

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

BISHOP ALEXANDER'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY.

[The following is a copy of the Appendix to the Sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Hatchard, at the baptism of the present Bishop in Jerusalem, at Plymouth, June 22, 1825.]

In compliance with the wishes of those to whom I am greatly indebted, I am induced to give a brief account of the circumstances which led me to the final decision of embracing the Christian religion.

I was born in a town in Prussia in the year 1799—educated, since the seventh year of my age, principally in the Talmud, and in the strictest principles of Judaism. From my sixteenth to my twentieth year, I held the office of a teacher of the Talmud and the German language among my brethren in Germany: at which period, a situation of a similar nature offered itself to me in England, where it was required that I should be capable of performing the duty of a choctet, (an office, as is known to my Jewish brethren, only given to persons peculiarly qualified, and who must go through the strictest examination by the high-priest.)—this, however, I soon acquired, and came to England.

Not to enter into useless details, I need only mention, that until that time I had not the slightest knowledge of Christianity, nor did I even know of the existence of the New Testament.*

Strong impressions of prejudice against the very name of Christ, was all the knowledge I possessed of him, and in blindness and ignorance, I never felt curious to inquire the reason of that prejudice. I looked upon all other sects besides Jews, as the Gentile idolaters mentioned by Moses and the Prophets, from whom I found sufficient reasons and commands to abhor their practices. But, blessed be the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who has dealt thus mercifully with me, a worm, who am not worthy of the least of his mercies, in raising me from a death-like sleep, in which so many still remain, who are satisfied with a false peace, without a wish or an effort to be awakened from its dangers.

In the year 1820 I came to London, and having found myself disappointed of the situation above alluded to, I was recommended by the kindness of the high-priest in London to a private family in the country, as tutor to their children.

My employer was a man of strict integrity, and strongly attached to the principles and ceremonies of Judaism. He was the first who acquainted me with the exertions which are making in England for the conversion of the Jews, but treated them with derision, and said, that every Jew ought to read the New Testament, in order to be more confirmed in his own religion. This roused my curiosity, and not being able then to read and understand English, I procured a German Bible. I was greatly struck with the first of St. Matthew, and had no idea that Christians knew any thing of our patriarchs. I was still more struck with the character of Christ, and the excellent morals which he taught; but having gone no further than merely to admit them, it produced no particular effect upon my mind, though it considerably lessened my prejudices. By the providence of God I was led from thence to another place (Norwich) as rabbi, where I had opportunity and leisure to give lessons in Hebrew and German, as I had then obtained some knowledge of the English language. This afforded me the means of access to many pious Christians, and of becoming more acquainted with their religion. I was in an especial manner led to read the New Testament, and found many of the references there given to the old Testament prophecies incontrovertibly fulfilled.

This produced great uneasiness of mind; but instead of turning my face to the Lord God in prayer and supplication, to direct and lead me in the right way, I endeavoured to shrink and turn away from the Divine light which had thus begun to dawn upon me.

About this period, the situation at Plymouth most providentially offered itself, and I was led to accept it, partly from its having been represented to me as more advantageous, but chiefly from the desire I felt to become reconciled to my former

views, and regain my peace of mind, with a full determination to have no intercourse with Christians; and during my first three months at Plymouth I strictly adhered to this resolution:—Satan so far aided the wishes of my wicked heart as to bull me again into a delusive peace.

The Lord, in his love toward me, would not suffer me thus to proceed in the path of destruction; he raised me up a spiritual preceptor, in a friend (the Rev. Mr. Golding) who was desirous of taking lessons in Hebrew; and when we began to read for our lessons parts of the Old Testament, subjects of discussion often presented themselves, and feelings to which I had for some time past been a stranger again rose in my mind, and I began more seriously (and I trust not without earnest prayer to God for his guidance) to inquire into the truth, by more carefully comparing the Old and New Testament; and after much mental conflict, came almost to the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, whom I had been taught to expect in a different form than that in which he is really represented in the Old Testament.

Still I could not see everything so clearly as to be enabled to give up all for him; I had not strength enough to avow my feelings publicly, though I did not hide them from several of my brethren, especially from one with whom I had more frequent intercourse; to him my sentiments were well known, and it pleased the Lord to raise him up, after having been acquainted with it for several months, to inform the elders of the congregation; they could do no otherwise than take the matter into serious consideration, and I am sure not without very painful feelings to them, made known the circumstances to the Rev. S. Herschel, Chief Rabbi, who has the power of deciding these matters. He requested my suspension until he heard again from the congregation, in order finally to decide. This was one of the most painful periods of my life; Satan stirred up every possible means to present fears and doubts to me.

Those who are acquainted with human nature, and with the influence of early education, will easily be able to judge in what a painful situation I was then placed. By following the dictates of my conscience, I had nothing else to expect than to lose all that was valuable to me in this world, a comfortable and sufficient livelihood, together with the affections and friendship of all who were dear to me.

But by yielding to the entreaties of my friends, I should have inflicted a wound upon my conscience; in short, many painful ideas presented themselves to me—the giving up all (to which I was evidently called), the prejudices of early impressions, and the prospect of having to take up a new and heavy cross in my future life.

All these considerations so tended to increase my distress of mind, that if there could have been found at that time any means whatever to reconcile me to my former views, I should have gladly used them. However, this was not the Lord's will. A week after I was finally suspended, and had evidently pointed out to me the way in which I was to go; I began to submit myself to the Lord to follow him; and soon afterwards regularly attended the ministry of a dear friend (the Rev. Mr. Golding, then officiating at St. Nicholas Chapel,) to whose spiritual instruction I am greatly indebted. Having also been brought into immediate connexion with many Christian friends, my mind became more and more established, which led me finally to embrace the Christian faith as my future hope for time and for eternity.

To my Jewish friends, whose kindness toward me I shall ever remember, I beg to take this opportunity of returning my sincere thanks; and though I am sensible of being an outcast from them, yet I trust I shall never be unmindful of them before a throne of grace in my feeble prayers, that the Lord may bless and keep them, that the Lord may cause his face to shine upon them, and be gracious unto them, that the Lord may lift up the light of his countenance, and give them peace, even "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."—Amen.

M. S. ALEXANDER.

* In proof of this I must state, that so great was the struggle, and so earnest the entreaties of my friends at that time, that I was even induced to appeal personally, and also by letter, to the leader of the congregation, to say that I should be happy to retract my steps, if any means could be found to remove the difficulties by which I was encompassed.

MISCELLANEOUS.

From late Bristol papers.

MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION FROM SHIP-WRECK.

We have to record from the mouth of the master, the only survivor, (as far as he has been able to relate it,) one of the most miraculous and providential escapes from shipwreck of which we have ever heard or read.

During the awful storm of Friday night, the 3d December last, the sloop *Perseverance*, Morris Evans, master, of Carnarvon, with a mate, one seaman, and a boy, bound from South Yarmouth to Dublin, when between the South Bishops and the Smalls, carried away her bowsprit; and, immediately after, a sea broke on board that swept the decks, carrying away her bulwarks and chain cables, staving her boat, and making her a complete wreck, with every sea sweeping her fore and aft.

She was now driving before a furious north-wester, with her mainsail set—the captain, mate, and the man, took refuge in the cabin, up to their necks in water; but the boy, in endeavouring to follow their example, was washed overboard by a sea, and his wailing cries were instantly lost amidst the tumultuous howling of the troubled deep. At about twelve o'clock at night, the vessel struck in a small cove on a part of the coast near St. Bride's, in the Jack Sound, called the Deer-park, where the cliffs are nearly in perpendicular height from 150 to 200 feet, (nearly opposite to the rock on which the ill-fated *Albion* steamer was lost.) The mainmast immediately broke into three or four pieces; and the last which the captain knew of his men, for they kept calling to each other so long as the sea permitted their heads to be above water, was the feeling of their hands as they held on to the wreck under water; such was the dreadful state they were in on the instant when the vessel struck.

The captain was instantaneously washed overboard, when he grasped one of the pieces of the mainmast, and was washed with it into a cavern in the perpendicular cliff, and it was carried away as instantly as he loosened his grasp, and had got a little beyond the force of the waves. This cavern, at the high spring-tide, is many feet under water. There he lay, holding on to the rocks, with the sea bursting and bubbling over him, till next morning (Saturday.) This being the time of the neap-tides, with a gale of wind blowing right upon the coast, the tide recedes so little as to make it an impossibility for any one to get out of this cave, save by climbing these perpendicular cliffs, or of getting out of the cavern, except by watching till the heaviest wave has broke.

After exhausting himself, the captain said, in crying for assistance, there seemed to be no alternative but that of being drowned in the cavern, or being starved to death by cold and hunger. He now cut his boots from his feet with his knife, and threw them upon a ledge of rock above the cavern, in the hope that they might meet the eye of some one in passing; and then commenced an attempt to scale the cliff, which he had mastered, he says, a height of above forty feet—when on taking hold of a stone, which was loose, he began to slip; and at the very moment that he fell, and expected to have his brains dashed out on a huge rock immediately below, and on which he must fall, a tremendous sea swept over the rock, and bore him to the mouth of the same cavern to which he had before been cast, and in which he had lain before; and now, with feet and hands dreadfully swollen by climbing, and the action of the salt water—battered, bruised, and dreadfully shaken, he lay another night in this awful cavern, with the sea breaking over and drenching him.

Sunday morning came, with no possibility of receiving human aid. Once more he nerved himself to try and get out of the cavern. He had, he says, prayed most fervently; he thought of his sick wife and infant family—he made the attempt—and he found himself most wonderfully strengthened every step he took.

After incredible toil, and tearing his hands and feet against the sharp-pointed rocks in a most dreadful way, he ascended very nearly to the summit—where he was so very nearly falling again, that he looked whereabouts he should fall; but, most providentially, despair nerved him to almost superhuman resolution, which enabled him to seize hold of a projecting pinnacle of rock, up-

* Here it must be stated, that at all the Jewish colleges on the continent, the New Testament is never introduced or mentioned.