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THE
CHURCHMAN

MAY, 1889.

ART. I.—THE HALLE INSTITUTUM JUDAICUM.

WE do not know of any book which deals with the whole history of efforts made for the conversion of the Jews since the days of the Apostles. It would be a work exceedingly difficult to compose, needing special training and wide knowledge, especially knowledge of Talmudic literature and Jewish thought, and, most important of all, sympathy with all desires after divine life, however strangely these desires might be expressed. But if written from the true standpoint of one who has himself found the key to the Christian position in personal relation to Christ, it would be of the deepest interest and of permanent value. But, alas, a Neander arises but seldom, and for this particular work Neander's studies had not fitted him. There still remains room for such a work, and we commend the suggestion to all those who are interested in (and what true Christian is not?) the conversion of the Jews. For a part of the history, however, we are not without a guide. Pastor de le Roi's work,¹ to which we are chiefly indebted for the materials for this paper, is a comprehensive history of the efforts made for the conversion of the Jews from the time of the Reformation to the middle of the eighteenth century—a period, roughly speaking, of two hundred and fifty years; beginning with the great blaze of light among the Christians and the feeble attempts to carry a few rays of it to the Jews, and ending at a time when the intellectual darkness of the Jews was, perhaps, at its deepest, but which was as the dark before the dawn. For the end of the eighteenth century saw "the third Moses" (Mendelssohn), and his eventually successful efforts for the culture of his people.

At no period, apparently, has the Christian Church been

¹ *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden*, von Lic. J. F. A. de le Roi. Karlsruhe. 1884.

altogether forgetful of her duties to that nation to which it owes everything. Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine (who at least feel themselves bound to try to meet their objections), Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Pope Martin V., our own *Domus conversorum*, the endeavours in Spain, miserable though their issue was, all witness to a sense of the duty laid upon the Church of preaching the Gospel to the Jews. Nor were such efforts altogether in vain, although they were far too closely connected with a system of coercion to prove widely successful. The "stand and deliver" policy is very easy, but when faith and habits are the booty desired it can seldom be effective. Yet strange how slowly it dies. Nothing was commoner even after the Reformation than to compel Jews to at least attend places of Christian worship, and there to listen—unless, perchance, as they sometimes did, they stuffed their ears with beeswax—to arguments of Christian preachers. But though the theory of compulsion was long advocated by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, it was essentially opposed to the spirit of Protestantism. The Reformation, which had begun with a revolt against religious compulsion, could not in the end fail to see the theological error and the mistaken policy of using compulsion in any form towards opponents of Christianity, and to trust solely to spiritual means of winning them. Members of reformed Churches cannot consistently advocate compulsion. That may be left to those who believe in the infallibility of one special Christian organization, or to those who, restrained by no belief in God, have no valid argument to convince them that persecution of individuals is not really for the benefit of the race.

But at the time and the place of which we are speaking, the University of Halle in the first half of last century, the influences were widely different from Roman Catholicism and Freethought. The University itself was of but recent date (1694), and had been founded through the deeply Christian influence of Spener. Its atmosphere was Pietistic; Evangelical we might call it, save that English Evangelicalism lacks the morbid introspection of German Pietism. And with this Pietistic influence Callenberg, Professor of Philosophy and afterwards of Theology, was deeply impressed. Callenberg's personal history is not uninteresting. Born in 1694 of peasant parents, his ability was recognised by his village pastor and he was sent to a school at Gotha, where the Christian life and testimony of his head-master was of lasting effect upon him. In 1715 he joined the University of Halle, and came into contact with A. H. Franke, the co-founder with Spener of Pietism, and one of the first professors of the University; and with one Salomon Negri, originally of Damascus, afterwards Arabic Professor at Rome, and at that time teacher of Oriental languages

in Halle. Negri's earlier experiences with freethinkers in France and Italy now proved of the greatest benefit to Callenberg, for he was able to satisfy the doubts that were creeping over the mind of the young student. Yet while Negri cleared up his intellectual difficulties, Franke was the means of satisfying his heart. It was through Franke's preaching that he entered into spiritual rest.

With his inner peace came the almost unvarying accompaniment, the desire to serve God with all his power and to carry to others the Gospel which he now enjoyed. Callenberg felt drawn towards missionary work, and, not unnaturally from his friendship with Negri, to missionary work among the Mohamadaus. With this object he learned from his friend Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Yet he never went abroad. For Franke, seeing his zeal and ability, wished to retain him in Halle, and begged the King to make him Professor of Philosophy. This office he held from 1727 to 1739, when he was appointed Professor of Theology.

In academic work, however, he made no special mark. His claims to remembrance rest neither on his scholarship nor on his writings, but on his relation to missionary enterprise. For his early desires, though apparently frustrated, really moulded his whole life. Even work among the Mohammadans was never lost sight of. He translated into Arabic, or republished after earlier translations, several Christian treatises, among them Grotius on the "Error of the Mohammedans," written for those Christians who lived among them, four books of the *De Imitatione Christi*, the Gospel of St. Matthew, the Acts, the Epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews; while parts of the third and fourth Gospels were published in Persian, and the Sermon on the Mount and parts of the Epistles of St. Peter and St. John in Turkish.

But meantime God was guiding him to work in other ways. He heard that J. Müller, whom he had formerly known at Gotha, had composed a treatise dealing with the conversion of the Jews, which Müller wished (unlike, apparently, earlier authors of similar tracts) to publish in a form likely to be read by those to whom it was addressed. Many such tracts had been already written, but, as they were in Latin, they were practically out of the reach of more than a few of the best educated among the Jews. Müller had long since had his pamphlet ready in German-Hebrew, but had been unable to find a publisher for it. Callenberg borrowed the MS. (1723), and after further vain attempts to find a publisher, begged the author to write a circular asking for funds to pay for the cost of printing. The sum he asked for was ridiculously small, only twenty thalers (about £3), but it was not raised till the end of

1726. Then the printer found that he could not print it for the price, and the matter ended by Callenberg and a friend named Frommann, a converted Jewish physician, themselves procuring some German-Hebrew type and printing and publishing the treatise under the title of "A Light at Evening Time" (Zech. xiv. 7). Its effects have been enormous. Within eight years it was translated into German, into English (by the S.P.C.K.), into Dutch, into Italian, and soon after into French, and it is still found to be of practical use by modern workers among the Jews. It is very short, only about sixty pages in the modern English edition, but very ingenious. We are not sure that it is altogether straightforward. For the author's aim that it should not at first sight betray its Christian origin has been fully carried out. If in the modern edition the name of the publishers, "London Society's House," were not fully set out, there would be considerable likelihood in its readers supposing that it was written by one who was himself a Jew, though certainly a Jew of mystical, perhaps cabalistic, tendencies. Its plan is, briefly, as follows: The Jewish nation has a glorious future before it, but this is only to be obtained on true repentance. A suffering Messiah, even a suffering Messiah ben David, is not opposed either to the Scriptures or to the Talmud and the Rabbinic writings. Targums and commentators recognise even His Divinity; while the doctrine of the Trinity may be found in the Zohar. Judged indeed by the modern standard of criticism, its interpretation of Scripture is much too literal. But it serves its purpose admirably among Jews of a certain stage of culture, for it reminds them that their own authorities contain intimations of doctrines which are identical with the creed of Christendom, and thus prepares them to receive fuller and clearer statements.

This small treatise played no unimportant part in the history of the *Institutum Judaicum*. Callenberg's publication (April 3rd, 1728) of a report of the means taken to publish it, and of his expression of his thanks to those who had subscribed towards it, always seemed to him to be the date of the commencement of his *Institutum*. For when he pointed out in his report that there was now Jewish type already to hand, and therefore the opportunity, as there had never been before, of supplying the Jews with abundance of similar literature, money and sympathy alike flowed in. He was urged on to fresh effort. A colporteur was engaged to carry the "Light at Evening Time" far and wide; a Christian friend in Halle, who had as a young man learned printing, undertook to print gratuitously all that might be needed; and with these encouragements Callenberg set about trying to reach not merely German Jews by his

German-Hebrew language and type, but Jews of all countries by Hebrew proper.

Meantime Callenberg's work was making an impression on the students of his University. Several used to meet together to learn German-Hebrew and to prepare themselves for work in the cause in after-life. Callenberg was glad to help them, and gave them advice about their studies, but as yet this was all. In July, 1729, however, one of their number, Manitius, begged him to found a college, in which students might have full guidance and preparation for missionary work among the Jews. But for this Callenberg was much too cautious. Little by little, as God should guide him, was always his method. He was only able to promise them a weekly lecture, which would to some extent meet their wishes. This he at once began, and lectured on Rabbinic, the condition of the Jews, and the best means of winning them to Christ. His work grew. In March, 1730, his printing-office had German, German-Hebrew, Hebrew, and Arabic type, and he had already, *i.e.*, in two years, printed, or had in course of printing, in one or more of these languages, the "Light at Evening Time"; a "Letter to the Jewish Community"; "The Sermon on the Mount"; "The Gospel of St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles"; Luther's "Catechism"; Franke's "Beginning of Christian Doctrine," "An Account of St. Paul's Doctrine of Justification by Faith"; and Freilinghausen's "Plan of Salvation." A great part of the actual work of printing was done by Jewish proselytes. Frommann superintended two regular assistants, and wandering proselytes received pecuniary help for a few days on condition of their giving such help as they could.¹

It is easy to understand that in this way the *Institutum Judaicum*, primarily an organization for printing and publishing books and treatises for missionary work among the Jews, became the centre to which all in the University who felt an interest in Jewish missions were attracted. The students had opportunities of meeting proselytes (*i.e.*, of seeing results), and of preparing themselves by knowledge of Hebrew and Rabbinic for missionary work hereafter if they should be called upon to undertake it. And this came about, not by any long-thought-out plan, but by one of those plain indications of Providence which it is never

¹ Among later publications of the *Institutum Judaicum* in German-Hebrew, Hebrew, or Arabic, may be mentioned the whole of the Old and of the New Testament; the Augsburg Confession, with notes; a translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews; Isaiah liii, translated and annotated; Gregory the Great on the Conversion of the Jews; and a great variety of controversial tracts, *e.g.*, on the Emperor Titus in his relation to the Jews; on Rome and Messiah; on the Purpose of the Mosaic Law; on False Trust in External Circumcision; etc., etc.

safe to neglect. In October, 1730, a missionary to the Jews (as we should call him in these days) came to Halle. Widmann had for two years been travelling among the Jews of Hungary and Poland, trying to lead them to Christ, had met in Vienna with Callenberg's publications, and now came to ask him for some copies to use on his travels. Callenberg, with his usual caution, asked Manitius, the student who had before shown his desire to learn Rabbinic, etc., to see a good deal of Widmann, and to find out his true character. It ended in Manitius being so taken with him that he begged Callenberg to allow him to go with Widmann on his next journey. Callenberg agreed, and undertook to pay their expenses and to continue supporting them "so long as they conducted such travels in a Christian fashion, and as became students of theology." They started on November 16, 1730, and henceforth direct missionary work became an integral part of the *Institutum Judaicum*.

We have been somewhat careful to give details of the beginnings of the undertaking, in order that we might put clearly before our readers the gradual and natural character, so to speak, of its growth; but it is not our intention to enter into particulars from this point. It must be sufficient to indicate the methods generally pursued.

The characteristics of the *Institutum Judaicum* were two-fold. First, study and literary work; secondly, direct personal endeavour to win converts. The first was never forgotten. Callenberg's centre of influence was his printing-press at Halle, and the lectures and readings that connected themselves with it. Men did not go out on the missionary expeditions unless they had fully qualified themselves by study; when they returned from their travels for rest they returned to study. Callenberg was profoundly impressed with the belief that missionaries to the Jews ought to be able to meet them with their own weapons, and to refer as easily as their opponents to the Talmud and the Rabbinic literature. It was in the combination of learning with practical effort that the peculiarity of Callenberg's efforts lay.¹

But when the missionaries went out, what missionaries they

¹ Schultz, for instance (1736-1776) lectured in the University of Halle on Arabic, Mohammadanism, Rabbinic, Greek, certain books of the Old Testament and New Testament. It is said that he once met a Polish Rabbi, to whom he began speaking German. The Rabbi excused himself on the ground that he spoke Polish; Schultz continued in Polish: the Rabbi began Rabbinic; Schultz joined in: the Rabbi spoke in a mixture of all three languages; Schultz also, until at last the Rabbi confessed himself beaten, and accepted the missionary pamphlets which Schultz offered him. Woltersdorf, too (whose early death in 1756 was a serious loss to the *Institutum*), besides knowing Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, could converse in English, Italian, modern Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and Armenian.

were! Young men, men who never intended to spend all their lives as missionaries, but who were willing to give a few years to the work before settling down in a parish, they worked with all their power. They were all Gentiles. Never but once was a proselyte allowed to go on a missionary expedition, and even that was more of an apparent than a real exception; for he was only allowed to accompany two other missionaries, and was sent back by them after a few months to receive further instruction in Christian graces. For notwithstanding the apparent advantages of employing proselytes—advantages which none who know anything of the admirable work done by them as missionaries to-day will for a moment doubt—Callenberg felt very strongly that on the whole it was better to use only Gentiles. He found the proselytes as a rule not too learned, self-opinionated in the extreme, with an overweening sense of their commercial value, and a dislike to endure the hardships which missionaries in those days were forced to bear. For though missionary work has of course its trials and dangers now, it is ease and luxury itself compared with what it was then. The missionaries went as the very poorest. Their payment was less than tenpence a day, so they had no choice but to go on foot, laden with their 70 lb. weight packages mostly of tracts and books; sometimes tramping it for weary miles through the forests of Poland; sometimes driven away from the gates of the towns as vagrants; sometimes in Austrian territory imprisoned on the charge of being Hussites; having as their usual food bread made of mere straw, as it seemed, and dipped in warm milk, with occasionally a little dried meat; often laid on beds of sickness through the privations they endured; refusing repeated “calls” to settle down as pastors in some place where their work was known; speaking to every Jew they met, whether rich or poor, for at that time even the rich Jews were accessible; preaching even in synagogues, as they could do in those days, the way of repentance and faith; they proved themselves true successors of the Apostles.

Their work lay primarily among the unconverted Jews, but they also specially bore in mind the needs of proselytes. For these often found it a hard matter to retain their new faith. It is often difficult, even in these days, for a converted Jew to find work. At that time it was almost impossible. To become a Christian meant then to entirely give up one's means of livelihood, with very little chance of being able to engage in fresh work. For, thanks to the barbarous laws which were not as yet beginning to be removed, most occupations were forbidden to Jews, and such as they knew, more especially money-lending, were in the hands of Jews alone, who not unnaturally refused to employ one whom they termed a renegade. The marvel is

that so many proselytes then stood firm. Callenberg and other Christians before him had not altogether neglected them, but only a little direct help could be given, and it lay much on the hearts of the missionaries to seek out the proselytes in different places and cheer them in their new state. This part of their work was perhaps not the least satisfactory of any. At all events Callenberg affirmed that though he knew many a proselyte who did not live as he ought, yet it was extraordinarily seldom that proselytes returned to Judaism, and, in fact, that he and his missionaries had personally not met with one certain case.

The missionaries were only lay-missionaries, not ordained clergymen. They therefore never baptized. When they were blessed to the awakening of souls, they handed them over to the pastor of the district in which the men lived, that he might prepare them for baptism, thus at once ensuring a continued interest being taken in them by the Church authorities of the place, and also not laying upon the mission the full responsibility of baptizing them or of maintaining them afterwards.

Whither the missionaries went depended on many circumstances. The presence of proselytes, the interest taken in the cause by Christians, the invitation of some already-awakened Jew, the interest or the opposition shown on former occasions, the number of Jews in any district—in a word, anything that tended to show the will of God as to the probability of success—determined their course. They travelled widely. Schultz himself, one of the best known of their number, travelled through all parts of Germany, through Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Silesia, Hungary, Holland, England, Venice, Italy, Turkey, Asia Minor and its islands, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria; and then had far from completed his original plan, for he had intended to at least make a preliminary tour of inspection and see the state of the Jews in Armenia, and passing “through Central Asia to China,” to journey back by Ispahan and Bagdad and Balsora, thence to Madras and Coromandel and Abyssinia. Thence he would go through Egypt to Jerusalem, Italy, France, and Spain, and afterwards to America, coming home to Halle through England. This seems visionary, but no one was less of a visionary than Callenberg, with whom Schultz had arranged his plan, and the amount that was actually accomplished tends to show that it was not altogether impossible. At any rate, it calls our attention to an important element in the novelty of Callenberg’s work, that he dared to embrace in thought and active organization a scheme which should ultimately reach the Jews of the whole world.

But, judging by results, what are we to say of the *Institutum*? Its conception and its methods were excellent. Did

the results correspond? To give a direct answer is not easy, men have such different ideas as to what are corresponding results. Its *direct* results may be fairly easily stated, for Schultz, who had excellent opportunities of knowing, having access to the exact lists that were kept, reckoned in 1760 the number of Jews baptized through the instrumentality of the mission at one thousand. But no one with any sense of justice would look only, or even chiefly, at direct results as showing the good done by Callenberg's mission. The *indirect* results were of even more importance. M. de le Roi claims among these, and fair consideration bears him out, *first*, that the Jews became conscious of a widespread interest being taken in them by Christians. It was for the first time, we should suppose, since Apostolic days that they could at all generally have realized this. Efforts on their behalf had before been too spasmodic and too local to produce any such widespread feeling. But to learn that Christian people no longer looked at them as mere pariahs, but as those who were invited as well as they themselves to share the blessings, whatever they were, of Christianity, was no slight advance gained in the relation of Jews to Christians. *Secondly*, the Jews began to learn something of the true character of Christianity itself. They had before very closely allied it—even if they did not absolutely identify it—with heathenism. Can we wonder at this? Was the popular Christianity of the Middle Ages so very unlike heathenism? Is the popular Christianity of Roman Catholic countries even at the present day so totally and altogether in contradiction to such a representation? Brought up, as Jews were, with the utmost abhorrence of anything approaching the worship of men, could they fail to be impressed by the polytheistic character of the saint-worship that surrounded them? The refined distinctions of the theologians, so perilously near even as the best of them came to the distinctions of the heathen philosophers, were generally unknown to the dwellers in the Ghetto. They judged by the creed of the populace around them; saw them prostrating themselves to graven images; and naturally found it hard to perceive the difference between Christianity and the worship of false gods. But when the missionaries of the *Institutum Judaicum* visited them, they were brought into close contact with men who knew nothing of Saint or Image worship, and who considered the Virgin Mary to be only the holiest of women. Yet of their Christianity there was no doubt. Christianity, then, if such were Christians, must be something different in its essence from the popular heathenism to which the Jews had been accustomed. This was a new idea to them, and bore abundant fruit. *Thirdly*, the Jews learned that it was not sufficient to be prepared to defend their religion

by an appeal to the Rabbinic commentators and the Talmud. While the missionaries could in this respect meet them with their own weapons, they borrowed Talmudic practice and asked what the Hebrew Scriptures really said. The Hebrew Scriptures had been, like the Christian Bible before the Reformation, very little studied. It was known in parts and selections, but ignored as a whole. But when these strange preachers came, appealing to that Hebrew text which Jews as well as Christians professed to accept, the Jewish laymen (if we may make such a distinction in the case of the Jews) appealed to their Rabbis for confirmation or denial, and Rabbis and laity alike were urged on to study their own Scriptures. *Fourthly*, the mission introduced to Jewish notice the New Testament. Until that time it had been practically impossible for Jews to know anything of the New Testament, circulated as it was in a strange language. But the missionaries now went forth with the Hebrew New Testament, or parts of it, in their hands, and urged those Jews, who wished to learn what Christianity really was, to study it for themselves at the fountain-head. No doubt the translation was imperfect. Hebraists at even the present day are not satisfied with any translation of the New Testament that has yet appeared—witness the repeated revisions of even Delitzsch's version. But such as it was, it could be read by Jews, and it was accurate enough for practical purposes. The charter of our faith was no longer hidden from that nation by means of whom it had come to us. It was once more placed before them that they might read it for themselves, and gain at first hand the knowledge of the Person and the Work of Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah.

M. de le Roi claims that another result of Callenberg's mission may be seen in the change that took place at the end of the century in the relation of the Jews to general culture. This is not impossible, but it is so hard to distinguish the different causes that brought about the sudden conversion of Jewish opinion from extreme narrowness to, in many cases, extreme breadth, that we do not wish to insist too much on the part that the *Institutum Judaicum* had in it. Men's minds generally at the end of last century were seething with new opinions and an ideal reign of Liberty, and it is easy to exaggerate the part which the humble mission of Callenberg had in producing the change. But that it had part we can hardly hesitate to affirm. The seed of doubt in formal Judaism and of hope in the possibilities of Christianity which it sowed, the vital intercourse between Jew and Gentile that it produced, the searching and inquiring that it encouraged, all tended to prepare the Jews for change, even though this proved to be too often only a change from Pharisaic formalism to Sadducean culture. That was not the fault of the mission,

but of those who, after the mission had ceased to be, failed to carry on the work that it had begun.

For though during Callenberg's lifetime Christians in many lands and of all degrees heartily supported the work by their interest, by their prayers, and by their money (our own S.P.C.K. giving him books, and translating some of his publications; Moravians in Surinam reporting to him their work among the Jews of that country; princes and statesmen, and bishops and clergy, and tradesmen and mechanics asking for the reports of the mission, and in one case striking medals in its honour), yet the *Institutum Judaicum* hardly survived Callenberg's death. It did, indeed, last till 1792, though Callenberg died in 1760, but it dwindled away and became, in its latter years, only a shadow of itself. Why? Partly because of Callenberg's over-caution. He had kept it entirely in his own hands (not laying it on permanent foundations by entrusting it in his lifetime to a committee), and his successors to whom he left it—namely, his son and Schultz—proved themselves incapable of carrying it on with the same sobriety of judgment that had characterized Callenberg. But the chief cause lay in the spirit of the time. The piety of the early part of the century was exchanged (at all events in the circle from which the *Institutum* drew most of its support) for Rationalism, and to Rationalism then, as now, Missions are of little moment. It is in the warm glow of Evangelical faith that missionary work, whether to heathen or to Jews, thrives. History bears witness to the fact that it becomes starved in proportion as Rationalism flourishes. The two cannot co-exist. Either missionary work attacks Rationalism and conquers it by its enthusiasm, or Rationalism eats the heart out of missionary work. Alas that the latter was the fate of the *Institutum Judaicum*!

Yet, apart from the lessons of its decay and fall, the story of its growth and *Blütezeit* is full of instruction for us to-day. Never, perhaps, have there been such opportunities for winning the Jews to Christ as now. Never, save perhaps in the middle of the eighteenth century, have Christians been thinking so much of the best means to be used for their conversion. The history of the Halle *Institutum Judaicum* points to the right methods of undertaking the work of "promoting Christianity" among them. It teaches combination of study, and that at a centre of learning, with personal endeavour. The former was the characteristic of the seventeenth century; the latter, if we may say it without offence, seems to be rather the method of the nineteenth century. It is to the combination of the two that Callenberg's life-work calls us.

A. LUKYN WILLIAMS.