

**WHAT IS JUDAISM?
OR, A FEW WORDS
TO THE JEWS**

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What is Judaism? or, a few words to the Jews by Raphael D'C Lewin

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RAPHAEL D'C LEWIN

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BY

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TO
HIS JEWISH BRETHREN,
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD,

This Essay

IS,

WITH FEELINGS OF SINCERE REGARD,

RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E .

THE VOICE OF REASON IS THE VOICE OF GOD. With this earnest conviction deeply impressed upon my heart, the following pages have been prepared, and are now respectfully presented to the public.

I am aware, however, that in thus unreservedly declaring my full opinions on the absorbing subject of the Jewish religion, I am rendering myself liable to much severe and harsh criticism. My views will not only be opposed with much bitterness by hundreds of my co-religionists, but my motives will even be, either wilfully or innocently, misunderstood. My opponents will not be likely to deal very mercifully towards me in their judgment, while among my friends and well-wishers there will be found some (and I could easily name them, even now, as I write) who will be apt to regard this publication, if not, indeed, the writer, with feelings akin to distrust and dislike. Still, I hope and believe that among those who will read this little essay, there will be many who will endorse my sentiments, and give me credit for at least being sincere in my intentions. To them, therefore, a few words of explanation should be given as to

the reasons which have influenced me to undertake so arduous a task, and the object which I hope to attain thereby.

The age in which we live is an age of reason, of inquiry, and of investigation. The Educated, as a rule, are no longer content to be led by the dictates of blind faith in any branch of human knowledge, and least of all, in religious belief. Political equality, civil and religious liberty, the march of civilization, the rapid strides which science is everywhere making, have all combined to remove the scales from the eyes of men and to lessen the immense power which, until lately, crafty priests and ecclesiastics have exercised over the minds of the populace. Among all religious denominations there is now a healthy agitation, and the tendency is to purify the Church of those spurious elements which were engendered in times of bigotry and superstition, and thus by degrees to lessen the bar which separates the children of one Eternal Father from each other. That there is still a large amount of intolerance and bigotry manifested in certain quarters which will sometimes lead to very lamentable results, is, unfortunately, but too true; and while we deplore this fact, we not only can pray to Almighty God to remove this evil, this plague-spot from society, by bringing knowledge into those quarters, but we can ourselves diminish the evil by diffusing education among all classes, and by using every legiti-

mate and honest means at our command to suppress intolerance and bigotry in whatever shape they may present themselves. But, thanks to God, the miscalled orthodoxy of all creeds, which engenders selfishness, exclusiveness, illiberality, and finally despotism of the worst kind—that of the mind—is fast dying out, sinking into the grave to which long ere this it should have been consigned. Thus it happens that in this free and glorious country, perhaps more than in any other, the pure and holy principles of religion are becoming widely understood, and the differences which still exist among men upon religious points form no barrier to the general peace and happiness. Every day the field of religious thought is being explored, and as the light of reason is the more reflected upon the scene, so are the several unholy doctrines and dogmas arrayed before the tribunal of intelligence, condemned as follies and sentenced to oblivion. In this way do the several religions of the world form subjects for just criticism, and thus has Judaism among the others been brought prominently to public notice. Yes, Judaism, the religion which has been so long despised, scorned, and trampled under foot, is now a matter of grave importance in the eyes of the world, and in this country especially is attracting the attention of thousands of our non-Jewish brethren. Doubtless this agitation and curiosity have been produced partly from the schism which exists in our midst, the sig-