

**MISSIONARY JOURNAL
AND MEMOIR, OF THE
REV. JESEPH WOLF,
MISSIONARY TO THE JEWS**

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Missionary Journal and Memoir, of the Rev. Jeseph Wolf, Missionary to the Jews by Joseph Wolff & John Bayford

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JOSEPH WOLFF & JOHN BAYFORD

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J. Beckwith
MISSIONARY JOURNAL

AND

Memoir,

OF THE

REV. JOSEPH WOLF,

MISSIONARY TO THE JEWS.



WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.



REVISED AND EDITED

BY JOHN BAYFORD, ESQ. F. S. A.



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PREFACE.



THE Missionary labours of Mr. Wolf have excited a very general interest. The account he gives of his many conversations with the Jews in different places, is curious and striking. He exhibits the Jewish character somewhat in a new light, in the relation he gives of their manners, their opinions, and their general habits of thinking. And he adds another testimony to this most important fact, that in the present day, Jews are every where found well disposed freely to discuss, and candidly to investigate the truth of the Christian Religion.

The Journals of Mr. Wolf have been published from time to time in the Jewish Expositor, as they reached this country. They appear worthy of being collected into a volume; and the Memoir of his former life, and of his conversion from Judaism, which at the request of his friends, he wrote before he left England, naturally forms a preface to the Journal. In preparing them for the press, the Editor has interfered but little with the original manuscripts, and no farther than by the correction of the more striking errors in grammar and idiom, which

indeed are very few, when it is considered that at his landing in England, Mr. Wolf was wholly unacquainted with the English language.

Considerable difficulty has attended the de-cyphering of many of the names, both of persons and of places: and the Editor fears he may have been less successful than he could have wished. He entreats the indulgence of the Reader where he has failed, either in this or in any other respect. But he trusts, that on the whole the account he now presents to the Public, of Mr. Wolf and of his missionary exertions, will not be found without interest.

London, April 29, 1824.

Memoir, &c.



NEAR Bamberg in Bavaria is a little village, called Weilersbach, which is inhabited by fifty Catholic, and fifteen Jewish families. I was born in this same village: in the year 1796. My father was the Rabbi of these Jews. My parents left this village within fifteen days after I was born, and came to Halle in Prussia, where my father exercised again the office of a Rabbi. I had a strict Jewish education: my father began to teach me all the Jewish ceremonies, when I was four years old; and told me that all the Jews were expecting the Messiah, every day and every hour, that his advent could not be far off, and at that time we should dine on the great fish, called Leviathan. I believed all my father told me, and I considered Christians as worshippers of a cross of wood, and no better than idolaters. I began to read the Hebrew prayer-book when I was six years old, and recited it every day, without being able to understand its contents. My father sent me at this time to a public Christian school, to be instructed in German reading; but I had his express command never to be present when the school-master began to speak on a religious subject; and my father, with this view, desired the schoolmaster to allow me to remain at home on those days which were fixed for explaining the Christian doctrine. The schoolmaster did so, and I continued to be an orthodox Jew.

When I was seven years old, I walked one day in my room, occupied in meditation; at the same time I thought about Christ Jesus, whom I considered as a bad man, and an enemy of the Jews. It occurred to my mind to

become a Christian, but this purpose I disregarded after a few minutes, and I was as zealous a Jew as before.

When I was about seven years and a half old, my father left Halle, and came to a great village near B. as Rabbi amongst the Jews. I was at this time grown a bad boy, and I began to feel that I was a great sinner, and my conscience began to rebuke me, and I was in great distress as often as I committed a fault. The Jews of that village were greater enemies of the Christians than the Jews in general are. My father instructed me at this time in the books of the Talmud; and every evening I was obliged to go to buy milk at a barber's, who was a Lutheran Christian. My mother ordered me to be present in the stable while the barber's servant was milking, that I might inform, if the servant should put any thing into the milk-pail which the Jews are prohibited eating: for the Jews know, that nominal Christians deride in this manner the ceremonies, and the law of the Jews. But being weary of staying so long in a stable, I went into the dwelling of the barber, and conversed with him about our Messiah, whom I expected every day, who would build again the temple of Jerusalem. The barber and his wife, who were true Christians, heard me with patience and compassion. Then he said to me, "O! my dear child! you do not know the true Messiah. Jesus Christ, whom your ancestors did crucify, was the true Messiah; but your ancestors always expected an earthly kingdom, and not a heavenly one; and therefore they killed him, likewise as they did the prophets, and if you would read without prejudice your own prophets, you would be convinced." I was eight years old. I was confounded when I heard them thus speak. Without being able at that time to read the prophets well, I believed what the barber told me, and said to myself "It is true that the Jews have killed and persecuted prophets, because my father himself told me so:—perhaps Jesus Christ was killed innocent."

Two days after my conversation with the barber, I went to the Lutheran clergyman of that village, and said to him, "I will become a Christian." The minister

asked me, "How old are you?" I answered, Eight years. He replied, "You are yet too young; return to me after a few years." I told nothing of these circumstances to my father, because I feared punishment. But he observed himself, that I was more unquiet and much more thoughtful than I ever was before. Some of my questions caused him to suspect; and he said one day to my mother, while I was in the closet of the adjoining room, where I could hear it: "Alas! our son will not remain a Jew!"

When I was ten years old, my father went to another town; and when I was eleven, he sent me to a different place in Germany, under the direction of a rich Jewish lady, whose intention was to take care that I should be instructed in the Latin language, and in the knowledge of the Talmud, in order that I might one day become a Rabbi, and a physician to the Jews. I found in the house of that lady, several Jews who were deists, like the old Sadducees; who began to communicate their sentiments, that we are not obliged to observe the law of Moses, that all men, as well Jews as Christians, have the same moral principles, and that Moses was a great man, but a great imposter. I did not agree with them, especially with regard to the character of Moses;—but I began to disregard the ceremonies of the Jews, and to have doubts about the necessity of a revelation. My brother, who studied with me, had not any inclination to apply himself to the sciences, and therefore he hindered me every day when I would study, and it was impossible to make progress. I became for that reason so ill from sorrow, that I was obliged to return to my father's house; and having not any very good religious principles, my moral character began to fall. I sometimes lifted mine eyes to heaven, but not with filial confidence, or childlike simplicity. The Lord, therefore, ceased to send me down from heaven the dew of his grace! My father and mother observed something was amiss, and shed tears. I was only twelve years and a half old, and yet an insatiable ambition and vanity had taken possession of my heart.