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Introduction

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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Introduction

(*"Read This I Pray Thee"*)

Abraham Silverstein

Mr. Silverstein writes himself down as "Pastor A. Silverstein, Binghamton, N. Y.". He adopts the title "Pastor" because he is a Christian minister in that city; and also he is the editor of the *Redeemed Hebrew*. He is a convert from the Jewish religion to Christianity and has been an heroic missionary to the Jewish people both in foreign lands—Syria—and also in the United States.

The *Redeemed Hebrew* was a monthly periodical issued in the interest of what is called "The Redeemed Hebrew Literature Mission". It is a publication both international and interdenominational and "stands for all that is good, and opposes all that is evil". The *Redeemed Hebrew* has received literary contributions from a large circle of Christian pastors and from Jewish rabbis. Mr. Silverstein has been a fearless defender of his own faith of missionary endeavor to convert the Jews to Christianity; and this in the midst of violent opposition and bitterness from the people of his own race. While laboring as a missionary in this cause he wrote a booklet which he entitled *Old Man Swartz*, being the story of a Jew of the orthodox faith, who sternly resisted all arguments and endeavors to convert him from the faith of his fathers. Finally on the suggestion of Mr. Silverstein he agreed to accept the reality of Jesus Christ for twenty-four hours, meaning that he accepted Christ on trial for twenty-four hours, and by doing so became converted, and the book *Old Man Swartz* that tells this story has been a potent missionary force in the field of converting Jews to Christianity. In course of time this book fell into the hands of a correspondent of Mr. Silverstein at Calgary, Alberta, Canada and led to a correspondence between this Canadian rabbi and Mr. Silverstein who invited the rabbi to write

him his objections to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Messiah of the Jews. This request was granted and the rabbi's letter was published in the *Redeemed Hebrew* by Mr. Silverstein, who made this proposition to the Christian ministers of the United States in a boxed paragraph on the title page of the *Redeemed Hebrew* of November 25, 1925.

"The question," wrote Editor Silverstein, in the same number of the *Redeemed Hebrew*, "is so profound, so full of interest and so highly important, that we have decided to put it up to our readers for reflection and *Bible* study, and invite them to send replies, so that we may win him [Rasha] to the Christian faith, as we did some years ago another rabbi who signed himself 'Rabbi XXX'. We submit this letter to you dear reader and frankly ask you what would you answer under the circumstances?"

Mr. Silverstein previously tells us that in a note received from the Calgary rabbi that his letter was signed "Rasha" and that the letter comes from a highly learned and deeply spiritual Hebrew scholar.

WHO CAN ANSWER THIS JEWISH SCHOLAR?

* * *

"I would sin, were I to accept your Jesus."
 "Jehovah forbids me to believe in Jesus. Your
 faith is wrong."

* * *

Who will defend Christ Jesus before this
 Jewish Rabbi? He brings Scriptures to prove that
 there was no need of Jesus.

Then he continues his remarks as to the issue here raised:

"How would you defend your faith in Jesus? We will select the best reply and publish it in separate form for wide distribution among all people at the price of cost plus postage. We are honor bound not to divulge the name of the writer, and under these

conditions are permitted to publish his letter [i. e. in full]. Now may God bless you and reflect seriously since only cold facts must be submitted and inspired answers given."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the time—November, 1925—had a number of missionaries laboring in Binghamton and vicinity (and by the way near the settlements on the Susquehanna River where Mormonism had much of its origin), and among these missionaries was Sister Alda Fugal, one of our lady missionaries. Seeing this matter come up in the *Redeemed Hebrew*, she told Mr. Silverstein of Elder B. H. Roberts, then President of the Eastern States Mission, and that he might be interested in this question, and suggested that the *Redeemed Hebrew* with the rabbi's letter be submitted to him with an invitation to be one of the contributors to the pending symposium. This was done and to the desk of President Roberts came the monthly publication with the aforesaid article. It was looked over casually, but the amount of work then on hand, in the Eastern States Mission, precluded any serious attention, so it lay about the mission office. Each time it was seen, however, it suggested that it ought to receive attention, until at last it was taken up and more thoroughly examined; and it was to be seen that it afforded an approach perhaps to the large Jewish population in the city and state of New York, and so President Roberts wrote his answer to the editor of the *Redeemed Hebrew*.

It so chanced that it was accepted as the most available reply and consequently both the letter of the Jewish rabbi and Elder Roberts' answer to his "opposition to Jesus" appeared in the next issue. The rabbi's letter being accompanied with the reply.

Such was the interest in the subject that the regular edition of the *Redeemed Hebrew*—about 15,000—was exhausted and a second edition was immediately published. Upon this awakened interest being learned, the second and third contributions of President Roberts on the subject were prepared and published in following numbers.

This is how these three papers to the *Redeemed Hebrew* came into existence; and there have been published several editions of the articles since.

Now the whole contribution with some expansion of the articles from the form in which they first appeared are made into a book that the author trusts will be felt as a contribution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the message it has for the tribe of Judah and all Israel, in their relationship to the New Dispensation of the Fullness of Times, in which is to be gathered together all things in one, even in Christ Jesus our Lord (*Eph. i:10*).