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Religious.

THE JEWS.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE EASTERN NOVA SCOTIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,

The subject to which we invite attention in this our annual epistle, is that of **THE JEWS**. They claim our attention and regard as being a portion of the human race; and they claim peculiar regard, as being among the most interesting portions of that race. To them do we owe, instrumentally, all we enjoy in the present, and all we hope for in the future. From them sprung "the desire of all nations." "Out of Zion went forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This fact alone invests the Jew with an interest which nothing can enhance.

In treating this subject, we may advert to the present condition of the Jews; to the claims which they have on our christian sympathies; and then present some incentives suited to call into activity such sympathies. During the long lapse of eighteen centuries the Jew has stood forth conspicuous before the world, a monumental attestation of the truth of the divine word. The destruction of the city of their solemnities, and their dispersion over the earth, was a literal fulfilment of prophetic threatening, uttered long ages before, by the servants of God. "If ye will not for all this, hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury, and I, even I will chastise you seven times for your sins; I will scatter you among the heathen and will draw out a sword after you, and your land shall be desolate and your cities waste." "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other." In harmony with these and numerous other predictions of the prophets the present condition of the Jew is that of isolation from man, and alienation from God. Because of their stiffnecked rebellion, because they would have it so, they are given up to the rejection of the Messiah, whose coming, and the time and circumstances of whose coming, he that runneth may read.

Their case presents to our view with terrible conspicuousness the blinding process, the hardening power of unbelief, and its far reaching, fearful consequences. Scathed and blasted, we find this people dispersed among the nations and deprived of those privileges which are denied to no others. Like those great rivers which disembody, and with distinct current, flow out far into the ocean, so do this people, though among, coalesce not with the nations of the earth. Wherever we travel we find the children of Abraham everywhere and always the same, groping in the darkness of a dispensation long since passed away. "For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away." They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, of the divine and only way of justification," and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Such is the condition of the Jew. He is under disabilities from man, he is under the frown of Heaven, and in a condition the most wretched which falls to the lot of humanity.

Having adverted to their present condition, let us now with much brevity, glance at the second part of our subject, and notice the strong claims which they have on our christian sympathies. The sentiment of the great Apostle reverberates along the centuries and makes a responsive echo in every christian heart: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," is the great command of him who spake as never man spake. This excludes none, but embraces all the human race. And if there be a people to whom beyond another, we owe a debt of gratitude yet unpaid, it is that people, descended from faithful Abraham. As the depositaries of the glorious revelation of God to man, through them have come down to us the scriptures of eternal truth. In these sacred oracles are contained those cheering and sublime teachings, those far-reaching, all-embracing prophecies which fill the entire field of vision to the

close of time, and nerve the christian's heart for the great warfare of life.

That nothing may be wanting to incite to an energetic response to the claims which the condition of this people make upon us, we have presented before us the sure word of promise. "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a prince, without a king, without a sacrifice and without an image, without an ephod and without a teraphim. Afterward shall they return and seek the Lord their God and David their king." "And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck them up, to break down and destroy and afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith the Lord." And what is Ezekiel's vision of the reviving of the dry bones but an illustrious promise of a more glorious revival than has yet occurred, when that people shall turn to the Lord from whom they have revolted? Says the evangelical prophet: "It shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem." Let us hear the decisive and final utterance of the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "I would not brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." There shall be a general turning of Israel to the Lord their God.

Again, have we not in the response of this people, to the claims of the Gospel in the earlier ages of Christianity, a bright promise of their glorious destiny? From the Acts of the Apostles we hear that many Jews early embraced the truth. By the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost three thousand were converted; not long after, five thousand had embraced the truth as it is in Jesus; and to the Church were daily added, such as should be saved. Along the subsequent centuries, we have from time to time cheering pledges that God has not forgotten to be gracious to his ancient people. In order to prove this we have but to refer to the Jews of the 5th Century, in the islands of Minorca, Cyprus, and Crete, when large numbers were brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the dark, gloomy periods of the middle ages, the Lord ever had his witnesses among the descendants of the Father of the faithful.

We cannot here notice, except in the most cursory manner, the influence of the Reformation of the 16th Century, on the condition of the Jews. It may suffice to say, that the revival of literature, the study of the sacred languages, and of the Holy Scriptures, the study of oriental customs and manners, and that of the Hebrews in particular, led to a deeper interest in this people than had existed for long ages before. Then was awakened in the breasts of christians a very general sympathy in behalf of the ancient people of God. We learn that Luther, in his latter years, expressed the warm emotions of his heart towards them. And history informs us that Oliver Cromwell had thoughts and plans with reference to their re-establishment.

In the 17th Century a pious preacher of Strasburg named Schadeus, translated the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, into the Hebrew, and at his own expense published them, under the name of the Pentateuch of the New Testament. Not long after this John Muller published a letter to the Jews, on the Salvation of Christ. The success of these two works was great, and many were brought thereby to enjoy the blessings of salvation.

In order further to encourage and incite us to the performance of duty, in this noble work, let us briefly notice the condition of this people during the past and present century, and the efforts which have been put forth for their conversion. We have thus far noticed only individual efforts. But early in the 18th century christian communities took the work in hand. The Moravian brethren were not backward in this noble cause. Zinzendorf had enlarged views of Israel's destiny, and ever treated the Jews with great consideration and affection.

The first society especially formed in their favor took place at Halle, in Germany, in 1728, under the name of "the Jewish institute of Callemberg." In this institution we have a triumphant proof of the power of prayer. Said the pious and venerable Prelate, Hochstetter: "there are three things which in prayer, I have long asked of God.—1st. That he would be pleased to pour out an abundant effusion of his Spirit on christians in Germany; 2nd. That he would be pleased to send forth laborers into the vast field of Pagan lands; 3rd. That he would remember the vine of Israel and have mercy upon it." This last prayer was answered, and the noble institution above noticed, was established. Young Callemberg, the founder, continued for thirty-two years, to direct it. This establishment continued for sixty-four years, and sent forth Jewish missionaries through Europe, Asia, and Africa, who proclaimed salvation through the blood of the Lamb.

Whilst European christians have put forth such noble and successful efforts, christians in America have not forgotten their duty in this great work. In the cities of New York and Boston, central Jewish societies exist, with hundreds of branches throughout the Union. On the shores of the Hudson are lands, which christians of the United States have assigned to Jews who have fled from persecution in other countries. The Lord has largely blessed the efforts of American christians in this noble cause.

Permit us now, before concluding, to present some of the many motives which urge us to labor and pray for Israel's conversion.

1st. *Sympathy for the suffering* calls for our prayers and our efforts. Has ever a people endured such numerous and long continued wrongs, as have the Jews. Theirs have been the rigors of an Egyptian endurance, for age on age. Their unceasing cry has been, when the morning came, "would God it were evening," and at evening, "would God it were morning," because of the terror which has seized upon them. Nor let any in reply to this, say "such was the prediction of the prophet, and such the purpose of heaven." Divine purpose and human duty, so far from running always in parallel lines, are not unfrequently seem opposed, the one to the other. By the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," was our Lord's betrayal; yet was it by "wicked hands that he was crucified and slain."

2nd. *Gratitude* calls upon us to put forth a helping hand. Who was the first great missionary to the human race? Though the Prince of the kings of the earth, he was a Jew. Though "Immanuel, God with us," he was of Abraham's seed. David's Lord was David's son. And allied to the great missionary, as to the flesh, were the first subordinate missionaries. They gave us the gospel; our privilege and duty in return, is, to present it to them.

3rd. *The Command* of our risen Lord is, "begin at Jerusalem." To the Jew first in point of time was the gospel preached, was the word of salvation sent; and as long as Israel's race is found far from God and righteousness, the command comes, clear and distinct from the Captain of Salvation, "beginning at Jerusalem."

4th. When faith would fail and courage sink prophecy reassures us "Behold I will gather you from the nations, I will bring you into your own land, I will cleanse you from your pollutions, I will give you a new heart, I will put my spirit within you, and make you walk in mine ordinances" "so all Israel shall be saved."

5th. Finally, Do not the signs of the times present a powerful motive to hasten into the field, which promises such a glorious harvest?

1. Among these signs is the marked change, which is taking place in the civil condition of the Jews. We find alike in England and France, in Germany, Holland and Russia, yea, everywhere, that the civil disabilities under which they so long labored are fast being removed.

2. There is at this time, a disposition on the part of the Jew to listen to the christian such as has never before existed since the time of the Apostles.

3. The general expectation of this people is another cheering sign. At the advent of the blessed Jesus, there was a general expectation of some near, unknown, but great event; and such is now the state of expectancy on the part of the peeled and seathed sons of Abraham.

4. Lastly, the numerous conversions which have taken place among them, within the past few years, is one of the extraordinary and encouraging signs of these times. In Berlin, where there are not 7,000 Jews, no less than 1,000 have professed faith in Jesus Christ. We are told that in Hungary and Gallicia, the field seems white, ready to the harvest. In Russia, within the last 15 years, about 2,000 have embraced the truth. Some cases of thrilling interest have lately occurred in America, of the conversion of Jews, the recital of which, did space permit, would cause our hearts to leap for joy. And let us recur to the generally well known fact, that more Jews have been converted within the last quarter of a century, than during the previous period of seventeen hundred years.

Is there nothing, Dear Brethren, in these, and in such facts as these, to awaken our highest expectations, and our fullest activities with reference to Israel's destiny? Are we desirous of blessings richer far than all the abundance of corn or wine? Behold the sure high-way to such blessings: "I will bless him that blesseth thee, and curse him that curseth thee." Castigations the most rigorous have ever fallen upon Israel's persecutors, while those which have shown them favor, have shared in the richest benedictions. This is a fact which deserves to be deeply pondered. Are these rich promises for those who propagate the gospel? Are there in store for them rich blessings of heavenly favor? Does their peace flow as a river, their righteousness as the waves of the sea. But if there be blessings richer and fuller for the diffusion of heavenly truth among one people more than another, it is for those who say unto Israel, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Though the time has not yet come, it may be drawing near, when it will be our privilege and duty, as a body of christians, to establish a Jewish Mission. May we unite with our praises for blessings enjoyed, our activities and prayers, for their largest diffusion, and be in readiness, at the divine call, for every good word and work.