



FROM THE
RABBIS TO
CHRIST



H. L. HELLYER

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From the rabbis to Christ

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FROM THE RABBIS TO CHRIST

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

SUGGESTING THE KIND OF GOSPEL
THAT WILL APPEAL TO THE JEW

By H. L. HELLYER



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INTRODUCTION

Henry Leon Hellyer was born near Odessa, Russia, in 1880; and he was brought up there according to the strictest discipline of the Jews, and with the expectation that he would become a rabbi. At the age of fourteen, having finished all preparatory studies, he was sent to western Russia to what with us would be called a theological seminary. Losing his zeal, if not his faith, he left this institution when sixteen and went in quest of work to London and thence to Glasgow. It was in the latter place that he experienced the wonderful change that his narrative describes. Determined to live for the conversion of his people to the Saviour, whom he himself had found so precious, he came to Canada, entered the Bible Training School at Toronto, and completed the regular course of two years. Turning then to the United States, he transferred his church-membership to the church of which Harris H. Gregg, D.D., is pastor, in St.

Louis, Missouri, and entered the Preparatory Department of Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. Graduating here in 1910, after six years, he came to Princeton Theological Seminary. He is now (April, 1911) a regular student in the Junior Class.

Mr. Hellyer has given this account of his conversion to the public for three reasons. He would arouse sympathy for the Jews in the hearts of Christians; he would show how the Jew may best be reached with the gospel; and he would present Christ to the Jew as he should be presented to him.

Those of us who have read this little book feel that it is well fitted to realize these ends. It has revealed to us as we never even conceived how much the Jew needs Christ, how ignorant he is of him, and especially how outrageously he has misrepresented him. Our earnest hope and prayer is that God will use Mr. Hellyer for the salvation of his ancient people and through him will hasten the day when "all Israel shall be saved."

WILLIAM BRENTON GREENE, JR.

Princeton, New Jersey.

I

LIVING IN THE TALMUD

How pleasant it is for the weary traveler who has reached his happy home at the end of a long, difficult journey to look back at the rough road he has traveled. Sitting in the cool shade of the sheltering trees, surrounded by his own loved ones, safe and secure from all danger, how he likes to tell of the perils through which he has passed and to give thanks to the Almighty for his protection and guidance. And as he looks back over the perilous road with its pits and snares which he himself has so narrowly missed and beholds his friends and brethren struggling there, his heart goes out to them, and he raises his voice to them, that perchance they may hear him and heed his warning ere it is too late.

In his incomprehensible and wonderful way, God has led me through a seemingly inextricable maze of dark caverns into the light of his salvation through the blood of his Son,

Jesus Christ. I cannot understand how he did it; but this I know, that the Spirit of God has rested upon me through Jesus, and that, whereas I was lost, now I am saved.

I love to read the story of the transformation of Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:1-4, into Paul, not only because in it is manifested the wonderful power of the gospel of Christ unto salvation, but also because the story of Paul's conversion is that of the conversion of practically every Jew who comes into the fold of Christ, and, therefore, my story also; and because the zealous spirit shown by Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, is the spirit in which labors every Jew who truly and sincerely enters into fellowship with his Messiah, the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world.

I was born in southern Russia in 1880. My parents were of the ordinary type of poor Jews, who make up about ninety-five per cent of the entire Jewish population of that locality. They were very religious and zealous for the Law of Moses as set forth, not by Moses—as everyone who knows the conditions existing among the Jews will testify—but by the rabbis in the Talmud, which is quite a different thing. At the age of four years, when

scarcely able to lisp, I was sent to a Jewish private elementary school—*cheder*—where I was taught to read Hebrew. That year my father died, and then began on the part of my mother a bitter struggle to maintain me at school and to keep her own soul and body together. To add to our misfortunes, our house burned down, and mother was now obliged to provide rent also. I was too young to realize the severity of her struggles. Then I already had enough to do to keep my entire childish attention occupied. For, besides attending to my studies, I was obliged to go, during an entire year, twice daily to the synagogue to repeat prayers for the repose of my father's soul, as I was taught that this was the only way to keep it out of purgatory. Also, under the guidance of my dear mother and, likewise, of my teacher and companions at school and elsewhere, all of whom were of the same race and type as myself, I was occupied every minute of my waking hours in either doing something or avoiding doing something else, for the sake of my own salvation, as well as my father's repose and my mother's future safety. We Jewish children were taught that our parents—the dead as well as the living—

were responsible for every one of our actions or omissions until we should attain the age of twelve. At that age every Jewish orphan becomes personally responsible to his Maker. Those Jewish children who have both parents living receive an additional year of grace. There were six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Law which I had to observe, besides customs too numerous to mention, which were to be observed just as strictly as if they had been commandments! The infraction of any one of them meant damnation.

If, in my childish speculations, I ever ventured to ask why a certain act was either commanded or prohibited, I invariably received a stern rebuke. "Jews are not permitted to inquire," I would be told. "Such is the Law, and anyone expressing doubts or inquisitiveness exhibits a dangerous tendency toward becoming a 'Goi' (Christian), or a 'Meshúmod' (renegade Jew)."

Such answers soon put an effective check to any inclinations that I may have possessed for research beyond the six hundred and thirteen commandments and the several thousand customs. The word Christian was in itself sufficient to make the hair stand on end with

terror on any Jewish head; for, as everybody knew, the Christians were the boys with the brutal faces who ran about bare-footed with whips and cudgels in their hands, attacking every Jewish boy they met, and from whom I myself had been obliged to flee on more than one occasion. Christians never went to a Jewish *cheder* (school), nor to a synagogue; did not study the Commandments, did not know the Jewish God; instead, they ran about wild, cursed and blasphemed, went to churches (horrible thought!) and ate pork! And, of course, I was going to keep all the commandments and all the customs, and even invent new ones, if possible, rather than become as one of them. As the years passed by, the gulf between me and the Christians grew ever wider and deeper.

In the meantime, I had learned to read Hebrew quite fluently and had been instructed in the book of Leviticus. At the age of eight years I was given to understand that, as I had now reached a mature age, and had studied as much of the Bible as was desirable or even permissible to a true Jew without the saving guidance of the Talmud (lest the word of God lead him into error and so to eternal dam-

nation) it was now incumbent upon me to begin the study of the Talmud forthwith.

My mother's poverty had increased with the years. Yet she struggled bravely, and often denied herself food, to the end that I might continue my studies, as her life's ambition was to see me become a rabbi.

My elder brother was working at the tailor's trade. Under the local industrial conditions, he was obliged to devote many hours each day to his work in order to earn even the bare necessities of life, and was therefore deprived of all opportunity to study the Law. In other words, he was of no spiritual value to his parents, to himself or to the Jewish community. He was lost. Having thus lost one son, my mother redoubled her efforts to save me by maintaining me at school, and often spoke to me of the glorious future which awaited me as a rabbi in Israel, whose duty it would be to expound the intricate points of the Law concerning "clean" and "unclean" food and other matters of like vast importance. She told me of the certainty of a high place in heaven after such a life on earth, and of her own bright prospects hereafter as the result of having produced such a son.

As I grew older, I became more and more absorbed in the study of the Talmud. At the same time my feelings toward the Christians grew more and more bitter. The Christians caused us Jews to live huddled together in miserable little towns, without the opportunity to earn a reasonable livelihood; the Christians occupied all the government positions to which no Jew durst even aspire; the Christians owned all the lands in the country, the Christians frequently got drunk and boisterous, and assaulted and robbed, or even murdered, the Jews. What, then, could a Jew have in common with a Christian?

While I was forming this unfavorable opinion of the Christians, my teacher and my companions took particular care to discredit in my sight their chief abomination, Jesus Christ, the God of the Christians, who was worshiped in those abominable and detestable places, the Christian churches. Who did not know the true history of that blasphemer and impostor! Before I reached the age of ten years, I had the following account of my Saviour drilled into my mind.

Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary. She never spoke to the boy of the circumstances

surrounding his birth, but, of course, the entire community among which they lived knew them well, and the children with whom Jesus associated frequently taunted him with them. To his persistent inquiries, his mother gave only evasive answers, and Jesus finally, tired of being thwarted, determined to learn the truth. One day his mother stooped into an open trunk in search of something; this was the boy's opportunity. In an instant he had dropped the lid on her neck and threatened to decapitate her if she did not confess the truth. She confessed, and Jesus then and there determined to make a name for himself in spite of his ignoble birth, and at whatever cost. Accordingly, he betook himself to Egypt and was there instructed by the magi in the various secret incantations which gave those wise men the power to perform miracles. Upon his return to his native land, he imitated the magi and soon obtained a numerous following as a miracle worker. One day, inflated by his successes, he proclaimed himself God; this angered the rabbis, who attacked him, compelling him to flee for safety, and he ran into the only place whither the Jews dared not follow him—the Holy of holies—as it meant

instant death for anyone except the High Priest—and to him also except on the Day of Atonement—to enter that place. Here Jesus possessed himself of the tablet on which was inscribed the name of Jehovah (the Shem Hamforash), and by secret combinations of its letters, and by magic incantations, he was enabled to soar into the air. At this many fell down and worshiped him. At the sight of such terrible blasphemy, the rabbis rent their garments, and one from amongst them, a particularly holy man, offered up an earnest prayer imploring the God of the Jews to give him greater power than that possessed by the impostor, to the end that he might save his people Israel from the terrible danger that threatened them of becoming idolaters. Immediately his prayer was answered; he rose higher in the air than Jesus was able to fly, and sought to confound and humiliate his opponent by an unmentionable act. As might have been expected, under these circumstances, his incantations immediately lost their effect; Jesus fell to the ground and was promptly crucified by the rabbis. And this was “their God.”

Having gained this knowledge of what I

was told was his true history, I hated and despised him even more than before, and my contempt for the blinded, foolish Christians increased; likewise, my resentment against them for worshipping such an unclean, blasphemous impostor, who had actually dared oppose the rabbis! And I exulted over the fact that he had met his deserts on the cross. The churches, until then unclean to me, became a hundredfold more detestable and execrable; in passing them, it was my duty—if I wished to preserve my prospects for future salvation—to expectorate in their direction and to pronounce anathemas against them. The Christians who were sometimes gathered in their courts inspired me with terror and repelled me beyond description.

At home and at school I daily heard reports of new atrocities committed by the Christians against the Jews; I was taught that I could expect nothing else from people who worshipped an impostor who had bequeathed to his followers his hatred for the Jews for the opprobrium cast upon him. The news of the most oppressive measures enacted by the government, or the most horrible crimes committed by the populace against the Jews, awak-

ened no surprise in me, but only resentment against them and "their God." My resentment was made all the greater when—in our boyish quarrels—the Christians openly asserted that to mistreat an unbelieving Jew was equivalent to an act of worship and greatly redounded to the glory of Jesus Christ.

I write this not in a spirit of anger—God forbid!—but with profound pity both for the unfortunate Russians, whose Christianity consists entirely in Greek ritualism with very little trace of spirituality, and for my equally unfortunate Jewish brethren who dwell among them and who have come to regard the religion of their Russian oppressors as true Christianity; they have never heard of any other. Between these two races there is constantly kept up the vicious circle formed by brutality and ignorance on one side, and resentment and misunderstanding on the other.

II

A SON OF THE LAW

Time went on, and with it also my study of the Talmud. As I grew older, my plays became fewer and my studies more constant. Steadily my life was settling into the rut of fulfilling the Law. But as yet I was comparatively free from care for my spiritual safety, for, as I had not yet reached my twelfth year, the burden of my transgressions fell on my deceased father and on my mother. I tried to live according to the Law, and at times I felt quite proud of myself for the reason that, having it in my power to cause my parents untold suffering in the hereafter, I was meek and loving enough to do my best in the opposite direction. I felt particularly proud when some of our Jewish neighbors remarked upon my conduct to my mother.

As I approached my twelfth birthday, when I would become a "Son of the Law" and assume full responsibility before God for all of my actions, mother often spoke to me about

the approaching event, setting forth its importance and significance, and admonishing me to beware of the consequences of any possible thoughtlessness on my part in connection with the Law. I felt very important at the thought that I would at last join the community of Israel as an independent member, sharing in its blessings and privileges in this world, and in its hopes and promises in the world to come.

At last the fateful day arrived. In a night I was transferred from a child into a man. My heart swelled with pride when, for the first time, I found myself praying with phylacteries on my forehead and on my left arm. I felt that a great change had taken place in my life, though I did not, as yet, realize its full import. I knew that I was free to act as I pleased with regard to the Law, my mother being no longer responsible for my actions, could now only advise, but not command. I was an independent and free member of the community, and I was satisfied.

But, like Jonah's gourd, this satisfaction, born of the consciousness of my self-importance and based upon nothing substantial, perished the selfsame day and left in its stead dread, doubt and uncertainty. I was now a Jew de-

pendent on my own actions for my salvation. While no longer responsible for my religious behavior to my mother, I had become responsible to a being of vastly greater power, namely, Jehovah, who, as I well knew, could consume me with the breath of his nostrils. His eye was now upon me watching to see whether I repeated every word of my morning and evening prayers, or omitted a sentence; whether, on the Sabbath, I carried my pocket handkerchief tied around my thigh, as I should, or dared leave it in my pocket, permitting it to constitute a burden and thus laboring by carrying it; whether, on the same day, I dared touch the only copper coin I possessed in order to ascertain whether it was still safe in my pocket or had been, peradventure, lost. His threatening hand was ever extended over me. Every step I made, every glance I cast, every word I uttered or failed to utter, every move of my every muscle, was to be a factor in my future state. I could no longer cast the burden of my sins on my poor mother, nor on my deceased father; I, I myself, was the responsible party. I had no excuse for neglecting the works, for I had received four years' instruction in the Talmud and was acquainted with

the six hundred and thirteen commandments and with many of the fences built around them by the rabbis, as well as with some of the secondary fences built around the first row.

My life, therefore, became very strenuous, but even then I could not remain satisfied, for, in the first place, there were points which the rabbis had disputed but had left undecided. What was I, a poor child, to do when the rabbis had been unable to arrive at a conclusion as to what was best to do? Yet, act I must, for life was not a theory, but a stern reality.

My instructor could not enlighten me on such points; being helpless himself, he endeavored to conceal his helplessness by becoming angry whenever I ventured to approach him on this ground. "What impudence," he would cry, "what audacity; what presumption to seek answers to questions which our rabbis—blessed be their memory—did not see fit to answer!"

I could not go to my mother for advice, for the men alone study the Law in Israel. What was I to do?

Then there was the dictum of the rabbis, "All Jews are responsible one for another,"

continually staring me in the face. Of what avail was my own strict religious life, when so many other Jews neglected their duty? With all of my prayers and fasting, how could I ever escape eternal damnation, when I knew several boys who omitted at least half of their prayers? And how could I hope for mercy, when several of our Jews had gone over to the Christians?

Slowly life lost its charms and finally became a veritable nightmare. With every breath I drew, I felt that I was accumulating sin upon sin, and I also felt that I was powerless to stem the tide. And many a time I wished that God had been merciful enough to remove me from this world before I had reached my twelfth birthday, for then I should have appeared before him pure and guiltless.

At this juncture an apparent ray of light shone out from amidst the gloom. In the prayers for the Day of Atonement I read, "Repentance and Prayer and Charity remove the evil of the decree." Here was hope indeed; this, at last, was so clear that no one could mistake its meaning. Surely, I need no longer be troubled in spirit about uncertainty

in action. Repentance, Prayer and Charity. How easy! Once again my salvation was secure, and once again my spirits rose to a very high pitch. I repented of all of my sins of commission and omission; I redoubled my zeal at prayer and repeated the Psalms, and I gave my only copper coin to the poor. For a while I was contented.

But this condition was only a short truce. Very soon I noticed that prayer could not help me decide the questions which the rabbis had left undecided; that I could not repent of all of my sins, for sometimes I forgot all about some sins I had committed; that it was absolutely impossible for me to repent of the sins which other Jews had committed and for which I, nevertheless, was responsible; and that I had nothing to give to the poor, for I was very poor myself. Thus, my poverty became a barrier to my salvation. Only the rich could purchase a place in heaven!

My life became a veritable torture. I saw the gates of heaven closed in my face, hopelessly and forever. Whether I kept the Law or desisted, I felt that I was only adding to the strength of the locks and bolts. And as I studied the position of the Jewish community

generally, my heart sank still lower within me and I could only repeat with the prophet, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

In my anguish, I cried out to God for enlightenment, but no answer came. Everything around me pointed toward me as the architect of my own salvation, and toward the Law as the means.

III

IN THE SCHOOL OF THE RABBIS

At the age of fourteen years I had finished all preparatory studies. It was now necessary for me—if I was to become a rabbi—to repair to a “Yeshiva,” a seat of higher learning, there to receive further training. Accordingly, I set out for western Russia. I had no money, and was therefore obliged to travel on foot. The journey was long, weary and tedious; I was footsore and—the greater part of the time—hungry, but my spirits were buoyant, for I realized that now at last I was going to a place where I would receive proper training in the Law; where all dark things would be illumined with the wisdom of the rabbis; where all doubts would disappear; where, in a word, I would leave the Judaism of the common people behind me and penetrate into the mysterious realms of the Judaism of the elect of Israel.

I dared not look beyond that, for the sight that met my gaze was too dazzling to be true.

I could see myself, after the lapse of a few years, a holy rabbi, seated at the head of a long table, poring over tomes of the Law, and explaining to the people the intricate points connected with such things as the proper slaughtering of poultry, or a piece of beef which has accidentally come into contact with a drop of milk, and other matters just as intimately connected with the salvation of Israel. And everybody who came to me addressed me as "Rabbi" and awaited my decision with bated breath! On my word hung the fate of the chicken or the piece of beef; according to my decision, the meat would serve as food to a Jewish family or go to a "Goi" at reduced rates. The prospect was so dazzling I scarcely dared contemplate it.

With an indescribable sense of awe I entered the great seat of higher learning. I imagined myself in the presence of God himself and scarcely dared breathe. The instructors there appeared to me as spiritual beings removed far above the earth and in direct communication with God on high—just such men, in fact, as I had been given to understand the authors of the Talmud had been before them. The students seemed to me to

reflect in their faces the spirituality of the masters. And how could it be otherwise? Were they not all prospective rabbis—holy men in Israel without sin or blemish?

Eagerly I took my seat. With bated breath I began the study of the Law, expecting to see heaven open and the whole mysterious truth of Judaism burst upon me in all its radiance and glory.

During the first few days things bore a peculiar air of sanctity; but when my first impressions wore away, I began to notice things as they really were. My studies were in nowise different from those which I had pursued during the preceding few years; they were only more advanced. The air was filled with the same old disputes and doubts; the masters displayed the same old impatience at any attempt on the part of the students to explain the things which the rabbis had left unexplained. Every tendency toward independent research was throttled in its incipiency; every attempt at original thought was decried as damnable heresy. They must all travel the beaten track without deviating an iota either to the right or to the left.

I still consoled myself with the idea that

God, in his wisdom, had revealed to his children as much of the Law as was necessary for them to know, and that these present and future leaders of Israel, surely knew the ground on which they stood. It behooved me, then, to study my masters and my colleagues and gain salvation by imitating their lives.

After the first few weeks, when the novelty of the situation had worn entirely off and my studies had become a matter of mere routine, I began to study the surroundings. The instructors were too important looking and too overbearing in manner to be approached. When, in the course of my studies, I did muster up sufficient courage to approach one of them for an explanation of an obscure passage, he looked at me with great contempt for my evident ignorance and—in a severe tone and very rapidly—explained the passage, apparently to his own satisfaction, and, turning in his chair, devoted his attention to another student. I was left dazed and bewildered. I never dared nor cared to ask for any more elucidations.

In the dozen or more prospective rabbis who studied at the same table with me I was greatly disappointed. To say that there was a lack

of spirituality about them is to express it very mildly. Their business in life was to spend a certain number of hours each day in the unavoidable but evidently very irksome study of the Law in order that when reasonably proficient therein, they might obtain a rabbinic or open a school and thus be enabled to live.

Their studies were interrupted by frequent intervals during which much gossip of a social and political nature was indulged in. They lived in a world of their own creation. It would have been amusing to an intelligent person to listen to the views which those young men expressed on the current topics of the day, exhibiting as they did their awful ignorance of the most elementary propositions connected with anything outside the Yeshiva. Their conversation on more intimate subjects was not always fit for the ears of a boy of my tender years.

Having been disappointed at my own table, I determined to get acquainted with and study some of the students who were very near the completion of their studies. Some of the men, indeed, had already completed their work; they occasionally served as assistant instructors

while waiting for vacancies that they might begin their rabbinical careers. Like the masters, they had become inflated with the idea of their own importance, and their pride and arrogance before the younger students knew no bounds. However, by exhibiting a due spirit of humility and submission, I managed to get better acquainted with some of them. To my disgust, I noticed that they were essentially the same as the students by whom I was surrounded at my own table; they were only a few years older and they knew a little more of the Law. Their main object now—while waiting for a rabbinate—was to find a wife who possessed money. It did not matter what else the young woman might be—all daughters of Israel were alike—but she must have money, and her parents must be able to support the newly married pair for a number of years. The more proficient the young man was in the knowledge of the Law, the more money must his prospective bride have, and the more years must he be supported.

My admiration soon turned to disgust, and later to an absolute loathing. I loathed the Yeshiva and all that it contained. Higher

Judaism with its mysteries had now vanished. There remained the same old doubts and uncertainties. Even the prospect of becoming a rabbi had lost its charms, for it meant that I must resemble—eventually—those young men.

Satan had his dwelling place in that Yeshiva. In his subtle way, he began to whisper into my ears that it was absolutely useless to look for higher ideals—that there were none. The whole world was corrupt, and the leaders of the people more so than others. God's mercy and salvation were a myth; God had never meant to save humanity; he had given us the conception of heaven for the sole purpose of tantalizing us into vain attempts at getting into it, but its gates were eternally and hopelessly shut against us. Religion was a delusion, a cloak to beguile people into paying the expenses of the learned ones. As for truth and union with God—these were non-existent.

I cannot tell whether I was the only one in that institution tortured by such thoughts. I took good care to conceal my feelings from those around me; perhaps others acted in the same manner. I had to bear my burden alone and watch myself sinking deeper and deeper

into indifference and hypocrisy. I was threatened with spiritual annihilation. However, my early training asserted itself before it was too late.

My loathing for the school grew daily until it turned to a veritable horror of it. I could no longer bear the thought of remaining an inmate of it—a living lie—or of associating with the prospective rabbis. I realized that to remain where I was meant spiritual decay and final death. One day I concluded to leave the place.

Then began a period of wandering throughout Russia in search of a spot where a poor Jewish youth could find work to do and a place to live. But wherever I went I found the same conditions prevailing as in my native place. The Russians were everywhere worshipping ikons of the "Mother of God" and of numerous saints, and striving to avenge the crucifixion by oppressing and mistreating the Jews; while the latter were striving to live up to the letter of the Law, in total disregard of its spirit, and nourishing an implacable hatred for Christ and his followers. Not a single missionary voice was raised in all the confines of that vast empire to tell to the

Jew of the loving Saviour whose wounds bled anew at every crime committed in his name.

Disappointed with my brethren in Russia, I crossed the border into Austria; I traversed Germany and crossed into England. Everywhere I found bigotry and fanaticism, modified, it is true, by history and surrounding circumstances, but nowhere eradicated. I was looking for perfection and found none. Wherever I went among my brethren, the Law was the only thing offered me as of supreme importance, and the Law could not satisfy me.

Finding no rest abroad, I returned to my native place and confided my troubles to my dear mother. With tears in my eyes, I explained to her the doubts that tormented me and gave me no rest, and begged her to suggest something that would reassure me. She listened very patiently and at last very soothingly said:

“My son, this restlessness is sent upon you as a punishment from the God of Israel for your sin of leaving home. Stay here, my child, resemble the rest of the Jews, observe the Law, and you shall be satisfied and find rest for your weary soul.”

I left for England again.

IV

ADRIFT

After varied experiences in Hull and in London, I finally found myself working at the tailor's trade in Glasgow, Scotland. I was now a well-grown youth, able to discern things. My scruples in regard to my spiritual life had left me, to a certain extent; the old doubts no longer troubled me; my fears concerning my salvation slumbered. From association with various Jews in various walks of life, my religious life had become, like theirs, a mere succession of mechanical observances of certain rites, and repetition of certain prayers at certain times. All round me trusted to the Law for their salvation; why not I?

I passed my days at the tailor's shop where I was employed, and my evenings at the lodging house where I shared a poorly furnished room with several other young Jews in the same poor circumstances as myself. Here my time was spent in reading such literature as I could understand. Being of a contemplative

disposition, I did not seek any outside amusements, and my life flowed very smoothly.

Of course, I lived amongst my own brethren as I had in Russia, and as in Russia, too, I was surrounded by Christians. For some reason the latter never forced themselves upon my attention, and—strangely enough—I could sometimes forget that I was a Jew, and that some of the people around me were not Jews, but Christians. Scotchmen or Englishmen to me were only Scotchmen or Englishmen, and although they went to church, I seriously suspected that they were not true Christians, else—surely—they would have persecuted me. As I had no occasion to dread them, I did not hate them. Those who claimed to be the followers of Jesus had ceased to interfere with my peace and well-being, and I soon ceased to think of Jesus. But he had noticed me.

Among my roommates there were two young Jews of unsettled habits and very elastic morals. Often, while I remained in my room during the evening, they spent their time in sundry resorts and returned usually late, rather the worse for liquor, boisterous, using unbecoming language and, seemingly, proud of their condition. Though my religious sense

was slumbering, the shock of the misbehavior of these two Jews at times reawakened it. They were a thorn in my side, first, because they were Jews, members of the chosen race, whose prime business in life should have been the fulfillment of the Law; and, second, because I knew that I was responsible for them before God, and that the greatest devotion on my part would fail to atone for such sins. To my remonstrances they answered with sneers and blasphemy, and their wickedness grew from day to day.

I had given them up as hopeless, sent into this world by Jehovah as a further punishment of Israel for their great sins, when, to my surprise and gratification, I began to notice a change in the two young men. They still spent their evenings away from home and returned late, but they were now quiet in their manner, and if one of them attempted to use boisterous language, the other would check him with the question, "What would Mr. Matthews think of this?" At times their old habits would reassert themselves; but after such occurrences they usually looked ashamed and depressed in spirit.

I asked them where they now spent their

evenings. They answered that they went to a mission presided over by a Jew who had accepted Christianity and was preaching Christ to the Jews. They added that I could derive some spiritual benefit from an occasional visit to that place.

In an instant my old prejudices and my old hatred for Christ and Christianity returned in all their vehemence, and I literally fumed and raged. The idea of asking me, a true and faithful son of Abraham, to profane the holy name of God by going to a mission and listening to a "Meshúmod" preaching "their God," "the God of the Gentiles!" If the preacher had been only a poor, ignorant Gentile (although, of course, I should not have gone to listen to his profanity) the invitation of those two Jews would not have been so preposterous, for a Gentile could not be expected to understand the enormity of his blasphemy in exalting the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But a Jew! Think of a Jew who had the Law and who knew the true God, preaching idolatry and inviting his brethren to leave the God of our fathers and to worship the man who not only hated us himself, but commanded his followers to hate and persecute us! Think

of a Jew advising his brethren to bow their knees before the images of the "Mother of God" and of the saints, to go to church and do the thousands of things which, as I thought, went to make up the Christian religion! And I shuddered as I recollected some of the Jews in Russia who had gone over to "them." I cannot describe my feelings towards those men, in fact, it would be useless to attempt it, for only an orthodox Jew can conceive the depth of my hatred for them.

It was in vain that my two Jewish friends endeavored to explain to me that their missionary did not resemble the typical Christian of my conception. To me all converts from Judaism were alike, pledged to carry out what I had been taught were the behests of Jesus to hate the Jews as long as the world endured. Then, I was sure, their motives in embracing Christianity were in every case of the most sordid kind. I remembered one young Jew in Russia, a school-teacher, who had applied for a position to which was attached a monthly salary of ten roubles in excess of that which he was receiving. On being informed that his religion barred him from that position, he promptly "became a Christian"

by joining the Greek church, and received the coveted appointment. I remembered another young Jew who had become a Christian for the sake of a petty commission in the army, which no Jew could hold in Russia. Still another one had done the same thing for the sake of a position as schoolmaster in a village school, with a salary of twelve rubles a month! Think of a Jew consenting to worship in a place of abomination during his entire lifetime here and to go to eternal perdition after death for the sake of such miserable inducements! And that was not the end of the story of their degradation. Their Christian neighbors (although glad, of course, to have won over at least a few of the unbelievers to their side), could not, in their sober moments, fail to see into their mercenary motives, and looked upon them with suspicion; it behooved them, therefore, to manifest a great zeal for the cause of Christ and, as a rule, they vied with the Gentiles in going to mass, in observing the feasts and the fasts and, particularly, in hating and persecuting their (former) brethren. When, in connection with this religious zeal, we take into consideration the fact that these renegades were, without ex-

ception, confirmed infidels, their character will stand out clear and well defined. As a consequence, their names were a hissing and a byword in every Jewish household, and shame and reproach were heaped upon every man, woman and child in any way connected with them.

And this missionary into whose unclean place my two friends were trying to entice me, what could he be, but another of those miserable, sordid renegades, who had contracted with the Devil to preach Jesus and persecute the poor, innocent Jews, while his life endured, for the sake of some monetary consideration? I felt certain that such were the facts in the case. And as for his eagerness to preach Christ to the Jews, was not that an indication of his great hatred for our race? What other means could he have selected half as efficacious for bringing misery upon Israel as the inducing of some of the weaker members of the community to damn their own souls and those of their relatives for all eternity? Incidentally, their great crime reflected on the safety of all Israel, for we were all responsible one for another. Altogether, it was a diabolical scheme, cunningly laid and

carried out. The missionary was altogether too horrible a creature to associate with.

My two Jewish friends had not as yet become Christians, although they had been visiting the mission for some time, and, on the whole, they were morally improved. But then, they were really as bad as Christians, for they did not observe the Law at all, and their morals were very loose. And, after all, it would have been better for them if they had remained in their horrible state, for now they were confronted by the tremendous danger of becoming Christians, in comparison with which drunkenness and all other crimes were mere pastime and innocent amusements.

I firmly resolved to steer clear of the accursed place; and I strove to forget it.

However, my curiosity had been aroused. Often, when the two Jewish youths returned home, sober and in good spirits, I caught myself speculating on the nature of the mission. I ascribed these thoughts to Satan, and earnestly prayed to God to deliver me from the tempter. But in spite of my prayers the desire to visit the mission grew stronger and stronger within me.

One incident particularly served to stimulate

this desire. One evening my two Jewish friends returned from their usual haunts rather late, and I could see at a glance that they had not spent the evening at the mission. They were discussing their exploits with evident satisfaction, when one of them suddenly interrupted his friend, exclaiming, "That is all very well, only, what would Mr. Matthews say to this?" A hush fell over the two young men and they both looked guilty and ashamed. I was greatly astonished and asked them if Mr. Matthews, being a renegade, would not rejoice if he knew that they were so very bad, almost as bad as Christians? "As bad as Christians?" they said. "Henry, you know not whereof you speak. We can never be like them, for true Christians are good." Of course this appeared so ridiculous that I burst out laughing. Who could imagine a good Christian? My friends simply said, "Come and see." They seemed so positive about their statement that I began to think at times that, possibly, I had received a false impression of the Christians. Such thoughts were only fleeting, for the next moment I usually thought, "But think of the Man they follow!" How can they be good? Nevertheless, my desire to

visit the mission grew stronger and stronger. Once I had almost offered the two young men to accompany them, when the horror of the contemplated step presented itself to me in all its blackness.

So the summer passed. The evenings grew longer and colder and more tedious in the cheerless lodging house. My two friends spent correspondingly happier hours at the mission; they looked very comfortable on returning.

I now permitted myself more often to think of the place which they described in such attractive terms, and gradually the place began to lose its terrible aspect. At least, I reasoned, no possible harm could befall me if I should step into the mission, for no one could compel me to become a Christian against my will, although there is this common belief among the Jews that the missionaries often use trickery once they have you inside their mission. One of their favorite methods (so we were told) was to brand a cross upon the seduced's left arm on the place where one of the phylacteries is put during the morning worship. This is done by every foul means imaginable; its purpose is that the victim might never again be able to return to Judaism. Perhaps my

influence would serve to bring the poor, miserable renegade back to his duties as a Jew!

One evening, when my friends found me particularly depressed they urged me to come with them to the mission. I consented. But the next instant I began to feel that I was a monster, a traitor to the cause of Israel, to the Law and to the God of the Jews. I thought of my mother, my sister, my brother and of the everlasting shame that I would bring upon them by my thoughtless and blasphemous act. I, a true Jew, a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a child of the Law, would step into a Christian mission and listen to the blasphemous teachings of the Jew-hating, God-hating Christ; who commanded men to indulge in all of those excesses to which the Christians gave themselves up, in obedience to his voice! If, as the rabbis taught, I was entitled to a reward for merely entering the synagogue, even though I did not pray, then I would be, of course, in danger of damnation for entering an abominable mission, even though I did not bow to Jesus. I grew nervous and could scarcely eat my food; but, desiring to appear strong and brave, I concluded not to withdraw my consent.

After supper I started for the mission. My heart beat wildly and my cheeks grew pale as we approached the terrible place. I fancied that all Israel was looking at me, and I cast furtive glances to see if any Jews saw me. Fortunately, the mission was situated away from the Jewish quarter, and I met no Jews. Several times I was on the point of bolting, but the desire to appear brave restrained me. My brain was on fire, my knees were bending under me, a thousand voices rang in my ears, each one crying that I was lost, lost!

Yet I could not resist the force that was impelling me onward, for it was God himself who, in his great mercy, had looked down upon me, a poor, lost sheep, and had sent his Son to find me. Moving against my will, and crying out to myself in the anguish of my soul, yet not possessing strength enough to retrace my steps, I, with my two companions, soon found myself in front of the mission.

How can I describe my feelings at that fateful moment? Here I was, about to enter an accursed, abominable mission. I, the pious Jewish youth, whose duty it was to avoid everything connected with Christ and his followers, to detest his churches, to resent his cruelty, to

hate every Jew who spoke his name, I was about to enter a mission devoted to preaching him to the Jews! I could see my mother and my sister and brother looking at me in terror, and my townspeople pointing their fingers at me in their rage; I could hear the entire Jewish race shouting at me in their fury; I could see the Law hurling its curses at me, and Gehenna open at my feet. In my terror, I wished to run away from that horrible place, but God would not let me. I was powerless to turn; I felt that some mysterious force, stronger than I, was controlling me and leading me on.

Presently I found myself within the building. Trembling in every limb, I stood there, conscious of being in a very pleasant, warm room, but terrified at the thought that, at any moment, the terrible renegade was liable to pounce upon my defenseless person and baptize me forcibly, thus making me a Christian, as, I knew, the Russian Government had been wont to do with young Jews in the days of Nicholas the First.

While I was still trembling, he came. I looked at the venerable Israelite with his benevolent face and kindly eyes; I felt the

warm grasp of his hand; I heard his friendly, fatherly greeting, and I stood literally dumb with astonishment. When finally I did regain the use of my voice, I could only stammer these words:

"Surely, you are not a Meshúmod?"

"No, no, my child," he answered. "I am not a Meshúmod; what an idea!"

"But you believe in Jesus Christ?"

"With all my heart. But, my friend, I also believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the only true God. I am a Jew like yourself, and I love my people. I know what you have in mind when you speak of a Meshúmod, and I must tell you that you will find nobody like that in this mission. Our religion is the religion of Israel, with some slight difference, which I cannot now discuss with you. But we shall speak of it some other time."

"And you believe in Jesus Christ?"

"Yes, brother; with all my heart and soul," answered the venerable missionary.

For the moment I felt that I was reduced to a state bordering on imbecility. I could not explain the situation. This patriarchal Jew, with flowing beard and sweet, kindly eyes,

looked very much like a rabbi; he claimed to love the Jews and to believe in the God of our fathers; and yet, in the same breath he confessed his belief in Jesus Christ! Surely, one of us two was mad, and I was certain that it was my mind which was affected; I felt that the struggle through which I had gone lately had been too much for me.

While I was still standing there in my bewilderment, the friendly, fatherly voice of the missionary invited me to look around and make myself comfortable.

The room was large. A bright, cheerful fire was burning on the hearth; several groups of Jewish young men were gathered at several tables, some reading very earnestly, while others were playing chess, checkers or other games, chatting pleasantly and apparently feeling quite contented. I examined some of the books that lay scattered on a long table and noticed that they were written in various languages. Among others, I picked up one which had the name of Jesus Christ printed in large Hebrew letters on the front page; this I quickly dropped as if it had burned my hands, and went into the next room.

This, too, was a cheerful place, bright and

warm. In the center were two long tables presided over by a young man and a young woman, respectively, both neatly attired, who were teaching a number of young Jews to read and write English. The teachers were not Jews; yet study their faces as I would, I could discover nothing but kindness and benevolence in them; they literally shone with goodness. I almost wished that I could discover at least a trace of brutality about them in order that my established opinion of the Christians should not suffer at the very first close contact with those whom I had been taught to hate, but it was in vain; kindlier faces I had never seen in my life. Certainly, I could not remember a face half as kindly among the prospective rabbis at the Yeshiva. This room was fitted with a small pulpit from which Mr. Matthews addressed his visitors nightly after school and held special services every Saturday and Sunday.

A third room, adjoining the schoolroom, also looked very inviting. This was the missionary's private sanctum in which he met, entertained and instructed earnest inquirers. Next to this room were Mr. Matthews' private apartments, where his daughter kept house for him.

I was so engrossed by what I saw that I could not give myself any clear account of what I felt. The entire place bore an air of welcome; I felt better than I had ever felt in my unattractive lodgings; so much better, that in a few minutes I had forgotten that I was in a mission where Christ's name was preached, that the presiding genius of the place was a renegade Jew whose object was to induce me to betray my people and to believe in "their God." I only knew that I was surrounded by an atmosphere of peace and repose such as I had never known in my life before. My petty troubles and tribulations were hushed in that place of rest, and I was living a new, hitherto untasted life.

The evening passed very rapidly, and it was rather late when Mr. Matthews mounted his pulpit and offered up a short prayer invoking God's blessing on Israel, such as I had never heard in a Jewish synagogue. While he was praying, I somehow imagined that I was the victim of a practical joke; that I was amongst orthodox Jews who had merely brought in the name of Jesus for the pleasure of confusing me, but that now, at prayer, they were compelled to act naturally and, of course, did

not dare to pronounce that hated name in the presence of God. However, Mr. Matthews soon began to pray God that his brethren might be brought by the Spirit to recognize him who had died for their salvation. These, of course, were strange words to Jewish ears, and to me they had no meaning whatever. The missionary spoke of a Saviour, a Redeemer, our Elder Brother. I understood not a word of all of that, for I had never heard of Jesus in that light before; to me he was "their God," and nothing more.

Presently, however, Mr. Matthews concluded his prayer, telling God that he asked those things for Israel in the name of Jesus Christ. Then I realized that he was, after all, a Christian and that he had blasphemed in daring to bring that detestable name before God. Just why he had prayed to "our God" in the name of "their God," or just why, having a God of his own, he had prayed to "our God" at all, I could not understand. But the name of Jesus Christ pronounced so boldly in my presence had a peculiar effect on me. I imagine that if a sharp-pointed dagger were driven into my heart, I should feel as I did at that moment.

The prayer over, Mr. Matthews pressed my hand, inviting me in his fatherly way to call again soon, assuring me of his friendship and apologetically explaining to me that in case of need or misfortune, I was not alone in the world. His manner was so warm and friendly that I caught myself wishing that I might remain with that man, that I might never again be compelled to return to my dismal lodgings.

The next instant I awoke, as it were, from my trance. A million voices suddenly burst forth within me, bidding me flee from the accursed place and the patriarchal traitor. I forgot his benevolent face, his kindly eye, his warm, sincere handshake and proffers of friendship; I forgot the restfulness and peacefulness of the institution, and the fact that those young Jews who had spent such a useful and enjoyable evening under its roof, would, in its absence, in all probability, have spent it in low dives laying the foundation for a low, vicious life. I only knew that the place was a mission, the man a missionary, a renegade, a traitor, and I in imminent danger of becoming a Christian. And I fled.

V

GROPING IN THE DARK

That night I could not sleep. The enormity of the crime I had committed loomed up before me like a hideous monster, growing ever larger and heavier, as the sleepless hours slowly rolled by, and threatening to drive me mad. I grew feverish and deliriously tossed from side to side, vainly trying to drive the besetting visions from before my eyes. If I could see the terror of my near and dear relatives before I entered the mission, I could now hear the despairing cry of my relatives; if I could see the finger of scorn pointed at me before, I could now hear the imprecations hurled at me by enraged Israel. I—who had been carefully trained in the knowledge of the God of the Jews and of the Law, who had been taught always to remember that I was a Jew, as long as breath endured—had proved a traitor to my God, to my nation and to the Law by entering an unclean place where the name of Christ, Israel's archenemy, was spoken. I

felt that I was lost; I did not even dare to pray, for I well remembered the Talmudic maxim that "all sins might be forgiven save the sin of worshiping strange gods." And had not my visit to the mission been an act equivalent to idol-worship?

I groaned aloud and cast about for a means whereby I might atone for my terrible act of treason. I thought of the three graces: Repentance, Prayer and Charity. And again I groaned as I realized that not even they could wash away my stain. My case was hopeless. Under the circumstances, I did the only thing which seemed to hold out any hope for me—I resolved never to step into that accursed place again and to do penance for my crime in the hope that perhaps God would not permit me to perish.

The succeeding few weeks were an endless round of misery and torture to me. I tried hard not to think of the missionary nor of his mission; but it seemed that my very effort to banish them from my mind brought them before me with greater constancy and persistency. The missionary was ever before me, reaching out his friendly hand; his soft, kindly eyes were always looking into mine;

his fatherly voice was ever telling me of his love for the God of his fathers—my fathers—and for the people of Israel—my people—ever reminding me that I had a friend in him, and inviting me to come and see him again.

At my lodgings, after the day's work was over, the struggle continued. The bare walls and floor of the poor apartment where I found shelter had never looked very comfortable or inviting; the coarse jokes and levity of my Jewish roommates had never attracted me. But since that fateful visit to the mission the place seemed like a prison to me, and I could scarcely tolerate the ways of my companions. I attempted to pursue the same light reading that had helped me while away the evenings in days gone by, but I could not concentrate my mind upon it. In a few minutes I would usually find myself thinking of the peaceful, warm, bright rooms at the mission; of the kindly, patriarchal missionary and of the beaming faces of the teachers. Everything invited me to come and forget my loneliness and my poverty. Then, there was the mystery of the situation. The rabbi-like missionary had declared to me that he was a Jew, not a Meshúmod, that he was devoted to Israel and to

Israel's God, and yet believed in Jesus Christ with all his heart. I could not understand that, since it was against all my past experience. I must inquire.

So one evening, several weeks after my first visit to the mission, having silenced my conscience, I found myself walking slowly and undecidedly to the same place again. The old desire to turn back was still strong within me, but I resisted it. My heart still beat wildly, and my knees bent violently.

I did all in my power to quiet my feelings, assuring myself that it was my duty to investigate the missionary's doctrine to the end that I might overthrow it. The same old thought of bringing the missionary back to the Law possessed me, and I tried to persuade myself that I, and not he, was the true missionary. I felt competent to demonstrate his error to my lost brother, for I relied on the Law to bear me out in my argument. Mentally I was myself arguing with the old gentleman, telling him all I knew about Jesus the impostor, the God-defying and Jew-hating blasphemer, telling him all that the rabbis had ever said against idol-worship. And I could see how the miserable renegade in a short time

gave up the fight and again confessed the God of his fathers. I became so enthusiastic over this thought that, unconsciously, I increased my speed. My fears and misgivings left me.

In a few minutes I found myself at the mission. Again I felt the warm pressure of Mr. Matthews' hand and heard the welcome of his gentle voice. In the peaceful, benign atmosphere of the quiet mission all thoughts of bitterness and of strife fled from my mind. Again I saw several young Jews reading very attentively, a few others amusing themselves in an orderly manner, and, in the adjoining room, a number of others still studying under the guidance of several Christian young men and women, just as benevolent looking as those two whom I had seen on the occasion of my first visit to the mission. That same mysterious sense of peace and well-being possessed me, and even in greater degree than before.

I spent a very pleasant evening, and again Mr. Matthews dismissed us with a prayer and spoke of Jesus as our Friend who had given up his life on the cross to the end that we might have everlasting life. Once more I

felt that sharp, unpleasant sensation about my heart.

Of course, I had been looking all my life for a means of salvation—all Jews were doing the same every day; I had kept the Law scrupulously in the hope of salvation; in my prayers, together with the rest of my brethren, I had invoked the merits of the saints, hoping to get salvation through them, yet never feeling sure of my ground. I welcomed, therefore, the thought of a Saviour. But why did not Mr. Matthews mention as my Saviour some rabbi who had written some nice little fence about a point of the Law in the Talmud? Such a Saviour I could have welcomed with joy. But when I heard that my Saviour was he, the "God of the Gentiles," a pang of horror, cutting and repelling, shot through my heart. I could not contain myself, and as soon as he had finished speaking, I asked the missionary how he, an intelligent Jew, could speak in that manner about the greatest enemy the Jews had ever had.

"My son," he answered very calmly and kindly, "I see that you have heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are really interested in the subject, join me over a cup of

tea next Thursday evening, and we shall discuss it. A bright young man like you might be able to convince me that I am wrong; I am not too old to learn."

I eagerly accepted the invitation, particularly when Mr. Matthews informed me that there would be nothing about the tea which could in any way offend my orthodox instinct. I wondered greatly that he was not afraid to offer such a challenge to a Jew who, he might have known, could expose his error and shatter his idol in short order. I already gloated over the thought of how I would confound the missionary.

The succeeding two days I spent in reviewing my knowledge of "their God." I felt that I was going to fight the battle of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob against the abomination of the Christians, even as the zealots of old had fought against Baal and Astarte, and that it behooved me, therefore, to gird my loins with the strength of knowledge. I recalled every word that I had ever heard concerning Jesus Christ, seeking a point of vantage from which to attack him. I reviewed the scandalous story with which I was so familiar, and the atrocities which the Christians had

practiced, and were still practicing against the Jews—and stopped. Try as I might, I could not discover that I possessed any knowledge whatever bearing on the person or claims of Jesus of Nazareth. I could hurl invectives against him; I could upbraid the Jew who believed on him for being a traitor to the God of Israel, but for the first time in my life I was forced to admit to myself that my reasons for so doing were based on nothing; that I knew nothing of Jesus, save the story I had been told at home.

On the other hand, why should a child of the Law devote his time to the study of such an abomination as the life of Jesus Christ, the God of the Gentiles? Was not that story sufficient to confound all those who believed in him? And besides, since all Jews spoke so much against Jesus, I reasoned that there must undoubtedly be an abundance of passages in the Law which confirm their views, although I myself had never come across any of them. Now, if only I mentioned the Law and the Prophets in a general way, what could the missionary possibly say in the defense of his God? And I already saw myself emerging from the contest with colors flying.

Thursday evening I repaired to the mission. Mr. Matthews met me with his usual cordiality and ushered me into his private room, where he introduced me to his daughter, an estimable lady about thirty years of age, who greeted me so pleasantly that, in spite of the knowledge that I was with a pair of renegade Jews, I was forced to admit to myself that never in my life before had I felt so comfortable or at ease as I did in that pleasant room, warmed by the presence of those two followers of Jesus even more than by the bright fire on the hearth.

Soon I was seated at the table. Mr. Matthews chatted very pleasantly about various subjects connected with my past experiences and present life, but not for an instant did he touch on the one thing which was foremost in my mind and for the sake of which I was there—the discussion of Jesus. Surely I had already obtained a victory without speaking. The miserable sinner knew that I had the Law on my side.

Yet I was not quite satisfied with my easy victory; by every instinct of the rabbinical training I had received, I felt impelled to confound my adversary and to compel him to

admit his defeat. While I was planning the first step of attack, the old gentleman, as if divining my thoughts, suddenly changed the subject and asked me about my hopes for the hereafter. This gave me the desired opening. Very warmly I upbraided the old gentleman for forsaking the only people in the world who were certain of a place in heaven, since it was their God who owned it. How could he ask me about my hopes? The sole fact that I was a son of Abraham insured me a high place in Paradise; and he, as a Jew, knew well that no member of any other nation was destined to see heaven.

I was excited, but my host was calm and placid. Not for an instant did his pleasant smile leave his countenance; his voice was quiet and cheerful. He reminded me that there were many bad men among the Jews. I retorted that the spiritual condition of the Jews did not matter, that the one important fact was that they were Jews. To his suggestion that many of them did not believe in the God of Abraham, I replied that even this was not important, so long as they remained Jews and did not bow their knees to idols, for, when they should come to see our

God face to face, they would, of necessity, believe in him.

"Yet," he said, "if you have ever read your Bible, you know that Moses cursed the Jews who should not fulfill all of the Law." "Oh, the curse pertained only to very great sinners," I answered, hesitatingly, feeling that the missionary had scored a slight point.

"According to your belief, then," he said, "such sins as are commonly committed in Israel daily, sins against the Ten Commandments even, nay, more, even the denial of God himself, the Holy One of Israel, are only slight offenses which do not come under the curse of Moses? Can you name the great sins which do come under it and which the Jews do not commit?"

I remained silent for a while, then said, "Granting that some of the Jews are very great sinners, their hopes are nevertheless bright for the sake of the religious members of the community."

Then he opened the Bible, and I read in Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

"Now," said the missionary, "according to Moses, sin is the omission of a point of the

Law. And what have our rabbis to say about salvation? 'The ignorant have no share in the world to come.' And for good reasons, because the knowledge of the Law must precede its fulfillment. My son, once more I ask you, what are your hopes for the hereafter? Do you know and keep all of the Law?"

I admitted that I did not; but I argued that I was leading an orthodox life such as I had been taught to lead; that I prayed, kept most of the commandments, went to synagogue on Sabbaths and holidays, and did many more things which the Jews considered important and counted as righteousness.

Then Mr. Matthews opened the book of Isaiah, chapter 64, verse 6, and I read:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

"We must not take this too seriously, Mr. Matthews," I said, "for this was said by Isaiah, who was only a prophet. Now, if Moses or the rabbis had said it, then, of course, there would have been authority in the words."

Mr. Matthews then invited me to read Deuteronomy 18:18, pointing out that Moses himself had put those who according to my

statement were "only prophets" on an equal footing with himself, indicating that their words were of equal authority with his own, both being the words of Jehovah.

I was literally bewildered when I realized that I had overlooked so many fundamental truths of the Law on which depended my hopes for salvation. I was grieved and exasperated at the thought that it had remained for a renegade to point out those truths to me, an orthodox Jew. But I consoled myself with the thought that the excellent knowledge of the Law would contribute to the greater damnation of the traitor, for I had been taught that of those who knew much, much was required. Anyway, how did my lack of knowledge of the Law affect the standing of the impostor Jesus? I therefore reminded the missionary of the true object of my visit—the discussion of Jesus, the enemy of the Jews.

He answered that he was not acquainted with that Jesus; that I must be mistaken in the identity of the person; that the Jesus whom he knew was a friend of the Jews; that, in fact, he had consented to a shameful death on the cross to the end that the Jews, before

others, might have salvation, and that, dying at their hands, he had prayed for them.

"Oh," I said, "Mr. Matthews, if you only knew what I know about him, you would change your mind on the subject."

And I proceeded to unfold before the missionary the story which had been so well drilled into my mind, feeling while I was telling that now I had conquered. As I spoke, the old man's eyes became sad, and when I had finished they were filled with tears.

"My poor child," he said to me with compassion, "have they compelled you to listen to such horrible tales about my Saviour—your Saviour? Tales which no sane man would utter? May God forgive those who have taught you to believe such madness, and may he help me to undo the mischief wrought in you by our poor, ignorant, deluded brethren. Your soul is too precious in the sight of God to permit it to perish on account of such an idle and blasphemous tale. Rid your mind of this poison; study the Law and the Prophets. We have already established the fact that our prophets spoke the word of God. Now, let us hear what Isaiah has to say concerning the birth of Jesus."

He pointed to Isaiah 7:14, and I read:

"Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son."

"Now," continued the missionary, "read chapter nine, sixth verse of the same prophet."

And I read:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

"Nay, nay, my brother," said Mr. Matthews very kindly, noticing my great confusion, "do not imagine that I blame you for not knowing that which, as a Jew, it is your duty to know. Only, try to correct the defect. Here is a copy of the Bible—your own Old Testament—study it. As a supplement to what we have read this evening, read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. And now, may God bless you, my son."

VI

COMING TO THE LIGHT

It would be a mistake to think that my conversion was accomplished that night. I left the mission confused and angry. On my way home I could only upbraid myself for my defeat and for permitting a miserable renegade to silence me, a child of the Law. When my anger abated somewhat, my thoughts took another turn, and I was forced to admit that something was wrong. Later, through the silence of the night, I could only repeat to myself the same assertion. Now, who was wrong? Surely not the rabbis. It must be the Christians. Yet, the missionary had not opened his mouth about the belief of the Christians, but had spoken to me of my own Bible, the word of God, which I was compelled to believe. But if the teachings of the Bible differed from the religion which I had been taught, then I was wrong; and if I was wrong, then all Israel was wrong; and my father had been wrong before me, and

my mother, and my teachers and the rabbis—all, all were wrong. The missionary, then, was right. This was a terrifying thought, and when it crossed my mind, I was tempted to awaken my slumbering roommates and to implore them to protect me from the missionary and from Jesus Christ. I attempted to seek refuge in the old story, but it appeared so despicable now that I at once dismissed it from my mind. In its stead, like the writing on the wall, there appeared before me the words of Isaiah. I shuddered and repeated that something was wrong.

The next day, the struggle continued. Wherever I looked I could see only the Prophet Isaiah repeating his words concerning the birth of the Child, and I could hear only God repeating, "Hear him, for he speaks the words which I have put into his mouth!" The seed had been sown in my heart, and God, in his infinite mercy, was fostering it, only I, in my blindness, was struggling against the light, preferring to retain the band around my eyes which, under the guidance of the rabbis, I had worn all my life. I dared not admit even to myself that I had been wrong; my whole nature rebelled against such

an acknowledgment; neither could I, in the light of Scripture, delude myself with the idea that I had been right. There was a holy prophet whom I had been commanded to hear telling me that my acts of righteousness on which I had relied for my salvation were only filthy rags; that my prayers were not desired by God, Isaiah 1:11-17, nor my fasts approved of him, Isaiah 58:5. I had lived a lie; the holy had become unclean.

On the other hand, did I dare judge my mother, my teachers, all Israel? Did I dare question the authority of the rabbis? I remembered that I had been particularly trained to refrain from such speculations, as they always implied the danger of unbelief. But if the maxims of the rabbis could not bear investigation, what was their authority? Then, was there a possibility of the Christians being right? At this horrible thought, I grew faint, and all Israel seemed to shout into my ears: "No, no! How dare you think that? You are a Jew!"

I resolved to think no more on the subject. But the resolution did not help me, for it was God's voice speaking within me and it would not keep silent. Then I determined that

as the missionary had brought all of that trouble upon me, I would never again see him nor his mission; and for two weeks I remained away from him.

Yet on the Sunday of the third week I found myself at the mission once more, eagerly drinking in the words of Mr. Matthews concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. To me the missionary was no longer speaking of the impostor of my story, but of the Child whose birth Isaiah had prophesied, and who had lived a life of which I knew nothing.

I became a frequent visitor at the mission. At times my Jewish zeal reasserted itself, and I tried hard to think of the missionary and of his mission with my former hatred; but the attempt always failed. Slowly I became accustomed to the words Saviour, Redeemer, Friend.

When I realized what a strong influence the missionary's words were exerting over me, I began to feel guilty in the presence of my Jewish brethren. I would not have admitted even to myself that my views on Judaism had undergone a change, and I feared lest my brethren, on noticing my frequent visits to the mission, should suspect that all was not well with

me. It was a fortunate circumstance for me that the mission was situated away from the Jewish quarter, for I could always slip away without arousing much comment.

Very slowly a change was wrought in my feelings with regard to Jesus Christ. As I listened to Mr. Matthews from day to day and from week to week, the sound of the once hated and dreaded name ceased to send that sharp pang through my heart; I could, in the course of time, at least tolerate it; and with the tolerance for the name came also a tolerance for the story of the life and death of the Man who had borne it.

Once I ventured to touch a copy of the New Testament, and the contact had the effect of an electric current. When I opened the book for the first time intending to read it, I imagined that something terrible would happen to me. I could not overcome my curiosity, and as no bolt came down from heaven to consume me, I soon overcame the uncomfortable feeling, and began to read the New Testament systematically.

The story unrolled to me, at once charmed and frightened me. I looked in vain for the boastful, malicious Jesus of my early con-

ception; instead, I found a Man possessed of humility, tenderness and love inexpressible. So far from defying the Law, I found Jesus calling upon it as the witness of his truthfulness. I had been taught to believe that Jesus had set up claims in defiance of the God of Abraham; that he had hated the Jews and had taught his followers to do likewise. What was my surprise then, when, in Matthew 7: 21-23, I read that—according to Jesus—no one could inherit the kingdom of heaven who did not do the will of his Father, who was the God of Abraham; that, therefore, my God was his God also; that all those who work iniquity must depart from him! The question as to what constituted the will of the Father, Jesus settled for me in Matthew 25: 34-46. The King invites into the kingdom prepared by God—his Father—those who have fed the hungry and clothed the naked among the least of his Jewish brethren, and repudiates those who have not done so. I compared these words with Isaiah 58: 5-9, and found that the words of Jesus were the words of God. On every page I found only purity of ideal and high spirituality.

Not only did the teachings of Jesus charm

and fascinate me; they also frightened me; for, if they were pure, they were not what I had been taught to believe they were; and if misrepresented in one respect, then why not in another? What if, after all, there was truth in Jesus? Then, what about rabbinical Judaism?

I had been taught to work out my own salvation through the daily mechanical repetition of a certain number of lines of prayer and the avoiding of certain kinds of food, and other acts of the same character. But slowly the conviction forced itself upon me that, in comparison with the righteousness of Jesus, my righteousness might well be called filthy rags; that the likeness to God in which man was created could not possibly pertain to his bodily form, and that therefore Jesus was the most perfect image of the Father—a being without sin and full of love and righteousness.

Again my spirit became greatly perturbed; again I realized, only more clearly and forcibly than before, that I was a miserable sinner, away from God, defying my Creator by substituting for things spiritual, which he demanded of me, things physical, which his soul abhorred.

I redoubled my prayers in the effort to derive some spiritual solace from something. On the Day of Atonement I went to the synagogue. There, as I prayed fervently, with the rest of the community, my doubts were quieted for a moment, and I said to myself that, after all, we Jews were in the right, for we were in direct communion with God and needed no mediator. But while I was still thinking thus I heard the leader say in a voice full of fear and trepidation:

“In the absence of a mediator against the accuser, speak thou to thy people of hope and salvation!”

At these words a hush fell over the praying men and many burst into tears. So Israel did, after all, realize a need of a mediator and possessed none. There was an accuser, and no one opposed him!

Then what became of the assurance I had been given that I was sure of salvation because I was a Jew? It vanished into thin air and in its stead was left an aching void and the fear of the wrath of God. But what was the remedy? Involuntarily there came to me the words I had read in John 4: 14:

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that

I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Was it possible that in repudiating Jesus, Israel was repudiating the Mediator he was so ardently wishing for and, therefore, also his salvation? But if Israel perished, need I perish also? The boldness of the thought frightened me; I prayed long and earnestly that God would teach me the way to salvation, and during my long prayers I could only hear the one word "whosoever," as if that had been intended as an answer from God.

The following Sunday I went to the mission; there the ever fatherly missionary read the words of John 14:6:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

"Is that really true?" I asked the missionary's daughter.

"Why do you ask me?" she answered. "Search the scriptures. I see that you have not read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah."

When I protested that I had, she advised me to read it once more, this time intelligently.

That night I read Isaiah 53:4, 5, 7, 8.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. . . . He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of my people was he stricken.”

And again in the same chapter, verse 9:

“He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

I well remembered the explanation which the Jewish rabbis had given me of that chapter. According to their teaching, Israel was the innocent sufferer who was bearing the sins of the world. In days gone by, this explanation had satisfied me as had everything else taught by the rabbis. But I had now begun to compare scripture with scripture, and I discovered that this explanation could not be true if God's word was not contradictory to itself. The Jews were instructed by God to bring as an offering only animals without

a blemish; nothing that had a blemish would be acceptable. Therefore, whosoever was to bear the sin of the world must himself be sinless, without guilt or stain. How could such a description apply to corrupt Israel? And if Israel was sinless in the eyes of God and was chastised only for the sins of others and "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth," then what became of the words of God in Jeremiah 44:4-8, where he tells Israel plainly that the land was destroyed because they had provoked him to fury with the works of their hands?

No, the explanation of the rabbis was preposterous, for it was arbitrary, and I could not accept it. Jesus was the only sinless being ever created into the world, and the chapter must, of necessity, refer to him. And again I read:

"By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. . . . And he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

I leaped for joy, for I had at last found that Mediator for whom I had wept, with the rest of Israel, during all my life. And like Saul of Tarsus, I heard the voice, "It is hard

for thee to kick against the pricks." Did I believe in Jesus Christ? Yes, I realized the truth. I, even I, the young Russian Jew, the orthodox Jew, whose ambition had been to become a rabbi, the Jew who had hated Christ and everything that bore his name, was a believer in Jesus Christ, and his name was the most precious name to me under the sun. I no longer struggled nor fought against the conviction that Jesus was my Redeemer, and I continually heard the voice of the Father saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

I was a Christian. This was a secret, for as yet I dared not come out openly for Jesus. I rejoiced in the knowledge that I was no longer alone, naked in my sins before God; that if I sinned I had an Advocate; that I could turn to my dear Elder Brother for shelter from the temptation of life. His words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," breathed peace and joy and hope and comfort for me. In my happiness, I wished to cry out to my friends that I had found my Saviour and that he was calling for them also; only I noticed that I was alone in my new state and that

the others were still the same orthodox Jews that they had been, and that to speak to them of Jesus would have meant persecution and ostracism for me, that they would have called me "Meshúmod."

At this thought I paused. I had not thought of that before. And when I thought of that terrible word as applied to me, I shuddered again and again. None but a Jew can realize what it means for a new convert to be called by that name and to have applied to one all that it implies. Translated literally it means "annihilated." It implies that the Jew called by that name has by his own act annihilated himself from the midst of Israel and from Israel's God; that his former friends must henceforward be his enemies; that his relatives must hate him as a thing accursed and unclean, and must, in their turn, be hated and despised, on his account, by all Israel; that he can never again be admitted into a synagogue; that he cannot participate in any prayer, nor in any religious ceremony such as circumcision or a wedding. Then I thought of my mother. I could hear her bitter cry of anguish on learning the terrible truth about her son, on whose religious future she had built such grand hopes

for herself; I could see her go into mourning for me as for one dead; I could hear her lamenting and wishing rather that I had died a thousand deaths as a Jew than that I had taken the terrible step which made her an outcast for the remainder of her life and condemned her to black darkness for all eternity. Never again could she venture forth in daylight without her neighbors pointing their fingers at her in derision and holy horror, and repeating to their neighbors and to the children the shameful fact that her son was a renegade. They might, in their holy indignation and fervent zeal, even cast stones at her. My brother and my sister, who were both married, would be in danger of losing their partners in life, for the latter could sue for and obtain divorces from them from any rabbi, on the ground that their brother was a believer in Christ. My little nephews and nieces would no longer find any playmates at school, on account of their uncle; all the other children would consider it an act of worship to abuse them at every opportunity; and should they, in the course of time, find young men and women willing to marry them—which was doubtful—their children would likewise be

shunned and abused on account of a Meshúmod in the family. In a word, I would bring ruin and lifelong misery on my family in the immediate present, and for generations to come. Did I have the right to do so?

Then began the struggle between love for Christ and love for my family. On the one hand, there were those near and dear to me stretching out their hands to me in agony and terror, beseeching me in the name of my dead father, in the name of the saints, of the Law and the rabbis, in the name of all that is dear to a Jew's heart, not to bring disgrace and ruin upon them by becoming a Meshúmod; while, on the other hand, there was Christ, my Saviour, calling me to come unto him and obtain a pardon for my sins and life everlasting. My Jewish training, my relatives, my friends, the entire Jewish nation cried out to me that I was a Jew and therefore had no part in Jesus of Nazareth, and that my first duty was to my relatives; while Paul was telling me that the gospel of Jesus Christ was the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first—to me first, and Jesus himself was forever repeating, "He that loveth father or mother more

than me is not worthy of me." Matthew 10:37.

Several times I was on the point of renouncing Christ, but I could not. Often I prayed to God to remove the thoughts of Christ from my mind for the sake of my poor, innocent relatives, and invariably the words of Jesus came to me as an answer, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." Therefore, in the light of these words, my relatives were preventing me from believing in the God of my father Abraham, substituting in God's stead a sensuous Being, the product of the distorted minds of the rabbis; and my duty in the matter was so clearly laid down in the Law that I could not misunderstand it. How could I misinterpret the command of Moses, Deuteronomy 13:6-8, not to listen to anyone who urged me on to idolatry? Yet, pray as I would, I could not change the fact that my mother and my relatives, and the rabbis and all Israel were urging me on to the idolatry of rabbinism, to the exclusion of my God. Christ alone stood ready to bring me to him: everybody else was making a desperate attempt to plunge me into eternal damnation.

Thus I struggled and prayed, listening in turn to the voices of Christ and of my people, and swayed in my emotions from side to side as a reed is by a storm. By degrees, the voices of my people grew fainter and fainter, and in the same measure Christ's voice grew clearer and stronger; and at last the day came when I could hear only his voice speaking sweetly of peace, of forgiveness, of salvation, of the Father and of everlasting life. All else was hushed,—he had won. He had become the very breath of my life, and it was no longer a choice with me between Christ and my relatives, or Christ and the Law, but between Christ and despair, between Christ and death. My people had lost their influence over me; I could only pity them, and, pitying, love them all the more, even with the love taught me by Jesus Christ.

I now confessed the Lord Jesus before Mr. Matthews and requested baptism. He received the news very coolly and informed me that I could afford to wait. This surprised me, for together with the rest of my brethren, I had had the idea that the missionary was lying in wait for unwary Jews, eager to pour holy water upon them in a moment of their thought-

lessness. And when, after I had repeated my request several times at intervals of a few weeks, he still treated me coolly, I began to suspect the sincerity of the old gentleman's belief in Jesus Christ.

However, the time was now past when I could be influenced in my own belief by the attitude assumed by any individual, and I resolved to make a final appeal to the missionary, and, if he disappointed me, to look for satisfaction elsewhere. Accordingly, three months after my first confession of the Lord, I very earnestly addressed myself to Mr. Matthews, setting forth my disappointment at his coolness toward me and indifference toward my request. Then, to my joy, his manner changed; his eye beamed again with the old kindness, and he evinced satisfaction in every feature as he grasped me warmly by the hand and said: "My son, you have stood the trial well; I see that you really and truly are converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and are worthy to be taken into fellowship with him. So be it; you shall be baptized."

The following Sunday it was accomplished, and Christ came to dwell in me and I in him.

But it had required eighteen months to convert me.

Several of my Jewish friends had heard of the proposed ceremony and came to witness it. When it was over, one of them, a very earnest man, approached me and sorrowfully said: "Henry, what have you done! You have killed your poor mother and brought disgrace upon yourself and your family!" His remarks cut me to the heart, but there was a sense of satisfaction, for I knew that Christ had found me.

Ever since then the voice of my Lord has been continually urging me on to go and tell my brethren about God as revealed by his Son. But I preferred to wait, thinking that delay would redound to God's glory, for the reason that after my baptism I could not persuade my Jewish friends among whom I was anxious to begin Christ's work that I was in earnest, and I knew that, unless I could persuade them of my earnestness, my work among them would necessarily be in vain. They were divided in their opinions as to the real reasons which underlay my baptism, some affirming that I was mentally unbalanced, others pitying me for having succumbed to the wiles of the mis-

sionary, while a third contingent persistently inquired as to the amount of money I had received as an inducement to submit to baptism.

For two years I continued to work among them at my trade, serving the Lord and endeavoring to disabuse their minds, in the hope that some day they would listen to the truths of the gospel. However, my efforts failed entirely, and I finally came out in open work for Jesus Christ in other fields. Now I can only hear his command to preach the gospel to every creature, and his promise to be with me "Always, even unto the end of the world." What if my people despise me? They have despised him before me. But if I succeed in bringing only a single one of my erring brethren to the feet of my Redeemer, even as I myself have been brought to him, what joy there will be in heaven!



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