

**UNDER THE CZAR AND
QUEEN VICTORIA:
THE EXPERIENCES OF
A RUSSIAN REFORMER**

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Under the Czar and Queen Victoria: the experiences of a Russian reformer by Jaakoff
Prelooker

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JAAKOFF PRELOOKER

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THE EXPERIENCES OF A RUSSIAN
REFORMER

BY

JAAKOFF PRELOOKER

LATELY HEAD-MASTER OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL, ODESSA; FOUNDER OF THE
"NEW-ISRAEL" MOVEMENT IN RUSSIA

AUTHOR OF "NEW-ISRAEL," "PRINCIPLES OF ALTRUISM," "SABBI SHALOM ON THE
SHORES OF THE BLACK SEA," "ZWISCHEN JUDENTHUM, CHRISTENTHUM
UND ALLEN ANDEREN RELIGIONEN," ETC. ETC.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

IN the beginning of the year 1881 intimations appeared in the Russian and other European papers of a new movement among the Jews towards Christianity, which had resulted in the formation of a society called "The New Israel Brotherhood." Shortly afterwards a book was published in St. Petersburg entitled "New Israel," which made a great sensation in Russian society. It was enthusiastically approved by the press. One of the leading magazines—*The Historical Messenger*—described the book as "epoch-making," while other journals reviewed it in a series of sympathetic articles.

The author, Mr. Jaakoff Prelooker, whose literary firstling evoked such universal interest and praise from his own compatriots, was at the time a young man of scarcely twenty-two, occupying a humble position as assistant-master in the second Government School for Jews in Odessa. He was the founder and the powerful advocate of the new movement; and his message was "to revive Israel and reconcile it with the Christian world." Since then Mr. Prelooker has continued with much devotion for a series of years his work of reform in Russia in various directions, showing himself to be a talented writer and preacher, as well as a philanthropist of a high type. The results of his work were certainly very remarkable under the circumstances. Attacked on all sides by Jewish orthodoxy, and latterly by the agencies of the Russian Government as well as

the Greek Church, he bravely strove to maintain his ground, until finally, exhausted by the unequal struggle and utterly prostrated, he felt himself compelled to leave his native country for another of greater freedom, where he could continue the struggle more safely, and perhaps none the less effectively. Since his arrival in England in July 1891, in spite of having to speak a foreign and difficult language, Mr. Prelooker has, by his public lectures and addresses, evoked everywhere a good deal of sympathy with his unfortunate countrymen. It is desirable, therefore, that the public should know a little more of the man and his work, especially as the movement originated by him not only touched the Synagogue and the Jewish nation, but also directly and indirectly affected, influenced, and encouraged to a certain degree the Protestant movement in the midst of the Russian Church itself, as will be seen from his sketch.

Let our readers, however, excuse a word of warning. In Western Europe, where the Reformation has long ago become an accomplished fact, and freedom of conscience has more or less been secured to all, we have, owing to the numerous existing sects, become accustomed to bestow our attention or admiration only on reformers and leaders who have succeeded in gathering around themselves multitudes of followers, or who can organise and lead processions and demonstrations of splendid magnitude. But if the reader expect to meet something similar in a sketch of the life of a reformer in Russia, he will be greatly disappointed. Russia is as yet on the eve of its reformation, and owing to the political *régime* prevailing in the country for centuries, the energies, devotion, and talents of her best sons are spent and wasted in struggles against numerous obstacles with which Western reformers have no longer anything to do. The work, however, is certainly none the less needed and valuable. To

use an expression of the time of the Reformation, there must be some to lay the eggs, and some to hatch them and bring them to maturity; and which of these works is most important remains, perhaps, an open question.

We have in the following pages the life of our reformer, as written by himself, with some detail, and we hope it will not only prove interesting and inspiring in itself, but will also at the same time give vivid and true pictures of the institutions and condition of things in Russia.