

CURRENT ISSUES.

A THIRD series of Dr. S. Schechter's *Studies in Judaism* has been issued in America. It is a posthumous publication, a selection from published and unpublished material, and barely comes up to the standard of its two predecessors. Yet Dr. Schechter had learning and strong convictions. His writing had generally an edge upon it. And this volume is certainly welcome.

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Two of the studies are biographical. Dr. Schechter reviews the careers of Zunz and Geiger, admiring both but naturally criticizing Geiger. Both Zunz and Geiger did yeoman service as apologists for Judaism in Germany during last century. Yet Geiger seems to Dr. Schechter a Jewish Broad Churchman in his theology. For Geiger refused to be bound by rabbinic Judaism. His great hope was that Judaism as the perfect ethical monotheism would one day become the religion of all men, and this he regarded as the mission of Jews in the world. He threw over belief in any coming Messiah; he would not hear of any return of the Jews to Palestine; he desired to strip Israel of its local and nationalistic trappings, in order to equip it for its true inward mission to humanity. No more severe words could be uttered against Zionism than Geiger poured out. He even disparaged the study of the Hebrew language, against which, he candidly admitted, "History has given her judgment."

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In some respects history has, for the time being, given its verdict against Geiger. Zionism has acquired a vogue. And the recrudescence of nationalism has affected the self-consciousness of Judaism. Dr. Schechter, however, opposes Geiger's conception of Judaism as nationalistic, and sees no hope whatever for Judaism if it puts the religious teaching of Israel above

its religious life. He seems even to agree with Zunz's remark that for Judaism to abolish the rite of circumcision would mean suicide.

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What then is Schechter's outlook for his religion? The only hope seems to be a re-assertion of traditional Judaism, and a stern refusal to recognize anything in the shape of Christianity. He protests against modern reform—Jews paying tribute to "the sweet rabbi of Nazareth," and against some Jewish platforms "on which Christ has become a subject for sermons and orations as in any Unitarian Church." He seems to be alarmed at the ebb from modern Judaism, partly due to this liberalizing movement. "The world has not shown the least sign that it is prepared to be converted to Judaism, except the few proselytes we get through intermarriage. But certainly all statistics point to the fact that we have lost, during the last century, more men and women to Christianity than in any age especially distinguished by persecution." And when we turn over Dr. Schechter's pages to discover how Judaism is to remedy this state of things, we find that it is to be by stiffening Jewish traditions, by abjuring any concession to Christianity, and by reviving the nationalistic rites and practices of Israel.

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In the Fourth Gospel there are editorial notes or explanations of certain sayings. A remark of Jesus is sometimes followed by a sort of parenthetical comment, indicating what our Lord meant. Now it has been often pointed out that these explanations are not invariably accurate, and Dr. F. J. Badcock, of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, shares this view. He has published a book of *Reviews and Studies*, partly of doctrinal subjects and partly exegetical. One of these papers is upon "Christ as Seer," and in the course of it he deals with one or two of the Johannine sayings, separating them from their appended explanations.

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In the second chapter, for example, when Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," was He alluding to His own resurrection. The note says so: "He spake of the temple of His body." But we are not bound by

the interpretations offered in such editorial comments, says Dr. Badcock ; what the "temple" symbolized was the Jewish religion, in course of being destroyed by Jews who would not recognize their real Messiah.

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Another instance is selected from the last chapter, where Jesus tells Peter that "when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Now the editorial comment on this is that Jesus said this "signifying what death he should die." Can girding up the loins, etc., be possibly applied to crucifixion? Surely not, Dr. Badcock argues. What Jesus foretold was that Peter would require to be braced up by another disciple of stronger spiritual fibre. And the prediction was fulfilled, "closely fulfilled by the meeting with St. Paul at Antioch. St. Peter failed through feebleness, and St. Paul braced him up, stiffened him, as we should say, and carried him in the opposite direction to his natural inclination."

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But in the same paper a still more revolutionary suggestion is offered. Dr. Badcock anticipates that it will be "rejected by many"; nevertheless it deserves to be mentioned as a novel interpretation of an old text. The text is the Rock-saying, "on this rock will I build my church, etc." We all know the various directions taken by theories about this passage, but no one would guess what Dr. Badcock proposes. Take these words out of their present context in Matthew's Gospel, he says; they were not spoken by Jesus to Peter, but by the Father to our Lord Himself, perhaps at the baptism. The Church is not built on any man's faith or confession, but on Jesus Christ its one foundation. When the words are read in this sense, they yield a consistent meaning. In their original form they were: "Thus saith the Lord to me, 'Thou art the rock whereon I will build my Church and against thee the gates of death shall have no power and [after the Resurrection] I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven [power of sending the Holy Ghost], and whatsoever thou shalt bind shall be bound, and whatsoever thou shalt loose shall be loosed'" [referring to our Lord as universal Judge].