

“Jessey the Educator” and “Jessey the Jew”: Henry Jessey, Hebraism, and Puritan pedagogy in seventeenth-century England

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*And as he expert was in holy tongue, / He's making now an everlasting
Song; / Swanlike his lips, o life with warbling death / Sung sweetest notes of
praise in dying breath. / What if deaths dart did us in Jessey wound, / The
root of Jessey grows not underground; / The root doth grow, above there all
is found: / That doth with everlasting fruits abound.¹*

Henry Jessey – the seventeenth-century English Baptist, millenarian, and educator – was a crucial figure in the English Reformation, whose “everlasting Song” has only recently been rediscovered by scholars. Jessey’s life and work was largely influenced by his historical moment, as a “pastor in politics”² who lived through the English Civil Wars, interregnum, and the early days of the Restoration of the English monarchy. He was an active millenarian, with a scholarly knowledge of Jewish tradition and the Hebrew language. He was also an educator, who exhibited an acute Puritan approach to childhood and developmental education through a number of pedagogical texts, and who aimed more broadly to educate Christians and Jews about each other. Yet these two key aspects of Jessey’s identity have been examined almost entirely separately from one another in the historical scholarship. This paper will, for the first time, consider together Jessey’s Hebraism and pedagogical interests. An appreciation for the ways in which Hebraism shaped Jessey’s pedagogical aims, and for the ways in which those same aims may have limited his commitment to Hebraism, is significant not only for proper understanding of Jessey’s work. It also allows for a more precise evaluation of the extent of Jessey’s “philo-Semitism”, as well as the broader accomplishments of Puritan educational reform in seventeenth-century England.

1 Edward Whiston, *The Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey* (London, 1671), 107–8.

2 Ernestine G. E. Van der Wall, “A Philo-Semitic Millenarian on the Reconciliation of Jews and Christians: Henry Jessey and his ‘The Glory and Salvation of Jehudah and Israel’ (1650)”, in *Sceptics, Millenarians, and Jews*, ed. David Katz and Jonathan Israel (New York: Brill, 1990), 163.

Hebraism in the Renaissance and Reformation

Prior to the Renaissance of late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe, Hebrew was largely absent from the Christian intellectual world. In fact, there was no official Hebrew programme in European universities until 1540, when Henry VIII established the Regius professorships of Hebrew at Cambridge and Oxford.³ This is not to suggest, though, that Christians lacked interest in Hebrew and Judaism prior to the Renaissance. Early anti-Jewish writings in the eleventh and twelfth centuries – medieval *adversus Iudeos* literature – were ubiquitous and were even used as models of rhetoric in schools.⁴ And while, as Michael Signer argues, there were few true scholars of the Hebrew language in the twelfth century, many “cultural Hebraists” made connections with Jews and wrote about Hebrew and Jewish literature.⁵

By the early fifteenth century, the study of Hebrew texts – not only through the Old Testament but in Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources as well – was a central part of Renaissance scholarship and was established as a field in its own right. For example, Leonardo Bruni, the Italian humanist, historian, and politician, helped to establish interest in Hebrew in the early Renaissance, suggesting that a complete understanding of Platonic thought would require a knowledge of the Hebrew language. In his 1405 translation of Plato’s *Phaedo*, Bruni affirmed that “Plato received his wisdom from Jewish sources” and that Platonic doctrines were inextricably tied to the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁶ This renewed curiosity in the study of Hebrew texts and Jewish theology, moreover, was largely made possible by the growth of Italian printing culture. It was the fifteenth-century Italian printing houses that became the “scriptoria of Judaica”, providing the prayer books, Old Testaments,

3 Frank E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 31.

4 Anna Sapir Abulafia, “‘Sie Stinken Beide’, or How to Use Medieval Christian-Jewish Disputational Material”, in *Seeing Things Their Way*, ed. Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 76–7.

5 See Michael A. Signer, “Polemic and Exegesis: The Varieties of Twelfth-Century Hebraism”, in *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

6 For other examples of early Renaissance interest in Hebrew, see Abraham Melamed, “Introduction”, in *Hebraic Aspects of the Renaissance: Sources and Encounters*, ed. Ilana Zinguer, Abraham Melamed, and Zur Shalev (Boston, MA: Brill, 2011), pp. 1–6.

and even Talmuds and rabbinic commentaries that allowed the Christian-Hebraica movement to flourish.⁷ As Frank Manuel argues, though, this early Renaissance interest in the Hebrew language was not grounded on any institutional basis. Rather, Christian scholars and humanists would personally have to find a rabbi who could serve as their tutor and, at best, provide them with a foundation in Hebrew. Even Pico della Mirandola, the fifteenth-century Italian philosopher who inaugurated the Christian study of Jewish mysticism – known as Kabbalah – was largely reliant on his tutor, the converted Jew Flavius Mithridates. It was Mithridates who translated thousands of folios of Kabbalah for Pico from Hebrew or Aramaic into Latin, since Pico’s own understanding of Hebrew was limited.⁸

Like many other intellectual currents of the Renaissance, the philological interest in Hebrew that began in Italy had spread into Protestant Europe by the seventeenth century.⁹ However, these intellectuals were thinking and writing within a deeply contentious Protestant context; moreover, partly as a result of Martin Luther’s own relationship with the Jews and his theological influence, the study of Hebrew was further complicated. In the early part of his career, Luther was largely supportive of Hebraism and, while hoping for their widespread conversion, was empathetic towards the Jewish people.¹⁰ This toleration for the Jews, moreover, was also a product of broader Protestant theological ideas: the turn against the papacy, which replaced Judaism as the embodiment of the anti-Christ, helped to diminish the widespread antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence that characterized Judeo-Christian relations in the medieval period.¹¹ Yet by the late 1530s – following the expulsion of Jews from Saxony in 1536 and the subsequent influence of Sabbatarian “judaizing” throughout Germany – Luther no longer believed that Jewish conversion to Christianity was possible. Moreover, to counter his previous toleration of the Jews, he actually enlarged his own definition of the anti-

7 Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 32.

8 *Ibid.*, 31, 42.

9 Melamed, “Introduction”, 4.

10 See Armas K. E. Holmio, *Martin Luther: Friend or Foe of the Jews* (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1949), 16–17; Jerome Friedman, “Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica: Scripture and the Renaissance Myth of the Past”, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11 (1980): 74.

11 Howard Hotson, “Anti-Semitism, Philo-Semitism, Apocalypticism, and Millenarianism in Early Modern Europe: A Case Study and Some Methodological Reflections”, in Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way*, 99–100.

Christ into a “diabolical, eschatological trinity” that was comprised of the papacy as well as Jews and Turks.¹² Thus in his 1543 essay “Concerning the Jews and their Lies”, Luther retreated from his former declarations, asserting, “Our people, the Christians, should watch out for them, the Jews, that they should not be misled by that stubborn, cursed people (whom God punishes because of their lies; a people who haughtily despises the world). The Jews tried their utmost to convert us to their religion.”¹³

Luther’s antagonistic proclamation did not keep Hebraists from their work: a wide range of Continental Protestant scholars of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries remained deeply committed to the study of Hebrew. Sebastian Munster, for example, the early sixteenth-century German cartographer, cosmologist, and philosopher, was also known as the “German Ezra” for his work in Christian-Hebraism. Among other things, Munster produced a collection of Hebrew and Aramaic grammars and a trilingual dictionary in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin that provided a foundation for further Protestant scholarship in the field.¹⁴ Recently, Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg have argued that Isaac Casaubon, the sixteenth-century French philosopher and classical philologist, not only had a keen understanding of Hebrew and Aramaic but also approached Jewish texts in the same way that he worked with classical materials in Latin and Greek. In other words, Casaubon’s work in the field of Christian-Hebraism mirrored his scholarship and philological interests in classical humanism, bridging the gap between these two forms of Renaissance study.¹⁵ These Continental Protestant Christian-Hebraists were not only interested in Hebrew for its use in theological scholarship, but also – as the example of Casaubon further proves – for its inherent educational importance. Abandoning the common “four-fold method” of Hebrew exegesis, which sought to provide both a literal translation and “Christological interpretation” of the Old Testament, early Protestant Hebraists focused on the developing art of translation. By aiming for a philological and historical understanding of the Old Testament, they saw that it was necessary to remove Christ from their

12 Ibid., 100.

13 Holmio, *Martin Luther*, 24.

14 Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 48.

15 See Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, with Alastair Hamilton, “I have always loved the holy tongue”: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship (London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

interpretation, and thus analysed the Jewish text with a “tacit acceptance of its dogmatic significance”.¹⁶ In other words, such a close analysis would allow for a greater appreciation of the importance of the text as a work in and of itself, without the influence of Christian overtones; again, these Hebraists were not interested in religious rhetoric.

Many sixteenth-century Christian-Hebraists even went beyond Scriptural analysis and furthered the development of Hebraism as an independent area of study. If Christian-Hebraists had only been interested in Hebrew for its philological significance, Jerome Friedman claims, then there would be greater evidence of their use of translation tools like the Hebrew dictionaries, lexicons, and grammars that were ubiquitous by 1550. The fact that Christian-Hebraists turned not only to the Old Testament but also to Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources suggests that they found deeper sources of meaning in Hebrew texts beyond the purposes of translation. In the wake of Pico della Mirandola, Johann Reuchlin became the leading Protestant intellectual who studied and wrote about the Talmud and Kabbalah in the early sixteenth century. Reuchlin was a scholar of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, and a Stuttgart civil administrator and jurist. Moreover, he became a staunch defender of the Talmud and Kabbalah and helped to ward off the spreading censorship of the early Reformation.¹⁷ This wide-ranging exegesis embodied by Reuchlin and other Protestant Christian Kabbalists is evidence of a larger Renaissance idea. Hebraism, as Friedman argues, like the study of Greek and Latin, was a means of accessing a distant past in which answers to contemporary problems might be found.¹⁸ In an age of theological dispute, Hebrew was important both as “God’s own grammar” and as the language of a longstanding scholarly tradition itself – an educational tool in the arts of argumentation and rhetoric.

By the early seventeenth century, though, Christian study of Kabbalah was in decline. After Pico and Reuchlin, the only Christian theologians who studied Kabbalah were those who were interested in predicting the Second Coming. The exception to this rule were Christians who, as knowledge of rabbinic Hebrew spread, were able to find passages in the Talmud and in post-Talmudic rabbinic texts that contained “expressions of loathing for Christians, curses, and blasphemous depictions of Christ, Mary, and the Apostles”, which only further distanced Jews

16 Friedman, “Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica”, 71.

17 Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 45.

18 Friedman, “Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica”, 84.

from Protestants.¹⁹ No longer were scholars interested in ancient and rabbinic Judaism for their own sakes, as another area of study in the realm of classical humanism. Moreover, as Stephen Burnett shows, this intellectual shift was reflective of the movement of Christian-Hebraism at large. Unlike previous generations of intellectuals, early seventeenth-century Protestants did not require the help of Jews but could learn the biblical language from their fellow Christian-Hebraists, and study both Hebrew and Aramaic as part of the established university programmes in oriental languages.²⁰

Yet the early seventeenth century also witnessed the spread of Christian-Hebraism to England, where its presence was ubiquitous.²¹ Its arrival was anticipated by a number of key sixteenth-century innovations. First, as noted earlier, Henry VIII instituted Regius chairs of Hebrew at Oxford and Cambridge in 1540. Second, intellectual exchange with Continental Protestant scholars allowed for the diffusion of Hebrew Bibles, grammars, and even Talmudic and rabbinic texts through England. These grammars, as David Katz argues, democratized the study of Hebrew on their entrance in the popular market.²² Accompanying this public interest in Christian-Hebraism was the millenarian scholarship of Johann Heinrich Alsted and Joseph Mede. In 1627, Mede completed his *Clavis Apocalyptica* while a fellow at Christ's College. The *Clavis* argued that a numerological and eschatological approach to the Book of Revelation could reveal its underlying millenarian meaning. Mede's exegesis, in turn, won him intellectual respect and admiration both in England and on the Continent.²³ In the same year Alsted published his *Diatribes de Mille Annis Apocalypticis* and the second edition of his *Theologia Polemica*, two works that were also milestones in inaugurating the English millenarian movement. Moreover, they were two of the first that equally criticized Christian and Jewish millenarian beliefs: while Jews ignore the first

19 Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 143, 149.

20 *Ibid.*, 71; Melamed, "Introduction", 10; see also Stephen Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500–1660)* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2012).

21 This is not to suggest that there were no English Christian-Hebraists before the seventeenth century; see e.g. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, "A School of Christian Hebraists in Thirteenth-Century England: A Unique Hebrew–Latin–French and English Dictionary and its Sources", *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 249–77.

22 See e.g. Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (1610), 4.5.18–23.

23 Jeffrey K. Jue, "Puritan Millenarianism in Old and New England", in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 263.

advent of the Messiah, Alsted argues, too many of his contemporary Christians also fail to recognize the present signs of the second advent. As Howard Hotson suggests, Alsted was willing “to meet Jewish messianic expectations halfway”.²⁴ The intellectual prominence of Alsted and Mede points to the fact that eschatological disputes were already in full force well before the political upheaval of mid-seventeenth-century England. Moreover, it shows that the importance of Jewish learning was recognized even before England would consider readmitting Jews.

Henry Jessey the nonconformist minister

Henry Jessey, the minister of “respectable nonconformity”,²⁵ provides a clear example of the influence of the Christian-Hebraic tradition in revolutionary mid-seventeenth-century England. Born in 1601, Jessey was “carefully Educated by his Parents, until he became capable of Grammar School”, subsequently entering St. John’s College at Cambridge in 1619.²⁶ After converting to Puritanism in the same year, Jessey received his degree in 1623 and then stayed at Cambridge to study Hebrew and rabbinical literature. Following his graduation in 1626, and ten years of preaching, tutoring, and establishing himself as a “nonconformist minister”, he was urged to replace John Lathrop as the pastor of the Independent Jacob Church. But, in order to understand Jessey in his role in the Jacob Church – the congregation whom he served as pastor from 1636 until his death in 1663 – it is first necessary to understand the historical context of the church from its beginnings in 1616, as well as the larger milieu of seventeenth-century English religious radicalism.²⁷

The historiography of this tumultuous era has primarily focused on the separatism and sectarianism urged by religious nonconformists. Indeed, John Coffey in his *Persecution and Toleration* insists that there were two essential changes in religion in seventeenth-century England: the destruction of the Anglican religious “monopoly” and the resulting dissemination of non-Anglican sects, and the dissolution of a widespread

24 Hotson, “Anti-Semitism, Philo-Semitism, Apocalypticism”, 107.

25 Van der Wall, “Philo-Semitic Millenarian”, 163.

26 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 1.

27 For Henry Jacob and the Jacob Church, see “Records of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church 1616–1641”, *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 1 (1908–9): 203–25; Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1616–1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 4–20.

insistence on religious uniformity.²⁸ And Christopher Hill argued that radicals entirely discarded the notion of a state church and its system of tithes, in favour of a more democratic, independent system of individual church elections and voluntary contributions.²⁹ On the one hand, the founding principles of the Jacob Church seem to conform with this sectarian doctrine. In his 1605 *Humble Supplication to his Majesty King James*, Henry Jacob insisted that “each Church of Christ should be so independent as it should have ye full Power of all ye Church affairs entire within itselfe”, and in fact provided “An Exposition of ye Second Comandement, shewing that therein now is required a right vissible Church State & Government independent”.³⁰ On the other hand, Jacob strongly believed that absolute separation from the Anglican establishment was neither necessary nor productive. He insisted that while Anglicans “in simplicity” subscribed to a corrupted doctrine, they were still “true Christians nevertheless” and could not simply be deserted.³¹ In fact, Jacob searched to find theological arguments that might bridge the gap between congregational self-sufficiency and the Christian legitimacy of the Anglican Church.³² Thus, when one remembers that the Jacob Church served as the parent congregation for almost all the Particular Baptist churches in seventeenth-century England, and that Jacob’s church “for twenty-five years served as a recruiting agency and training school for some of the most important sectarian leaders of the coming revolutionary period”, its strictly non-sectarian philosophy should not be forgotten.³³

Now, scholars of seventeenth-century England are in consensus on the fundamentally religious nature of the English Civil War. But even ten years before the beginnings of the war, reconciliation between Nonconformists and the national church ceased to be a possibility. The notorious High Commission, originally established by Queen Elizabeth, helped to stimulate the violent and deeply religious civil war of the following decade. The centerpiece of the High Commission was the ex

28 John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558–1689* (New York: Pearson Education, 2000), 6.

29 Christopher Hill, “Irreligion in the ‘Puritan’ Revolution”, in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, ed. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 196.

30 “Records of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church”, 207–8.

31 Henry Jacob, *A Defence of the Churches and Ministry of Englande* (Middelburg, 1599), 38.

32 David R. Como, “Radical Puritanism, c. 1558–1660”, in Coffey and Lim, *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 246.

33 “Records of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church”, 205; Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, 4.

officio oath: if the commissioners suspected individuals of nonconformity, they could simply summon them by virtue of their office – without an official claim or accusation – and force them to take a religious oath. If they refused, the commissioners maintained the authority to imprison the nonconformists for an indefinite period. By 1640, David Como argues, the “forces of sectarian Puritanism” were unleashed, and preachers and propagandists were suddenly able to proclaim and disperse their beliefs without an immediate persecutory backlash.³⁴ By 1646, there were more than thirty-five separate churches in London. Upon the King’s execution, moreover, religious sectarianism only further intensified: Murray Tolmie insists that “the sense of common purpose and common dangers shared by the London churches in the 1640s began to give way in the next decade to a hardening of denominational lines, as groups of churches moved together to define their common ground and to distinguish themselves from other groups.”³⁵ Thus scholars claim to have identified a trend of steadily, and at times exponentially, increasing religious radicalism through the Cromwellian regime, only dissipating by the time of Charles II’s restoration in 1660.

When one considers that Jessey’s own career spanned the length of this tumultuous era, it would be easy to suggest that his mode of nonconformity fitted in with this larger sectarian movement. It is true that Jessey was by no means an Anglican, and expressed no intentions of reconciliation with the national church. Yet one can clearly observe the ways in which Jessey was influenced by Henry Jacob’s original ecclesiastical and political principles. In 1640, Jessey’s church split equally into two congregations, one being led by Jessey and the other by the preacher and future politician Praise-God Barebones. While this was a logistical necessity – the congregation under one pastor would simply have been too big – it was also the result of debate over the proper mode of baptism. Again, in 1644, those members of Jessey’s church who repudiated infant baptism in favour of believer’s baptism split off to join groups led by Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin. Jessey himself came to accept believer’s baptism and in 1645 was rebaptized by Knollys; yet throughout these disputes of theological detail, Jessey maintained a remarkably open and tolerant stance. In fact, he not only sought to maintain a greater union among the smaller sects of his own church, but also reached

34 Como, “Radical Puritanism”, 252

35 Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, 5–6.

outside his own congregation to find points of commonality with other groups. As opposed to strict separatists, Jessey was eager to work with radical reformers within the Anglican church, while retaining separatist members of his own congregation. B. R. White characterizes the web of religious groups surrounding Jessey's church as organized in a "common looseknit interdependence", where "there were no high walls of bitterness between them and even the withdrawals are recorded as brotherly."³⁶ To understand Henry Jessey, then, is to understand one way in which radical, sectarian nonconformity and intergroup toleration could coexist during the upheavals of mid-seventeenth-century England.

Henry Jessey the Hebraist

Even as a minister of Christ, Jessey's Hebrew education deeply influenced his own beliefs and was reflected in his writings. First and foremost, Jessey was an active millenarian, with a strong conviction that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. Many millenarians at this time believed that the Jews, in their conversion to Christianity, were to play an essential part in the Messiah's return.³⁷ A product of this eschatological environment, Jessey devoted his life's work to the study of Hebrew and Jewish theology as a means to convince the Jews of Christianity's truth and his fellow Christians of the Jews' theological importance. According to his biographer, Jessey learned not only Hebrew but also the "Syriac and Chalde Dialects which the unlearned Jews spake in their captivity, which gave occasion to the holy Pen-men, who then lived (as Daniel, Ezekiel, &c.) to use (wholy or miscelaniously in part) those Dialects".³⁸ And Jessey "exhorted all Christians" to learn Hebrew as well, since he believed that the revival of Hebrew as the "pure language" would accompany the millennium.³⁹ In fact, in 1652 Jessey began work on a new translation of the Bible with John Owen and John Row, the latter a Hebrew professor at Aberdeen; while it was nearly completed by 1659, it was never published.⁴⁰ Although this was less than fifty years after the publication of the King

36 B. R. White, "Henry Jessey in the Great Rebellion", in *Reformation Conformity and Dissent: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall*, ed. R. Buick Knox (London: Epworth Press, 1977), 134-5.

37 David S. Katz, "Anonymous Advocates of the Readmission of the Jews to England", in *Michael: On the History of the Jews in Diaspora* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1986), 126.

38 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 43.

39 *Ibid.*, 62.

40 Stephen Wright, "Henry Jessey" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

James Bible, Jessey argued that “even the best translations are many ways faulty”, and viewed exegesis as a continually ongoing and revisionary task. In particular, Jessey believed that the Hebraisms of the New Testament should be “carefully observed in Translations”, and was committed to providing “more English, and fewer Greek, and Latine words” in his translation for the benefit of the widest possible audience.⁴¹ Finally, in his everyday life, too, Jessey exemplified the true Hebrew scholar and millenarian. He was said to have observed the Sabbath, as the Jews did, on Saturdays, but “managed his Judgment and practice therein with great caution” so as not to offend his congregation and only fulfilled this duty with “4 or 5 more of the same mind”.⁴² His copies of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments were his “sword and dagger” and with him at all times.⁴³ It is not surprising, then, that Jessey earned himself the nickname “Jessey the Jew”.⁴⁴

As a Hebraist, Henry Jessey is notable not only for his scholarship on the Hebrew language but also for his political efforts to help Jews across the Diaspora. In particular, he maintained a long partnership and friendship with Menasseh ben Israel, the Dutch rabbi and *shtadlan* (intercessor) who advocated the Jews’ readmission to England. As Sina Rauschenbach argues, Menasseh – like Jessey – was both active in the political realm and a Hebrew scholar and author, deeply engaged in the Christian Hebraica tradition. In turn, his relationship with Jessey only further indicates the important alignment between Hebraism and pedagogy. Menasseh had a great appreciation for Pico della Mirandola who, according to Menasseh, was “the model for a Christian author studying Jewish sources”.⁴⁵ He strongly believed in the power of cultural and educational exchange, and argued that dialogue between Jews and Christians would be beneficial for both parties. Moreover, in his own scholarship, Menasseh worked to find points of theological congruity to further his goals of Judeo-Christian reconciliation.⁴⁶ He was, Rauschenbach argues, a true educational innovator: although, from the fifteenth century on, Jews had worked with Christians to produce grammars and dictionaries for the study of Hebrew,

41 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 45, 48–9, 55–6, 58.

42 *Ibid.*, 87.

43 Katz, “Anonymous Advocates of the Readmission”, 125–7.

44 Van der Wall, “Philo-Semitic Millenarian”, 164.

45 Sina Rauschenbach, “Mediating Jewish Knowledge: Menasseh ben Israel and the Christian *Respublica litteraria*”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102 (2012): 563.

46 See Menasseh ben Israel, *De resurrectione mortuorum libri III* (1636) and *De fragilitate humana* (1642); Rauschenbach, “Mediating Jewish Knowledge”, 567.

Menasseh went a step further by making Jewish thought accessible in Latin to a wider audience.⁴⁷

On one hand, this partnership between Menasseh and Jessey was largely based on a shared political awareness. The 1640s and early 50s, following the end of political censorship, witnessed not only an explosion of radical Christian doctrine but also widespread reference to contemporary Jews – a new and heightened understanding of the Jews’ historical and present-day suffering.⁴⁸ Part of this consciousness was a result of, not surprisingly, millenarianism: following the purported discovery of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, and the publication of Menasseh’s *Humble Addresses*,⁴⁹ the theological argument to readmit the Jews was stronger than ever. But additionally, Jessey and Menasseh understood that the political prerogative to advance Jewish readmission was urgent and, in fact, could realistically be accomplished. In some sense, Menasseh’s presence at the 1655 Whitehall Conference, in which Jewish readmission to England was debated, and Jessey’s “Narrative of the late Proceeds at Whitehall concerning the Jews” were attempts to counter the recent resurgence in arguments against Jewish readmission. Just six years before, when readmission was first seriously considered, rumours quickly spread that the Jews were also negotiating to purchase St. Paul’s in London and a library at Oxford for their own use.⁵⁰ And the polemicist William Prynne was becoming a fairly vocal opponent against their cause – in fact, during the Whitehall Conference he published his *Demurrer*, which recalled Jewish ritual murders in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, and may well have contributed to the failure of formal readmission.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Cromwell’s own attitudes towards the Jews and Jessey’s relationship with the Lord Protector seemed to suggest that readmission would succeed. Cromwell, while not an ardent millenarian, did express his belief that the Jews would be a part of God’s divine plan, and hoped one day to see the union between all “godly people” (upon the Jews’ conversion to Christianity).⁵² And Jessey, who in 1653 had sided with

47 Rauschenbach, “Mediating Jewish Knowledge”, 569.

48 David Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 169.

49 Menasseh ben Israel’s *Humble Addresses to the Lord Protector* (1655) envisions England as the final frontier of Jewish Diaspora expansion, only after which would it be possible for Messiah to arrive on Earth.

50 Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission*, 179.

51 *Ibid.*, 221–2.

52 *Ibid.*, 190; Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 148.

Cromwell against his own political constituency, might have thought that Cromwell would return the favour in 1655.⁵³

On the other hand, even before they recognized this shared political agenda, Menasseh and Jessey were united in a common interest in millenarianism, Hebraism, and exegetical philology. In 1649, Jessey attached a postscript to a letter sent by Nathaniel Homes, the Puritan preacher and theologian, to Menasseh ben Israel. In return, Menasseh sent Jessey an autographed copy of *The Hope of Israel*, which was to be published in the following year. Jessey's copy of the text, now at Dr. Williams's Library in London, is illuminating. Jessey marked up the pages with his own English translations of the Latin and Hebrew, noting, for example, Menasseh's misspelling of the Hebrew word "ophir".⁵⁴ But on a deeper level, this text clearly exhibits a scholarly exchange in millenarian theology. Jessey often adds his own references in the margins, citing Scriptural passages that help to confirm the prophecies noted in the text. He seems especially interested in Menasseh's philology as it relates to Fifth Monarchist principles. For example, Jessey marks where Menasseh discusses the placement of the Hebrew letter "mim" in Isaiah 9:7, suggesting that its "hidden" placement in the middle of words signifies the similar hiddenness of the Fifth Monarchy prior to its arrival.⁵⁵ Moreover, this text highlights the way in which both Jessey and Menasseh perceive a divine importance within their contemporary setting. By engaging in a philological, even Scriptural, analysis of a contemporary revelation – the appearance of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel – they bring their scholarship into the realm of modern-day Judaism.

For Menasseh and Jessey, closely tied to the political goal of readmission was a shared belief in the power of writing, as an educational tool, to convince the general public of their cause. This is evident in Jessey's *Narrative of the late Proceeds at White-Hall concerning the Jews*, directed to those "inquisitive to hear the Truth thereof". This "Truth" is an account of the conference that is largely supportive of the Jews, focusing almost exclusively on the arguments made in favour of their cause. Here, Jessey employs a number of rhetorical strategies. First, he reiterates the theological claim that defends the Jews "for their Fathers sake", for he

53 See B. R. White, "Henry Jessey: A Pastor in Politics", *Baptist Quarterly* n.s., 25 (1973/4): 105.

54 Henry Jessey's copy of Menasseh ben Israel's *Spes Israeli*, London, Dr. Williams's Library, 3008.D.22, p. 18.

55 *Ibid.*, 84.

and his fellow Christians “partake of the Messiah, and promises, and salvation, that was to the Jewes, as natural branches of the Olive-tree . . . because their Brethren we are; of the same Father Abraham”.⁵⁶ He reaffirms the argument that England, in particular, has a duty to support the Jewish cause; following the Jews’ harsh treatment under Richard I, Henry III, and Edward I, “in no Nation hath there been more faithful, frequent, and fervent prayers for the Jews than in England”.⁵⁷ While he notes the economic arguments made against the Jews’ readmission – that the merchants would lose business upon their arrival – Jessey cites the counter-argument that “the Jews coming and so trading might tend to the bringing lower the prices of all sorts of commodities imported . . . and to the benefit of most of our Manufactures (where they shall live) by their buying of them”.⁵⁸ Finally, Jessey attempts to win over his readers with pity: he reminds them that “many Jews are now in very great straits in many places”, and that “many Jewish merchants had come from beyond seas to London” in hope of a successful outcome but, following the confusion and irresolution that marked the end of the conference, “they removed hence again to beyond the Seas, which much grief of heart, that they were thus disappointed of their hopes.”⁵⁹ Jessey is explicit about his educational intentions for this narrative: that readers will send it “to their Christian Friends”, so as to spread his “Truth” as widely and effectively as possible.

In this way, one sees that the relationship between Henry Jessey and Menasseh ben Israel was founded in common political and theological goals, and in a common pedagogical belief. They both desired Jewish readmission to England, which would, in turn, allow for the Messiah’s return, and understood that this successful political outcome would only be truly effective if the general public were better educated in Jewish culture and the Hebrew language. And in fact, the *Whitehall Narrative* was neither the first nor last of Jessey’s works that made use of this educational strategy. Between 1645 and 1662, Jessey published annual almanacs entitled *A Scripture Almanack or The Scripture Calendar*, whereby he took advantage of the fact that almanacs were the “quintessential mass market item of the booksellers” in seventeenth-century England and as

56 Henry Jessey, *A Narrative of the late Proceeds at White-Hall concerning the Jews* (London 1656), 3–4.

57 *Ibid.*, 4.

58 *Ibid.*, 9.

59 *Ibid.*, 9–10.

such were one of the first sources of printed material that could effectively educate the public at large.⁶⁰ In its first edition in 1645, Jessey concludes by providing an account, citing Daniel 2, “of the four monarchies which had stretched through world history until his own day ‘and of the Fifth shortly succeeding, and farr surpassing them all.’”⁶¹ This passage highlights not only Jessey’s millenarian beliefs but also his relationship to the notorious Fifth Monarchy Men. Bernard Capp, who has provided the most comprehensive account of this group, describes the Fifth Monarchists as a “political and religious sect” who advanced a uniquely revolutionary form of millenarianism – one in which the millennium would “arise from amongst the saints, ordinary citizens and soldiers”.⁶² While many of the proposals of the Fifth Monarchy Men seemed fairly reasonable – abolishing tithes, redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor, cleansing the clergy, and eradicating unnecessarily harsh punishment for small offences – they were notably violent in their aims.⁶³ Jessey, as the “respectable” Nonconformist, was known for his moderation within the Fifth Monarchy movement. He was deeply critical of the Cromwellian government but, as noted earlier, was willing to work with the Lord Protector and endured repeated ridicule from fellow Fifth Monarchists as a result.⁶⁴ And his *Scripture Almanacs*, while advancing Fifth Monarchist views, also laud past monarchical institutions that have justly performed their duty.⁶⁵

In addition to the fundamentals of millenarianism, Jessey’s *Scripture Almanacs* provide an account of his own beliefs about Judaism, Hebrew, and the role of the Jewish people. One of the most important features of his theology, as discussed earlier, was the reestablishment of the Sabbath on the sixth day of the week and, more radically, the adoption of the Jewish calendar. In the almanacs, he grounds this Sabbatarian argument in Hebrew and Greek passages of Scripture, which are printed alongside the text, and suggests parallels between the ancient lunar calendar and the

60 Steve Baker, “Premillennialism and Calendar Reform in Revolutionary England: Henry Jessey’s *Scripture Almanac*”, *Journal of the Union Faculty Forum*, 20 (2000): 8.

61 Jessey quoted in White, “Henry Jessey: A Pastor in Politics”, 100.

62 B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 14.

63 *Ibid.*, 4, 56; Bernard Capp, “The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism”, in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, ed. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 173.

64 White, “Henry Jessey: A Pastor in Politics”, 117.

65 Baker, “Premillennialism and Calendar Reform”, 15.

Christian solar calendar.⁶⁶ In the style of Kabbalah, Jessey uses number and prophecy to predict the Messiah's return: 'From the Creation of the first Adam, to the end of the world by Noahs Flood . . . are 1656 y. From the Incarnation of the 2 Adam, to the beginning of a new and flourishing World, wherein shall be a restitution of all things . . . tis hoped (by some) will be about the like space.'⁶⁷

Moreover, Jessey incorporates biblical Jewish laws that not only support his millenarianism but also offer critical perspectives on the socio-economic problems of his day. In biblical Israel, Jessey asserts, every seventh year was a time "of rest to that Land, and of freedome to Debtors and slaves", and every fiftieth year was proclaimed a Jubilee "for liberty, even to such servants as had despised it before, and to debtors, and for lands and houses sold or mortgaged". These teachings, as Baker argues, "offer support for programs of radical redistribution of wealth", and reflect the Fifth Monarchists' strategy – as well as those of many English Nonconformist groups – of reaching out to the poor to gain further support against the religious establishment.⁶⁸ Finally, Jessey's almanacs reiterate his consistent belief that the millennium would provide the "restitution of all things". For Jessey, this restitution was just as much a part of God's divine history for the Christians as for the Jews (his "Church of Old"⁶⁹), and thus his almanacs were meant to help foster the goal of Judeo-Christian reconciliation.

Many of Jessey's other texts reflect his Hebraic and Jewish interests, too, as well as his hope for the Jews' acceptance into England. In 1658, a pamphlet entitled *An Information Concerning the Present State of the Jewish Nation in Europe and Judea* was published and widely circulated in London. This text was published anonymously, and it is more than possible that Jessey was its author; David Katz suggests that his fellow millenarians John Dury and Samuel Hartlib may have written it, but since all three men were working in conjunction with one another, the attribution of individual authorship may not be possible or strictly necessary. Addressed to the "sober minded" Christian reader, this pamphlet at once makes political, historical, and theological claims that provide a compassionate and compelling understanding of the Jewish people. It notes the great distress of the German Jews in Jerusalem, where "four hundred of

66 *Ibid.*, 9, 14.

67 *Ibid.*, 11.

68 *Ibid.*, 15.

69 Henry Jessey, *Miscellanea Sacra: or, Diverse necessary Truth* (London 1665), 30.

their widows were famished to death, and the taxes laid upon them by the Turks, being rigorously exacted, they were haled into prison, their Synagogues were shut up, their Rabbi's and Elders beaten and cruelly used".⁷⁰ This example, for the author of the pamphlet, serves to depict the larger historical plight of the Jews – that “as the distress of Nations doth increase in the world, so the affliction and misery of the Jews; they being scattered among these Nations . . . and not being able to return to the Inheritance which they expect as a Nation in the Land of Canaan, there the land being theirs by Gods Promise, their Affliction and Calamity must needs be by so much greater than that of other Nations.”⁷¹

In turn, this increase in “the distress of Nations” is interpreted as evidence of the millennium, a “manifest preparation” for the return of the Jews to their rightful land and the arrival of the Messiah. And to convince its Christian audience of the Jews' worthiness of God's mercy, the pamphlet includes an account of the recent exchange between Rabbi Nathan Sephira, a representative of the Jerusalem Jews, and English millenarians. Revealing a common understanding of the Messiah and his arrival, this exchange confirms that “there is no inconsistency, but rather a Consonancy with the Promise, that Jesus shall be revealed to them as Joseph was once to his Brethren . . . that the Lord doth prepare a way for them to be converted unto Christianity”.⁷²

Jessey's later work, *Miscellanea Sacra: or, Diverse Necessary Truths* (1665), also illustrates his endeavour to educate Christians in Jewish theology, for their own greater understanding of Scripture. He defends the Old Testament as “the manifold wisdom of God”, written by the “same Spirit of Truth” as the New Testament and word of Christ. Thus, a true Christian must have a knowledge of both the Old Testament, which provides the “literal sense” of God's word, and the New Testament, which offers a “mystical” interpretation of the Old Testament “importing some other Metaphorical or Allegorical, or Harmonical Resemblance thereunto”.⁷³ Here, again, Jessey emphasizes the importance of the Hebrew language and philological analysis: fully to understand the Old Testament, “every word must be taken in that sense which the matter will bear . . . many Hebrew, and Greek nouns, verbs, and particles . . . have various significations or

70 [Henry Jessey], *An Information Concerning the Present State of the Jewish Nation in Europe and Judea* (London 1658), 5.

71 *Ibid.*, 3.

72 *Ibid.*, 17.

73 Jessey, *Miscellanea Sacra*, 20.

acceptions according to the placing of them with other words.”⁷⁴ And as the New and Old Testaments can “stand together in some common, undeniable truth under differing respects”,⁷⁵ so too, Jessey argues, can Jews and Christians as people. “All Israel”, Jessey asserts, “eate the same spiritual Manna, and drank of the Rock, which was Christ; yet God was offended by their sins and smote them” – it was only a matter of time until they were to “be brought into one Fold”.⁷⁶ Additionally, Jessey insists that Christians have much to learn from the Jews’ own cultural practices. The act of fasting, for example, is best accomplished by “imitating the Extraordinary, or Miraculous fasts of Moses, Elias, or Christ, in fasting forty dayes together. Secondly, imitating those Jews in yearly fixed fast dayes . . . the fast being called a Day of restraint in the Hebrew”.⁷⁷ Or the celebration of Passover, Jessey suggests, may provide an apt model of true Christian faith: “The Gentiles, who mystically are Jewes and the Israel of God . . . Christ our Passover is sacrificed – keep the Feats, not with Leaven of wickedness, but with Unleavened bread of sincerity: Purge out the Old Leaven.”⁷⁸ By affirming the legitimacy of these Jewish traditions, as models by which Christians may better their own religion, Jessey provides his audience with a deeper understanding both of Scripture and of Jews themselves – a people similarly steeped in ritual practice.

Writing about Judaism for a Christian audience was only a part of Jessey’s work: of equal, if not greater importance was his endeavour to educate Jews about the truth of Christianity, so as to bring about their conversion. This is the goal of his 1650 treatise *The Glory and Salvation of Jehudah and Israel*. Ernestine Van der Wall, in her account of *The Glory*, argues that this treatise “stands out as one of the most philo-Semitic works of the seventeenth century”.⁷⁹ This treatise also confirms Jessey’s role as a seventeenth-century Hebraist with a deep understanding of and appreciation for the Jews. Van der Wall shows the way in which Jessey defends Christian Messianism for a Jewish audience exclusively through the use of Jewish sources, including the Old Testament and Talmudic, Kabbalistic, and rabbinic texts. Jessey even admits that “If I found more truth on your side than on that of the Christians, all advantages, all honor,

74 Ibid., 15.

75 Ibid., 20.

76 Ibid., 29.

77 Ibid., 3.

78 Ibid., 29.

79 Van der Wall, “Philo-Semitic Millenarian”, 163.

and all riches of the world would not prevent me from embracing your truth".⁸⁰

This method, according to Van der Wall, was not common among fellow Christian conversionists, but it would have been one of the most effective. Jens Aklundh examines conversion tracts written by Jewish converts themselves, most of which were published during the second half of the seventeenth century. These Jewish converts, Aklundh argues, were no longer "Pauline" – they did not attempt to defend their conversion based on the model of Paul's "mystical experience" and subsequent conversion in Acts of the Apostles 9:3–19. Rather, they described "what convinced them of [Christianity's] truth", and their belief in Christ as the true Messiah.⁸¹ In fact, the converts turned to Jewish sources for their own defence: they relied on works of Kabbalah to prove Christ's divinity, even resorting to the same type of prophetic calculation evident in Jessey's *Scripture Almanacs*, and argued that a close analysis of the Old Testament would reveal Christianity's truth. Conversion was conceived of as "the apex of a perfect Jewish education", where Christianity served to fulfill, rather than reject, the convert's Jewish identity.⁸² Thus Jessey, by making use of these same Judeo-Christian links in his own work, exhibits an acute knowledge of conversion psychology. And in this sense, Jessey's attempt to make Christianity accessible and appealing to a Jewish audience is a clear inversion of Menasseh ben Israel's own educational strategy.⁸³

80 Ibid., 183.

81 Jens Aklundh, "Voices of Jewish Converts to Christianity in late Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England", *Seventeenth Century* 29 (2014): 48.

82 Ibid., 51.

83 However, Jessey's strategy in the *Glory* – of appealing to Jews' own Judaism to convince them to convert – was much more effective at converting English Jews than Jews of any other nationality. As Elisheva Carlebach has recently argued, Jewish converts prior to the Reformation faced an immense and insufferable pressure entirely to repudiate their former religion. In particular, converts were forced to "prove their loyalty" to Christianity by engaging in outwardly antisemitic behaviour, and thus the most zealous converts were responsible for book burnings and confiscations, polemical treatises against Judaism, and violent attacks. Yet these medieval attitudes towards Jews largely remained unchanged in early modern Germany. Converts not only furthered accusations about the diabolical and anti-Christian nature of Jewish prayer, but also worked with Christian-Hebraists: converts provided Christian-Hebraists with first-hand accounts of Jewish rituals, to help further their denunciations of Judaism and conversion tactics, while Hebraists helped converts in their own antisemitic rhetoric; Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany 1500–1750* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001). In contrast, as Todd Endelman has argued, Jews in post-Reformation England were able either to remain Jewish and face ghettoization with little persecution,

When we consider the message of *The Glory and Salvation of Jehudah and Israel*, as well as all Jessey's other texts that ultimately sought the widespread conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity, we must always question the extent to which we can call the author "philosemitic". Compared to some of his fellow early modern millenarians, Jessey seems to fall short of deserving such a title. For example, Isaac La Preyère (1596–1676), the Huguenot secretary to the Prince de Condé, turned to Hebrew scripture to argue that Jews were deserving of divine redemption as Jews, in his 1643 *Du Rappel des Juifs (On the Calling of the Jews)*. Or the eighteenth-century English scientist and Unitarian dissenter Joseph Priestly, also a millenarian, declared that Judaism and Christianity were religiously unanimous and thus would coexist indefinitely "not only in this imperfect life but also in the perfect world to come".⁸⁴ This "most advanced form of millenarian philo-Semitism", Howard Hotson argues, "saw no need for a campaign of Jewish conversion whatsoever".⁸⁵ Moreover, as part of a collective of Nonconformist leaders in 1647, Jessey signed a document that "stressed the need for self-government within the churches without the exercise of 'a coercive and worldly power' by the state, while recognizing the need for 'a kindly government' to protect society from the natural wickedness of men".⁸⁶ As a true philosemite, Jessey, we might assume, would recognize the similarities between these political and civic requests and those of the Jews, and could respect the "self-government" of the Jewish church as much of his own. But those who see Jessey and other Protestant conversionists as philosemitic – Katz, Richard Popkin, Edelman, and others – have posited a number of compelling arguments. Coffey summarizes these as follows: "[Protestant conversionists'] view of the Jews was certainly a dramatic improvement on the traditional Christian alternative, which identified the Jews with the Devil . . . although Jessey expected the conversion of the Jews, his insistence on their unique status as God's chosen people implies that he envisaged their perpetual distinctiveness rather than assimilation. Most importantly, the philo-

or to convert and integrate fairly easily into English society. If they were expected to prove themselves, they did so by attacking Catholicism rather than their former Judaism; Todd M. Edelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Aklundh, "Voices of Jewish Converts", 45. Thus *The Glory and Salvation of Jehudah and Israel* may have been more limited in its efficacy and scope than was originally intended.

84 Joseph Priestly quoted in Hotson, "Anti-Semitism, Philo-Semitism", 116.

85 *Ibid.*, 115.

86 Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission*, 124.

semitic commitment to Jewish toleration was firm. The conversion of the Jews was to be an uncoerced millennial miracle, and when English Jews failed to convert, millenarians did not turn against them but simply concluded that the millennium had yet to dawn.”⁸⁷ While Jessey was by all accounts a “respectable” moderate in his Christian nonconformity, his insistence on searching for Jewish truth and abiding by Jewish rituals must be seen as radical and ahead of his time. And as both a Hebraist and an outspoken Nonconformist preacher, Jessey brought Judaism and questions of Jewish toleration into the political spotlight, dispelling medieval Christian ignorance, and paving the way for full assimilation and emancipation in the centuries to come.

Henry Jessey the Educator

Most of the scholarship on Henry Jessey has focused on his role as a millenarian, Hebraist, and philosemite. Yet he was a children’s educator as well, with an extremely innovative pedagogical style. Only by examining both aspects of Jessey’s career can we gain a deeper sense of his place within mid-seventeenth-century England and evaluate his role as a philosemitic millenarian. Jessey was not unique as a religious radical simply because of his interest in children’s education. As John Sommerville shows, English Puritans in the seventeenth century effectively brought about an educational revolution. There was a clear social explanation underlying this interest: lacking an institutional foundation, Sommerville argues, the Puritans were “likely to sense the importance of reaching children . . . Puritan books had to warn children against a society in which their brand of religion was unfashionable.”⁸⁸ Thus, both the theological and political stakes of children’s education were extremely high and, in turn, this increased the incentives for Puritans to acquire a deeper understanding of childhood development and pedagogical tools. As a result, the Puritans were among the first early modern authors to write books exclusively for children, re-articulating their theology in order to fit the child’s understanding.⁸⁹ In particular, the Catechism was seen as the most important form of children’s education because it served the needs

87 Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 157.

88 C. John Sommerville, *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 24–5.

89 *Ibid.*, 23, 71.

of the movement to “indoctrinate its members”.⁹⁰ Given this significance, the Catechism was the tool in most need of reform. The final result of this reform was a graded Catechism, designed to be accessible to readers of all levels, so that the children could begin their immersion in Puritan theology from an earlier age.

Jessey’s own educational ideas and works fit in nicely with this larger understanding of English Puritan pedagogy. As his biographer noted, Jessey was “never cumbred with house, with children or with wife”, and yet “stooped to the capacity of Children and Babes . . . nor did he think it below himself, to teach them to spell, and read, if he had a quarter of an hour to spare where such young ones were.”⁹¹ He understood that education, even in an age of apocalyptic theology, required motivation; thus when travelling on ministerial trips, he convinced fellow travellers to pay a “forfeiture” upon “speaking (at unawares) any untruth, or positively affirming what cannot be made good, or unnecessarily using affirmations or taking the Lords name in vain; swearing or cursing, or disorderly mentioning the fault of others; or being sinfully angry, or passionate with another”.⁹² Jessey’s *Looking-Glass for Children* offers short biographies of children in which one “mayest see and behold the condescension of the Lord to such little Ones, in opening their understanding, and giving them a sight and sense of their undone estate by nature”,⁹³ and predates the emergence of this genre as the “largest class of religious books for children” following the Restoration.⁹⁴

Just as one can trace the legacy of Jessey’s respectable nonconformity within the Jacob Church, so one can do the same with his pedagogical theories: Henry Jacob, too, believed that he and his fellow Christian ministers had a divine duty to instruct all men in the ways of God.⁹⁵ Jessey’s *Catechisme for Babes* was first written in 1640, then reworked and published in 1652, and is the best example of his work in children’s education. It is not surprising that Jessey, as a radical preacher and a pedagogue, would have written a catechism. More than eighty-three catechisms were written and published in the 1640s, more than had ever been produced in

90 Ibid., 34.

91 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 17, 42.

92 Ibid., 36.

93 Henry Jessey, *A Looking-Glass for Children* (London, 1673), A2.

94 William Sloane, *Children’s Books in England and America in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: King’s Crown Press, Columbia University, 1955), 49, 51.

95 “Records of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church”, 209–10.

a single decade.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the Catechism was a uniquely Reformed innovation: Luther, who believed that Christians should have a solid understanding of the foundational religious principles, produced a small Catechism that taught the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed and followed each by asking "What does this mean?"⁹⁷ Nor is it surprising that Jessey published the Catechism a full twelve years after it was written. As his congregation expanded and his prominence as a preacher grew, Jessey understood that his catechism could not be fully effective in manuscript form, where it would have to be either delivered orally or copied and distributed to his intended audience. Barbara R. Dailey is perhaps the only scholar who has provided an analysis of this text and has shown its place within the larger catechismal tradition. First and foremost, she argues, Jessey's catechism is a product of the seventeenth-century "double catechism", which was marked to differentiate its sections for children and adults. However, while this differentiation demonstrated a greater understanding of children's educational capabilities, by shortening the questions and responses, the language typically "remain[ed] adult".⁹⁸ Compared to other examples, Jessey's catechism is notably forward-thinking. Dailey shows the way in which Jessey makes use of children's vocabulary, where "'naughtiness' replaces the usual term 'transgression' in the definition of sin".⁹⁹ Jessey tailors the theology to a children's understanding, too, relying on physical imagery and focusing on Christian ethics; for example, he encourages the child to "consider his actions, good and bad, and to make rightful choices".¹⁰⁰ And he publishes the Catechism in a large, highly legible font suitable for the young reader.

Yet in her analysis, Dailey fails to recognize Jessey's work as a Hebraist and a religious educator for both Jews and Christians. While she notes the Jewish origins of the catechismal tradition, an "oral tradition of instruction probably extending back to the Temple days of ancient Israel", she does not mention that Jessey's own education at Cambridge was largely devoted to the study of Hebrew. And, although she recognizes

96 Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530–1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 5.

97 *Ibid.*, 17.

98 Barbara R. Dailey, "Youth and the New Jerusalem: The English Catechetical Tradition and Henry Jessey's *Catechisme for Babes* (1652)", *Harvard Library Bulletin* 30 (1982), 31.

99 *Ibid.*, 38.

100 *Ibid.*, 39.

the millenarian context of seventeenth-century catechisms, where “many believed that the end of time was drawing near” and “prefaces to catechisms began to take account of the troubled times”, there is no acknowledgment of the role of the Jews in Jessey’s millenarian theology.

These shortcomings, however, are not unique to Dailey’s scholarship: all analysis of Henry Jessey thus far has either focused exclusively on “Jessey the Jew” or on Jessey the pedagogue, but has not attempted to integrate these perspectives. Given the evidence presented in this paper, further analysis and a more fully contextualized understanding of his life and works seem appropriate and well overdue. To take one example, his *Miscellanea Sacra* of 1665, in which he includes a section for “Some Helps for weaker Christians, to the right Understanding, and Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures”. The influence of both the Catechism and Jewish interests are clear: through a dialogue of questions and answers, Jessey discusses such topics as the proper Jewish Sabbath, the Old Testament and its use in the Gospel times, and God’s mercy towards the Jews. Or, another example is his *Storehouse of Provision* (1650), which he describes as a “collection of various types of spiritual food . . . some Milk or food for tender Babes; some wine for fainting fadded soules; some Bread for strengthening the weak in Faith; and some strong meates, for such as are grown up, and are stronger persons” – divine knowledge from the “wise disposing Providence of the great School-master of all”.¹⁰¹ In this text, too, Jessey integrates the catechismal method by addressing “Four Questions by a Converted Jew. With Answers Thereto”.¹⁰² Given that the *Storehouse* was published in the same year as *The Glory and Salvation of Jehuda and Israel*, it is not surprising that here, too, Jessey educates his audience about the continuity of Judeo-Christian theology. To the second question, “How to improve Christ for Justification?”, Jessey answers, “As Jacob obtained the blessing of his Father, coming in the garments of his elder Brother: So we, in the Garments of our elder Brother Jesus Christ, when we sinne daily, daily confess and go still to God, as to a Father, in Christ.”¹⁰³ Hebraic and educational overlap can also be seen if Jessey’s role as a preacher is considered. His biographer notes that when he preached, “his manner was to read and expound some Chapter . . . thence shewing how all the Judaical Types did signifie and hold forth Christ”.¹⁰⁴ Jessey himself recognized

101 Henry Jessey, *Storehouse of Provision* (London 1650), A2.

102 *Ibid.*, 35.

103 *Ibid.*, 39.

104 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 41.

the power of the sermon: in his *Exceeding Riches of Grace*, it was his lecture on “what great favour God will shew towards the flock of the Jews” that saved the young and mentally ill Sarah Wight from drowning herself in the Thames, seeing that God would forgive even “the basest people on earth”.¹⁰⁵

Finally, we might also look to Jessey’s works for children to find evidence of these varied, interconnected layers of his approach. Yet here, in Jessey’s most basic pedagogical material, his *Catechisme for Babes*, the Hebraism that is fundamental to his other texts is entirely absent. Nowhere in the Catechism does Jessey note the Jewish people and their important relationship to Puritan theology. Twice, in passing, he notes the origins of Christianity in “Abraham’s seed”;¹⁰⁶ but if this Catechism was the child’s first introduction to religious thought, she or he probably would not understand this reference or Abraham’s larger role in Judeo-Christian theology. Nor does Jessey integrate Hebrew into the text, as a means of providing the child with even the most simple introduction to philological and etymological analysis of Scripture. Given the historical context of this Catechism – published just three years before the Whitehall Conference and two years after his *Glory and Storehouse of Conscience* – this raises an important question: why did Jessey not choose to incorporate his Hebraic and Jewish beliefs into his catechism?

I shall argue that this apparent omission points to a large shortcoming in Jessey’s purported philosemitism. Even if we take into account possible reasons for the lack of philosemitic principles in this educational text, I believe that the argument will still stand – but first, let us consider those possibilities. For one, Jessey simply might not have believed that such an integration of Hebraism into a catechism was appropriate. Since the Catechism was intended to provide a strong Puritan foundation, Hebrew or Jewish theology could be confusing for the child and counter-intuitive to the task at hand. As Dailey suggests, “Puritans believed that knowledge was important for salvation, that truth made one free. But first one had to understand the meaning of divinity in order to believe and be saved.”¹⁰⁷ In fact, Jessey explicitly intended to remove all “strange tongues” from his catechism: asserting that Latin and Greek were “not suited to [younger children’s] understandings”, he “desired to see one so plain and easie in the expressions, as that the very Babes, that can speak

105 Henry Jessey, *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced* (London, 1647), 10–11.

106 Henry Jessey, *A Catechisme for Babes, or Little Ones* (London, 1652), 34.

107 Dailey, “Youth and the New Jerusalem”, 34.

but stammeringly, and are of very weak capacities, might understand what they say.”¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the fact that his millenarian beliefs are absent only further confirms this hypothesis. While some of his contemporaries, in their own catechisms, did begin “to take account of the troubled times” more explicitly, Jessey’s pedagogical caution may well have prevented him from doing the same.¹⁰⁹ In this way, Jessey’s catechisms fit into the larger conservatism of early modern catechismal history: Ian Green argues that elementary and intermediate catechisms underwent little change from the Reformation through the early eighteenth century, where authors throughout these two centuries relied on the “same staple formulae and topics”.¹¹⁰

Second, even if a philosemitic Catechism was a possibility, it was probably not Jessey’s priority. John Morgan suggests that the core educational imperative of the Reformed church was to provide “the undefiled truth of Scripture . . . in the clear vernacular to the people”.¹¹¹ It is likely that Jessey’s determination to provide a revised translation of Scripture, which his biographer described as the “Master Study of his life”,¹¹² took precedence over his catechism, let alone a catechism that would integrate his Jewish and millenarian interests. The fact that the Catechism was first written in 1640 – the year of the first division in his church – also indicates that, in the tradition of anti-separatism, it was probably intended to counter such division by striving for an educational uniformity among the youngest members of his church. And Jessey’s efforts to provide a civic education in Jewish theology and Hebrew philology – as exemplified in his almanacs, political pamphlets, and other widely published material – reflect his political optimism. In this Republican era, where the general public might actually exercise some political influence, and in the context of Jessey’s millenarian urgency, a civic education that might lead to the Jews’ acceptance and subsequent conversion would have a greater immediate impact.

Jessey’s own education in Hebrew – which began only upon his arrival at university – also suggests that an integrated catechism would not necessarily be a vitally important educational tool. The fact that

108 Jessey, *Catechisme*, A3.

109 Dailey, “Youth and the New Jerusalem”, 34.

110 Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 565.

111 John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 121.

112 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 60.

Jessey could have acquired both a proficiency in Hebrew and a scholarly knowledge of Jewish theology during his years at Cambridge suggests that an “early start” might not have been strictly necessary. Indeed, Green submits that “demands for competence in Hebrew” in seventeenth-century English schools were few and far between, and thus Hebrew only played a small role in the grammar school curriculum. It is most likely that it would have been taught only if the instructor was an “enthusiast”, on a one-to-one basis, and would have been limited to the oldest and most advanced students in the school.¹¹³

We can also interpret the lack of integration in the Catechism, though, as simply a shortcoming of Jessey’s work and of his pedagogy. The fact that Jessey does not seek to educate young Christians in Hebrew or Jewish Old Testament theology, or to provide educational material for the children of his potential Jewish converts – as he does for adults in his other printed material, even translating the *Glory of Ieudah and Israel* and dispersing it “among the Jews of Divers Nations”¹¹⁴ – seems to be inconsistent with and even contradictory of his larger educational ideas. Jessey’s biographies of troubled children, briefly noted earlier, emphasize the intellectual and religious power of any individual Christian of any age. As Dailey argues, Jessey seemed to believe that Christian “conscience” was “not solely the privilege of adulthood but, theoretically at least, the right of every child”, children who are portrayed “not as innocent victims who need protection from the knowledge of current events, but rather as members of a society who need to be taught to discern a providential order underlying apparent worldly chaos.”¹¹⁵ Given the faith that Jessey places in the intellectual capabilities of children, it is conceivable that he would place a similar faith in the ability of children to acquire a knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism early on. And Jessey’s integration of Jewish theology and Hebrew into his sermons, as noted in his biography and *Exceeding Riches of Grace*, makes the lack of such an integration in the Catechism all the more inconsistent. Seventeenth-century catechists understood that members of a congregation, both young and old, would only be able to understand a sermon if they had been thoroughly versed in the principles that were going to be preached. This need for comprehension only became more urgent during the Civil War, as congregations frequently split apart and

113 Ian Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 260.

114 Whiston, *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, 80–81.

115 Dailey, “Youth and the New Jerusalem”, 36–8.

the preacher's success was determined, in part, by his ability to connect with the entire audience.¹¹⁶ Again, it is strange, then, that Jessey, as a preacher who produces a catechism for his own congregation, chooses to exclude some of the essential principles of his sermons.

Perhaps we can justify this decision by appealing to the larger historical context: as noted earlier, it may just have seemed entirely inconceivable and irrational for pedagogues in seventeenth-century England to educate children in non-Christian doctrine. Yet, among Jessey's contemporaries, and even within Jessey's own intellectual circle, there was certainly precedence for integrating philosemitism and pedagogy. While Green affirms that catechists were cautious in their approach, he also notes that by Jessey's day they aimed for "greater breadth and depth" in their catechisms than did their predecessors, even when writing for beginners.¹¹⁷ And while not all children would be able fully to grasp these catechisms, certainly some children would benefit – even from multi-lingual texts. Thomas Rae argued that by the age of eight, any student embarking on his secondary education had "to begin the study of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Oriental tongues, with a view to being able to read, write, and translate in them".¹¹⁸ And Sloane cited the example of Richard Evelyn, who had learned his catechism by two and a half and who, "by the time of his death in 1658 at the age of five . . . had begun Latin, Greek, and French, had read Aesop, and had studied Euclid . . . and [was] a keen student of Scriptures" – yet Evelyn, Sloane contended, was "not at all unique".¹¹⁹

A number of seventeenth-century English educators did, in fact, publish works that exhibit attempts to integrate Judaism into Christian education or Christianity into Jewish education, even for the youngest reader. Green notes that in the early 1630s, an English clergy-schoolmaster translated the official Prayer Book Catechism into Hebrew, and that in 1638, a text entitled *Catecheticae versiones variae* provided Prayer Book catechism translations in English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.¹²⁰ William Seaman (1606/7–1680), an English Orientalist and the first European to translate the New Testament into Turkish, also produced a catechism in Hebrew that, according to Seaman, was the first of its kind. Seaman's

116 Green, *Christian's ABC*, 27; Sloane, *Children's Books*, 59.

117 Green, *Christian's ABC*, 564.

118 Thomas H. H. Rae, *John Dury, Reformer of Education* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1970), 173.

119 Sloane, *Children's Books*, 8.

120 Green, *Humanism and Protestantism*, 291.

Catechesis Religionis Christianae Brevior, published posthumously in 1689, aimed to instruct Jews in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and to help Christians understand Hebrew books and Scripture in the original tongue.¹²¹ John Davis, an English schoolmaster, produced *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Tongue, Being a translation of the Learned John Buxtorfius' Epitome of his Hebrew Grammar* in 1655. Davis argued that English translations of Scripture allowed room for “abuse” by “the monstrous spiders of our age”, and thus produced this translation “for the profit of young beginners” so that the biblical language might be more widely available among Christians.¹²² The Anglican clergyman Thomas Walkington (1557–1621) published his *Exposition of the two first Verses of the sixt Chapter to the Hebrews* in 1609, a catechism on the act of catechizing itself, which cites the Catechism’s Jewish origins: “In the Iewish Church being before the comming of Christ, it was practised both in families . . . and in publike assemblies . . . or catechised in law, so the words are in the *greek meant of such an introduction as is by catechising fit for Children”.¹²³ Moreover, Walkington appends a shorter catechism “for the favour and ease of such as be weake, as well in yeares as knowledge”, a dialogue between Abraham and Isaac that discusses in greater detail the Christian principles brushed over in Hebrew 6:1–2. While this is clearly an anachronistic Christian text – Isaac affirms the “merciful goodness of God through Christ”¹²⁴ – it nevertheless aims to instil in its young reader a sense of Judaism and Christianity’s mutual correspondence. And in 1680, an anonymous author produced *The Jews Catechism*, the first English translation of Abraham Jagel’s *Leqah Tov* (Venice, 1595). Jagel, a sixteenth-century Italian Jewish philosopher and catechist, was the first known Jew to publish a catechism.¹²⁵ It was based on Maimonides’s Thirteen

121 William Seaman, *Catechesis Religionis Christianae Brevior* (London, 1689).

122 John Davis, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Tongue, Being a translation of the Learned John Buxtorfius' Epitome of his Hebrew Grammar*, that those which are ignorant of the Latine tongue, may attaine by this English introduction to the knowledge and apprehension of the originall Text of Scripture . . . Whereunto is annexed an English interlineall interpretation of some Hebrew Texts of the Psalmes, for the profit of young beginners (the like never before published) (London, 1655).

123 Thomas Walkington, *An Exposition of the two first Verses of the sixt Chapter to the Hebrews, in forme of a Dialogue; wherein you have A Commendation of Catechising, also A declaration of the sixe fundamentall Principles wherein the Christians of the Primitive Apostolicall church were Catechised* (London: Printed by Tho. Snodham, for Thomas Man, dwelling in Pater-noster Row at the signe of the Talbot, 1609), 4.

124 *Ibid.*, 2.

125 Morris M. Faienstein, “Abraham Jagel’s ‘Leqah Tov’ and Its History”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 89 (1999): 319–50.

Articles of Faith, was written in dialogue form between a scholar and his master, and was intended for the instruction of youth. The translator, who also recognized that it was a Jewish practice “to reduce [the Law] to certain Heads: So that the Fundamental Points thereof might be always in every mans Mouth”, intended that this translation would help Christians understand the basic tenets of the Jewish faith, and hoped that it would be “plain and easie” enough “to be understood like to common talk in familiar conversations”.¹²⁶

Even if Jessey was not aware of these specific pedagogical texts, he certainly would have known of the educational innovations happening right around him. In fact, in 1650 Jessey provided an English translation of *The Conversion of Five Thousand and Nine Hundred East-Indians*, which described a Dutch minister’s recent successes in Formosa (modern-day Taiwan). Jessey himself relates that the minister, M. Junius, “in some years space, having learned their Language, he Preached to the Indians, and thereby many were brought to the professing of Christ, and by himselfe were Baptized . . . M. Junius, since his returne to Holland, married againe; and he hath endeavored to instruct a young man in their Language, to send to them; and hath Printed some Catechismes in that Tongue, to send over unto them.”¹²⁷ Junius even “translated certaine Pslames into the Formosan Islanders Language”, with the (supposed) result of his efforts being that “the Indians offered to us all their Children to be brought up by us”.¹²⁸ Or one might look to Jessey’s fellow millenarian John Dury, an associate of Menasseh ben Israel, and also an important English educational reformer who has long been neglected in the scholarship.¹²⁹ While Dury was not a catechist himself, and did not propose any theories about childhood education in particular, Jessey could have learnt much from Dury’s own educational opinions regarding the Jews. In 1649, Dury published his *A Seasonable Discourse*, which among other things, sought to establish a college for “the advancement of knowledge in Orientall tongues, and Jewish Mysteries . . . [a] subordinate unto the means of setting forward

126 *The Jews Catechism. Which was lately Translated out of Hebrew into Latine. By the Eminently Learned Ludovicus de Compeigne de Veil* (London, 1680).

127 Henry Jessey, *Of the Conversion of Five Thousand and Nine Hundred East-Indians, In the Isle of Formosa, neere China, To the Profession of the true God, in Jesus Christ; By meanes of M. Ro: Junius, a Minister lately in Delph in Holland. Related by his good Friend, M.C. Sibellius, Pastor in Daventrie there, in a Latine Letter. Translated to further the Faith and Joy of many here, by H. Jessey, a Servant of Jesus Christ* (London, 1650), A3.

128 *Ibid.*, 8, 19.

129 See Rae, *John Dury, Reformer of Education*.

Piety”.¹³⁰ Dury was not only interested in teaching Hebrew and other Oriental languages as the tongues of the “Oracles of God”, but also so as to “have communication with those Nations . . . especially in matter of Religion, [so that] we may have a true and full in-sight in their ancient, and they in our modern Learning” – an attempt to spur a broader engagement between Jews and Christians as modern people.¹³¹ And although, like Jessey and many other Christian millenarians, Dury ultimately sought the Jews’ conversion, he deeply believed that this college would be a means of searching for divine truth. Knowledge in Hebrew would not only convince “the Jewes of the truth of Christianity” but also “Christians themselves might get occasion to consider their common Interest, and therein be drawn to professe a nearer Union then hitherto they have thought upon.”¹³²

By considering Jessey’s educational works and Jewish and Hebraic interests together, one gains a more nuanced conception of Jessey’s “philosemitism”. On one hand, Jessey could in fact be labelled a philosemite. He maintained a devotion to and deep appreciation of ancient Jewish theology, Talmudic and rabbinic writings, and the ills of modern-day Jews, and defended his interests in sermons and in writing. And, as David Katz argues, Jessey “put into practice his convictions regarding the Jews”, delivering aid to Jews in need and seeking their readmission to England through political campaigning.¹³³ Yet, on the other hand, as Frank Manuel suggests, neither “philo-Semitism” nor “anti-Semitism” can ever be conclusive descriptions, since writers “harbor contradictory motives”.¹³⁴ Not Jessey or Dury or any Christian seeking the conversion of Jews could be truly philosemitic. But this paper has shown that such “contradictory motives” may be more subtle and nuanced. Jessey, by striving for uniformity among many congregations, constantly would have had to walk a fine line. When such issues as the proper mode of baptism were sources of congregational split, to have introduced even more controversial issues – the legitimacy of Jewish theology, for example – into children’s education would probably have only been a further source of intra-church conflict.

To advance a true Judeo-Christian reconciliation, it is conceivable

130 John Dury, *A Seasonable Discourse* (London, 1649); see Richard H. Popkin, “The First College for Jewish Studies”, *Revue des Etudes Juives* 143 (1984): 351–64.

131 Dury, *Seasonable Discourse*, 15.

132 *Ibid.*, 18.

133 Katz, “Menasseh Ben Israel’s Christian Connection: Henry Jessey and the Jews”, 137.

134 Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 9.

that Jessey might have recognized the importance of beginning to promote theological similarities from the youngest age, and would have followed the examples of the educators discussed here. And if he truly believed the words of Timothy 3:15, quoted at the beginning of the Catechism, that “from infancy thou hast known the holy Scriptures”, he might have understood the potential of a deep philological knowledge of Scripture instilled early on. The fact that Jessey does not do so, in one of his few works for children, points to a personal misunderstanding of child psychology and a larger shortcoming of Puritan educational strategy. Henry Jessey, as a Puritan educator, might serve as an example of the over-reach of the Puritan educational revolution. By minimizing the complexity of children’s literature, Puritan educators may have prevented their children from acquiring certain skills or perspectives – a theological understanding of and respect for Judaism, or a knowledge of Hebrew, for example – that would be more difficult to obtain later on. Just as Jessey has been described as a moderate or “respectable nonconformist” in the radical movements of the English Civil War, then, so too may he be termed a moderate or respectable philosemite.