

Isidor Loewenthal, Missionary to Pakistan¹ 1827-1864

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edited by Jack C. Whytock

**Helen H. Holcomb was the author of Men of Might in India Missions: Their Leaders and Their Epochs, 1706-1899. She was the wife of Rev. James Foote Holcomb, and they served as Presbyterian missionaries in India for over twenty years. This article originally appeared as chapter 12 in this 1901 book. It has been edited and slightly modernized for the Haddington House Journal and footnotes have been added. Interest in Loewenthal has been growing recently as there has been a renewed discussion of Jewish missions. Loewenthal thus takes his place amongst the more familiar names of Edersheim and Saphir.*

Late in the afternoon of a November day in 1846, when rain was falling drearily, a stranger came to the house of the late Rev. S. M. Gayley, living near Wilmington, Delaware. He was a young man of diminutive stature and carried on one arm a basket containing thread, needles, and other small articles that he offered for sale. He looked very forlorn, drenched with rain, insufficiently clad, and shivering with cold. To help one who seemed in dire need, a part of his small stock was purchased. Then silently the young man covered the remaining articles to shield them from injury by the storm and turned slowly toward the door. But he had come to a household where hearts beat kindly. Mr. Gayley entered the room just as the stranger was about to pass out and gave him a cordial invitation to spend the night under his roof, an invitation that was most gratefully accepted.

¹ Helen H. Holcomb, "Isidor Loewenthal" in *Men of Might in India Missions, the Leaders and their Epochs, 1706-1899* (London and Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1901), 292-319. This is a most fascinating book, containing thirteen chapters of biographical studies of some of the famous missionaries to the sub-continent, starting with Bartholomew Ziegenbalg. Holcomb wrote several books including *Mabel's Summers in the Himalayas*.

Engaging his guest in conversation during the evening, Mr. Gayley found that he possessed more than ordinary ability and was an accomplished linguist, having not only a good knowledge of Hebrew, but also being acquainted with several of the modern languages. It was certainly a pity, he reflected, that a man of such attainments should be engaged as a peddler. He accordingly invited him to remain for a time in his house while he would try to secure for him a position as a teacher.

The young man who had been brought providentially to this Christian home was Isidor Loewenthal, the son of Jewish parents, and born in the city of Posen, in Prussian Poland, in the year 1827.² He was the eldest of a family of eight children. While the father had little regard for Judaism, though observing its principal rites and ceremonies, his mother adhered strictly to the traditions of the Rabbis, and instructed her children carefully in the tenets of the Jewish faith.

At a very early age, Isidor was placed in a Jewish school, where he acquired the rudiments of science, learned to read the Hebrew text, and repeated prayers which he did not understand. The boy made rapid strides in learning and gave evidence of the possession of unusual mental gifts. While still very young, he entered the Gymnasium of his native city. A Gymnasium in German education is considered an elite high school. There he studied the ancient classics, natural science, metaphysics, mathematics, music, Hebrew, and several modern languages. At the age of seventeen, Isidor had passed successfully through the entire course of study usually taught at such institutions.

His father felt that, having bestowed upon his son a liberal education, he should now put to practical use the knowledge he had acquired. Accordingly, he made arrangements to place him as a clerk in a mercantile house in Posen. But the young man showed little aptitude for business, much to the disappointment of his father. All his leisure hours were devoted to his favourite studies. He greatly desired to enter one of the German universities, and arrangements for this were completed when an event occurred which changed the whole course of his life and made him henceforth an exile from his native land.

He had become associated with educated young men who had imbibed liberal political sentiments. Young Loewenthal, in full sympathy with such views, was not careful to conceal his opinions. An original poem containing sentiments adverse to government appeared

² See the brief biographical sketch of Loewenthal in Jacob Gartenhaus, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, chapter 20 (Chattanooga/Grand Rapids: International Board of Jewish Missions/Baker, 1979), 127-128.

in one of the public journals. It was traced to Loewenthal, with the result that he was brought under the notice of the police. Finding that he was in danger of arrest, he fled from home and with difficulty escaped to Hamburg. From there he took passage on board an English ship for New York, where he arrived in the autumn of 1846. He was now safe from pursuit, but he was alone in a strange land, almost destitute of means, and ignorant of the English language.

He tried to find employment in New York, but not meeting with success he went to Philadelphia. Here, too, he found every door closed to him. If there was no employment for him in the cities, surely he could find work in the country, he reasoned. From one farmhouse to another he wearily made his way, offering his services for such wages as the farmers might choose to give him. Looking at his small stature, and finding that he was quite unacquainted with farm work, no one was willing even to give him a trial.

His purse was now very light and his heart very heavy. As a last resort he invested his meager total savings in a small stock of thread, needles, buttons, etc., and with his basket on his arm, set out as a peddler. Happily his experience in this field was brief, and a brighter career opened before the desolate stranger. That day in November, 1846, while peddling his wares, he stopped at the home of Rev. Gayley (the incident which began this article). This meeting and invitation to stay the night was to have far-reaching implications for Isidor and for the history of Christian missions. Mr. Gayley was able to secure for him the position of French and German teacher at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania. Mr. Loewenthal entered upon his congenial duties in the beginning of 1847. He had by this time acquired some knowledge of the English language; however, not content with his attainments and with untiring industry, he addressed himself to study. Thus, by the close of the session he could both speak and write English with classical purity, and in a short time he had acquired a considerable knowledge of English literature. Not only did he devote his hours of leisure from college duty to study, but also long hours of the night. Sometimes whole nights were spent over his books. One of Mr. Loewenthal's characteristics was an iron will, which enabled him to bend all his energies to the accomplishment of whatever he undertook. Another distinguishing feature of his strongly marked character was a marvelously retentive memory, which held for practical use whatever knowledge he in any way acquired.

When he began life in a strange land, Mr. Loewenthal resolved not to disclose his lineage. Accordingly, during the time spent in Mr. Gayley's home that gentleman received no intimation that the stranger

under his roof was a son of Abraham. This fact he first learned through a letter from Mr. Loewenthal some time afterward. To Mr. Gayley he owed more than a home when he was homeless and kindly interest when he had not a friend in the New World. Under his roof he received his first religious impressions and became convinced of the truth of Christianity. This good news he communicated to his benefactor in a letter written in July, 1847. In that letter he told him how as his guest he had felt that he could not without rudeness absent himself from the morning and evening devotions of the family; how the word of God read on these occasions and the earnest supplications offered led him to feel that he had an immortal soul, a soul in danger; how, although he did not then disclose his feelings to his host, he began to read his Bible and to pray; how finally, God had removed the evil from his heart and had revealed to him Jesus as his Saviour. The second man to influence Isidor was a fellow Jew, Victor Herschell, a student at Lafayette College. Herschell and Loewenthal were roommates and one evening Herschell, who had become a Christian, prayed out loud for the salvation of his roommate, who was then present. By morning, Loewenthal had come to faith in Christ.³ Herschell also went on to become a missionary. He served in Jamaica and was murdered there in 1865 by a mob attack.⁴

In the autumn of 1847, while on a visit to Mr. Gayley during a vacation in the College, Mr. Loewenthal made a public profession of his faith in Christ as the true Messiah and was baptized and received into the Rockland Presbyterian Church, to which Mr. Gayley then ministered.⁵ “So through a series of steps – contact with a Christian family and the Bible, then with a Jewish friend who believed – Loewenthal came to know the Messiah and publicly professed Him in 1847.”⁶

Soon after this event he entered the senior class of Lafayette College and graduated with honours. He then acted for some time as tutor in the College and later as teacher of languages at Mount Holly, devoting his leisure hours to philological studies, in which he made notable

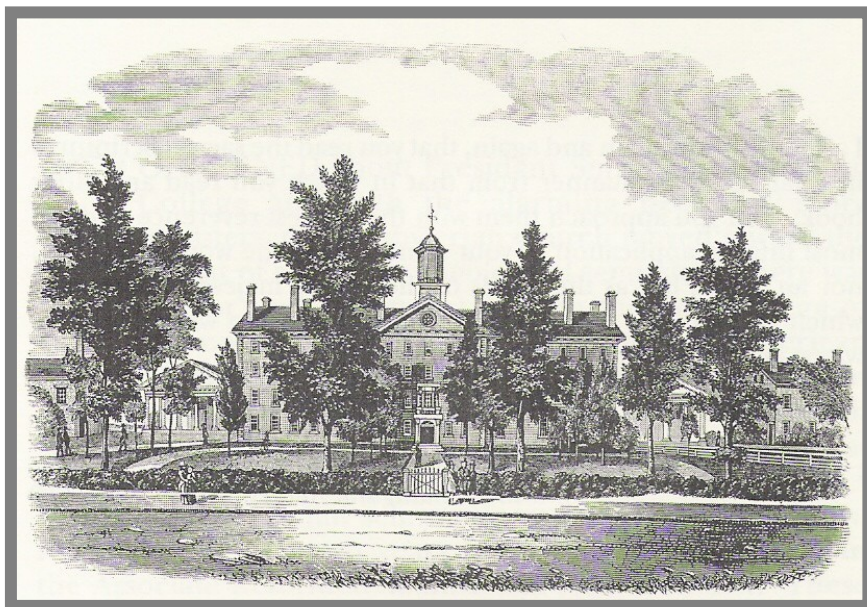
³ David A. Rausch, ed., *Louis Meyer's Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983), 3-4.

⁴ Rich Robinson, “Jews for Jesus...For the Nations: Isidor Loewenthal, 1826-1864” in *Jews for Jesus Newsletter* (April, 2004).

⁵ Readers interested in learning more about Jewish evangelism are directed to John S. Ross, “An Introduction to Two Thousand Years of Jewish Evangelism,” in *Haddington House Journal*, Vol. 5 (2003), 53-65.

⁶ Robinson, “Jews for Jesus...”.

progress. In the autumn of 1852, he resigned his situation at Mount Holly and entered Princeton Theological Seminary. In theological study he took the keenest interest, but while maintaining a high rank in this department, he still pursued his philological studies. As he wielded a facile and powerful pen, he was a valued contributor to the *Biblical Repertory*. This journal had been founded by Charles Hodge in 1824 and was to become the Seminary's great tool for disseminating information.



Princeton Theological Seminary, 1843

The Society of Inquiry in the Seminary⁷ elected him as their essayist at the commencement exercises of the class in which he graduated. He

⁷ The full name was "The Society of Inquiry on Missions and the General State of Religion," founded in 1814 at Princeton. The Society's purpose was to promote missions at Princeton and to ensure that an earnest engagement occurred in such. They looked to the London Missionary Society for encouragement and inspiration. The Seminary Professors were all honorary members, whereas the students were subscribing members. I am unaware of a full study on this Society and its impact upon American missions. It is one of the silent feeders of the great missionary enterprise of the nineteenth century. The role of the Society was critical for Loewenthal and others. See, David B.

chose for his subject “India as a Field of Labor.” It was a masterly production, evincing great ability and a comprehensive knowledge of the subject. Princeton Seminary in the 1850’s was a true centre of evangelical missionary discussion and zeal. During the first fifty years of the Seminary’s existence (f. 1812), one out of every three students went forth “on missionary ground.” Among this great number were Isidor Loewenthal and Levi Janvier.⁸

Having completed his course at the seminary, Mr. Loewenthal acted for a time as tutor at Princeton College and filled his position with marked ability. But his heart was set on India as the field of his future labours. He was licensed to preach the gospel in 1855 by the Presbytery of New York, and in August of that year sailed for India, where he arrived in the following November.

In 1834, when mission work was begun in India by the Presbyterian Church of America, work among the Afghans was contemplated; yet, as both the men and money sent from America were required for the evangelization of more accessible parts of the country, no attempt was then made to reach the Afghan population. However, not long before Mr. Loewenthal’s appointment to India, the Executive Committee in America had been led to consider beginning work among the Afghans by the offer of \$7,500 from a Christian military officer, Captain H. Conran,⁹ whose duties in Attock, Peshawa, and other far northern cities had led him to feel a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the Afghans. It was felt that Mr. Loewenthal’s linguistic talents especially fitted him for the contemplated mission. Missionaries would not be allowed to reside in Afghanistan, yet as many of the people came down from this northern country to Peshawar (Pakistan), numbers could thus be reached with the gospel, their language could be learned, and the Scriptures translated. In this way, when a door should be opened into this closed land, there might be a preparedness to enter.

Mr. Loewenthal’s first year in India was spent in Rawal Pindi (Pakistan), a city two hundred miles north of Lahore. The year was devoted to the study of the language and rapid progress was made – to

Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning 1812-1868* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), Vol. I, 144-154. Unfortunately, the transatlantic connection between this Princeton Society and the Societies in Gosport, England or Basle have been ignored for too long by Presbyterian historians.

⁸ Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, Vol. I, 406-407. Reading Calhoun’s stirring summation of the Princeton missionaries leads one to feel this is one of the sadly neglected themes in Princeton’s history and influence.

⁹ the patron

such an extent that he was soon able to preach fluently in the local language. Near the end of 1856, the annual meeting of the mission was held in the station of Dehra. At its close, Mr. Loewenthal wrote to the Executive Committee in New York: "The Mission have sent me to Peshawar, with a view of penetrating, as soon as ever I can, and in whatever way possible, into closed up Afghanistan. I go with great diffidence and tremblingly hope for the manifest aid of the Lord."

Peshawar is a city on the borders of Afghanistan. Many of the peoples here (in the twenty-first century this is the North West Frontier Province) belonged to one of the world's largest tribal groups. It had been known historically as a dangerous region. English officials, both civil and military, had therefore felt that it would be exceedingly imprudent to permit any Christian teaching among the Afghans. A Commissioner stationed at Peshawar said, when consulted on the subject of allowing a missionary to reside in the city, that no missionary should cross the Indus river while he was Commissioner of Peshawar.

One afternoon, not many months after he had made this emphatic declaration, the Commissioner was sitting in the verandah of his bungalow when a tall Afghan appeared and salaaming profoundly, presented a petition. The Commissioner took it and began the reading. The next moment the Afghan's knife was plunged into the heart of his unsuspecting victim. His successor in office was Sir Herbert Edwardes, a man who feared God and who felt that to permit the gospel to shed its rays in the dark places of the earth would bring blessing and not disaster. A meeting had been appointed for the 19th of December, 1853, to consider the subject of a Christian Mission to Peshawar. It was the day of the Races, and it was suggested that, on this account, the meeting should be deferred. "Put off the work of God for a steeple-chase!" exclaimed the godly Commissioner. "*Never!*" The meeting was therefore held on the appointed day. The number in attendance was not large, but God was present by His Spirit. Sir Herbert Edwardes took the chair and spoke as one inspired, for he had just come from his closet, where he had held intercourse with the King of Kings.

It was decided at this meeting to ask the Church Missionary Society to begin work in Peshawar, and an encouraging amount for the purpose was at this time subscribed. One English officer, sympathizing with the murdered Commissioner rather than with his successor, when the paper asking for subscriptions for the proposed Mission reached him, wrote: "One rupee towards a Deane and Adams revolver for the first missionary." The missionary, he felt, would need firearms for his protection, and he said that missionaries coming to Peshawar could not

exist without the protection of his sepoy. This officer was transferred to Meerut before the outbreak of the mutiny there, and together with his wife was cut down by his own sepoy at the very beginning of the mutiny.

The first missionaries sent to Peshawar were: Rev. C. G. Pfander,¹⁰ Rev. Robert Clark, and a devoted layman, Major Martin, who had resigned his commission in the army to enter upon the work of a missionary. All belonged to the Church Missionary Society. They reached Peshawar in January, 1855. Mr. Pfander began at once to teach and to preach. A school for boys was opened in May, and of this Mr. Clark had charge. In addition to his other duties, Major Martin organized the secular work of the Mission, kept the Mission accounts, carried on a large part of the correspondence, and gave generous financial help to the infant enterprise.

Mr. Loewenthal therefore found Christian workers in Peshawar on his arrival. Here he was to pitch his tent and be ready to move into the regions beyond as soon as the Lord should open the way. Meanwhile he would be occupied in study, in preaching to the people as soon as able to use the language, and above all, in preparing a translation of the Holy Scriptures into Pushtu, the language of the Afghans. The languages spoken in Peshawar were Hindustani, Persian, and Pushtu. Hindustani was spoken in the city and in the cantonments and was the official language of the government. The higher and more educated classes spoke Persian, while Pushtu was the language spoken in the villages and by all the surrounding tribes. Knowledge of Arabic was also necessary, the better to secure attention in argument, as the population was almost exclusively Mohammedan.

Mr. Loewenthal, after he had become somewhat acquainted with the city, wrote:

Peshawar is interesting as a sort of Alsace, a borderland between countries—the Gibraltar of the East, where Jew and Gentile, exiled Europeans and refugee Asiatics, Bengalis and cut-throat Afghans meet and jostle each other. One sees ambassadors from Yarkand, silk-dealers from Bokhara, long-

¹⁰ Pfander (1803-1866) was one of the foremost evangelical missionaries to the Muslims in the nineteenth century. See his classic work, *Balance of Truth*, in this regard. A. Scott Moreau, "Pfander, Karl Gottlieb" in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Carlisle/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 2000), 750-775.

haired Belooches, close-shaven Moguls, adventurers from Herat, and scholars from Kandahar.

The streets of the native city were irregular and the houses were chiefly of mud, low and flat-roofed. Around the city ran a low mud wall intended as a protection against robbers. A quadrilateral fortress, Fort Jumrood, whose walls rose to a great height, dominated the city. The European quarter was in striking contrast to the native city, with its pleasant bungalows set in the midst of spacious compounds, gay with flowering shrubs. The surrounding scenery was full of grandeur. The valley was sixty miles in length, bounded on the east by the Indus and girt on every side by hills, some of which were bare and rocky and others clothed with vegetation. Rising above all, two hundred miles to the southwest was the snow-capped peak of Takht-i-Suleiman, or "Solomon's Throne."

But other thoughts than of the grandeur of the scenery filled the heart of the missionary as he looked out over the enchanting prospect. He wrote:

Standing before the wild range of the Suleiman mountains, gazing evening after evening as the sun is setting behind it, on the line of savage, habitationless, precipitous crags, standing so distinct against the brilliant sky, following morning after morning the strong sunlight of these latitudes as it penetrates one by one the rugged passes and the jagged clefts – forbidden by man and nature to cross beyond, and knowing that once beyond he might pass through this vast cradle of nations, from the Khyber to the great commercial entrepôt of Yezd in one direction and beyond the Oxus as far as Orenburg in the other, and be everywhere almost the first to announce the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ, the missionary is apt to fancy these mountains more and more insurmountable barriers; sickness and exhaustion cause him to feel his own weakness and littleness daily more keenly, and he would be tempted to despair were there not a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'

Of the inhabitants, Mr. Loewenthal wrote:

The Afghan is fierce and bloodthirsty and is never without weapons. There is hardly a man whose hands are not stained

with blood. They are faithless to public engagements, unless the keeping of a promise would further their own interests. Like all Mohammedans, they are excessively sensual. They are very avaricious and this passion is the safeguard, which the ruling powers have against their religious frenzy and uncontrollable ferocity; and yet the surface of all Mussulman [Persian for 'Muslim'] life is thoroughly religious. God, if not in all their thoughts, is certainly in all their words.

The missionary, before he learned that their words were by no means an index to their thoughts, felt reproved when he observed how constant was their verbal recognition of God in all they did, and how continual the avowal of their dependence on Him in all the common affairs of life. The Afghan's morning salutation is, "Peace to you." If you ask after his welfare, he answers "Thanks to God," If you say a storm is rising, he replies "God is great."

On the night of the 11th of May, but a few months after Mr. Loewenthal's arrival, news reached the officials in Peshawar of the mutiny of the native troops in Meerut. Five days later Sir Herbert Edwardes was summoned to Rawal Pindi to attend a Council. Returning to Peshawar on the 21st he found a crisis impending, as during his absence a succession of plots had been discovered. Letters had been intercepted from Mohammedan fanatics, exhorting the sepoys of the disaffected regiments of Peshawar to follow the example of the troops in Meerut. There were in the valley two European regiments and six or seven regiments of Sepoys; of the latter the majority were disaffected. It was decided to disarm a large proportion of these troops, and some were sent out of the valley.

One Sikh Sirdar, on being asked why he always inquired so anxiously about the safety of Peshawar, replied by rolling up the end of his scarf and saying, "If Peshawar goes, the whole Punjab will be rolled up in rebellion like this." But Peshawar was saved. The summer, however, was one of painful anxiety. Mr. Loewenthal wrote at this time, "Things outwardly seem to go on as usual, but everyone is aware that he is standing on a mine, and that the train is laid. I am, however, perfectly calm, without fear, and feel content and happy."

Through all the uncertainties and trials of his first year in this frontier city, Rev. Loewenthal had diligently improved his time in the study of the languages, and could say that he had in some small measure succeeded in acquiring the colloquial use of the Persian language, but had failed as yet in making himself master of the Pushtu. The inherent difficulties of the language, the want of proper helps, the

difficulty of access to the people speaking it, and the excessive heat which had prevailed for several months of the year are some of the reasons given why his progress in the Pushtu had been less rapid than he desired.

Unable to penetrate into the Afghan country beyond Peshawar, Mr. Loewenthal kept continually in mind the thought of evangelizing the people of this closed land through the press, especially through the Word of God translated into Pushtu, which is spoken from the Indus in the east to Herat in the west, and from the Hindu Kush in the north, to the deserts of Baluchistan in the south, an extent of country larger than the whole of France.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dr. Leyden, the professor of Hindustani in the College of Fort William, Calcutta, made the first attempt to produce a Pushtu translation of the Scriptures. In 1811 a translation of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark into this language was completed. At Dr. Leyden's death, the year following, the scribe previously employed by Dr. Leyden continued the translation under the superintendence of the Serampore missionaries. An edition of the entire New Testament in this language was printed at Serampore in 1818. A few copies of this edition found their way into European libraries, and some, doubtless reached Afghanistan through Afghan merchants who carried the fruits of Kabul as far as Calcutta. When a lieutenant (after Sir Herbert Edwardes) was sent by the government to the Bannu District in the year 1848, he found a copy of the New Testament in Pushtu in the hands of an Afghan. It had been given him at Hardwar, when as a boy he had accompanied his relatives to the great fair held at this place, with the injunction to take care of the Book and neither fling it into the river or the fire, but preserve it until the day when the British should be rulers of his country. The man had kept the Book wrapped carefully in many folds of cloth and perhaps had never read a page of the Sacred Volume or allowed any one else to do so.

When missionary work was begun in Lodiana by the Presbyterian Church of America in 1834, copies of the Serampore Pushtu version of the New Testament were given to the Afghans found there, many of whom had accompanied their exiled King, Shah Shujah, to this place. At the time of Mr. Loewenthal's residence in Peshawar, very few copies of this edition existed. After careful examination it was decided not to print this version, but instead, to prepare a new translation.

In the year 1821, the Serampore missionaries had issued an edition of the Pentateuch in Pushtu, and in 1832 the historical books of the Old Testament in the same language had also been issued, but of these

portions of the Old Testament Mr. Loewenthal was unable to procure even a single copy.

As soon as he felt himself sufficiently familiar with the language, he began a translation of the New Testament Scriptures into Pushtu. Progress was necessarily slow in the beginning of such an enterprise, but the diligent missionary was not discouraged. Nor was he faint of heart because there seemed no immediate prospect of penetrating into Afghanistan. In reference to this he said:

Though at this moment, Afghanistan seems closed, events which may take the most sagacious statesmen and diplomatists by surprise may furnish the key and suddenly the gates may burst open. At that moment let the Church be ready to go in and possess. Though like Achaean warriors we may have been lying ten years before the impregnable city, every moment of that time may have been needed to fit us for the final conquest. The representatives of the world, the merchant and the soldier, will be ready for the juncture; the philanthropist and the political economist will offer to this people their civilization. But what is civilization without the Gospel?

Life on the borders of a wild country like Afghanistan, even in peaceful times, was not without its excitement. Writing to his friends in America in February, 1858, Rev. Loewenthal said:

After my recovery from a severe attack of fever, I had planned an expedition into the Yusufzoy country when a sudden attack of the Afghans upon an Assistant Commissioner's camp, in which his tents were burned, five of his servants killed, some horses of his escort carried away and he himself narrowly escaped with his life, warned me that the time was not yet. Robberies, many connected with murders, are of nightly occurrence in the city. Some thieves, about three weeks ago, dug into my house, ransacked it and came to the bed where I enjoyed a very sound sleep, but did no harm beyond carrying off what clothes they could find and some cooking furniture. They also took out a large and costly Persian manuscript, but not being of a literary turn, they left it outside, where I found it in the morning, together with the trunks they had emptied. They might have done much more

mischievous, and it is hard to tell why they did not. The Lord is very good.

The year 1859 passed tranquilly. Mr. Loewenthal was occupied in preaching and in translating the Scriptures into Pushtu. This latter branch of labor was most congenial to him, and as he gained in experience, his conviction of the supreme importance of his work deepened. A Pushtu translation of the Holy Scriptures would reach a larger proportion of the Afghans than would a translation of the Scriptures into the Persian language, as only the more highly educated among them were acquainted with the Persian. Mr. Loewenthal observes:

It is rare to receive much assistance from the Afghan writers in the investigation of truth. There is no cultivation of their language and literature going on at this time, and the epoch seems propitious for the creation of a new, a Christian literature. Reading is very much left to the women now; a state of things which can hardly be true of any other part of India. The women can tell you in rhyme and metre what twenty-five things make a prayer nugatory, or what is meant by saying that God has neither quiddity nor quantity, etc.

“Free-spoken are these Afghans,” he wrote on another occasion. “‘You priests read,’ they say sometimes, ‘because you are paid for it. Pay us, and we will read, too, even your Holy Book, if you will. Nobody reads to be instructed. Why should we read?’” Mr. Loewenthal found in his intercourse with these stalwart men of the North what the missionary finds in other parts of India, the lamentable absence of a sense of sin and of the necessity of a Savior, the only basis of real religion. Mr. Loewenthal asks in one of his letters:

Where is the standing-ground then to be found from which to work the lever of conversion? Theoretically and speculatively the answer may be difficult; practically, it is not; men have been converted; this one fact outweighs all theories [and] arid calculations to the contrary, and the most satisfying consideration is that conversion is not man’s work; the missionary is sent simply to preach the Gospel, and no nation, assuredly, even in a mere moral and political point of view needs the Gospel more than the Afghans.

Mr. Loewenthal preached in Pushtu in the city when his audience consisted chiefly of people drawn from the villages, but Persian was the language usually employed. Frequent visits were made to the villages in the vicinity of Peshawar. The discussions and conversations in the bazaars of the city and in the villages procured for the missionary frequent visits from so-called learned men, who came rather to air their erudition and to confound the missionary than to seek instruction. With the desire of the missionary to be courteous to all, there was a jealousy of the precious hours that he feared were but wasted in fruitless discussions. "The Afghans are the greatest idlers imaginable," he wrote, "and waste many a day for the missionary." Discussions were occasionally held in the vicinity of some city mosque, but from those encounters he usually returned burdened with the conviction that no real good had been accomplished.

From time to time, professed inquirers after the truth presented themselves, but when put to the test of sincerity which the missionary thought it right and wise to apply, and which consisted in a willingness to work for their bread, they were frequently found wanting.

Mr. Loewenthal mentions in one of his letters how and why an inquirer came to him to be instructed. The man had fallen into perils among his own countrymen. He had been persecuted and oppressed, and to crown all, his wife had been carried away while he was absent from home and the offender refused to restore her. Beside himself with sorrow and anger, the man ran through the streets and bazaars of Kabul crying out that religion and truth, morality and faith had departed from Islam, that the religion of the Mohammedans was cruelty, oppression, and wrong, and that he was going to Peshawar, where the English ruled, and would there become a Christian. He did not find it so easy a matter as he had thought to change his faith. When he made inquiries on the subject, of either Hindu or Mohammedan, he was told that every one must remain in the faith in which he was born. One day a Jew passed the shop in which the much-perplexed man was working as a cobbler, and this man was pointed out to Mushki, the Kabuli, as one who had become a Christian. Accosting the Jewish stranger, he asked him who had made him a Christian; and he was at once conducted to Mr. Loewenthal. Mr. Loewenthal commented:

A wonderful specimen of humanity he was. His language was neither Persian nor Pushtu. He called it Kabuli, and after a good deal of close attention I found that it was a curiously dipped kind of Persian. But one's tongue gets to be very loose in this Asiatic Babel, and in a few days I could talk as bad

Persian as any Kabul cockney. The entire extent of Mushki's religious knowledge consisted in this – there is one God and Mohammed is his prophet. His memory was marvelous. To read to Mushki the Lord's Prayer three times was sufficient to enable him to repeat it accurately. Doctrines until then quite new to him, presented to him clearly once, thenceforth became his property for aye. He was ready to confess himself a sinner, but had no conception of guilt. That he was inquiring concerning the Christian religion gave him, he maintained, a sufficient claim to support, and he refused to engage in any employment.

Mr. Loewenthal was eventually obliged to withdraw his support. The man then began to wander about the country, calling himself a Christian.

Although Mr. Loewenthal's chief employment was the translation of the Scriptures into Pushtu, yet he did not neglect the work of preaching. Very frequently he preached to great crowds of "vociferous, fanatical, gainsaying people," some of whom came to his house for more quiet discussions.

In the summer of 1862, Mr. Loewenthal made a tour into Kashmir. He wrote to his friends in America:

The climate is wonderful and the beauty of the valley such as to sustain the descriptions of the travellers and even of poets. Man alone, and his works are here, too, in grating harmony with the loveliness of God's creation. I have tried to preach, but with little success or satisfaction. Kashmiris understand only Kashmiri, which I do not know yet. I have found people who know Persian, but these belong to the respectable classes who do not form the crowds the missionary usually has to address in bazaar preaching. Some of the latter, however, both Hindus and Mohammedans, have been visiting me in Srinagar, and thus the Gospel has been preached to a few.

Of the hindrances to work, either in the bazaars of the city, or in the surrounding villages during the hot season, Mr. Loewenthal's experiences coincide with the experiences of probably every missionary on the plains of India. He says:

I find it almost impossible to get back from the preaching in the villages, without being exposed to the sun later than I can bear it, and the result is prostration. It is not the pain so much which I regret, as the absolute loss of so much time. In the evening there is a steaming crowd in a close bazaar with the thermometer near a hundred, and not a breath of air, and loud clamouring until the voice absolutely seems to refuse to sound.

But the discomfort of such experiences, aside from the apparent unfruitfulness, was less trying than the conviction that he was thereby in a great measure unfitting himself for the literary work which “the greatest variety of men, in unconscious concert persisted in thrusting upon him,” so that he was often perplexed as to the line he ought to pursue.

Rev. Loewenthal took great delight in cold weather itinerations. On one occasion he was traveling with the officer in charge of the District of Yusufoy, who moved about with a large escort of foot and horse. He was asked by his host not to preach in the frontier villages and not to create any excitement. In regard to these restrictions, he said, “They are woeful dogs, but limping is better than not to be able to walk at all,” well knowing that only when under the protection of so powerful an escort would it be possible in outlying districts to preach the gospel at all. On this tour he preached in some villages to large and attentive crowds, and in places where he was not allowed to go to the people the people came to him. “I am pretty well known,” he wrote, “to many of the better classes, so as soon as my presence was known, respectable Khans, learned Mullahs, zealous Imams and other cleanly-dressed, large-turbaned Afghans crowded into my little tent, and we had disputations all day long. I distributed some few of the Gospels in Pushtu and made the truth known to many.” During this tour he spent the time at his command in revising and correcting his Pushtu translation of the New Testament.

In the summer of 1862, he wrote to the Executive Committee in New York, “I hope you will receive early next year three copies of the Pushtu New Testament, one, as you requested, for your Library in the Mission House, one for the Library of Princeton Seminary, and one for the American Oriental Society.”

In the autumn of 1863, Mr. Loewenthal was again at the front, “accompanying a considerable military force which it was thought would only have a march through a hitherto unknown part of the Afghan country and no fighting.” These circumstances Mr. Loewenthal

thought favorable to his becoming acquainted with tribes to whom he might have access in more peaceful times, and as a large part of the force was to consist of frontier regiments, he would always have in camp a congregation of Afghans. "I have two or three services on Sunday in English," he wrote, "and have also had opportunities of preaching to the Afghans, and have even distributed some Pushtu Gospels. I am not usually exposed to fire; attending the wounded is one of my most arduous duties."

Letters received in New York from India dated the 31st of March 1864, conveyed the tidings of the death of the Rev. Levi Janvier, D.D., at the hands of a Sikh fanatic at Anandpore, in the Punjab.¹¹ Mr. Loewenthal, after hearing of the death of Dr. Janvier, wrote to his friend in England, Major H. Conran, whose generous gift had opened the way for the beginning by the Presbyterian Church of America of a Mission to the Afghans, "Strange it is that such an eminent and useful man should have been cut off in his prime. Why was not I taken and he spared?" But the end of life for him also was nearer than he dreamed. Dr. Janvier met his death on the 24th of March. On the night of the 27th of the following April, Mr. Loewenthal was in his library deeply engrossed in study. The hour of midnight came, but it passed unheeded. An hour or two longer his fascinating studies held him, then pushing aside his books, he walked out into the cool night air, as was his custom before seeking his couch. He was in his own garden, with no thought of danger. There was the sharp report of a pistol, and Mr. Loewenthal dropped to the ground, the ball having penetrated his forehead. His own watchman, who, it was said, took his master for a robber, had shot him.

Thus passed away one of the most remarkable men that India has ever known. He had spent only seven years in Peshawar, yet in that brief period he had made himself acquainted with the Pushtu, and had translated into this difficult language the whole of the New Testament, and put the same through the press. He had also nearly completed a Pushtu dictionary. He could preach with facility in the Pushtu, Persian, Hindustani and Arabic languages. It has been said that probably no other foreigner at that time in India had so thorough a knowledge of Asiatic literature and so intimate an acquaintance with the manners and customs of the people of the land and with Oriental politics as he. He

¹¹ Rev. Janvier had spent twenty years as a faithful missionary. His last task was to conduct a communion service before returning to his home. Later that night he was shot by his chokeydar (watchman). See also, *The Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: Mission House, 1865), 19-27.

had a thorough knowledge of the religious system of the people, and as a disputant with Mohammedans and other religionists he was a master. His library, which filled the four sides of his study, the higher shelves reached by a ladder, contained the rest of the books and most ancient manuscripts to be found in any private library in India.



*Grave of Rev. Isidor Loewenthal
in Peshawar, capital of NWFP province of Pakistan*

He enjoyed the friendship of men of the highest rank in both the civil and the military service in India. He possessed genius in the truest sense. His versatility was marvelous, he having what is exceedingly rare, a seemingly equal aptitude for all branches of study, excelling in whatever he undertook. He was an accomplished musician, mathematician, metaphysician, and pre-eminently a linguist. As a philologist he stood in the front rank. He conducted a large correspondence and was a valued contributor to British and American quarterlies. Many have benefited from his scholarship and have built

upon his labours.¹² He had fine conversational powers, and in the social circle was a delightful companion. As a Christian he was sincere, humble, devout and zealous.

After the death of Mr. Loewenthal, Major Conran did not lose interest in opening the way for a mission into Afghanistan. He put aside a sum of money for this purpose and corresponded with the Mission Committee in New York in reference to supplying the place of the fallen missionary. The way to this did not seem plain. "Feeling my strength failing," wrote Major Conran to a friend in India, "as I knew not the day of my death, I felt the responsibility of keeping the Lord's money idle, perhaps to fall into unworthy hands, and made it over to another society."

Afghanistan still remains a closed land, but the wild inhabitants of the regions beyond Peshawar have now the gospel in their own language and one day the missionary will enter in "to plant the Cross and teach the Book."

Standing beside the grave in the beautiful English cemetery in Peshawar where rest the remains of Isidor Loewenthal and looking out over the hills surrounding the valley and beyond which he so longed to penetrate, we have thought that perhaps God has now revealed to him the reason why he was held back from entering Afghanistan with the gospel.

While not yielding to a feeling of impatience because there are yet lands closed to the heralds of the Cross, let us unite in the prayer contained in the old Church litany of the Moravians:

"Keep our doors open among the heathen,
And open those that are shut."
Amen.

¹² Gartenhaus, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, 128. I have found one thesis which is in part on Loewenthal: Matthew Ebenezer, "American Presbyterians and Islam in India 1855-1923: A Critical Evaluation of the Contribution of Isidor Loewenthal (1826-1864) and Elwood Morris Wherry (1843-1927)," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia (1998).

*Bronze tablet placed by the students of Princeton
Theological Seminary in the Classroom Building
known as Stuart Hall, Princeton, New Jersey¹³*

**OF THESE THE WORLD WAS NOT
WORTHY**

WALTER MACON LOWRIE

class of 1840,

thrown overboard by pirates in the China Sea, 1847

JOHN EDGAR FREEMAN

class of 1838,

ROBERT McMULLEN

class of 1853,

who, with their wives, were shot by the order
of Nanasahib, 1857, at Cawnpore, India

LEVI JANVIER

class of 1840,

stabbed by a Sikh fanatic at Lodianna, India, 1864

ISIDOR LOEWENTHAL

class of 1854,

shot accidentally or by design at Peshawur, India, 1864

JOHN ROGERS PEALE

class of 1905,

killed with his wife by a mob at Lien Chow, China, 1905

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

¹³ Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, Vol. 2, 239.