

Dr. Landau's Succoth Sermon.

From "TWO ZIONISTS" (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—In these times of stress and trouble for the Zionist movement, a heavy responsibility is thrown upon Jewish leaders, lay and spiritual alike, in guiding public opinion. It is for this reason that we were so sorry to hear some of the sentiments which were uttered on the present Zionist position by Dr. Landau, in the course of a sermon which he delivered at the Yeoville Synagogue, on the eve of the second day of *Succoth*.

The sermon lasted, in all, some twenty minutes; of that period at least fifteen were devoted to general reflections on the inter-connection between the Jewish people, their Torah and Erez Israel. Then, arising from this trend of thought, Dr. Landau proceeded in the last five minutes to the following effect (so far as our memory serves us): That he had it on good authority that Dr. Weizmann had recently given expression in Berlin to the view that a Jewish State could never be achieved in Palestine; this declaration (the speaker proceeded) amounted to the abandonment of the age-long hope of Israel, the hope for which Herzl had died and the *Chaluzim* suffered; and he (the speaker) felt that he would be failing in his duty as spiritual leader of the community if he did not protest against such a declaration: a man who held views such as those of Weizmann had no right to remain at the head of the movement; and Jewry throughout the world would not lie low, but would rise and demand that men with such views relinquish their position of leadership.

Now sir, we are far from suggesting that this is not a subject fit for a sermon; rather do we welcome the efforts of our spiritual leaders to guide opinion on vital problems of the day. But is this the way to do it? Even on the assumption that Dr. Landau was right both in his facts and inferences, is this the way to treat a question of such first-rate importance? Is it helpful or fair to squeeze into a five-minute talk, as an appendage to something else, a few dogmatic views and dogmatic conclusions on a highly controversial matter? How many of the congregants knew what the precise points at issue were? How many of them, whether they knew these or not, left the synagogue satisfied that Dr. Landau's conclusions might be accepted even if they did not know his reasons for them?

Views coming from a man in so eminent a position carry in their mere utterance great weight. There is, therefore, a corresponding duty on the speaker to scrutinise not only what he says, but how he says it. Granted that Dr. Landau is satisfied in his own mind on the validity of the conclusions he has reached, we suggest with all humility that his approach towards the problem was in no way helpful, but misleading. The pulpit is not the political platform, a far higher sense of responsibility is generally expected from the former. Even from the political platform, when the issues are highly controversial and of national import, one expects the honest statesman to present not merely his conclusions, but also all the facts on which they are based, so that the honest listener is himself placed in the position to draw his own conclusions. And when a speaker chooses the pulpit as a medium for the expression of political views, surely at least the standards of the politician can be expected from him.

But the matter goes further. Dr. Landau claimed that he had his facts on good authority. We cannot question that, as he did not state what that authority was. From press reports that are to hand, however, two things seem to be clear: first, that there is a possibility that the reports of Weizmann's speech are not correct; second, that the excerpt of the speech so far to hand is incomplete. Dr. Landau may perhaps have had the whole speech from his reliable authority; if, however, he was relying on the general press, surely it is unwise to base an opinion on an excerpt torn from its general context, in the light of which it may have been explained, qualified or modified; and surely it is still more unwise to voice in public an opinion on such evidence!

Finally, sir, might we plead with Dr. Landau for a more constructive contribution towards the present problems of the movement? Might we plead that, even if he has formed definite conclusions about the present Zionist leadership, he should not rest content with voicing these, but should enlighten us on the constructive steps which should be taken in the future? May we suggest, with all humility, to Dr. Landau, that for the advancement of the cause which he has so much at heart, the task to-day, more than ever, is to go beyond negative criticism, and to enlighten, encourage and inspire with faith.

Yours, etc.,

"Two Zionists."

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Annual Celebration by Talmudical College.

The Selborne Hall was filled to overflowing on Sunday evening, when the S.A. Talmudical College carried out the annual celebration of *Simchat Beth Hashova*. Rabbi S. Rosenzweig, the President of the College, was in the chair. The proceedings began with the singing of *Hatikvah* by Chief Cantor S. Steinberg and his choir of the Berea Synagogue. At a later stage in the proceedings they also gave an excellent rendering of the *Retsai*.

Rabbi S. Rosenzweig said the most important question to-day was that of the religious education of their children. This he regretted to say, was dying away. Judaism was being neglected from day to day because its education was being neglected. The teaching of the Hebrew language alone would not keep Judaism alive.

The college had been begun as an experiment to see whether the treasures of the Talmud could be instilled in the minds of the youth. Their finances, however, were in a parlous condition. The only congregation that assisted them was the United Hebrew Congregation, which gave them a monthly subsidy of £5. He made a strong appeal for financial assistance. He also thanked the Hebrew High School for the free use of its premises for the college.

Dr. J. L. Landau (Chief Rabbi) said that a few hours previously he had been at "Arcadia," where he had addressed the Orphanage children. Whilst doing so he had asked himself what would become of those children. And on this occasion, on speaking to them that evening, he was asking himself what would become of the local community? The problems confronting the Jewish people in South Africa existed also among Jews the world over. The reason was that at no time since the destruction of the second Temple had the Jews been so materialistic as they were to-day. In the darkest days of their history, Jews were idealists. In the cellars of the darkest Ghettos they said, "Hear, O Israel!" and when they said that, they were prepared to sacrifice their lives for their holy religion. To-day the reverse was the case, and they loved more than sacrificed more for the material welfare of their children than the spiritual. They only thought of what was good for their children in this world, and did not regard their welfare in the eternal life to come. Thanks to the Talmudical College, they had a number of young men to whom they could look to with pride, and who would go ahead in this study for the good of Judaism.

They thought that to-morrow they would have a national home in Palestine. That prospect, however, had become more and more distant. Some day, however, that ideal would be realised, for the Jews would triumph over their enemies. Meanwhile, however, the Jews in *Golus* had to strengthen themselves. He appealed to them to give their support to the college and its work for Judaism, and he hoped that not only the number of synagogues, but Judaism, too, would grow in this country.

Addresses were delivered by Rabbi Gordon and Rabbi Katz. Mr. Garsh, a past student of the college, also spoke. Masters J. Woolf and N. Lohof, the latter a youngster of 10 years only, delivered talmudical discourses in an excellent manner, showing remarkable erudition. Masters H. Joseph and J. Woolf gave Hebrew speeches, one on the prophet Elijah and one on the prophet Ezekiel.

During the evening Miss Joseph rendered a violin solo.

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