

# An Open Letter To Rabbi Maurice Lefkovits

(Editor's Note—The following open letter to Rabbi Lefkovits was written by C. C. McCarthy of Grand Rapids, Minn., in response to a sermon, the context of which was published in the News Tribune.)

"Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord."—II Peter 2:11.

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."—Jude 9.

My Dear Rabbi: I have read, with both interest and astonishment, your eloquent Christmas sermon, as published in the News Tribune and the Duluth Herald. As your discourse is manifestly intended for the Gentiles, I will presume to write you this open letter, asking you, publicly, certain questions, and requesting public answers to the same.

First, Do you not, in your sermon, bring a railing accusation against the Christian religion and the Christian people of the world? Is the style, tone and quality of your effort in harmony with the exalted character of your theme? You were discussing a great world religion in connection with present world conditions. Were you not a little careless, at least, in the use of such words as "indictment," "degrading," "outrageous," "incongruous," "hypocritical," "hypocrisy," "blasphemous," "blasphemy," and other similar words? Don't you think, rabbi, that you should have, and exhibit, more love, tenderness, pity and charity for the poor, blind, and lost Gentiles? You ought to know, I think you do know, that we did not intend by our Christmas ceremonies to degrade, outrage, lie, cheat and blaspheme. If we erred it was because of blindness. Oh, rabbi, rabbi, are you so secure and smug in your exalted state, being of the seed of Abraham, that you can, from the peaceful haven of your temple, afford to hurl such terrible epithets and charges against us lost and rejected Gentiles, struggling in the ocean of despair?

But here, rabbi, is made manifest why Christ is so precious to the Gentiles. Here is an exhibition of the differences between the Jewish priesthood and the Christ. Christ would not rail against us as you do. No, he would love us, and pity us, and have great charity and compassion for us. Instead of reviling us as "hypocrites" and "blasphemers" he would call us friends and brothers, and reach out to save us. Yes, sir, really I believe Christianity is better than Judaism,—at least for the Gentiles.

Second, In your sermon you asserted that "for 19 centuries Christianity has had undisputed sway with every worldly advantage on its side, and that, for well-nigh 2,000 years, it has had unhindered domination, both temporal and spiritual." Will you please tell us where the Christian religion has had undisputed sway during 19 centuries with every worldly advantage on its side? Will you also tell us where this religion has had unhindered domination, both temporal and spiritual, during well nigh 2,000 years? Really, it comes as a sort of surprise to us Gentiles to be informed that during all of the time, for 19 centuries, this religion has held undisputed sway and unhindered domination in the world, both temporal and spiritual, with every worldly advantage on its side. Has the Christian religion ever had undisputed sway or unhindered domination at any time or place in the world? Has it such sway and domination in the United States? In Minnesota? In Duluth?

Let me give you a little incident illustrating my point. On Saturday, Dec. 26, 1914, the next day after you delivered your sermon, I was in Duluth, and while there had a conversation with one of the most prominent and influential Jews in your city. He is a good business man, successful and wealthy. I think he is a member of your congregation. No doubt he sat in the temple and listened to your bitter arraignment of the Christian religion the evening before. We were talking about Mexico and the attitude of this government toward that country. During the conversation our mutual friend expressed himself very strongly

against the policy of the United States as respects Mexico and said, "We ought to have that country (Mexico); we ought to take it. Five thousand men could take it easily. We ought to have it, and we will have it."

"Why should we take it?" I asked. "What do we want it for?"

"What do we want it for?" he echoed, "why, sir, it is the richest part of the continent; it has greater mineral wealth than any other equal area of land in North America; its natural resources are unlimited. That, sir, is what we want it for."

Now, don't you see if that man could have his way, he would have the United States send an army into Mexico and take that country and its lands and territory away from its people by force of arms. Oh, no, rabbi, the Christian religion has not undisputed sway, nor unhindered domination, even in Duluth. In fact, I suspect you, yourself, would deny any such claim and cite yourself as evidence to the contrary.

Third, Doesn't it occur to you, rabbi, upon reflection, that your argument against the Christian religion is a little shaky? Let me state it so as to have it before us. You say (1), that the Christian religion is negated, rejected and repudiated by three-fourths of its adherents; and (2), that this is evidence of there being something radically, inherently and fatally wrong with the faith itself.

Why do you assert that the Christian religion is repudiated by three-fourths of its adherents? What are your proofs? You point to the present great European war and to past wars waged by Christians as evidence supporting your assertion. Let me quote you:

"We are told that at the nativity of Him whom they call the Christ, an angelic chorus sang the exultant chant, 'Peace on earth, good will toward men.' In all the 19 centuries that have since elapsed I fail to find a single century, or even a single decade, or even a single year, or but a single day, in which peace reigned on earth and good will among all men."

So you undertake, by inference, at least, to hold the Christian religion responsible for all the war there has been in the world during the last 1900 years. Note the three last words of the above quotation. You prove your assertion as to the number of Christians who negate, reject and repudiate their faith by the existence of war, and then you prove the inherent and fatal wrong in the Christian faith by its being so repudiated by its adherents. Really, rabbi, don't you see that your argument is a boomerang? Doesn't it occur to you that it must inevitably return and strike