

# עדות לישראל

"Witness to Israel."

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## THE PECULIAR PEOPLE.

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## [SUPPLEMENT.]

# THE PECULIAR PEOPLE.

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### OPEN LETTER TO THE REV. RABBI L. WEISS, COLUMBUS, GA.

*Dear Sir,*—Allow me, a Christ-believing Jew, to give an answer to your letter, addressed to the editor of THE PECULIAR PEOPLE, and published in that paper.

1. There can be no “sad disappointments in the expectation” of any Christian concerning the adoption by the Jews of “Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah promised to our Fathers.” We, as *true* believers, are naturally moved by that inward, hidden, secret, spiritual life which God has put into us, to confess our *real* experience of the forgiveness of our sins, conversion, regeneration, and reconciliation with God. We, no matter whether preachers or laymen, preach the gospel, not only because we know it to be our duty, but because we cannot help doing so, leaving in the hands of God, who only is able to open the eyes of the understanding, our efforts, which in love are well-meant.

2. Our study of the Bible is in vain, if we do it as critics and not as humble scholars, bringing with us much prejudice and the human measure of reason, darkened also by sin. Without that Holy Spirit, who moved and inspired those God-elected men in writing the Holy Scriptures, we are not able to understand the Word of God. Therefore we must pray for enlightenment through the Holy Spirit, as did David: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” *Psa. 119: 18.* But now is the time for Israel, as the Lord has foretold through Isaiah (29: 9–12), “Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the

prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned." (Read the whole chapter, please!) The trouble, as you see, is "that Jews to-day study the New Testament as well as the Old,"—not well, because in the "spirit of deep sleep," as the Lord says, and with "closed eyes" of understanding.

3. That education and our surroundings, especially in the times of childhood, have an immeasurable influence on man, cannot be denied. But has, therefore, all the *good* we have learned of a loving mother less value? And, on the other hand, is the *wrong* impressed by the bad example of corrupt, demoralized parents not so wrong, but excusable because merely the result of a bad education? No, no. We should be very careful in using the holy word, "education," with an intent to diminish (lessen) the value of the absolute truth of the absolute (revealed) will of an absolute (independent) God.

4. "By birth" one can be a Jew or a Gentile with all the peculiarities of his nation or family, but in regard to religion he comes and has to come according to the will of God, and make a personal decision because of personal responsibility. Why do we see so many fall into infidelity in spite of their Jewish or Christian training, which they once enjoyed from their Jewish or Christian parents? Of course birth and education have a great influence, but they are not everything. By birth "one is as honest . . . as the other." Yes, according to Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" And according to Psa. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." What do you think of this honesty of mankind? We may be very "honest and earnest" in our outward behavior and appearance; but "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord

looketh on the heart." 1 Sam. 16: 7. Therefore, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings," (Jer. 17: 10,) judged according to the state and being of the *heart*, not the outward appearance of the behavior. Now, where is the honesty of man, no matter if born a Jew or anything else? No, we are sinners by birth, and must be born again, spiritually, in the heart; we personally have sinned and need forgiveness of our sins, and reconciliation with a holy and just God, the Creator of the universe, who is very anxious to make the sinner a child of God by changing him into the holy image of God. Justification is necessary to sanctification, and is the way to it; therefore its importance is already seen in the Old Testament. When God revealed anew His holy Law, which was originally written in the human heart, but lost—almost wholly—by the sin of our first parents, He gave at the same time commandments for bloody sacrifices, in order to reconcile the transgressors of the law with Himself. For the first purpose of the law is to show us our natural sinfulness, our depravity by birth, in order that, depending on the grace of a merciful God, we might be reconciled with Him in His own way, which he has ordained, to reveal us His holiness and justice at the same time. That "the wages of sin is death," was practically shown in the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. "A heart filled with contrition and humanity" was not sufficient at that time for reconciliation with God, nor is it sufficient now-a-days. The bloody sacrifice—brought of course with a contrite heart—was the claim of the offended holiness and justice of the perfect God. But the Lord said, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me." Isa. 29: 13. At certain times they brought those offerings, but not in the right state of heart, without contrition, only as a matter of habit; and therefore the Lord said, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." Isa. 1: 11.

“Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.” Isa. 1: 16, 17. They brought sacrifices and continued to do wrong. There was no recognition of sin, and therefore no “heart filled with contrition.” Now, dear sir, you confess and claim to have a contrite heart; where is the sacrifice you bring? You say, perhaps with David, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” *Psa. 51: 17.* No, He will not! But the same Holy Spirit which wrought such a true contrition in the heart will give more light from degree to degree. From step to step He will lead the upright and obedient follower to the full light, showing the way to full salvation, which consists in forgiveness of sins, and close communion with God, thus enabling him to live a holy life in true godliness.

5. We are responsible to God in proportion to the spiritual light we have obtained, and also in proportion to what we could have by using all the opportunities which are given us for our enlightenment. God is not a hard man, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strewn. “Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.” *Job 34: 12.* “In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.” “He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes<sup>1</sup> with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.” *Job 33: 15, 16, 28-30.* No, dear sir, God did not send a Saviour to redeem a small number only of the vast millions of the whole population of the world. And further, it is not the doctrine of the Bible that those “millions that have never yet heard of Christ, or understood His mission,” should perish. “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (for not the hearers of the law are just

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1) Heb.—Twice and thrice.

before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Rom. 2: 12-16. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Rom. 1: 19-23. Obedience to the light the Lord has given certainly results in increasing and continual obtaining of light, progressing from degree to degree. A heathen thus obedient will be saved, and he will see in his last hour, if not before, by the enlightenment of God, that after all, his soul's salvation depended only upon the merit of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. We, as citizens, declare guilty a man who even unintentionally acts against the law of the country, and we punish him, ignorance of the law not being deemed a sufficient excuse. But from God we expect it otherwise! Thank God, he is better than we! He knows the degree of our light, and He has the true measure according to His abundant wisdom, might, and love.

6. God has "created a world, filled it with a population for four thousand yéars, and then sent a Saviour." Yes. In Israel God gave a progressive revelation of salvation—in Christ, of course—and the way to it; outside of Israel in heathendom, the human race ripened by-and-by for the coming of the Saviour. Neither Israel nor the heathen

were ready to receive Christ and his salvation. There must be a time of preparation and education. During that time the claims of the Lord upon men have always been according to the measure of the revelation at each period of time. He who was obedient according to the light of his time, which was given both generally and personally, was pleasing to the Lord, and saved. There was no danger at all for men then living; but we must not deny our manifold blessings and privileges, living in the time of a fuller revelation, having all the light of Christ and His gospel.

7. The rabbinic maxim taught by Maimonides you quote, that "all the just, of whatever people, have a share in future reward." (Say rather, "future *world*.") Very well. Is a sinner just? Is not everybody a sinner? Can anybody be just without justification? Is there justification possible without a sufficient sacrifice? (See foregoing argument.) Of course nationality is no privilege, and no hindrance; every sinner can be justified, no matter to what people he belongs. If he be then *just*, he has a share in the happiness of the future world.

8. A sinner cannot have communion with God; sin is a thick wall between God and the sinner. A king gives no audience to a rebel; but his children and friends have access to him. We cannot come before God in our own name nor in our own righteousness. The accomplished work, the name and merits of our Saviour and Mediator, are the key to the Father's heart, Heaven, and storehouse.

9. You say, "There is no necessity to believe in a Saviour," and then you quote: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return." Isa. 45: 22, 23. Now, you contradict yourself. First you say "there is no necessity to believe in a Saviour," and then you prove the Lord God Himself to be a Saviour. He "saves," Well, if you believe in the Lord God, you believe in the Saviour. Then you do the same as we, for *we* believe that the Saviour is God and Lord. A human Saviour

would have no value at all for us. The death of a man, being himself a sinner—in spite of all his morality—and depending on grace, could not be sacrificial and saving. Of course, this supposes the Trinity of God and the incarnation of the “everlasting Word,” (*Logos*) the Son of God. I do not intend to treat this doctrine, but allow me to say at least, that just as “the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord,” “and the cloud filled the house of the Lord,” (1 Kings 8: 10, 11), built by Solomon, why might not the body of a man be created in a supernatural way, especially to be filled with the glory of the real literal presence of the Lord, being in this way a temple of God in the fullest sense of the word, a mercy-seat (throne of grace)? Then we can come and “look” unto Him, “God manifest in the flesh,” and “be saved.” As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21: 9), even so must Christ be lifted up, that whosoever *looks*, believing on Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life. Yes, there is only *one* Redeemer, and none else besides Him.

10. Just as God permitted His prophet Micah to write: “For all people will walk, every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever,” so may He indeed permit for a while. such an unnatural peace in order to give a little rest to His much persecuted people, Israel. This can only be a peace of indifference, the peace of the (spiritually) dead in the graveyard. Do not forget that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Isa. 11: 9 and Hab. 2: 14. “In that day shall there be one Lord and his name one.” Zech. 14: 9. You see there will be unity and agreement in faith, and then only can there be a real and true peace. But as long as there is not this agreement there will be war between “light and darkness,” and therefore between men; because the worship of idols—every one walking in the name of his own god—has no such influence for good, to induce men to keep “peace one with another.”

Finally, “What makes me a good Christian, that makes me a good Jew,” you say. Yes. As soon as a Jew believes



with all his heart in Christ he is a good Jew, because a good Christian. But, nevertheless, he must not, and cannot change his nationality. He never shall be a Gentile (a "Goy"). The one God has one revealed will, and one way for every sinner to be saved. There is only one love, one kind of morality, coming from the one religion, as given in the one Book of God, the Bible. There is only one covenant of grace, through the one Saviour of all mankind. It is a broad platform, indeed, embracing everybody, but a narrow way by the conditions given. Judaism wants and acknowledges progress in religion. Well, here it is. Christianity is the "progressed" religion of the Jehovah of Mosaism. Therefore, be not astonished if we cannot prove each single point from the Old Testament, as you—not yet enlightened—want to see. But I beg you most cordially, go humble-minded, prayerfully, to "your" God, if you think we have another one. Ask Him for light, read and study the Scripture—both parts—without prejudice, as a scholar, not as a critic; and I am sure—because God is true and no liar—that you will find hidden things you have never hitherto seen. Yea, finally, you will recognize that Jesus of Nazareth is the King of Israel, the promised Messiah.

Yours truly and respectfully,

J. H. WALLFISCH.

*Sherrill, Dubuque Co., Iowa.*