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The Shepherd of Israel



In part three of this series, several Jewish scholars made known their answers to the monumental question — “Who do you say that I am?” Although it was posed by Jesus of Nazareth nearly 2,000 years ago, Jews and gentiles continue to ponder this question and give a variety of responses.

Recently I convened a roundtable discussion to which I invited eight famous Jewish authors. Not surprisingly, they all showed up right on time . . . after all, the discussion took place within the confines of my own mind. This doesn't mean, however, that I have created or invented their statements. Just consult the footnotes at the end of the article for proof that the eight authors really made their lasting statements.

And now, the discussion begins. . .

Shepherd of Israel: Gentlemen, thank you for being here today. My first question is this: Rabbis today seem to be alarmed at the large number of Jews being attracted to the

person of Jesus of Nazareth. What is the proper Jewish response to the fact that so many Jews are turning to Jesus?

Israel Zangwill, Jewish novelist: We shall never get the future straight until we disentangle the past. To disentangle the past means to re-examine the trial of Jesus — myths woven purposely by our leaders around the greatest and most noble personality in history, only that we may not see and recognize the real Jesus. To us, my brethren, in this our day, is given the privilege to reclaim the Christ we have lost for so many centuries. Has not the crucified Christ more than fulfilled the highest and noblest of our greatest prophets? Is not he the incarnation of the essence of what the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets taught?¹

S of I: The rabbis say, though, that only ignorant Jews or those with hope of material gain would turn to Jesus. Is this so?

Eight Jewish authors give surprising new answers to an age-old question. . .

Who Do You Say That I Am?

PART FOUR

By Steve Schwartz

Max Brod, author, poet, composer: I am constantly amazed at the naïvete of our teachers and leaders who are surprised when I tell them that the best of our youth, our intellectuals, become Christians out of conviction. . . . Our "leaders" do not believe it. To them a Jew never becomes a Christian unless he wants to better his position. That Christianity has drawn to itself such noble souls as Pascal, Novalis, Kirkegaard, Amiel, Dostoyevsky, Claudel, etc., etc., and that it exercises a most overwhelming influence on the most earnest truth-seekers among us, of that our teachers know nothing.²

S of I: How widespread is this upsurge in Jews turning to Jesus?

Gustav Lazlo, author: The movement for the recognition of Christ by the Jews is not a phantasy arising from (my) brain. In the hearts and minds of many men, ordinary men like myself, traders, men of affairs, the fact that Christ is the only leader who can take us anywhere worth going to is coming to new recognition.³

S of I: Since it has been estimated that there are between 50,000-100,000 Jewish followers of Jesus at the present time, I'd say your comment is accurate.

I'd like to read you something from the pen of the great Jewish historian and Bible scholar, Heinrich Graetz. Speaking of Jesus, he said: "He felt within himself the call to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . . . He, by word and example, raised the sinner and the publican, and filled the hearts of those poor, neglected, thoughtless beings with the love of God, transforming them into dutiful children of their Heavenly Father. He animated them with his own piety and fervor, and improved their conduct by the hope he gave them of being able to enter the kingdom of heaven."⁴

Do any of you gentlemen share this historian's lofty view of Jesus?

Ernest R. Trattner, author: No Jewish prophet before Jesus ever searched out the miserable, the sick, the weak, and the down-trodden in order to pour forth love and compassionate service. He went out of his way to redeem the lowly by a touch of human sympathy



"Is not he (Jesus) the incarnation of the essence of what the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets taught?"

ISREAL ZANGWILL

that is altogether unique in Jewish history!⁵

Sholem Asch, Jewish author of international fame: Jesus Christ, to me, is the outstanding personality of all time, of all history, both as Son of God and as Son of Man. Everything he ever said or did has value for us today, and that is something you can say of no other man, alive or dead. . . . Every

act and word of Jesus has value for all of us, wherever we are. He became the Light of the World. Why shouldn't I, a Jew, be proud of that? No other religious leader, either, has ever become so personal a part of people as the Nazarene. When you understand Jesus, you understand that he came to save you, to come into your personality. It isn't just a case of a misty, uncertain relationship between a worshiper and an unseen God; that is abstract: Jesus is personal.⁶

Isidore Singer, Ph.D., managing editor of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*: I regard Jesus of Nazareth as a Jew of Jews, one whom all Jewish people are learning to love. His teachings have been an immense service to the world in bringing Israel's God to the knowledge of hundreds of millions of mankind. . . . We are all glad to claim Jesus as one of our people.⁷

S of I: Dr. Singer, you mentioned that Jesus has performed the valuable service of making Israel's God known throughout the world. What if Jesus had never lived?

Harris Weinstock, U. S. labor leader and author: Without Jesus and without Paul, the God of Israel would still have been the God of a handful, the God of a petty, obscure and insignificant tribe.⁸

S of I: So are we Jews to rejoice there was a Jesus despite the anti-Semitic persecutions performed in His name?

Weinstock: Let the Jew, despite the centuries of persecution and suffering, be thankful that there was a Jesus and a Paul. Let him more fully appreciate that, through the wonderful influence of these heroic characters, the mission of the Jew is being fulfilled, and his teachings are being spread to the remotest nooks and corners of the world by Christianity.⁹

S of I: One of us, I notice, has been silent throughout this discussion. And yet he is, perhaps, most qualified to make an assessment, since he was born just a few years after the crucifixion of Jesus. Of course I am talking about the illustrious author and historian Flavius Josephus.

Flavius, I know that some people

don't believe you really wrote this, but would you mind repeating the paragraph that appears in all ancient manuscripts of your *Antiquities of the Jews*?

Flavius Josephus, historian (born A.D. 37): Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these

How is it possible for these learned Jewish authors to say such wonderful things about Jesus, yet stop short of calling Him the Messiah? Do they believe that Jesus failed to fulfill the Messianic prophecies found in the Jewish Scriptures?

At the time of Jesus, there was a widespread Jewish expectation that the Messiah would throw off the yoke of Roman oppression and institute a kingdom of never-ending peace and prosperity. Instead of doing this, Jesus died at the hands of the Romans.

Surprisingly, however, the crucifixion doesn't disprove the Messiahship of Jesus—it substantiates it! See why by sending for two free booklets:

*An Astonishing Yom Kippur Prayer

*Why Did Messiah Have to Die?

and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.¹⁰

S of I: Not at the present day either, Flavius. I see you call Jesus "the Christ", or "the Messiah." During the past 20 centuries millions of Jews have said the same thing.

S of I: What about it, dear reader? You've heard our illustrious Jewish writers speak out in favor of Jesus. You've seen that countless numbers of Jews have believed in Jesus and still do. Let us consider seriously the words of Israel Zangwill: "To us, my brethren, in this our day, is given the privilege to reclaim the Christ we have lost for so many centuries."

FOOTNOTES

¹Quoted in *Unto His Own* by Dr. Jacob Gershom, Marshall, Morgan and Scott Publishers.

²Quoted by D. B. Bravin, *The Dawn*, Jan.-Feb. 1934.

³From a letter written to the *Morning Post* (London) as quoted in *The Rebirth of the State of Israel* by Dr. Arthur W. Kac, Baker Book House.

⁴Quoted in *The Eternal God Revealing Himself* by David L. Cooper, Ph.D., The Evangelical Press.

⁵Trattner, Ernest R., *As a Jew Sees Jesus*, Charles Scribner's Sons.

⁶Mead, Frank S., "An Interview with Sholem Asch", an article printed in *Christian Herald*, January, 1944.

⁷Quoted in *The Eternal God Revealing Himself* by David L. Cooper, Ph.D., The Evangelical Press.

⁸Weinstock, Harris, *Jesus the Jew*, Funk & Wagnalls Co.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Josephus, Flavius, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, xviii 33.

"For Free, Take!"

That's a quote from the not-so-famous Jewish author Steve Schwartz. But it's good advice when you consider that the following two booklets are yours free for the asking:

*An Astonishing Yom Kippur Prayer—the Musaf Prayer from the Jewish Prayer Book certainly is astonishing . . . and will make you question many of your beliefs.

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THE CONFESSION OF A REFORM JEW

BY SID STERN

OR I THOUGHT I WAS A LIBERAL UNTIL MY DAUGHTER BECAME A JESUS FREAK



Sid was going to prove to his teenage daughter that Jesus was not the Messiah. Knowing he had to save her from the "Jesus freaks," he took out the Bible he had received as a Bar Mitzvah gift to prepare himself for the verbal battle. But Sid was in for some surprises . . .

What does a 50-year-old Jewish photo engineer do when his 14-year-old daughter says, "Dad, Jesus is the Messiah and you should

believe in Him"? This is what happened to me while I was employed by the Atomic Energy Commission in Los Alamos.

My daughter Sheryl had become involved with what I called "Jesus freaks." I told her, "Forget it—we Jews don't believe in Jesus. That's what makes us different from the *goyim*." When she asked me to prove what I said, I decided I would show her that Jesus was not the Messiah.

Taking out the Bible I had received as a Bar Mitzvah gift, I was suddenly made aware of the irony of the situation—I had never opened my own

Jewish Bible. Now, 37 years later I'm about to start reading it.

For nearly a year I studied my Holy Scriptures every night, trying to find something that would disprove what my daughter was telling me.

One evening I read in the book of Jeremiah that God promised to make a new covenant with the house of Israel, a covenant different from the one God made at the time of Moses. That same evening I found a note which my daughter had placed in my Bible. It said:

"Dear Dad, My Bible—including the New Testament—is in my room. Why don't you read it sometime? Love, Sheryl."

Because of my love for her I picked up her Bible . . . but sat with it all night without reading it. The next evening I told myself that I should read the New Testament even if it wasn't meant for us Jews. If I read it with a scientific and Jewish mind, how could it hurt me? After all, I felt that my "Yiddishe Kup" would protect me. So when I began reading the Gospel of Matthew, I didn't fear this *goyishe* book—but then I was surprised to discover that the New Testament was written not only *by* Jews and *to* Jews

but also *about* Jews.

One night while I was reading something I couldn't understand, I became frustrated and slammed the book shut in anger. Calming down and telling myself that I *could* understand the difficult passage, I re-opened the Bible . . . but it fell open instead to the ninth chapter of the book of Acts.

There I began reading about a Jew named Saul who hated Christians. Now *this* I could relate to! We both believed that Jewish people shouldn't believe in Jesus. (I was also interested because my Jewish name is Saul.) I read how he persecuted Christians until the day he met the Messiah on the road to Damascus. I have to admit I was impressed by the change that came over him after his encounter on that lonely road.

At this time I received a job offer from General Electric to work at Goddard Space Flight Center. In order to get the job, I had to pass an extensive physical exam, an exam I was sure to fail because of a very painful physical affliction.

Two days before the exam I decided I would solve my pain problem, my job problem and the problem of Jesus

all at one time. For the first time in my life I prayed a real prayer from my heart: "God, if You are real and if Jesus is truly the Messiah . . . and if You can remove this pain, then I will believe in Jesus and accept Him as my Messiah, and I will live my life for Him."

The next morning I awoke without pain . . . but also without a recollection of my previous night's prayer.

On the following day at my physical exam the doctor asked me dozens of questions about my medical history. At one point he was about to ask about my physical problem, when he stopped himself and said, "I can see that you've never had trouble with that and probably never will." Since I wanted the job, I kept my mouth shut.

On the way home, as I drove up the lonely mountain road to Los Alamos, I remembered my prayer and the bargain I had made with God. Pulling off the road at the first safe place, I prayed my second real prayer—this one, an invitation to the Messiah to come into my life.

God kept His part of the bargain . . . now I am doing all I can to keep mine.

The Shepherd of Israel

Steve Schwartz, Editor

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