

THE SHAMES OF CHRISTENDOM

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE HEALING PLACE

This, then, is the situation.

The Jew is the channel down which has flowed to the Gentile the river of the knowledge of God. The Psalms that have brought comfort to souls bowed down by sorrow, hope to lives darkened by despair, courage to hearts shaken by fear are the outpouring of Jewish souls; whose trust in God sustained them in similar circumstances.

The Saviour who died upon the Cross was born of a Jewish woman, and though in one sense He rises above all nationality, yet “**as concerning the flesh**” (Romans 9:5) He was a Jew. All this enormous debt the Christian owes to the Jew. The manner in which up to the present he has repaid it we have seen. The result is that mutual distrust and enmity which characterize the relationship of Jew and Gentile to-day.

Dr. James Black says:

“The links between the Jew and the Christian are so real and so beautiful, the points of contact are so spiritually deep, the affinities are so sure, and the debts are so mutual, that this ancient enmity is a continual source of wonderment to an inquiring mind. One feels that it is a quarrel between near relatives, literally between father and son; and, like most family feuds, the focus of bitterness has centered round irrelevant and surface things. And, as usual, the more trivial the more bitter.”

We must set ourselves to heal this family feud. Even when we see moral deformity in the Jew it should be a matter rather of self-reproach and humiliation than of aversion—of self-reproach and humiliation based upon the wrongs which have largely wrought this deformity in the Jew, rather than of aversion begotten of an unconscious moral snobbery.

We have seen that Christians are in great measure responsible for this unloveliness.

Ill-treatment has tended to aggravate whatever unpleasant traits are native to the Jewish character. A man with his back to the wall fighting for his life is not likely to be troubled by scruples as to the manner of his fighting, and when he is fighting for the honor or the existence of those he loves, he is still less likely to trouble about the kind of weapon he uses, so long as it effects his purpose.

We may paint the Jew as black as we will, but by so doing, we only increase the strength of the argument for his evangelization. It is not the shining virtues of the cannibal of the South Seas or of Central Africa, but his desperate need compels us to seek his salvation. Christ Jesus **“came into the world to save sinners”** or, as He Himself puts it, **“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”**

The first step towards reconciliation must come from our side. The great characteristic that marks off Christianity from Judaism is the majesty of love that conquers all aversion and forgives all wrong. The injuries that Christianity suffered at the hands of the Jew are more remote than the wrongs the Jews have suffered at the hands of Christians, and should all the more easily be forgiven and forgotten.

Even if we meet with rebuffs, as well we may, we must, if we are to commend the reality of our faith in Jesus, steadfastly seek the salvation of Israel.

In what direction is this first step to be made? Obviously there must be a frank and full recognition of the sins of the Christian Church in relation to the Jew. We must acknowledge that we have treated the Jew in a shameful and unchristian way. We must express our contrition and sorrow. The way of reconciliation lies by the cross of humiliation and repentance.

The conscience of the Church as a whole is not yet sufficiently moved on this question.

Prejudice dies hard, and notwithstanding the fact that there is no form of missionary work for which the reasons are so strong, or in which the success achieved is greater, there is none that is so neglected.

Nonetheless, signs are not wanting to-day that the extreme importance of the Jew strategically is at last being borne in slowly upon our leaders, and the significance of the Jew in world evangelization is being more fully realized. Amongst the Jews themselves, from a variety of causes, the claims of Jesus Christ are being more freely discussed.

The time seems ripe for a fuller mutual understanding.

There is, moreover, a dawning consciousness amongst Christian leaders that the real menace of the world to-day lies not merely in secularism, but in the fact that this secularism is largely due to the extent to which a Jewry which has lost its own faith in the clash of modern knowledge and culture with religious forms which cannot bend to adapt themselves to new conditions is pervading our social system, our thought, our national ideals and institutions.

Jewry must be won for Christ.

There is a sense in which we may say, without irreverence, Christ cannot do without the Jew, and certainly the Jew cannot do without Christ. To win the Jew for Christ we must begin with ourselves. There must be in us a fuller understanding of all that Jesus Christ is, of what He means to be to us, and of what He means us to be towards Himself and others.

Not by means of theological argument, or even by debates as to the meaning or interpretation of the prophets, will the Jew be led to Jesus.

He will be led to Him as he sees Him manifest in us, in love that overleaps all personal prejudices and racial antagonisms, love that unlocks the hearts and homes of Christian people to the homeless Jew; in sacrificial service, born of the constraining love of Jesus.

“Love,” says a young Hebrew Christian, Dr. Oscar Prentki, “is the *Esperanto* of Christianity.”

It is the one language which all peoples understand. One of the most experienced of European missionaries made a practice of inquiring of all converts with whom he came in contact what was their initial impulse towards Christ. He places it on record that out of fifteen hundred all but two stated that the first desire to know something of Christ was born of some kindness shown by a Christian.

In the noble words of J. A. C. Mackellar:

“The meeting-place is in Jesus—the Son of a Jewish home—the Christ of the Judean road, the Christ of the World’s Hope—the Universal Saviour. In Him alone can the feud of the centuries be ended and the reconciliation of the seemingly irreconcilable forces be secured.

In Him alone can ultimate unity be gained through the power of the Cross working in sacrificial love and service till there is no difference between Jew and Christian.”

God is love and Jesus the Christ is the supreme expression of God (Hebrew 1:5), and when we, in turn, are in some measure expressions of the Lord we serve and whose name we bear, a restless world will find in Him its peace, and a world at enmity with God its reconciliation.

O LORD, we thank Thee for the grace
And lowly love that came to die,
To share the shame of Adam’s race,
Thyself for us to sanctify.
We wrong Thee, Lord, when we forget
The human heart that suffered pain,
And eyes that filled on Olivet
With love that longed for love again.

Those eyes that first at Bethlehem
Thrilled with their light a Hebrew maid,
Who tenderly caressing them
Felt all her anguish overpaid.
That human heart—a tiny thing—
On Mary’s breast at Nazareth,
Lay midst the warmth and comforting
And felt her softly-swelling breath.

The hands they hurt on Calvary
Were tiny once, and rosy, when
Thy mother's bosom blissfully
They pressed within the cattle-pen.
The feet they nailed upon the tree
Once pattered on a cottage floor,
And Joseph paused, and smiled to see
Thee clamber through his workshop door.

Forgive us when we so forget
The homeless race whence Thou wert born,
That we, reviling them, beget
In them of Thee both hate and scorn.
"Remove the veil from Israel's face"
Too long, O Lord, we've blindly prayed,
Pour on our own the oil of grace,
Show us the trust that we've betrayed. Amen.

- W. N. C.

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