

translated literally, would have made the language rather uncount, and the author's ideas not quite so comprehensible; and in one or two assertions, founded on the author's imperfect acquaintance with the customs of a nation that he has happened to mention: in the latter case, as the proposition had not any connexion with the main thread of the discourse, a slight omission has been made.\*

Having given this explanation concerning the following pages. I invoke on my undertaking the blessing of the Almighty, and earnestly commend the work to the reader's most serious attention.

L. LOEWE.

55, MANSELL STREET, GOODMAN'S FIELDS,

*The 8th day of Elul, 5601.*

*(25th of August, 1841.)*

*The first anniversary of the liberation of the Jews at Damascus.*

\* The translator thinks it proper also here to state, that he does not always concur with the opinions of the Jewish Rabbi Maimoon; but he has not invariably recorded his dissent in the shape of notes at the particular passages to which he makes exceptions, fearing that by so doing he might divert the reader's attention from the drift of the discourse.

## INTRODUCTION.

(MAIMOOM ENTERS THE HOUSE OF SIMMIAS, AND ON SEEING SIMMIAS BOWS TO HIM TWICE.)

MAIMOOM. God be with thee, Patriarch of the Greek Church.

SIMMIAS. Chief Rabbi of the Israelites, may God bless thee. Friend Abraham Maimoon, may thy arrival in this place prove auspicious. I have been most anxious to see thee, and so have thy brethren that dwell here. Is peace with thee, my friend? And tell me, I pray, how fares thy brother, the Lord Jacob Maimoon? he that is one of the seven ministers of the Sultan at Constantinople.

MAT. I am well, my lord: and so also is my brother Jacob, who has been mindful to enquire after thy welfare. My lord, pray tell me if the Governor of Jerusalem has received the Sultan's firman.

STM. He received it eleven days ago. The *Sheikh el Islam* and myself were summoned into his presence to hear the whole of it read; and it exactly corresponds with the copy which thou didst send me a few days previous to the arrival of the official document. The substance of it is as follows:—The Greek Church, which is

situated opposite our mosque, is to remain undisturbed; the Greeks are to be allowed to perform their religious devotions as usual, free from interruption or annoyance; and if any one shall dare to molest these Christians, or their house of prayer, whether the offence so committed be great or little, the same shall be punished with death. Now, friend Maimoon, how can I sufficiently thank thee for thy good offices with thy brother the minister? and in what terms ought I to thank thy brother for all the good he has effected with the Sultan on my behalf, and on behalf of the Greek Church? The God of your forefathers, who is also our God, alone can give you meet substantial rewards; for myself, I can only offer you my grateful acknowledgments, and those in such a mode as falls short of what this benefit deserves.

MAR. A righteous act is in itself the best reward.

SIM. My brethren at Constantinople have acquainted me with the hatred which the Oolamas bear us, and which they have signified to their Moofti. I have likewise learnt from them that the Turkish prime minister participates in their hatred. But the Almighty is our help; He gave strength to the heart of thy brother, that, through his great wisdom, he might vindicate our cause before his majesty the Sultan, against all those ministers and Moslem priests to whom we are an eyesore: and, from thy brother's maxims, these bigots should learn that a mortal, whose understanding is limited, and must ever be so, should not wage war with his fellow-creatures, merely because they profess a religious creed opposed to his own; that every nation should be at liberty to worship God after its own fashion;

and that, if we had power to control them in the practice of their faith, as they have to control us, our principles would be to leave them in that respect entirely to the guidance of their own consciences. By the Greek Christians at Constantinople, I was informed that thy brother strove for us during many days, and brought all his extensive knowledge into action to gain our cause. His conduct was indeed noble and generous; and how untiring must have been his perseverance in reasoning so long with those fanatics—so long and so well as to prevail against them at last, by means of intellectual arguments alone. This event does indeed reflect glory on the Israelites; though holding to their ancient faith with the most unconquerable tenacity, yet they have risen up to advocate liberty of conscience for strangers. By that example, the world will be made fully aware of your righteous sentiments and humane feelings; and, further, they will be made aware that the Almighty has endowed you with surpassing wisdom. God grant that the learned of all nations may walk in thy footsteps, and dismiss from their hearts the cruel hatred which many such have cherished towards those who think fit to worship the Most High differently from what they do. O triple sword! O dreadful poison! many wise and good men have, through your agency, fallen victims to that hatred; but, O God, devoutly do I pray that an epoch may soon approach when the great light described by the prophet Isaiah may break forth over the whole world, when "The wolf will dwell with the lamb," &c. Thanks to the Almighty, in the Christian countries of Europe religious prejudices decrease daily, as we hear, so much

so, that we may hope to see, ere long, but a very slight difference between all religious opinions: this state of things was prophesied by a learned member of our church, in a work written by him:\* "The time will come when it will be no longer asked in Europe whether a man is an Israelite or a Christian."

MAR. (*Sighing heavily.*) The inhabitants of Europe are not yet altogether free from that contagious malady, prejudice. A few days ago I received a letter from my brother Samuel, the spiritual head of the congregation at Cracow, in which it was stated that the Israelites there were grievously oppressed and persecuted by the Christians. They were accused of murdering many Christian children, for the purpose of obtaining Christian blood to mix up with the bread required for the Passover; and I regret to say, that many of the most distinguished Israelites of that town and the adjacent places were arrested, and, with their wives and children, were put in irons, and made to suffer tortures of a most dreadful description. Didst ever thou hear of so cruel a case?

SIM. I have also received a letter from the Patriarch of that town, who is my friend, in which he mentions the circumstance; and also, that it was corroborated by the testimony of three Christian women, who acted as servants to Jewish families.

MAR. (*With great emotion.*) Ah! doubtless it was an ordinance of the Almighty. If the Patriarch of that

place is really thy friend, worthy Sir, I must beg of thee to write me a letter to him, in order that my brethren may be freed from so monstrous a suspicion. Do not, I pray, refuse me this favour: I will not leave thee till my petition is granted.

SIM. It is impossible for me to write this instant; I must first give the subject much consideration. I advise thee, therefore, friend Maimoon, to go home and repose awhile; at present thou must be greatly fatigued with travelling. To-morrow let me see thee again, and we will talk further on this matter.

MAR. I thank thee, and will take thy advice. Blessed be the Lord, who again appears propitious to our cause.

Maimoon closed this interview by bowing to the Patriarch with profound respect. The next morning Maimoon returned to Simmias, and, after the usual exchange of friendly salutations, they commenced the discussion of the important subject raised at the conclusion of their prefatory discourse.

\* Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.  
Tome 4, page 41.

## FIRST CONVERSATION.

SIMMIAS. After we separated last night, I could scarcely sleep for thinking of the accusation which thou didst mention as having been brought against thy people—that they are accustomed to use Christian blood in the ceremonies of the Passover festival.

MAIMOON. And what is the result of thy meditations on that subject? Tell me candidly; do not conceal from me any one thing which may have entered thy mind.

SIM. I regret to say, that my opinion is that this accusation must have had a stronger foundation than what we may term a trifling circumstance. I hope thou wilt not feel offended with me for thus declaring myself. Thou art aware that I always have been fond of searching out the truth in all things. My opinion does not arise from any blind prejudice concerning thy religion. God forbid that it should. Thou canst not think that my disposition is so uncharitable. I must request that thou wilt give me further information concerning this serious imputation; and if thou shouldst advance anything sufficient to convince me that I am labouring under an error, I shall indeed feel happy to make an acknowledgment to that effect.

MAI. (*Sighing heavily.*) God forbid, my dear friend, that I should imagine that thou wouldst willingly grieve me; yet I cannot conceal from thee that thy words

penetrate to my very soul, and cause every part of my body to shudder. It makes me tremble when I reflect that this frightful falsehood has acquired such influence as to affect in some degree such men as thou.

SIM. Let not thy heart grieve so much; had I known that my words would have given thee so much pain as is manifest by thy countenance, I would not have entered on this subject under any circumstances. However, as a proof of the sincerity of my respect for thee, I shall give thee as serviceable a letter of recommendation for thy brethren as I am able to write; for thy happiness is of more moment to me than princely treasures and mines of gold; the love I bear thee is one of the most powerful feelings in my nature.

MAI. Pardon me, thou dost not justify thyself by speaking thus. The philosopher, as thou knowest, said, "Love Plato, and love Socrates; but love truth more than both;" therefore, I pray, tell me all that thou dost think; keep back nothing. What makes thee think that such an accusation against the Jews can have been founded in truth?

SIM. The reasons which have led me to think so are many.

MAI. Be kind enough to mention one.

SIM. The first is a report which has existed ever since the very beginning of the Christian religion.

MAI. I am indeed surprised that one so learned as thyself, so well acquainted with history, and particularly with the history of the Church, should use the phrase "since the very beginning of the Christian religion." There is not the slightest trace in any historical works of

any such accusation having been made at so early a date. These accusations only began six hundred years ago, in the time of Alfonso, the tenth king of Castile. At that time there was a priest in Spain, who, in his sermons, declared to the public, that the Israelites could not solemnize their Passover unless they had Christian blood; so, at least, says Doctor S. Virga, in his work entitled "Shebet Yehuda."

SIM. I have read a Latin copy of that work, translated by Gencius, and printed in Amsterdam in the year 1651. Virga is well known amongst the learned Christians to have been a faithful historian, and the greater part of what he has published was taken from Christian historical writers, who wrote in Spanish and other European languages.

MAL. King Alfonso would not believe that priest; but the populace threatened the king to commit some outrages on the Israelites; and so violent had the priest made them, that the king became afraid of losing his own life.

SIM. Alfonso was a wise and wonderful man.

MAL. It was he who said in his pride, "Had I been the Almighty's adviser during the creation of the world, surely it would have been a great deal better than it is at this day."

SIM. It was not that he meant to assert that he was wiser than the Almighty; but being the greatest astronomer of that age, his vanity led him to believe that he was the only clever man in astronomy; and he discovered the most excessive of human weaknesses, in affecting to undervalue the powers of the Most High.

MAL. It was indeed the height of human folly; yet

several philosophers have spoken with contempt of the works of Nature; for instance, the celebrated Burnet, who attempted to demonstrate that there was a great deal of superfluity in the construction of the earth, especially in the mountains and valleys, and that the defects observable in them are injurious to those parts of the earth that are inhabited. Those philosophers did not possess that real wisdom, or they must have acknowledged that deficiencies do not exist in Nature; that every thing which God has created has been arranged with such regard for its usefulness, as to leave no room for improvement, and that such deficiencies exist only in the imaginations of vain persons, whose minds are too limited to comprehend more of Nature's works than just what are presented to their eyes. A boundary has been fixed to the progress of all things terrestrial, the human mind included; the Lord has said and proclaimed, "Mortal, thus far shalt thou go, and no further!"

SIM. Thou art right; it is so. Alfonso was indeed a learned man, especially an astronomer. He spent more than 400,000 ducats in forming an astronomical society; he invited Christian, Arabic, and Jewish professors of the science to join it, and maintained those who complied with his invitations in Toledo during four years, while they were making observations; and that distinguished society was under the direction of an Israelite, who was really the greatest astronomer of the age.\*

MAL. That was the celebrated Rabbi Izzhak-ibn-Seyd. The astronomical tablets that were arranged by that

\* Eichhorn's *Geschichte d. Lit.* B. 2. p. 355.

society have been named after the king, and are known to this day by the title of "Alfonso's Tablets." But, my good friend Simmias, let us leave Alfonso and his tablets, and return to the prime subject of our conversation. Tell me, didst thou read attentively that part of Virgã's work, where he speaks about the priest that preached in Spain?

SIM. I believe it is recorded that the king said to some learned Christian, that he had observed in the priest many more signs of folly than of wisdom.

MAI. Thou art right; that Christian's name was Thomas. But there are no historical documents in existence which show that any such appalling accusation was ever made against the Israelites previously to the time of that priest; since that period, however, it has been extensively circulated amongst all the lower classes of the Christians.\*

SIM. How thinkest thou the accusation against the Jews, of using human blood at the Passover, could have arisen all at once? Might there not have been some slight reason for it? for we see that not only does it receive credit from the lower classes of Christians, but occasionally from the better informed.

MAI. And is there any doubt expressed respecting the law of Moses?

SIM. No; God forbid that there should: the law of

\* King Alfonso had a sharp dispute with that Thomas respecting the Jews. Vide *Shebet Yehuda*.—Ben Iekhia, in his work, *Shahshelet Hakabala*, says that the dispute took place in the beginning of the 6000th era, which corresponds with the 13th Christian century, and with the time of Alfonso.

Moses, from the beginning to the end, gives evidence of its having been formed on the authority of the Almighty. Like thee, we Christians believe that the law of Moses is from heaven; that all its histories, commandments, and ordinances,—in fine, that the whole of it was given by one shepherd, the God of heaven and earth, through Moses the righteous. Upon that is based the whole of the system of Christianity; and without the law of Moses and the prophets, the Christian religion could not exist. Confirmatory of this are the words of our legislator, the Messiah: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil: for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them the same, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."\*

MAI. And yet there are men of considerable erudition who have brought accusations against the law of Moses and the Prophets; for instance, Apion of Alexandria, and Apollonius Molo.

SIM. Apollonius was very learned, and was the instructor of Cicero and Julius Cæsar.

MAI. Lysimachus and others wrote violently against the law of Moses, as appears in the book *Contr. Apion*. These asserted, also, that the Israelites were accustomed

\* Matthew, v. 17—19.

to entrap Greeks into their power, feed them well for a time, and then offer them as sacrifices to the Almighty on the altar in the Holy Temple; and that when a certain Greek king, who had conquered Jerusalem, went into the Temple, he found a Greek locked up in a secret place there, who said that such things were actually done. The Greek authors and men of letters at length gave full credence to these assertions; and, as a matter of course, the vulgar believed them much more readily; and it was found impossible to eradicate these impressions. In addition to all these imputations, the Israelites were at last accused by the previously quoted writers of having worshipped the shadow of a column, whilst they were in the wilderness, in the time of Moses and the tabernacle; and in the second book, *Contr. Apion*, it is stated that they worshipped the head of an ass in the Temple. The celebrated historian, Plutarch, has said in his writings that the Israelites honoured and preserved pigs as sacred animals; and that on their Sabbath, and at the feast of the tabernacle, they paid adoration to the idol Bacchus. Tacitus, in the fifth book of his history, says that the Hebrews were called "Yehudim," from the mountain Ida, in the Island of Crete; and that at the time when Bocchoris ruled Egypt, the Israelites were, by the advice of the oracle of Hamonia, exiled from the country to remove the leprous disease that prevailed in it: he also mentions that they worshipped the figure of an ass in the Temple: and many other absurd and unfounded things are recorded by him, which must be familiar to all who read the Greek and Latin classics.

SIM. The Greeks were not only maliciously prejudiced against the Jews, but against the Christians, during the infancy of the Christian religion, as many ancient writings abundantly testify; and the most wicked and ignorant amongst them accused the Christians of crimes which they never dreamt of.

MAR. Yes; but they were not all ignorant and unprincipled that thus aspersed the Christians.

SIM. Who were the good and enlightened men that did so?

MAR. Marcus Aurelius was one. It is well known that, for those times, he was a very good monarch; he not only forgave his enemies, but even trusted and showed favour to them after they had offended him; he honoured philosophers, and was himself famed for having acquired much knowledge; yet he persecuted the Christians, because he believed that they dealt with evil spirits.\* I need not mention what the Christians were accused of by Nero, the cruel; by Domitian, and other emperors; but Plinius, who was a governor in Bithynia, under the Emperor Trajan, and who was famed as a philosopher and author, even he persecuted the Christians.† Whatever misfortune happened in the territory which he governed, the Christians were said to be the cause of it; and it is recorded in history that many thousands of Christians, men, women, and children, were killed through the influence of such prejudices, independently of those who were first subjected to most barbarous tortures. The Romans of that era firmly

\* Euseb. lib. 4, cap. 16.

† Plin. lib. 10, Epi. 102, 103.

believed that the Christians were the enemies of the whole world;\* and such prejudices continued till the Christian religion became powerful.

SIM. Well, thou seest that falsehood cannot endure long. Now the truth has been established, thou wilt not hear any more said, either against the law of Moses or the Christian religion; every one now confesses that the Christian religion is founded in truth.

MAI. It is not my purpose to argue about religion; but to show thee what violent hatred has been excited against a body of people professing a peculiar religion; that even philosophers and virtuous men have been led away by prejudice to fight against truth; and that, when Christianity was in its infancy, and supported by only a few, and the Heathen creeds were powerful in the number and quality of their advocates, the weaker party was always kept under and persecuted. The fact is, the earliest Christians were afflicted with grievous penalties wherever they were found, just the same as the scattered and feeble Israelites were who subsequently lived under Christian governments: and who knows better than thyself, that even at this very day, the Christians, I mean those classes of Christians denominated Roman Catholics, Armenians, Greeks, and Copts, are despised and constantly insulted in India and Persia; because the more numerous and powerful portions of the people in those regions are disciples of Mahomet.

SIM. Thou sayest true. If the European monarchs had not inspired them with fear, Christians really could not have remained in those countries.

\* Tacit. Annal. lib. 15, c. 44.

MAI. If the Christians are really feared by the Indians and Mooslimin in consequence of the power of the European monarchs, they cannot attribute their exemption from persecution to the respect of those people for the Christian religion. The Israelites that dwell amongst the Eastern nations, having no such protection extended to them from a favoured part of the world, are frequently made to suffer in a most pitiable manner; yet, with all that the Mooslimin and Hindoos allege against our creed as motives for their ill-treatment, there has never been an instance of Mooslimin or Hindoos accusing the Israelites of committing murder for the purpose of obtaining human blood to use in their religious ceremonies.\* So far from being degraded by them with that imputation, they are allowed several

\* *Rechtung der Juden*, Cap. 1. § 11, in a note written by Mendelssohn:—"It may be that, in the present age, the Israelites in Christian dominions are better off than under the Moslem sway; but they certainly were never so cruelly persecuted by the Mooslimin as they were by the Christians of the Middle Ages; who butchered them in cold blood, burnt them alive, sequestered their property, and drove them naked into strange lands without the slightest remorse, countenanced as they were in such proceedings by their spiritual directors. At the present day, the Israelites in the Turkish Empire are taxed with something like moderation, and are not punished solely because of their peculiar system of religion. The number of Israelites in Mohamedan countries is greater than in Christian countries; and in these, if they have sufficient ability, they are not prohibited from aspiring to high offices under the governments: the present prime-minister of the Emperor of Morocco is an Israelite; his name is Zambul." The author here alludes to a French newspaper, called the "Imperial Conservator," No. 17, Petersburg, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 1824; in which it is mentioned that an Israelite, from Mogador, Myer ben Macuin, had been sent on a special mission to all the Christian courts of Europe.



privileges: sometimes they are made consuls, ministers, governors of districts, and toll-inspectors. By the Turkish Government they are allowed to purchase land and slaves, and to retain both as their legitimate property. Similar privileges are given to them in all countries belonging to Mohamedan and Indian rulers.

SIM. But canst thou explain why it is that the Christians charge the Jews with using blood at the Passover festival, and not of any other crime of a similar degree of iniquity? There certainly must be some reason for this.

MAR. Hast thou forgotten the multiplicity of charges that have been made against the Jews in Spain, Portugal, France, England, and Germany, besides that of using blood? Read the history of the Spanish Inquisition. Hast thou forgotten the accusation brought against them in the year 1400, when that extraordinary plague (by some called the Black Plague) was raging throughout nearly two-thirds of the world? When the awful distemper invaded France, many of the Christians declared, some of them even on oath, that they had seen the Israelites throw poison into the wells and rivers, and, at the same time, utter and perform incantations; and that this was the cause of the plague raging. In France and Germany many thousands of Jews were seized in consequence of these allegations, and sacrificed with the most inconceivable cruelty. Thou wilt find many cases parallel with this recorded in history. If thou wouldst turn this subject over in thy mind with due attention, thou wouldst find that such crimes as were imputed by the Heathen nations to the Christians

in former ages, the Christians have in later times attributed to the Jews. The celebrated Rabbi Menashe ben Israel very justly observes: "The same arguments which were used by the Christians at the commencement of their system of religion, to clear themselves of the odious stigma under which they laboured, may now serve us to prove our innocence to the Christians; and we have even a stronger argument to advance in our behalf than they could have had: for, as it is well known, the Israelites are prohibited by their own law from using blood of any kind; whilst the Christians, on the contrary, are allowed to eat the blood of many creatures."

SIM. Did the heathens ever accuse the Christians of eating human blood?

MAR. Undoubtedly: they were accused as we are at this very day. The heathens asserted that the Christians used human blood at their Passover.\*

SIM. (*after having remained some time silent*). Brother Maimoon; thou art right. I recollect having read of this circumstance myself; it is not new to me. But the argument, that the Heathens accused the Christians of such a crime, may be turned against thee; because the Heathens may have said that they first saw the Israelites using human blood, and that, knowing the Christians to have sprung from them, they inferred they were guilty of the same.

\* See Tertullian, in his work "*Apologia contra Gentes*;" Justin Martyr, in his work "*Apologia ad Anton.*" c. 2; Eusebius *Cæs.* I., V., cap. 1, 4; Pindea in his work, *Monarchia Ecclesiastica* I., 11, cap. 52, and others; see also *Rechtung der Juden*, in the afore mentioned chapter, § 18.

MAL. In answer to this new objection, I may tell thee, firstly, that the Israelites at that period were greatly respected before the Heathen monarchs, and that they were so, I will produce ample evidence presently: secondly, that the annals of the world will not shew that the Israelites were ever accused of so abominable a practice by any other people than the Christians. All the accusations in respect to such a practice have come from Christians, who have said that we use only Christian blood; besides, as I have already mentioned to thee, the first time any such accusation was made, was only six hundred years ago, though the Christians themselves had been so stigmatised a thousand years ago, and even at an earlier date than that.

SIM. It is very strange; I really cannot understand how the accusations of the Heathens against the Christians could have originated.

MAL. I think the cause must have been that mentioned by a learned writer, named J. Tugendhold, in the preface to a work written by him\* (pages 37, 38); the Heathens took the idea from the hostia, which is a ceremony instituted in commemoration of the body and blood of Christ. In addition to that, there were two well-known sects of Christians, in the early ages of Christianity, from whose actions the Heathens might have been induced to suspect them of such a practice; these were the Gnostics and the Cataphrygians; they were known to extract blood from a child by puncturing the flesh with a pin, and to mix it up with the hostia.†

\* Obrona Izraelitow. Warsaw, 1831.

† Lexicon Antiq. Ecclesiast. v. A. E. Miri, 1717, p. 5.

SIM. That is mentioned in the History of the Church,\* and the author who has recorded the circumstance was right. However, we are now speaking of the crime of which the heathens accused us; but the Israelites have not yet justified themselves, because, if it is proved that the Christians were wrongfully accused, it cannot be inferred from that, that the accusation of the Christians against the Israelites is utterly devoid of truth.

MAL. I will now refer more particularly to the arguments of Tugendhold; and by them I think I shall be able to shew that this idea of the Jews using human blood had its rise in a circumstance different from any thing which the Jews did. It is said, that the Christians killed children of the heathens to mix their blood with the hostia, which is to commemorate the body and blood of Christ, who said to his disciples, on the evening of the Passover, whilst eating Passover-cakes and drinking wine, as the Israelites had been ordained to do from a very early period of the world, "Think that this is my flesh and blood." In the early ages of Christianity, the heathens did not know how to distinguish Israelites from Christians; for many of the primitive Christians were Israelites, and the Christians themselves were also denominated Israelites; consequently, the Heathen writers, when inserting this circumstance in their books, may have written "Israelites," meaning those new religionists who had sprung from them. It is certain that celebrated Greek and Roman authors have recorded incidents of that description, authors to whose works much credit is given; and it is therefore possible that

\* Justin Martyr, in his work, *Apologia ad Anton.* cap. 2.

the Christians, in subsequent ages, founded their ideas of the practices of the Jews from the verbal mistakes into which these authors naturally fell. It is not improbable, that they mistook the word *Yehudim* (which meant Christians) for Israelites, and the word *mazzah* (signifying the hostia), for Passover-cakes, which the Israelites eat on the Passover festival: and perhaps words similar to the following were found in the historians just alluded to: "The Israelites eat unleavened bread, which they call *mazzot*, and mix it with the blood of children, in commemoration of a certain meal which was eaten on the holy evening on which they solemnise their Passover." Now the author of that passage must have alluded to the Christians, who, at the time referred to, were commonly denominated Israelites; and by saying *mazzot* (Passover-cakes—hostia) mixed up with the blood of children, he may have alluded to the sects called Gnostics and Cataphrygians; and the words "certain meal eaten on the holy evening," may have been used in reference to the very last holy supper of Christ, which took place at the Passover.

SIM. Thou hast put a remarkably ingenious supposition; but we must not be guided by suppositions alone: there should be irrefragable proofs adduced: proceed to explain thyself.

MAR. At the time that the Israelites began to take up their abode under the Christian governments of Europe, they attracted much observation by the number and precision of their preparations for celebrating the Passover night. It was noticed how extremely careful they were in baking the Passover cakes; that no one was allowed to touch them, except with clean hands. The

common class of Christians in whose neighbourhood, or houses, the Israelites happened to dwell, thought, therefore, that they did something strange on the Passover evening; and the envious prejudice which, in those days of mental darkness, a difference of religious opinions was sure to engender, coupled with the jealous feelings which the wealth that Israelites frequently contrived to amass, was very likely to make them think, that so much mysterious preparation was for no good purpose. What preposterous things will not the professors of one religious creed sometimes attribute to those of another? I recollect having read one of Voltaire's works, in which he charges a certain Christian sect with having instituted a certain festival, called by them "The Festival of the Ass," on which occasion they clothe an ass in beautiful apparel, and bring it into an ante-room of their church, where they shew the animal great honours, by singing a poem in Latin, to which all present reply with another lyrical composition, which begins, *Eh Sire âne! ça, chantez.*\* Now, with this example of detraction before us, who can tell what lengths various religious parties may go in inventing calumnious charges against one another?

SIM. Thou hast now shewn me, that the jealousy frequently engendered by a difference of religious opinions, propagates more evil reports than all other kinds of animosities in the world. I myself know that a great many false charges were made against the Israelites in Spain during the sway of the Inquisition. But all this does not prove that the Israelites could not occasionally

\* Voltaire's Works, xli. p. 367; xvii. p. 380; and xxxvii. p. 340.

be guilty of a heinous crime. Is every one of thy people equally righteous with his fellows? Thou must believe that Israelites may sometimes behave wickedly towards Christians, as well as I believe that Christians occasionally do that which is wrong to the Israelites.

MAL. It may be that some of the charges made by Christians against Israelites are true; but then those Israelites can only be certain individuals who have acted dishonourably, in order to obtain some advantage in money transactions; and the actions of such cannot be said to be the actions of a whole nation. Besides, the Israelites have not at present any king, or general ruler of their own race; nor are they combined in a large community, so that the general tenour of their actions can be homogeneous; so far from that being the case, every Israelite may, in a great measure, do as he likes. But why should the whole nation of Israelites be stigmatised for the faults of a few individuals?

SIM. At all events, thou dost confess that there may be people amongst the Israelites in whose hearts there does exist deep animosity to persons professing a religion averse to theirs, and that such are capable of doing wrong to the Christian religion, either as regards a member of that religion, or the religion itself.

MAL. The dislike of other religions which the ignorant feel, may be considered almost natural to them; every individual of that description professing a certain creed, always fancies that his own is the best, and therefore dislikes and contemns all those whose opinions differ from his in that matter, without exception. I should think that the lower classes of the Israelites are

not, any more than others of the same grade, exempt from such contagion; and, of course, they imagine that their system of divine worship is the true and proper one, and feel an inclination to underrate the merits of all others: but the sensible and enlightened amongst us do not entertain such unfavourable notions of other creeds, for we are expressly commanded to behave with friendliness to those who are not under the same obligations to adopt our system of worship as we are, of which I will shew thee proof hereafter.

SIM. The common classes of the Christians hate the Jewish religion more than any other, because they were of that system that crucified our Messiah; so, undoubtedly, do the common classes of the Israelites revile the Christian religion and all its disciples, and are worse affected towards them than to any other system or people.

MAL. What thou sayest—that the Christians hate the Israelites more than they do any other people, may be correct; but in that thou has expressed an opinion utterly at variance with the principles and positive injunctions of your own lawgiver; who, in plain words, said, “Love your enemies;” and you are doubly bound to love those who live peaceably with you, and those that are strangers in your lands, in accordance with a commandment of the Almighty, given through Moses:—“Thou shalt love the stranger.” But I do not think it is a correct inference, that the Israelites must entertain an equal hatred to the Christians. If the Israelites do bear them any ill will, it can only arise from the bad treatment which they have so frequently met with from

the Christians. But the disposition of our people is not to cherish hatred; on the contrary, they are by nature inclined to love the country they inhabit, and the people who happen to be their neighbours.

SIM. How canst thou flatter thyself and thy co-religionists to such a degree, as to say, "The Israelites do not hate the Christians so violently as the Christians hate them?"

MAT. My reason for saying so is this: the system of Christianity is mainly founded on the death of Christ on the cross, &c.; the moment a Christian child is capable of receiving instruction, he is made acquainted with the principles of Christianity, the origin of its peculiar institutions, its holidays, the particular works of the Messiah, and of the manner in which he was deprived of life on the cross; consequently, the cross, and all that pertained thereto, must constantly be in his mental vision, and he cannot help being pervaded by sensations of abhorrence of those who were the instigators of such a tragedy. But this is not the case with any of us; the principles of our religion have been established from time immemorial, and all our ceremonies are coeval with them; besides, we never have occasion to make any allusion to your Messiah, not even to mention his name.

SIM. Let me hear more in support of this position thou hast taken.

MAT. On the appearance of Christ, who thought (according to the opinions of his disciples) to improve our religion, the Israelites would not receive him; at all events, our laws remained as before, and the proceedings of

Christ were, in fact, only known in a few towns in the Holy Land; in all other places where Israelites were dwelling at that time, the people were ignorant of the existence of such a person; and the Israelites who were exiled to Spain during the existence of the second Temple, were especially so. Thus Christ, after his death, was soon forgotten by the majority of the Israelites; and at this very day his history is not universally known to them, perhaps to only one in a thousand, such as those who are familiar with foreign languages, and who are in the habit of mixing and conversing with Christians. There are indeed many distinguished Rabbies who know but little about Christ, and who do not wish to know more, because they have no inclination to make an agitation concerning events which passed so many ages ago. Subsequently to Christ, there were several persons who rose up amongst the Israelites as Messiahs; but the Israelites gave no credit to them, nor did they seek to obtain vengeance on them. At this day we have not the least allusion to the history of Christ in our Talmud; the few passages which it formerly contained referring to him have been expunged, because our forefathers, when they came to reside under the protection of European and Christian monarchs, thought proper that they should, for the sake of peace; and therefore the persons who had to make additional copies of the Talmud, and afterwards the printers of it, purposely omitted them. But observe how differently the Christian Testament has been handed down to these times. In the Christian Testament is an ample narrative of the death of Christ, and it is repeatedly asserted therein that he took upon himself the responsibility of all the

sins committed by the whole world, and died for the purpose of sanctifying the name of God; and by these means all his disciples are perpetually reminded of the injuries perpetrated on him by the Israelites. Amongst the Christians there are most powerful preachers, whose eloquence affects the heart and makes the eye to weep; there is a great deal of poetry written on this subject, in which the sufferings of Christ are described in a most pathetic manner; there are persons who have a powerful genius for representing by action such scenes; and who can penetrate the heart equally as well as the preacher; pictures of Christ under the hands of his enemies there are in abundance, and those done with the most consummate skill: the wickedness of the Israelites is, in short, one of the essential parts of the groundwork of Christianity; and how is it possible, therefore, that Christians in general should not cherish an antipathy to them? But such is not the case with us, because we are commanded to love every body, and have no precept to lead us to single out any particular people as our natural enemies. It has frequently happened that Jews of the lower orders have been converted to Christianity; and on such an occasion is it not natural that such Jews would decry the people, ceremonies, and institutions that they had renounced? the effect of which would most surely be to augment the prejudice that the Christians already entertained against them. There is no parallel case which I can refer to in connexion with us. It is seldom that Christians in Europe have been converted to our faith; consequently few Christians have had any motives for exciting a bad feeling in us for their co-religionists. In addition to the reasons

which dispose the Christians to look with suspicion on the Israelites, already advanced by me, I will mention this; there are many books in circulation amongst them written by ancient authors who were deeply prejudiced against our race, and who enjoined the people of their day to destroy the Israelites whenever they could, and advised monarchs and judges to banish them from their territories, to confiscate their property, and to burn their houses of prayer. The advice of these bigoted writers, many of whom were priests, was, alas! too often adopted; the actual despoilers of the unoffending Israelites believing that, for their zealous persecutions, they should be rewarded in a future state. Now we have no books amongst us that treat on such subjects, neither have we any devotees that make it their business to raise an agitation concerning such; and it is, moreover, highly improbable that we should try to give any offence to our neighbours, if it were merely on account of our being always in a minority, and scarcely ever powerful enough to hold up our heads before the nations of the world. We are strangers in most places, and are satisfied if the Christians only regard us with a friendly countenance; as the son of a concubine would be if regarded with kindness by the son of his father's married wife. And although civilization is making its most rapid progress amongst Christian nations, in consequence of which there are amongst them men of the greatest acquirements in philosophy and science, and their monarchs are in general men of profound understanding, and friends of justice and humanity; and although even amongst the lower classes of European Christians we find many enlightened persons,

who are also endowed with good moral qualities : still the long-lived antipathy to the Israelites has not yet been rooted from their minds. At this very day, all Christian children, with but few exceptions, are embittered against the Israelites ; their innocent minds cannot but contemplate with horror the affecting tragedy of the crucifixion, of which they hear so much, and, consequently, they must detest all those that have any connexion with the authors of it ; and though, as they grow older, they get better affected towards the Israelites, a portion of the prejudice imbibed in their infancy will, in most cases, remain with them in spite of their most strenuous exertions to dismiss them. It has frequently happened that an ignorant child, under the influence of this prejudice, has not thought it any harm to insult a venerable, and generous-minded Israelite, and has even ventured to throw stones at him ; the result of which has been, that the Israelite could not forbear giving him some chastisement, and in so doing may have drawn blood, as a father correcting his own child may have done : might not such an occurrence have furnished evil-minded Christians with a pretext for saying that this had been done in order to obtain the child's blood for unholy purposes ? There are very few Christians that have not Jews amongst their neighbours ; and the consequence must be, that both have transactions together ; the boys of the Israelites and Christians that dwell in the same vicinity play and roll upon the ground together ; and is it not probable that differences should arise between the parents, and that these boys should sometimes quarrel and beat each other ? Thus may be excited the anger of an ignorant Christian in Poland, a

person who probably may not know one letter from another, and not possess any natural good quality ; such a one would not hesitate to swear such an oath against the Israelite as would induce others to consider him guilty of the appalling charge : and his conscience would be very unlikely to give him any qualms in the course of such a proceeding, for such notions as he might have imbibed concerning religion, would make him think that to destroy the Israelite was a deed righteous in the eyes of God and man.\*

SIM. Dost thou mean to say the Israelites of all classes, high and low, are men of considerable acquirements ?

MAT. Yes, they are.

SIM. It may be true that the Israelites in Italy, France, and Germany, are well versed in reading, and some celebrated for their acquaintance with particular sciences ; but that is not the case in Poland and Russia, where a great many of thy brethren reside, and where, according to what I have heard, only a few are acquainted even with the Talmud : there are none amongst them that are distinguished for their acquaintance with general literature and science ; and the lower classes of Israelites in those places are as ignorant as the Christians of the same grade.

MAT. God forbid ! thy informants utter gross falsehood. It is indeed well known to the enlightened portion of society, that even in Poland and Russia there are many Israelites who, though they may not be generally well versed in foreign languages, and a variety of sciences, have a perfect acquaintance with the Talmud and

\* This description refers to the mode in which Christians and Jews are in the habit of dwelling in Poland.—*Translator.*

the Bible; and that nearly every one reads Hebrew tolerably well, if not with grammatical precision, and can say and understand his prayers in that language: nearly every one reads the Bible in Hebrew, and understands the meaning of its various passages. There are schools in many of the small towns and villages, and schoolmasters specially appointed for the poor, who are instructed gratuitously. It is said in the Talmud, that the appointment of schoolmasters in each town was contemporaneous with the erection of the second Temple, at which period a decree was issued, ordaining that such teachers should be remunerated for their labours by the community at large. In the countries I have referred to, women and children read in Hebrew, and they, as well as the men, understand the Hebrew-German, the language to which they are mostly accustomed. Into this language the whole of the Bible has been translated, their prayers and ethics; some of the best commentaries, as the book *Szëna Oreëna*; extracts from the Talmud and other books of morality; *Menórat Hamaor*, the beautiful work, *Khobót Halebábot*, and histories like that of Josephus, and others. They have also translated into this language the Books of Proverbs, Enigmas, Proverbs, and Poetry; so that all the Israelites there, young and old, may at least know something. Daily, when they have left their employment, they assemble in their schoolhouses to study, and particularly in the morning and evening, during the holidays; and this mode of obtaining knowledge is practised by the lowest class amongst them, such as water-carriers, porters, &c. The women assemble occasionally, and one reads to the others; even the man who begs in the streets will have

in his possession such books as are of the most importance; and thou mayest find in the house of a person of mediocre circumstances, books, old and new, of the value of thirty ducats; and with some of the toll-keepers, books of the value of one hundred ducats; but in the house of a Christian minister in the same village, although he may be a much richer man than the toll-keeper, the books would not be worth a couple of ducats. Thus, in the smallest towns, where the number of Jewish families does not exceed ten, their spiritual head, though a needy man, has a larger library than the Christian priest of the same place, though he has the charge of so many more people. In Poland and Russia, the Israelites can boast of numerous printing offices: there is hardly a single province without one: and there are many of their printers who are noted for the carefulness with which they perform their work. A person who takes pleasure in reading, sharpens his intellects, and the more extensive his knowledge becomes, the more is his soul purified. But this is not the case with the bulk of the Christians in those countries, for though they can certainly boast of some men whose learning surpasses that of the Israelites, the lower orders scarcely know how to decipher a letter. Occasionally we hear of Christian magistrates in those countries who cannot write their own names, and are incapable of reading in any language; and they, of course, must be very ignorant, in comparison with the meanest of the Israelites. The Emperor Alexander the First endeavoured more than all his predecessors to enlighten the people under his government; his good intentions, however, have not yet been accomplished, on



account of the short time which has elapsed since he commenced his system of tuition; but it is to be hoped that they will in the course of time, as he kindly said on his having effected some improvements in the mode of education: "Then will there be light in the most humble cottages."\* There is reason to hope in these days, through the agency of the mighty and wise Emperor Nicholas the First: may the glory of his majesty be elevated, for he exerts himself in every way for the benefit of his subjects; may the Almighty be with him, and may he long remain on the throne of his kingdom!

SIM. I am aware that the lower orders of Christians in Poland are rather loose in their morals and general conduct; but, according to the information which I have received, they are so through having copied the Israelites. Men frequently imitate the bad they see in others; and it is a striking passage of the Psalmist's which says, "They mixed with the nations, and learned their actions;" (Ps. cvi. 35).

MAI. To shew what is the truth in this matter, I will quote the words of a learned Christian, who wrote the reverse of what thou hast now advanced. By my life, I swear thou wilt hear things which thou dost not look for; and these are the opinions of Professor Schulten, a man well known to the world as being endowed with a good understanding, and who rejoices in establishing truth.

SIM. I admit that he is such as thou describest; he is particularly known by his travels, which he has written

\* See the works of Karamzin, vol. viii., *Tableau de l'Instruction publique en Russie.*

with great judgment; and he has shewn how extensive is his knowledge in many branches of literature. I am most anxious, therefore, to hear his opinions.

MAI. I am ready to gratify thee, although what I am about to extract from his works has no reference whatever to the accusation against my brethren of using human blood, which was the starting subject of conversation. The following are his words, in a separate chapter.\* They have also been copied in the work called *Ideen über die nöthige Organisation der Israeliten in Christlichen Staaten, von Joh. Ludwig Ewald.* After having described the state of Galizia, which is under the government of the Emperor of Austria, the learned Schulten proceeds to say, "Yet there is a class of people in Galizia who alone deserve to live in that beautiful and fertile country, &c. I allude to the sons of Israel. So much has been said about the Israelites in Galizia, that one is almost afraid to speak any more about them, because it may seem ridiculous: but still it is necessary to resume the subject. It is the opinion of those who have paid attention to statistics, and of other persons worthy of credit, that the 300,000 Israelites in Galizia are the cause of all the evil that has befallen that country, and that it is requisite to root them out of it, if they cannot be converted. It is said that the Israelites are the proprietors of the spirit shops, and spread deleterious liquors all over Galizia; that they are the chief means by which the people are intoxicated and

\* *Annalen der Literatur und Kunst des Oestreichischen Kaiserthums, 1807.*

kept in ignorance; and that they stifle the spirit of industry in the people at large, by glutting the country with goods imported from foreign parts, and by exporting all the raw materials which might be manufactured at home. It is true that the Israelites do all that they are here charged with; but if they did not, would it not be done by the Christians? I know of many Christian landlords, as well as Israelites, who intoxicate their tenants by means of spirituous liquors. There are many wealthy Christians, who, instead of building places for the manufacture of cloth and linen, and for dressing leather, export all their fleeces and the produce of their hemp fields. The difference between the Jewish and Christian merchants consists only in this; the Jews are contented with a smaller profit on their speculations than the Christians. Instead of laying restrictions on industry, they are almost the only persons who really encourage it; and the example presented to the Galizian peasants by their exertion is calculated to incite them to bestir themselves likewise: but the lord who lets his vassals out to the Israelites for their use, does all that is in his power to stifle the spirit of industry in both. The Israelites only are permitted to travel for commercial purposes; they may go all over Galizia, if they choose to establish themselves there; they are the tailors, the shoemakers, the carpenters, furrriers, glass-manufacturers, goldsmiths, and lapidaries; they till the ground also, for which they pay a greater rent than their Christian neighbours; and the knowledge of all the arts here referred to they bring with them from other places. The beer which they brew is very good, whilst that

brewed by the other inhabitants is hardly drinkable. In every district they are the inn-keepers; and one can always find food in the house of an Israelite, though it be situated in a part of the country scarcely habitable, whilst, on the contrary, there are Christians, even in the towns, that will refuse to sell a morsel of bread. Compare the physiognomy of the Israelite with that of the Galizian peasant, and it will be observed that the countenance of the former is perfectly human, whilst that of the latter strongly resembles the face of an orang-outang. In the pale, swollen, disfigured features of the Galizian peasant, thou wilt hardly perceive a single mark that betokens the possession of intellect; whilst, generally, the brightening eye of the Israelite indicates at once his Oriental and distinguished origin. The Israelite's aquiline nose, his open lips, his golden hair, and even his beard, conjoin to give him an aspect of sagacity which strongly contrasts with the stupid visages of those that surround him." Buchholz \* mentions that statistics have been collected in Prussia respecting the number of persons generally confined in prisons, and those tried for criminal offences; and it has been ascertained that the number of Israelitish malefactors is much less, proportionably, than those amongst the Christians.

SIR. I will not attempt to refute these arguments. I have now heard something from Professor Schulten's

\* *Ueber die Aufnahme der jüdischen Gemeinden zum Bürgerrecht.* Vienna, 1815.

works which I did not expect. But listen; I am going to ask thee another question.

MAL. Ask me whatever thou may'st think proper; and, if I am able, I will give thee an answer.

SIM. Thou hast said that it is natural to the Israelites to love the country they inhabit, and the people amongst whom they may be dwelling. Tell me, I pray, in what does that love consist?

MAL. All historians are unanimous on this point; and even the events which have come to pass in the present generation are sufficient to establish the fact;—that the Israelites never take part in any conspiracies or insurrections which may agitate any country in which any of them may be dwelling: they always lend their support to the government under whose protection they may be. They never even practice any animosity against those monarchs and rulers who have tyrannised over them; but do all they can to promote peace, however badly they may have been used. Reflect on their conduct to the Spaniards, although they were grievously persecuted in Spain; though hundreds and thousands were massacred there, others despoiled of their property, and driven in a state of destitution into Barbary; yet, when some of those who took refuge in Barbary had risen to stations of honour and dignity there, and when the Spaniards had conquered the city of Oran, which is situated in Barbary, they served them as loyal and dutiful subjects. Afterwards they fought against the enemies of the Spaniards with sword and spear, and never sought revenge for the ill-treatment which the

ancestors of these Spaniards had rendered to theirs. Even at the time when the inhabitants of Oran revolted against the Spaniards, and both famine and disease were raging in the town, the Israelites laboured with all their might, unremittingly, to make peace, and to procure food for those that were perishing.\* The general history of the world will supply evidence in abundance to confirm what I have now asserted.

SIM. Thou art right. I have read of these facts myself in a Spanish historical work†.

MAL. But what reward did these wicked Spaniards give to the peaceful Israelites?

SIM. I feel melancholy when I reflect on their ingratitude. Those same Spaniards, when they had acquired actual possession of the country, banished the Israelites from the town.

MAL. That happened in the year 1669 of the Christian era; and from that time no Israelites have been allowed to settle in the town again. Was ever greater baseness than that perpetrated?

SIM. I must acknowledge to thee, my friend, that my heart is fully alive to the injustice now referred to. How could those Spaniards, being Christians, and having been taught the doctrine the principles of which so strongly recommend the practice of mercy, so far outrage the commonest obligations of common humanity?

MAL. If all people designating themselves Christians would regulate their actions in perfect accordance with

\* *Allgemeine Weltgeschichte, aus dem Englischen, übersetzt von J. S. Semler. B. 15. § 118.*

† *Historia Univers. Jud. de Barrios.*

the precepts of Christianity, they surely would be blessed both in this world and that which is to come.

SIM. I think the Spaniards have always been more rigid in their religious observances than any other Christian people.

MAR. It is very foolish for a man to quit the middle path of his religion to go to extremes; and the violent enthusiast is generally found to be a fool. The Spaniards considered that the only way to evince the firmness of their attachment to their creed, was to avenge the death of the Messiah by forcing the whole world to become converts to Christianity, or by killing all those that refused. They also were of opinion that the more they tortured those whose system of divine worship differed from theirs, the more would they be entitled to the favourable regard of the Almighty. And they even believed, that by shewing any mercy to such, they sinned against the Almighty.

SIM. Whoever carries his religious notions to such extremes is greatly deficient in true knowledge: but fanaticism has been very prevalent in all ages.

MAR. And in proportion to the depth to which those Spaniards sank in ignorance and folly, the Israelites of that period, particularly those of Spain and Portugal, made themselves more renowned for their acquirements in literature and science than any other nation; as numerous works produced by them, and which are now extant, will testify.

SIM. (*appears angry, moves his lips, and shakes his head*). More renowned in literature and science! Understand well what thou sayest. Perhaps thou art

now unwittingly exaggerating; I have certainly never had reason to doubt thy own veracity.

MAR. (*looking steadfastly in Simmias' countenance and smiling*). I did not exaggerate; I have never done so; God forbid! I said it, do repeat it, and will also say it a third time. I will adduce the testimony of the most noted Christian authors of the present time in support of what I have asserted. But I must confess that I am much surprised that thou hast never heard of it before. Were I not fearful of losing sight of the various arguments I have to bring forward respecting the accusation of using human blood, which, as I observed a little while ago, was the starting subject of this conversation, I could convince thee, ere thou art much older, of the correctness of all that I have now been submitting for thy consideration. But I will do so ere long, nevertheless; at a fit opportunity remind me of my promise; and, if it please God, it shall be fulfilled.

SIM. I will not fail to remind thee. But now let us return to the discussion of the accusation against the Israelites of using human blood.

END OF THE FIRST CONVERSATION.