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“Will Anti-Jewish Prejudice Ever Cease?,” 1906 March 11.

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Sunday, March 11th, 1906

### Will Anti-Jewish Prejudice Ever Cease?

I speak of anti-Jewish prejudice, not of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is a polite name, an euphonism to conceal ancient bigotry. There is no question of Arian or Semite among people who scarce know the meaning of the words. It is the Jew who is hated as a Jew. I shall not speak of Jewish good-citizenship and loyalty and patriotism. I shall not answer as did Disraeli - "Northern Europe worships the son of a Jewish mother and gives him a place at the right hand of the Creator; Southern Europe worships besides, as queen of heaven, a Jewish maiden". I shall not remind the world that the Jew wrote the Bible and sang the songs and proclaimed the commandments. I shall make no appeal to history, which reveals the Jews as the benefactors of the human race - history which gives distinction to the Jew, in soul and in intellect, among the true noblemen of all time. I shall not deal with ancient Jew hating, nor with modern Jew baiting, in Europe or Africa or the Orient. Thus I might awaken public sympathy and lead, perhaps, to a barren meeting of fruitless protes. I shall not deal with the prejudice of the ignorant and the unlettered and unjust teaching of religion, still living in the Middle Ages, centuries behind the times. I shall speak of anti-Jewish prejudice in America, and more specifically as it manifests itself here in Cleveland. I anticipate no enthusiasm of the public, but I am confident of the sober approval of just-minded and right-hearted Americans, who are truly American in spirit.

Is there any prejudice in America today? The fires of the old hatred have burned low. There is prejudice enough and to spare. 'Tis not a far journey to find it. The time has come, in my judgment, when we should speak plainly. Patience, submission and non-resistance are favorite Christian doctrine. We Jews seem to be the only ones possessed of the meek Christian spirit. Smitten on the one cheek, we are asked to turn the other. Some there are who would claim the monopoly of all smiting and resent it if we be rude enough to strike back, or not patient under continued insult.

No longer bear in silence. Cease the complaint, whispered as though fearing to speak. Be not content with the individual protest, but speak and protest and fight openly. Appeal to American fair play. Hold up the men and their methods to the scorn they deserve. The American people have a strong sense of justice and will have little sympathy with the survivals of medieval hatred and persecution - so un-American in spirit.

The comic weekly and the stage caricatures do much to perpetuate stupid prejudice. Let us show our disapproval by non-support. Do not encourage them by subscription or by advertisements. If there be those in the professions or in business, who show anti-Jewish feeling, who do not fancy Jews, or do not like Jews, leave them severely alone. Usually they are eager enough to deal with Jews or to benefit by them. Do not disturb them in the enjoyment of their likes and their fancies. We can live without them. Let them live without us.

Some there are so prejudiced they will not sell Jews property, nor rent them houses or apartments, supposedly reserved for the elect. What is it they intend? Would they reestablish a Jews' street, or a Jewish Quarter; create a ghetto without walls and gates, in America, which has never known such distinctions? What is the justification. There may be a good excuse. There is no real reason save prejudice.

Sometimes we are assured there is no discrimination against Jews like myself, but only against disagreeable Jews. To speak plainly, this is not the truth. If disagreeable people and persons of bad reputation and of evil character were excluded, none could with justice complain. But the disagreeable people and the persons of bad reputation and of evil character, the drunkards and the gamblers with cards and with stocks, the ones who lead a double life and the pious hypocrites are not usually associated with the Jewish name, nor discoverable in the Jewish countenance. Let us cease to bear such discrimination in silence, It is no shame to us. The shame is upon the owners of the houses and the apartments and



of the lots and the allotments. Let the names of the owners and the agents be publicly known. Compel them to take their stand as friends or as enemies. Let us buy and rent property and live wherever we please. Hold up to public ridicule the absurd idea of those who believe themselves entitled to exclusive ownership and reservation of the earth.

Thus there are lodges of great fraternal orders, forever proclaiming the noblest principles of universal brotherhood, lodges to which no Jew can belong. Let us pierce the bubble of the empty pretense of their noble principles. This anti-Jewish prejudice, so un-American in spirit and in practice, is insinuating itself into our schools and colleges. Let us stand boldly, demanding equal opportunity for all.

Clubs there are that do not want us. Jews are not welcomed as members in any of the leading Clubs of Cleveland. Why? Is it because there is a character test for membership and we have been found wanting? No, it cannot be. If character or intellect or culture were the test, some who pose as better than Jews would be reduced to their true level in society. Let them have their clubs. I have never sought and would not seek membership. I scorn to trespass even when invited as guest. I refuse to be tolerated for the hour or the occasion. I have refused to go in the past and shall continue to do so in the future. We should all refuse to go in self-respect.

Perhaps some one will say, they will be glad of it, and laugh at us for our folly. Let them rejoice. Let them laugh. They must honor us in spite of themselves. The degradation is theirs to belong to the narrow and the bigotted and the un-American. We retain our self-respect.

Perhaps some day men and women will arise to protest against the unwritten law which shuts the door in the face of the Jew. Surely there are some men of principle and of conviction, who have the courage to speak against prejudice so vicious and un-American. Perhaps we shall wait in vain. At least, we shall have

saved our honor.

One wearies of the old tune too often sung - of love and admiration for Israel, the chosen people; love for the Jew of history and precious little for the Jew of the present. We shall be content with a little less love. We prefer a little more justice.

Will it ever cease? Hatred of the Jew has endured for thousands of years. He has suffered persecution in all lands. Jew hating and burning and torture were once a favorite pastime of church and state. Europe is still inflamed with hate of the Jew, and Russia still wields the cruel lash and keeps burning the fire of persecution. The day is not near in Europe, in lands of desolation, or in lands of freedom. Will the day ever come? The signs of the times do not indicate rising of the dawn.

Will anti-Jewish prejudice ever cease? I believe it will cease. Yes, I believe it in the face of the virulent anti-Semitism of almost all Europe; in the face of prejudice only too manifest in free America. The Jew of understanding treasures his faith unshaken by all the cruel centuries, in the coming of the Messiah - the Messianic age, the age of light and not of darkness, of truth and not of superstition, of love and not of pious bigotry, of peace and not of war. The day when justice and righteousness shall be established in the world. 'Tis time when the world understood that every messianic view is empty pretention and hypocrisy if not indissolubly joined with love and with justice and with brotherhood. I believe prejudice will cease. I could not be a sincere and intelligent Jew and believe otherwise. The Jew holds fast to his age-long faith in the triumph of truth and the enthronement of justice.