THE Jews of the present day have got one religion—the Christians have got another. It is much to be desired that all the sons of men should have the one true religion, but, as this is not likely to be the case for some little time longer, it becomes those who differ to examine the nature and grounds of their differences. Whatever Jews may think upon the subject, Christians feel themselves bound to inquire whether they have really erred so grievously as modern Judaism asserts. The oral law brings no less a charge against them than this. That they are guilty of idolatry, and therefore in a worse state than even the Mahometans.

As to those Gentiles who, like the Ishmaelites, are not idolaters, their wine is unlawful to drink, but is lawful for purposes of profit, as is taught by all the Gaonim; but Christians are idolaters, and their wine, even such as has not been used as wine of libation, is unlawful even for purposes of profit. (Hilchoth Maahaloth Aseroth., c. xi. 7.) These words are very plain, and are confirmed by the practice of rabbis in every part of the world, who abstain as carefully from the wine belonging to Christians, as their forefathers would have done from the idolatrous libation of the Canaanites. Jews, therefore, cannot be astonished if we examine with care a religion that brings against us so grave an accusation, and endeavour to defend ourselves against the charge. We might ask them, whether they believe in our churches any of the emblems of idolatry. We might refer them to the ten commandments written up in the most holy place of our sacred edifices. We might quote from the New Testament many warnings against idolatry as plain and as solemn as any to be found in the law of Moses; but there is a previous question to be considered, and that is, What is the character of that system, which witnesses against us? Is it worthy of credit—can its testimony be depended upon? If the oral law be really from God, and if its teachers should appear as faithful depositories of divine truth, their testimony would have great weight. But if the rabbis be detected as daring corrupters of divine revelation, and their religion be proved to be a perversion of the law of Moses, then this charge must fall to the ground as unworthy of all credit; and this is what we assert. We have already given many reasons in support of this assertion, and now add some more which we find in the laws about wine of libation, which laws appear to us to be not only unwarranted additions, but unmerciful, uncharitable, and irrational.

We do not mean to deny that it is utterly unlawful to partake of wine that has been consecrated to idols; on the contrary, we would assert this as zealously as any Israelite. Concerning things offered to idols, the New Testament says, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." (1 Cor. x. 20, 21.) Let not therefore any Israelite think that we wish to defend what is contrary both to the Old and New Testament. But though fully convinced of the unlawfulness of drinking wine or any thing else consecrated to the service of idolatry, we confess that we cannot see why it is unlawful to make use of wine not consecrated to idolatry, simply because it belongs to, or has been touched by, a Gentile; and yet this is the rabbinic law.

"Wine belonging to Gentiles, of which we do not know whether it has been consecrated or not, and what is called common Gentile wine, is unlawful even to make a profit of, just like wine that has been consecrated; and this is by the decree of the scribes. Whoever drinks so much as one quarter measure of this common Gentile wine is to be flogged with the flogging of rebellion. All wine also which a Gentile touches is unlawful because he may have consecrated it, for the thought of a Gentile is to idolatry. Hence thou hast learned, that concerning wine belonging to an Israelite which a Gentile has touched, the law is the same as in the case of common Gentile wine, which is unlawful even to make a profit of." (Ibid., 3, 4.) Now in this law we have first the unauthorised additions of the rabbis.
We have already granted, that wine, and everything else, consecrated to the service of idols is unlawful, but with this the rabbis are not content. They forbid wine that was made by, or ever in the possession of, a Gentile, or even if a Gentile has touched it, and that not only to drink it, but to make any use of it, or to sell it, or to be in any way employed about it, so as to make any profit by it.

The wise men have been very strict with respect to the common Gentile wine, and have pronounced its price to be unlawful, as that of winds which has been consecrated to idolatry; therefore if a bond be given to an Israelite to labour with him, in any thing concerning wine, his wages are unlawful. In like manner, if he hire an ass, or a ship, to carry wine, the hire thereof is unlawful: and if it be given to him in money, he is to throw it into the salt sea. But if the hire be given him in clothes, or vessels, or fruits, he is to burn them, and to bury their ashes, that no profit may arise therefrom. But if an Israelite has hired an ass to a Gentile to ride upon, and he lays upon it bottles of wine, then the hire thereof is lawful" (Ibid., c. xiii. 15, &c.). For all this there is no authority whatever in the law of Moses,—it is a pure invention of the rabbis, who had but little respect for the divine law, and no consideration at all for the necessities of man. It is evident that these additions must, in many cases, become so many impediments in the way of earning a subsistence. The proprietor of a ship, or the owner of cattle, is cut off from one source of employment and profit. Now, even in the case of the rich, though they may feel it less, this is an unjustifiable severity; but in the case of the poor, it becomes a most cruel oppression. In the wine-countries, for example, a poor Jew might perchance find employment with some of the growers of that article; but the rabbis have declared that honest industry, in a matter which God has nowhere forbidden, is unlawful, and the fruits of it so abominable, as to be fit only for destruction. In this city, also, many examples of the absurdity and cruelty of this law might be found. Suppose that a Christian wine-merchant should wish to employ some one or more of those numerous Israélites, who are destitute of the means of earning a livelihood, and should therefore offer him a situation, either in his cellar or his counting-house, the rabbies say that he dare not accept of it: and that it is more pleasing in the sight of God that the man should go about idle, and that his family should starve, than that he should labour honestly, and do what God has permitted. Who is there, except the rabbies themselves, who does not see that such a decision is irrational, oppressive, and unmerciful, not now to speak of its injustice to Christian nations, by clasping them with the idolaters of Canaan? But take another case, suppose that some Christian, finding a Jewish family in deep distress, some of the members perhaps recovering from sickness, to whom a little wine might be beneficial, gives them a bottle of wine. What are they to do with it? May they make use of it to strengthen their exhausted frames? The rabbies answer, No. May they sell it, and with the money purchase food, or some other necessary of life? The rabbies answer, No. What then are they to do with it? The rabbies answer, Destroy it, destroy what would recruit your fainting bodies—which would purchase food for an Israelite—destroy what might perhaps save your life, simply because we have forbidden it; and it is more important that our unauthorised laws should be preserved inviolate, than that you should be comforted or strengthened or relieved in your misery. This is the mercy of Judaism. But we have not done yet. Suppose that the mother of the family should begin to reason, and say, This wine would preserve my poor child's life; a little of it would strengthen me, and enable me to tend the sick bed with more alacrity; God has nowhere forbidden it. She accordingly administers to her child, and partakes herself, when some Rabbinic zealot enters and perceives what she has done. Now suppose that the ministers of the oral law had the liberty to follow out all its enactments, what would be the consequence? The poor woman would be summoned before a civil tribunal; the oral law would be opened, and her sentence be, The flogging of rebellion, as we have cited above. Is this merciful, is it just, is it rational? Is there any thing like it in the New Testament, or in the religion of Jesus of Nazareth? The oral law says that we are idolaters, but is it worthy of credit? Can any reasonable man place confidence in the teaching of those who are so senseless as to forbid a pious fellowcreature to make use of proffered relief, and so merciless as to flog him with the flogging of rebellion, if he regards God's permission more than their prohibition? But it is not only absurdity and cruelty, which here are to be noticed, there is also a certain measure of that cleverness which we have remarked on former occasions, which provides for the transgression of the law, and the retaining of the merit of keeping it. The above extract says, "If an Israelite has hired an ass to a Gentile to ride upon, and he lays upon it bottles of wine, then the hire thereof is lawful," and on this principle
the owner of a ship or a waggon may let either
generally for the transport of merchandize, and
provided the word wine is not mentioned, the
Gentile may transport his wine, and the Jew
lawfully receive and use his money, though if
the word wine had been mentioned, the money
would have been so unlawful, that it ought
not even be given to relieve the wants of the
poor, but thrown into the salt sea. Here the
rabbies betray their own insincerity, and their
unbelief in their own enactments, by their de-
termination to evade their severity, whenever
it interferes, with that which is before her in her
own interests. But even if there were no cruelty, no contempt
for the law of God, and no evasion, the effect of
multiplying such observances is to lead away
the mind from the weightier matters of religion.
The ignorant think, even whilst they are vi-
olating the ten commandments, that, if they
abstain from Gentile wine, they are fulfilling
a more meritorious duty, and making compen-
sation for their other transgressions. Indeed
the rabbies themselves are not free from this
effect, if we may judge by the following pas-
tage:

If a Gentile harlot be at an entertainment
of Israelites, the wine is lawful, for their fear
is upon her, so that she would not touch it.
But if an Israelite harlot be at an entertainment
of Gentiles, her wine is unlawful, because she
may touch it without her knowledge. (Ibid., c. xii.
26.)

Now if men or women are so wicked as to be
found in such circumstances, in the open dis-
regard of God’s law, is it not deceiving them
to tell them, or to lead them to suppose that
there can be any merit in any mere ceremonial
observance, even though it should have been
ordained by God himself: and is it not strain-
ing at a gnat and swallowing a camel, to forbid
a poor perishing Jew to taste wine touched by
a Gentile, and to allow it to those who are
feasting with a harlot? Perhaps some one
will reply that it is on account of the idolatry
of the Gentile; but we have seen in the first
extract given in this paper, that if wine be
touched even by a Gentile who is not an idol-
ater, it is unlawful for a Jew to drink it; so
that to be a Gentile at all is in the eyes of the
rabbies a greater degradation and of more con-
 taminating influence, than to be guilty of gross
immorality. Now we appeal to the good
sense of every Israelite, whether this is not
to exalt vice, and to degrade humanity? God
chose a people to himself, Israel is that people;
we honour them as such: but, is that any
reason why Israel should trample upon the ties
of our common humanity, and look upon the
touch even of a Gentile who fears God, as so
defiling that it makes wine unfit for the use of
a Jew. How are peace and charity ever to pre-

vail between Jews and Gentiles, so long as
this is looked upon as religion? Yes, and
how is true religion and true fear of God ever
to prevail amongst the mass of the Jewish
community, so long as they are taught that
Israelites guilty of immorality are more holy
than a Gentile who fears God, and that sin is
not so dreadful as uncircumcision? The object
of such commands was plainly to prevent all
social and friendly intercourse between Jews
and Gentiles under any circumstances, and to
build up an eternal wall of separation between
them. This is very different from the much
national and official distinction instituted by
God himself. The object of God’s choice was
not to put an end to the practice of love and
charity between the Jews and all the other
nations of the earth, but to cement the bonds
of affection. He made Israel the depository of
his oracles, that they might communicate the
truth to other nations, and that thus the nations
should feel gratitude for the benefit conferred,
and the Israelites feel that affection for the
nations, which a teacher naturally feels for
those who, by his Instrumentality, have for-
saken error and embraced the truth. The oral
law prevents the fulfilment of the divine law,
and cuts asunder also these ties of amity and
peace. It makes it impossible for Israel to
communicate any blessing, and for the Gen-
tiles to receive any blessing at their hands,
and goes far towards throwing suspicion on
the divine law. If there were no other medium
of communication, than the rabbies, between
the divine law and the world, the worship of
Jupiter and Bacchus and all the other heathen
deities would still prevail. How could the
nations ever have been converted by those who
made them, in the first place, that God is
such a respecter of persons, as to think immo-
rality in a Jew less contaminating than the
mere external touch of a pious Gentile? Rea-
son revolts at such profane absurdity, and
therefore if God had bad no better messengers
and representatives of his truth, idolatry would
still continue. Some may reply, idolatry does
still continue, such at least is the sentence of
the oral law, and, though grieved that any
should be so blind as to bring such a charge
against Christianity, we are by no means
angry or offended at it. If the Jews still
believe in their own religion, and therefore
think that Christians are idolaters, it is their
bounden duty to say so. But then we ask in
reply, if Christianity be idolatry, how is it
that its doctrine is more pure, more merciful,
mor charitable, and more rational than that
of the oral law? Christianity has no ceremo-
nial laws to be observed by those who feast
together with harlots—Christianity nowhere
sentences the poor to flogging, because they
partake of what God allows—Christianity
nowhere represents God as an unjust and
impartial judge, who looks not at moral good
and evil, but at a man's nation. Christianity teaches that true religion is that of the heart—
that at the day of judgment mercilessness will obtain no mercy, and that God is the God of the
spirits of all flesh. Let then the lovers of the
oral law account for this fact, that Christianity, which they call idolatry, teaches
a doctrine that glorifies God and benefits all
men; whilst Judaism, which they say is the
truth, teaches a doctrine dishonouring to God,
oppressive to the Jews, and degrading to all
other nations. Some Jews will reply, that
Christians are not idolaters; then we ask such
persons how they can pretend to profess
Judaism, which has asserted the contrary for
so many centuries, and also acted upon this
principle, prohibiting all intercourse, as much
as Moses did in the land of Canaan. Either
Christianity is idolatry, or Judaism is false;
there is no alternative. Every Jew, therefore,
who asserts that Christians are not idolaters,
pronounces of Judaism that it is false. Let
all such persons then deal honestly, let them
renounce what they do not believe; and let
them denounce to their brethren what they
think it necessary to disavow before Christians.
They are bound to do this, not only to ren-
ounce the injustice with which the oral law
treats Christians, but to take away the cruel
and oppressive yoke which bows down their
brethren the Jews. If Christianity be not
idolatry, then all the laws concerning γόνατι,
"wine of libation," are utterly out of place in
this country. Then poor Jews may accept of
Christian bounty, and the offices of kindliness
and charity may be practised between Jew
and Christian. Those Jews therefore who
profess to believe that Christians are not
idolaters are bound, by their obligations both
to Jews and Christians, to protest against the
oral law, and publicly to disavow all belief in
it. So long as they do not make such a public
disavowal, their professions of love and charity
and respect for the religion of Christians must
be looked upon as hollow and insincere. So
long as they make such professions, contrary
to the oral law, and yet frequent the worship
of the synagogue, which asserts the divinity
of the oral law, they must be regarded either as
persons who have motives for professing what
they do not feel, or who want moral courage
to renounce what they disapprove. These
remarks apply particularly to those Israelites
who have practically forsaken Judaism, who
associate with Christians, eat Gentile food, and
drink Gentile wine, and some of whom perhaps
even deal in it as an article of merchandize.
Such persons, though Israelites by nation, are
not Jews by religion, at least according to that
sense in which the word Jew has been used
both by Israel and Gentile nations for the last
two thousand years. Such persons cannot
pretend to be professors of the Jewish persua-
sion. Any one who is in the habit of drinking
Gentile wine has practically forsaken Judaism,
just as much as if he had assumed the turban
and professed himself a Mahometan. It
becomes such persons especially to make a
stand against the oral law, and to declare pub-
illy what their religion is, and whether they
have any fixed principles at all. They cannot
be regarded as Christians, for they have not
been baptized; they cannot say that they are
Jews, for they have forsaken Judaism; they
cannot assert that they have the religion of
Moses, for unless that religion be found
amongst Christians, it does not exist. There
is no body of religiousists to be found in this
country who profess themselves Mosaists. In
the synagogue the oral law is professed; in
the Church Christianity is professed: but
where is the place of worship frequented by
those who have forsaken Judaism without
embracing Christianity? Such persons appear
in a light that is not at all advantageous to
their principles. In private they profess to
shun the intoleration of the oral law, they viol-
ate its precepts, and yet on the occasion of the
great Jewish fasts and festivals they are to be
seen in the synagogue joining in the worship,
and observing the rites of the oral law. What
then are we to believe concerning such
persons? Are they indifferentists who have
no religion at all? or are they secret admirers
of the oral law, who, for worldly purposes,
deny it when occasion suits, and conform to it
when the conscience is uneasy? We are far
from pronouncing them either one or the other,
but simply propose these questions for their
own consideration, remind them of the bi-
vocal light in which they appear, and would
give them advice similar to that of Elijah to
their forefathers. If the oral law be true
religion, profess and practise it. If the oral
law be erroneous, superstitious, and unchari-
table, renounce it openly and honestly.

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