

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

## ART. II.—MR. ADAMS'S "HISTORY OF THE JEWS."

*History of the Jews: From the War with Rome to the Present Time.* By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS, M.A., Vicar of Old Shoreham, author of "Wykehamica," "School-boy Honour," etc., etc. London: Religious Tract Society, 56, Paternoster Row, 1887.

THIS excellent history is introduced by a preface remarkable for its modesty, in which the author does not profess to have written more than a "popular history." The characteristics of the work are clearness, moderation, fairness, good sense: at the same time dulness, too often the companion of good sense, is absent here. The book is a most readable one, full of interest. The interest is indeed on the whole, it must be allowed, a painful one; for it is the account not of what may be called the divine part of the Jewish history—it is not a pictorial history of the exploits of Joshua and Gideon—it does not tell of the sweet Psalms of David, nor of the inspired prophecies of Isaiah, nor even of the patriotism of the Maccabees; but begins in a sad and dark period, telling of the fortunes of the Jewish race after the destruction of their city down to the present time: a sad story relieved by few acts of mercy and kindness; yet ever moving on, though slowly and with many drawbacks, to a better time of toleration and forbearance.

The author refers to various histories, among others to that of Rabbi Joseph Ben Meir (p. 274), J. M. Jost (p. 322), Da Costa (p. 327), Graetz (p. 324), of whom both Mr. Adams and Dean Milman, in his third volume of his "History of the Jews," speak in the highest terms. The chief subject of the volume is the treatment of the Jews by the various Christian nations among whom they sojourned. Persecuted though they were by the heathens and Mahometans, yet heavier and longer were their persecutions from Christians. Lord Lyttelton is quoted (p. 343) as saying that "the man who hates another because he is not a Christian, is no Christian himself." What, alas, are we to think of Christianity, when we read this book? Unchristian Christianity, is all we can say. The Mahometans contrast favourably with the Christians. In the last chapter of the romance of "Ivanhoe," the Jewess Rebecca says to the Christian Rowena: "My father has a brother high in favour with Mohammed Boabdil, King of Granada; thither we go, secure of peace and protection for the payment of such ransom as the Moslem exact from our people." For such cruelty and intolerance as the Jews suffered there is no justification; yet, doubtless, they at times offended and irritated those amongst whom they lived by an undue display of wealth, and by the enormous interest they exacted. But the Jews, knowing

amidst what dangers they lived, how uncertain was the tenure of their gains, how easily a mob was excited to plunder and massacre, how ready ambitious and extravagant princes were to look to the Jews for money, how blindly the most absurd charges of boys crucified and wafers stabbed were believed, how the impossible in those days was explained by the miraculous, how bigoted the clergy were—must needs make money while they could. Mr. Adams deals with this question at some length (p. 225). He inquires whether the harshness with which the Jews were treated, even by good and amiable men, had any reasonable justification. This is his conclusion :

As it has been with the land of the Jews, so it has been with themselves. Their true national character is among the noblest—if it is not the very noblest—that the world has seen. Whatever great qualities humanity may possess, it is by men of this race that they have been exhibited in their highest development. If we ask from what nation has arisen the ablest legislator, the most far-seeing statesman, the wisest philosopher, the most chivalrous warrior, the greatest monarch, the most Heaven-inspired poet, we must answer, in every instance, From the nation of the Jews. Nor is it to individuals alone that this applies. What struggle for national independence was ever more gallant than that of the Maccabees? Which, among all the countless nations overthrown by the military genius of Rome, ever resisted so long, or with such fatal effect, her illimitable power as the defenders of Jerusalem? But no doubt centuries of oppression had their effect in deteriorating the nobler and developing the meaner features of the Jewish character, until the Jews became at last almost, though not quite, what their persecutors believed them to be.

Mr. Adams's book is specially clear and distinct in one way, that the treatment of the Jews is given separately for each country. Thus in the English portion we are told that many Jews followed the Norman Conqueror into England. To him they were invaluable. He lacked not money, so long as there were Jews ready to be squeezed, imprisoned, tortured. With Jewish money he contended with his barons; with Jewish money he built abbeys and castles. But as time went on, the popular hatred of the Jews increased. With admirable art has Sir Walter Scott given in the most gorgeous of all his romances the contrast between Normans, Saxons, and Jews. In one edition is an engraving of Isaac the Jew approaching the Grand Master of the Temple with a letter. "Back, dog!" says the Grand Master; "I touch not misbelievers, save with the sword." The chapter which describes the interview between the Jew and the baron in the dungeon of his castle, sets before us the passive resistance of the captive to the ferocity and greed of Front de Bœuf. Well might the Jew say afterwards: "Alas! alas! on every side the spoilers arise against me: I am given as a prey unto the Assyrian, and as a spoil unto him of Egypt." "And what else should be the lot

of thine accursed race?" answers the worldly and dissolute Prior of Jorvaulx Abbey. Little did the priors and abbots think that the time would come when their monasteries would be gone, but Jewish merchants still be found in England. It is good to read that the children of loving St. Francis of Assisi saved seventy Jews from death by their prayers to the king, though they incurred the anger of the populace by this act of mercy. The banishment of the Jews from England, about a hundred years after the scenes imagined in the novel of "Ivanhoe," was the cruel act of Edward I., anxious to get popular favour when about to attack Scotland; and yet it has saved our country from the disgrace of further persecutions. This is the simple and touching account of their exile from England, given by Mr. Adams (p. 185):

The king was greatly disturbed at the course things were taking. He could neither conscientiously condemn nor defend the Jews. It is likely that he took his final resolve of expelling them altogether from his dominions as the most obvious solution of a great and ever-increasing difficulty. When he had once made up his mind on this point he was determined enough in his mode of carrying it out. He confiscated the whole of their property, except such as they were able to remove, and ordered them to quit England on pain of death. It might be thought that, considering what had been the condition of Jews in England for the last fifty years, the prospect of quitting for ever the scene of their sufferings would have been welcome rather than otherwise. But such was not the case. A man's home is his home, after all! and the effect of hardship and trial is often to endear the scenes of their occurrence more deeply to the sufferers. We are told that the last few days before the departure of the Jews witnessed scenes of the most distressing description; that they clung to their old haunts with a lingering affection, which, one would think, must have moved the compassion of all who beheld it, however deep the prejudices of race and creed. But the stern edict was not revoked. The festival of All Saints—that day sacred beyond all others to mutual goodwill among all the children of the great Father above—witnessed the consummation of the wrongs of the Jewish people. They went forth into penury and exile from the shores of England, and for nearly four hundred years they returned no more.

No part of Mr. Adams's book is more striking than that which deals with the fortunes of the Jews in Spain. Perhaps the effect on the reader had been even more powerful if in this instance whole story had been given us together, and not been divided by the treatment of the Jews in other countries. "The Jews had settled in Spain before the Christian era, and, as it would appear, had lived in peace and security." Indeed, the name of the city of Toledo, that city of councils and ecclesiastics, has been derived from "Toledoth," the Hebrew city of "generations," as supposed to have been a place of refuge for the Jews, when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>1</sup> The tolerance or

---

<sup>1</sup> Ford's "Handbook of Spain," p. 832.

indifference of the Arian Visigoths offers a strong contrast to the zeal or intolerance of the Catholics. Honour be to Isidore of Seville!—"among intolerant, tolerant only he." He seems to have had some idea of the duty of toleration; but what could one, however influential, do for toleration in the beginning of the seventh century? About eighty years afterwards, the twelfth council of Toledo passed ordinances so atrocious, that Mr. Adams says that "they will surely call to mind the saying of Solomon about the tender mercies of the wicked." Yet these were but the beginnings of sorrows. However, first came an unlooked-for respite to Israel. From the foundation of the Moorish kingdom of Cordova to the end of the tenth century, a period of happiness was granted that perhaps the Jews neither before nor after enjoyed. Their schools at Toledo, Granada, Cordova flourished. Between the Mahometan and Jew were bonds of union; both were the enemies of the Christian. The religions of Moses and Mahomet were in some respects alike; both put in the front the unity of God—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God"; "There is one God, Allah." Both religions abhorred idols; in plainness the synagogue and the mosque were not so unlike; as yet there was no Protestantism. But as the power of the Crescent waned in Spain, and the Cross advanced, the condition of the Jews became worse. Sometimes, indeed, the Jews were defended by the Christian kings in Spain, but they were always liable to be attacked through envy of their wealth, and through religious bigotry, by debtors, mobs, and priests. At last came the Inquisition—dreaded name! It is said that Torquemada made Queen Isabella promise that if she ever came to the throne, she would make the destruction of heresy her chief end. Llorente has revealed its dreadful secrets. Upon the Jews and the so-called "New Christians"—that is, Jews who conformed to the services of the Church, but were naturally suspected of a love for their old faith, and of secret observation of the Jewish ritual, and of retention of the Hebrew Bible—the awful fury of the Inquisition at first chiefly fell. A man (p. 236) was a concealed Jew if he had no fire on Friday night; if he put on clean clothes on Saturday; if he washed the blood from meat; if on the Day of Atonement he blessed his children without making the sign of the cross; if he called a child by any Jewish name; if he sat at table with a professed Jew; if, dying, he turned his face to a wall; if he washed a corpse with warm water, etc. Well may Mr. Adams (p. 237) say: "If it were not that these enactments were followed up by the most barbarous and insatiable cruelties, it would be difficult to read this extraordinary catalogue of offences without a smile. But all disposition to mirth vanishes when we re-

member what ensued." Great numbers of arrests were made; the accuser's name being kept a profound secret, it was easy to indulge malevolence without the risk of exposure. The accused not being told the exact nature or details of the charges against them, were unable to disprove them; and not being confronted with the witnesses, could not expose their falsehood. Both witnesses and accused were frequently put to the severest tortures, under the pressure of which they made confessions which they were not allowed to retract. In short, says Mr. Adams, "it was wholly impossible for anyone to escape condemnation when it was the wish or the interest of the inquisitors to condemn him; and it is no wonder that the list of their victims should have extended to a length so fearful."

In the year 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella commanded all Jews to renounce their creed or depart from Spain. Isabella, the friend of Columbus, whose nature was so shocked at a bull-fight at Medina del Campo that she did her utmost to put bull-fights down, took a leading part against the unhappy Jews. At the lowest calculation some hundreds of thousands must have gone into exile. Even the pope (Alexander VI.), hearing of their sufferings, was moved to pity,<sup>1</sup> and Mahometan princes condemned Ferdinand as an unwise and impolitic king. "Thanks to the Inquisition, were lost (Ford, p. 279) to poor, uncommercial, indolent Spain, first the wealthy Jews, then the industrious Moors." It is said that there are now barely two thousand Jews in Spain.

We might naturally have supposed that the condition of the Jews would have been as bad in Italy, the centre of the papal system. But Spain was more papal than the pope himself. The reasons of the Jews in Italy meeting with a better treatment are various, and are given with great clearness and ability by Mr. Adams (pp. 197, 198, 199). As it has been remarked, not without an object, that the best emperors of Rome were often the greatest persecutors of the Church, so Mr. Adams notes that the Jews sometimes received the harshest treatment from the best pontiffs, and were more equitably dealt with by the worst. The Jews, though always exposed to contempt and scorn, and liable to sudden outbursts of persecution, were found too useful in the towns of Italy, Venice, Genoa, Florence, Leghorn, Mantua, Verona, to be expelled or massacred. If we may take the case of Shylock as a

---

<sup>1</sup> "It must be added," we read (p. 42), "that although Alexander showed compassion to the fugitives, he made them pay a heavy price for his protection of them, and also bestowed on Ferdinand the title of 'the Most Catholic,' in requital of the banishment of the Jews from his dominions."

true representation of the state of the Jews in Venice, we may conclude from it that the Jews, though treated with scorn and insults of the grossest kind, yet, being useful to the extravagant, were at times invited to the houses and meals of the borrowers, and that their right to the capital lent and its interest were maintained by the Venetian Government. Thomas in his "Historie of Italye," 1561 (quoted in Singer's edition of Shakespeare), says: "In every city the Jews keep open shops of usury, taking gage of ordinary for xv. in the hundred by the yeare; and if at the yeare's end the gage be not redeemed, it is forfeit, or at least done away to a great disadvantage; by reason whereof the Jews are out of measure wealthy in those parts." It has been said that "the plea of Shylock in exacting forfeiture of the bond is the very history and genius of Judaism;" and again, that those only can have a full notion of the degradation of the human mind by slavery to the written law, who have had some glimpses of the Rabbinical literature, a monument of tyranny in comparison with which Egyptian bondage was enfranchisement.

The Reformation had necessarily a favourable influence on the condition of the Jews. Not that the reformers were at first favourable to the Jews. Calvin regarded them as the enemies of Christ; Martin Luther gave advice about the Jews not unlike that which he gave about the revolted peasants: "Burn their synagogues, break into and destroy their houses" (p. 225); "After the devil, you have no more bitter, venomous, violent enemy than the Jew" (p. 284). On the other hand, Grotius had a great respect for the learning of the Rabbins. If the Calvinist abhorred the Jew, the Arminian would feel pity for him. But whatever the opinion of individual reformers might be, the course of events in the Reformation was of necessity soon to lessen the persecution of Israel. In the mighty contest between the Papacy and Protestantism the Jew would be forgotten, and, as Mr. Adams says, if the Reformation did nothing else but open Holland as a refuge for Jews flying from Spain, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, this alone was to them a mighty advantage. But alas! we are all alike, Christian or Jew; there is no difference. Once more the persecuted becomes the persecutor. The Jews, who had hardly escaped from the Inquisition, presently engaged in petty tyrannies and persecutions, Jew excommunicating Jew. This naturally leads Mr. Adams to speak briefly of Spinoza, cursed by his brethren Jews; the most unselfish, abstemious, patient, humble, benevolent of men; neither Atheist nor Pantheist, though called both, yet no believer in the God of the Old and New Testaments; a fatalist, yet an inconsistent fatalist, as all atalists must be; a man without followers, author of an im-

practicable system which seems to sacrifice individual existence for what may be called a negative unity.

The tide of intolerance is ebbing. Of course dislike and scorn long remain after direct persecution has ceased, and can be removed out of the hearts of men by no Act of Parliament; and there are faults on both sides. The Christian reader dislikes Shylock, not because he is a Jew, but because he showed no mercy; we all sympathize with the beautiful character of the Jewess Rebecca, and her profession, similar to that of Diana Vernon in "Rob Roy," that "she might not change the faith of her fathers." These instances are in the region of romance; but, what is much more to the point, in real life we admire Sir Moses Montefiore, the champion of Jewish rights at Rome, at St. Petersburg, at Morocco, at Constantinople, in Egypt; we feel that he was worthy of the honour conferred on him by a Christian Queen; we are sure that, though a Jew by profession, he had, like many other Israelites, the spirit of Christian benevolence in his heart. Again, in the life of the Earl of Shaftesbury, we read: "Early in 1882 intelligence was received in this country of cruel persecutions of the Jews in Russia; strong articles appeared in the newspapers on the subject, but no action was taken till a body of Hebrews in London wrote a letter to Lord Shaftesbury, urging him to intercede on behalf of their suffering brethren, and wondering that no Christian had come forward to assert the principle and practice of true Christianity; then a meeting was called at the Mansion House—a grand meeting, full, hearty and enthusiastic; then the question was discussed in the House of Lords; and 'we had,' says Lord Shaftesbury, 'a very satisfactory flare-up on the Jews in the House of Lords.'" Look upon this contrast. In the days of Peter the Hermit the Crusaders rushed into the city of Treves (Milman, vol. iii., p. 308), and began a ruthless pillage and massacre of every Jew they could find. The remnant were received by the Bishop of Treves with these words: "Wretches, your sins have come upon you, who have blasphemed the Son of God, and calumniated His mother! This is the cause of your present sufferings." Then the Bishop repeated a short creed. The Jews, in an agony of terror, assented. In 1882, in striking contrast to the above, the Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser, acted as Chairman of the Committee for the relief of the Jews then persecuted in Russia, and concerted with the Committee the best mode of distributing the money raised in Manchester for the relief of the sufferers. One old Rabbi met the Bishop in the street, and said: "Oh, my lord, we pray for you every Sabbath in our synagogue." In acknowledgment of his willing and able services the Jews sent him a



letter of thanks with Munkacsy's picture of "Christ before Pilate." At the Bishop's death, to the expressions of sorrow and sympathy addressed to his widow, coming from the various communities of Christianity, were added addresses from the congregation of British Jews, from that of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, from the South Manchester Synagogue, from the Manchester Hebrew Congregation, from the Board of Guardians for the relief of the Jewish Poor of Manchester. These addresses speak of "The Bishop's brave denunciations of the wrongs under which their brethren had suffered, of his broad and tolerant spirit," and declare a hope that "the lessons of love and toleration which he had taught by precept and example would tend to cement in closer union the bond of brotherhood between Jew and Christian." Then seemed well-nigh to be fulfilled the text, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew" (Col. ii. 11).

The continuance of the Jewish nation has been called "a standing miracle." And surely it is so. In "Antitheism, and Remarks on its Modern Spirit,"<sup>1</sup> a quaint, original, and thoughtful book, we read: "Then come the Jews in person from all parts, and speaking all the languages of the civilized world, and say: Look upon us; are we not the past that now stands living and moving before you, bidding the future, that shall surely be as that which now is? Are we not now, and have we not been for nearly four thousand years past, a people apart from all others? And have we not still Abraham for our father and Moses for our lawgiver? And this law we have always observed even down to the present day, even throughout our dispersion, which has made the whole world a Babylon to us, without presuming to add to or detract from it in the least point." Surely any other people had long ago been lost as utterly as Tyre and Carthage, that had undergone anything like the trials through which the Jewish nation has passed. To compare the gipsies with them in this point is (as is said in "Antitheism," p. 183) utterly unreasonable. It took God's special providence to keep them together as a nation in Egypt. Afterwards, in the promised land, they were mingled with the heathen, and learned their works, Solomon, their greatest king, broke the law of Moses—he encouraged idolatry; then by division they became weaker. Ten tribes out of twelve have been lost, and are not to be found, except indeed in the opinion of a few. Then came the captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. Was it, humanly speaking, the least likely they should ever return as a nation? Yet return they did, with diminished fortunes, but with a perseverance and an obstinate attachment to their

<sup>1</sup> By R. H. Sandys. London: Pickering and Co., 1883.

creed stronger than before their captivity. The persecution of Antiochus could not stamp the nation out. When their city and temple was destroyed by the Romans, and the sacrifices and rites came to an end, what merely natural cause could keep together the Jews dispersed among the heathen? And yet even then the worst had not come; if for a time they were suffered to make themselves homes amidst the ruin of their city, after the revolt of Barchochebas Adrian built a heathen town on the site of Zion, and forbade the Israelites from entering or even beholding from afar the sacred spot. In time Christianity became the established religion of the empire, and then their history was, as Mr. Adams says, a sad monotony of persecution succeeding persecution; but in this monotony there is a strange diversity in the character of the persecutors, amongst whom are found lawgivers, as Justinian and Edward I.; Churchmen like Ambrose, Christians and Saracens, Romans and barbarians, kings of the East and kings of the West, inquisitors and reformers, Catholics and Protestants, barons and mobs, the good and the bad, the worldly and the fanatic; and if there be any other contrast, all have combined to attack the helpless Jew. And yet their faith has withstood all these attacks. The two lines of Shakespeare describe their resistance:

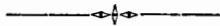
Still I have borne it with a patient shrug,  
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.

At times there have been gleams of tolerance, and the sun, if not of pity yet of toleration, has shone on the Jews; but it has been, as it seems, as ineffectual for their conversion to Christianity as the windy storms of persecution, and the Jew still wraps himself in the cloak of an enduring faith. The Jews are continually looking for a deliverer, not being able to accept the humble Nazarene, and finding the cross a stumbling-block; and many false Christs have arisen, saying, Lo here, or lo there; disappointment after disappointment has come, but the Jew still hopes, still clings to his faith, is still unconverted. To convert a Jew has passed almost into a proverb of difficulty. The author of the "Art of Pluck" speaking of the so-called logical conversion, says: "Some say, all propositions admit of conversion, except the Jews." The Jew sees in the history of his race the fulfilment of the words of Scripture, that "there should always be a faithful remnant among them, revering and observing the law, and looking forward with a firm trust to an ultimate restoration, which, even if it should not prove a territorial one, will, they feel assured, be not the less a complete and wonderful one. Thus they stand forth a perfect, living, continuous fulfilment

of a plain-speaking prophecy delivered upwards of three thousand years ago" ("Antitheism," p. 183). And Mr. Adams, in the first of his five appendices, states what sounds strange (only we have learnt to expect what is strange when reading about the Jews), that "the number of the Jews at the present time appears to be rather less than seven millions, the very number which, so far as it is possible to determine, was that of the Jewish people when our Lord was born at Bethlehem." So far as we can judge of the future, it is likely, in an age where the commercial spirit has in a great degree taken the place of enthusiasm and religious partizanship, that the number of the Hebrews will increase rather than diminish. We are told that in France their influence has considerably increased of late.

There are five useful appendices attached to the book, remarkable, as is the whole book, for their clearness and fairness. The account of the Talmuds, the Targums, and the Massora is distinct and readable; the appendix on the attempt under Julian to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem is judicious and sensible. In the last appendix, on the Blood Accusation, as also in p. 73, Mr. Adams has suggested the probable source of the oft-repeated charge of the crucifixion of boys by the Jews, namely, that at the Feast of Purim, "the most mirthful, or rather the most riotous of all the Israelite festivals, when they were wont to drink until they could not distinguish between the blessings pronounced on Mordecai and the curses imprecated on Haman, it was their practice to erect a gibbet, to which a figure representing Haman was fastened, and whenever his name occurred in the service they broke out into furious execrations against him." The Temple may fail, but Purim never; the Prophets may fail, but not Megillah—that is, the roll in which was written the Book of Esther.<sup>1</sup> Then did the children hiss, spring rattles, strike the wall with hammers; presents were sent, alms bestowed even on Christians; plays and masquerades followed.<sup>2</sup>

JAMES G. LONSDALE.



#### ART. III.—SIMILES AND METAPHORS OF THE BIBLE.

THERE are two books in my library to which (read long ago) I often recur with pleasure, Bishop Lowth's *De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum*, and Bishop Jebb's "Sacred Literature."

<sup>1</sup> Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

<sup>2</sup> Kitto's "Encyclopædia of Biblical Literature."