

## Evangelicals, Jews, and anti-Catholicism in Britain, c. 1840–1900

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Jews in the nineteenth century became entangled in a series of affairs. The term “affair” did not connote merely an injustice but the process through which a perceived wrong became the object of mobilized public opinion. Most famously, for the Jews, there were the Damascus, Mortara, and Dreyfus affairs. All three placed Jews in conflict with the Catholic Church. The emergence of these affairs was one facet of a new political culture constituted by the reformed franchise, by petitions, public meetings, and a press which together constituted “public opinion”.<sup>1</sup>

Evangelical Protestants offered Jews support in these struggles. The nature of this support has become the subject of growing but divergent interest among scholars. Nadia Valman has explored the figure of “the Jew” in the evangelical imagination. She highlights the gendered ambivalence of evangelical representations of “the Jew”. She draws attention to the repeated iteration of the dual images of the “good” (spiritual and feeling) Jewess and the “bad” (materialistic and legalistic) Jew.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to this approach, which points to an irreducible ambivalence in evangelical attitudes, recent books by Donald Lewis and by Hilary and William Rubinstein, reach unreservedly positive conclusions. Lewis deprecates what he sees as “an article of faith” among scholars “that the professed love of Jews by Christians is in some way a form of antisemitism, in spite of all evidence to the contrary.” The Rubinsteins highlight what they regard as a powerful and neglected tradition of Christian philosemitism.<sup>3</sup> The

1 Miles Taylor, *John Bull and the Iconography of Public Opinion in England c. 1912–1929, Past and Present* 134 (1992): 93–128; James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, 1815–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Aled Jones, *Power of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).

2 Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

3 Donald Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13; William Rubinstein and Hilary Rubinstein, *Philosemitism: Admiration and Support in the English-Speaking World for Jews, 1840–1939* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999).

present essay aims to make a contribution to this continuing discussion of the relationship between Jews and evangelicals in the Victorian decades. At the same time, it draws attention to the way in which this relationship – as it developed through a series of affairs – was a facet of political culture as well as of eschatology and literary culture.

On 5 February 1840 two men disappeared from the streets of Damascus. One was a Capuchin monk, Padre Tommaso, the second his servant, Ibrahim Amara. The double disappearance and possible murder required an investigation. This was undertaken by the Ottoman governor-general of Syria, Sherif Pasha, and the French consul, Count de Ratti-Menton. The consul's involvement arose from the capitulatory agreement between the French government and the Porte, under which the Roman Catholic clergy in the Ottoman Empire enjoyed the protection of France. Count de Ratti-Menton's role in the prosecution and torture of Jews in Damascus was invested with special and dark significance by both Jews and conversionists which went far beyond his individual culpability but encompassed his identity as a Frenchman, a royalist, and a Roman Catholic. Within ten days Sherif Pasha had arrested, tortured, and interrogated three Jews. One died but the two others confessed their knowledge of the murders, disclosed that they had been determined to procure human blood for "Passover dough", and implicated other wealthy and prominent local Jews in the crime. Further arrests, tortures, and confessions followed. By March, ten men had been sentenced to be hanged. At this point, Sherif Pasha paused. He was obliged to await confirmation of the executions from his superior, the Viceroy of Egypt, Mehemet Ali.<sup>4</sup>

The "Damascus Affair" ended well for the Jews. On 6 September orders to set free the Jewish prisoners reached the city, and two months later the Sultan issued a *firman*, declaring the ritual murder accusation to be without foundation. In the spring of 1840, however, the situation had looked bleak. Most obviously this was the case in Damascus but events in the Ottoman Empire reverberated in Western and Central Europe. In Britain, the charges laid in Syria received wide attention, not least in

4 There is a vast literature on the Damascus Affair. The modern starting point must be Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder", Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For a contemporary account see George Wildon Pieritz's in David Salomons, *An Account of the Recent Persecutions of the Jews at Damascus with Reflections Thereon and an Appendix Containing Various Documents Connected with the Subject* (London: Longman, 1840).

Parliament and the press. The issue, it seemed, carried implications for Jews and Judaism everywhere, and not only in the Ottoman lands. If the allegations were true, *The Times* proposed, “the Jewish religion must at once disappear from the face of the earth”.<sup>5</sup>

British Jews did not stand alone in the face of this storm. Notably, on 28 May 1840, a distinguished delegation representing the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews waited on the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, bearing a statement from the Society’s thirty-second annual conference which expressed “deep sympathy with the Jewish nation” and asked for the Foreign Secretary to use his influence to help the victims and prevent further “atrocities”.<sup>6</sup> The belief that the Jews would one day turn to Christianity had been an abiding theme in Protestant thought, though its credit was far from constant. From the 1820s and 30s, however, evangelicals evinced a new emphasis on their connectedness to the Jews and this was linked to militant Protestantism. In 1843 four thousand supporters gathered to mark the London Society’s thirty-fifth anniversary at a meeting at which Lord Ashley placed the Society’s claim for support on the ground that “it is essentially an association of Protestants.”<sup>7</sup> By championing the Jews, evangelicals made a statement that could outbid the historical claims of Roman Catholics and Tractarians. As Lewis has argued, “In the Jews of Europe they found their link to their historical past: by championing the Jews, they were celebrating their age-old links with Scripture and the apostolic tradition, which in their minds superseded claims to rootedness in any particular time period of Christian history.”<sup>8</sup>

British Jews’ most effective, prized weapon in the debate over what had and had not occurred in Damascus was the report written by the Protestant missionary and former rabbi, George Wildon Pieritz. Pieritz had settled in Jerusalem where he worked for the London Society. He went to Damascus at the request of Jews in Jerusalem, “to rid them of this calumny”.<sup>9</sup> At the end of April Pieritz travelled from Beirut to Alexandria to plead the Jews’ case with Mehemet Ali. He forwarded his report to Europe through the leaders of the Jewish community in that city. *The Times* published extracts and the entire text was reproduced as a forty-

5 *The Times*, 25 June 1840, 12.

6 Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 131.

7 *Jewish Intelligence*, June 1843, 186.

8 Lewis, *Origins of Christian Zionism*, 103.

9 Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 82.

page pamphlet complete with an introduction and commentary by the banker and combative campaigner for Jewish equality, David Salomons. Pieritz “found the whole charge against the Jews there [in Damascus] a vile fabrication, and that all means and right of legal defence was denied them; while the most cruel tortures were employed to extort from them false confessions of guilt.”<sup>10</sup> Born a Jew and educated as a rabbi, Pieritz had renounced the religion of his fathers to become a Christian missionary. As Salomons pointed out, he was well acquainted with Hebrew literature, the duties of the Jewish clergy, and the laws of religious conduct but, at the same time, “he had no motive to palliate crime, nor desire to conceal abominations which ought to be exposed to public view”.<sup>11</sup> In other words, what was important was not merely the content of his report but the authority of the man. The *Times* agreed. The report was “cogent” and the writer unlikely “to strain either the facts or the argument in their [the Jews] favour”.<sup>12</sup>

The support Jews received from the London Society and from Pieritz signified but the tip of the conversionist and evangelical iceberg. Others too leapt to the Jews’ defence in pamphlets and the press. Alexander McCaul, the leading scholar in the London Society, published a lengthy pamphlet setting out *Reasons for Believing that the Charge Lately Revived Against the Jewish People is a Baseless Falsehood*. “Had the calumny and the persecution been confined to the ignorant followers of Mahomet, it would have been hardly worth notice”, he explained. It was its currency among European (by which he meant Catholic) countries which stimulated him to publish his pamphlet. McCaul aimed to discredit rather than disprove the allegation of ritual murder. His emphasis fell on the history of the accusation which, in the past, had been “brought forward amongst others, now universally acknowledged to be gross and ridiculous falsehoods”. Characteristically, McCaul used his defence of Jews to highlight superstitions imposed on Christianity by Roman Catholicism.

Does the reader . . . believe that they [Jews] used to crucify images, and shed their blood, or they could raise storms at will to destroy thousands of Christians, or produce a six years’ pestilence, or that they could kill a Christian bishop by burning a wax image, or deprive a king of reason, or that they drew blood from consecrated wafers, and that miracles were wrought to discover their wickedness? Why then should he receive

10 *The Times*, 6 July 1840, 9; Salomons, *An Account*, 48.

11 Salomons, *An Account*, iii–iv.

12 *The Times*, 17 Aug. 1840, 3.

the charges concerning the use of Christian blood in the Passover? The testimony for the latter is not in the least degree stronger than that for the former.<sup>13</sup>

The Damascus Affair and the role of France and its representatives appeared to demonstrate the connections between popery and persecution and between Protestantism and freedom. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna asked, “Do we ask for illustrations of unchanged Popery?” Her answer: “Look at Damascus.”<sup>14</sup> The Lord Mayor of London provided his official residence, the Mansion House, for a “grand public meeting” on 3 July 1840 to publicize and denounce the persecutions in Damascus. The occasion brought together evangelicals, Quakers, Radicals, and anti-slavery activists in support of the persecuted Jews. Here the cause of the Damascus Jews was aligned with English love of liberty. J. Masterman spoke “with those feelings which must be common to all of England, who at all times were ready to assist in putting down any system distinguished by tyranny.” The national and religious origins of the particular tyranny were underscored by the Reverend Noel. He condemned the persecution Jews suffered in Damascus at the hands of “a populace ignorant, more ignorant and degraded than the lowest of the European states.” His audience knew, he said, “how exceedingly light human life was reckoned by the Turks” and, to make matters worse, the conduct of the Roman Catholics had brought shame on Christianity.<sup>15</sup> The meeting at the Mansion House was followed by others at Dublin, Falmouth, Liverpool, Manchester, and Portsea. Here too the assemblies passed resolutions, raised funds, and identified the nation with the cause of the suffering Jews in Damascus.<sup>16</sup>

In these speeches, pamphlets, and newspaper reports, Jews drew support from a widespread and powerful vision of Britain as a kingdom whose liberties had been nurtured by Protestantism and had been forged in struggle with Roman Catholicism. Anti-Catholicism was an integral part of this national imaginary, which traced the political evils of popery from Bloody Mary, to the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot, and finally the Glorious Revolution of 1688. It was a vigorous strand in political, literary, and popular culture in the early nineteenth century, present in “a torrent of

13 Alexander McCaul, *Reasons for Believing that the Charge Lately Revived Against the Jews is a Baseless Falsehood* (London: Macintosh, 1838), 6.

14 Charlotte Tonna quoted in Lewis, *Origins of Christian Zionism*, 194.

15 *The Times*, 4 July 1840, 6.

16 *Manchester Times*, 4 July 1840, 1.

tracts, books, magazines, and newspaper stories".<sup>17</sup> It had been nurtured by a hundred years of war with France and it was legitimized in law. Not only were Catholics excluded from Parliament before 1829, their churches could not have steeples, their priests were banned from wearing clerical garb in public, they were barred from leaving charitable bequests for "superstitious" purposes, and their schools did not receive parliamentary grants. Far from waning in the face of Victorian modernity, in the 1830s anti-Catholicism was given fresh impetus by the combined threat carried by Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the rising pace of immigration from Ireland, and the Romanish sympathies of Tractarians within the Church of England.<sup>18</sup>

Jews too adopted this Protestant and anti-Catholic narrative of the nation. Salomons placed the ritual murder accusation in a narrative that congratulated British society on its modernity. "The gross calumnies circulated concerning the Jew", Salomons said, afford "a striking contrast between the present age and the dark periods of history". The fact that England in the twelfth century had been the fount of the ritual murder narrative was thus transformed into a positive characteristic of the present. Salomons presented the issue as a humanitarian crusade and invoked the same liberal, imperial, and moral sentiments that infused Victorian opposition to the slave trade: "he felt they would have the support of the British public and their Christian brethren in improving the condition of mankind all over the world."<sup>19</sup> Implicit in Salomons's encomium to the British constitution and its imperial mission was the idea that these were expressions of the Protestant Reformation and its particular influence on "the British people, [who] with true religious feeling, have . . . nobly identified themselves with the sufferings of God's ancient people". It was the influence of Roman Catholicism which united the "dark ages" in England with early nineteenth-century France. He developed this theme in his pamphlet published in 1840, the same year:

Whatever religious sentiments may be professed by individuals, to whatever community they may belong, no reading or thinking man can

17 Dennis Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), ch. 2.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Morning Chronicle*, 25 June 1840, 6. On this theme see Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012), 140–41; Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

deny the benefits which the Reformation has afforded to the civilized world. That great religious movement emancipated the human mind from the trammels of bigotry, and introduced those higher principles of individual responsibility so necessary to the good conduct of each member of society . . . The principle of civil and religious liberty acknowledged at the Reformation, must for ever prevent the recurrence of a period similar to that in which Europe was involved during the middle ages.<sup>20</sup>

As Salomons's speech and pamphlet illustrate, the influence of anti-Catholicism extended beyond the ranks of conversionists. Anti-Catholicism was implicit in every reference to the blood libel as a legacy from the "dark ages". *The Standard*, citing the *Morning Herald*, identified "the monks of the Latin convent" as the "principal actors" in "the horrible tragedy of Damascus".<sup>21</sup> Ratti-Menton was denounced as a "legitimist of the oldest and worst school – an advocate of the imbecile and fanatical party who by their folly brought about the revolution."<sup>22</sup> Despite the advent of the Orleanist regime, France remained indelibly marked by Roman Catholicism: "This is the 'France of July' under the revolutionary dynasty of the barricades – France at Algiers outvies the Arabs of the desert in barbarism – France at Damascus takes a part in re-enacting the savage atrocities against the Jews which begrimed Europe with blood and crime five centuries ago."<sup>23</sup> Defence of the Jews against the blood libel was thus assimilated within a Protestant national imaginary that had the capacity to corral Tory and Whig, Christian and Jew, radical and Anglican, alike, with evangelicals and conversionists placed firmly in the vanguard.

Militant Protestantism was a longstanding feature of Victorian political culture and the Damascus Affair was not the only moment when it focused on Jews as victims of Catholic persecution. It can be seen powerfully at work eighteen years later in the Mortara Affair and even at the end of the century its continuing vitality contributed to responses to the campaign to secure justice for Alfred Dreyfus. The Mortara Affair erupted when the six-year-old Edgardo Mortara was taken from his parents' house in Bologna. That city is located in Romagna, then one of the Papal States and so within the civil jurisdiction of the pontiff. While a baby, Edgardo fell ill and the family's servant girl, fearing that he might die and concerned that his soul would be damned, secretly baptized him, rendering the child

20 Salomons, *An Account*, 61, 75–6.

21 *The Standard*, 9 June 1840, 3.

22 *The Times*, 18 April 1840, 5.

23 *The Standard*, 9 June 1840, 3.

Catholic according to canon law. Edgardo lived, however, and in 1858, news of his baptism reached the Archbishop of Bologna who ordered the gendarmerie to remove the boy from his family home so that he could be raised a Catholic.<sup>24</sup>

The affair quickly became a European scandal and gave rise to heated debates “over individual conscience, freedom of religion, and the respective rights of family and church.”<sup>25</sup> Everywhere the episode was used to question the conduct and prerogatives of the Roman Catholic church. But, whereas in much of Europe this fed into the politics of anti-clericalism, in Britain it was militant Protestantism, in the form of two organizations, the Evangelical Alliance and the Protestant Association, that organized memorials, petitions, and public meetings. An anonymous pamphlet published in 1860 explained that the affair “shews what Popery still is, and what it will be till it perishes. The persecutor of all men, it especially insults the Jews.”<sup>26</sup> *Jewish Intelligence*, the journal of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, labelled the events at Bologna “a flagrant act of robbery”. It illustrated the Catholic falsehood that “it requires only a mechanical process to transmute a heathen into a Christian.”<sup>27</sup> The high tide of protest was a petition assembled by the Evangelical Alliance and signed by Members of Parliament, senior clerics, and more than two thousand individuals and organizations, protesting that the “proceedings of the Pope in Rome are repulsive to the instincts of humanity, and in violation of parental rights and authority . . . and, above all, in direct opposition to the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion.”<sup>28</sup>

As in 1840, the language of anti-Catholicism extended to Jews. Addressing events in Bologna, an editorial in the *Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer* was uninhibited. The newspaper condemned Roman Catholicism as “a religious system which can sanction atrocities of which Sodom and

24 David Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgar Mortara* (London: Picador, 1997).

25 Wolfram Kaiser, “‘Clericalism – That is our Enemy!’ European Anti-Clericalism and the Culture Wars”, in *Culture Wars: Secular–Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Wolfram Kaiser and Christopher Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 74.

26 *The True Story of the Jewish Boy, Edgar Mortara, Who Was Taken From His Parents on June 23rd 1858 by Order of Pope Pius the Ninth and Who is Now in Custody in Rome* (London: Wertheim Macintosh, 1860), 14.

27 *Jewish Intelligence*, 1 Jan. 1859, 2–3.

28 Raphael Langham, “The Reaction in England to the Mortara Affair”, *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 39 (2004): 96.



Gomorraah would have blushed”.<sup>29</sup> The Mortara Affair coincided, broadly, with Lionel de Rothschild’s admission to the House of Commons and the two events led the same newspaper to align patriotism, Protestantism, and the Jews:

Our Protestant Countrymen have indeed reason to congratulate themselves on the great events consummated in the time of Queen Elizabeth. The triumph made by Protestantism under her reign is the greatest conquest in modern time made by the spiritual and moral part of human nature . . . It is the Bible which is the religion of the Protestants and it is the Jews who preserved it for them at the risk of their lives and taught it them in due time. Thus Judaism may fairly claim its share of influence, both in the formation and consolidation of Protestantism.<sup>30</sup>

An interpretation of the Jews’ travails through the lens of militant Protestantism and anti-Catholicism continued to the end of the century. In 1899, following his conviction for treason five years earlier, the case against Dreyfus was tried for a second time, at Rennes. On this occasion, as before, the court martial found Dreyfus guilty, although the verdict was followed eventually by a pardon. In Britain, the outcome of the second court martial precipitated a convulsion of anti-French sentiment expressed in the press and at public meetings. The largest of these demonstrations was held at Hyde Park in London and drew seventy thousand participants. One speaker ascribed the verdict to “priestcraft and clericalism”.<sup>31</sup> Editorials in *The Times* as well as “the authors of several published letters to the editor attempted to extend moral responsibility to the Pope, the Roman *curia* and the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vaughan.”<sup>32</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Reverend Hugh Price Hughes told his London congregation that French Catholics were to blame for the decision at Rennes. He traced the fateful marriage of Catholicism and militarism, apparent in the persecution of Dreyfus, to the creation of the Jesuit Order in 1521 by Ignatius Loyola, a former soldier.<sup>33</sup> The *Methodist Times* concurred that “every one of the chief military proponents

29 *Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer*, 17 Sept. 1858, 316.

30 *Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer*, 3 Dec. 1858, 4.

31 *Daily News*, 18 Sept. 1899, 3.

32 Robert Tombs, “Lesser Breeds Without the Law: The British Establishment and the Dreyfus Affair, 1894–99”, *Historical Journal* 41, no. 2 (June 1998): 506.

33 Ronald Huch, “British Reaction to the Dreyfus Affair”, *Social Science* 50, no. 1 (1975): 23; Roger Standing, “Hughes, Hugh Price (1847–1902)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, ed. Lawrence Goldman (May 2006), [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34043](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34043) (accessed 10 Oct. 2015).

of this fateful outrage is a pupil and disciple of the Jesuit Society.” The Baptist admonished “the Pope and his army of satellites in France”. The Anglican newspapers *The English Churchman* and *Christian World* agreed that a similar injustice could never have occurred in Protestant England.<sup>34</sup>

How should we interpret the consistent support for persecuted Jews expressed by conversionists and other evangelicals? A historical understanding of this activity will not isolate this narrative but will contextualize it alongside other encounters between Jews and evangelicals in Victorian England. A full account would dwell on the literary encounters that Nadia Valman has illuminated.<sup>35</sup> It would also deal in detail with evangelical responses to the Jews’ campaign for civil and political equality. The long struggle to allow a professing Jew to enter Parliament was the foremost domestic political issue through which Jews impinged on evangelicals. Conversionists’ solicitude for Jews persecuted in other countries did not invariably lead them to campaign for the Jews’ political equality at home. Some of the leading early proponents of civil and political equality for Jews were members of the evangelical Philo-Judaean Society.<sup>36</sup> However, Lord Ashley (later Shaftesbury) and other members of the London Society ranked among those most eager to continue to exclude Jews from Parliament and so keep it a Christian assembly.<sup>37</sup>

Jews played a vital role within evangelical eschatology. They were to be loved, not for their current degraded condition, but for their special place in God’s plan. Judaism was valued as the precursor and foundation of Christianity but, petrified by “rabbinism”, Jews were “a people chastened but not wholly cast off.” Their future, guaranteed by prophecy, lay in conversion to Christianity and redemption through acceptance of the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ. In the midst of the Mortara Affair, *Jewish Intelligence* looked forward to this moment: “May the Lord have mercy on you. May he redeem you from your sins, and also from your captivity. May He again take you for His own and make you shining lights; and may the name of Jesus be glorified in you, and preached by you to the ends of the earth.”<sup>38</sup>

34 Huch, “British Reaction”, 25–6.

35 Valman, *The Jewess*.

36 Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 59–60.

37 David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840–1914* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 47.

38 *Jewish Intelligence*, 1 January 1859, 6.

The image of Judaism offered by conversionists could be as much a caricature as anything offered by the Jews' persecutors. The same article in *Jewish Intelligence* asked Jews, "what is your doctrine respecting proselytizing others? How would you act in this case if you had the power?" The writer went on to claim, on the basis of some quotations cherry-picked from Maimonides, that had Jews the power to enforce it, "no other alternative but Judaism or death would be given to the world at large".<sup>39</sup> In this way, Judaism (as it had been interpreted by the rabbis) was seen to bear defects that were similar to those displayed by Roman Catholicism – in this case belief in the efficacy of forced conversion.

Conversionist thinking on Judaism reached its most elaborate expression in the writing of Alexander McCaul. In the 1830s, McCaul regularly preached to Jews on Saturday evenings and published weekly pamphlets, *Old Paths*, which in 1837, were gathered and published as a single volume. He also wrote a series of essays for the *British Magazine* which formed the content for another book, *Sketches of Judaism and the Jews*, published in 1838. He went on, in 1841, to become Professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Literature at King's College in London. McCaul aimed to demonstrate that Christianity was a faithful continuation of the divinely inspired writings of the Old Testament. Judaism, by contrast, was "a new and totally different system, devised by designing men and unworthy of the Jewish people." The term McCaul used for this system was "rabbinism" and it held the same evils that evangelicals habitually found in Roman Catholicism: "If asked to give a concise yet adequate idea of this system, I should say it is Jewish Popery: just as Popery may be defined by Gentile Rabbinism. Its distinguishing feature is that it asserts the transmission of an oral law or traditional law of equal authority with the written law of God, at the same time, that, like Popery, it resolves traditions into the present opinions of the existing Church." McCaul's reverence for Jews as bearers of a Divine mission was laced with contempt for normative Judaism and, therefore, for Jews as he encountered them.

The attitudes to Jews I have examined here were complex. They do not fit comfortably into a dichotomy that places on one side philo-Semitism and professions of "love" for the Jews and on the other an opposite tradition of "antisemitism". In this respect, the analysis provided here augments Valman's analysis of the evangelicals' ambivalent response to Jews. However, in addition we can note that encounters

39 Ibid., 5.

between Jews and evangelicals were instrumental as well as textual. They concerned outcomes – proselytism, Parliament, and persecution overseas – as well as representations. Conversionists could be welcome allies at one moment and opponents at another. Our desire to find a single term – whether “ambivalence”, “antisemitism”, or “philosemitism” – can flatten the contingent relations of power carried within this uneven history.

At least some Jewish contemporaries did perceive the different facets of this relationship. Its uneasy character developed in at least two different ways in the course of the Mortara Affair, one more liberal and outwardly confident, the other conservative and self-effacing. The former was exemplified by the *Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer*. An editorial on 12 November 1858 roundly criticized Sir Culling Eardley, the President of the Evangelical Alliance, for placing the claims of Christianity and not humanity at the core of the campaign to attain the release of Edgar Mortara. Popery, Eardley had maintained, was the greatest impediment to the conversion of Jews. What is striking here is the confidence of the Jewish response: “Although willingly admitting the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism, yet can the Jew pronounce them both at fault. . . . The opposition of the Jew to Christianity is directed against all its forms. Momolo Mortara would have just as much objected to his son being brought up a Protestant as a Roman Catholic.”<sup>40</sup> The Evangelical Alliance was a welcome partner in the struggle against the papacy but its conversionist goals were anathema.

The conservative response was equally significant. As Raphael Langham has noted, British Jews were less active than their French and American co-religionists in the Mortara case. The Board of Deputies, and Moses Montefiore in particular, were reluctant to intervene and were quick to quit the fight once their initial protest had been rejected by Rome.<sup>41</sup> The Mortara case placed Montefiore in an embarrassing position. The Roman Catholic Church defended its actions in the matter by stating that it was enforcing the law in the aftermath of a valid baptism. In other words, it took its stand on the ground of prescription by constituted religious authority. This was precisely the ground on which Montefiore stood, as he supported the Chief Rabbinate in Britain in its dispute with religious reformers in Britain. Not only did Montefiore support the

40 *Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer*, 12 Nov. 1858, 4.

41 Langham, “Reaction in England”, 81–2.

herem (an excommunication) issued in 1841, in 1853 he used his casting vote as President of the Board of Deputies to exclude reformers who did not conform in religious matters to the ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>42</sup> The parallel to the issues raised by the Mortara case is not fanciful. On the contrary, Montefiore's opponents drew attention to the analogy. Lionel de Rothschild accused the communal exclusionists of "popery". He affirmed that "he had every respect for the ecclesiastical authorities but he was not going to be led by them as by a Catholic priest. They might be, and no doubt were, very learned men but they had no right to inquire of him whether he kept one or two days of the festivals."<sup>43</sup> The Mortara affair presented Montefiore with a problem. It offered him an occasion to intervene not only in the cause of the Jews but also of social and moral progress. However, he would also have been aware that in doing so he was attacking the religious authority – based on precedent, law, and hierarchy – that he defended in Britain and which had been attacked as analogous to popery.

As Rothschild's spat with Montefiore illustrates, some Jews embraced the rhetoric of patriotic Protestantism and of anti-popery as their own. The history of Jewish anti-Catholicism – directed both at real Catholics and at fictive Catholics within their own ranks – is an unexplored facet of Jewish history in Victorian Britain.<sup>44</sup> The Damascus, Mortara, and Dreyfus affairs placed the interests of Jews in opposition to those of Catholics. In this respect, the strain of Jewish anti-Catholicism is unsurprising. Yet for individuals such as David Salomons and Lionel de Rothschild and for a newspaper such as the *Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer*, anti-Catholicism carried a rhetorical dimension. In adopting the language of anti-Catholicism they placed British Jewry, and themselves as its representatives, within the predominant national story. It was a political language that allowed Jews to present themselves as rational, patriotic, and liberal. Catholicism was an ideal antagonist for it was widely perceived to carry none of these qualities. Moreover, in the struggle for Jewish equality these were the very virtues that Jews were required

42 Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 47; Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 67.

43 Lionel de Rothschild quoted in Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 69.

44 See comments, though, in Abigail Green, "Nationalism and the 'Jewish International': Religious Internationalism in Europe and the Middle East c. 1840–80", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 2 (April 2008): 535–58. For France and Germany see Ari Joskowitz, *The Modernity of Others: Jewish Anti-Catholicism in Germany and France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

to demonstrate. If we conceive Jewish emancipation as a process that extended beyond a narrow legal process to encompass Jews' integration within political culture more broadly, then anti-Catholicism must be reckoned a significant component of that history.