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Where Next



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WHERE NEXT?

(Adapted from a conversation between Mr. James E. Bennet and a fellow-passenger.)

I HAD been at Bridgeport, Conn., speaking to a group of young people. Coming back to the city I sat with a young man. The train was crowded. I started to read a book, about the typography of the Hebrews, by Dr. Anderson. The young man was reading a magazine. I thought to myself—here I have travelled to Bridgeport to speak to a group of young people, why shouldn't I speak to the young man beside me. I closed my book. In a minute he rolled up his magazine. I sighed. He turned and looked my way. "Whew," I said, "it's hot in here." He admitted it. We thereupon came into conversation through the topic of the weather. It is a free topic.

He told me he had been to Connecticut and was on his way home to Bayridge. "I used to live in Bayridge," I said, "many years ago."

"Well! What do you know about that?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. It is a coincidence," I replied.

"Did you get wealthy there?" he asked, smiling.

"Depends what sort of wealth you mean," I said, returning his smile. "Wealth of material possessions, or wealth of soul?"

He laughed. "Soul! Where did you get that idea?"

"Why, in church," I said.

"Well, I'm Yiddish," he explained. "We Yiddish don't usually go to church, you know. Anyway, don't tell me you believe in a soul. That is an old idea that has been exploded. It's a myth, a superstition nobody believes in these days. It has gone clear out of date. One of the old phases of religion; science has settled that. There are no souls. Don't tell me you believe in souls." Having told me that no one up-to-date did, he asked me if I believed in souls. But I overlooked that and said, "Yes, I believe in souls; I have one, so I have to." He seemed intensely interested in looking at me. I believe he would have paid admission to see me. I looked intelligent and yet I persisted I had a soul.

"Show it to me," he demanded.

"I can't show it to you," I answered.

"You tell me you have a soul and when I

ask you to show it to me you say you can't. That is the way conversations like this always end. If you say, 'I have a dollar,' and I asked you to show it to me and you did, well, then I would believe you have a dollar. I never believe anything I do not see. When it comes to a soul, you can't show me. I'm up-to-date; I'm hard-boiled; I'm practical; I'm a rationalist and materialist. If I see it, all right."

"Well," I said, "let's talk about something else. You probably went to High School. I have an idea that you were near the top of your class."

He brightened perceptibly. "I was! How did you know?"

"That isn't hard," I returned. "I have been talking with you. You seem to have a very keen intellect."

"Yeah," he returned—modestly—"several teachers mentioned it and said that I should develop it—I have developed it, I'm learning to express myself."

"That's certainly fine," I agreed, "for a good intellect is a wonderful thing, and you have one."

"Yes!" he exclaimed proudly, "I certainly have one."

"Show it to me," I innocently asked him. "Why, you can't see my intellect. Nobody sees things like that."

"But you said you had one, and so I thought you must have seen it."

"Why, no, you don't see your intellect," he impatiently replied.

"Well, now that's just too bad. I guess maybe you haven't one after all."

"Why, you just said I did yourself, and the teachers said I had a good intellect."

"I guess I must retract," said I, "and say I *thought* you had one, for now I see you haven't. You told me a little while ago that if you could not see a thing you did not believe it, and that it did not exist, and now you say you haven't seen your intellect,—so I must come to the conclusion you do—if it cannot be seen, it does not exist. I'm getting hard-boiled, too."

HOOKED!

"OH," said he, "that's where you hooked me."

"Why no," I said, "you hooked yourself. You made two statements and I put them together. Now—I'll ask you again—have you an intellect?"

"Yes," he agreed. "I have an intellect and I cannot see it. I overlooked that fact—I admit it."

"All right. That's fine. I admit it, too—you have an intellect." I thought a moment and then asked him: "Have you any ambition?"

"You said it!" replied the boy. "I'm working down on Wall Street. I'm going to be head of the firm. I have a good chance."

"As you say—you certainly have an ambition. Did you ever see it?"

"No—you aren't going to catch me again. That's another thing you cannot see."

"That's very interesting," and I again plied him with a question. "Have you a memory?"

"My memory is fine. I can remember 'way back when I was a kid."

"Memory is a very precious thing," I told him. "Where do you keep yours? In a safe deposit vault?"

"No," he laughed, "I keep it with me."

"Then you have it with you now. I'd like to see it. Show it to me, for I have never seen a memory. You are holding back on me. In the beginning of our conversation you said, 'Here I sit, what you see of me

is, and if you do not see it, then it does not exist,' but now here you sit with an intellect and memory and ambition, and I cannot see them."

"Gracious!" he laughed. "I did not think about them."

"Have you a will?"

"A will? Oh, sure, I have a very strong will. I usually get my own way. But listen, I cannot see it and I'll admit that right now."

"All right, you acknowledge you can't produce it. Let me ask you another question. Have you a personality?"

"I certainly have. Wherever I go I make an impression. I have a strong personality. People always remember me."

"Can you show me your personality?"

"No, you can't see my personality either."

"Well, let's see—have you any emotions, affections, loves or hates, likes or dislikes?"

"I have," he admitted, "and how!"

"Can you see those?"

"Say, what is this, anyway? Where did you get these questions!"

"These are kindergarten questions," I told him.

"I graduated from a High School, but I

never heard these questions before. This is all new to me," he confessed.

"Let's suppose," said I, "that lightning came through this window and struck you, and they laid your body right down in the aisle."

"Gracious!" he shivered—"I'd be dead."

"Yes," but I asked, "what is death?"

"Why, dead; when you're dead, you're dead," he tried to explain.

"Yes," I agreed, "if you're dead, you're dead, but that doesn't explain much. I am asking you. I graduated over forty years ago. I'm not up-to-date, like you. I am hoping that you can explain some things to me. Now," I called his attention again—"here's your body lying dead in the aisle. Has it any of these unseen things? Has it any ambition?"

"Nope," he said; "never saw an ambitious corpse."

"Well—let's see what happened to your memory when the lightning struck your body."

"It went out," he replied.

"Where did it go? It must have some place to go because it was such a fine memory. Did the ambition say, 'this is no

place for me, I'll be going,' and the intellect say, 'I'm quitting'?" I admitted I was pretty dumb at this subject and would like to be as enlightened as he, and asked him how they "went out." Did they go out as a unit or singly?

"I think they went out as a unit," he thoughtfully replied.

"Did they have a boss for the unit? Who led them?"

"This is clear beyond me. What's this we're talking about? Is it religion? I never made any study about religion. I never bothered with it. I'm not religious."

"What you and I are talking about now is religion. I am wondering if these attributes as a unit have a name or not. We have 208 bones in our body, at least that was what I was taught when I went to school. However, when I want to refer to the 208 bones, flesh and organs, I do not call them by their individual names. I refer to them as my body. I have fingers, nose, eyes, ears, and several hundred parts, and each part has a name, and all those parts put together have a name called 'body,' and all act in unison. Take your will, ambition, personality, memory,

etc. If they all act in unison, perhaps they have one common name."

"What are you driving at? Are you trying to prove to me that I have a soul?" asked the young man, as if it just dawned upon him.

"No, I'm not trying to prove anything. You just said there is no such thing as a soul, so I am asking you to find out how these things stand. You are fresh out of school. I thought I could ask you these questions and get up-to-date with you. Tell me—what do you think would be the proper name for these attributes?"

"If soul is the name—I'm willing. Do you mean to tell me that a soul is all these things put together? What do you know about that? I am over twenty years of age, a graduate from High School, been working a few years, and I have said over and over again I had no soul and here I've had one all the while and not known it."

"Now, you tell me what you think about the soul. Which is relatively the more important, the soul or body?" I asked him.

"That's a question I can answer. Sure—I'm thinking of myself dead—lying down there in the aisle—empty. I am nothing but

garbage—going to bury me to get rid of my body—but my soul, which moved out, is alive somewhere."

"Where do you suppose your soul is?" I asked the young man.

"Why ask me that? This is all new to me. Here I sat comfortably thinking I was the whole thing and I find I am two parts."

"Oh, by the way, " I interrupted, "there are a few other things I want to know. What is the difference between you and a dog?"

"What's the catch to this one?" he persisted. "Everybody knows that I am no dog. A dog goes around on all four feet."

"But maybe you could practice a little and use your hands and your feet."

"A dog barks," he pointed out.

"Yes," I admitted, "but you can bark like several dogs. But this *is* serious. You should know the difference between yourself and a dog. Suppose you go home late some night, you might go to sleep in the kennel."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't. I know I belong in the house and not the kennel. I'm not a dog, but I don't know why. Perhaps it's this—I have a soul and a dog has none."

A DOGOLOGY

I SAID: "Has a dog a memory? a personality? a dogology, or individuality? Does a dog know which dog he is?"

"Sure," he answered. "My dog remembers me and he knows who he is."

"Do they have wills?" I asked.

"Some are more stubborn than others," he put in.

"Do dogs have loves, hates, likes, dislikes, etc.?"

"I have been bitten. Say, are you trying to show me a dog has a soul, living in a body? I give up. I have a body—so has a dog. I have a soul—so has a dog. Say—what is the difference between me and a dog?"

"Did you ever see a dog in trouble?" I asked.

"Lots of times," he remarked.

"Did you ever see that dog get down on his knees and pray?"

"Of course not! No animal does that. They do not know anything about God."

"No, you are right," I agreed. "They are not God-conscious. Let me ask you another question: did you ever see a human being in trouble?"

"Yes, I have seen my mother pray. Yes, I can see that there *is* a difference. Say, where do you get this from, anyway? They don't teach this in High School. The teachers who taught me don't know this. They never heard of it, likely."

"Perhaps they did know it, but you never heard it. If you will turn to the Jewish Holy Scriptures, second chapter of Genesis, verse 7, you will find that the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. A dog has a soul, and I have a soul. But I have a consciousness of God, and a dog has not. You have a consciousness of God. God is life and God has given you life so that His Spirit testifies to your spirit."

"Is that the difference between me and an animal?" he asked, "I thought I was an animal."

"You are not an animal."

"There are three kingdoms," he reminded me. "Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal, I'm not a mineral, and I'm not a vegetable, so I must be an animal, because there are only three kingdoms."

"There is another kingdom, however, a fourth," I added.

"What's that?" he asked.

"It's Man, human beings. Do you think your soul developed from an amoeba, or from the slime of the River Nile?"

"I don't see how any soul could evolve from the slime of the River Nile."

"How about your soul?" I asked.

"That must have come from somewhere," he answered.

"How about your spirit?"

"That must have come from God. If God is Spirit, then it couldn't come from anyone else. Do you believe in evolution?" he asked.

"No," I replied.

"Neither do I," he confessed.

"I thought you were taught it," I said in amazement. "When did you change?"

"Just now. There's no sense to it."

"Did you ever hear anything at all about God?" I asked him.

"Yes, I have a consciousness that there is some great power beyond me. There must be someone to create and maintain this whole universe."

"We call HIM—God."

"If there is a God, it must be so. He must dominate the earth."

"Here is a tree," I pointed from the window. "It is alive. Does it have any consciousness at all?"

"It has life without consciousness," he replied.

"Animals have life and self-consciousness, but no God-consciousness," I said.

"If you have a consciousness of God, what must you be?" He did not answer so I continued: "If I recognize that there is a God I must be a spirit or I would not recognize Him. Then I am three things—I am a spirit, and I can recognize God; I am a soul and, therefore, self-conscious, and I am a body and world-conscious."

"Good gracious!" he remonstrated, "I sat down here thinking I was just myself, and here I find myself triplets. I certainly never had a conversation like this in all my life. And, do you know, I believe it. You are telling the truth."

"Yes, it's truth, and I am not charging any fee. I have not really told you anything—I've only asked you questions. It was in you, but it wasn't exactly on top—it needed to be stirred up a little. But, let's

get back to you—lying on the floor again. When you moved out of your body, where did you go?"

"Where is there to go?" he countered.

I thoughtfully asked him, "When you got on the train did you have a ticket?"

"Sure, and the ticket read, 'New York.' That's where I am going."

"You did know where you were going, then, when you got on the train?"

"Certainly."

"Well, here you are on the train, bound for New York, according to your ticket, and if lightning struck you just where would your soul go?" I asked him.

"Are you trying to tell me I am going to Hell?"

"Me, tell you? Mercy, no. I'm asking you questions. There is a Heaven and there is a Hell. Where are you going? God is in Heaven. Are you going there?"

I DON'T KNOW GOD!

"I DON'T know God or the way, how could I be going there?"

"I see," said I. "Well, as you don't know where you are going, tell me where you came from. If your body is made of the dust of

the ground from where did your soul and spirit come—evolve out of the slime of the River Nile?"

"The soul and spirit could not. I didn't even know I had a soul and spirit ten minutes ago."

"If your soul and spirit came from God, how are they going to get back to God?" I finally asked him.

"I don't know."

"Have you any conscious feeling that your soul and spirit now belong to God?"

"I never paid any attention to God," the young man owned.

"What have you done all these twenty years?"

"Personally, I thought very little about God. The rabbis, priests and ministers believe, let them fight about it—they could handle it, if there is or isn't a God—all right. I eat, sleep, drink, I live decently. I've always imagined when I grow up I would have a family, a big house some day, have lots of money. I never thought of God, nor that He had anything to do with me. I made up my mind I would have nothing to do with Him. But I was wrong."

"I am glad that you see that point," I

told him. "You cannot get along without having relationship with God, either you are with Him or against Him. Do you feel saved?"

"No," he answered solemnly, "I know I will not be saved until I am somehow entirely in the power of God. Say—wait a minute. Were you talking religion?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well," he laughed. "I never talk religion, that's the reason I didn't know what you were driving at."

"Now what would you be if you were religious?"

"You see, if I were religious I would not eat ham, but I do eat ham and so am not religious," he explained.

"If that is all you know about religion, I'll tell you what religion means—it is taken from the Latin word 'religo'—that which binds man back to God."

"I thought religion was something dry—like philosophy."

"No, I've just told you what religion really is."

"Wait a minute. (He took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow). You certainly had me worried for a minute. But I just

thought of something. I'm a Jew and the Jews are God's chosen people. Since I am a Jew, and the Jews are God's chosen people, I'm saved. I'm a Jew."

"Ah!" I said, "what tribe are you from?"

NOT A RED INDIAN

"TRIBE?" he asked in astonishment. "I said I was a Jew, not a Red Indian."

"Yes, tribe," I repeated.

"I can't tell you. I knew Indians had tribes. I did not know Jews belonged to tribes."

"That's something else this questioning has brought out, you see. Every Jew must belong to some tribe."

"Then, that's something else I never heard of. All right, what tribes are there?" he asked, as if he would pick out one and join it like the Oddfellows, Buffaloes or Rechabites.

I repeated the names; Reuben, Judah, Levi, Issachar, Gad, Simeon, Zebulum, Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, Asher, Benjamin.

"I have heard about Levi, but few of the rest."

"Well, then, do you belong to that tribe—the tribe of Levi?"

"No, I'm sure I don't. I don't really know what tribe I belong to. Wait a minute, though," he added, "you've reminded me. Don't some say that all the Jews are only of the tribe of Judah, or only of two tribes, or something," vaguely.

"Yes," I agreed, "some do say that, but it is neither scriptural nor historical. People who say that are usually devotees of a silly, anti-Semitic theory called 'Anglo-Israelism' or 'British-Israelism'. But the theory is false. The term 'Jew' latterly came to be applied to the whole twelve tribes of Israel. Paul belonged to Benjamin; Anna belonged to Asher; Simeon, of course, belonged to Simeon. Now, what tribe do you belong to?"

"I know no more about my tribe than I do about Paul, Anna, and Simeon," he confessed.

"If you cannot tell what tribe you belong to I don't believe you are a Jew," I told him.

"My father's a Jew and I have always been one," he answered rather indignantly.

"Then, if he's a Jew, what tribe does he belong to?"

"He doesn't know either."

"Where did he come from?" I tried to find out.

"Russia," was his reply.

"Well, I'm beginning to wonder if you really are a descendant of Abraham," I said.

"I am," he asserted.

"Then I want evidence."

"But I cannot prove it."

"Then you are not a Jew," I commented.

"That's stranger yet. I came in here, sat down a single Jew, now I am a Gentile in three pieces. I am commencing to think that you are right. Now, suppose you tell me what you are," thinking this was fair play.

"Oh, I am a Jew," I informed him.

"Yeah—you would be. That makes it perfect! I thought you were a Gentile and I a Jew. Now I'm a Gentile and you are a Jew. All right, I'll ask you—what tribe do you belong to?"

"Judah," I promptly told him.

"You know your tribe?" he asked in surprise.

"All of us do," I stated.

"Say, what kind of a Jew are you anyhow?"

"I'm a Gentile-Jew," I assured him.

"No, no. There isn't any such a thing. I don't believe that. I can't swallow that. If you are a Gentile then you're a Gentile, but if you are a Jew, then you're a Jew. You can't be a Gentile and a Jew at the same time."

"But you just told me your father came from Russia. What is he now?" I asked him.

"He's an American."

"An American? How did that happen?"

"Why, he just went over to a judge, he swore he would renounce Russia and all foreign potentates and swore allegiance to the United States and its President, and agreed to uphold its Constitution and obey its laws. The judge said, 'All right, you are an American' and he signed his name, and that was that."

"And, then what?" I wanted to know more.

"That made him an American, sure—a Russian-American," he explained.

"Right. That's just the way I became a Gentile-Jew," I replied.

"Did you get naturalized?" he teased.

SUPERNATURALIZED

"NO. I got supernaturalized," I replied, "when I became a subject of the King of the Jews."

"Supernaturalized! Say, I don't get that. Anyway, the Jews haven't got a king," he parried.

"That's where you are wrong," I pointed out. "The Jews have a king. Haven't you heard about him?"

"Never. What paper was that in?" he said, thinking himself facetious.

"Why, they have always had a king since the time of David—they still have a king. I was born a Gentile—lost, a citizen of the Kingdom of the World. Then I stood up before the King of the Jews, renounced the World, the flesh and the Devil, and swore allegiance to the King of the Jews and agreed to uphold the laws of His kingdom—and that's how I became a Jew."

"Well—maybe that's so. Who is this king?" asked he, thinking he had me this time.

"His name is Jesus."

"I've heard about him, but he was killed. He was crucified because he was a great imposter, blasphemer, therefore he was bad and they very properly killed him."

"He was the Son of God, fulfilling all the prophesies of the Messiah, the Christus, the Christ, and He is the only true King the world will ever have. The only King the Jews will ever have, and I have accepted Him as my King. Your father was naturalized into America. I was supernaturalized into the kingdom of God. I am in His kingdom and belong to Him."

"All right, but where does it come in that you are a Jew?"

"I can explain that," I said. "If you and I had the same father we would be brothers and if you are a Jew, then I would also be one. To all that received Him, to them the Lord Jesus gave power to become sons of God. I believe on His name, and am a son of God. Jesus is THE Son of God. He is a Jew. I must be a Jew; not, of course, by natural physical birth; but by supernatural spiritual birth. Moses calls this the circumcision of the heart. The Messiah Jesus calls it being 'born again.' Therefore, by this spiritual birth I am also a son of Abraham by faith."

"Where do you find that?" he asked me.

"Galatians," I replied.

And he looked as if he didn't know whether you ate them raw or cooked them—didn't

know the difference between Galatians and spinach. "In Galatians it says that I can become a son of Abraham by faith." Then I read to him the third chapter of Galatians in the New Testament.

"Hold on," he expostulated, "I was taught that the New Testament isn't for Jews."

"Regrettably, that is one of Israel's great mistakes," I replied. "The New Testament is Israel's dropped weapon. It is a Jewish book, part of the Jewish Scriptures inspired by the very God of Israel. The word 'testament' means covenant, and in the Tenach a New Testament is Divinely promised to Israel."

"Where do you find that?" he inquired.

I had Isaac Leeser's translation in Hebrew-English published by the Hebrew Publishing Company. I opened it at the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah, and showed him verses 30 and 31, (verses 31 and 32 in the English), which read:—

הַהַּ יָמִים בָּאִים לִ

נֹאסִיָּהוּ וְכִרְתִּי אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית
 חֲדָשָׁה: לֹא כִבְרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם בְּיוֹם
 הַחֲזִיקוּ בְּדָם לְהוֹצִיאָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶשְׂרֶה־הֶמָּה הַכָּרוּ
 אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְאֲנֹכִי בְעֻלְתִּי בָם נֹאסִיָּהוּ:

Then I showed him Leeser's English translation:—

"Behold, days are coming, saith the Lord, when I will make with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah a *NEW COVENANT*; not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day that I took hold of them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they have broken, although I was become their husband, said the Lord; . . ." (Jeremiah Chapter 31; verses 30, 31. (31, 32)). Then we turned to the New Testament, and I let him examine chapters nine and ten of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"Gosh!" he breathed. Then paused before adding, "You are right. I can see that. You are a spiritual Jew by supernatural birth and I am a physical Jew by natural birth. I've had the physical circumcision which nevertheless still leaves me estranged from God; you've had the spiritual circumcision which has reconciled you to God. You are saved and I am not. If this train had a wreck and your body and mine were crushed so that you moved out and I moved out, you would go to be with your God, and I would not."

"Certainly, I would, because I've got a ticket. I have made arrangements ahead of time."

"And I wouldn't go to God?" he questioned.

"Why, no. You've made no arrangements. You haven't a ticket."

"Oh, I see—that's what you mean by being lost. That wouldn't be so good. Bing—crash! You go to God and I go in the other direction. What is Heaven like? What is Hell like?"

"Let's accent the positives," I replied. "God is Light; absence of light is darkness. God is Love; absence of love is intolerable. God is Life; absence of life is death. I am not referring to mere physical death, I mean spiritual death. Eternal estrangement from God, from Light, Love and Life."

"And, it looks to me," said he, "that you have all the positives and I get all the negatives."

"Yes, right now, you have all the negatives and I have the positives. And that is a terrible picture."

"But how can I get what you've got?" he asked.

"That's a very old question and you can get what I've got in an equally old way.

Indeed, as a Jew, you've got a prior right! That's the tragedy of it. The gospel, the 'good news,' according to the First Chapter of Romans, is 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; *TO THE JEW FIRST*, and also to the Gentile.'

"If I've got a prior right to that 'good news,' and it brings me salvation, why, I want to exercise that right. What is the 'good news?'"

I showed him First Corinthians, chapter fifteen, verses one to four. That Messiah (Christ) died for our sins according to the Old Testament Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He was raised on the third day according to the Old Testament Scriptures. Then I quoted the words of the Jew, John, in his First Epistle, chapter five—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God."

He looked hard and long at the words.

"You are an unsaved Jew," I added. "You should be a Messiahite, a Christian. The word 'Christ' is only the anglicised Greek for the Hebrew word 'Messiah.' It is unnatural for a Jew not to be a Christian. I'm a Gentile. Many of your people, the Jews, received the Lord Jesus; indeed, the first

Christians were all Jews. But nationally and officially Israel rejected Him, so He came to us Gentiles, just as your prophets said He would, and very many of us accepted Him."

"Aren't all the Jews saved?" asked he.

"Not unless they are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Not all the Gentiles are saved either. The way of salvation is the same for both Jew and Gentile."

He pondered. "But those who accept Jesus as Saviour and Redeemer, whether they be Jew or Gentile, what have they got, that the rest of us haven't got?"

"Blood," I answered. "The atoning blood of the only final sacrifice for Jewish or Gentile sinners. The atoning blood of the Sent One, the Messiah, forever acceptable to a Holy God."

"Um, that's important; I can see that now," he said, softly.

"It's vital," I added. "You see, through it, although I was once a spiritually dead Gentile, yet I became a living, regenerated 'Jew.' In Acts 16: 31 we read, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.' I had to believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, I had to believe that."

"That may be very hard for me to believe; not because of what is in the Scriptures,—that seems clear enough. But because I was taught differently as a Jew. As a Hebrew I can't change my religion." Then added, a little wistfully, "Can I?"

ABRAHAM CHANGED HIS RELIGION

"OF course you can. Abraham changed his religion," I countered. "And down through the ages countless numbers of spiritually enlightened Jews have followed his good example. Do I have to remind you again that the first Christians were all Jews? Even to-day there is a world-wide Hebrew-Christian fellowship, and some estimate the number of Jewish Christians at nearly a million. A man called Whateley said, 'If your religion is false you are bound to change it; if it is true you are bound to spread it.' In the light of God's revelation to him, Abraham found his religion to be false, so he changed it. I'm glad he did. If he hadn't, I mightn't have had my salvation to-day, and you might not be having your chance of it now."

"Whew! I guess Abraham didn't realize how far-reaching his decision would be!" he gasped. Then added, "But, as a Jew, don't I now believe what Abraham believed?"

"The Scriptures say, 'Abraham believed God.' God's revelation to man, both Jew and Gentile, is the Bible. Both Old and New Covenants. Wherever man has added or substituted mere human tradition contrary to the Scriptures, he has established or perpetuated a false religion. This is true of both Jews and Gentiles. There is a false Judaism just as truly as there is a pseudo-Christianity, and devotees of either are equally deceived. True Bible Christianity is organically related to true Bible Mosaic Judaism as the fruit is to the plant that bears it. Both Old and New Covenants speak of salvation through the shedding of the atoning blood of the Sent One, the Messiah. Abraham believed this. Moses said 'for the blood it is that maketh an atonement for the soul' (Vayikra 17: 11)."

"If I say that I am a good Jew, honest, clean and possess all the pleasing attributes found in a cultured person, wouldn't that suffice without saying that I am a sinner in

the sight of God, and that the blood of Jesus was paid to ransom me?"

"No. If your father had stood before the judge and said to him, 'Judge, you are a fine man and I like you. I like the Governor of New York, and the President of the United States. Judge, I build libraries and give away thousands of dollars to all worthy causes. I take care of hundreds of people. I believe in education. I help everybody I can. I want to be naturalized.' Would your father get naturalized on his good record?" I asked him.

"No," he answered.

"What would your father have to do to become a citizen of the United States?"

"He would have to renounce his allegiance to Russia and pledge allegiance to the United States."

"Wouldn't all his good works suffice?"

"No," shaking his head.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because there is only one way in which to become a citizen of the United States and everyone has to do the same thing to become naturalized."

"Wouldn't the judge accept all his good

works and let him become a citizen? Is the judge as narrow as that? Intolerant?"

"The judge is not a respecter of persons. They all have to do it the same way as there is only one way. They have to renounce their connection to their foreign country and swear allegiance to this country. It is not your money or what good you do."

"That illustrates exactly what you have to do to become a Jew spiritually mature and acceptable to God. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead thou shalt be saved.'"

"It sounds reasonable and sensible," he acknowledged. "I have to renounce the false human traditions like Abraham did, and believe God and pledge allegiance to Him and His Messiah."

"Exactly. And observe that by doing this you are not departing from the true Jewish faith; you are returning to it. You will stand with Abraham, Moses and the Prophets of Israel who all were used of the God of Israel to speak of and hope in the Messiah Jesus. Surely, you will accept your own Jewish Messiah and Saviour," I urged.

He was greatly disturbed. "Why didn't somebody tell me this a long time ago? I never heard of this nor has my family. I don't know of any one else that ever heard about it. I never knew this was what you called the Gospel. I never heard of it before and here I am lost, and my whole family is lost."

"But there's still time to turn from mere human tradition back to the God of Israel. Back to the whole Revelation which He has given you in the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Back to the one and only Messiah-Redeemer of Israel," I ventured.

"Frankly, that's what thrills me," he confessed. "I don't cease to be a Jew when I receive the Messiah Jesus; I become more a Jew than ever. I see that. You've thrown an awful lot of light my way, and I'm grateful."

"Awful' is the right word to use," I confirmed. "It would indeed be awful to turn from that light. It would be awful to trust ritual and tradition and reject the very Messiah, the Holy One of Israel."

We reached Times Square by that time and he said, "I am going to think this over."

I believe he is going to be saved. He knows the way of salvation.

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