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THE DIALOGUE

In this dialogue the Christian Pastor Rev. M. inquires how he may inherit eternal life, or how he can be justified before God and thus be free from eternal punishment; and Mr. Cohn replies and tries to convince him that a Jew has eternal life. But the Pastor insists on proof not taken from the doctrines of men, but from the Bible, where it is written: "Thus saith the Lord."

The Pastor: I have read the Old Testament and have found that God has a glorious future for all who walk in the right path, but I cannot find out what I am to do in order to be sure of everlasting life.

Mr. Cohn: The Jewish religion assures every man of eternal life, if he becomes a Jew, for it is written in our law: "All Israel has a share in the world to come."

The Pastor: I have read the Old Testament, but I cannot recollect where this is written.

Mr. Cohn: This is written in "Perek Abot" which we Jews read every Sabbath afternoon, throughout the summer.

The Pastor: My dear friend. I wish you would bring me the proof from the Bible and not from Perek or Talmud, because the Old Testament is of God whilst the Perek or Talmud is of men.

Mr. Cohn: Our wise men and rabbis who have said so are truthful men, and they have not originated this truth in their own brains, but have taken it from the Bible, and in Isa. 60:21, it says: "And thy people are all righteous and shall forever inherit the land." Thus you see that it is written that all Jews are righteous or just.

The Pastor: This verse, "and thy people are all righteous," does not apply to Israel in their present condition, for it says in the same connection, "they shall forever inherit the land." But as Israel does not possess the land, they are not righteous. This verse rather refers to the future when Israel shall be converted to God and to David their King, as it is written in Hos. 3:19, "After these things Israel shall return and shall seek the Lord their God and David their King." That means that when they shall accept their Messiah, the Son of David, then shall they be called righteous and shall inherit their land forever. So we see that when I become a Jew I shall not by any means be sure of eternal life. What then shall I do?

Mr. Cohn: I can advise you to be circumcised, then you shall certainly be saved from the punishment of hell, for our wise men say that Abraham is sitting at the gate of hell, not permitting

any man to be cast into it who is circumcised.

The Pastor: This is very hard to do, but I would obey it if I knew that it was true. I read, however, in Deut. 10:16 "and the Lord thy God shall circumcise thine heart," and Jer. 4:4, "Circumcise yourselves unto the Lord and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah."

Again, in Jer. 9:26 it is written: "For all the goyim (Gentiles) are uncircumcised (in flesh), but all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart." So we see that the Jews are as little circumcised as the goyim and the outward circumcision of the flesh availeth nothing, if the heart is not circumcised. Neither can Abraham save any man from hell be cause of his circumcision of the flesh, for God never said so, only a man claims this in the Talmud. But in Isa. 29:13 God says that Israel fears Him according to human commandments and He will punish them for it. No sir, you must show me from the Bible what I am to do to inherit eternal life.

Mr. Cohn: Now I know what to advise you. We read in Deut. 6:25, "it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God." If you observe all the commandments you shall be just and righteous.

The Pastor: This is true. This is written in the Bible. But will you kindly tell me how many commandments I must keep to make me righteous?

Mr. Cohn: According to the computation of our wise men there are 613 commandments.

The Pastor: You frighten me, Mr. Cohn. Do you believe that a man can possibly keep so many commandments?

Mr. Cohn: No sir, the Bible also says: "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Eccl. 7:20. Then again: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sins?" Prov. 20:9. We Jews only observe as many commandments as possible, and if you become a Jew, you will have to do the same. That is all.

The Pastor: Dear sir, if you Jews only observe as much as you can then you are not righteous at all, for in Deut. 6:25 we read that we are righteous if we observe all the commandments. Then we read in the 27th chapter, in the 26th verse: "Cursed is he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." So it is evident that if we break one law only, we are under the curse, and who can save himself from the curse of God?

Mr. Cohn: You see, dear friend, with us Jews it is different. Even if each one cannot fulfil the law by himself, yet all



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OUR MEETINGS

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the nation fulfils it, one observing one part and the other observing another part of the law; all Israel being one body, everyone has a share in the righteousness of the other, and if you become a Jew, you will share in the righteousness of all

The Pastor: How is this possible? In the first place we read in Ezek. 8:14 "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and in Jer. 31:29, "Every man shall die for his own sins;" the righteousness of others will not help the sinner. In the second place, if the Jews are so intimately connected that they share in each others fulfilment of the law, they necessarily must share in each others transgressions of the law, and I am sure that there are more of the latter than of the former. What then is to be done with the many sins of the people?

Mr. Cohn: We Jews worry little about sins, for it is written, Lev. 16:30, "For in that day shall he (the priest) make an atonement for your sins before the Lord." On the strength of this word we believe that God forgives all our sins on the great annual atonement day.

The Pastor: I think you are greatly mistaken, for it is not the day, but the High Priest that makes an atonement. As it is written elsewhere: "And the priest shall make an atonement for him." Then you know that the priest made an atonement only through the sprinkling of the blood, "for it is the blood that atoneth for the soul," Lev. 17:11. Especially on the day of atonement did Aaron take two lambs, one for a sin offering, whose blood he sprinkled upon the mercy seat, and the other for a scapegoat upon whose head he laid his hands and with them the sins of the people, sending it into the wilderness to die for the people. But to-day, we have no High Priest, no blood and no lamb, and how do

(continued on the other side)

