**Lightning Apologetics**

**…cont’d from last week.**

When the good Rabbi was asked why he had given up the Synagogue for the Church, he gave an answer that showed he had a keen understanding of his present position: “But I have not given it up. Christianity is the integration of the Synagogue. The Synagogue was a promise, and Christianity is the fulfillment of that promise. The Synagogue pointed to Christianity: Christianity presupposes the Synagogue. So you see, one cannot exist without the other. What I converted to was the living Christianity.”

“Then you believe that the Messiah has come?” The interviewer asked.

“Yes, positively,” replied Zolli. “I have believed it many years. And now I am so firmly convinced of the truth of it that I can face the whole world and defend my faith with the certainty and solidity of the mountains.”

“But why didn’t you join of the Protestant denominations, which are also Christian?”

“Because protesting is not attesting. I do not intend to embarrass anyone by asking: ‘Why wait 1,500 years to protest?’ The Catholic Church was recognized by the whole Christian world as the true Church of God for 15 consecutive centuries. No man can halt at the end of those 1,500 years and say that the Catholic Church is not the Church of Christ without embarrassing himself seriously. I can accept only that Church which was preached to all creatures by my own forefathers, the Twelve who, like me, issued from the Synagogue.”

“I am convinced that after this war (WWII), the only means of withstanding the forces of destruction and of undertaking the reconstruction of Europe will be the acceptance of Catholicism, that is to say, the idea of God and of human brotherhood through Christ, and not a brotherhood based on race and supermen, for ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond nor free; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’

“I was a Catholic at heart before the war broke out, and I promised God in 1943 that I should become a Christian if I survived the war. No one in the world ever tried to convert me. My conversion was a slow evolution, altogether internal. Years ago, unknown to myself, I gave such an intimately Christian form and character to my writings that an archbishop in Rome said of my book, *The Nazarene,* ‘Everyone is susceptible of errors, but so far as I can see, as a bishop, I could sign my name to this book.’ I am beginning to understand that for many years I was a natural Christian. If I had noticed that fact 20 years ago, what has happened now would have happened then.”

As was to be expected, the announcement caused a great stir in Jewish religious circles throughout the world. The Jewish community of Rome tasted gall. Overnight the once venerated, learned Rabbi who had offered his life for his “sheep” became to some an ignoramus, and to all a heretic and a traitor. The Synagogue of Rome proclaimed a several-days’ fast in atonement for Zolli’s defection and mourned him as dead, while at the same time they denounced him as a *reschumad* (apostate, one struck by God) and excommunicated him. To the uninformed Christian, this may appear excessively severe, but the Jews sincerely believed Spinoza deserved it: They believe Rabbi Zolli deserves the same. Though to many it looks like frightful bigotry to condemn a man like Zolli, we must yet be wary against hastily condemning the Jews for this. The Catholic Church also excommunicates heretics with severe penalties.

Rabbi Zolli, like others who became Christians, was condemned by the Jewish leader elders because in their judgment he had violated God’s Name by believing that the man Jesus was God. To be fair, we must give to the Jews of Rome credit for acting honestly in the Rabbi-convert’s case. Moreover, the Jews have long memories. Their souls are still smarting from countless past persecutions; today their poor bodies are suffering again in a most horrible mass murder of millions in Europe (remember this article was written while WWII was still going on in 1945).

All the difference between the religious beliefs of devout Jews and Catholics hinges on one question: “Is this Jesus whom the whole world worships as God really the Messiah whose coming was foretold by the Jewish prophets of the Old Law? Conclusion next week and you’ll find out what Christian name Zolli took!