Some Jewish Witnesses For Christ

Aaron Bernstein

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SOME

JEWISH WITNESSES

FOR

CHRIST.

BY

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PREFACE.

This book has grown very considerably in the making, and what was expected to form a comparatively small pamphlet has become quite a substantial volume. It is probable that if still more time could have been spent upon it, its size would have been greatly increased, for the fact of the matter is that there have been and are many more Jewish witnesses for Christ than can readily be enumerated. But the author has all along been very desirous that his work should appear in the Centenary Year of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, the same year which has seen the production of the History of that Society written by its gifted and deeply lamented Secretary, the late Rev. W. T. Gidney. The two books are companion works of reference, and in relation to Jewish missions they are both of inestimable value. In some degree the one supplements the other, because the biographies indicate many of the results of the various missionary enterprises recorded in the History.

That Hebrew Christians should publish the arguments which have convinced them that Jesus is the Messiah, not merely for their own vindication, but rather to lead others to the same conviction, is not at all surprising. It is, however, peculiarly noteworthy that their literary efforts have not been limited to those of an apologetic nature, but that, on the contrary, they have made valuable contributions to almost all the departments of human knowledge. The learned author has rendered this one of the most pleasing features of his work, and it has evidently afforded him no little gratification to exhibit clearly the vast erudition of his numerous brethren.

The Rev. F. L. Denman, the other Secretary of the Society, has read the proofs, and has done all in his power to secure accuracy, yet as many authorities have been consulted, and all are not of equal

reliability, it is probable that some errors have been overlooked, and those to which readers kindly draw attention will be corrected in any future edition.

H. O. ALLBROOK,

_Principal of the Operative Jewish
Converts' Institution._

JEWISH WITNESSES FOR CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION.

THE history of the Mission to the Jews is coeval with the history of the Christian Church. The names of Christ's disciples mentioned in the Gospels are nearly all those of Jews, and in the Epistles a great many of them are of Jewish converts. But the general reader of the New Testament does not realize the fact, because it was the fashion among the Jews at that time to assume Greek names. For instance, several of St. Paul's relatives bearing Greek names became Christians, but we should not know that they were Jews if the Apostle had not written, "Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen." Again, "Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen" (Rom. xvi. 7 and 21). Whilst where we have not this information with regard to other such names, we take it for granted that they were Gentiles. For instance, Zenas, mentioned in Titus iii. 13, is naturally taken by the general reader for a Greek, yet scholars maintain that he had formerly been a Jewish scribe or lawyer.

The aim of this work is to shew that God had at all times in the

history of the Christian Church a considerable number of believing Israelites who, after their conversion to Christianity, rendered good service to their fellowmen and to the Church of Christ at large. Out of this company of "the remnant according to the election of grace," only a very few comparatively have their names recorded in history. The names of the great majority are written in the Book of Life alone. But as in the prophet Ezekiel--Noah, Job and Daniel--and as in the Epistle to the Hebrews--the short list of the Old Testament saints--are the representatives of a large number, so may the converts mentioned in this book be considered as representatives of a vast number of their brethren who had the courage and the grace given them to take up the cross and follow Jesus.

Yet, of course, to give a mere nomenclature, or catalogue, of persons would not signify much unless it were followed by a description of the life and work of the persons concerned. The material thereto is abundant--there is a vast literature upon the subject--as will be presently seen, with the exception of that which refers to Jewish converts of the Eastern Church. The sublime maxim, "One soweth and another reapeth," is peculiarly applicable to a biographical writer. He cannot and must not be original, but has to state the facts in the life of the person whom he attempts to delineate, just as he finds them recorded in books, or letters, or as he knows them from personal observation. But it is obvious that the latter can only be the case when the subject of a biographer's writing is a contemporary and known to himself.

The following are the sources from which the writer has immediately drawn his information:--

(1.) "The Jewish Encyclopædia." Every contributor to this remarkable work of 12 volumes is well-known in the literary and religious world as a reliable authority upon the subject of his article.

(2.) "Juden Mission, a history of Protestant Missions among the Jews since the Reformation," by Pastor de le Roi, well-known and esteemed in the churches on the Continent and beyond its borders.

(3.) "Christen und Juden," by the late Rev. A. Fürst, D.D., formerly a Missionary and Pastor at Amsterdam, and well acquainted with Spanish literature.

(4.) "Jewish Witnesses that Jesus is the Christ," by the Rev. Ridley Herschell (father of Lord Chancellor Herschell), who gives his autobiography and the lives of several personal friends.

(5.) "The People, the Land and the Book," by B. A. M. Schahiro, of the Bible House, New York.

(6.) "The Hebrew Christian Witness," by the Rev. Dr. Moses Margoliouth, 1874-5.

(7.) "Sites and Scenes," by the Rev. W. T. Gidney, M.A.

(8.) "The Talmud," whose testimony is very reliable when it speaks of Jewish Christians.

Ultimate sources of information, and ulterior literature, to which nearly all these writers refer, are as follows: "Wolf, Bibliotheca Hebraica." "Gräetz, Geschichte der Juden." "Hetzel, Gesch. der Hebraischen Sprache." "Fürst, Bibl. Jud." "Steinschneiders Bibliographisches Handbuch." "Catalogue Bodl." "Dict. Nat Biog." "Meyer's Conversations Lexikon." "Da Costa's History of the Jews in

Spain." "Kalkar, Die Mission unter den Juden." "The Jewish Missionary Intelligence." "The Jewish Missionary Herald." "Saat auf Hoffnung," by Professor F. Delitzsch, of Leipzig. "Nathanael," by Professor Strack, of Berlin. Other biographical dictionaries and histories.

CHAPTER I.

APOSTOLIC PERIOD.

The Apostolic Period began on the day of Pentecost when the disciples who were gathered together were a hundred and twenty in number (Acts i. 15), but were only a section of the 500 brethren who had seen the Lord after His resurrection (I. Cor. xv. 6). On the same day, as the result of St. Peter's first missionary sermon, "there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts ii. 41). A short time afterwards "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts vi. 7). This progress continued to such a degree that St. James, after hearing the interesting missionary report of St. Paul, "about the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry," said to him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe" (Acts xxi. 20). How glad we should have been if we had some account of, at least, the more prominent converts of that period, and knew something of the sufferings that they had to endure for the sake of Christ. Nevertheless, the Acts of the Apostles, though containing much in relation to the progress of the Gospel among Jews and Gentiles, gives but little information with regard to Jewish

individual conversions, and mentions only two Jewish Christian martyrs--namely, St. Stephen and James the Elder--and is even silent about the exclusion of Jewish converts from the Temple, which we gather only from the Epistle to the Hebrews. This fact is to us an evidence that St. Luke, the first ecclesiastical historian, had no design to shew to the world the inherent power of the Gospel exemplified by the conversion of many of the very people who had rejected Christ, and it proves the genuineness and authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles and the date commonly assigned, for had it been written later, as some critics maintain, the author would surely have taken the trouble to give his readers some detailed information concerning at least one per cent. of that vast multitude of Jewish converts mentioned by St. James. Such is the method of the ecclesiastical historian in modern as well as in ancient times, as the following two examples will shew: Pastor de le Roi, Jewish missionary historian, has for years not only collected statistics of Jewish converts in various churches, and summed up the whole number as being 224,000 in the nineteenth century, but he has also furnished us with a great deal of information concerning the history of many of these converts. For, as the Rev. W. T. Gidney rightly says, "Jewish converts must be weighed as well as counted." The second example is Hegesippus, who, according to Eusebius, was a Palestinian Hebrew Christian, and lived in Rome about 150 A.D. He is the father of Church history, and wrote a book under the title "Hyponeymata Pente," with the special design to answer the question of the Pharisees, "Have any of the rulers believed in Him?" and to shew that the Gospel made rapid progress among the Jews in the first century in spite of great opposition. Of this opposition the Jewish Liturgy to this

day bears witness in the so-called "Blessing against the heretics," which Samuel the Little composed in the Synagogue of Yabne, in the presence of Gamaliel the Elder. Justin Martyr in his Dialogue, Origen in Homily 18, Jerome on Isaiah, complained of it, and it has, alas, been a source of trouble to the Jews at various times throughout the Christian ages. Hegesippus supplies information about a number of Jewish sects, who regarded each other as heretics. It is a pity that the greater part of his book has been lost, and we have only a few fragments in "Euseb. History iv.," and an extract in "Photius Bibliotheca" (page 232). That probably contained detailed information about the more prominent converts in the Apostolic age. Still, the most valuable relic for us is his list of Hebrew Christian bishops in regular succession in the mother Church at Jerusalem. These are as follows: James, the Lord's brother (Gal. i. 19), of whom Hegesippus states that he was martyred while praying in the Temple. Symeon about 62 A.D., Justus I. 64, Zacchæus 112, Tobias 114, Benjamin 116, Justin 118, Matthias 120, Philip 122, Seneca 125, Justus II. 126, Levi 128, Ephres 130, Joseph 132, Jude 133. The shortness of their episcopates probably indicates that it was a time of great tribulation. To this list may perhaps be added Ananias, who baptized Saul of Tarsus at Damascus, and, according to tradition, was subsequently bishop there and suffered martyrdom (See "Schaff. Bible Dictionary"); Crispus, Chief of the Jewish Synagogue (Acts xviii. 8), who, according to tradition ("Constituit Apost." vii. 46), was afterwards Bishop of Ægina; Clement, of Rome, who, according to Bishop Lightfoot, was an Hellenistic Jewish convert or son of a convert. The bishop came to this conclusion, after weighing much the internal evidence of his Epistle to the Corinthians.[1]

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