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ART. II.—A RABBI AT OBERAMMERGAU.

IN the *Review of Reviews* for September Mr. Stead gave some account of a work by Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf, of Germantown, Philadelphia, describing the impression produced on his mind by the Passion Play. Those impressions resulted in the conviction that the Gospel narrative gives an entirely erroneous view of the nature of the occurrence described as the Passion of our Lord, the Founder of Christianity having fallen a victim to the Roman Government only, the Jews having had no share in the matter.

The theory here represented is of some interest, not perhaps owing to its intrinsic probability, but as illustrating the effect which some years of toleration have had in modifying the attitude of Jewish writers in their estimate of the Christian Saviour. According to this Rabbi, Jesus Christ was a Jewish patriot murdered by pagan oppressors. This is a very different view from that represented by the medieval Jewish libels which gave so much satisfaction to Voltaire.

I have been asked to say whether, from the specimens quoted by Mr. Stead, it is likely that the Rabbi has been able to prove his case. Mr. Stead urges against it the *a priori* doctrine that nations invariably do kill their prophets, and this argument is assuredly weighty. But even without this it seems from the summary given by Mr. Stead that the Rabbi's case rests on a series of propositions which are incapable of proof, but easily capable of refutation.

“There is not in the whole history of Israel, from Moses to Jesus, a single case on record of anyone ever having been put to death because of differing religious views. Only he who cursed God by the ineffable name of Jehovah, and who seduced others into cursing God, and enticed them to idolatry, was a blasphemer according to Jewish law and guilty of death.”

It is to the credit of Jewish writers that they often attempt to show that their community has never been guilty of religious bloodshed. R. Krauskopf is repeating an assertion made by a great predecessor of his about a thousand years ago, then refuted by a reference to the Jewish calendar, which commemorates a day whereon the differences between the schools of Hillel and Shammai led to the shedding of blood. Of course, R. Krauskopf's statement is absolutely untenable. The case of the man who was stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day (Num. xv. 32) is a case on record which does not come under any of the exceptions by which the force of this sweeping generalization is modified in the second

sentence, and anyone who is acquainted with the Old Testament could add others.

“There is not in the whole compendium of the Talmudic law an enactment, a decision, a decree that could even by the farthest stretch of an orthodox imagination construe as heresy or blasphemy anything that Jesus ever said or did.”

This is emphatically asserted; but if by the “Compendium of Talmudic law” either the Talmud or any authoritative compendium of it be meant, the assertion is no more tenable than the other. According to the Mishnah of Sanhedrin (vii. 5), he who violated the Sabbath was to be stoned. That healing on the Sabbath was considered by some authorities violation of the Sabbath is also quite certain. Hence, although it might be possible to maintain that a liberal interpretation of the law would be found consistent with the acts at which the lawyers of our Lord’s time took offence, the proposition quoted by Mr. Stead is untenable.

The summary of R. Krauskopf’s position further contains a number of objections to the Gospel narrative on the ground of informalities in the procedure attributed to the Judges. Many of these are familiar to those who have studied the controversies connected with the Gospels. “The trial is held, and the verdict of death is pronounced on the Passover night; according to Jewish law no trial could be held in the night.” To this and similar difficulties there seem to be two answers.

First, the Jewish codes which we possess do not even claim to be contemporaneous with the events recorded in the Gospels. The legislation of the Mishnah is not a record of actual practice, but an ideal system argued out of passages of Scripture at a very much later period, and in all probability orally preserved for many centuries. Even, therefore, if the rules of the procedure of the Sanhedrin were undisputed (which is not the case), their existence in the Jewish codes would be no guarantee for their having ever been observed. If the rule given in the Talmud—that every Sanhedrist must know seventy languages—was really enforced, we may safely assert that there never was a Sanhedrin, for it is clear that scarcely one man in a century could possess that qualification. There is, however, little ground for supposing the rest of the Talmudic rules to be any less ideal. They were excogitated at a time when the most impracticable regulations might be made without occasioning serious inconvenience. But even if we suppose these rules to have existed, the Jews, like the rest of mankind, were not likely to be bound by rules of procedure when there was any strong reason for over-riding

them. The argument that because a rule was broken therefore it did not exist has indeed been used for the rewriting of Biblical history, but even there its success is not assured.

These considerations seem sufficient to answer the excerpts given by Mr. Stead. For the endeavour which the book represents to place the attitude of the Jews from the first towards the Gospel in a more favourable light than that in which history presents it, gratitude is due to the author.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

ART. III.—THE SACRIFICIAL ASPECT OF THE HOLY COMMUNION.¹

THERE are in the New Testament four accounts of our Lord's institution of the Holy Communion. If we place these side by side and mark their points of similarity and their points of difference, we shall find that while on the one hand there is no small amount of variety in form and in the expressions used, yet there is, on the other hand, a striking agreement amongst all four writers in idea and principle. If we make a careful analysis of the contents of each narrative we shall find prominence is given by all to three distinct features about the institution :

1. That it consisted of certain acts done by our Lord before His disciples—the acts, viz., of taking, blessing, and distributing the elements.

2. That it consisted of certain words of explanation spoken by our Lord which gave to the elements a new sacramental character, so that they are to be regarded as definitely connected with our Lord Himself—with His body offered and with His blood poured out—and no longer merely bread and merely wine.

3. That it consisted also of certain words of command spoken by our Lord which enjoined upon the disciples the use and purpose to which the elements were to be applied.

St. Matthew and St. Mark content themselves with simply giving it in the form that the elements are to be consumed : “Take, eat ”; “Drink ye all of it.”

St. Luke and St. Paul, omitting any actual reference to this part of the command, while yet presupposing its existence, report the additional direction : “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Now, the words used by the last two, St. Luke and St. Paul, in their rendering of our Lord's command have been the subject of no small dispute.

¹ The substance of a paper read before the Swansea Ruri-decanal Chapter.