life rooted and growing in the hearts of men? We may as well think of stilling our thirst with the stale water of the stagnant pool, or of inhaling the air stored up for centuries in the earth, as feed our souls on spiritual food prepared for remote ages. Men grow, and so must ideas and religious truths. Judaism entered the world's arena with a protest against the dead gods of the heathen world, while asserting its God to be the God of life. Yet God, in order to redeem us, in order to comfort us in time of trouble and loss, in order to strengthen us against trials and temptations, must be a *living God*, not a God who created the world some 6,000 years ago, resting ever since; not a God who revealed His will some 3,100 years ago, keeping silent ever since, but a God who still works incessantly in the workshop of Nature, a God who still reveals His law in the vast creation and in the conscience of man, a God who lives in us, who in more or less distinct sounds and signs speaks to all men and ages; a God who has eternities at His command, by whose magnetic force all souls are attracted, following His law of freedom as the water drops of the ocean follow the gravity of moon and sun. Judaism is a *living faith*, not a religion confined to dead letters, to a scarcely readable parchment scroll, but one which forms the vital spark of all moral action and conduct, which prompts us to worship and perceive God, not in dead forms, in rites of by-gone ages, in signs hardly intelligible, but in living truths and forms, expressive of life and truth. And as life manifests its power in attracting and absorbing all that nourishes strength, and in rejecting all that is obnoxious and burdensome, so religion shows its vitality in constant change and reform. Mosaism was built on views and rites adequate to the age, when Israel grew into a nation, of materials furnished in those times. Rabbinical Judaism again made use of what later ages and civilizations offered in the shape of opinions and forms. And so are we to-day anxious to find appropriate and impressive forms for what is the living Judaism of our age.

My esteemed opponent, in a conversation I had with him on the pending issues, said to me after having heard me speak in the manner I do here: "*You are only an ethical Jew!*"—Why?

All our great prophets were but ethical Jews. None of them insisted, or represented Abraham or any pious and good Israelite as such who had to insist, on the observance of the Mosaic ceremonial laws! And this prophetic ground we wish to hold, believing only thus to work out our mission as priests of One God in the midst of the modern world.

Inquiring into the chief cause of the present decay of religious fervor and earnestness, we find it to be the awakening of man to self-consciousness. He disdains to bend his neck to a yoke imposed upon him by uncultured ages of the past, whether it consists of creeds which shackle and cripple his reason; or of statutes and prohibitions which enchain and imprison his body. The Jew was in so far more fortunate than his Christian brother in that he had his intellect unfettered. He was allowed free research, he only had to submit to the legal restrictions of the Mosaic-Rabbinical system. Of course, he did not mind this wall of seclusion as long as he remained shut up behind the Jewish Ghetto. Yet no sooner did he inhale the invigorating air of liberty and modern civilization, particularly in our own free country, than he craved for an untrammelled intercourse with the Gentile world. He longed for recognition as fellow-citizen. He did not wish to appear as a foreigner, as an Oriental, not even in his own house of worship. For this reason, Reform was welcomed and hailed, not only as an emancipator from the yoke of dead ritualism, but also as a safeguard and victory-boding banner to rally all the enlightened and progressive Jews who otherwise threatened to leave Israel's camp. For Reform, with the voice of Ezekiel, said to the spirit: "Come and blow upon the dry bones of Judaism and infuse new life into it." Pointing to the eternal truth of the law, of the prophets and the psalmists, it predicted a new epoch for Israel of modern civilization, saying: The divine power which created Mosaism and Rabbinism will provide another form for Judaism, destined, in conjunction with its two daughters, Christianity and Islamism, to bring about the Messianic era of humanity.

Reform Judaism has exercised a mighty influence upon modern Israel. Ritualism is not altogether dead, but which conservative rabbi to-day dares give utterance to the old Talmudical maxim that to eat a piece of unclean meat is a greater crime than to cheat, because subject to severer punishment? As in the most orthodox church, so there is but one voice heard to-day from the

most conservative and the most radical Jewish pulpit concerning morality and humanity ranking high above every ritualistic law and ordinance. This is the victory of prophetism over church dogmatism and synagogue ceremonialism. If in any, in this most essential point we have made great headway in religion. But also in regard to modern innovations one synagogue after the other has thus far followed the van of reform. Every organ that is played in the Jewish synagogue, every woman that sings in the choir or joins in the prayers of the congregation from her pew, every confirmation solemnity introduced, every exchange of Occidental features for Oriental ones, is an inroad upon Rabbinical Judaism and a victory of Reform.

That Reform has not made good all its promises, that it has failed to realize many of its expectations, I do not hesitate to admit. Its great shortcomings consist in its neglect of domestic devotion, in its constant appeal to reason instead of cultivating the sentiment. Reform abolished the old regular services, the Hebrew daily prayers, but did not train our children to communicate with their God in fervent devotion at the beginning and close of each day. It did away with old formulas of praise and benediction, but failed to imbue every step or enjoyment of the Jew with religious life. It allowed the old fires of self-consecration, of sanctification of human life at its various solemn epochs to cool down. Still who knows who is to blame? There is little more piety and devotion manifested in conservative circles. The Sabbath is in no way better observed among the conservative than among the Reformed Jews.

We certainly need and pray for a spirit of conservatism which holds its protecting wings over our time-honored and sacred legacy. But we shall never preserve Judaism from decay by galvanizing dead forms, by instituting rites and views which collide with modern civilization and prevent us from a free intercourse with a world which we are to win for the idea of the One God and the One Humanity. No. We want a broad, enlightened and cosmopolitan Judaism. We want a Judaism which appeals to the heart as well as to reason. We want a religious education which again renders each Jewish household a sanctuary of piety and devotion, of purity and virtue. We want religious forms which stamp our souls with the seal of religious freedom rendering us true children of God, and not with the seal of cruel bondage to make of us blind slaves of the letter of the Law.

We want a Judaism congenial to the free soil of America. We want progress and enlightenment, and shall not rest until we have divested Judaism of all its disfiguring rites and placed it on that height on which we may hope we shall one day feel the brotherly grasp of all those who gladly inscribe their names unto the Only One of Israel, because they have felt and seen that God is with us.

The tablets of the laws written by the hand of man—says the Midrash—have been broken, but when once God Himself will write His law upon the tablets of the hearts of men, no earthly or superhuman power will again break that covenant, for divine truth or love is then with indelible letters written upon them. For this great renewal of God's covenant with man we wait and work, and all the advancing forces of civilization will help us along until the goal is reached. Amen.

PIETY OR A LIVING RELIGION?

THIRD DISCOURSE.

"And they (the children of Israel) ate of the corn of the land on the morrow after the Passover. Neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."
—Joshua v. 12.

A GREEK legend tells of a hero for whom a goddess obtained the celestial gift of immortality, but, as she had forgotten to ask for immortal youth, she saw the frame of her beloved one fall into decrepitude and shrivel into a mere shadow, so that death would have been a thousand times more preferable to the intolerable burden of life he had to carry on without even the hope of relief. The prerogative of hoary old age is granted to Judaism by all, whether friend or foe. In regard to endurance Israel is admitted to stand forth unparalleled in history. What a number of kingdoms and empires did the Jew see rise and fall! He saw old Egypt on the pinnacle of her glory, he beheld Assyria and Babylon in their triumphant sway over the nations, and shouted over their defeat. He hailed Cyrus as deliverer, and fought bravely under Alexander and his successors. Judaism riveted the attention of Julius Cæsar; it helped in establishing Christian Rome. Charlemagne and Frederick II., the Hohenstaufen prince, both admired and recognized the Jew's valor. The spread of the Arabian power, the rise of the great Spanish empire was partly due to the Jewish intellect, and he triumphed over the downfall of Ferdinand and Isabella's kingdom. In the Reformation, in the revival of learning he took part, and with greetings of joy he welcomed the new era of liberty. inaugurated in the new world and heralded by France all over the old. Forsooth, the crown of old age cannot be denied us by any. What

we claim is the vigor and freshness of youth. In old age, China may surpass us as a nation; perhaps some Eastern sect as regards religion. But from the fountain of youth none has drawn as refreshing and quickening drinks as Judaism. The power of constant regeneration is our glorious privilege; we have overcome death and destruction both as a nationality and as a religious system, and the secret of our immortal youth is *Reform*.

We are far from claiming Reform as an invention and innovation of ours. On the contrary, we behold in it the vitalizing power of Jewish history. Orthodoxy stamps us, the leaders and representatives of Jewish Reform, as heretics, because, accepting the results of modern investigations on both the fields of natural science and of Biblical and comparative religious research, we no longer stake our Jewish faith upon the belief in the divine, or supernatural origin of the Mosaic laws. We behold in *Mosaism* the result of a struggle continued for nearly a thousand years between lofty prophetism and Hebrew idolatry, the work of priestly compromise between a national and impure worship of the Deity and sublime ethical, world-embracing and spiritual Monotheism. Only in this light we find the justification for so many shortcomings and frailties under which the Mosaic law labors. We can account for a good many inhumanities still tolerated or sanctioned in the Pentateuch. But Orthodoxy cannot. It clings to the letter. We discern the divine Revelation only in the spirit permeating the Mosaic legislation. Orthodoxy perceives the word of God in the petrified form, in the *unchangeable* statutes. Neither do we underrate the work of *Rabbinism*. There is a beautiful narrative in the Talmud, full of suggestive truth. When Moses stood on Mount Sinai, wrapped up in the smoke which hid the majesty of God from his sight, he beheld the future generations of Israel's teachers along the vista of time, hosts of pupils sitting at the feet of each. With wonder and amazement he listened to their discussions, and there, lo! his ear caught the words of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua, the one asserting emphatically: "This is what our great teacher Moses said;" the other contradictingly said: "No, Moses our teacher spoke differently." Moses felt quite bewildered, as he overheard the strange controversy, and exclaimed: "O Lord! I fail to recognize my teaching in what they claim my authority for!" But God rejoined: "Forsooth, it is thy teaching, nevertheless. It is the same truth, the same underlying idea, only

applied to another age and other conditions." Rabbinism was once Reform, too. It was the unfolding of the Mosaic ideas in accordance with the altered circumstances of life. The Rabbis transformed the laws, given to a people imbedded in a national soil, into regulations for a religious sect scattered over the wide globe. Under their hands, Mosaism thickened into a hard crust to protect the imperilled life of the Jew, as the shell protects the precious pearl amidst the storm-tossed waves which beat against it. But amidst this process of incrustation it deepened Jewish piety; it extended the spirit of priestly holiness over the entire Jewish people, investing every household and each step of life with the character of religious sanctity and purity. Yet all this was due to the regenerative power of Reform. The Bible, I am sure, knows very little of the deep and purifying influence of the New Year and the Day of Atonement as the season of self-examination and repentance, nor of the Festival of the Giving of the Law. In fact, the entire synagogue as an institution of public devotion and instruction is a creation of Rabbinical Judaism. Thus in a great many respects Rabbinism was an improvement upon Mosaism, but, once petrified in thousands of minute statutes and restrictions, its healthy growth was checked. The ethical spirit, the prophetic idea underlying all the laws was lost sight of; reason and common sense were banished altogether from the field of legal decision (the *Halacha*) and reserved only for the digression of the preacher (the *Hagada*). In other words, Rabbinical Judaism was theoretically free, but practically fettered. In this state it remained throughout the middle ages. In vain did the great Jewish thinkers of the Spanish-Arabian period try to imbue it with new intellectual life. Some of them perceived that Mosaism was in the whole a mere compromise, a concession to an immature age, but they with their keen flights of thought only beat, like an encaged bird, against the bars of the prison, unable to break them open.

We to-day feel that we have arrived at a new period. We can and ought no longer submit to the yoke of blind authority-worship. When the Israelites had passed the Jordan, and the cheering sight of golden corn-fields greeted them on the new soil of promise, the old *Manna* ceased to fall from heaven. Only for remembrance was a flask, filled with the heavenly bread, kept, but for their daily nourishment they had to cut the wheat, to grind the flour, and bake the bread. The spiritual nurture, too, must

be prepared for each age or period of history anew. The old Mosaico-Rabbinical Law is our flask of Manna. It must serve as a holy reminiscence and warning of God, but it cannot be the daily bread for our spiritual use. We want it prepared of the finest produce of our age, after the pattern of the Mount. In other words, we want a religion of life, no dry legality or dead formality.

In denouncing Reform and innovations of any sort, people confound two altogether different things—*piety* and *religion*. We certainly owe reverence and gratitude to our fathers; we ought to honor our sacred bequest of the ages. But does he honor his father better who leaves the inherited estate unimproved and shut up from the influence of modernizing culture, thus allowing it to decay? Or is it not more in accordance with true filial love to have it constantly embellished and improved in value and appearance so as to perpetuate the memory of its first owner? I shall always remember with longing the deep impressions of my childhood, so sweetly interwoven with the beautiful life our fathers led under the sway of true orthodoxy, while secluded from the intercourse of the great social world among them. What an inexhaustible source of bliss and happiness amidst sorrow, care and trouble was the practice of the religious rites to them! What a fountain of blessing, of elevation and comfort, of spiritual self-sanctification was every single religious custom to them! Not the synagogue only, but the house; not the Sabbath only, but each day was filled with holy thought, an uninterrupted intercourse with God Almighty. Can this life be recalled? Can Orthodoxy, fanatical, inconsistent, and anachronistical orthodoxy conjure it back? As little may the florist undertake to expose his Eastern hot-bed plants, artificially nurtured on our soil, to the fierce blasts of our Western winds. No. Orientalism on our free American soil will not stand the test of time. We want Judaism to be the exponent of a religious truth for all ages and climes. We want to see Judaism practised in fullest accordance with our Occidental civilization. We ought not to be satisfied with erecting monuments of piety to our forefathers, but should aim to continue their legacy, and to perpetuate their spirit in and through our lives.

Two sacred shrines were carried, the rabbis say, in front of Israel while journeying through the desert, the one containing the two tablets of the covenant with the law of the living God

of Israel inscribed on them; the other, the mortal relics of Joseph, the pious ancestor. The former represented the idea of religion, the other that of piety. Let us beware of confounding what we owe to our past with what we are obliged to do for the future. The reminiscences of our great and glorious past should remain sacred to us, but they cannot lead us forward towards the great land of Messianic promise.

In a neighboring synagogue, I am told, a youth was called up last Sabbath to pronounce the benediction upon the law, being initiated into the sphere of Jewish duties, *בר מצוה*, and while every soul in the audience was impressed with the awe of the moment, the reader read from the sacred scroll *חוריע ומצורע*—chapters which, had they been translated into the vernacular, would have filled the hearts of the hearers with anything but religious devotion. Now, for the sake of God and truth, is such horrible self-deception forever to pass as religion? Are we the reformers, not justified, for the sake of our children, for the sake of the world, for the sake of God's holy name, to insist upon *purified* Judaism, upon thorough Reform of our synagogue service? Are we not justified in asking for a Bible purified from all its offensive and obnoxious elements; for religious forms and practices which elevate heart and soul, in place of such which discredit and disgrace us before the world? What matters it to me if we are denied the power of reforming? I ask in due deference: "Will our orthodox rabbis, in the broad daylight of reason, still subscribe to the rabbinical tradition which has caught so little of prophetic truths as to teach:—1st, in regard to conjugal love: 'He who lives in matrimony ten years without being blessed with offspring must divorce his wife and marry another one' (Maimonides H. Ishus, xv. 7); 2d, in regard to slavery: 'He who frees his slave of Gentile birth commits a sin' (Maimonides H. Abadim, ix. 6); and 3d, in regard to tolerance: 'He who on principle and from mere spite disregards any of the Mosaic commandments (as for instance, the dietary laws) has no claim upon pity and compassion, and should rather be thrown into a pit than to be rescued from peril' (Maimonides, Eduth xi. 10, and Akkum x. 1)?"

I say "rather no Judaism at all than that we should bow under the authority of Rabbinism and surrender reason and freedom." No. Rabbinico-Mosaic Judaism is dead, but far from degrading it, we wish to lay it, like the broken tablets of the

law, *שברי לוחות*, alongside of the better system of religious life which we are anxious to build in consonance with the demands of our age.

Stand-still is death. We want a living and working religion. When you behold a grain of seed that has fallen into the small fissure of a rock, take root in the very heart of the stone and split the hard granite, tell me what gave the little seed the power to overcome the mighty stone? It is the superiority of life over death. The dead ritualism of the past will never be able to cope with the living issues of the age. Not because we have introduced reforms, Judaism failed to realize our expectations, but because we have not introduced enough to totally replace the dead rites of the past by living and beautiful forms suitable to our time. We dwelt too long upon the rubbish of the past, neglecting to build attractive quarters for the rising generation.

Ancient history records the noble deed of two brothers who, in a city besieged and threatened with fire, asked the conquering general, who was under some obligation to them, for the permission of leaving and carrying with them what they prized most. Their request being granted, they took their parents, the one the aged father, the other the aged mother upon their shoulders, and left with their precious burden.

We, too, find Judaism, find religion beleaguered by the powerful forces, mental and religious, of the age. How may we best hope to preserve our sacred heritage? Surely not by opposing, but by befriending ourselves with the mighty attainments and factors of the time. And if we but succeed in building up a new religious life while faithfully and reverentially continuing our identity with the past, if we provide for the spiritual demands of our children in such a manner as to impress them with the glory of our past and the greatness of our mission as Jews, we shall not only reflect credit upon ourselves, but also honor our fathers and forefathers, being inspired and cheered by the same truth which inspired and comforted them, and with our children be ready and willing to live, and, if necessary, also to die for the same God for whom they lived and died. Amen.

IS REFORM DESTRUCTIVE OR CONSTRUCTIVE?

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

"Ye shall keep my statutes, which if man doeth, he shall live by them. I am the Lord."—Leviticus xviii. 5.

"WHAT is the cause of storms?" a rabbi in the Midrash asks, and his answer is: "Whenever mankind is absorbed in the worship of the sensual, God sends storms and earthquakes to rouse them from lethargy." When after many days of scorching heat the air becomes close and oppressive, so as to make every living being pant for a refreshing breeze, storms are welcomed as a blessing, however vehemently they strike the earth with their hail, thunder, and lightning. They clear the atmosphere, regenerating and quickening all life. Let us candidly admit that our mental atmosphere has of late grown rather sultry. Religious indifference and callousness, chiefly on the part of the progressive ones, encouraged retrogressive orthodoxy to become bold and presumptuous. A tide of conservatism carried us all more or less backwards, until at last the flood reached up to our very hearts, and we felt that, unless we offer energetic resistance, we would lose the ground under our very feet, and become untrue to ourselves, to our aims and ideals as Reform Jews. Having thus far merely maintained our right and our liberty against intolerance and narrow-minded dogmatism, it behooves us to state the actual merits and claims of Reform Judaism. Reform, we are told, cannot and did not but pull down, "pluck out," and destroy. Let us see whether this is really so; whether Reform is merely *destructive*, or whether it is *constructive* and *positive* in its tendencies and in its character.

I answer: Reform Judaism is positive. It desires to build up a pure and perfect manhood. It aims at the realization of a true religion of humanity in full accordance with our text:

"Ye shall keep my statutes which, if man doeth, he shall live by them. I am the Lord."

Religion, says our text, is not for God, nor for heaven. It is for man—for his elevation, comfort, and inspiration. Judaism does not build its system of salvation upon the hereafter. The world that now is, is its field of labor, and humanity is its fruit. To cultivate and promote all that is human, to unfold all that is noble and good in man, and to impart the blessings of divine love and truth to all sons of man—this, in conformity with cosmopolitan prophetism, is the great aim and object of enlightened Judaism.

Let us inquire then which of the two is better qualified to realize these demands, Orthodoxy or Reform? Does Mosaic-Rabbinical Judaism come up to the mark, while rendering religion an endless number of prohibitory laws and restrictive statutes, erected like bars and turn-pikes on the path of the Jew to obstruct his march, or, like poles and boundary-stones, warning him not to come near this, nor to touch upon that? Do you call that a positive religion which consists only of laws saying: "Thou shalt not do this," "Thou shalt not eat this," "Thou shalt not wear this?"

Look at the priceless treasure Judaism has given to the world—the *Sabbath*. What did Mosaic-Rabbinical law render it but a burden and a heavy yoke? The real positive side, the comfort and cheer, the heavenly bliss of the Sabbath-day, is well-nigh crushed under the pile of restrictions placed upon it, under the thirty-nine chief prohibitions of work, as cooking and baking, culling and sowing, weaving and sewing, building and planting, writing and cutting, and ten times as many derivative ones which Rabbinism counts, hardly taking regard of the spiritual and human motives underlying the Sabbath law.

Or take the *Passover* festival, the Memorial of Israel's deliverance. What a large network of interdictions concerning the eating or tasting of leavened bread, or of anything that ferments, has been allowed to overgrow and to entirely obscure the idea of liberty, of the Jew's consecration to God's priesthood which gave rise to the solemn festivity. The sweet reminiscences, the beautiful symbols have almost lost their intrinsic charms beneath the terrors of death facing him who dares to taste a bit of bread or broth that has the flavor of yeast.

Which religion has a grander day to boast of than our *Day of*

Atonement is? It is Judaism's brightest jewel. It proclaims man as a child of God, allowing no power, no mediator in heaven or on earth to interfere between man and his Maker, declaring man to be his own priest and redeemer from sin. Yet behold how under the sway of the law this most precious fruit of the Jewish spirit is soured by the over-awing fear of the penalty of excision with which the Father of Mercy is represented to strike him who, during the twenty-four hours, ventures to satiate his hunger or thirst with a morsel of bread or a drink.

And so are all the rules and ordinances offered by the Mosaic-Rabbinical law concerning *domestic life* far from being elevating and inspiring forms of devotion, apt to remind the mistress of the household or the other members of the family of their sacred duties within the domestic sphere; but, void of all moral lessons and suggestive thoughts, they only ring forth in unmelodious, husky sounds the words: "Thou shalt not eat this. Thou shalt not cook this. Thou shalt not mix this and that." There is nowhere a provision made for the higher demands of the heart and the mind; nothing in all the legal forms and usages that ennobles and refines the soul. Indeed, a glance over the entire structure of Mosaic-Rabbinical Judaism brings before your mind a thick, impenetrable forest of legal statutes in which you look in vain for the light of heaven to illumine the road. *Legality has blown out the light of religion.* The deep longing of the soul for the living God has actually been lost sight of amidst these car-loads of oppressive restraints with which life has been surrounded. And if for the last hundred years people, amidst the common cry for self-emancipation and enlightenment, disgusted with all the hedges and ramparts which had thus long shut them up from the world, commenced pulling down one after the other, who is to blame? Not Reform, I am sure. No Reform rabbi ever told his audience to break the Sabbath, to violate the Dietary Laws, or to eat on Yom Kippur. Amidst the reckless desecration and destruction indulged in by the multitudes, Reform alone dared to be *positive*. Proudly lifting the prophet's staff, it began again to point to the indestructible kernel of religion. In the soul-stirring strains of the ancient seers it preached: "God cares little for your fasts and your outward forms of worship. Loosen the bonds of injustice. Cling fast to virtue. Show kindness. Practise charity and goodness. This is the essence of all religion." Bringing out all that is

humane and everlastingly good and true in the ancient laws, Reform endeavored to spiritualize them and lift religion to a higher sphere far above the sweeping storm of destruction. It allowed the husks to moulder in order to make the inner truth shine forth with all its cheering beauty. It inspired all with hope, while Orthodoxy was all despair. Was Reform, then, not *positive*?

Inquiring, furthermore, into the objects and motives by which the Conservative Jew is urged to obey the law, I find the promise of reward in the great beyond to be held forth as chief incentive to duty. "Israel," says the Talmud, "has been privileged to receive so many laws in order to endow it with so many shares in the bliss of the future world." This is the ruling idea of Rabbinism. But does this view stand the test of philosophical enlightenment and moral refinement? How about the noble maxim proclaimed by one of the oldest Rabbinical sages, Antigonus, of Socho: "Be not like slaves who fulfil their duties only for the sake of receiving wages"? Suppose the entire construction of eternity's bliss and misery upon the small circumference of a seventy years' sojourn on earth should prove futile, and our advanced sense of justice would demand a larger horizon and scope for the Divine Economy, is Judaism then imperilled? Or are the gates of eternal salvation indeed shut to him who disbelieves in Resurrection of the Body, or in traditional Paradise and Hell? Here again the question is pertinent: Is Rabbinism *positive* which debars reason's progress, or is it rather Reform which lays all stress on the actual duties of life, leaving, like the prophets of yore, the veil unlifted, which God in his wisdom has spread over the domain of the disembodied spirit, saying in the words of Holy Writ: "That which is hidden belongs to God, and that which is open concerns us and our children?"

And there is a third point, most important and grave, which we dare not overlook: All the boasting of Orthodoxy notwithstanding, man is not recognized by the Law in his heaven-born nobility as a child of God. Not only are woman and slave not acknowledged in their full personal worth as self-centered beings, as reliable and totally responsible persons in matters of legal decision or religious devotion and promise, but the very privilege of man, his freedom of conscience, is disclaimed. The idolater and the Jewish heretic, who on principle

reject one iota of the Law, are both outlawed. Only he who observes the Noahidic laws of humanity—the proselyte of the gate, to which class Christianity and Islamism belong—has claim on human compassion and love, yet not the heathen. And even the former is denied the privilege of Sabbath rest or of studying Israel's law. In this respect, Talmudism has fallen far below the standard of Prophetical humanity. Far be it from me to throw stones into the well from which we with our fathers have drawn the waters of life. For I know very well that misfortunes dimmed the eyes of our ancestors so that they could not see far beyond the narrow compass of their own lives. But let at least the most conservative Jew of to-day confess that the old walls have justly and well-deservedly been broken through by the tide of an enlightened age.

Contrast this with what Reform has accomplished. Brushing off the dust and mould of ignorant ages, it made Holy Writ legible again. Pushing aside the vagaries of Talmud, Midrash and Cabbala, it made pulpit and school resound with the perennial teachings of the Book of Books. It caused the lives of the Patriarchs, the workings of the prophets to appear in new and charming splendor. It aroused the interest of the Jew in all that is human, broad and cosmopolitan, laying stress on character, virtue and personal merit, and regarding the national and temporal as of secondary importance. Pointing to God's revelation to man, it held up the pictures of Abraham and Enoch, of Job or Jethro as lessons how to measure men on the scale of pure humanity without respect to creed and kin. While rejecting the dusty arena of the Halacha, it delighted to elicit living truths from the green, fertile fields of the Hagada, selecting out of a mass of worthless sayings gems like Rabbi Meir's: "The heathen who practises or studies the Law ranks as high as the Jewish high-priest;" or Ben Asai's: "This is the book of man," this is the foundation-stone of the whole Law, the key to the commandment of love for the fellow-man."

Like Prophetism, Reform rendered *practical humanity* the end of all religion. With this object in view, it nurtured and awakened everywhere the spirit of philanthropy, turning the attention of the modern Jew to the social and moral demands of life. Indeed, most of the institutions of charity and benevolence by which modern Judaism eclipses the old, may be put to the credit of Reform Judaism which, while laying all possible

stress on the humanitarian side of religion, roused the enthusiasm and the devotion of the enlightened Jew for the cause of generous-hearted love and beneficence.

Nor is the issue between Orthodoxy and Reform a mere dispute about claims and merits concerning the past and the present state of Judaism. It is a vital question concerning the future. It is a question of "to be or not to be," of religion in general. Behold the drift of our age. It upsets long-cherished views. It unsettles opinions and traditions hoary with age. It takes especial delight in dissolving, undermining, and unhinging established facts and beliefs by critical analysis and doubt. Amidst the gigantic problems which agitate all classes of society, we often feel as though the very ground beneath our feet would give way, since nothing above or below, none of the foundations of heaven or earth, appear stable and firm. Still looking closely at the aims and objects in view, we find that the mighty onslaught against the institutions and traditions of the past tends to nothing else than to asserting the perfect liberty and grandeur of *man*. What authority has lost in power, humanity at large has gained. Man's intellectual horizon, his domain over nature, his resource of wealth, his insight into the world around and within him, is steadily widening and enlarging. While class, race, and creed interests are pushed into the background, the man comes to the front. All those great social questions concerning labor, education, charity, property and crime; all those soul-stirring contests about the rights and claims of each class and member of human society, what do they aim at but the full recognition of *man*, of the divine individuality in every human being, whether child or adult, man or woman, high or lowly, even in the fallen sinner and abject criminal? Everywhere humanity holds forth its claims high above every title and letter of nobility. And this very spirit of broad philanthropy searches and examines religion after its purely human merits. It endeavors by comparison to bring the human side, the common good as well as the common errors, in every religion to light in order to render human love and virtue the test and arbiter of all. The most humane religion thus becomes, by common verdict, the best and most perfect one, and only acts which confer the greatest benefits upon mankind are regarded as the holiest ones and the most divine. In short, the destructive tendencies of our age are in fact emi-

nently positive. They do away with decaying, obsolete views, creeds, and rites in order to make room for a broader and truer, purer and simpler faith, for the great religion of humanity.

Of course, Orthodoxy in all denominations stands aghast at the fearful havoc done by the fierce array of reason's marshalled forces. The adherents of the old tremble at the organized work of overthrowing. Reform, on the contrary, hails the triumphant rise of the new. It beholds in the radical change the realization of its brightest hopes. In this light, Reformed Judaism views the present condition of the world. It proclaims a new era for humanity amidst the downfall of letter-worship and authority-belief. Shut up within his dreary ghetto-walls, crushed beneath the nightmare of subjugating legality and fear, the Jew, with his unparalleled martyrdom, his marvelous endurance and unfaltering faith, was a grand and wonderful spectacle in the eyes of the nations, but he knew not why he suffered so terribly. He only felt that he had a glorious legacy in charge, and he defended it with his naked life. And amidst this great darkness surrounding him his eyes grew so dim that, when the new day dawned, he failed to see the light which beamed upon the world and his own grand mission. Reform then loosened his bonds by declaring him to be the Messiah of the nations, the priest of mankind. Reform changed his attitude towards the world by telling him to rise from the ruins of the past and be one of the foremost in building, not a Jewish temple and kingdom, but the great, all-embracing *temple of humanity*, the longed-for kingdom of divine truth, righteousness and love all over the globe. Reform enhanced the opportunities of Judaism by defining anew its relations towards Christianity and Islamism, by recognizing their merits, their providential tasks as help-mates and co-workers of Judaism in spreading the belief in the One God of Abraham and Moses, and showing that its own great work for the world's salvation by truth and love is not accomplished yet. Conservative Judaism is, by its very nature, timid and shy in this age of iconoclastic radicalism. Reform rendered Judaism self-conscious, self-asserting, by pointing to the fact that every progress in science, art and industry, every new discovery and research will only form new rounds in the ladder of perfection which leads man up from earth to heaven, from the animal kingdom to God's holy realm.

But in order to truly render Judaism what it should be, the

religion of man, Reform has still a great and difficult task to fulfil. It must replace *legality* by *intrinsic* and *spontaneous* devotion; it must rule out fear and make love of God reign supreme. Thus far its influence was more negative than positive. It appealed too exclusively to reason. It therefore succeeded in rendering the Jew wiser but not better; we have grown free intellectually but not morally. Having emancipated the modern Jew from the yoke of ceremonialism, it must find other and more appropriate means of cultivating devotion and awakening love of God. It must strive to rouse the heart and engage the sympathies and the emotional side of man in order to make the Jew realize that religion is not a law, but a positive faculty and privilege of man, a covenant of God as old and as broad as heaven and earth.

Beautifully does the Bible single out the rainbow as the sign and symbol of God's covenant with man. Its wonderful many-colored effulgence of light upon the dark clouds is the most expressive illustration of the great Sun of Truth and Righteousness reflected in man, the manifold conceptions and aspirations of the human heart being only so many shades and hues of the one sublime light that shines on all, though hidden from sight.

Yes, God's Revelation is in all and for all. Away, then, with the barriers which separate us, the priests, from those whom we are to bring near God! The religion which the world is, more than ever before, in need of, wants humanity, character, justice, charity, freedom, and social happiness as its main elements, and Judaism, with its old, yet ever fresh fountain of inspiration, is ready to offer them to all. Let us understand and realize our mission. Let us step forth, and with uplifted standards of victory win the waiting world. Let us proclaim and practise, and by practising successfully teach the true religion of humanity and thus contribute our share towards making man what he is made for—God-like.—Amen.

PALESTINIAN OR AMERICAN JUDAISM?

FIFTH DISCOURSE. DELIVERED ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, THE
SABBATH AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH OF TAMMUS.

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts:
"The fast of the fourth month, and
the fast of the fifth, and the fast of
the seventh, and the fast of the tenth
shall be to the house of Judah joy and
gladness and cheerful feasts, but love
truth and peace."—Zechariah viii.
19.

Thus the prophet spoke regarding those who continued to bewail the fall of the old temple at Jerusalem, after the foundation had been laid to the new. Already then the views and habits of the conservative and the progressive parties seemed to collide. Dissension and discord threatened to harm the common cause. But the prophet was far from preaching peace at every price. Knowing full well that, as long as truth was not established as the basis, peace was only futile, he insisted on having truth first well grounded, and peace sought for afterwards. And these prophetic words also serve us as a motto: Truth first and then peace!

It certainly required all the boldness and original independence of mind which Einhorn possessed to proclaim the national fast, the memorial day of Jerusalem's destruction a national feast for Reformed Judaism, as our prayer-book designates it; to declare that out of the fire of the conflagration of the temple Israel rose rejuvenated as the Messiah of the nations. It certainly is not within everybody's reach to soar as high in the realization of a still distant future. Still every Jew to-day ought to take side with either view, the progressive or the retrogressive one, as regards the Holy Land; he must decide whether this day, as the first

Sabbath between the Seventeenth of Tammus and the Ninth of Ab, should be devoted to wailing over Jerusalem's sad fate, or, being the Fourth of July, given over to joy and thanksgiving in view of the Holy Land of Freedom and Human Rights which on this day was offered to all men and nations? In short, he must face the question, whether we as Jews still mourn over our past political power and glory, buried under the ruins of Zion, and waiting for a resurrection, or whether we are to celebrate the Fourth of July, not merely as Americans socially, but also as Jews in a political and religious sense as well, thanking the sublime Ruler of History for the new aims and prospects opened on this free soil for the realization of our Messianic expectations? For us, as Reformed Jews, the question has been decided long ago. We love Jerusalem as the cradle of our national existence, but we do not long for a return. We behold in Jerusalem's overthrow, not a fall, but a rise to higher glory. For us Zion stands for the fulfilment of humanity's keenest hopes and loftiest ideals, as pronounced by Israel's great seers of yore, and every "city of Brotherly Love" forms a part and link of the same. Consequently, we perceive in the jubilant tocsin peals of American liberty the mighty resonance of Sinai's thunder. We recognize in the Fourth of July the offspring of the Sixth of Sivan. We behold in the glorious sway of man's sovereignty throughout this blessed land the foundation stone for the splendid temple of humanity we hope and pray for. Why then should we lament over the fall of the old? Still it behooves us to-day to examine a little closer what the Fourth of July means to us, both as Americans and as Jews.

What the privileges are with which the Declaration of Independence endowed us as Americans, I may express in one sentence: It placed a king's crown on every human brow. It invested every human being with heaven-born sovereignty. As the Sixth of Sivan appointed Israel to be a kingdom of priests, so did the Fourth of July render the American nation a priesthood of true human royalty. *Freedom, Equality, and Brotherly Love* form the three precious jewels on the diadem of American citizenship.

Freedom is first and uppermost. No oppression from above, no compulsion from without, no obstruction by law, no barrier nor class privilege checks man in the unfolding of his power and his individuality. Free speech, free press, free exercise of all

civil rights, free practice of every art and industrial vocation, free expression of thought and opinion throughout the land! What a vigorous, energetic, enterprising and noble type of mankind has this new liberty fostered and raised! What a splendid, firm and resolute spirit of enterprise and industry has it roused and cultivated! It has pushed the old world into the background. It outshines and challenges the rest of nations in inventive genius, in clearness of judgment, in practical, sound common-sense.

Equality is the second. All are alike before the law. No difference of rank, of blood, class, or creed. Man alone counts. With equal rights and equal duties, each stands against the other, holding the same chance as the other. One opinion is as good as the other; one sect entitled to the same respect as the other. And behold the fruits that grow on the beautiful tree of liberty and equality! A new and decidedly better kind of humanity thrives and flourishes under our benign institutions. The exclusive and offensive particularities of the former immigrants are dropped, and broader views and finer traits take their place. All that is small, clannish and local is, by force of public opinion, pushed aside, and that which is humane and universally good and sweet brought into prominence. Human worth and dignity, human greatness and skill form the standard and object of all endeavors in social and religious life. Great cosmopolitan aims and achievements decide on the value and success of each single effort within the great national fabric.

And here we have already included the third jewel of American life, the spirit of broad-minded liberality and brotherly love. Freedom, far from unbridling passion and selfishness in the genuine American, tended rather to bring out the nobler and tenderer qualities of man. It engendered humility and devotion in his attitude towards God, and generosity and kindness in his relation to his fellow-man. The American is profoundly devout and religious, but his religion has not the flavor of fanatical bigotry. He is by nature tolerant and philanthropic. Without inquiring after birth or creed, rank or profession, he readily and gladly lends assistance to all the suppliants and needy. Church and school, municipal and State affairs help and promote the interests of benevolence and charity. What in other countries the princes, fattened on the marrow of the people, now and then consent to do, all the industrial classes of the people, high or lowly,

vie with each other in accomplishing. Liberality is one of the chief innate traits of the American people. Yes, the American people is a nation of noble-minded sovereigns. And to spread and plant these truly Republican ideas and notions all over the globe is its glorious mission. Its seeds lie deeply imbedded in the wilderness of Sinai, in the truths revealed by our great prophets of yore; but the magnificent tree, as it stands before us to-day, overtopping all other human plantations, is to offer shadow and fruit to all the nations and kingdoms of the world. And this reminds us Americans not only of our debt of gratitude to God, but of our sacred task for future mankind.

Particularly great and solemn is our debt of gratitude and our obligation as American Jews. Not only because we enjoy comparatively greater blessings on this blessed soil of freedom than elsewhere on the globe, but because the very aims and ideals of humanity, which form the essence and soul of our religion, find here a more congenial and fertile soil than anywhere else. Here is the land where milk and honey flow for all. This is the land of promise of a great and new human race. Here the old dividing lines of race and sect are obliterated, and by natural selection a new type and standard of manhood and womanhood is developing. But then it behooves us as Jews to contemplate and to know what position we have to take in the midst of this great nation, and what the duties are which devolve upon us as the divinely chosen people of priests, as the oldest of nations among this, the youngest one in human history.

Brethren! The answer is not difficult. In order to exert our influence, in order to carry out our mission, we must first cultivate and develop the fine qualities which distinguish American life, and then enrich the world surrounding us with those treasures of the mind and the heart which we have stored up during our journey through the lands and ages. It will not do for us as teachers of humanity to remain Hebrews in garb and custom, in views and language. It will not do to offer our prayers in a tongue which only few scholars nowadays understand. We cannot afford any longer to pray for a return to Jerusalem. It is a blasphemy and a lie upon the lips of every American Jew. Neither ought we any longer to retain the Pentateuch lessons unrevised and unabridged, either in an annual or in a triennial cycle. I revere the venerable Torah scroll as our sacred palladium of the ages, for which our fathers a thousand times sacrificed their lives, and

which, in fact, miraculously preserved our own, but I want to have it read, or rather the whole Bible used and perused with caution by way of wise eclecticism. If we may, in the words of Moses, the great law-giver, proclaim: "Which is the people that has laws so wise and just as are ours? And which people has a God so holy and high, and yet so nigh as is ours?" we must, I am sure, bring our religion home to the understanding and appreciation of all the people. We must do away with all that detracts from the grandeur and wisdom of Judaism, and hold aloft only that which enhances its human worth and brightness. If we want to give expression and scope to the great prophetic wish and hope that our sanctuary should become "a house of prayer unto all nations," we certainly ought to render our mode of worship, all our religious observances truly attractive and impressive for all. King Solomon's dedicatory prayer, so mindful of the stranger that comes from afar to listen and to see, should ring forth its melodious sounds out of every human heart. Religion humanized and humanity religionized—that is the aim, the beginning and end of Judaism, as Reform understands and expounds it. Now the reform movement, so happily and auspiciously started in the old Fatherland, has there only too soon been interfered with and partly suppressed by the authorities of either the State or the older generation. Free America offers bright prospects for its healthy and vigorous growth and rise. Untrammelled and unimpeded by any power, Judaism may evolve all its strength and its wisdom, and it must naturally assume a really democratic, cosmopolitan character. In this atmosphere of freedom and broad humanity it cannot help becoming a free, practical, common-sense religion, able to enter the arena and compete with the great religious denominations, and striving for victory through pulpit, school, and press. But in order to win in this great prospective contest, it must throw into the background everything small, clannish, and exclusive. It must drop its Orientalism, and become truly American in spirit and form.

Mark well. We have first to use the pruning-knife and trim our own tree of life before improving those of others. We must first embellish ourselves ere we may embellish others. We must first learn from our American fellow-citizens how to blend religious devotion and piety with freedom. We must first rekindle the flame of religion in our hearts, and at our domestic

firesides, before we may enlighten others. We must first awaken religious sentiment and enthusiasm in our children, and render our houses and our synagogues what they were in the dreary ghetto, sanctuaries of faith, temples of virtue and piety; we must first have again, as of yore, our domestic life hallowed by Sabbath rest and sacred festive praise and song, ere we can claim the title and name of God's holy people before the world. Much is needed to render Judaism honored, admired, and influential in our country. Many are the sacrifices we have to bring ere we have reached the standard which commands the respect of those around us. We must first succeed in opening the eyes of our own people, in familiarizing them with our priceless past and our world-redeeming truths, in inspiring our younger generations with love and zeal for our great historic mission, before we dare offer our religion as a model and a bright gem to others. It is true, nowhere has Judaism better chances of becoming the pioneer of a humanitarian religion, nowhere can the Jewish faith venture to be the advocate of the broadest truths concerning God and man, and form the golden chain to embrace all religions and sacred books, and blend them into one religion of humanity than in this blessed new world. Still this requires moral earnestness, a deep religious conviction, a positive, self-asserting faith. And this is what Radical Reform aims at, not by *destructive* measures, but by *constructive* ones, by ever new attempts at building up, just as nature works—recuperating, refashioning and putting up new tissues, while, or even before, the decaying old have begun to shrivel and fall off.

The seventeenth of Tammuz, with its sad reminiscences of Israel's tragic fate, recalls to my mind the touching words of the saintly martyr, Rabbi Hanina ben Thordion, who, having been found studying the Law in spite of the imperial interdict, was condemned to be burned together with the sacred scroll. His pupils, sorrowing witnesses of his terrible sufferings, stood aghast, wondering at the marvellous patience and resignation which brought a smile on the face of the martyr amidst the most agonizing pains. "What seest thou, O Master, that causes thee to smile in this awful moment?" was their question. "I see the scroll of the Law consumed to ashes, but the letters, as if written in fire, rise up to heaven, as visible testimonies of the Invisible God to whose throne my soul is soaring up." הנבילין אשר בשרפן והאותיות פורחות באויר. Indeed, this is the secret of the entire

Jewish history. The outer shape is being steadily consumed, the Jewish temple, the Jewish nationality, the laws, the rites, all crumble to pieces before the storm which works destruction throughout the ages, but the vital spirit permeating the past continues, ever creating new and better forms in place of the old ones. Israel is the burning bush, and God appears in the fire that burns but consumes not. And only when the fire has spread to fill the entire world with its bright blaze of holiness, only when Israel's God will be worshipped in truth as the King of the nations and the Father of men, the full secret is revealed, the mission of the Jew fulfilled. Amen.