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NEO-ZIONISTS

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**ZIONISM
AND THE NEO-ZIONISTS**

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"The securities were shifted, the terms of the trusteeship changed, when the people of the Land became the people of the Book. . . . The idea of their trusteeship was a sheet-anchor to the Jews as the waves and the billows passed over them. . . . Trustees of civilisation might not sigh or sing in solitudes; nor was it worth while, with the feeling so keen that 'a thousand years are but as a day,' to plot or plan against the oppressors of the moment. The ideal of the Jews must always be to bring forth instruction, and the Word of God from Jerusalem'; and to this end—'that all the people of the earth may know Thy name.' This is the goal of Jewish separateness. . . . The loyal believe that a political restoration would be a retrogressive step, narrowing and embarrassing the wider issues."

KATIE (Lady) MAGNUS, 1889.



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ZIONISM AND THE NEO-ZIONISTS

Fifteen years ago I wrote* :—"The Russian Pale will not be broken down till the Jews of Russia have succeeded, like the Jews of England before them, in asserting their right to civil and religious liberty. Liberty in Russia is non-existent; when Russia has learnt its blessing, Russian Jews will share in it. The real problem of the twentieth century is the backwardness of the nations, not the forwardness of the Jews."

I was there expressing a conviction that the Jewish problem in the twentieth century, then only a year old, would be solved by the progress of backward nations, not by the surrender of the Jewish race to the neo-Zionists; and, because my argument was misrepresented in certain quarters as an attack on the author of *The Jewish State*, I added the following words, to which I subscribe to-day :—

"My belief in the foredoomed failure of neo-Zionism, my objection to its leaders' readiness to 'make capital,' in Mr. Zangwill's words, of the 'longing for Palestine' (as if to say that the name of Isaiah has been added to

* *Aspects of the Jewish Question*. By a *Quarterly Reviewer*. 1902. Mr. John Murray, who published this little book, kindly allows me to make use of its contents in the present pamphlet.

the directorate of Zion, Limited), and my conviction that neither Turkey nor the Great Powers would ever seriously consider the project, are independent of my admiration for Dr. Theodor Herzl himself. The attack on the scheme must stand for what it is worth, but there is nothing personal in its intention. I have twice had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Herzl; once, in Vienna, in 1896, and again, in London, this year [1902]. On each occasion he has allowed me to express my disagreement from his views, and on each, and especially on the second, I have been deeply sensible of the single-mindedness, the devotion, and the sincerity which inspire the leader of this hope. He does, I believe, more harm than good, but the conclusion of the matter lies on the knees of the gods."

We may be nearing this conclusion to-day. At least, there is a body of Jews, smaller in this country than abroad, who, despite the writing on the wall and the birth of liberty in Russia, still desire to lead the Jews back to the country from which they have spread the law, still desire to draw them away from the scenes of their missionary work and to exchange the old Zionism for the new. Before that conclusion is registered beyond recall (and it has still a long way to travel), it has been suggested to me that I should re-issue portions of the essay which I wrote in 1902.

For the interval of fifteen years has brought some changes for the good. In 1902 we read in *The Jewish Year Book* :--

"The dawn of the twentieth century finds the Jews in many countries groaning under disabilities . . . which seem to mock at all ideas of human progress. As one reads of them, one almost fancies that time must

have moved backward instead of forward. . . . The unpleasant truth is forced upon us that a large portion of Europe is still plunged in the darkness of the Middle Ages."

Assuredly, that is not so true to-day. The star of freedom has risen in new Russia, and Prussian *Kultur*, which re-invented anti-Semitism, is setting in baths of blood. The Jewish problem to Jewish eyes in 1902 was how to escape persecution. Theodor Herzl was a desperate man. Jewish conditions under Francis Joseph were intolerable, and the situation was even worse in Roumania and Russia. To-day this despair is lifted. Prussia, the State without Semitism, is falling by the vision she rejected. Democratic Russia is finding her own soul. The remedies devised by the neo-Zionists to cure the evils they could not bear disappear with the evils that engendered them. Dr. Leon Pinsker's *Self-Emanicipation* of September, 1882, reads like an old, dead play :—

"The international Jewish question must undergo a national solution. Our national regeneration can take place, of course, only very slowly. But *we* must take the *first* step, and our successors will have to follow. . . . The national regeneration of the Jews must be initiated by a congress of Jewish notables:"

The first steps are being taken by the Gentiles, and there is no longer an international Jewish question. So, too, Dr. Herzl's monograph, *A Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*, first published in England in 1896, is likewise antiquated and out of date. Herzl's original manifesto proposed to found a Jewish State in Western Asia or South America. Later on, he selected Palestine, as the ancient home of the Jews,

possessing a glamour to attract the victims of European hate. His notion was that the Sultan of Turkey would sell the province to the Jews—Dr. Pinsker shared this delusion—and that the European powers would guarantee its integrity as a fifth-rate buffer State—the wildest notion, to our thinking, which an ambitious journalist ever based on a neglect of political facts and an indifference to religious belief. It never had the least prospect of success; and the Herzl variant of Zionism, though it successfully deluded a heterogeneous crowd of foreign enthusiasts, proved an unfortunate compromise between two quite opposite ideas.

The restoration of the Jews to the land of their old independence may occur in one of two ways. It may be by the concerted act of the Governments of the countries of their dispersion, devised as a measure of self-protection against the spread of the Jews; or it may be by the fulfilment of prophecy when the Jewish mission is complete. The first is the creed of good anti-Semites, the second of orthodox Jews. The orthodox Jew recognises a divine purpose in his exile. He is where he is for some purpose. By his mere survival and patience he is serving some divine end. He is a witness and a priest, and he may not interrupt the mission of his race to save his own poor skin. But Dr. Herzl's plan made short work of the spiritual element in the new exodus of Jewry. He tried to anticipate Providence. The restoration, instead of occurring as the appointed end of the dispersion, was to be interpolated in the middle of it as a means of evading its obligations. This plan, which was a travesty of Judaism, was equally futile as statecraft. There was not the least disposition on the part of the Great Powers of Europe to see the wealth and talent of Israel pass into the hands of the Sultan, nor

yet to see the Holy Land invaded by a crowd of Jews, still less to complicate the Eastern question by planting another weak State in that troublesome ward of invalids.

The unaccustomed meekness of the scheme was, perhaps, its most surprising feature. Isaiah said: "Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Judah, for the Lord hath comforted his people. Say unto Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid." On these passages, and passages like these, the Jews have based their faith in the Messiah, whether personal or impersonal, at whose coming the nations of Christendom will be eager to take hold of their skirts; and the people which is permitted to look forward to so splendid a destiny as this is forgiven by all just men for the touch of racial arrogance, inevitable, perhaps, to those who live in the light of such a mission. But now, contrast with Isaiah and his appeal to racial pride the apologetic tone of Dr. Herzl in defining the destiny of his race:—

"The departure of the Jews," he wrote, in his introduction to the *Jewish State*, "will involve no economic disturbances, no crises, no persecutions; in fact, the countries they abandon will revive to a new period of prosperity. There will be an inner migration of Christian citizens into the positions evacuated by Jews. . . . The Jews will leave as honoured friends, and if some of them return, they will receive the same favourable welcome and treatment at the hands of civilized nations as is accorded to all foreign visitors. Their exodus will have no resemblance to a flight, for it will be a well-regulated expedition under control of public opinion."

A flight, accordingly, which is no flight, an abandonment and an evacuation—this was to be the modern rendering of the Messianic hope; instead of Gentiles coming to the light, Dr. Herzl offered the pretty picture of Jews content, like foreign visitors, with a “favourable welcome and treatment.” I have called this a travesty of Judaism. But it proved worse than a travesty in the event. For Dr. Herzl and those who thought with him became themselves part-authors of the anti-Semitism which they set out to slay. How could the European countries which the Jews proposed to “abandon” justify their retention of the Jews? Why should civil equality have been won by the strenuous exertions of the Jews if the Jews themselves were to be the first to offer to “evacuate” their position, and to claim the bare courtesy of “foreign visitors”? Why should the Russian Jews depart in the very hour that the Russian peasant found his soul? We all remember the debates in the House of Commons of 1833. Lord Macaulay, speaking in committee on behalf of the removal of disabilities, said:—

“Another objection which has been made to this motion is that the Jews look forward to the coming of a great deliverer, to their return to Palestine, to the rebuilding of their temple, to the revival of their ancient worship, and that, therefore, they will always consider England not their country, but merely as their place of exile. But surely, Sir, it would be the grossest ignorance of human nature to imagine that the anticipation of an event which is to happen at some time altogether indefinite . . . can ever occupy the minds of men to such a degree as to make them regardless of what is near and present and certain. . . . Are we to exclude all millenarians from Parliament and office?” . . .

Fourscore³ years—a strong man’s lifetime—make a

short instalment of the Millennium, but if the neo-Zionistic plan for the political restoration of the Jews has to be taken into serious account, then Macaulay was wrong, and his "grossly ignorant" opponents were right in their view of human nature.

But the neo-Zionists were playing with words, and knew not all they said. Zion was a magical name in the ears of the ignorant victims of Russian and Roumanian persecution; and though Dr. Herzl was indifferent at first whether he led them to Argentina or to Palestine, he quickly perceived the commercial value of keeping the name of the old firm on his prospectus. Not even Mr. Zangwill, ingenious rhetorician though he is, could evade the logic of this conclusion. "Palestine, indeed, but an afterthought," he wrote in his *Dreamers of the Ghetto*: "an aspiration of unsuspected strength, to be utilised—like all human forces—by the maker of history. States are the expression of souls; in any land the Jewish soul could express itself in characteristic institutions, would shake off the long oppression of the ages, and renew its youth in touch with the soil. Yet since there is this longing for Palestine, let us make capital of it—capital that will return its safe percentage." Was there ever a more cynical confession of the commercialisation of a spiritual idea? And the promoters knew their public. Poor Jews, who would have preferred the fleshpots of Vienna to the unknown terrors of South America, jumped at the sound of Jerusalem. To die in Palestine is their ambition; the restoration is their waking dream; and Dr. Herzl, the "maker of history," was quick to represent his scheme of evading the mission of the exiles and their duty to the lands of their dispersion as a fulfilment of the ancient prophecy.

"The Jews," he himself wrote, "have dreamt this

kingly dream all through the long nights of their history. 'Next year in Jerusalem,' is their old phrase. Now comes the opportunity to prove that the dream may be converted into a living reality"—and to the extent of the possibility of the off-chance neo-Zionism launched its propaganda. The opportunity, stated with so much skill, might be the trumpet-call to Zion; at least the ears of Ghetto-bred Hebrews, bewildered with cries of hate, might well be eager to accept another false prophet as the Redeemer. Not, indeed, that Dr. Herzl's success was commensurate with his anticipations. In 1896 he wrote: "I imagine that Governments will, either voluntarily or under pressure from the anti-Semites, pay certain attention to this scheme; and they may perhaps actually receive it here and there with a sympathy which they also show to the Society of the Jews." This expectation was not fulfilled. The Western Governments did not invite a spontaneous outburst of anti-Semitism by acknowledging their Jews as strangers; and, as to the interviews with the Sultan of Turkey which Dr. Herzl enjoyed, we know now that his Imperial Majesty was smiling in his long sleeve. But the Congress was founded, and each year it was addressed by "impassioned rhetoricians," whose airy structure in the clouds quickly began to reveal little signs of rifts and flaws. I may be permitted to quote the picturesque account of such a gathering from the reporter's pen of Mr. Zangwill, who, as a friend of the movement, if called as a witness on the other side, will give evidence of supreme importance. He wrote some years ago:—

"As no two of the leaders are alike, so do the rank and file fail to resemble one another. Writers and journalists, poets and novelists and merchants, professors and men of professions—types that once sought

to slough their Jewish skins and mimic, on Darwinian principles, the colours of the environment, but that now, with some tardy sense of futility or stir of pride, proclaim their brotherhood in Zion—they are come from many places; from far lands and from near; from uncouth, unknown villages of Bukowina and the Caucasus, and from the great European capitals; *thickest from the pales of persecution, in rare units from the free realms of England and America*—a strange phantasmagoria of faces—” and, it may fairly be added, a strange foundation of a State. The italics are my own; but Pole, Hungarian, Roumanian, Frenchman, Dutchman, German, Russian, Egyptian, Swede—how shall these be welded together into a single republic, pent closely between the desert and the sea? “As an attempt to realise the ideal of Judaism,” wrote Mr. Oswald John Simon in the *Nineteenth Century* as long ago as September, 1898, “the programme formulated at Basle presents the spectacle of the most contemptible, if not the most grotesque, species of idealism which was ever laid before the remnant of the descendants of a great nation.”

These words are even truer to-day. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona*; there were Zionists before Theodor Herzl, long before he had as much as realised that any Judaism existed except by the disabilities which it imposed. Let me quote Isaiah for a moment—Isaiah, the first and greatest, the most eloquent and most spiritual of Zionists, whose burning pride in his own race and whose invincible belief in its destiny were combined in an impassioned appeal to which no true Jew can be deaf:—“The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despise thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, the Zion of the

Holy One of Israel." "I will bring thy seed from the East, and gather thee from the West. I will say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; everyone that is called by my name. For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him." What is there of this prophetic confidence, of this stubborn and steadfast faith, in the Zionism of a Congress and a Bank and of negotiations with Oriental tyrants? Their Zion is to "return a safe percentage," a safe percentage of the glory of the Lord, of the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. I have read a fair amount of Hebrew literature, and I venture to assert that not even Heine himself, in his bitterest mood of disillusion, ever touched with more savage mockery a high and an inspiring ideal. All the hope and the patience and the waiting, all the suffering and the agony and the martyrdom, all the inspired belief in an end transcending the unfulfilled prayers and the incomplete longings of the ages, are to be sacrificed to the temporary advantage of using the name of Zion and are to gratify the "frightfulness" of anti-Semitism by abandoning the mission of the Semites. Surely, to quote Isaiah again, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." Zionism demands an ampler air. Zion—the symbol of emancipation—the promise of redemption—the salvation of the world—will not permanently acquiesce in so humiliating a defeat, nor adopt so foreshortened a standard in lieu of its age-long aim.

The neo-Zionists are pliant enough not to require all Jews to hasten to the Zion of their foundation. "For thus saith the Lord, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream,

As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." But Dr. Daiches, eight years ago, addressing the London University Zionists; contracted this flowing stream to the size of an inland canal: "It is not the intention of Zionism," he declared, though we learned our Zionism from the Prophets, "that all Jews all over the world should leave the countries in which they live and emigrate to Palestine. This is not necessary, this is scarcely possible. A great number of Jews will always remain in the Diaspora." Are these still to be permitted, we wonder, to pray for the Zion of the Restoration? For our dream, our prophetic certainty, of the Messianic Zion would be mocked by the Zionist flag of such as migrate to that colony. What a pitiful travesty of nationalism! We are to be citizens of the country in which we live; we are to be members of the State of Palestine; we are to cherish the Zion of Hebrew hopes. In their vaunted national ambition, these neo-Zionists forget how to think imperially of Zion. Let them call their adventitious colony by any other name they choose, Daichesia or Zangwilopolis, or what they will, but let them leave us the mother-comfort which is the promise of Israel in Jerusalem.

We used to hear about Little Englanders. Surely Little Jews is the right term for the neo-Zionists, bred in persecution, who "prophesy falsely unto you in My name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord." Desperate men in places may have urged the remedy of flight. But the strenuousness, the consistency, the moral purpose have always lain in the direction of an improvement of Jewish conditions from within. Russian Jews by remaining in Russia will help Russia to become a modern State. German Jews will teach Semitic virtues to the disciples of Herren Adolf Stoecker and Houston

Chamberlain. For this is the mission of Israel in exile, the divine object of his dispersion, as it may be read. And here, accordingly, is found the final solution of the Jewish question, as it presents itself to the minds of spiritual Jews acquainted with their own history :

“ God wills that His world, the world of man, shall become better, not worse. With the optimism of faith the Hebrew seers and poets look *forward* to a Golden Age : they do not relegate it to a distant and irrecoverable past. Righteousness and peace shall at last prevail. ‘ They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more.’ This is the final issue of Israel’s work. . . . Such is the exalted hope, ethical and religious in one, world-wide in its range, spiritual in its goal, which the highest teachers of the Bible explicitly connect and co-ordinate with the mission and the destiny of Israel. . . . They form, to my thinking, the essence of Judaism.”* We shall spill that essence at grave peril.

Laurie Magnus.

* Montefiore, *Bible for Home Reading*, II.

JUDAISM AND NATIONALISM

STATEMENT BY AMERICAN RABBIS.

The following statement appears in the Message of the President to the Twenty-eighth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, held in Buffalo, New York, on June 28, 1917:—

Another movement, which in my judgment is calculated to suppress the religious vitality which Judaism should manifest, is one not making itself felt from without but rather from within the camp of Israel. I refer to Jewish nationalism. I am not here to quarrel with Zionists. Mine is only the intention to declare that we as rabbis, who are consecrated to the service of the Lord, whose lips are to guard knowledge and from whose mouth the people are to seek the Law because we are messengers of the Lord of Hosts, have no place in a movement in which Jews band together on racial or national grounds and for a political state or even a legally-assured home. Upon us rests the obligation to take up and sound unremittingly the keynote to which the Jew has ever given expression. The religious Israel, having the sanctions of history, must not be sacrificed to the purely racial Israel of modern planning. If it is sacrificed, the religious demand of the Jews of our age, apart from other considerations, cannot be satisfied. The time has come for this Conference to publish the statement that it stands for an Israel whose mission is religious, and that, in the light of this mission, it looks with disfavour upon any movement the purpose of which is other than religious.

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