

The Popes and the Jews

News from Poland and Russia, where, it is alleged, a campaign of persecution had been inaugurated against the Jews, show that intolerance is a human propensity that cannot be entirely eradicated (says *Truth*, N.Y.). Various causes may excite this latent propensity and incite it to mob law or mob legislation, contrary to the teaching of religion. The popular prejudice against the Jews in the middle and subsequent ages was not so much against Judaism as against the Jews as a class or as a race with strong characteristics differing from the European peoples among whom they dwelt as strangers. The persecutions of the Jews in the time of the crusaders arose from the common belief that they were giving information to the Turks, with whom Christian Europe was at war. Giving aid and comfort to the enemy is resented by every community, whatever may be its religion. We do not say that the common belief in this case was founded on fact; it is sufficient for our present purpose that such a belief prevailed. It is enough to account for the prejudice, antipathy and intolerance to the Jews of that particular time. At another time they were believed to have introduced leprosy into Europe. But perhaps the greatest cause of anti-Jewish sentiment was their usury, by which they acquired and controlled the currency of nations. It is in view of this that, by the genius of Shakespeare, Shylock became the symbol of the general history of the Jews in Europe.

We have here reasons enough to account for the popular prejudice resulting in persecution of the Jews; it was not a question of conscience, but a case of racial hate.

Such was the attitude of the people toward the Jews, and the cause of it. Now let us consider the attitude of the Popes toward the Jews.

We will begin with Innocent III., who was elected Pope in 1198, 700 years ago. In one of his letters to those who were persecuting the Jews he wrote: "They (the Jews) are the living witnesses of the Christian faith. Christians should not exterminate or oppress them, because they have not lost the knowledge of the law. As in their synagogue they should not go beyond what the law permits, we should not trouble them in the exercise of the privileges accorded to them. Though they chose to persist in the hardness of their hearts rather than to seek to understand the oracles of the prophets and the secrets of the law, and come to a knowledge of Christ, they have, on that account, no less right to our protection. Hence, as they claim our assistance, we comply with their demand and take them under the aegis of our protection, in compliance with the gentle spirit of Christian piety, following the footsteps of our predecessors of happy memory, of Calixtus, of Eugene, of Alexander, of Clement, and of Celestin. We forbid anyone to compel a Jew to be baptised, for he who is forced to it is not considered to have the faith. But if he consents to receive it, no obstacles should be placed in his way. No Christian should use violence toward them, seize their goods, or change their customs with legal process. Let no one trouble them on their festival days, whether by striking them or by casting stones at them, and let no one impose on them on those days the work that they can do at other times. Besides, to oppose ourselves with all our force to the perversity and cupidity of men, we forbid any one to violate their cemeteries or to disinter their bodies for money. Those who disobey these prohibitions will be excommunicated." (History of Innocent III., by Hunter.) "The Jews," says this same historian, "lived in perfect security at Rome. No oppression weighed upon them. Many distinguished themselves by honorable lives, and many occupied official positions. Innocent treated them with kindness. Alexander III. calmed the people exasperated against them and Gregory IX. defended them against the bad treatment of the Crusaders. St. Bernard and the most distinguished prelates of the Church partook of these sentiments, not excepting the Bishops of Spain, who for a long time previously had, with the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiffs, protected the Israelites against kings and peoples."

The Jews themselves have borne witness on this subject. In 1807 the rabbis and delegates from different synagogues were invited by Napoleon to meet in Paris and constitute a great sanhedrim. This was, perhaps, the

first act of toleration and justice of which the Jews were the subject, on the part of a civil government. Through a sentiment of delicacy that did them honor the first use they made of the opportunity afforded them by Napoleon was to solemnly pay the debt of recognition to the only power that had protected them in the previous centuries—the Papacy. We will cite the proceedings of the session held on February 5, 1807, and which are preserved in the Department of Public Worship. The following is the memorable resolution:

"It is in consequence of the sacred principles of morals that in different times the Roman Pontiffs have protected and received into their States the Jews—persecuted and expatriated from different parts of Europe. About the middle of the seventh century St. Gregory defended and protected the Jews in the whole Christian world. In the tenth century the Bishops of Spain opposed with all their power the people who wished to massacre them. The Pontiff Alexander II. wrote to those Bishops a letter full of felicitations on their conduct. St. Bernard, in the twelfth century condemned the fury of the Crusaders. Innocent II. and Alexander III. equally protected them. In the thirteenth century Gregory IX. protected them when, in England, France, and Spain, they were threatened with great misfortune; he forbade, under pain of excommunication, to force their conscience or trouble their festivals. Clement V. did more than protect them—he facilitated for them the means of instruction. Clement VI. gave them asylum at Avignon, when they were persecuted in all the rest of Europe. In the following centuries Nicolas wrote to the Inquisition to prohibit forcing the Jews to embrace Christianity. Clement III. calmed the fears of parents who were alarmed at the fate of their children, who were frequently wrested from the arms of their mothers. It would be easy to cite an infinity of other charitable actions of which the Israelites have been at different epochs the objects on the part of ecclesiastics instructed in the duties of men and those of their religion.

"The people of Israel, always unfortunate, and almost always oppressed, have never had the means or the occasion to manifest their recognition of so many benefits. For eighteen centuries, this great and happy occasion, which we owe to our August Emperor, is the only one that has presented itself to express to the philanthropists of all countries, and, notably, to the ecclesiastics, all the sentiments of gratitude with which our hearts are penetrated towards them and their predecessors.

"The deputies of the Empire of France and of the Kingdom of Italy to the Hebrew Synod decreed the 30th of May last, penetrated with gratitude for the successive benefits of the Christian clergy in past centuries in favor of the Israelites of the different states of Europe, full of thanks for the reception which different Pontiffs and many other ecclesiastics have given at different times to the Israelites of different countries, when barbarism, prejudice and ignorance, united, persecuted, and expelled the Jews from the bosom of society.

"Resolved, That the expression of these sentiments shall be recorded in the proceedings of this day, that it may ever remain an authentic testimony of the gratitude of the Israelites of the Assembly for the benefits which the generations which have preceded have received from the ecclesiastics of the different countries of Europe.

"Resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Minister of Worship."

Now, it appears to us that this testimony of a great Hebrew Synod proves that the Popes were tolerant, and that they used their influence to protect the Jews.

AN APPEAL FROM THE BACKBLOCKS

The WAIATU QUEEN CARNIVAL in aid of the Church to be built at Tuatapere will open on THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, when it is hoped his Lordship Dr. Whyte, Bishop of Dunedin, will be present to grace the occasion.

Friends who have promised donations or contributions are requested to forward them before that date to the undersigned—

(Rev.) D. P. BUCKLEY,

Presbytery, Riverton.

W. F. SHORT

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