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Evangelical Anglican missionaries and the London Jews Society: Palestine Place at Bethnal Green and related developments, 1813–1895*

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The London Jews Society (LJS) was the common name for the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (LSPCJ), still in existence as the Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ), founded in 1809, the major missionary group attempting to convert the Jews of London. This paper will examine the foundation of the LJS and the construction of Palestine Place from 1813 at Bethnal Green, near Cambridge Heath,[1] on the edge of the Jewish community in the East End of London. It will focus on how the LJS conceived of itself and what made its mission distinct. The early supporters of the LJS from 1810 were evangelical Anglicans, including William Wilberforce and Charles Simeon. This mission centre was established on a five-acre site and included the Episcopal Jews' Chapel, separate schools for boys and girls, staff houses, a Hebrew (missionary) Training College, and a "house of industry", which provided work for converted Jews, mainly printing books

1 For a map of the site see "Bethnal Green: Cambridge Heath", in *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 11, Stepney, Bethnal Green*, ed. T. F. T. Baker (London: Victoria County History, 1998), pp. 109–12, at *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol11/pp109-112 (accessed 3 Dec. 2018). For an 1840 sketch, see LMA, *Collage* 7406.

* I have been encouraged to examine the influence of Palestine Place by Professor David Ruderman, University of Pennsylvania. I also appreciate the invitation from Professor Michael Berkowitz, University College London (UCL), to contribute a paper on this subject for the Jewish History seminars at the Institute of Historical Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London, in 2016. A wider view of this subject is found in my *Christian Philosemitism in London 1810–1850: Palestine Place at Bethnal Green, the Heart of the London Jews Society* (Peterborough: BRP Research, 2017), following my Master of Historical Research at the University of London, supervised by Professor Lawrence Goldman. The primary sources used for the paper include the original LJS papers deposited at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. A picture of Palestine Place may be found in the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) and some LJS/CMJ conversionist material is in the Mocatta Library at UCL and UCL's Mocatta papers at the National Archives (NA), Kew.

and pamphlets. From the 1820s, the work of the LJS expanded into Europe and Russia and, by 1841, as far as Jerusalem, when a Protestant bishopric was established. The first bishop was Michael Solomon Alexander (1799–1845), a converted Jew, who had lived at Palestine Place and had previously been the Professor of Hebrew at King's College London. Another notable resident was Dr Alexander McCaul (1799–1863), who followed Alexander as the next Professor of Hebrew at King's. In 1840, McCaul effectively opposed the false accusations of the Damascus Blood Libel, joining with Moses Montefiore and the Jewish community worldwide to confront this hatred towards Jewish people. This shared opposition led to a more positive alignment between the Jewish community and Christians in the public sphere, both in Britain and worldwide.

In the context of the history of the development of Palestine Place, I shall also consider the significance of the emergence of academic Hebrew studies at the new University of London, founded in 1826 (renamed University College in 1836), and of Hyman Hurwitz (1770–1844), the first Anglo-Jewish professor there.[2] In other recent historiography, Yaron Perry has challenged what he considers to be the destructive missionary activity of the LJS, and Felicity Griffiths has noted potential antisemitism at King's College London, founded in 1828 to rival UCL, the "Godless Institution of Gower Street".[3] This has demonstrated the arrogant attitude of High (or Broad) Church Anglicans, prompting the rival foundation of King's to compensate for UCL's "secular and irreligious foundation". UCL's open door to Jewish students, Dissenters, Quakers, Unitarians, and atheists was despised. Tory newspapers called it the "Cockney College" and the Scottish clergyman Edward Irving (1792–1834) even called it the "Synagogue of Satan", a common antisemitic trope.[4] David Ruderman has further provided a wider perspective on the intellectual atmosphere around this time.[5]

2 Leonard Hyman, "Hyman Hurwitz: The First Anglo-Jewish Professor", *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (hereafter, *Transactions*) 21 (1962): 232–42; Rosemary Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 45, 46.

3 Yaron Perry, *British Mission to the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Palestine* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Felicity Griffiths, "The Social, Religious, and Political Foundations of the University of London" (Ph.D. thesis, University College London, 2018), 6, 7.

4 Griffiths, "Social, Religious, and Political Foundations", 70, 71.

5 David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Evangelical Anglicans

At the beginning of the nineteenth century in London, there was great interest shown in the Jewish people by evangelical Christians, motivated by what they understood to be "Christian philosemitism". They raised substantial funds for the LJS, which were invested in Palestine Place, about which, to date, little has been written. The Clapham Sect, or the "Saints" as they were also known,[6] included the notable members William Wilberforce MP (1759–1833) and Charles Simeon (1759–1836) from King's College, Cambridge, who both strongly supported the LJS. This organization has been described as a "network of friends and families in England, with William Wilberforce as the centre of gravity, who were powerfully bound together by their shared moral and spiritual values, by their religious mission and social activism, by their love for each other, and by marriage".[7] This group also founded the Church Missionary Society for Missions to Africa and the East, especially India (CMS) in 1799 and the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804 (later simply the Bible Society) and were instrumental in the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807. In this context, the question will be considered why they also took such a keen interest in the Jews. There was a theological shift at the end of the eighteenth century, when Christians gave a new priority to missionary activity worldwide, including the Jewish diaspora. Why did many of the leading members of the Christian establishment during the early nineteenth century strongly support the LJS? The Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria, was the Patron of the LJS for several years from 1813 and other office-holders included leading bishops, bankers, and Members of Parliament. Later on, Lord Shaftesbury (1801–1885) was the active Vice-President, and then from 1848 the President, spanning fifty years. Within the evangelical laity, teaching about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith became the new fashion.

The LJS was formed in 1809 by Joseph Frey (1771–1850), who was born into a Jewish family at Mainstockheim, Franconia, and converted by a Lutheran pastor. In 1801, he moved to England and worked with Jewish people in East London for the London Missionary Society (LMS), founded

6 Ernest M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976).

7 Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle transformed Britain* (Oxford: Lion, 2010); Anne Stott, *Wilberforce, Family and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

in 1795, giving lectures to them at the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Jewry Street, Aldgate.[8] By 1813, leading speakers such as Simeon and Dr William "Millennial" Marsh (1775–1864) were also lecturing to Jews at the Jews' Chapel, Brick Lane. In January 1807, a small junior school for twelve children had been established by the LMS. Frey and a group of his supporters set up the LJS in February 1809, so that he could work with the Jews and be in control. Perry comments that "Frey had composed a manual on practical methods . . . to Christianise the Jews of London".[9] It was estimated that at this time there were "not less than thirty converted Jews in His Majesty's Dominions".[10] Frey laboured to raise funds for his new venture and by 1810, Lord Barham (the famous admiral and politician, who was active with Wilberforce in the abolition of slavery) was the president. Influential names appear as vice-presidents, such as William Wilberforce (elected on 6 March 1810, chairing the Annual Meeting on 14 June),[11] Thomas Babington MP (after whom Thomas Babington Macaulay was named), the Right Honourable Nicholas Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Henry Hoare of the banking family, and Charles Simeon (besides being a Fellow of King's, Cambridge, Simeon was the vicar of Holy Trinity Church there for fifty-four years).[12]

Palestine Place

The work at Palestine Place started in 1813, with the building of the chapel and the schools at Bethnal Green. The Duke of Kent laid the foundation stone on 7 April 1813, attended by 20,000 people, notably the Lord Mayor of London, Wilberforce, Babington, and Lewis Way (1772–1840; educated at Eton and Merton College, Oxford). Way became the financial saviour of the LJS in 1815 and was one of its key leaders.[13] They celebrated afterwards with a dinner and some of the Jewish children were introduced to the Duke.

8 Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion: Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 13.

9 Perry, British Mission, 13.

10 W. T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: From 1809 to 1980* (London: LJS, 1908), 35.

11 Oxford, Bodleian Library, CMJ papers, Minutes of 28 July 1809,

12 Ibid., Minutes of 17 April 1810.

13 A. M. W. Stirling, *The Ways of Yesterday 1307–1885* (London: Thornton, Butterworth, 1930), compiled from Way's family papers. See also Stanley and Munro Price, *The Road to Apocalypse: The Extraordinary Journey of Lewis Way* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2011).

He immediately agreed to become the Patron,[14] contributing a hundred guineas to the fund; in all, £1,941 was donated. Soon the Society gained public (non-Jewish) acceptance. The Episcopal Jews' Chapel at Palestine Place opened on 16 July 1814, which was claimed to be the first chapel in England designed for worship by converted Jews, and the complex as a whole was used until 1895. This site eventually incorporated the Hebrew Training College, the chaplain's house and other staff houses, separate schools for boys and girls,[15] and the Operative Jewish Converts Institution (OJCI), which was established to provide work for the Jewish converts, who had been rejected by their families and the Jewish community – this work variously included printing and candle and basket-making. B'nei Avraham, the first Hebrew Christian Association, was formed in the Jews' Chapel on 9 September 1813, with forty-one members, who volunteered to visit sick Jews and to pray with them.[16] The modern "Messianic Jewish" movement, which is not accepted by any recognized Jewish denomination as Jewish, claim its roots from this group.

Lewis Way had inherited a large fortune.[17] He first took the chair at the LJS on 28 September 1813 and was later famed as "the first in modern times to convince the Jews that a Christian can truly love them".[18] Public subscriptions and a substantial gift from Charles Simeon all aided the funds. Detailed annual reports were published that showed the activities, budgets, and individual subscribers. However, the obvious question is whether these reports have an element of bias, as their intention was to keep funding a "successful" LJS. Leading speakers at the annual meetings included Lord Gambier, Robert Grant, Edward Bickersteth, and Professor William Farish, the Jacksonian Professor of Chemistry at Cambridge. These meetings were the public face of the LJS and a highlight of the day was the readings and singing by the Jewish children. In December 1809, it

14 Rodney Curtis, *Christian Philosemitism in London 1810–1850: Palestine Place at Bethnal Green, the Heart of the London Jews Society* (Peterborough: BRP Research, 2017), 30, 46; Gidney, History, 41.

15 NA, UCL's LSPCJ Mocatta papers, Jews and Schools Committee Minute Book, 25 May 1815–20 May 1819.

16 Hugh J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity* (London: Duckworth, 1936); Michael R. Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

17 Rodney Curtis, *Christian Philosemitism, Lewis Way and the Development of the London Jews Society between 1810 and 1840* (Peterborough: BRP Research, 2017), 21.

18 Bodleian, CMJ papers, Minutes of 28 Sept. 1813, 3.

was reported that the original LJS school had 300 children, which seems exaggerated,[19] but few were in fact Jewish. By May 1812, 83 Jewish children had been admitted and, according to the Fourth LJS Report, 41 Jewish people had been baptized.[20]

There was soon a major controversy between the Anglicans and the Dissenters, mainly Baptists and Congregationalists, and in consequence the LJS became exclusively an Anglican society in 1815. The Duke of Kent withdrew from the LJS in 1816, suggesting that two bishops should now be joint patrons, these were the Bishop of St David's, Dr Thomas Burgess, and the Bishop of Gloucester, Dr Henry Ryder. A Hebrew college was suggested, so that the students would be able to prepare Hebrew tracts and could translate the Anglican liturgy into Hebrew. Students would learn Hebrew and also be taught about Jewish customs and culture. This plan was fully realized when McCaul became the Principal of the Hebrew Training College at Palestine Place in 1840. Frey, the founder, was expelled in January 1816 for "immoral behaviour".[21] His downfall was revealed by critics of the LJS, such as Henry Hadley Norris (1771–1850), a local vicar and the Anglican leader of the Clapton Sect, who liked to oppose the evangelicals, and B. R. Goakman, who lived at Palestine Place and was originally the official printer for the Society (on whom more later). Frey's departure was useful for the LJS because he was a Dissenter leading an Anglican society. The LJS had attempted to have him ordained but the Anglicans refused; nevertheless, he loved to refer to himself as "the Reverend" and wear clerical robes.[22] I shall describe his later ministry shortly.

Baptisms and converts

The baptismal registers from Palestine Place are available in the Bodleian Library in Oxford: they show few converts. Total baptisms at the Jews' Chapel were about 1,000 up to 1863 (20 per annum), about 1,500 up to 1881 (28), and 1,842 at its closure in 1895 (23).[23] The majority were children, but converted Jews were also baptized in other London churches. The quality

19 Gidney, *History*, 40.

20 *The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel 1816* (London: LJS, 1816), 170.

21 Bodleian, CMJ papers, LJS minutes 11 Jan. 1816. See n. 99 below.

22 Joseph Frey, *Judah and Israel, or the Restoration and Conversion of the Jews* (London, 1837), 84.

23 Bodleian, CMJ papers, EJC baptismal registers to 1895, except for 1885–89, which are held in the NA, UCL's LSPCJ Mocatta papers.

and the sincerity of these "professions of faith" must be considered in the context of the great poverty and unemployment in the East End of London. Most of the baptisms were of foreign immigrants with limited English, so whether their faith was genuine or merely convenient needs to be questioned. The offer of a job, some new clothes, and somewhere to live was taken up by young men in particular and by families. One genuine Jewish convert was Michael Solomon Alexander. At his baptism in 1825 at Plymouth attended by 1,000 people, he gave a long "testimony", which was published.[24] Any new Jewish convert was treated with great suspicion by Christians and Jews alike – even the LJS recognized this suspicion.[25] The Jew was encouraged to leave his "Jewishness" behind and to behave in an English Christian manner. Even then, many in the Church would still treat the convert as the "other". This problem was a strong disincentive to convert, in addition to being rejected and "pronounced dead" by the rest of the Jewish family. Many in the Jewish community referred to these converts in disparaging terms as *meshumadim* (apostates). The LJS had started in London but there was only a small Jewish community there early in the nineteenth century, estimated at 15,000.

The foundation and funding of the London Jews Society

A theological foundation of this new outreach to the Jews in London was given in 1796 by the LMS, the pioneers of Jewish mission: "the deplorable state in which the Jewish nation is now found, has a loud claim on Christian philanthropy. The Jews were, however, the natural branches of the spiritual vine . . . the Gentiles were grafted in, yet there will arise a time, in which all Israel will be saved; in which there will be one-fold of Jew and Gentile. They have lived and traded with us, and we have scarcely reflected on their melancholy state, as outcasts of God."[26]

The annual income of the LJS was substantial and exceeded that of most of the other missionary societies, even though few Jews were converted. As noted earlier, annual reports to the supporters provided the accounts: for example, for 1817, £6,948; 1819, £12,141; 1835, £12,328; 1838, £19,054; 1840, £22,398; 1847, £29,046; 1848, £24,721; and 1850, £28,278. Expenditure

24 Michael Solomon Alexander, "An Account of his Baptism", appendix to John Hatchard (vicar of St Andrew, Plymouth), *Predictions and Promises of God regarding Israel: A sermon on the Baptism of Michael Solomon Alexander* (London: Hatchards, 1825).

25 Bodleian, CMJ papers, Report to the OJCI, 1834, 8.

26 *The Evangelical Magazine 1796*, 403–5.

grew each year as the work of the LJS, funded from London, expanded into Europe, to Jerusalem, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Simeon raised 200 guineas following his LJS annual sermon in 1811. He was especially proud of the gift of £1,000 from the junior members of Cambridge University for the Jewish cause in 1812.[27] The LJS responded to the New Testament's call to the "Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile]" in Romans 1:16. Their financial supporters chose to fund the LJS in preference to the many other worthy philanthropic causes available. The fact that so many were willing to donate generously is evidence of a new outlook of philosemitism within the evangelical community.[28]

The Episcopal Jews' Chapel

The EJC was unique in that it was an Anglican centre for worship designed to welcome both Jewish seekers and converts.[29] It had the formal backing of the Bishop of London and, following the impressive opening ceremony, the evangelical Anglicans had a focal point for their missionary endeavours in the East End of London. The importance of this new respect and honour for Jewish people was demonstrated by these large and impressive buildings. Financial support from the LJS backers confirmed the priority of the Jews as the people of God, who were worthy of the Gospel. The chapel welcomed both Jews and Gentiles, soon establishing a Hebrew flavour. Once the Hebrew translation of the New Testament had been published between 1814 and 1817, it was used at Hebrew services.[30] Robert Smith observed that "a greater interest in the Hebrew language was encouraged [by the LJS] and their Hebrew printing".[31] A special hymn book was printed for use in the chapel[32] and, in 1830, a Hebrew version of the *Book of Common Prayer* (this liturgy was later used at Christ Church, Jerusalem). Hebrew symbols were incorporated into the interior of the church and the exterior welcomed visitors with a Hebrew inscription from

27 Bodleian, CMJ papers, file e.8, Minutes, Nov. 1812, 4.

28 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The People of the Book: Philosemitism in England, from Cromwell to Churchill* (New York: Encounter, 2011), 120.

29 For a photograph of Palestine Place see Gerry Black, *Jewish London: An Illustrated History* (London: Breedon Books, 2002), 43.

30 London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 930, and the Alexander papers, MS 3393.

31 Robert Smith, "The London Jews Society and Patterns of Jewish Conversion in England, 1801–1859", *Jewish Social Studies* 43, no. 3/4 (1981): 283.

32 Portions of the Psalms of David with Hymns on various subjects for use at the EJC, selected by the Rev. C. S. Hawtrey (London: LJS, 1822).

I Kings 8:34, "Then hear Thou in Heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel". Some services were held in German for the convenience of recent immigrants. Baptism of the Jewish converts had already taken place at the original Jews' chapel in Brick Lane, Spitalfields, and other Anglican churches (St Lawrence Jewry in the City and St Clement Danes on the Strand), where 80 were baptized between 1810 and 1814.

Schools

Schools had been set up from the start of the outreach to the Jews in London. A general Jewish perspective was expressed by Cecil Roth, writing in 1950: "in 1807 the London Society [LMS] established a Free School for Jewish boys and girls. The methods employed in cajoling indigent parents to send their children to attend created great indignation in the Jewish community. On 10 January 1808, [later Chief] Rabbi Hirschell [Solomon Herschel or Hirschel, 1762–1842] delivered a sermon at the Great Synagogue forbidding the members of his flock to enrol their children in this pernicious institution; an abstract being subsequently published in Yiddish and English."[33]

It was noted that only the lowest section of the population attended. Later, in 1817, the Jews' Free School (JFS) was opened in Bell Lane, Whitechapel, which by 1900 had 4,000 pupils.[34] The school that so threatened Solomon Hirschell was in Bethnal Green, founded before Palestine Place was built, and had 45 Jewish boys and 38 Jewish girls by May 1812.[35] Following the Hirschell ban, school numbers were reduced to 29 boys and 22 girls in 1813.[36] Once established at Palestine Place, the boarding numbers were limited to an average of 100 children, equally split between boys and girls.[37] Priority was given to the children of converted Jews or those who were "seeking" and by 1840 the priority was formally expressed as a "Jewish father or mother unbaptised, the child aged over six years, healthy, with a maximum of two children per family . . . no

33 Cecil Roth, *The Great Synagogue, London 1690–1940* (London: Goldston 1950), 8.

34 JFS was the largest school in Europe. Moses Angel, the head for 51 years, maintained that children were "ignorant even of the elements of sound; until they had been Anglicanised", LMA, letters, 4046E.

35 *Jewish Expositor* (LJS house journal), 1813.

36 Bodleian, CMJ papers, file e.1, Minutes, 31 March 1813, 171.

37 W. T. Gidney, *Missions to the Jews: A Handbook of Reasons, Facts and Figures* (London: LJS, 1901), 66.

illegitimate children".[38] Many were from extremely poor backgrounds and "there are a few who, having had to struggle with unexpected difficulties, have through God's blessing upon their diligent exertions, raised themselves to situations of credit and respectability".[39] When the schools were closed in 1895, new buildings were constructed at Streatham in south London, called "the Hebrew schools", to continue the work with the Jewish children. By 1899, 1,332 children had been educated at Palestine Place and at Streatham. However, the Streatham school was closed on 15 January 1913, when a list of the remaining students was compiled.[40] When the boys reached fifteen, they were mostly employed as apprentices and the girls from sixteen as domestic servants; the brightest were selected to become school-teachers.[41]

The Operative Jewish Converts Institution

The Operative Jewish Converts Institution was founded in 1831, following the Pauline injunction that "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Its aim was to support and instruct the "inmates" [sic] for a limited time, "to retain only the diligent and dismiss some".[42] There was sensitivity about ejecting Jews post-baptism: the evangelicals wanted to treat them with mercy and charity, especially as they had been rejected completely by the Jewish community as apostates. They would be provided with board, lodging, and clothing and then taught a trade – normally printing and bookbinding. Samples of the printing typefaces used, including Hebrew characters, are available in the British Library in a *Specimen Book* of 1850.[43] This booklet was published as advertising material for their professional services, the aim being to provide "the means of obtaining their future livelihood by honest industry".[44] The OJCI was a special attraction for young, destitute, immigrant men, who had arrived in England with nothing. Their motives were not always purely religious.

The conditions of residence required daily Bible reading, "uniting together in Divine worship in the homes", like a family. They were expected

38 UCL, Mocatta papers, LSPCJ By-Laws 1840, updated 1850,11 (donated by Mrs Lask-Abrahams in 1992).
39 Gidney, *Missions*, 68.
40 Ibid., 41; UCL, Mocatta papers, LSPCJ, Schools Committee Minutes, Feb. 1913.
41 UCL, Mocatta papers, LSPCJ By-Laws 1840, 13.
42 Bodleian, CMJ papers, file e.15, OJCI Annual Report 28 April 1834, 5, 8.
43 Specimen Book of the Printing Types used at the OJCI (London: LJS, 1850).
44 British Library (BL), OJCI Report 1834, Intro.

to attend public worship regularly and to engage "on a continuous course of Christian training and discipline". There was a total of 300 "inmates" up to 1850; in those nineteen years about 100 were baptized and lived "consistently with their baptismal engagements". This encouraging information was circulated with an appeal for friends to continue their financial support for the OJCI. The patron was the Bishop of London; vice-patrons included Lord Shaftesbury (described as a "distinguished friend of Israel"),[45] the Prussian ambassador, Christian Bunsen, and the Marquis of Blandford. The Right Honourable Sir George Henry Rose GCH was the President and the committee included Dr Marsh, Simeon, McCaul, and Sir Robert Harry Inglis, MP for Oxford. It remained in operation until 1931. At the start, the committee sought a superintendent who had "Jewish experience and a devoted love for the Jewish people". John Christian Reichardt (1803–1873), a converted Jew, was selected, who had been an LJS missionary in Europe.

A few of the annual reports of the OJCI are deposited in the British Library and reveal that from 1834 there were sixteen "inmates". Some were regarded as unfit and unwilling to work; others had shown industry and were learning a trade. In 1834, three left to trade locally, three were helped to find work outside, and it was commented that they still attended the chapel for worship. Many were immigrants and it was stated "that some were baptised, then deserted and returned to dishonesty". One of the previous converts was banned from the City by the magistrates. In contrast, another stayed a year and then returned to the Continent; once settled there he sent a letter of thanks and appreciation. He referred to his experience in London as "practical Christianity in a Christian family". March 1834 was an eventful month, as four returned to the Jewish fold and another one was baptized a Roman Catholic. One disgruntled convert, who had lived at the OJCI for a year, left in anger and formed his own anti-missionary society. The LJS response was that "to every successful advance, opposition must be expected". Again, it was the ladies who were instrumental in raising funds. In 1842, the annual report boasts that two of the inmates had been accepted by the Hebrew Training College to train as missionaries and another had become a schoolmaster. Pride of place went to the ordination in Jerusalem of a previous convert by the Bishop of Jerusalem, who was to minister in the Middle East. During the OJCI's existence, 264 people passed through its system.

45 Bodleian, CMJ papers, file e.15, OJCI Annual Report, 2 May 1842.

The LJS was fully aware of blatantly insincere baptisms: they realized that many from abroad had no form of testimonial about their previous lives and character and thus there was a real danger of deception. In 1843, the annual report refers to "false statements and misrepresentations to which the Institution has been lately exposed", admitting that there is "the necessity of exercising considerable caution in receiving new inmates". A greater control of the "Christian Israelites" was essential to prevent abuse by these false inmates and the subsequent bad publicity. Everything possible was done to protect the reputation of the Society and ensure the continuing flow of funds. A reference is made in this report to James Cohen, a Jew from North Africa; when he was admitted he spoke only African [sic], Arabic and biblical Hebrew. By 1845, the nineteen converts earned four-fifths of their board and clothing costs, as the trading environment had improved. A reference was made to 150 people in the congregation at the EJC. From 1846, a system of "probation" was established. There was also a suggestion that a similar scheme should be set up for converted "Jewesses". An intriguing comment was made in 1848, "that all the inmates were now Jewish",[46] and a new printing press was bought during that year. In 1850, the report noted a serious problem of (unspecified) disease in the local community.

The Hebrew Training College

For the express purpose of promoting the aims of the Hebrew Training College, comprising an average of six students each year, an instruction booklet was given to the missionaries in 1824.[47] The instructors were encouraged to "excite the sympathy of Christians to their [the Jews'] favour" and demonstrate that they "were friends of Israel". They were recommended to avoid political discussions and also to ignore all disputed topics. They were especially encouraged to be obedient to the Society, to be careful of their health, and to be prudent in the use of expenses. The LJS principles were summarized in a sermon to the students at the College in 1848 as follows: "Bring the scattered of Judah and Israel to a cordial reception of the Lord Jesus Christ as the true Messiah. To interest Christians and other persons in their welfare. To obtain such information as may be useful for these purposes."[48] This intended respect for Jewish

46 BL, OJCI Report 1848, 36.

47 Bodleian, CMJ papers, file e.4, General Instructions to Missionaries, 1850.

48 James Cohen, *An Address to the Students at the Hebrew College at Palestine Place on the 30 November 1848* (London: LJS, 1848), 18.

people can be seen in the same address: Jews are described as "well disciplined, most reading [sic], acute, argumentative and (in their way) learned people".[49] Edward Bickersteth in 1837 encouraged his audience at the EJC to remove any "stumbling blocks" in their relationship with the Jews, when they showed the wrong Christian attitudes: "everything in the New Testament respecting Israel is calculated to excite the tender, compassionate, and kind feelings of Christians towards the Jews". He challenged his hearers to confess their part in the church that had persecuted the Jews and behaved towards them with prejudice, treating them with "contempt instead of love". Bickersteth argued that the Jews had their own stumbling blocks – self-righteousness, the traditions of men, the Mishnah, and their unbelief in the Messiah sent by God.[50]

W. T. Gidney, in *Missions to the Jews* (1899), an official publication of the LJS, outlines its priorities as Evangelistic and Pastoral; Educational; Bible, Tract, and Prayer Book distribution; Colportage (hawking religious books); and Medical.[51] Building on this foundation, the work in London was well established but limited in its scope, because the emphasis had shifted to Europe and the Middle East. In 1978, the character of LJS supporters was commented on by Mel Scult, a severe Jewish critic of the Society: "in the light of the association of these individuals with the Society, it is certainly obvious that the mission to the Jews was *not* the idea of a few fanatics . . . on the fringes of Christian society, but of the majority".[52] The *Jewish Encyclopaedia* estimates that 204,000 Jews worldwide were converted to Christianity during the nineteenth century and 50,000 in England.[53] The LJS was an important part of this growing worldwide outreach to the Jews.

Producing a Hebrew New Testament and printing Jewish books

Dr Claudius Buchanan had returned from India in 1810 with a Hebrew New Testament translated by a Jew. He challenged the LJS: "how strange it appears that, during a period of 1800 years, the Christians should never have given the Jews the New Testament in their own language! By

49 Ibid., 14.

50 Edward Bickersteth, *The Way of Christ Prepared, sermon at the EJC, 12 March 1837* (London: LJS, 1837), 5, 10.

51 Gidney, *Missions*, 56.

52 Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 108.

53 *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, "Modern Converts to Christianity"; De la Roi, *Jewish Baptisms in the Nineteenth Century*, iii, 60, cited in Hugh J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity* (London: Duckworth, 1936), 85.

a kind of infatuation, they have reprobated the unbelief of the Jews and have never at the same time, told them what they ought to believe.'[54] Work was started immediately on a Hebrew translation of the New Testament (NT). The Gospel of Matthew was published in 1814, Mark in 1815, and the complete NT by 1817. A second edition of 10,000 copies was printed in 1819. Plans were then made to produce a second, improved edition, and Stanislaus Hoga (1791–1860) was involved in a later Hebrew translation in 1838. He had been persuaded to come to London from Warsaw by Alexander McCaul, following his baptism in 1822. Hoga became a critic of the LJS from 1849.[55] Wilberforce was enthusiastic about the initial venture, proclaiming, "was it not a great thing to give the Jews the Gospel of Christ in *pure* Hebrew? Was it not a disgrace to the Christian church, that near two thousand years should have elapsed without having accomplished it?"[56] The Society also republished Jacques Basnage, Sieur de Beauval's *History of the Jews* (1708)[57] and Charles Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Jews* (perhaps the 1753 edition),[58] both printed to encourage the LJS members to engage actively with their Jewish neighbours. The Society wanted to provide suitable resources to reach the Jews effectively in both Britain and abroad.

The theology of the LJS

The content of the sermons preached on behalf of the LJS reveals the motivation of the Society and the underlying assumptions and beliefs about the Jews. These sermons may be seen as representative of a transition from merely seeing the Jews as a wayward nation to perceiving them as individuals worthy of respect, in particular by appreciating their spiritual

54 Claudius Buchanan, cited in Gidney, *History*, 55.

55 Stanislaus Hoga, *The Controversy of Zion* (London: Macintosh, 1839). See Beth-Zion Lask Abrahams, "Stanislaus Hoga: Apostate and Penitent", *Transactions* 15 (1939–45): 121–49; David B. Ruderman, ed., *Converts of Conviction: Faith and Scepticism in Nineteenth-Century European Jewish Society* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), ch. 4, "The Intellectual and Spiritual Journey of Stanislaus Hoga: From Judaism to Christianity to Hebrew Christianity", 41–53.

56 William Wilberforce, letter, *Jewish Repository* (June 1815): 235.

57 Jacques Basnage, Sieur de Beauval, *The History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present Time: containing their antiquities, their religion, their rites, the dispersion of the ten tribes in the East and the persecutions this nation has suffer'd in the West* (London: Beaver and Lintot, 1708).

58 Charles Leslie, *A Short and Easy Method with the Jews: Wherein the Certainty of the Christian Religion is demonstrated by Infallible Proof. With an answer to the most material of their objections and prejudices against Christianity* (London: printed for A. Strahan, 1753).

heritage. The phrase "a standing miracle" recurs,[59] which emphasizes the continued existence of the Jews as a distinct nation, who had maintained their faith and heritage despite centuries of persecution. It was generally assumed that the Jews would gradually be assimilated into other cultures, so their continued existence was regarded as a divine miracle. Evangelical Anglicans such as Robert Bickersteth used what they said were (Jewish) biblical, prophetic sources to teach that God had not finished with the Jews, who were seen as a vital component in the "Last Days" of religious history. Some taught that the widespread conversion of the Jews would result in a new impetus from these "converted Jews" to spread the Gospel back to the Gentiles.[60]

The common bond between Judaism and Christianity was constantly affirmed within the LJS by reinforcing the Jewish foundations of the Christian faith.[61] LJS sermons stressed that this had been ignored by the Roman Catholic church over the previous fifteen hundred years, following Constantine in 325 CE. The major argument of McCaul, repeating earlier anti-Jewish polemics that had been articulated in medieval disputations, was that the rabbis had added a layer of error over the original text of Scripture.[62] He believed that the revealed Word of God had been obscured by the Mishnah and that the rabbis "had introduced the tainted laws of men"; this argument lies at the heart of his book *The Old Paths* (1837).[63] He wished, however, to present this argument in a different way. Any treatment of the Jews by Christians, in any event, was encouraged to be compassionate and respectful. "What feelings are you actuated [sic] towards God's ancient people the Jews? Do you compassionate [sic] them in their present estrangement from the fold of Christ?"[64] The LJS realized that there were also many things that the Jews could teach Christians, which anticipates the modern concept of a Judeo-Christian heritage in Britain. Outreach to the Jews in London during this period focused on a previously neglected and despised Jewish minority. This investment in the buildings at Palestine Place and all the activities there were meant to demonstrate to the Jews in London, and worldwide, that they were still

59 Robert Bickersteth, "The Annual Sermon for the OJCI at the EJC, 15 May 1851", Oxford, Worcester College, Pottinger papers 9/13 XZ.7.2, 14.

60 Ibid., 28.

61 Ibid., 25.

62 See Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish–Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London and Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993).

63 Alexander McCaul, *The Old Paths* (London: LJS, 1837).

64 Ibid., 30.

God's covenantal people, with a future purpose and a hope. Despite all the criticism and challenges, by 1853 there was estimated to be fifty clergy of Jewish descent ministering within the LJS. Whether or not this led to a more favourable perspective on the Jews among the laity must remain a matter of speculation.

Among what were believed to be influential sermons preached at the EJC was that on 8 November 1841, the day after Bishop Alexander's consecration at Lambeth Palace and just before his departure as the Bishop of Jerusalem.[65] A note in Alexander's personal papers records that Dr Joseph Wolff (on whom more later) had preached at the EJC and that Alexander had met him there. Another note reflects the strong objections from John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey of the Oxford Movement (the Tractarians, High Church) to the Jerusalem Bishopric.[66]

The EJC was the main resource that the LJS could use to encourage any Jewish enquirers in London. However, the fundamental problem was that to be seen to attend a Christian place of worship was forbidden to Jews, especially at a site that was promoted as a centre for conversion. Debates and discussions were continued in less conspicuous premises but, surprisingly, several Jews did attend discussions at the EJC. An analysis of the sermons preached at Palestine Place, and on the LJS circuit nationwide, immediately shows a mismatch. These sermons involved intellectual, biblical, and spiritual arguments (often at great length) and appealed to Jews of a higher intellectual capacity than the locals at Palestine Place and in East London. Most of those hearers were of the lowest class, academically unlike the more enlightened, philosophical Jews found in Europe. Of course, Alexander and Wolff had more than capable intellects but they were definitely the exception to the usual listeners. It can be concluded that the LJS sermons were mainly for Christian supporters to buy; they were published by the LJS and many other booksellers, and were purchased as part of the fashion to be considered an intelligent and well-read Christian.

65 Farewell Sermon of the Bishop of Jerusalem, Michael Solomon Alexander, on 8 November 1841 (London: LJS, 1841).

66 Oxford, St Antony's College, Middle East Centre, Jerusalem and the East Mission Private Papers, box 1, files 1–3, Alexander papers.

Converts

There were many false converts, as the LJS acknowledged, but there were also some genuine Hebrew Christian "trophies", as they regarded them. The most obvious was the Right Reverend Michael Alexander, who as noted earlier was the first Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, from 1841 to 1845. He was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Posen, Prussia, and emigrated to England in 1820 (his rabbi father had been born in England).[67] Alexander had planned to teach German and the Talmud in London, but the opportunity had fallen through. An application was made to the Chief Rabbi, Solomon Hirschell, and Alexander was offered a post as a private tutor to a family in Colchester, Essex. There he met Dr William Marsh, a pillar of the LJS leadership team and the close friend of Simeon. Alexander was challenged by Marsh to read a German New Testament; when reading the first chapter of Matthew, with its section about the Jewish Patriachs, he was intrigued. Further study led him to say: "I was more struck with the character of Christ and the excellent morals that he taught".[68] Then Hirschell appointed him as a rabbi in Norwich. The synagogue was next to an Anglican church and he met many pious Christians there.[69] His particular interest was in the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies about the person of Christ. While he had been a lodger in Lambeth in London, a visitor had left a Christian Bible, which he read out of curiosity. Hirschell next appointed him as a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) in Plymouth, where he met his wife, Deborah, and they married in 1824. Resolving to avoid Christians, he nevertheless gave Hebrew lessons to a local Anglican curate. Again, he could not avoid discussing whether Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and he secretly went to some evening services at the church. Alexander was given an LJS leaflet about the converted Jew Dr Joseph Wolff (1795–1862), who had embraced Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Hirschell found out about Alexander's interest in Jesus and ordered him "to go before the Ark and curse the God of the Christians".[70] He then suspended him.

At the age of twenty-six, Alexander was baptized at Plymouth in 1825. He was ordained at Dublin in 1827 into the Church of Ireland, then worked for seven years in Gdansk (Danzig) and London for the LJS. He taught at

67 Kelvin Crombie, *A Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Nicolaysons, 2006), 1.
68 Hatchard, *Predictions and Promises*, 38.
69 Ibid., 42.
70 Crombie, *Jewish Bishop*, 18.

King's College London, becoming the Professor of Hebrew and Rabbinic Literature. There is no record of him objecting to the antisemitic tenor at King's when it styled itself as the counterweight to UCL. In 1841, as noted earlier, he was appointed the Bishop of Jerusalem; sadly, Alexander died of a heart attack in Cairo on 23 November 1845. His *Testimony* is extant.[71]

Another leading convert was Joseph Wolff, an Anglican vicar and missionary to the Middle East. He was an outstanding man and represented a new attitude among the Jewish converts. Wolff was proud of his Jewishness and that he had discovered Yeshua as "his Messiah". In contrast to the previous tropes, he affirmed his Judaism, building on that foundation to present himself as a "completed Jew". Wolff was the son of a rabbi from Bavaria. His father said of him at the age of eight, "God have mercy upon us, our son will not remain a Jew. He is constantly walking about thinking, which is not natural!"[72] Wolff was baptized as a Roman Catholic in Prague and then sent to a monastic community in Rome. There he met Henry Drummond (1786–1860), a rich banker and MP, who in his curt manner commanded, "Wolff, go with me to England".[73] In July 1819, aged twenty-four, Wolff was funded by him and settled in East London. He soon discovered the EJC at Palestine Place, joining it regularly for worship. As a result, he decided to become a Protestant, regarding this form of Christianity as his new spiritual home.[74] Drummond introduced him to Simeon and Way, the latter of whom offered him a place at Stansted Park, his house in Sussex, as a member of the earlier Hebrew College there, before it was transferred to Palestine Place. Later on, Simeon shared his rooms with him at King's College, Cambridge. After two years of informal "training" of Wolff by the LJS, Drummond became impatient and exploded: "tell them you must go out [to the Middle East] immediately, and if they don't send you; I will send you *at once*".[75] Instead, Wolff returned to Stansted Park, where he made what turned out to be a crucial contact with Alexander McCaul. Wolff became the most successful missionary to the Jews in the Middle East. He married Lady Georgiana Walpole (of the same family as the eighteenth-century prime minister), whose brother interrogated him before the marriage about the suitability

71 Alexander in Hatchard, *Predictions*.

72 Cited in Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Sublime Vagabond: The Life of Joseph Wolff, Missionary Extraordinary* (London: Churchman, 1984), 82.

73 Ibid., 17.

74 Ibid., 26.

75 Ibid., 36.

of his family pedigree. "I am of the illustrious blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", retorted Wolff with pride; the brother immediately withdrew his objections to the marriage. Simeon officiated at the society wedding at St George's, Hanover Square, in London. Dr Wolff was one of the few notable Jewish converts at this time, in contrast to the many thieves and frauds who had merely professed conversion. He was always regarded with enormous respect and as a man of great integrity. Way described him as "devoid of enmity towards man and full of the love of God . . . whatever he is, he is in earnest".[76]

False converts

It was questioned whether Joseph Frey was a false convert.[77] When he went to the United States in 1816, he founded the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews (which closed in 1826) and was the minister at a Congregational church in New York City. Then he became a Baptist minister on Long Island, moving in 1844 to teach at the University of Michigan and to minister in Ann Arbor. He strongly supported the fight against antisemitism in the United States and he was also active in the movement to promote the emancipation of the Jews in Europe. He died at Pontiac, Michigan, in 1850. The evidence shows that he was a genuine convert, while apparently not overcoming the temptations of adultery and fraud (more on this shortly).

The most public failure of the LJS converts was Benjamin Nehemiah Solomon. Following his conversion, he had left his wife and family in Germany and travelled with Way through Europe (in Berlin in 1818 they were forced to spend time dealing with Solomon's divorce), Tsar Alexander I issued a personal *ukase* (edict) in 1818 for Solomon to minister to the "Christian Israelites" in Crimea. It was famously part of Russian policy to encourage the Jews' conversion, in part through the "Cantonist" military recruitment process, which especially terrorized the lowest rung of Jewry. Way had promoted Solomon's cause by persuading the Bishop of Gloucester to ordain him as an Anglican priest and Way had preached at his ordination in 1817 in London. Wolff's report of their visit to Poland was published in the *Jewish Expositor* in 1818: "there is a great work to do in that

76 Lewis Way quoted in Stirling, *Ways of Yesterday*, 214.

77 Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey, *Narrative of the Reverend Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey* (New York, 1834).

country [Poland]".[78] He was originally seen as an important convert, even trusted enough by the LJS to preach the Annual Sermon in 1820. Solomon translated the NT into Yiddish for the LJS in 1821. Wolff had already warned Way that he did not trust Solomon and his distrust was proved correct when Solomon stole £300 of the LJS money.[79] Solomon later returned to his wife in Germany, resuming his Jewish faith and disappearing from history.

Other obvious fraudulent converts were the Josephson couple, who lived at Palestine Place and then moved to Stansted Park. The evidence is clear that a major crime was committed by Joseph Josephson and his wife; they were found by the police with money stolen from Way, hidden in a hollowed-out Bible. Mrs Josephson (originally a Jewish prostitute who claimed she had been truly converted) had also carried on an affair with Frey at Stansted Park. Finally, their theft of a cheque from Way for £600 resulted in their deportation.[80] These were not simply weaknesses but a substantial abuse of the goodwill of both Way and the LJS. Conversion for convenience was also a feature of the baptisms at Palestine Place. Several families had their children baptized so that they could enter them in the schools on the site. Younger men were also baptized, joining the community there for a short time and then leaving once they had found another job or had moved elsewhere in England or overseas. They left their conversion behind, too.

Is philosemitism really conversionism?

The challenge levelled at the LJS members was that they did not have a genuine love for the Jewish people but saw them only as targets for conversion. Thus, the philosemitism they espoused was a sham. As the LJS saw it, the heart of the Christian message is a missionary faith, to share the Gospel (good news) of Jesus with the whole world. This was the context of the surge in missionary activity before 1800. Generally speaking, Messianic expectation is rife around the turns of the centuries.

78 Benjamin Solomon, "Report to the LJS", *Jewish Expositor*, October 1818, 395.

79 Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Culture in Britain: A Guide* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), 613; Thomas H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Mansfield, CT: Martino), 553.

80 B. R. Goakman, *The LJS Examined* (London: B. R. Goakman, 1816), 58–61; M. Sailman, *The Mystery Unfolded: An Exposition of the Extraordinary Means to obtain Converts by the LJS* (Southampton: the author, 1817), 27, 47–50; Gidney, *History*, 57; Curtis, *Christian Philosemitism: Palestine Place*, 35–6.

New groups for outreach were founded, such as the Baptist Missionary Society (1795), the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799), and the Bible Society (1804). Their outreach extended worldwide from Britain to Africa, India, the Far East, and China. When the LJS was formed in 1809, it proclaimed that "for the first time" in England the Jews were seen by Christians as worthy of the Gospel, and not as those eternally rejected by God and guilty of deicide.[81] Conveniently, it was forgotten that Martin Luther had made various sympathetic appeals to the Jews, the rejection of which helped spur his hostility to them, and the LJS approach shared many aspects of earlier conversion efforts. For the LJS the Jews were especially important as they were seen as "half-Christians",[82] because they too were waiting for a Messiah and both shared the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. Ultimately, the aim was to convince the Jews that Jesus was also their Messiah. LJS supporters did not seem to understand the fundamental objection from the Jews that since Christians had demonstrated great enmity towards them over most of their history, why should they listen now? The LJS argued that if they showed love and compassion to the Jewish people in the context of conversionary efforts, this would win them over. Evangelicals were encouraged to demonstrate such a positive lifestyle that it would appeal to the Jews.

For the majority of Jewish scholars the term "philosemitism" is inappropriate when the claimed pro-Jewish posture forms part of a larger missionary effort. The fundamental question, in retrospect, is whether it is possible for an evangelical Christian to be philosemitic, without requiring or even encouraging the conversion of the Jews. Modern Jewish scholars present the limited argument that the only motivation for the LJS was conversion, not a genuine love for the Jews as people. Todd Endelman is the foremost Jewish historian who has researched the primary sources of the LJS. He argued that support for the Jews was not genuine, only a pretext for their conversion, and suggested that the LJS slogan was "winning them over by kindness". He writes that "this kind of philosemitism was not ultimately pro-Jewish insofar as toleration was intended *solely* to promote the conversion of the Jews".[83] He further states that Jews are seen as an abstract concept within the Protestant Millennial expectation (Christian Restorationism) and that "'philosemitism' must

81 Scult, *Millennial*, 96–7.

82 See R. H. Martin, "Pan-Evangelism and the LJS", *Church History* 46 (Dec. 1977), 441.

83 Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1831: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 50.

not be seen as unqualified expressions of love for flesh and blood Jews".[84] Endelman's most recent book, *Leaving the Jewish Fold* (2015),[85] follows this approach and he examines Jewish conversion in England and Europe. He further doubts that LJS support for Jewish rights was genuine because "some of the most active supporters of Jewish Rights were those who desired their conversion".[86]

I propose a more nuanced approach, these two perspectives need not be mutually exclusive. Is it possible to seek the wellbeing of the Jews, whether they convert or not, as they are free to choose? The LJS argued for a more positive view of the Jews as individuals by Christians; furthermore, they stood against all forms of antisemitism. Perhaps it is this latter feature that is the most important. Previously, the Jews had been treated with contempt and their religious tradition mocked as backward. The debates and discussions with Jews, under the auspices of the LJS, cast them as equals, close to Christians in many ways because of their shared spiritual heritage, especially the Torah and the fact that Jesus and his disciples were Jews. Western European art had long portrayed Jesus as a Westerner, such paintings rarely depicting him as a real Middle Eastern Jew. The LJS shocked some members of society and the church by reminding them that "Jesus was a Jew".

Living at Palestine Place

A unique insight into living at 8 Palestine Place is provided by Elizabeth Anne Finn (1825–1921), the daughter of Alexander McCaul. The family moved there in 1831, before he became the Principal of the College. She had been born in Warsaw and arrived in London at the age of six. Finn was used to Jews visiting their Warsaw home and she was fluent in Hebrew. She describes the community at Palestine Place and her friendships with the children in the school. When she was twelve, she taught them Hebrew. "My father took an active part in making the condition of the Jewish people made known [sic] to the people in England. They knew very little about it *and cared even less*". She observed that her father had "learned to love and admire the Jewish people in Warsaw".[87] On Saturdays, her father and

84 Ibid., 56.

85 Todd M. Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold: Conversion and Radical Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

86 Endelman, *Jews of Georgian England*, 57.

87 Elizabeth Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs Finn* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1929), 24, 26.

others from Palestine Place had debates with local Jews in Aldermanbury Hall in Spitalfields. Elizabeth Finn later had a unique link to Jerusalem when she married James Finn (1806–1872), the British consul there.[88] His role included being "the Protector of Jews in the East". Proselytizing was forbidden in Jerusalem, so the LJS claimed that it was focusing on charitable work, seeking not to aggravate the Jews and Muslims. Yaron Perry, however, makes a searing criticism of the mission: "by sending a motley crew of foreign nationals . . . the London Society revealed its lack of confidence in its own ability to sustain a significant presence in Palestine".[89]

From Palestine Place, McCaul was offered in 1843 the living at St James's, Duke's Place, again in the East End of London; the Great Synagogue was located next to the church. It was said that McCaul had a good relationship with the Jews in his parish. They respected his ability to speak Hebrew and his extensive knowledge of the Talmud and their customs.[90] He raised funds to help the Jewish poor in his parish on the same terms as other poor parishioners. When the church tower needed replacing, several local Jewish people contributed a substantial sum. Elizabeth Finn remarks that Lord Shaftesbury always referred to him as "My Dear Rabbi". McCaul was noted, however, for his weekly articles critiquing rabbinic Judaism as a man-made addition to "God's Word", starting in 1837.[91] That year, Trinity College Dublin conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. This honour gave him the foundation to become the professor at King's College London in 1841, then in 1845 he became a prebendary at St Paul's Cathedral.

The London Jewish community

It has been estimated that in 1850 there were about 35,000 Jews nationwide in Britain,[92] with 20,000 in London,[93] predominantly Ashkenazim. There

88 Beth-Zion Lask Abrahams, "James Finn: Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem between 1846 and 1863", *Transactions* 27 (1982): 40–50.

89 Perry, *British Mission*, 203.

90 Alexander McCaul, *Sketches of Judaism and the Jews* (London: Wertheim, 1838).

91 McCaul, *Old Paths*; see also Joseph McCaul (his eldest son), *Memorial Sketch of Alexander McCaul* (London: LJS, 1863).

92 Vivian D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850–1950* (London: Watts, 1954), 6.

93 David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840–1914* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 21.

was a clear distinction between the wealthier and longer-established Jews, who were mainly Sephardim, located in the West End of London, and the more recent immigrants, mainly Ashkenazim from Eastern Europe, in the much poorer East End. As has been seen, the prominent LJS converts, linked with Palestine Place, were immigrants from Franconia (Frey), Posen (Alexander), and Bavaria (Wolff). The substantial increase in Jewish immigration to the East End did not occur until later in the century, in the 1880s, following the Russian pogroms, especially from the Pale of Settlement. The total of Jewish immigrants between 1880 and 1914 was estimated to be 106,000, many of whom transmigrated through London to the USA (the Aliens Act of 1905 was introduced to restrict these "pauper aliens").[94] In our period, there was an active distancing by the more Anglicized and assimilated merchants, the professional Jewish upper classes in the West End, from "the poor Jews". They saw their "brethren" as a problem who could negatively affect their acceptance and status in British society. Nevertheless, concern for these "poor Jews" elicited generous financial support for them; sometimes Jewish charity was criticized as a means by which the richer Jews distanced themselves from the unwashed masses. It is significant that LJS efforts were focused on the poorer, lower-class Jews around Bethnal Green, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, and the East End of London.

A contrasting legacy that still exists today is the "original" Jews' chapel in Brick Lane and Fournier Street, Spitalfields. It was first built in 1743 as a French Huguenot chapel; from 1804, it was used as the Jews' chapel for the LJS and, after the EJC was erected, it became a Wesleyan church in 1843. Then from 1897, the strictly Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews from Lithuania "reused" it as the Spitalfields Great Synagogue. Famously, as Machzike Hadath, it was the pulpit of Rav Kook from 1916 to 1919, when he was stranded in London before his appointment as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in Palestine. In this period, after the Russian pogroms of the 1880s, some 10,000 members of the parish of 14,000 were Jewish. The synagogue was closed in 1952, when the community transferred to Golders Green. Finally, in 1976, it was again "reused" and became the Bangladeshi Muslims' Jamme Masjid (mosque). Thus, we can see the historic significance of this building in Brick Lane that spans all the Abrahamic faiths, from 1743 to date.[95]

94 David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe 1789–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 331.

95 Anne Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1666–2000* (London: Routledge, 2005).

Critics of the LJS, both Jewish and Christian

B. R. Goakman, a converted Jew, published *The LJS Examined* in October 1816 (after he had been sacked from his post of printer to the LJS), about the early days of the Society, which highlighted problems within the LJS. His accusation was that "*gain*, not conversion had been the moving cause of *their conversion*". This Jewish critic portrays his own cohort of young Jews as crooks and inherently deceptive; thus he reinforces the common negative stereotype of the Jews, that they were not to be trusted. Many of these young men were immigrants and were mired in poverty. At this time the Jewish charitable organizations were not as well developed or as generous as they became towards the end of the century. Goakman's main criticism concerned the waste of money on the project. He estimated that "£70,000 was spent in seven years".[96] This would have included the extensive building work at Palestine Place, for capital projects and equipment. Goakman worked with Frey and described him as a gambler. As with any critic, we cannot be sure of what is true and what is exaggerated but, as has already been revealed, Frey was eventually exposed as unreliable, to say the least. Yet there was indeed dignified contact between the communities and interest at the highest social level. The *Jewish Chronicle* described the Duke of Sussex (1773–1843), Prince Augustus Frederick, as "Britain's greatest Royal philosemite", who was a Hebraist and built up a superb Hebrew library, later sold to the British Library in 1844.[97] He was a Grand Master of the Freemasons. As a contrast, Roth highlights Daniel Mendoza, the boxing champion of England between 1792 and 1795, who was born in Bethnal Green and "familiarised countless persons throughout the country with the actuality of the Jew, and convinced them that he could excel in other capacities than as a pedlar and old-clothes man".[98] The LJS is also praised by Roth, who writes that "another powerful influence" in the growing respect for Jews "was that of the Evangelical movement . . . it was given fresh vitality by the enthusiasm of the philanthropist Lewis Way".[99] Roth concludes that "no longer were the unbelievers [Jews] considered an object for insult and reviling; they were approached in a spirit not only of friendship, but almost of veneration, as the ancient people of God".[100]

96 Goakman, *LJS Examined*, 72.

97 *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 May 2018. The collection at the BL includes a German Pentateuch from 1300 and a 14th-century Tanakh from Catalonia.

98 Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 226, 240.

99 Ibid., 242.

100 Ibid., 242.

The Damascus blood libel of 1840

A notorious slander was inflicted on the Jews of Damascus in 1840 following the death of one Father Thomas, a superior from the Franciscan convent in the city. Outrageous claims were made that his blood had been used in Jewish religious rituals.[101] Sir Moses Montefiore,[102] the notable leader of the Anglo-Jewish community, led a delegation to Syria and Egypt to protest. From the evangelical wing of English Christianity, McCaul was one of those who protested the innocence of the Jews in London,[103] gaining public support and he also engaged the backing of *The Times* during June. On 3 July 1840, a meeting was called by the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House, where Jews and Christians were united in protest. Because the libel had been instigated by the Roman Catholic Church and the French, neither of whom were in the good graces of the LJS, the evangelicals found it easy to come together. McCaul, who was considered to be one of the foremost philosemites of the era,[104] wrote a pamphlet, *Reasons for believing that the Charge, lately Revived against the Jewish People, is a Baseless Falsehood* (1840), to refute the libel. One of the LJS staff from Jerusalem, John Nicolayson (a Dane ordained by the Bishop of London in 1836 to serve with the LJS there), was sent to Damascus to investigate and to protest.[105] Perry observes that "the Protestant mission occasionally served as an army of colonial rule . . . contenting itself with a certain degree of 'Spiritual Imperialism'".[106] There was support for these protests from Queen Victoria, who respected Montefiore, the man who "was probably responsible for her marked Judeophilia".[107] Alexander also organized a letter to *The Times* on 25 June from forty-five of his fellow "Hebrew Christians", and the LJS, affirming the innocence

101 Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder", Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ronald Florence, *Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

102 See Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

103 Perry, *British Mission*, 51.

104 Bodleian, CMJ papers, Minutes, 25 Nov. 1863.

105 See Norman Rose, ed., *From Palmerston to Balfour: Collected Essays of Mayir Vereté* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1992), 45.

106 Perry, *British Mission*, 4.

107 Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987), 322; see also M. C. N. Salbstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain: The Question of the Admission of the Jews to Parliament 1828–1860* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1982).

of the Jews, stated: "we do solemnly protest that we have never directly nor indirectly heard of, much less known among the Jews, the practice of killing Christians . . . this is a foul and Satanic falsehood".[108] Later, in August 1840, Alexander issued a formal protest by "Christian Jews in England", signed by fifty-seven Hebrew Christians (which demonstrated that Hebrew Christians were a significant group within the Church, many of whom became ordained Anglican clergy).[109] In his authoritative work on the Damascus Affair, Jonathan Frankel devotes a whole chapter to "Christian Millennialists, Jewish Messianists and Palestine", arguing that these events in Damascus formed part of the British plan to open up Palestine to the Jews, a move strongly engineered by Lord Palmerston, when he was made Foreign Secretary in 1835.[110]

The LJS exerted influence through its President, Lord Shaftesbury, whose mother-in-law was married to Palmerston. Frankel observes, consistent with the legend, that "Palmerston enjoyed power politics, *Realpolitik*".[111] McCaul affirmed that "never was a people more misunderstood and misrepresented than the Jews".[112] Whatever the LJS achieved, they consistently treated the Jews with respect and esteem, strongly opposing the lies of the blood libels and of ritual murder.

Jewish–Christian co-operation in the foundation of London University

At the same time as the aggressive missionary activity of the LJS in London, in the 1830s there was a significant joint movement to establish the secular London University (later University College London), outside the influence of the Anglican Church. It was to be free from religious tests and exhibit complete religious tolerance by welcoming Jews, Dissenters, Quakers, Unitarians, Roman Catholics, and atheists to study there. The Oxford

108 Johnson, *History of the Jews*, 39.

109 Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold*, 246; *Jewish Intelligence* 1840, 240–41; Crombie, *Jewish Bishop*, 61.

110 Frankel, *Ritual Murder*, ch. 11, 284–306. See also David Katz, *Philosemitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603–1655* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 89–126; Franz Kobler, *The Vision that was There* (London: Praeger, 1956), 11–57; Sarah Kochav, "Britain and the Holy Land: Prophecy, the Evangelical Movement and the Conversion and Restoration of the Jews 1790–1845" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1989).

111 Frankel, *Ritual Murder*, 291.

112 Alexander McCaul, *Reasons for believing that the Charge, lately Revived against the Jewish People, is a Baseless Falsehood. Dedicated with permission to Queen Victoria* (London: Wertheim, 1840), 54.

and Cambridge colleges felt threatened and they successfully petitioned against a royal charter in 1831. In opposition to UCL, King's had been given a royal charter in 1829, admitting only Anglicans, this was relaxed in 1831, allowing other Christians to study, but all had to attend chapel and still there was no place for Jews. The Jewish community leader Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid (1778–1859), who was influential with the founders of London University, Henry Brougham (1778–1868) and Thomas Campbell (1777–1844), helped to raise the funds to purchase the land. A Baptist, Benjamin Shaw, underwrote the attendant debt at great personal risk and another rich Baptist from Hackney, Dr Francis Augustus Cox, became the founding secretary and then the first librarian, working closely with Goldsmid.[113] The Roman Catholics, who were emancipated in 1829, were represented by the Duke of Norfolk. The lead-up to the 1832 Reform Act was a contentious backdrop to this debate. Interestingly, King's had opened on the day in 1831 when the bishops in the House of Lords had met to reject that Bill. From the evangelical wing, Zachary Macaulay (1768–1838), the abolitionist and a fellow member with Wilberforce of the Clapham Sect, which had promoted the LJS, was a founder and council member of UCL. His son, Lord Macaulay,[114] asserted that London University "is destined to a long, a glorious and a beneficent existence . . . even those haughty foundations which now treat it with contempt, will in some degree feel its salutary influence".[115] Later, he was a prime mover in Parliament for Jewish emancipation. It must be emphasized that the Anglican Church was divided in its attitude to Jewish people at this time: evangelicals conceived of their denomination as philosemitic, but the traditionalist, High (Broad) Anglican wing, including the Oxford Movement, who were the main supporters of King's College London, had anti-Jewish elements.

There was a famous duel in 1829 between the Duke of Wellington and the Earl of Winchelsea, who had accused the Duke of wanting to allow Roman Catholics to enter King's, a lie that the Duke strongly resented. They both survived and Winchelsea apologized.[116] Some have argued that Catholics were hated even more than Jews in the 1830s. There was an aggressive

113 John Briggs, "F. A. Cox of Hackney: Nineteenth-Century Baptist Theologian, Historian, Controversialist and Apologist", *Baptist Quarterly* 38 (Nov. 1999): 392–411; Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, 33.

114 George Otto Trevelyan, ed., *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

115 T. B. Macaulay, writing in the *Edinburgh Review* 43 (1826): 340.

116 Gordon Heulin, *King's College London 1828–1978* (London: King's College London, 1978), 2.

theological controversy between UCL and King's, which prompted strong anti-Jewish feelings, as many resented the attempt to educate Jews at a university level. As the newspaper *John Bull* raged, "it is proposed to instruct butchers in geometry, and tallow-chandlers in Hebrew – tailors are to be instructed in Oriental literature, and shoemakers finished up [sic] in mathematics", a slur on East End Jews who practised these trades.[117] This debate took place even before the Jewish Emancipation Act of 1848. It may appear ironic that evangelical Christians, mainly Dissenters, were strongly represented in the foundation of 'the Godless' London University and they believed that their philosemitism encouraged wider Jewish participation in higher education. The Duke of Sussex, who identified with this form of evangelicalism, laid the foundation stone with full Masonic rights in February 1827.

Hebrew Studies at the new London universities

Alexander (Hebrew and rabbinical literature) and McCaul (Hebrew studies), from the LJS and Palestine Place, both held professorial posts at King's (as noted earlier), Alexander from 1832 and McCaul from 1846 as the first appointment to the new theology department.[118] Evangelicals had deeply split opinions regarding both King's and UCL, according to their tolerance of non-Anglicans. The Dissenter element strongly supported UCL because it gave them new, previously forbidden, access to university education: their only option before, along with Jews, had been to study in Scotland or on the Continent.[119] The universities of Edinburgh and Bonn were expressly chosen as models of religious tolerance for UCL, as Negley Harte states: "London university was conceived in Germany with its parentage in Scotland".[120] At UCL in 1828, Hyman Hurwitz (1770–1844) had become the first Jewish professor of Hebrew language and literature, an appointment which was announced in *The Times*.[121] While teaching at UCL he wrote his influential book *Elements of the Hebrew Language*.[122] From 1799 he had run an academy in Highgate: Endelman described it as the

117 *John Bull*, 14 Feb. 1825.
118 Heulin, *King's College*, 19.
119 Negley Harte, *The University of London 1836–1986* (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 12.
120 Ibid., 61.
121 *The Times*, 23 Jan. 1828.
122 Hyman Hurwitz, *Elements of the Hebrew Language* (London, 1829); see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online, "Hurwitz", rev. Sinead Agnew, 2004.

first Jewish "public school" in England,[123] "a Boarding School for Young Gentlemen".[124] Samuel Taylor Coleridge had recommended him for the UCL post. Christian critics mocked that "Talmuds and the reveries of the Rabies [sic] might perhaps be thought too theological for a Godless Institute".[125] An indication of the acceptance of Hurwitz into wider Christian society in London was his membership of a Masonic lodge; this had been a common way for the Jewish elite to acculturate from the 1720s.[126] Hurwitz's funeral was attended by many Christian friends. The appointment of Hurwitz demonstrated the full acceptance of Jewish people at the heart of UCL. In contrast, at King's, it was a converted Jew, Michael Solomon Alexander, who was appointed, highlighting the gulf between the London universities and the exclusion of Jewish people at King's.

Contemporary London: aspects of the social and religious atmosphere

Bloomsbury sprang to life when UCL was founded.[127] The immediate area had witnessed a new religious group that had broken away from the LJS, the Catholic Apostolic Church. It was formed in 1832 by Henry Drummond and Edward Irving, who had referred to UCL as the "synagogue of Satan". The adherents were interested in the role of Jews at the "end of days", and its teaching provided a foundation for Dispensationalism and modern American Christian Zionism, a variety of right-wing American fundamentalism. As late as 1900 that church was known, in local lore, for being hostile to Jews and secular society generally. The church building itself, Christ the King, remains a tangible legacy still dominating Gordon Square today, built in 1851; it was once used as the chaplaincy for London University and is now part of the Anglican Church.[128] Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), later part of the Bloomsbury Group, lived for some time opposite the Catholic Apostolic Church. Her grandmother was the daughter of

123 Endelman, *Jews of Georgian England*, 158.
124 Hyman, "Hyman Hurwitz: First Anglo-Jewish Professor", 232.
125 "London University", *Christian Remembrancer* 10, no. 7 (1828): 432.
126 John M. Shaftesbury, "Jews in English Regular Freemasonry, 1717–1860", *Transactions* 25 (1977): 168.
127 Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, ch.1, "Godlessness on Gower Street", 25–57; ch. 6, "Towards the Millennium", on the Catholic Apostolic Church in Gordon Square, 159–82.
128 David Tierney, "The Catholic Apostolic Church: A Study in Tory Millennialism", *Historical Research* 63, no. 152 (1990): 289–315.

John Venn, the rector of Holy Trinity, Clapham where Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect worshipped, as did a leading member, Henry Thornton MP, a forebear of E. M. Forster. Woolf's husband, Leonard, came from a high-class Jewish family. Gertrude Himmelfarb in 1985 pointedly contrasted the low ethical values of the Bloomsbury Group with Wilberforce's group, which had espoused much higher moral standards.[129] Close by in Bloomsbury, the Jewish High School for Girls, founded in 1845 by Isabel Goldsmid, built on the demand for good education in London for middle-class girls, which also accepted Christian pupils, thus actively seeking to improve Jewish–Christian relations.[130] Jews' College was also founded locally, in 1855, by Nathan Adler.[131] By 1860, these institutions served a Jewish community in London of about 20,000 people, most of whom were poor.[132]

A distinctive business was founded in the City in 1824, the Alliance Assurance Company, whose directors included Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1777–1836), Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), Sir Francis Baring (1796–1866), an Anglican, and Samuel Gurney (1786–1856), a Quaker. Now RSA, the Royal Sun and Alliance Company, it was originally formed to break the monopoly of Lloyds of London, which discriminated against Jewish merchants.[133] Alliance promised that it would not discriminate against anyone in the course of business. Its foundation confirms that at that time in London the social and religious climate was changing to one of joint public ventures, such as UCL.

The continuing significance of Palestine Place

The King of Prussia, Frederick William IV (1795–1861), visited Palestine Place and the EJC in 1848. He was a strong proponent of the Jerusalem Bishopric and had offered the post originally to McCaul, knowing him from Warsaw. Palestine Place was closed in 1895, when it was nearing the

129 Gertrude Himmelfarb, "From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals", *Quadrant* 30 (Jan. 1986): 19–28; she describes "the amoral decadence and 'higher sodomy' of the Bloomsbury Group".

130 See www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project, "Jewish High School" (accessed Dec. 2018).

131 Albert Montefiore Hyamson, *Jews' College, London 1855–1955* (London: Jews' College, 1955).

132 Roy Porter, *London, a Social History* (London: Penguin, 2000), 367.

133 Ibid., 247. See also the Rothschild Archive, "History", www.rothschildarchive.org (accessed Dec. 2018).

end of the lease, after which the site was rebuilt as a hospital, in 1900 for 669 patients. The work of this outreach centre spanned 80 years. When the EJC was being demolished in November 1897, ten memorial plaques (including those to McCaul, Reichardt, and Way) and the large stone baptismal font purchased by Way were reinstated within Christ Church, Spitalfields.[134] A similar font was also commissioned by Way for his Stansted Park chapel, where it can still be seen. These tributes emphasize the contribution of some of the people who had dedicated their lives to the LJS and particularly to Palestine Place. The theme of philosemitism is clear: "he loved our nation" was inscribed on McCaul's memorial by a group of "Hebrew Christians". James Cartwright MA (1798–1861), a minister at the EJC for twenty-nine years, was recalled for "His unwavering love and heartfelt prayers for God's ancient people". Another minister who served there for seventeen years, Charles Hawtrey (1780–1831), was said to have shown "his love for the Jewish people". These two were Gentiles. An important memorial is to Miss Jane Cook (1776–1851), a wealthy woman from Cheltenham, who funded most of the building at Christ Church in Jerusalem. "Hebrew Christians" are also recognized here: Dr F. C. Ewald (1801–1874), fifty years a minister with the LJS, and Dr H. Aaron Stern (1820–1885) for forty years. The commitment of both "Hebrew" and Gentile Christian leaders demonstrates how they worked together at Palestine Place, seeking to break down the dividing wall previously erected by the Church against the Jews.[135]

134 See www.christchurchspitalfields.org, "Monuments catalogue" (accessed Dec. 2018).

135 Galatians 3:28, "there is therefore no longer Jew or Greek" (i.e. Gentile).