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Elder B.H. Roberts' Reply

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To Pastor Abraham Silverstein, editor of the *Redeemed Hebrew*,

DEAR SIR:

Answering the question "Who Will Defend Jesus Christ Before this Jewish Rabbi—'Rasha'"—I submit the following paper, on one phase of the question only; the defense of the rabbi from the charge of committing sin should he accept Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. He says—

—"I would sin were I to accept Jesus."

—"Jehovah forbids me to believe in Jesus. Your [the Christian] faith is wrong."

This writer "Rasha", rejects Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah and the Savior of men through a forgiveness of sin, because;

(1) The Jehovah of the *Old Testament* is the God of all the world, not Jesus of the *New Testament*.

(2) Because, Jehovah—according to the Scripture passages quoted by "Rasha"—and not Jesus, is proclaimed the Savior of men—of all men, as well as of Israel—and the one who forgives sin.

"Rasha" claims an easy victory over the Christ by—as he thinks—the establishment of these two propositions. The *New Testament*, for "Rasha", "is a fiction"; "Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor; the *Old* and reliable *Testament* of Jehovah provides all that the Christian religion claims for the believer"—then "Why go to a *New Testament*?" "Rasha" is glad that he is with Jehovah; glad that "through him his sins are forgiven"—that though sins be as scarlet, they may be made white as snow; though like crimson, they shall be as wool; and entreats the "Christian Jew" publisher of the *Redeemed Hebrew*, "to come back" to the faith of his fathers, and use the knowledge he has

of the word of Jehovah for Jehovah's glory, and not for the glory of another.

"Rasha's" premises and arguments are easily disposed of by a little broader view of the word of God, even as it stands in the *Old Testament*. I undertake to dispose of them, practically, from the *Old Testament* alone.

What is the significance of that language in the first chapter of *Genesis*:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; . . . so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (*Gen. i:26, 27*).

And again, after "the fall":

"And the Lord God said: Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord sent him forth from the Garden of Eden" (*Gen. iii:22-23*).

What also is the significance of the language of *Genesis* iii:15—the words of Jehovah, saying to the serpent, the devil:

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

These Scriptures have to do with the questions here to be discussed. First, as showing that in the creation, while there is never to be thought of other than **One Divine Nature, one only God Nature**—yet there is more than one personage participating in that One Nature—more than One incarnation of it. Hence, in "our image" and in "our own likeness" as well as "Behold, the man is become one of us". Also, it is to be observed that the evil of the world—the "enmity"—is to be a battle royal between the "devil" and the "Seed" of the woman. The devil shall bruise the heel of the woman's "Seed", but that "Seed" shall bruise satan's head—wound him in a vital part—win a complete victory over the evil—this the woman's "Seed", the promised Deliverer, the Messiah, shall do.

Let us go still further into the matter—deeper. Consider God's (i. e., Jehovah's) great question, put to Job (xxxviii: 3-7):

“Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measure thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof, **When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**”

Surely after this questioning one must think of Job as being somewhere, and somehow as an entity, when the “foundations of the earth were laid”. Living in some self-conscious existence, or Jehovah's questions were meaningless. Somewhere he was, and doubtless among the “morning stars” who sang together, among “the sons of God who shouted for joy”. And was all this rejoicing over the prospects of that earth life promised in the laying of the foundations of the new earth? Was it then that “the promise of eternal life” was made “before the world began”, and by “God, who cannot lie”? (See *Tit. i:2*).

The important thing in the whole matter, however, is—and that is stated very clearly—that before the foundations of the earth were laid, there were “sons of God” in existence, and they shouted for joy at the laying of the foundations of the earth. It was to these doubtless, that Jehovah said, “Let us make man in our image”. These sons were spirits—the spirits of future men for whom the earth was being made—hence their joy. These spirits were sons of God and known of him even as the prophet Jeremiah was known. “The word of the Lord came unto me”, reports Jeremiah, “saying—Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (*Jer. i:4-5*). So, too, other prophet-leaders; among them, Messiah's messenger:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts” (*Mal. iii:1*).

Certain it is that the Messiah and his mission were known—his birth, and names and titles.

“Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (*Isa. vii:14*)—God with us (*St. Matt. i:23*); God with men!

More explicitly still is Isaiah’s:

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (*Isa. ix:6*).

I am not unaware of the fact that our brethren, the Jews, will not allow the interpretation that Christians in general, and, I may say, my own church with increase of emphasis—place upon these prophecies; viz., that they are fulfilled in the person, character, and mission of our Lord Jesus, born of the woman Mary of Nazareth. It was the mistake of Jewish rabbis and people two thousand years ago, that they insisted then, as they do now, that these and other Messianic prophecies of their Scriptures had reference to some earthly king who, in some glorious way, was to arise and rescue Israel from political subordination, and place him in a commanding position among the nations of the earth; where, enlightened by the inspiration proceeding from the Anointed One, blessing would attend upon the leadership of Israel. Indeed it is insisted upon by Jewish scholarship that these prophecies in *Isaiah*, chapters vii and ix referred strictly to a local situation in regard to the relations of Israel to nearby nations, and to be immediately fulfilled; that the child to be born of the virgin was to be born of the prophet Isaiah’s wife, or that the prediction had reference to some young prince to be born in the palace.

But this interpretation, if allowed, would involve our Jewish brethren in blasphemy more terrible than that which they conceive the acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah would bring to them. For consider what this child born of the "virgin" is to be called; and it follows that what he is to be called, that he is to be. And if he is to be called "Immanuel", "God with us"—that is, God with men,—then that is what he is to be. God with men! Must a being then, less than Jehovah incarnate be the "Immanuel" of the text?

Then, what of the companion and parallel prophecy of *Isaiah*, ix:6, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called. * * * **the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.**" Would the Jew "Rasha", would any Jew, dare say that a being less than their Jehovah incarnated could fulfill this prediction? If the exposition of the text is to be applied to someone of the Jewish race immediate to the days of Isaiah, to some king or prophet, a temporal ruler to deliver Israel from political subordination, who was he? And when he came was he "**the Mighty God**"—the Jehovah of the Jews, "**the Everlasting Father**"? There was no national character in Israel contemporary with Isaiah or subsequent to him until the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, who in his life and character fulfilled the terms of this prophecy, or gave any hope or promise of fulfilling it. How can this prophecy be fulfilled but by the incarnation of "the Mighty God", the incarnation "the Everlasting Father"?

But is it true that there shall be the incarnation of "the Mighty God", the Jehovah of the *Old Testament*? Shall God dwell with men in the flesh? Yea, verily. I marvel that the Scripture which so strongly proclaims it is never used in argument upon the subject. I quote it here. The prophet Isaiah takes the sorrows and afflictions of Israel to Jehovah:

"Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening hand was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord."

And the Lord, to comfort Israel, said in answer:

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead" (*Isa. xxvi:16-20*).

This is Jehovah speaking! "Thy dead men", O Israel, "shall live"—the resurrection of the dead proclaimed! **Together with Jehovah's dead body shall they arise!** Jehovah, then, is to have a "body"! He is to become "dead", and to "arise". Jehovah is to dwell with men in the flesh, to be "Immanuel", to live with men, to die, to arise from the dead, and the dead men of Israel to rise with him! Can language more clearly outline the incarnation of Jehovah in the flesh, his death and his resurrection? Blasphemy this? Then it is Isaiah, the great Hebrew prophet who blasphemes; or rather, Jehovah, for it is he who is speaking. And who but the Christ of the *New Testament* fulfills, or can fulfill the inspired prophecy of Isaiah, on the incarnation of Jehovah, his death in that mortal state, his resurrection to immortality in that incarnation, and the resurrection of men to an immortality with him,—**"together with my dead body shall they arise"**!

I am not seeking in this writing to make out the whole case of the Christ of the *New Testament* being the promised Messiah of the *Old Testament*. I am only meeting here and now the very limited argument of "Rasha" that Jesus of Nazareth cannot be the Messiah of the Jews because it is Jehovah alone who will save his people, who is the Savior of men, who alone does or can forgive sin. All right. So let it stand. Jehovah alone will save his people. Jehovah alone can forgive sin. Jehovah alone is the Savior of men—of all men. But when Jehovah becomes incarnate in Jesus Christ, then in his office of the Christ, the Anointed One, he forgives sins, saves his people, and is alone Savior of men,—**is it not the Jehovah of the Hebrews** that is doing all these things, functioning in all these capacities? And the Christ being Jehovah, and doing all this, do not all the objections of "Rasha", the Jew, fall to the ground on the supposition that Jehovah and Jehovah alone must

do them? For behold, the Jehovah of the *Old Testament* incarnated in the Christ of the *New*, is doing all these things,—saving his people, forgiving their sins, saving all men—it is Jehovah's work throughout; for Jehovah and Christ are triumphantly one and the same Savior.

What then becomes of "Rasha's" premises and arguments? Jehovah's glory is not given to another by the acceptance of Jesus, since Jesus and Jehovah are one and the same. It is not sin to compare Jesus with Jehovah, since it is but the comparison of the same Deity under different aspects. It is not sin to accept Jesus as Messiah since Jesus is both the Messiah hoped for in the tradition of the Jews, and he is also their Jehovah. Nothing which "Rasha" quotes from Isaiah—and these quotations are his reliance for proofs against Jesus being the Messiah of the Jews—is of any avail in the controversy since Jehovah and Jesus are one and the same personage; only in the *Old Testament* period, he is not incarnate; but in the *New Testament* period and now, he is the same, but incarnate.

To recapitulate, in part at least, in order to make clear and emphasize what up to this point is set down:

Spirits exist before they tabernacle in bodies of flesh and bone. A plurality of spirit personages were present in the creation with God; hence "let us make man in our image", hence "the man is become as one of us"; hence Job's "sons of God" who "shouted for joy" before the creation of the earth; hence, also, Jehovah, a Spirit Personage, seen and known as such by a number of the Hebrew prophets—Abraham, Moses, Seventy of the Elders of Israel, (*Ex.* xxiv:9-11); in such capacity he spake to Isaiah, and for the comfort of Israel he said: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. . . . the earth shall cast out her dead" (*Isa.* xxvi:19). This is the most direct promise of Jehovah's incarnation in a "body" that should die, that should arise from death, and others arise with him—"the earth cast out the dead"—resurrection!

Who of the prophets in Israel, or who of the kings has done like unto this? Or who of them can do like unto this? Messiah—the hope of Israel must do no less than this if he

fulfill the promises that rest on Israel's Messiah. No mere earthly king can fulfill Israel's Messianic hope—Messiah's mission. Earthly kings are born, they live the life-period of man—a few years, less than a hundred—and they die and their glory passes away even as the grass that is cut down and withers. They and their glory are temporary. But Messiah, Israel's hope of redemption, and the world's hope must be more than a temporal king, however glorious in worldly power his reign might be. He must be "the Mighty God", "the Everlasting Father". He must not only "forgive sins", but restore that which was lost by man's transgression in "the fall" of Adam. This through bringing to pass the resurrection of the dead, the only means through which may be restored the life that was lost through "the fall", as recounted in *Genesis*;

(1) The spiritual life which was lost by man's enforced separation from God; and—

(2) His physical life also which was lost by God's decree for transgression—the separation of the spirit and the body, "dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return". This wound must be healed, not only by the forgiveness of sin, but by the atonement for the sin, and by resurrection from the dead the only way of regaining that life which was lost. Some one with the power to achieve it must say, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise . . . and the earth shall cast out her dead." This was the work of God—of Jehovah. This was the mission of Jehovah proclaimed in *Isaiah*, when he promised Israel that her dead men should live—together with his dead body should they arise; this the work of the Christ—"to abolish death", and "to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (*II Tim. i:10*). It was this Isaiah-conception of Messiah's mission that led Job to exclaim,

"I know that my Redeemer liveth; and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me" (*Job xix:25-27*).

This also inspired Daniel to say:

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever” (*Dan. xii:2, 3*).

So much I commend to the consideration of “Rasha” from the viewpoint of Messiah’s mission, in the hope that it will persuade him to believe that he will be committing no sin against Jehovah, by accepting Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, for the very good reason that Jehovah and Jesus are one and the same.

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