FROM EXPULSION TO EMANCIPATION
Jews in England from the Middle Ages to the Victorian Era
by
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Foreword

The original impetus for the present essay was an invitation from Professor George Landow of Brown University, the learned founder and director of the website www.victorianweb.org to write an account of the so-called “Jew Bill” of 1753, which I happen to have mentioned in one of three earlier essays published on that extraordinary, richly documented website. In view of the website’s focus on the Victorian era, however, I thought it was essential to contextualise the 1753 Bill by situating it in the gradual evolution of the status of Jews in Britain until the achievement of full emancipation in the reign of Queen Victoria. The aim of the book-length study which grew out of this project is thus not to add further material to the history of the Jews in England or to offer a new perspective on it but, while locating the 1753 Bill in the history of the Jews in Britain, to pull together the existing, outstanding scholarship on the history of the Jews in England -- infrequently utilized or even referred to in many fine histories of England – and make it readily accessible to all readers.

In addition, however, at a time of increasing anti-Zionism (anti-Semitism?) and uncertainty, among so-called diaspora Jews themselves (for how many generations is it usual for people to think of themselves as part of a diaspora?), as to whether “the people of God” refers to a nation (or, as Benjamin Disraeli put it, a “race”), or to a religious community, or to the inheritors of a tradition, it seems not inappropriate to reconsider the evolving place of Jews in one society, which, in its turn, has defined itself, at various times, by religion, by descent and inheritance, and by a shared history and shared values and interests.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and express my appreciation of Professor Landow’s unstinting and invaluable editorial input.

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PART I.

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE “JEW BILL” OF 1753

1. The Middle Ages until Expulsion in 1290

There is not much hard evidence concerning Jews who may have been residents of or visitors to the British Isles prior to the Norman Conquest of 1066. It is certain, however, that in 1070 William the Conqueror encouraged (or ordered) a group of well-to-do Jews from Rouen to cross over to England, in the expectation that their commercial skills and capital would enhance the prosperity of his new realm by injecting capital into a hitherto undeveloped economy (Jacobs, xiii-xiv)*, while also helping to sustain his own power and authority. These early immigrants spoke a form of medieval French in their daily life and studied Torah with the help of French translations. They also frequently had French or French-based names, such as Jurnet, Le Brun, Quatrebuches (Richardson, passim; Abrams, passim). As legislation introduced in the twelfth century prohibited Jews from owning arable land, however, except temporarily as a pledge on a loan of money (Egan, 8-12), or to engage in crafts, most of which were subject to the regulations of religious and monopolistic guilds, they were restricted on the whole to finance and trade – though as pawnbrokers, a favoured occupation among the less well-to-do, they had to have enough skill to repair and refurbish jewellery and plate, clothing and armour, in order to make them saleable. In addition, some Jews have been identified as physicians, goldsmiths, soldiers and even vintners, fishmongers and cheesemongers (Richardson 26-27. Usury (borrowing and lending at exorbitant and abusive rates) being considered sinful by the Church, which severely punished Christian clerks and laymen caught practising it on the sly, this area of activity lay open to Jews and their mostly poor clients. Substantial money-lending, however, was distinct from small-time abusive usury -- in many respects bonds by both Jewish and Christian money-lenders took a form similar to that of the modern mortgage (Richardson 70, 83-86) – and had become an increasingly important instrument for sustaining and promoting both commerce and the state. It was an area in which Jews, excluded from landowning and agriculture, played a prominent role.

Contrary to popular belief, however, it was not, the medievalist H. G. Richardson has argued, an exclusively Jewish activity. There were many well-to-do Christian merchants who were also money-lenders. William Trentegeruns of Rouen

* To avoid footnote clutter, references have been incorporated into the text. Page numbers are given in parentheses. Author’s name and/or work title, as listed in the bibliography at the end of each section, are also provided wherever needed for clarity.
and William Cade of Saint-Omer both lent large sums to the future Henry II of England when, as Duke of Normandy, he contested King Stephen’s right to the English throne and organised a military expedition to the island in 1153. Cade, Richardson writes, “a man of immense wealth, with agents in every region of the Western world,” also “lent money to earls and barons, bishops, abbots and archdeacons and to many much humbler folk in all parts of the kingdom.” Indeed, “much the same clients went to a Jewish as went to the Flemish money-lender. [...] In essentials, Flemish -- and we may guess, all Christian – money-lending and Jewish money-lending were identical” (55; see also Palliser 67-71). With the passage of time Christians were even trafficking in Jewish bonds.

Money-lending was almost always complemented by trade. Thus William Cade traded in wool and corn, as did the wealthy Jew Aaron of Lincoln. In general, Richardson argues, “to pursue their callings, even money-lending, with success, the Jews must necessarily have cultivated good relations with the community in which they were a small and unassimilated minority” – to the point, he proposes, that, though their neighbours knew them by their practices, “it is unlikely that many Jews could be readily distinguished from Gentiles by their appearance. The order given in England in 1218 and repeated in 1253 that Jews should wear a badge (tabula) on the breast, so that they might be plainly recognized was the outcome of an openly discriminatory decree of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215; nevertheless it does point to the difficulty, throughout all the lands of Latin Christendom, of distinguishing Jew from Christian by their physical traits” (6). Not surprisingly, Richardson suggests that the number of converts to Christianity among the Jews was probably larger than is usually assumed: “There were [...] compelling reasons to persuade those who were not strong in the Jewish faith to throw in their lot with the Gentile community around them, from which they differed by so little, and the marvel is perhaps, not that there seems to have been a steady flow of converts to Christianity, but that the Jewish community stood steadfast as a whole through good times and ill” (28).

Not all scholars, no doubt, would find this extremely positive view of Jewish-Gentile relations convincing. An earlier writer on the Jews in England held that, since birth, marriage, death, inheritance and all human and state activities fell within the sphere of Church influence, the Jews could not be fitted into existing social arrangements. Hence William the Conqueror’s appointing them “a place to inhabit and occupy” in London and Oxford -- so-called “Jewries.” These are not to be confused with the ghettos to which continental Jews were later forcibly confined, the same writer insists. They were areas within the built-up urban scene in which the community synagogue, in proximity to which most Jews preferred to live, could be located. All in all, with their peculiarities of custom, dress, and speech and their extremely limited mingling with the native population, the Jews were seen as strangers in a strange land, living in the country not by common right but by the
special consent of the king, under his protection, and subject only to his regulation (Hyamson, History 12). As a more recent scholar has summarized the situation of the Jews:

In law, the Jews were uniquely, both legal persons and negotiable property. As a community they could be sold or mortgaged – indeed they were mortgaged by Henry III to his brother, Richard, against a loan of 5,000 marks. [. . .] As chattels of the king, their property was the king’s property. But they were also considered a distinct collective entity, addressed collectively through their leaders. To this extent, then, it may be said that the Jews had an acknowledged separate legal status. They constituted a communa, with which the king could deal as a single whole. [. . .] The charters issued by the Angevin kings described the Jews’ status in the most perfunctory terms. They were “just like our own chattels” (Richard I) or “just as our own chattels” (John) – that is, items of possession. [. . .] In relation to all men, save the king, the Jew was free, that is, free of any obligation of duty. But that amounted to a condition of total unfreedom. “The Jew,” explained the thirteenth century English jurist, “can have nothing that is his own, for whatever he acquires, he acquired not for himself, but for the king.” He was Crown property. An attack on Jews was thus an attack on the monarch’s prestige. [. . .] The king’s charters were mere statements of the Crown’s position in relation to the Jews at the time of issue. The Jews needed protection, and though the charters’ combination of privileges and restrictions purported to give them that, the Jews were not safe from their ostensible protector. [. . .] Against the Crown, the Jews had no rights. If the king chose to override their privileges in any particular case, he could do so [. . .]. He could act against them on a whim (he was not free to act thus against any other class of person). [. . .] Moreover, the limited protection that the king did offer was itself conditional and came at a considerable price. King John, for example, charged the Jews for the 1201 Charter 13 (25% of property value as against 10%), and if a Jew were imprisoned for any crime, he lost all his property to the king. Finally, a Jew’s unredeemed loans reverted to the king on the lender’s death. (Jacobs 332-35)

This relatively peaceful period of Jewish life in England was not without interludes of extreme hostility and violence, however, mostly among the poor and ill-educated, as is suggested by the opening sentence of the Jew in Crispin’s well-intentioned dialogue: “If the [Mosaic] law is one that should be observed, why then should you treat those who observe it as though they were dogs, driving them forth and pursuing them everywhere with sticks” (quoted Richardson 24). The increasing involvement of England in the crusades under Henry’s successors Stephen (reg. 1135-1154), Henry II (reg. 1154-1189) and especially Richard I (reg. 1189-1199) aggravated popular anti-Jewish sentiments. The historian Albert Montefiore Hyamson summarized the situation clearly in his History of the Jews in England of 1908:
The eloquence and zeal of Peter the Hermit and his coadjutors in the preaching of the First Crusade succeeded in banding together men of all nations in the task of recovering the Holy Land for Christendom. They had, however, another result that was hardly intended. To rouse the passions of the soldiers of the Cross lurid tales were told of all that Christians had suffered at the hands of that eastern people, estranged from God and the enemies of Christ. Christians had been massacred and their lands laid waste. Churches had been destroyed or, even worse, devoted to anti-Christian rites. Men and women had been tortured, Christians circumcised and their blood used for superstitious purposes. By these tales of infidel barbarity Europe was aroused, and her chivalry swore eternal warfare on the savage and un-Christian race, whose atrocities had been so vividly described. A huge army prepared itself to defend the honour of Christendom and to avenge the sufferings of the faithful. The soldiers of the Cross felt certain that they need not go so far afield as the East to find anti-Christian maligners of Christ, the allies, as they believed, of the perpetrators of the atrocities to the tales of which they had listened with horror. At their very doors were colonies of Jews, and right worthily would they open their holy mission if they rid the earth of the blasphemers within immediate reach of their hands. The Crusaders in their march across Europe left behind them a trail of martyred Jews, [. . .] not even the bishops having the power, though often the will, to protect these victims of the Crusaders’ zeal

[. . .]

The agitation on the continent had its echoes in England. [Though the spiritual leader of the movement, Bernard of Clairvaux protested against the attacks on the Jews, which, he insisted, contributed in no way to the true purpose of the Crusades], the vague dislike of the people was quickened by the Crusades into a positive hatred of the Jews. The general crime attributed to the Mohammedans of the East of circumcising Christians and using their blood for their own anti-Christian practices was translated into a definite instance of the Blood Accusation in England, and the opening of the Second Crusade coincided with the supposed martyrdom of St. William of Norwich. (22-23)

At the time (1144) of this first of many similar alleged crimes subsequently laid to the charge of Jews in all parts of Christendom, William was twelve years old, having supposedly been stolen from his mother or, as others held, bought from her, or, in still other accounts, offered a job by a man claiming to be the Archdeacon of Norwich’s cook, when his body was discovered by a nun in a wood outside the city of Norwich, the oldest Jewish settlement in England after London and Oxford. The Jews were accused of having seized and gagged the boy, tied his head with cords and pierced it with thorns, bound him as if on a cross on three uprights of wood and a horizontal bar, secured his right hand and foot with ropes, his left hand and foot with nails, before piercing his left side at the heart and pouring scalding water over the body (Hyamson, *History* 23-24; another version in Mundill, *The King’s Jews*, 72-74). Though the Sheriff of Norwich denied the charges against the Jews and took some of
them into the castle for security, he was held to have been bribed. The populace, its intense primitive hatred of Jews reinforced by stories spread by the Crusaders, was aroused. Many of the Jews of Norwich were killed; others fled the city to escape the same fate. Spread abroad as of about 1150 by the monk Thomas of Monmouth and written up by him in his 1173 narrative *The Life and Passion of St. William, the Martyr of Norwich*, the story led to similar accusations, followed by similar violent attacks, being made against the Jews of Gloucester (1168), Bristol (1183), Bury St. Edmunds, where, according to the contemporary chronicler Ralph de Diceto, 57 Jews were massacred on Palm Sunday, 16 March 1190 (Stubbs, 75-76), and Worcester (1192). One can imagine how “his” Jews must have felt when in 1186 Henry II obliged them to finance his crusade, with Philip II of France, against Saladin at a rate far higher than the tithe imposed on Christians. In addition, by enacting an “Assize of Arms” (1181), according to which all freemen were obliged to possess arms for use in defence of the king, whereas, on the grounds that the Jews enjoyed the protection of the king, all weapons in their possession were confiscated, Henry II made it impossible for the Jews to defend themselves in the event of mob violence against them.

Richard’s coronation at Westminster was the occasion of several gruesome incidents that demonstrate the increasing precariousness of the situation of the English Jews. Despite Richard’s having excluded them, a number of leading English Jews had presented themselves at Richard’s coronation at Westminster in order to pay homage and offer gifts to their new sovereign. They were expelled during the banquet following the coronation, however, whereupon they were set upon by crowds of bystanders. The rumour spread that the king had ordered a massacre of the Jews. Jewish houses in London were set on fire; those within were killed as they attempted to escape the flames; and their homes were looted, the mob then fighting among themselves over the loot (Julius 119-20). After Richard’s departure on the Third Crusade, further anti-Jewish riots with loss of life occurred at Lynn, Colchester, Norwich, Stamford, and other places. The worst was at York on the night of the 16-17 March 1190, immediately preceding Passover. After suffering several acts of violence, the Jews sought asylum from the warden of York Castle, who admitted them, along with their wives and children, to Clifford’s Tower. The tower was immediately besieged by a mob of crusaders and their supporters demanding that the Jews convert and be baptised. Inside the tower, trust between the Jews and the keeper broke down, and when he left the tower on some other business, they refused to allow him back in. The Jews having now flouted the King’s authority, troops joined the mob outside, where the besieged Jews pelted them with stones from the castle walls, one of which killed a monk, further enraging the mob. Trapped inside the tower, the Jews were advised by the leader of their community to kill themselves rather than accept martyrdom at the hands of the mob or allow themselves to be converted; he himself led the way by killing his wife and two children and then, after all the others had followed his example, he and the
community’s rabbi set fire to the keep, killing themselves and all who remained within. Over 150 Jews perished on this occasion (Julius 121-22).

On his return to England, Richard decided that records should be kept by royal officials of all the property and transactions of the Jews. Without such records possessions and transactions would not be legal. This “Ordinance of the Jewry” (1194) made all the transactions of the English Jews more liable than ever to taxation by the king who thus became a sleeping partner in Jewish money-lending operations (Mundill, *England’s Jewish Solution*, 6-7)

On the other hand, as already noted, Jews were permitted to have their own jurisdiction and there is evidence of their having a beth din (court of law) with three judges. A chief rabbi was selected by the Jews themselves, though the king retained a right of confirmation. Some Jews, having amassed considerable wealth, contributed to the cultural life of the country in which they had made their fortunes. Merton College, for instance, one of the earliest colleges in Oxford, was established in the 1260s with the help of a well-to-do local Jew named Jacob of Oxford, who was instrumental in the purchase and even in the selection of the designs of some of the buildings. Balliol College and Christ Church were also endowed with properties that were originally held as security by the city’s medieval Jews. As private tutors, local Jews assisted the university’s students and scholars in their study of Hebrew texts. The Franciscan philosopher Roger Bacon (c.1220–92), who spent many years of his life in Oxford, not only wrote with genuine admiration about Jews, but was an excellent Hebraist and, in all likelihood, was personally acquainted with members of the Jewish community and may have worked with respected scholarly Jews, such as Jacob of Oxford (Abrams, “Jews of Medieval England”).

Nevertheless, the situation of the Jews continued to deteriorate under Richard’s successors John and Henry III. As early as 1198, Pope Innocent III had written to all Christian princes, including Richard I, calling on them to compel the remission of usury demanded by Jews from Christians. A few years later the Pope laid down the principle that, for having crucified Jesus, the Jews were doomed to perpetual servitude. A little later still, in 1215, a year before the accession of Henry III to the throne, the Pope had the Fourth Council of the Lateran pass the law enforcing the wearing of a badge by the Jews. The Archbishop of Canterbury brought this into operation in England. Petitions were soon being sent to the king from a number of boroughs requesting that he remove “his” Jews from them. Jews were in fact expelled from Newcastle in 1234, Wycombe in 1235, Southampton in 1236, Berkhamstead in 1242, and Newbury in 1244. A number of Benedictine priories spread stories of Jewish ritual murders. One of the most widely reported of these – the case of the eight-year old Hugh of Lincoln, said to have been tortured and then crucified (1255) – was the first to be recognized by the civil government when Henry III intervened to order the execution of the alleged murderer and to have over ninety
Jews sent to the Tower of London, of whom eighteen were executed and their property expropriated by the Crown.

Conditions for the Jews did not improve with Edward I’s accession to the throne in 1272. In his Statutum de Judaismo of 1275 Jews were forbidden to lend on usury but were granted permission to engage in commerce and handicrafts and even to take on farms for a period not to exceed ten years. In effect this made life difficult for the Jews: farming cannot be undertaken at short notice and the ten-year limit was anything but encouraging; handicrafts cannot be practised without some training. In addition, by the thirteenth century the guilds were already securing a monopoly of skilled labour and in most markets only members of the Merchant Guild could buy and sell. Moreover Jews were prohibited from intercourse with Christians except in the practice of trade and from employing Christians to work for them. Some Jews resorted to highway robbery, others to coin clipping (scraping gold or silver from coins, a widespread practice at the time, which had been made a capital offence in 1275); others still sought a way out in conversion. The relatively moderate and respectful tone of Crispin’s debate with his Jewish friend gave way to heated attacks on the Talmud as blasphemous and as sanctioning anti-Christian behaviour. One such, presented before Pope Gregory IX in 1239, alleging that the Talmud not only contains blasphemous falsehoods but encourages Jews to despise, rob, and even murder Christians, so incensed the Pontiff that, after ordering its author, a converted Jew, to carry out further research and make a stronger case, he sent out letters to the kings of France, England, Spain, and Portugal ordering them to seize all copies of the Talmud and to hand them over to the Dominicans and the Franciscans (Mundill, The King’s Jews, 126-27).

On 17 November 1278 all the Jews of England -- believed to have numbered around 3,000 at the time, many having already decided to leave the country -- were arrested on suspicion of coin clipping and counterfeiting, and all Jewish homes in England were searched. According to Jocelin de Brakelond’s Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, all Jews in England of whatever condition, age or gender were unexpectedly seized and sent for imprisonment to various castles throughout England. While they were thus imprisoned, the innermost recesses of their houses were ransacked. Some 680 were detained in the Tower of London and around 300 are believed to have been executed in 1279. Those who could afford to buy a pardon and had a patron at the royal court escaped punishment (Mundill, England’s Jewish Solution 25-26; Green, “This Day in Jewish History”).

Preoccupied with imposing his authority on the diverse populations of the British Isles – the Irish, the Welsh and, through a planned royal marriage, the Scots (Frame 65-84) -- Edward I, continued to chip away at the condition of the Jews in England, for example by imposing a toll on Jews and Jewesses crossing a bridge at Brentford west of London, from which all other travellers were exempt. So by the
time the monarch issued his decree of 1290, requiring all Jews to leave the kingdom, and sent out writs to the sheriffs of all the English counties ordering them to enforce it, the condition of the Jews had already become virtually untenable. By the terms of this first ever mandatory expulsion of Jews, most of those expelled were permitted to take away with them only what they could carry (“some say,” according to a later, seventeenth-century chronicler, including “gold and silver”) or needed to pay for the journey. A small number favoured by the king were permitted to sell their properties first, but most of the money and property of the dispossessed Jews was confiscated. England’s Jews relocated to France, the Netherlands or lands, such as Poland, where they were protected by law. Seventeenth-century chroniclers put the number expelled at 15,000 or 16,000. Modern scholars suggest rather between 2,000 and 4,000. (Mundill, *England’s Jewish Solution*, 2, citing John Speed, *The History of Great Britaine*, 1611, John Stow, *The Annals of England*, 1615, and figures arrived at in recent scholarship).

2. Gradual Return of Jews in the early modern period

Several centuries were to elapse before Jews were re-admitted -- a development that occurred gradually and without formal legislation. A few did enter the country, however, in the fifteenth century, usually as physicians. Thus in 1409 one Sansone de Mirabella from Palermo attended to the wife of Richard (“Dick”) Whittington, the Lord Mayor of London (Roth, “The Middle Period,” 2), and by the early years of the sixteenth century a trickle of Marranos -- as the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had been forcibly converted to Christianity but continued to practice Judaism in secret, were known -- began entering England. (All Spanish Jews, after decades of pressure and constant scrutiny by the Inquisition, were obliged to convert by a 1492 decree expelling any remaining Jews, and all Portuguese Jews were similarly affected by a Portuguese expulsion decree in 1497.) Most Marranos moved to the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, formed in 1581, when seven Dutch provinces seceded from Spanish rule. In contrast, for the first dozen years of the reign (1509-47) of Henry VIII, “if Jews lived in England they were very quiet,” as one scholar has put it (Katz 3; for a brief account of the Marranos, Shapiro 68-73, for a full account, Hyamson, *The Sephardim*). Still, by the 1530’s there is evidence of a small Spanish and Portuguese community in London. In 1532 Henry VIII came to the defence of a Marrano by the name of Diego Mendes, who was being prosecuted in Antwerp for practising his Jewish faith -- perhaps in return for Mendes’s having assisted Henry with loans to the treasury. Jews also seem to have helped Henry VIII justify his divorce: the king’s English advisers sent a mission to Venice to consult Venetian Jews and Francesco Giorgi, a Franciscan friar and cabalist theologian, about the conditions of marriage and divorce in the Old Testament (Katz 23-48).
The relatively easy conditions of life for the small number of Marranos settled in London at this time is illustrated by two confessions extracted under duress from Jews familiar with the London scene. A cousin of Diego Mendes, one Gaspar Lopes, who had been living in London since the mid-1530s and had been sent to Italy in 1539 as an agent of the Mendes group based in Antwerp, was detained in Milan, where proceedings had been initiated against the Marrano refugees, and forced to inform on his co-religionists in England. Lopes admitted that Alves Lopes, in whose house in London he had at one time “lived for four or five days, holds a Synagogue in his house and lives in the Hebrew manner, though in secret; and that he [Gaspar] saw these things and that in this Synagogue [. . .] on one day only, the Sabbath, [. . .] there came to Alves’s house other false Christians to the number of about twenty.” Alves Lopes’s house was also, it turned out, a centre of information and assistance for Marranos from Portugal seeking to move on to a place, such as Turkey, where they could live out their lives freely and openly as Jews (Katz 4-5). Another Jew, under questioning by the Inquisition in Lisbon, told of having shared unleavened bread at Passover at the home of a Portuguese doctor with a large family in Bristol (Katz 10-11). It seems, in addition, that Spanish and Portuguese Marranos in England kept each other informed of the dates of important festivals in the Hebrew calendar and that a number of Marrano merchants from London regularly made the trip to Bristol at Passover to partake of the unleavened bread available there.

The fate of Roderigo Lopez throws a more disquieting light on the actions and involvements of members of the small Marrano community in the sixteenth century. Arriving in England around 1559 “to get his lyvinge by physicke,” Lopez quickly established himself in the medical profession; by 1567 he had been appointed house physician at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital and by 1569 he was listed as a member of the Royal College of Physicians, joining in that distinguished body (founded by Henry VIII in 1518) another highly regarded Portuguese Marrano physician, Dr. Hector Nuñez. Two years later he was treating Sir Francis Walsingham, soon to be appointed (1573) principal secretary to Queen Elizabeth, and in 1575 his name stood near the head of a list of the leading doctors in London, which may well have led to his being appointed chief physician to the house of the Earl of Leicester. In 1586 he was named Queen Elizabeth’s chief physician. Lopez and Nuñez were both involved in complicated ways, however, with Lopez serving at times one side, at times another, in various military and undercover moves to place a pretender, Dom Antonio, prior of Crato (Lopez’s birthplace), on the Portuguese throne after the deaths of the young King Sebastian I in 1578 and of his successor (and great-uncle) Henrique I in 1580, both without heirs, created a dynastic crisis in which other European countries, including Spain and England, were inevitably involved. Lopez’s intrigues, in favour first of Dom Antonio but then against him and in favour of Philip II of Spain, led ultimately to a charge of conspiring, on Philip’s behalf and in return for a payment of 50,000 crowns, to poison Queen Elizabeth and “to stir up a rebellion and a war within the realm and overthrow the commonwealth.” The poisoning, it was charged,
was held up only because Lopez would not act until he received his 50,000 crowns (Katz, 51-106; summary in Roth, History, 140-41).

The trial opened at the Guildhall in February 1594 and, despite his alternating confessions and denials, “ye vile Jew,” as he was described by Sir Robert Cecil, one of the fifteen judges, was found guilty, on the very first day, of attempted murder and high treason and sentenced to death. Curiously, Queen Elizabeth kept postponing the execution of the sentence. It is usually assumed that she may not have been entirely convinced by the evidence. On his side, if we are to believe the Bishop of Gloucester, Lopez protested that he “intended no Hurt against the Queen” and “had no other Design in what he did than to deceive the Spaniard and wipe him of his money.” Finally, however, on 7 June, 1594, Lopez was carried from the Tower to Tyburn, where he was hanged, drawn, and quartered -- the usual penalty for traitors. On the scaffold he is said by William Camden in his Historie of [. . .] Elizabeth (1630) to have declared that “he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus-Christ,’ which coming from a man of the Jewish Profession,” Camden observed, “moved no small Laughter in the Standers-by” (Cit. Katz, 96-97; Hyamson, Sephardim). A number of accounts of the Lopez affair were published shortly after the execution, and Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta was given several performances between May 1594 and June 1596.

Nevertheless, Lopez’s being Jewish seems not to have been central to his trial and the affair did not provoke an outburst of anti-Semitic sentiment or violence. On the whole, the small community of Marranos in sixteenth-century England was able to live in peace and relative, if by no means complete security. Over thirty years ago my late colleague Theodore Raab pointed out in fact that at the very time when Shakespeare’s Shylock and Marlowe’s Barabas were presenting ugly images of Jews, the distinguished and highly influential Anglican theologian Richard Hooker (1554-1600) was offering a far more nuanced account in which, even while continuing to deplore their failure to recognize Christ, he found much to applaud and learn from in the Jews’ dedicated and meticulous practice of their religion. Thus while hoping for the ultimate conversion of the Jews he “urged Christians to learn the best lessons from the Jews and to work with them rather than against them” (Raab, “Stirrings,” 27-28). In the secular world, the eminent Edwin Sandys (1561-1629) -- son of an Archbishop of York, Member of Parliament from 1604 to 1626, head of the Virginia Company and a director of the East India Company, with connections to many of the knights and peers of England -- devoted 11 out of 246 pages in his account of his travels in Europe, written in 1599 and published in 1605 as A Relation of the State of Religion in the Western Parts of the World, to the Jews (Raab, “Editions”). “Sandys’ purpose,” Raab writes, “was to describe in actual practice the various religions, notably Catholicism, that he had encountered on the Continent. [. . .] Of course, there was much that he objected to as a good Protestant; but he also found much that was admirable in Roman beliefs and practices, and he did not hesitate to say so.
It was the work of a pragmatist, trying to see both sides, and hoping for a reunification of Christendom, but reluctantly forced to admit that such hopes were vain. And the same down-to-earth attitude permeated his comments on the Jews.” Among other things, Sandys offered an explanation of the situation and behaviour of the Jews in economic terms. Jews are used, he wrote, “as the Friars to sucke from the meanest, and to be sucked by the greatest; insomuch, that the Pope besides their certain tribute, doth sometimes [. . .] impose on them a subsidy for ten thousand crownes extraordinarie for some service of state.” In other words, as Raab puts it, “the Jews were forced into their peculiar position in society because they served the economic purposes of Popes and governments, who could milk their subjects indirectly via Jews” (Raab, “Editions,” p. 329; see also Appendix A below).

Bibliography.


Most Englishmen did not realize that the relatively small numbers of immigrants from Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, chiefly traders and medical doctors who presented themselves as Christians or converts to Christianity, were often faithful to their Jewish ancestry and religion and wherever possible practised its rites in secret. Since these foreigners, referred to since the
sixteenth century as Marranos, observed outwardly most conventions and refrained from displays of their Jewish origins or faith, they were not pursued and not molested. According to David S. Katz’ *Jews in the History of England*, “throughout the entire public debate about the Jews that preceded the arrival of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel [an erudite Amsterdam Marrano who actively worked for legal and public readmission of the Jews into England and who will figure later in the present essay -- LG] in London in September 1655, the very existence of a Jewish community in an eastern corner of London was completely unknown to the English authorities” (108).

It has even been suggested that “by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the crypto-Judaism of London New Christians was a mere shadow – and often a distortion – of that which had flourished in Spain and Portugal before the expulsion. For some, it was little more than a consciousness of being of Jewish descent” (Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 18). Still, as we have seen, it is a fact that, without any repeal of the expulsion decree of 1290, some Jews had unobtrusively entered and settled in England in the fifteenth, sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By the 1630s their number began to increase as more and more were attracted by London’s growing importance in the international economy; but the newcomers were no less discreet than their predecessors.

It was not, in fact, the still relatively limited number of well-concealed Sephardim (Jews following a particular ritual and hailing chiefly in England from the Iberian peninsula) who brought up the issue of the readmission of the Jews into England but English Christians themselves, moved by the Reformation’s emphasis on reading the word of God in its original language and by the considerable, often sympathetic interest, especially among those most influenced by Calvin, in both the word and the people of the Old Testament (Rubenstein, 44). To study the word of God, it was necessary, at least for leaders of the Church, to acquire knowledge of the Hebrew language, and hence to bring in some Jewish scholars to assist in this undertaking. In addition, a number of English Christians began studying Judaism closely and adopting Jewish rituals; some from the more radical sects actually converted to Judaism, the men even accepting to have themselves circumcised (Poliakov, 205). Though ordained as an Anglican minister in 1611, John Traske (1585–1636) kept the Jewish dietary laws and maintained that the Jewish Sabbath should be observed and no work done on that day. For this he was prosecuted in Star Chamber in 1618. In 1621 the Archbishop of Canterbury, complained in the House of Lords that “many were inclined to Judaism,” and proposed that Sunday be styled “The Lord’s Day,” rather than the Sabbath, with its Jewish connotations (Endelman, *Jews of Georgian England*, 55).

By the time of the Civil Wars (1642-51) there was a movement, especially among Puritans and several of the smaller sects, in support of official recognition of every citizen’s right to practise the religion to which he or she was in conscience committed (Katz, *Jews in the History of England*, 110-114; Endelman, *Jews of Britain*
Those making this argument had the Nonconformists (Protestants whose religious beliefs did not conform to those of the established Church of England) chiefly in mind, the Jews serving largely as an extreme case. Thus at Whitehall the Council of Mechanics passed a resolution in favour of “toleration of all religions whatsoever, not excepting Turkes, nor Papists, nor Jewes.” On Christmas Day, 1648 this policy was endorsed by the Council of Army Officers and the suggestion was probably made that a clause to this effect be embodied in the nation’s new constitution. A month later, in January 1649, a formal petition for the repeal of the statute of 1290 and the readmission of the Jews into England was presented to Lord Fairfax and the General Council of Officers by Johanna Cartwright and her son Ebenezer, Baptists who had settled in Amsterdam. It was favourably received with a promise that it would be taken into consideration as soon as “the present more publick affairs are despatched” (Hyamson, 167-69).

Several tracts in a similar vein also appeared. 1646 saw the republication of Leonard Busher’s Religious Peace; or, a Plea for Liberty of Conscience, long since presented to King James and the High Court of Parliament then sitting, by L. B., Citizen of London, and printed in the year 1614. Busher advocated both religious toleration, freedom to speak one’s mind and to print one’s convictions in the matter of religion, and the resettlement of the Jews in England (no doubt with a view to their eventual conversion). Two years earlier, in 1644, while on a return visit to his native England, Roger Williams -- a Puritan minister and theologian, and the founder, after being convicted in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, to which he had emigrated in 1630, of sedition and heresy, i.e. of spreading “diverse new and dangerous opinions,” such as the dignity and humanity of the Indians and the immorality of slave-holding, of the Colony of Rhode Island as a refuge for “liberty of conscience” -- had argued in his Bloody Tenent of Persecution that, even though they were heretics, Jews could be good human beings and good citizens. Though this work was burned by the Common Hangman within months of its publication in 1644 (Katz, Philo-Semitism, 176-87; Toone, 116), Williams reasserted in a later work, The Hirelings Ministry none of Christ’s (London, 1652), that “No opinion in the world is comparably so bloody or so blasphemous as that of punishing and not permitting in a civil way of cohabitation the consciences and worships both of Jews and Gentiles” (Quoted, Méchoulan and Nahon, 56). In 1648, the London printer John Field brought out an Apology for the Honourable Nation of the Jews and All the Sons of Israel by Edward Nicholas, Gent, in which the author pleaded that his aim was to eradicate a national sin, defined as “the strict and cruel Laws now in force against the most honourable Nation of the World, the Nation of the Jews” (4). “It is not tolerable,” Nicholas argued, “even amongst Moral men, if we go no further, to adde affliction to the afflicted, as we do in continuing Laws in force against them; it stands not with a generous spirit, to triumph over a man helpless and in misery; much more hateful is it in men that profess themselves the servants of God; but rather that we endeavour to comfort them, and (if it were possible) to give them satisfaction for the innocent blood of
theirs shed in this Kingdom, and to restore them to commerce amongst us’’ (8). In making his plea, the author insisted, he was responding not to a hidden demand or request on the part of the Jews but to the urging of his own conscience: “What I have now written, was not upon any mans motion of the Jews Nation, but a thing that I have long and deeply revolved within my heart; but truly and indeed, my endeavours are for the glory of God, the comfort of those his afflicted people, the love of my own sweet native country of England, and the freeing of my own soul in the day of account” (15). The classic formulation of the plea for tolerance is Locke’s *Letters concerning Toleration*, the first of which appeared in 1689. “Neither pagan nor mahometan, nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth, because of his religion,” Locke wrote. “The gospel commands no such thing. The church, ‘which judgeth not those that are without,’ 1 Cor. v. 11. wants it not” (*Works*, 83).

Repeal of the 1290 expulsion decree and official readmission of the Jews into England was also the aim, even more passionately pursued, of significant numbers of English Christians eager to move as quickly as possible toward the fulfilment of the two conditions, as they believed, for the longed for Second Coming: on one hand, the scattering of the Jews to the furthest corners of the earth, predicted in the Book of Daniel, and on the other, their conversion to Christianity as the prelude to their Restoration or return to Israel. Both conditions, the Messianists believed, would be significantly promoted if Jews were allowed to cross from the Continent to the northern island kingdom of Britain. Hence the seemingly philo-Semitic views expressed in his *Israel’s Redemption* (1642) by Robert Maton, a Puritan divine and Fifth Monarchy adherent (i.e. believer in a “Fifth Monarchy or Kingdom that is shortly to come into the world,” as the title of a 1652 tract by William Aspinwall has it). Christians should not “contemne or revile the Jewes, a fault too common in the Christian world; and that partly because we are unmindfull as we'll of that Olive from whence we were taken, as of that into which we are grafted; whose root bears us, & not we the root.” (69, quoted in Katz, *Philo-Semitism*, 172; also Toon, 115-25).

By way of English sectarians who had taken refuge in Amsterdam, word of the spread of Messianism in England reached Menasseh ben Israel, a learned and respected Jewish rabbi, scholar, and printer, originally from Portugal, who had settled in the Dutch city and who, like so many at the time, Jews as well as Christians, had come to embrace a form of Messianism. Menasseh ben Israel, a broad-minded man, in whose view the merit of anyone living “with equity and justice,” whatever the form of his beliefs, will be recognized by the Lord (Méchoulan and Nahon, *Introduction*, 44-45), had heard in 1644 from Antonio de Montezinos, a Portuguese New Christian recently arrived in Amsterdam, of a group of Indians, whom Montezinos claimed to have met in the mountains of the Spanish South American territory of New Granada (present-day Colombia). The Indians recited the Hebrew *Shema*, practised Jewish ceremonies, declared their Fathers to be “Abraham,
Isaac, Jacob, and Israel,” and must therefore, Montezinos held, be descended from one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Montezinos had embodied his account in an affidavit executed under oath before the elders of the Amsterdam Synagogue and he repeated his assertion of truthfulness on his deathbed – when, according to the theretofore sceptical Menasseh, one is not likely to tell untruths. The scholarly rabbi then heard from John Dury, a member of the Westminster Assembly, whom he had met several years before, that in an English scholar’s as yet unpublished treatise, of which Dury sent him a copy, the claim was made that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. Like the English Messianists, who linked the Second Coming to the readmission of the Jews into England, Menasseh had also finally come to believe that the return of the Jews to England would not only be of immediate ground -- by the Portuguese traveller, Menasseh composed a scholarly tract of some 47 pages, entitled The Hope of Israel, in which, following the text of Montezinos’s narrative (7 pages), he carefully examined and expanded on it. While rejecting on doctrinal grounds the claim that the American Indians were descendants of the ten lost tribes, he argued that they were Israelites who had probably had to flee persecution in lands where they had settled. Originally published (and probably written) in Spanish as Miqweh Israel [in Hebrew lettering]: Esto es, Esperança de Israel, 5410 [the Jewish year, i.e. 1650], and soon after in Latin and English translations (Spes Israelis, 1650; The Hope of Israel, 1650, 2nd ed. 1652), it is said to have produced on its appearance in England “a profound impression” throughout the country but particularly, as was to be expected, among Messianists and Millenarians. Dury distributed the Latin edition “among all the leading Puritans,” according to the scholar Lucien Wolf, and “it was probably read in Parliament,” while the “two English editions issued anonymously by Moses Wall were rapidly sold.” (Wolf, xxvii).

To the Spanish text Menasseh prefixed a dedication to the seven Elders of the Amsterdam Talmud Torah (Jewish religious school for boys), each of whom is named, and a prefatory note “To the Reader” ("Al Lector"). An occasional word or phrase in Hebrew lettering confirms that the book was intended in the first instance for the substantial Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community of the Netherlands. The practical benefit to Iberian Jews persecuted because of their religion but add to the scattering of the people of Israel to the far ends of the earth and thereby significantly accelerate the advent of the Messianic age envisioned in Judaism, and now, in the mid-seventeenth century, expected in a foreseeable future. (Endelman, Jews of Britain, 20-21; Katz, Jews in the History of England, 112-13; Wolf, xviii-xxv).

With this idea in mind and in response to Dury’s urging that he communicate in a letter his view of the topic treated by the English scholar and -- supposedly on the basis of personal experience on the ground -- by the Portuguese traveller, Menasseh composed a scholarly tract of some 47 pages, entitled The Hope of Israel, in which, following the text of Montezinos’s narrative (7 pages), he carefully examined and
expanded on it. While rejecting on doctrinal grounds the claim that the American Indians were descendants of the ten lost tribes, he argued that they were Israelites who had probably had to flee persecution in lands where they had settled. Originally published (and probably written) in Spanish as *Miqweh Israel* (in Hebrew lettering) – *Esto es, Esperanza de Israel*, 5410 (the Jewish year, i.e. 1650), and soon after in Latin and English translations (*Spes Israelis*, 1650; *The Hope of Israel*, 1650, 2nd ed. 1652), it is said to have produced on its appearance in England “a profound impression” throughout the country but particularly, as was to be expected, among Messianists and Millenarians. Dury distributed the Latin edition “among all the leading Puritans,” according to the scholar Lucien Wolf, and “it was probably read in Parliament,” while the “two English editions issued anonymously by Moses Wall were rapidly sold.” (Wolf, xxvii).

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Menasseh then explains to the “most renowned Fathers” that he writes “in order to “gain your favour and good will to our Nation.” He also acknowledges and expresses gratitude for what he has learned from English friends of “your charitable affections toward us” and for help received “not onely by your prayers.” “The whole world stands amazed,” he asserts flatteringly, by Parliament’s actions to “defend the small and weak [. . .] and the eies of all are turned upon you, that they may see whither all these things do tend.” The “most renowned Fathers” would assuredly not have failed to recognize both the author’s discreet but obvious appeal to them to enact by law the readmission of the Jews into England and his allusion to the Messianic belief concerning “whither” such a move would “tend” (Wolf, 3-5). Menasseh ben Israel had in fact become more and more engaged in the effort to bring about an officially sanctioned change of policy in England concerning the Jews. When Oliver St. John and Walter Strickland, sent on a mission to The Hague early in 1651 to negotiate an alliance with the United Provinces, visited the Sephardi synagogue in Amsterdam, Menasseh was present and in all likelihood approached the two Englishmen to express his hope that official permission would be granted for the legal resettlement of the Jews in England. On his side, he was probably informed
by the visitors that Cromwell was indeed favourably disposed to such a change. Later in that year Menasseh sent a petition for readmission of the Jews to the Council of State, by which it was discussed on 10 October. The response must have been fairly positive, for in November a passport was issued for Menasseh to come to London to discuss the matter in person. His coming was delayed by passage of the anti-Dutch Navigation Act in 1651 and the ensuing first Dutch War (1652-54) (Endelman, Jews of Britain, 22). Nevertheless, opening Barebone’s Parliament (also known as the Parliament of Saints or Nominated Parliament, since it consisted entirely of 140 members selected by the army’s Council of Officers and Cromwell from names submitted by individual members of the Council), in July 1653, Cromwell – albeit no fanatical millenarian or Messianist but eager to secure the readmission of the Jews – ventured to suggest that history was at a turning-point and implied that the question of the readmission of the Jews might well be highly significant, inasmuch as the fulfilment of God’s promise to the Jews was the model and condition of a larger, coming transformation. “You are Called with a high Call,” he told Parliament,

and why should wee bee afraid to say, or think, that this way may bee the door to usher in things that God hath promised and prophesied of, and to set the hearts of his people to wait for, and expect? [. . .] Indeed, I do think something is at the door, we are at the threshold, and therefore it becomes us to lift up our heads, and to encourage our selves in the Lord, and we have some of us thought it our duty to endeavour this way, not vainly looking on that Prophecy in Daniel, And the Kingdom shall not be delivered to another people. You are at the edge of the promises and prophecies – among them, that “He will bring his people again out of the depths of the Sea, as once he led Israel through the red Sea.” (Cromwell, 24-25)

Amid conflict and infighting its members voted on 12 December, 1653 to dissolve Barebone’s Parliament without having officially readmitted the Jews or prepared the way for the millennium, and Cromwell took over as Lord Protector. With the end of the Dutch War in 1654, the public campaign in favour of officially sanctioning the resettlement of the Jews in England resumed and in September of that year, one Manuel Martinez Dormido, a Marrano merchant and sometime member of the mahamad or Council of Elders of the Amsterdam Jewish community, travelled to London. His being accompanied by Menasseh’s sole surviving son, Samuel Soeiro, would seem to indicate that Menasseh, constrained by a sense that it was not a good time for him to leave Amsterdam, had encouraged Dormido, who may or may not have been his brother-in-law, to make the trip in his stead (Wolf, ii; Roth, “Resettlement,” 7). As a Jew, Dormido had lost his fortune when the Portuguese drove the Dutch out of Brazil and he hoped to persuade the British government, now allied with Portugal, to help him recover it. Dormido presented two petitions to Cromwell in November 1654, one asking the British government to intervene with the Portuguese on his personal behalf, the other requesting official permission for Jews to settle and worship freely in England. No limitations or special
conditions on re-entry of the Jews were mentioned in the second petition; on the contrary, Dormido petitioned that Jews be allowed “to come with their families and estates, to bee dwellers heere wth the same euqallness and conueniences wch ye inland borne subjects doe injoy.” As the historian David Katz put it, “the prime enticement which he presents for Jewish readmission is the economic advantage which would accrue to the English. [. . .] ‘Busines will increase and ye comerce will become more oppulant’” (Katz, Philo-Semitism, 194; Wolf, v).

Cromwell referred the petitions to a special committee of the Council of State, the meetings of which he himself did not attend and which reported, within a month, that it “saw no cause to make any order.” That Cromwell was disappointed by this result is demonstrated, it has been claimed, by the fact that he went ahead on his own in the matter of the first petition, and wrote a personal letter to the King of Portugal on behalf of Dormido (Wolf, xxxv). As for the petition regarding the more contentious matter of a law officially sanctioning the readmission of the Jews, it is usually assumed that, though he apparently did not feel confident enough to intervene on it, Cromwell was in fact strongly in favour of it. The general view among scholars is that, while no millenarian, the Lord Protector supported readmission of the Jews on pragmatic grounds similar to those put forward by Dormido – and, as we shall see, frequently invoked by advocates of the Jews — namely that the Jews, as experienced merchants, would enrich the country and thus also increase state revenues. Some historians maintain, however, that in his attitude to the Jews, Cromwell was motivated, or at least also motivated, by quietly held principles of tolerance (Wolf, xxvii-xxx, xlv-xliv; Katz, Philo-Semitism, 196; a nuanced account in Henriques, 89-118). For not all the Sephardi Jews in London were wealthy merchants engaged in international trade. There were also Sephardim in London who depended on communal charity to survive. “Some,” to be sure, one scholar notes, “were persons once financially secure who had suffered business reverses, but others were part of a permanent unskilled underclass – casual laborers, street traders, itinerant peddlers, beggars, vagabonds, and criminals – which was found throughout the Sephardi Diaspora in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (Endelman, The Jews of Britain, 30; Roth, History, 190).

Whatever his motives, Cromwell took it upon himself to reissue the invitation to Menasseh ben Israel, as a Jewish scholar widely respected and immeasurably better known than Dormido, to come to England in order to activate the imagination of the educated classes, justify the government’s taking serious steps to resolve the question of the status of the Jews, and participate in discussions about what these steps should be. Distressed by the failure of Dormido’s mission but encouraged not only by the urging of his son, who was sent back to Amsterdam to persuade his father to undertake the journey, but by letters of invitation received from Cromwell himself, Menasseh was led to “conceive high hopes” and set out for London in October, 1655 with the text of his now well known “humble address” in hand. In the
meantime, Cromwell had been gathering intelligence from various London Marranos concerning the colony of Suriname (present day Guyana and Surinam), where the English had established a presence in 1650, and he had come up with the idea of populating it with Jewish fugitives from the neighbouring colony of Nieuw Holland, with its capital at Mauritsstad (present-day Recife), conquered by the Dutch in 1630 but currently being recaptured by the Portuguese. In order to attract them to British-held Suriname the Jews were granted a charter in which full liberty of conscience was secured to them, together with civil rights, a large measure of communal autonomy, and generous land grants. Thanks to Cromwell, a first step was thus taken toward the solution of the Jewish question by admitting Jews as full citizens in one of the colonial dependencies of Great Britain (Wolf, vi-vii).

In London Menasseh did not seek the hospitality of Dormido, who had been given permission to settle in England. Lodged in an expensive house in the then fashionable Strand, he was, clearly, the guest of the Protector, brought to London to discuss high affairs of state. Menasseh lost no time in having the manuscript of the text he had brought with him printed and published. In “To his Highnesse the Lord Protector of the Common-wealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland” -- the first of several texts gathered together under the title To His Highnesse the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Humble Addresses of Menasseh Ben Israel, a Divine and Doctor of Physick, in behalfe of the Jewish Nation - - he declared unambiguously that his aim was to “humbly entreat your Highnesse, that you would, with a gracious eye have regard unto us, and our petition, and grant unto us, as you have done unto others, free exercise of our Religion, that we may have our Synagogues, and keep our own publick worship, as our brethren doe in Italy, Germany, Poland, and many other places, and we shall pray for the happinesse and Peace of this your much renowned and puissant Common-wealth” (Wolf, 77).

In another of the Humble Addresses -- “A Declaration to the Common-wealth of England [. . .] shewing the Motives of his coming into England,” he listed four such motives:

First and foremost, My Intention is to try, if by God’s good hand over me, I may obtaine here for my Nation the Liberty of a free and publick Synagogue, wherein we may daily call upon the Lord our God, that once he may be pleased to remember his Mercies and Promises done to our Forefathers forgiving our trespasses, and restoring us once againe into our fathers Inheritance; and besides to sue also for a blessing upon this Nation, and People of England, for receiving us into their bosomes, and comforting Sion in her distresse.

“My second Motive," he goes on, stems from the fact that “the opinion of many Christians and mine doe concurre herein, that we both believe that the restoring time of our Nation into their native Countrey is very near at hand,” and that he himself believes, in addition, that the predictions of Daniel (12, 7) must first be
fulfilled, and that, in other words, “the People of God must first be dispersed into all places & Countreyes of the World.” As it is now known that “our Nation at the present is spread all about and hath its seat and dwelling in the most flourishing parts of all the Kingdomes and Countreyes of the world, as well as in America [. . .], except onely in this considerable and mighty Island,” it is clear that “before the Messia come and restore our nation first we must have our seat here likewise.

His “third motive,” Menasseh explained, “is grounded in the profit that I conceive this Common wealth is to reap, if it shall vouchsafe to receive us” as a result of “a very abundant trading into, and from all parts of the World, not onely without prejudice to the English Nation but for their profit, both in Importation and Exportation of goods.”

The fourth motive of my coming here is my sincere affection to this Common wealth, by reason of so many Worthy, Learned, and Pious men in this Nation, whose loving kindness and Piety I have experience of: hoping to find the like affection in all the People generally (Wolf, 78-80).

Two other texts accompanied the address to Cromwell and the Declaration to the Commonwealth of England and expanded on their themes. “How Profitable the Nation of the Jewes are” emphasized the benefits that Jewish commercial expertise and trade bring to the entire community, including the state treasury; “How Faithfull the Nation of the Jewes are” gave numerous examples of the Jews’ unswerving loyalty -- interestingly enough, as presented by Menasseh, not so much to the nation or state in which they live as to the royal family or ruler under whose protection they live. This tract also responded to the accusations that usury is the normal business of the Jews, and that the Jews kill the young children of Christians.

The general tone of the Humble Addresses is more like that of Dormido’s petition – practical and feasible – than that of Menasseh’s own earlier millenarian Hope of Israel. One of the most learned scholars and writers on Menasseh and his English mission argues, however, that “the nearer people approached the Readmission question as a problem of practical politics, the less enthusiastic they became for its solution,” and that when Menasseh formally opened his negotiations with the Government of the Commonwealth the attitude of the public had become “inhospitable” (Wolf, xl-xliv).

On 31 October, 1655 Menasseh visited Whitehall and presented copies of his Humble Addresses to the Council of State. Unfortunately for him, Cromwell was again not present at the session and thus did not participate in its deliberations, with the result that the Council felt free to take no action other than instructing a clerk to “go forth and receive the said books.” Around the same time, Menasseh submitted a formal petition to Cromwell requesting repeal of all the laws against the Jews and their readmission on a number of precisely delineated terms. On 12 November
Cromwell brought this petition up for consideration at a meeting of the Council of State, proposing that “Jews deserving it may be admitted into this nation to trade and traffic and dwell amongst us, as providence shall give occasion.” While he failed to carry the Council, its members did not wish to cross him. They therefore appointed a sub-committee to review the issue, but it too failed to act and recommended that outside opinion be sought. It did act immediately on that recommendation, however, sending out letters on November 14 to “twenty-eight of the most distinguished figures in English public, economic and intellectual life throughout the country” with orders to come to London to consult with the Committee on “some proposals made to His Highness in reference to the nation of the Jews” (Roth, “Resettlement,” 9; Wolf, xliv-xlvi).

The Conference opened on 4 December, 1655 in the Council Chamber at Whitehall. Cromwell himself addressed the assembled lawyers, clergymen and merchants, clarifying the issues before them, which he reduced to two: Is it lawful to admit the Jews to England, and, if it is lawful, on what terms should they be admitted? The first question was quickly answered by the two distinguished judges at the Conference, representing legal opinion: There was no law which forbade the Jews’ return into England, the Expulsion order of 1290 having been an exercise of the royal prerogative in regard to the personal “chattels” of the king, not an act of parliament, so that its validity expired with the death of Edward I.

The second question on the agenda, as presented by Cromwell, was not so easily answered. In the words of Cecil Roth, the great scholar of the history of the Jews in England, theological misgivings on the one hand, commercial rivalry on the other, now began to manifest themselves. “It became obvious that the terms which the delegates would recommend would have been harshly restrictive” and contrary to the intentions of both Menasseh and Cromwell himself (Roth, “Resettlement,” 11, Toon, ch.7). Having called the Conference precisely to spell out these terms, however, Cromwell would have been obliged to follow its advice. Aware of the way the wind was blowing, he decided to intervene. First he added three eminent judeophiles to the delegates. Then finally, on 18 December, when for some reason the doors of the Council Chamber had been opened to the public, to which William Prynne’s newly published anti-Semitic Short Demurrer to the Jewes (1656) had just become accessible. The proceedings, abetted by the representatives of the native merchants, had degenerated into “a vehement demonstration against the Jews,” in the words of Lucien Wolf, the early twentieth-century scholar and editor of Menasseh ben Israel. At this point, Cromwell rose from his chair, and in a powerful speech complained that he could no longer expect help from the Conference despite its having been charged with clarifying the issues and helping him formulate a fair policy. Thereupon he left the room, signalling that the proceedings were at an end. “The Conference broke up without a word of protest and the crowds dispersed in cowed silence” (Wolf, xliii-xliii).
It was widely believed that, having made his preferences clear, Cromwell would act on his own authority to readmit the Jews. But the Committee of the Council of State having finally come out with an extremely restrictive report on the status of Jews in England, Cromwell probably preferred not to challenge it immediately and nothing happened (Wolf, liv). A few continental Jews who had accompanied Menasseh to London, despairing of any positive outcome, packed up and went home. Menasseh himself stayed on in London, composing his *Vindiciae Judaeorum, in Answer to certain Questions [...] touching the Reproaches cast on the Nation of the Jewes; wherein all objections are candidly, and yet fully cleared* (1656). But he had become more and more despondent and pessimistic about obtaining the settlement he had long desired and worked to bring about.

An unexpected crisis in the local Marrano community in 1656 suddenly altered the situation. Since autumn 1655, Britain had been at war with Spain. The fact that many of the Marranos were of Spanish origin made them both useful to the government for intelligence purposes and vulnerable to accusations of collaboration with the enemy. They were thus thrown into consternation when, on the denunciation of an informer, proceedings were opened against one of their number, the affluent merchant Antonio Rodriguez Robles, as an enemy alien, and all his property, including two ships in the Thames, was seized. Hitherto closeted Jews, discreetly presenting themselves as Christian converts, the Marranos saw only one solution to the problem: to reveal themselves as Jews, refugees from the generally hated Spanish Inquisition, and throw themselves on the mercy of the Protector. Hitherto, they had held themselves aloof from Menasseh’s millenarian-inspired quest, seeking only, as they had done for generations, to be allowed to live quietly and mind their own business, and fearful that Menasseh’s highly public activities might cause them harm. The Robles case drove them into the open and into collaboration with Menasseh. In association with the latter they presented a petition to Cromwell, signed by Menasseh and six prominent Marranos, requesting permission to meet for private prayer according to Jewish rites and to have a burial place outside the city for their dead. As on previous occasions, Cromwell immediately passed the petition along to the Council of State with an endorsement in his own hand. Perhaps because the Robles case was currently under consideration, the Council delayed taking the petition up. In addition, the immediate situation was not favourable: opponents of any concessions to the Jews had mounted a powerful campaign highlighted by the publication of anti-Jewish books and pamphlets -- notably William Pryne’s already mentioned *Short Demurrer and Second Part of a Short Demurrer* (1656) and Alexander Ross’s *View of the Jewish Religion* (1655, republished 1656) – to which Menasseh’s *Vindiciae Judaeorum* (also 1656) had been largely intended as a response. Meantime Robles had adopted the tactic of appealing for release of his sequestered property on the grounds that he was not a Spaniard, but a Portuguese “of the Hebrew nation” and on 16 May, the Council ordered that Robles’s property be returned to him and the proceedings against him dropped. As
Cecil Roth put it succinctly. “As a Spanish Catholic his position would have been open to question; as a refugee Jew . . . he was safe” (“Resettlement,” 13).

As there was still, however, no response from the Council to the petition of 24 March 1656, it was placed on the agenda again on 25 June. The initial response of the Council appears to have been favourable after all, for Menasseh wrote to a relative in Amsterdam asking him to apply to the Sephardi community there for loan of a Torah scroll for the expected new London synagogue. This was received on August 4. Meantime the London Jews had hired a rabbi from Hamburg and were looking round for a site for their new synagogue, even though the original petition had requested only the right to meet for prayer “in our particular houses.” By the end of the year they had negotiated lease of a property in Creechurch Lane. A burial ground was also acquired in Mile End, to the East of the city. There appears to have been little public opposition to these developments among ordinary citizens, as distinct from jealous merchant-princes or argumentative theologians. When a prominent Marrano died in 1659 and was buried in the new cemetery, the great bell of the parish church was tolled and Samuel Pepys visited the synagogue for a memorial service a month later.

Conditions for the already resident Marranos had thus considerably improved. Their status as Jews was recognised and they were permitted to observe their religious rites openly in a Jewish house of worship. No clear, public readmission statement had been made, however, such as might have encouraged more Jews to come and settle in England. This suited the London Marranos perfectly. They had obtained what they wanted and had no desire for more. They had no wish to provoke their gentile neighbours by unduly asserting themselves or to draw throngs of immigrant Jews and potential competitors to the land. Menasseh, in contrast, was deeply disappointed. He had thought he had attained his goal of opening Britain to large numbers of Jewish immigrants, in order both to ease the plight of those in distress in other parts of Europe and to further his messianic and millenarian yearnings, and it was clear that that goal had not in fact been achieved. In deep despondency at what he saw as the failure of the mission he had been pursuing for years he decided to return to Amsterdam. But he was now in poor health, short of money, and without prospects either in Britain or in Amsterdam, where others occupied the positions that had once been his and where he no longer enjoyed esteem and status in a Jewish community largely hostile to Cromwell and supportive of the Royalists. In his distress, he turned to Cromwell for financial assistance and the sympathetic Lord Protector awarded him an annual state pension of £100 to be paid in quarterly instalments of £25. Menasseh set out for Amsterdam a broken man, bearing the body of his last son, Samuel, who had died in England. In poor health himself, he died before reaching Amsterdam in the house of his brother-in-law Ephraim Abarbanel in Middelburg. Cromwell himself died not long afterwards

A tragic outcome from one point of view, but according to several scholars a blessing in disguise. “Both Menasseh and Cromwell had built more solidly than they knew,” in the opinion of Lucien Wolf. “If the solution of the Jewish question arrived at towards the end of 1656 was not wholly satisfactory, it was precisely in that fact that its real strength lay. Experimental compromise is the law of English political progress. From the strife of wills represented in its extremer forms by Cromwell’s lofty conception of religious liberty on the one hand, and by the intolerance of the sectaries on the other, had emerged a compromise which conformed to this law, and which consequently made the final solution of the question an integral part of English political evolution” (Wolf, lxix-lxx).

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4. Restoration, “Glorious Revolution,” Enlightenment

With the death of Cromwell and the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, the Jews were understandably nervous and there was in fact a marked revival of anti-Jewish moves, notably among the merchants. As early as 30 November, 1660, City circles in London petitioned the newly enthroned Charles II to reverse the policy of the “usurpers” and expel the Jews, whom they accused of having revived the allegedly exploitative usurious practices of the time before the expulsion of 1290 and -- in a repeat of a slightly earlier smear campaign -- to have planned to buy St. Paul’s Cathedral and turn it into a synagogue. To this end, a revitalized Whitehall Conference was demanded; in the meantime, the imposition of heavy taxes on the Jews both as individuals and as merchants was requested. Charles II, however, no less interested than Cromwell in maintaining an active Jewish commercial presence in the country, almost certainly aware of the Amsterdam Sephardim’s sympathy with and possibly financial support of the Stuarts (Henriques, 120-21), and in general not susceptible to religious partisanship, refused to act on the petition and passed it along to the House of Commons, which did not act on it either. Four years later, when the Conventicle Act of 1664 came into force prohibiting “conventicles” (defined as religious assemblies of more than five people not in conformity with the
Church of England) -- and similarly opposed by Charles – an attempt was made by individuals close to the native merchants to exploit a measure designed primarily to repress Christian nonconformity as a means of blackmailing the Jewish community into paying protection money to avoid prosecution. Menasseh ben Israel's old associate Dormido, who had remained in London, along with two other members of the governing body of the recently established Sephardi synagogue petitioned the king for protection. Charles’ Privy Council responded on 22 August 1664 that no orders had been given to disturb the Jews and that they could continue to live as before, “so long as they demean themselves peaceably and quietly with due obedience to his Majesty’s Laws & without scandal to his Government” (Endelman, Jews of Britain, 27; Henriques, 148; Katz, 140-42; Rubinstein, 46-47).

In 1667 the Court of King’s Bench ruled that Jews might give evidence in courts of law by swearing only on the Old Testament and in 1677 a case was moved from London to Middlesex because all the sittings of the London court were on a Saturday and the chief witness, being a Jew, could not appear on that day. Charles’ Declaration of Indulgence of 15 March, 1672, while primarily an attempt to extend religious liberty to Protestant nonconformists and, especially, Roman Catholics by suspending execution of laws designed to penalise recusants from the Church of England, also provided protection to the Jews, if only incidentally (Endelman, Jews of Britain, 36). Near the end of Charles’ reign, in 1679, the Bishop of London, Henry Compton, together with Sir Peter Pett, a leading lawyer – both, in all likelihood not coincidentally, strongly anti-Catholic -- suggested that Jews be legally confined to ghettos as in much of the continent, a proposal supported by the then Lord Privy Seal, the Earl of Anglesey. Charles did not respond and simply ignored the proposal.

James II, whose privately held Catholic faith was tolerated, was also unresponsive to anti-Jewish moves, his primary concern being to shield the Catholic population as far as possible from laws and actions directed against non-Protestants (hence Jews as well as Catholics) and non-Conformists. During his short reign (1685-88) he attempted, without success, to revive his predecessor’s Declaration of Indulgence of 1672, which had called for suspension of the penal laws against Roman Catholics and Protestant dissenters but had been shot down by Parliament in 1673, the year after its issue, and replaced by the first of the so-called Test Acts, requiring anyone about to enter public service in England to deny the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and to take Anglican communion (Katz, 140-41; Endelman, Jews of Britain, 27-28; Rubinstein, 45). This meant essentially that neither Catholics nor Jews could hold civil office or become Freemen of the City of London. Equally, Jews were barred from attending the ancient English universities, or entering certain professions, since these required the taking of an oath “upon the true faith of a Christian,” or, in the case of the universities, being a communicant of the Church of England and subscribing to the Thirty Nine Articles (Jews of Britain, 36). All in all, despite being native born or permanently resident in England and in some cases “endenized” (acquiring some of
the rights of native born citizens), London’s Jews were still excluded from any number of key positions that required an oath taken on the Holy Sacraments. For most of the seventeenth century London’s Jews, in Professor Katz’s words, were “neither alien nor citizen. They were foreign in speech, dress, and manner, and must have seemed hardly touched by their place of residence at all” (156, 242). The tone of Pepys’s diary entry for 14 October, 1663, in which he recounts a visit to the original Sephardi synagogue in Creechurch Lane, is probably not uncharacteristic of English attitudes: “Lord! To see the disorder, laughing, sporting, and no attention but confusion in all their service, more like brutes than people knowing the true God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more and indeed I never did see so much, or could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this” (283-4).

The Glorious Revolution (1688-89), which ended the reign of the Stuarts and brought the Netherlandish Protestant William of Orange to the British throne as William III, was generally welcomed by the Sephardi population of London (a little over 500 families at the time), probably because they thought that, under William, London would be transformed into a city where Sephardi Jews would feel as secure and at home as they had long felt in Amsterdam. It would even seem that William’s expedition to England at the head of his Dutch army – and thus the ouster of the Stuarts – was largely financed by Sephardi Jews, one of whom, Francisco Lopez Suasso of The Hague, is believed to have advanced the prince of Orange an enormous loan, to this end, of two million crowns, at no interest and with no guarantees (Roth, 184; Katz, 157; Endelman, Jews of Britain, 28-29). Nevertheless, proposals were still being brought forward and acted on that placed burdens and restrictions on Jews alone. At the end of 1689, for instance, the House of Commons passed a resolution ordering the introduction of a bill that would levy a £100,000 tax on the Jewish community over and above their normal taxes. From 1689 to 1691 Jewish merchants were thus obliged to pay a poll tax of £20 a head, twice the amount levied on other so-called “merchant strangers” (Rubinstein, 46).

Still, with the passage of time, more and more Jews, especially the wealthier native-born Sephardim, were participating in English social life “with little obstacle,” as Cecil Roth puts it (195n2), acquiring property, sometimes intermarrying with gentile women, attending the theatre (Roth, 207-27). As early as 1723, for instance, Jews had come to hold high office in Masonic lodges and, according to one contemporary report, the well known traveller and adventurer Simon von Geldern (1720-74), the great-uncle of Heinrich Heine, having taken refuge in England after the discovery of a too gallant relationship with a lady of high birth, was one day observed playing piquet with Their Majesties in St. James Palace (Heymann, 343). “There is no question,” according to Todd Endelman, “that the Jews’ position in England at the end of the seventeenth century was superior to that of Jews in other European states – in large part [ . . . ] because the state ignored their presence most of the time and
left their legal status ill-defined” (Jews of Britain, 37). For example, a bill brought forward in 1698 “for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness” and aimed primarily at Unitarianism, the spread of which was a long-time concern of the religious authorities, made offenders liable to three years’ imprisonment. When it came back from the House of Lords, an amendment had been added that would have rendered all those openly professing Judaism also liable to prosecution. The Commons, however, overwhelmingly rejected the amendment by 140 votes to 78 and Jews continued to practise their religion unmolested.

Professor Katz, who tells of this bill, gives a further, vivid example of the improved status of the Jews in the last year of the seventeenth century. On Saturday, 18 November, 1699, according to a contemporary report, William III “dined with Mr. Medina, a rich Jew, at Richmond,” who had accompanied the monarch as an army contractor on his passage to England in 1688 and to whom he was further indebted for substantial aid in the War of the Spanish Succession (Medina had accompanied Marlborough on his campaigns, advanced him funds, and furnished provisions for the troops), thus marking the first occasion on which an English monarch had called upon a Jew in his home. Seven months later, in June 1700, Solomon de Medina was knighted by William at Hampton Court, “the first Jew to be so honoured,” albeit “the last,” as Katz acknowledges, “for a century and a half.” Both events, however, are viewed by Katz as “symbolizing for contemporaries, as they do for us, that Anglo-Jewry had arrived” (187-88). Several decades later, Samson Gideon (1699-1762), the London-born son of an immigrant Portuguese trader with the West indies, having demonstrated his skill as a financier and become “the most noteworthy financier, Jew or Christian, of mid-eighteenth century England” and one of the wealthiest men in the country” (Sutherland, 387-88), was called upon as an adviser to the British government, underwrote the National Debt, and used his fortune to finance the army during the Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the Seven Years’ War of 1756-63. He had a handsome country house built for himself (Belvedere in Kent, demolished in 1957), married a Christian woman and had his children baptised and brought up in the Church of England. His son was educated at Eton (Sutherland, 389).

Among some Whig statesmen the liberal ideas of the time had already led to a growing acceptance of arguments in favour of relieving native-born Jews of the many disabilities to which they were subject – notably exclusion from every public office and virtually all professions. It was a “hack” writer of Sir Robert Walpole, generally regarded as the first “prime minister” of Britain, who penned, most probably at the powerful Whig minister’s urging, a strongly argued pamphlet published in 1736 and entitled The Complaint of the Children of Israel, representing their Grievances under the Penal Laws; and Praying, that if the Tests are Repealed, the Jews may have the Benefit of this Indulgence in common with all other Subjects of England, in a Letter to a Reverend High Priest of the Church by Law Established. (The title page of one copy
which identifies the printer as W. Webb, Paternoster Row, London, bears the notice “Seventh edition.”) Though he named himself Solomon Abrahanel and described himself in his opening sentence as “a Jew, a CIRCUMCISED JEW,” the author was in fact one William Arnall, trained as an attorney, but active from a very early age as a political writer, often on behalf of Walpole and largely in the latter’s pay (Wikipedia).

Nevertheless, “it would be incorrect,” as Todd Endelman emphasizes, “to infer from this that the Jews of England no longer encountered the old vulgar prejudices or were accepted as members of the English nation, differing only from their Christian neighbours by virtue of their religion. The Sephardim of England, like Jews everywhere in early modern Europe, continued to be seen as a distinct national group, with their own peculiar cultural habits, mental outlook, religious customs, historical memories, and future hopes for national redemption. Moreover, however willing they were to tolerate Jews, Englishmen continued to view these differences in a negative light. [. . .] In both learned and popular discourse, Jews were still viewed as an obstinate people, clinging to old superstitions, refusing salvation, harbouring hatred toward Christendom” (The Jews of Britain, 37). In spite of his role as adviser to the government and his significant financial contribution to overcoming the Jacobite rebellion in 1745, Samson Gideon became the whipping boy of the opposition to a bill passed in 1753, the so-called “Jew Bill” -- to be discussed in the next section of this study – which would have made it possible for wealthy foreign-born Jews to be “naturalized” by act of Parliament, without having to swear by the Holy Sacrament and thus freed from the trading restrictions and special taxes imposed on the foreign-born, and which had to be repealed at the end of the same year because of popular objection to it. In Thomas Fitzpatrick’s dramatic skit, The Temple of Laverna (1753), Gideon appears in loose disguise as “the mighty Caiphas, the very Atlas of the State” -- a stereotypically “cunning” Jew, his seeming integration into gentile society being in reality a façade to allow him to wield a wider influence within the Christian world, while remaining “as true an Israelite as ever dwelt in Jerusalem.” In a print of the same year, The Grand Conference or the Jew Predominant, Gideon is represented sitting at a table with Henry Pelham, the Whig Prime Minister at the time of the passing of the “Jew Bill” in 1753, and Pelham’s brother, the Duke of Newcastle, who introduced the Bill to the House of Lords. Gideon is seen offering the brothers a bag of money containing £200,000, collected as a bribe by the Jews of England in order to expedite the immigration of their brethren waiting impatiently in the West Indies and on the European Continent. To reinforce the image of Gideon as the typically mercenary Jew, always a foreigner and outsider, he is shown as speaking with an accent characteristic of more recent Ashkenazi immigrants rather than of Sephardim, especially a Sephardi Jew born, as Gideon was, in London and completely at home in upper-class English society (Felsenstein, 206-09).

A new element added to the widespread negative or at best ambivalent view of Jews. Unlike their predecessors, the Sephardim immigrating to England in the eighteenth century in response to renewed inquisitorial activity in Spain and Portugal
were often impoverished. Some were so destitute that they could not afford the fare, so that the Sephardic synagogue in London had to arrange with British captains to pay their passage on arrival. Still more significant was the increasing immigration from Central and Eastern Europe of Ashkenazi Jews. (On subgroups of Jews, such as the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim, see the website Judaism 101)

The Ashkenazi began to emigrate from their homes in Central and Eastern Europe because they found themselves increasingly subject to hostile restrictions. In addition, the advancing economy of Britain provided another attraction for the poorer Jews. England, in other words, promised freedom, safety, and economic opportunity. According to a census list drawn up in 1695 in view of levying a tax to finance the war with France, there were 853 seemingly Jewish names in London’s 110 parishes, with 681 of them concentrated in six parishes alone. 598 were Sephardi and 255 Ashkenazi “Tudescos” – i.e. German Jews. A record drawn up by one Abraham Zagache slightly over a decade earlier, just before the Glorious Revolution, had produced a figure of 414 Sephardim and an insignificant number of Ashkenazim. It seems therefore that the Jewish population of London had doubled between the reign of the last Stuart and soon after the arrival of William III, with virtually all the Ashkenazi having immigrated between 1681 and 1695 (Katz, 183-85).

By 1690 the Ashkenazim in London who had at first attended the Sephardic Creechurch Lane synagogue (where the liturgy and rituals were unfamiliar to them and they were excluded from holding office or taking part in the service) had succeeded in setting up a synagogue of their own; by 1720, they outnumbered the Sephardim; and by the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Jewish population of Britain stood at seven to eight thousand, Ashkenazim made up two-thirds to three-quarters of that number – a disproportion that kept increasing with the years. Between mid-century and the outbreak of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars a further eight to ten thousand Ashkenazim migrated to Britain.

The majority of the new Ashkenazi immigrants arrived with few material resources or artisanal skills and “took to low-status itinerant trades to earn a living, hawking goods in the streets of London, buying and selling old clothes and other second-hand goods, peddling notions, gimcracks and inexpensive jewellery” – activities requiring no craft skills, and little capital or knowledge of English. In London, they were identified with the street trade in certain goods: oranges and lemons, spectacles, costume jewellery, lead pencils, belt buckles and buttons. But “their most characteristic street trade was the buying and selling of old clothes. Jewish old clothes men catered to the needs of an expanding urban population that could not afford to buy new clothing. Often they used aggressive techniques, accosting passers-by and virtually forcing them to make purchases. In addition, it was not unusual for indigent Ashkenazi Jews to be associated with criminal activity such as selling stolen goods. A fair number appeared at Old Bailey charged with passing bad coins” (Katz, 41-45). At the same time, the immigrant Ashkenazim also included
some modestly skilled craftsmen (pencil makers, glass cutters, watchmakers, tailors, hatters, shoemakers), who had been excluded from the German guilds, along with shopkeepers (active in areas such as Holborn, just outside the City of London where they were not permitted to engage in the retail trade, and in provincial towns such as Portsmouth, Liverpool and Bristol (Barnett 46), religious functionaries, and small-scale merchants and brokers, who soon took up trading and financial activities similar to those of their well-to-do Sephardi predecessors. In this way some acquired wealth, especially in the heavily Jewish diamond and coral trade with India (Yoge 154, 337-39), and distinguished themselves from their poor, generally despised fellow-Ashkenazim. Ashkenazi immigrants were particularly active in building up the East India Company. One Benjamin Levy, for instance, is believed to have been responsible for procuring the renewal of the East India Company’s Charter in 1697 (Barnett, 46). In the course of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries this group of Ashkenazi craftsmen and traders became in fact the backbone of Anglo-Jewish institutional life. “They constituted the majority of regular synagogue worshippers and members of hevrot (societies) devoted to traditional learning and practice,” in Endelman’s account. “They were also the founders of Jewish friendly societies, which, aside from providing the usual death and sickness benefits, offered a range of religious services. [. . . ] The artisans and shopkeepers also formed Masonic lodges, whose membership was largely Jewish [. . . ] and in which the dietary laws were observed.” Even the lower stratum of Jewish society, imbued with a capitalist work ethic, was in a good position to take advantage of the rapid expansion of personal consumption in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. “Street vendors moved up to shopkeeping,” as Endelman puts it; “old clothes men acquired fixed premises; shopkeepers were transformed into wholesalers, importers, and owners of emporiums; . . . hawkers of oranges and lemons became grocers and wholesale fruit and vegetable merchants (Jews of Britain, 46-47).

By the end of the eighteenth century prosperous Ashkenazi family firms in northern Europe, notably Hamburg, Frankfurt and Amsterdam, were sending younger members of their family to London, which was becoming the most dynamic trading centre in the world, in order to enhance the family fortunes. The Goldsmids from Amsterdam, starting as brokers and lenders to the government became one of the most prominent families in England -- co-lenders with Barings Bank to the government during the Napoleonic Wars, the first Jewish barristers, public benefactors raised to the baronetcy and, ultimately, in the 1860s, Members of Parliament. According to the Memoir of Sir Francis Goldsmid, Bart. (1882), “Two of Aaron Goldsmid’s sons, Benjamin and Abraham [respectively 1755-1808 and 1756-1810], rose to fortune and distinction as capitalists, and they were exclusively employed by Mr. Pitt, during the whole period of his administration, for contracting loans for the British Government to maintain the costly war against France” (ch. 1).
Nathan Mayer Rothschild, sent over to England by his father from Germany in 1798, after setting up a cloth wholesale business in Manchester, moved to London where in 1811 he founded the N.M. Rothschild & Sons banking business. The Rothschild bank helped finance Wellington’s armies on the Continent and in 1826 stepped in with an instant injection of gold to save the Bank of England. The Rothschilds were also active in alleviating the suffering caused by the Irish Famine of 1845-1849. In 1847 Nathan Mayer’s son Lionel de Rothschild, born in England, became the first unconverted Jew to be elected a member of the British parliament (though he was not able to take his seat until a decade later), while in 1885 Lionel’s son Nathan, raised to the peerage by Queen Victoria, became the first Jew to have a seat in the House of Lords.

In the course of the eighteenth century, under the influence of the Enlightenment, and as an effect of their ever greater and more successful involvement in the national economy, England’s Jews began to step back from their Jewish history and traditions, as we have seen in the case of one of the most prominent of them, Samson Gideon, and become increasingly integrated into the culture and society of their country of residence. “The most salient characteristic of Jewish religious life in the eighteenth century,” Todd Endelman writes, “was its laxity and ignorance.”

A minority of Jewish men, whether recently arrived or native born, continued to practice Judaism in the traditional fashion, regularly attending synagogue, observing the full regimen of dietary, Sabbath and festival laws, cultivating Talmudic learning. [. . . ] From mid-century, however, it is clear that such persons were not representative of the mass of Jews. The general level of knowledge and practice in England was markedly lower in the second half of the century than elsewhere in Europe. [. . . ] The weakening of traditional practice and knowledge was most pronounced among the very rich and the very poor. . . . Among the former, laxity was widespread by the 1730s or 1740s. The laws of kashrut, for example, were observed casually or not at all [. . . ] The wealthy were not punctilious about the observance of the Sabbath either. [. . . ]

Jews who acquired country homes were following a well-trodden path. Parvenu merchants and financiers routinely purchased country estates in order to display their material splendor, advance their claims to gentility – the ownership of a landed estate being the foundation of genteel status – and establish the foundation for their descendants’ entry into upper-class circles. [. . . ] The acquisition of country homes worked to isolate their inhabitants from the Jewish community and its institutions and simultaneously to bring them into closer contact with families from the traditional ruling class, who were their immediate neighbours. (The Jews of Britain, 54-57; see also Endelman, Jews of Georgian England, 118-65, and Rubenstein, 60-61)
Horatio Walpole, 4th earl of Orford (better known as Horace Walpole, writer, historian, Whig Member of Parliament and prolific correspondent), was on friendly terms, for example, with Jewish neighbours at Strawberry Hill, his striking neo-Gothic country house in Twickenham, south-west of London. “My next assembly will be entertaining,” he wrote to his friend George Montagu on October 3, 1763; “there will be five countesses, two bishops, fourteen Jews, five papists, a doctor of physic, and an actress; not to mention Scotch, Irish, East and West Indians” (Letters 5:376). Cecil Roth comments that Walpole’s “hobnobbing with a number of cultured Jews – all pillars of the synagogue – and numerous other members of his set doing the same would hardly have been imaginable elsewhere in Europe at the time” (>Essays and Portraits, 4).

Prominent Jews did similar entertaining. Thus Joseph Salvador, a wealthy Sephardi merchant (1716-86) and financial adviser to the Duke of Newcastle and his government around 1757, “gave a grand entertainment at his seat at Tooting in Surrey to a great number of noblemen and gentlemen, members of both houses of parliament” — so reported the London Evening Post of 10 July 1753 as part of the newspaper’s campaign, at the time of the 1753 “Jew Bill,” to discredit Jews and denounce their alleged wealth and influence (quoted Woolf, 106). Well-to-do Jews were also active in cultural circles, attending theatres and patronising musicians, such as Handel or Leopold Mozart when he brought his brilliant young son to London in 1764-66 (Barnett, 59; Roth, History, 209-10). If even prominent Jews were still excluded from most civic offices, that was not on account of their Judaism as such, but because, like Catholics and Dissenters, they could not take the oaths of office in the required manner (Newman 5-6).

The Jewish poor, Professor Endelman holds, were “no more immune to the attractions of the larger society than the wealthy. Some adopted a casual attitude toward observance of religious rites and customs [. . .] ; others failed to observe Judaism at all [. . .] , especially those who derived their livelihood from crime.” Like the notables, the Jewish poor too absorbed non-Jewish habits and tastes, in their case “the rough and tumble ways of their impoverished gentile neighbours. [. . .] The most striking example of their acculturation was the passion they developed for prize-fighting, both as spectators and participants” (Jews of Britain, 57-58). Daniel Mendoza (1763-1836) has long been credited with a determining role in the development of the modern sport of boxing.

The rabbi of the Ashkenazi community in London in the mid-eighteenth century (1756-63), the scholarly Zevi Hirschel Lewin, scion of a distinguished rabbinical family from Germany and Poland, complained bitterly about the falling away from Jewish law and tradition among well-to-do Jews in England. During the Seven Years’ War, when things were not going well for England, he reminded his congregation of the benefits they enjoyed under the British king and urged them to pray for him. As
reported a century ago by Charles Duschinsky (born 1878), a scholar and former rabbi in Moravia before moving to England, who had access to Rabbi Hirschel’s papers,

“He reminds his congregation that they live in a country where Israel is treated with kindness and where they enjoy liberty. This was said at a time when, in Germany, Jews were required to pay, not only extra war-taxes in money, but had to give up all boxes, watches, and rings, made of gold or silver. If a tax was not paid, the community had to give hostages, and the lot of the German Jews of those days was, accordingly, not an enviable one. ‘We Jews’, continues R. Hirschel, ‘can help the King as much with our prayers as by joining the Army.’ [. . . ]In another discourse, ‘by command of the King’, referring to some victory, he says: ‘The King does not attribute victory to his own arms but to the help of God. We Jews have double reason to be thankful for the victory, as the King’s peace will mean peace for us’ (Duchinsky, 110; see also Barnett, 55, on Emmunath Omen, a diatribe in Hebrew by one Dr. Meyer Löw Schomberg [1699-1777] directed against the moral laxity of well-to-do Jews).

Unfortunately, Rabbi Hirschel’s congregation was apparently not notable for its praying or even simply observing the Sabbath and Holy Days. “If you are thus keeping the holy day,” he exclaims, after having reproached his congregants for various failings, “by doing things which even the Gentiles do not do on Sundays, I ask you, ‘Why do you come to the House of God?’ God knows how tired I am of my life, when I see all your doings: I am even afraid to hear what, I am told, is happening publicly, let alone how you desecrate the Sabbath-day in private.” Duschinsky summarizes the Rabbi’s frequent scolding of his congregants: “They dressed like the Gentiles; shaved their beards, . . . associated with the English people, ate at their houses, and even went so far as to keep the Christian feasts to the neglect of their own. Christmas puddings seem to have been much favoured, and mixed marriages were not infrequent. They visited theatres and operas. There were coffee-houses which became meeting-places for card-players.” In Rabbi Hirschel’s own words,

Day by day we can see with our own eyes the decay of our people. We sin and act against the law of God; all our endeavours are to associate with the Gentiles and to be like them. That is the chief source of all our failings. See, the women wear wigs and the young ones go even further and wear decolleté dresses, open two spans low in front and back. Their whole aim is, not to appear like daughters of Israel.

Ultimately, the rabbi holds, the very Enlightenment argument about our common humanity cited by many contemporary Jews in support of their demand for full citizen rights is a modern idea foreign to and destructive of the essence of Judaism.

On the one side we claim with pride that we are as good as any of our
neighbours. We see that they live happily, that their commerce dominates the world, and we want to be like them, dress as they dress, talk as they talk, and want to make everybody forget that we are Jews. But, on the other hand, we are too modest and say: We are not better before God than the Gentiles, we all come from the same stock, are all descendants of Noah’s three sons, and need not keep more than the seven precepts which the sons of Noah are obligated to observe. Know you that ideas like these are the ruin of Judaism? We must be conscious that we are the chosen people of God, the kingdom of Priests, and behave as it behooves ‘Israel,’ the Princes of the Almighty. Reverse the order! Be modest in your personal ambitions, be content with the material advantages you enjoy in this country, but be not modest with your faith (Duchinsky, 114, 116, 117).

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5. The “Jew Bill” of 1753

In light of the growing rapprochement of upper-class Jews and well-to-do Englishmen, the general rise and increasing prominence of the Jewish population of England from about 1,000 in 1700 to 8,000 in 1753 (Newman, 1), and, not least, the role of the Jews in contributing by their expertise in trade and finance to the prosperity of the realm — bearing out Dormido’s already cited prediction under Cromwell that “Busines will increase and ye comerce will become more oppulant” (Quoted Katz, Philo-Semitism, 194) — it is not surprising that a measure would be proposed making it possible for wealthy and productive non-native members of the Jewish community in England to acquire the same rights as native-born English Jews. “London’s Jews,” in the words of historian Dana Rabin,

were involved in every aspect of its financial and commercial activity. They held stock in the Bank of England, traded in the money market, and advised the government on its financial policies: they owned the national debt, and they actively participated in selling it to the public. Over the course of the eighteenth century as Britain’s military expanded, Jews provisioned solders with supplies and the government with loans to fund the wars. [ . . . ] Jews were active in overseas importing and re-exporting commodities and exporting British goods. Their commercial networks made them international brokers around the world. The record of Jewish investment in colonial enterprises is quite dramatic. Between 1691 and 1712, fifty-eight Jewish names show up among the investors in the Royal Africa [the Royal African Company], while in the same time period thirty-four Jewish shareholders invested in the South Sea Company. Jewish merchants actively promoted trade in sites all over the Empire, including India, the Caribbean, North America and South America. (47)

The relative integration of Jews into English society having taken place without the enactment of any special legislation, positive or negative, governing their legal position specifically as Jews, the disabilities native-born Jews suffered from were chiefly those affecting other nonconformist groups. Foreign–born Jewish immigrants, however, were subject to some major inconveniences from which native-born English Jews were exempt. For instance, as aliens, they were not permitted to hold land. They could likewise not own or be a partner in the ownership of a British ship — this at a time when ownership of ships was an integral aspect of merchant trading and was thus by no means uncommon among successful native-born Jewish merchants, especially the Sephardim. Foreign-born merchants were also excluded from the colonial trade, while those who engaged in foreign trade were subject to substantial port fees and customs duties often twice as high as those to which native merchants were subject (Singer, 20).

The purpose of the highly controversial so-called “Jew Bill” — the term popularly used to refer to the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 — was to make England a more
attractive place for well-to-do and enterprising foreign Jewish merchants, notably refugees from Spain and Portugal who continued to be drawn to Amsterdam or had already found asylum there, by holding out the possibility of naturalization and thus avoidance of certain particularly onerous taxes affecting foreign merchants. The motives of the bill’s proponents in the Whig government and of its supporters in Parliament, in society at large, and in the Jewish community itself were no doubt partly moral and ideological — the liberal principle of freedom of religion, championed by John Locke, many Protestant dissenters from the Church of England, and not least — albeit anonymously — John Toland, the pantheist son of Catholic parents, in his extraordinarily eloquent Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland on the same foot with all other nations. Containing also, A Defence of the Jews against all Vulgar Prejudices in all Countries (London: J. Roberts, 1714).

But the expense of pursuing naturalization according to the terms of the act — i.e. for each individual through a particular act of Parliament — effectively confined the act’s application to a relatively small minority of Jews wealthy enough to take advantage of it and of whom it could therefore be expected that they were likely to contribute significantly to the nation’s prosperity and international standing. The option of “andenization” — i.e. moving upward to a status roughly equivalent to that, in modern times, of U.S. permanent resident, as distinct from citizen — was available to England’s foreign-born Jews, but in addition to being itself extremely costly — it was obtained by letters patent from the King — becoming a denizen provided only partial relief from the burdens born by resident aliens. It allowed for the purchase of land, for instance, and for passing it along to the next generation, but only to children born after the father’s endenization; it opened up the colonial trade, but it was again not retroactive so that the privilege could not be passed along to a child born prior to the father’s endenization; above all, the denizen was not exempt from onerous alien duties, suspended by Charles II and James II, but reinstated by William III (Katz, Jews in the History of England, 242).

Steps had been taken toward making naturalization available to foreign-born Jews in the American colonies. The Plantation Act, passed by Parliament on 1 June, 1740, provided for the naturalization of foreign Jews and Quakers resident in the colonies for seven years. 189 Jews obtained British nationality in Jamaica by taking advantage of this legislation. It was not likely, however, that even well-to-do Spanish, Portuguese, German or Polish Jews aspiring to British nationality would be in a position to cross the Atlantic and to spend seven years in the New World as a condition of acquiring the naturalization necessary for relatively unconstrained trading in the city of London. No less significant, perhaps, were several attempts in the Irish Parliament to pass legislation enabling Jews to be naturalized. Within five years four bills for naturalizing the Jews of Ireland were introduced into the Irish Parliament, but all four were blocked by the peers. One introduced into the Irish House of Commons in 1745 passed within a week but was thrown out by the peers. A
third bill brought before the Commons soon afterwards was carried without a division in three days, but once again the peers rejected it, albeit by only two votes. The primate of Ireland, the Church of Ireland’s Archbishop of Armagh, managed to nix a fourth attempt in December 1747 (Hyman 46-48).

The Elders of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in London had clearly been paying close attention to these developments, for a minute, dated October 1746, in the congregation’s Minute Book indicates that after the third Irish failure, the Elders thought they had not done enough to help secure passage of the bill.

With much grief we remind your Worships [i.e. the Mahamad or directors of the congregation] of the unsuccessful issue of the Bill for the Naturalization of our Nation in Ireland: and when we consider that one vote only [two in fact] deprived us of so great a benefit, we are left wondering what lack of application caused this great good to be defeated; and, seeing the possibility of a similar Bill being brought to this Kingdom at some time [. . . ] we leave your Worships to consider what methods may be adopted to seize any opportunity which may offer in good time to secure liberty for our nation. (Quoted Hyman, 47)

The Mahamad responded by having a “Committee of Diligence” appointed to consult the best legal authorities of the realm and any others who might be of help in the matter.

Thus it came about that Joseph Salvador, one of the most prominent and wealthy members of London’s Sephardic community and long active in the East India Company, contacted the Duke of Newcastle — a member of the House of Lords, a protégé and close associate of the great Whig leader and long time prime minister Robert Walpole until the latter’s death in 1745 and an older brother of the liberally disposed Whig prime minister (1743-54) Henry Pelham — about legislation that would make it possible for foreign-born Jews living in England to be naturalized. According to a memorandum among the Newcastle papers described as “Mr. Salvador’s Paper concerning the Jews” and dated London, 14 January 1753, “it is desired that it be enacted, that any person professing the Jewish religion whom it may in future be thought proper to Naturalise, shall in lieu of taking the Holy Sacrament, take the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, or such other oaths as may be thought proper, on or before the Second Reading of the Bill for Naturalising him in either of the Houses of Parliament.” Salvador went on to provide seven reasons for supporting his proposal. Among these, that as present law effectively excluded Jews by requiring those seeking naturalization to take the Christian Holy Sacrament, rich Jews were gravitating to other countries, instead of to England, which thus lost the benefit of their wealth and commercial skills; that the law could be formulated in such a way that it encouraged only “those that may be thought worthy and useful” (i.e. “the Rich Jews”) and effectively discouraged “the middling and lower sort from coming into those realms”; and that Jews or at least “the rich among them have by
Experience been found to be true Friends to the Government in all its Parts, and if further encouraged will be more closely connected with it, as they have no connection or tie with any other Government or State whatsoever” (Roth, Anglo-Jewish Letters 129-30). The British Jews’ strong, practical support of the government during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, Salvador may well have thought, provided clear evidence of that last point.

Salvador’s embryonic “Jew Bill” won the support of many Whigs in Parliament, among them Robert Nugent, author of a failed “Generalized Naturalization Bill,” introduced in 1747 and 1751, that would have allowed foreign Protestants to be naturalized without incurring the expense of a private act of Parliament. (One of the objections to Nugent’s bill had been that by not including Jews, it would drive away a small number of rich Jews in favour of a swarm of poor Protestants, as had happened on passage of an earlier act of 1709 that permitted naturalization, without a private act of Parliament, of foreign Protestants who could swear the required oaths and take communion in a Protestant Church.) Other Whig supporters were Lord Halifax, President of the Board of Trade, and the triumvirate that ran the English government at the time: the Duke of Newcastle, the Secretary of State, his brother Henry Pelham, the Prime Minister, and the earl of Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor. The task of presenting the text of a bill “To Permit Persons Professing the Jewish Religion to be Naturalized by Parliament” was entrusted to Lord Halifax. The bill was read for the first time in the House of Lords on 3 April, 1753. It was sent to committee, which made several amendments, and after three readings in quick succession achieved its final passage unanimously, without a division, on April 16.

On the following day it was read before the Commons. At first it seemed as though it would have a similar easy passage, but by the second reading on 7 May, opposition had begun to develop. The imminence of a general election probably stimulated Tory members to seize the opportunity of discrediting the ruling party by attacking the bill, while some Whig members also spoke out against it. Thus the Tory M.P. for Caine in Wiltshire, William Northey, warned that if the bill was passed one could expect

to see the Jews become the highest bidders for every estate that is to be purchased in England, the counties of which [ . . . ] they will at some private meeting divide among their several tribes, by lot, as they of old did the land of Canaan; and when the rich Jews have thus become possessed of land estates, great numbers of poor Jews must necessarily settle in their neighbourhood; for we know that they can make use of none but Jew butchers, bakers, poulterers, and the like trades, which, of course, must make them soon become very numerous in this country. (Quoted Hyamson 161)

A fellow-Tory, Sir Edmund Isham, member for Northamptonshire, predicted that passage of the bill would result in the naturalisation of multitudes of foreign Jews
who would constitute an enduring alien element in British society, since, unlike French refugees and German Protestants, the Jews never assimilate but keep themselves apart from the general population. In addition, it would give “the lie to all the prophecies in the New Testament,” according to which the Jews are “to remain without any fixed habitation until they acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah,” at which point alone they will be “gathered together from all corners of the earth and restored to their native land.” In contrast “we seem resolved to gather them from all corners of the earth, and to give them a settlement here without any such acknowledgment” (Quoted Hyamson, 161) One M.P. went so far as to suggest that, instead of proceeding with the bill, a secret committee be appointed to investigate by what right the Jews were tolerated in the country at all (Roth, History, 216-17).

The leading opponent of the bill, however, was Sir John Barnard, a former Lord Mayor of London (1737-38), a Whig M.P. for the City of London (1722-1764), a staunch defender of the English merchant class in the City, and a long-time enemy of the Jewish merchants whose prosperity, in his view, threatened that of the natives. In addition to his opposition to the bill on religious grounds, he argued that a Jewish immigration, which supporters of the bill claimed would increase commerce and thus benefit the country as a whole, along with all its inhabitants, would in fact reduce the profits of the English merchants by transferring much of their business into Jewish hands. “Jews may become our only merchants, and our only shop-keepers. They will probably leave the laborious part of all manufactures and mechanical trades to the poor Christian, but they will be the paramount masters.” The impoverishment of the mercantile and trading classes would impact the landed gentry and most of the landed estates of the country would pass into Jewish hands (Hyamson, 162). Yet another speaker, evoked the “resentment and cruelty of the Jews,” as illustrated by the story of Esther, where one learns that on getting power into their hands “they put to death in two days near 76,000 of those they were pleased to call their enemies, without either judge or jury,” and expressed his fear that naturalisation of foreign Jews might be a danger to the state and to the freedom of its citizens. Obnoxious as they will always be to the people, the Jews would find it in their interest to side with the king should he wish to oppose the will of his subjects and in all likelihood would supply an authoritarian monarch with the money necessary for the support of a foreign army in oppressing his own subjects (Hyamson, 162-63).

In favour of the bill, as has been noted, it was argued that it would introduce capital into the country by encouraging rich Jews to immigrate and settle, while still maintaining restrictions both on the total number of Jews who could become naturalised and on their political influence. Robert Nugent, whose naturalisation bills (which, as we saw, were not directed toward Jews) had been rejected only a few years earlier, supported the bill on the grounds that by encouraging rich Jews to settle in Britain, the bill would in fact facilitate their conversion to Christianity. “There is a fashion in religion as well as in everything else,” he argued, and “it is unfashionable to be of a religion different from that established in the country in
which we live” (quoted Katz, Jews in the History of England, 163). Another champion of the bill, the liberally inclined lawyer, classical scholar and poet, M.P. for Eye in Suffolk, chief clerk to the House of Commons (1731-1752), and subsequently secretary of the treasury, Nicholas Hardinge, attributed opposition to the bill to simple commercial rivalry, insisted instead on the great commercial advantages conferred on states by the settlement of Jews in their territories, emphasized that as the Jews provide for their own poor, there would be no burden on any parish, and recalled the substantial services rendered to the state by the Jews during the crisis of the ’45 Jacobite Rebellion (Katz, Jews in the History of England, 163-64) “A propulsive assumption behind the bill,” in the summary view of one recent scholar, “was that given the global network of their trading connections, the naturalization of these wealthy Jews would prove of untold economic benefit to the state” (Felsenstein, 188).

The opposing positions adopted by the members of Parliament were reinforced by petitions presented to the House. In response to a growing public outcry against the bill, word of which had begun to spread, or be spread by the bill’s opponents, a petition in favour of the bill was drawn up, seemingly at the instigation of the government itself. A hundred and two London merchants and traders signed this first petition, in which the case was made that enactment of the bill would “increase the commerce and credit of [the] nation.” The other side responded, on the same day, with a vehement protest against the bill from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of London. Along with their objection to the bill on economic grounds, namely that its enactment would have a negative effect on the established merchants of the city of London, these petitioners issued a broader and more popular cultural and religious warning: passage of the bill would “tend greatly to the dishonour of the Christian religion, and endanger our excellent Constitution.” A third petition, for which signatures were still being solicited when the Lord Mayor’s critique was presented, again stressed the economic consequences of the bill’s enactment. Those subscribing to it, for the most part English merchants trading with Spain and Portugal, argued, in view of the still ongoing activity of the Inquisition in the two Iberian countries — which, as one of the signatories acknowledged, “hate the Jews out of measure” — that discriminatory commercial measures might well be taken against native English merchants in retaliation and that Great Britain might lose its valuable “most favoured nation” privileges in Portugal. A final petition, in favour of the bill, bore the signature of over two hundred merchants, manufacturers, shipwrights and ship commanders, and argued that, if passed, the bill would increase the nation’s foreign trade, especially “the Exportation of the Woollen and other Manufactures of this Kingdom, of which the persons who profess the Jewish Religion have, for many years, exported great quantities.” This last petition was also strongly critical of the popular agitation that it claimed had been fomented by the bill’s opponents, and warned of its implications: “Were it once admitted that it is proper for the Public to examine People’s private Rights on Account of their Religion, none can answer where that would end” (Perry, 54-62; Hyamson, 164-66).
Prime Minister Pelham wound up the debate on the bill by categorically denying what had become the rallying-cry of the bill’s opponents in the press and on the street, namely that its passage would result in a massive influx of Jews and the destabilisation and de-Christianising of the country. Jews, he argued, ought to be considered in the same light as other dissenters — “not as enemies of our ecclesiastical establishment, but as men, whose conscience will not allow them to conform to it.” Indeed, “we have less danger to apprehend from them than from any other dissenters” since “the strict tenets of their religion exclude every man who is not of the seed of Israel.” Moreover, as they cannot, as Jews, “intermarry with a strange woman, we need not fear that they will have any success in converting our country-women” (quoted Perry 164).

On its third and final reading on 22 May, it turned out that though the minority opposed to the bill had increased its numbers from 16 to 55, the number of government supporters had remained stable at 96. The bill thus passed and was duly signed into law by George II on 7 June. It has been suggested that with a more concerted effort the opposition could have prevented passage of the bill, had not many Tories become convinced, in view of the public uproar against the bill, that the Whigs would be more easily defeated in the upcoming election if the bill was passed rather than defeated (Henriques, 171; Roth, History 217).

That public uproar took a number of forms and has been diversely interpreted. First, there was a lively and copious newspaper and pamphlet literature, along with cartoon-like prints, warning that facilitation of Jewish settlement represented a serious threat to the established Church of England, to the very character (Christian) of the nation, to the liberty and material wellbeing of the British people, gentry and workers alike, and to the entire future of the realm, which was virtually certain, in the view of the pamphleteers and letter-writers in the newspapers, led by the popular London Evening-Post, the London Magazine, and The Craftsman, to be completely taken over and ruled by the Jews and transformed into a Jewish state – Nova. The English were warned that with the passage of the bill they would become foreigners and second-class citizens in their own land (Cranfield, 16-30; Felsenstein, 187-214; Singer, 19-36). There appears to have been a curious preoccupation in the popular literature with circumcision, as if, in addition to their take-over of the land and the economy, the massive immigration that would result from conceding citizenship to the Jews would compromise the native Englishman’s masculinity. A song in Jackson’s Oxford Journal for September 1753 (no. 20, p. 1) warns in its chorus, repeated four times, that with the passage of the Jewish Naturalization Bill, Britons were about to lose “Liberties, Properties, and their Fore-Skins” (quoted Wolper, 63).

So shocking a Thought is sufficient to scare one.
Think well Lady S——-n of this Operation
And join with good Christians in saving the Nation.
Though there is no record of widespread acts of violence, criticism of the Jew Bill in Parliament and in print quickly morphed into significant mob unrest and widespread popular hostility to Jews in general. In the space of a few months, Horace Walpole wrote, “the whole nation found itself inflamed with a Christian zeal,” though “this holy spirit seized none but the populace and the very lowest of the clergy. [. . .] The little curates preached against the bishops for deserting the interests of the Gospel; and aldermen grew drunk at county clubs in the cause of Jesus Christ” (Memoirs, 1: 238, January 1751-March 1754). As one scholar has observed, “the mob frenzy that [antipathy to the bill] aroused provides as close an approximation as we are likely to find in eighteenth-century England to the kind of popular hysteria that in pre-expulsion days may have sparked a pogrom.” At the height of the turmoil the archbishop of Canterbury (as Walpole points out, the higher clergy in the House of Lords supported the bill and some of them were exposed to popular attacks as a result) expressed his fear that “such an abominable spirit” is brewing against the Jews “that I expect in a little time they will be massacred.” Another supporter of the bill in Parliament, Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, the brother-in-law of William Pitt, “trembled lest fires should be rekindled in Smithfield to burn Jews” (Felsenstein, 190-91). The unrest provoked by the passage of the bill was such that the Whig governing party, fearing a disastrous result at the upcoming election, brought in a new bill to repeal the measure it itself had worked so hard to pass only a few months earlier. While maintaining that the original proposals had been wise and beneficial, the Duke of Newcastle, who introduced the new bill to the House of Lords on 15 November, argued that the government had no choice but to yield to the public clamour. He was supported by the Bishops of Oxford and St. Asaph who acknowledged regretfully the need to yield to “weak and misguided consciences.” In the Commons too, after fierce debates, the new bill was passed, receiving royal assent on 20 December, 1753 (Roth, History, 221-22).

Modern interpretations of the popular uproar over the 1753 bill have varied considerably, though virtually all scholars have conceded some pertinence to causes and conditions other than those they themselves judge to have been primary. An upsurge of traditional anti-Semitism is broadly acknowledged as having contributed to the uproar. Some scholars, however, noting that the uproar was not marked by violence, died down after the repeal of the act, and appears to have had no lasting effect on Anglo-Jewish relations, have judged that the whipping up of admittedly deeply embedded anti-Semitic passions and prejudices in opposition to the “Jew Bill” was first and foremost a Tory strategy for bringing down the Whig government of Henry Pelham at the upcoming election. To others, anti-Semitism, never far below the surface of the popular psyche, needed little provocation to flare up. The unrest caused by the “Jew Bill” should be recognized in short as, above all, a manifestation of a recurrent social pathology. Still others have focussed on the rapid growth by mid-century of the financial sector, in which Jews played a prominent role, and on the hostility and resentment this development inspired among traditional merchants and the fear it aroused, in broad sectors of the general population, of a secretive
power (still present in the contemporary imagination as “Wall Street” or “the City”) that was on its way to reduce them to slavery, take over “their” country, and transform it into Judea Nova. To still other historians imperial expansion in India, the West Indies, and North America (where the population of the thirteen colonies is said to have reached one and a half million by 1750), and continuing strained relations with Scots and Irish, Catholics and Dissenters within the kingdom itself had aroused an uneasiness among the English about the stability and identity of their state and about their own identity as “Englishmen.” All these explanations seem plausible and need not be mutually exclusive.

**Bibliography**


PART II.

THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF JEWS IN ENGLAND

1. The Jewish Population in the later Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries

The uproar over the so-called “Jew Bill” died down as quickly and completely as it had started up. Immigration, now overwhelmingly of Ashkenazim from central and eastern Europe -- Germany, Poland, Bohemia – resumed, to slow down considerably only during the wars following the French Revolution. The Jewish population of England, estimated at between 6,000 and 8,000 in the mid-eighteenth century, mostly living in London, had risen by the early years of the nineteenth century to somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 in London and 5,000 to 6,000 in the provinces (Endelman, Jews of Britain, 41; Newman, 1; Roth, History 225). The Sephardim continued on their path of integration into English society. The majority of the Ashkenazim, belonging to a lower social stratum, were far less assimilated. The Prussian historian Wilhelm von Archenholz drew a sharp distinction between the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi communities in his Picture of England, containing a Description of the Laws, Customs and Manners of England of 1797: “Dress, language, manners, cleanliness, politeness, everything distinguishes them, much to the advantage of the former, who have little to distinguish them from Christians” (quoted Hyamson, 300). Still, among the Ashkenazim too, as noted earlier, there were wealthy and successful exceptions. The historian Cecil Roth tells of “an immigrant from Silesia, who at the outset of his career corresponded with his parents in Judeo-German and was anxious for the welfare of the religious institutions of his birthplace,” yet “could develop within twenty years into a staid British merchant, with his sons married to English girls – one a sea-captain and another in the colonial service, destined to be buried in Bath Abbey” (Roth, History, 225; Anglo-Jewish Letters, 189-91). The case of Alexander Schomberg, son of a German-Jewish doctor, Meyer Löw Schomberg who had settled in England around 1720, is no less striking. The young Schomberg converted to Christianity, joined the Navy in 1743, became a captain in 1757, played an important part in the capture of Quebec in 1759, and was
knighted in 1777. His portrait, painted by Hogarth in 1763, is in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The super-wealthy and unconverted Goldsmids (originally from Holland) and Rothschilds (originally from Germany) contributed significantly to the financing of the wars against Napoleon.

Wealthy Jews continued to build or buy up elegant country houses and to move their London homes into the more fashionable sections of the West End (Endelman, *Jews of Georgian England*, 56-57). This resulted -- as it was no doubt intended to do -- in their establishing ever closer ties to their Christian gentry neighbours, but also to growing detachment from the Jewish community as a whole, increasing use of English in communal life, even in the synagogue, and efforts to make the religious service itself less “foreign” and more “dignified.” It also led to reduced attendance at synagogue services, a decline in Jewish learning, less strict observance of Jewish law, a diminution of the role and authority of the rabbinate, and an increase in the number of conversions. Upper-class English Jews did not embrace German Reform Judaism. As Todd Endelman explains, even those who had distanced themselves from traditional Judaism still maintained, for the most part, “a nominal allegiance to the ideas and the institutions of orthodoxy and simply ignored those elements that were an obstacle to their enjoyment of life in this world. They were, to use a paradoxical phrase, *non-observant orthodox Jews*. Like the majority of property-owning Englishmen in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they were content to remain within the bosom of the established church (or synagogue) without giving much time or thought to the demands of their formal Jewish identity” (*Jews of Georgian England*, 134; also ch. 4, “Gentlemen Jews: The Acculturation of the Anglo-Jewish Middle Class,” and the summary account of the “entry of the Jews into the life of the English nation,” 248-49; see also Roth, *History of the Jews of England*, 226-27).

In some cases, Enlightenment ideas did lead to explicit scepticism or deism. “By the 1830s the number of Jewish Deists and sceptics had multiplied considerably,” according to Endelman. However, these “opponents of traditional Judaism were not a vocal or well-organized group. They rarely ventured into print and never undertook any campaign to embarrass the orthodox camp. [. . .] In all likelihood, many of those who were branded as Deists by the traditional camp did not deserve the name but were merely religiously apathetic, having given up traditional worship and ritual from a desire for social conformity” (*Jews of Georgian England*, 150-51).

There was, however, around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in the early decades of the nineteenth, a notable upsurge in published arguments in defence of Jews or in favour of emancipation by both English Christians and English Jews. Jews also began participating in the general culture of the nation more actively and broadly than in the past, and not simply in trade and finance. As this development cannot but have been a significant factor in the
emancipation debates leading up to the removal in 1858 of the last disability affecting English Jews, a number of instances of it will be described here in some detail and at some length.

Bibliography


2. The Acculturation of the Jews and their Participation in English Musical Culture.

By the mid seventeenth century and increasingly as time went on Jews were becoming productive participants in the nation’s cultural life. Moses Mendes, married to a Christian, baptised, and a Freemason, wrote poems, several successful stage pieces, the libretti of a number of ballad operas, notably Robin Hood (1750; music by Charles Burney) and perhaps also those of Handel’s English language oratorios Solomon and Susanna. In the words of a contemporary, Mendes was a “Person of considerable Genius, of an agreeable Behaviour and entertaining in Conversation [with] a very pretty Turn for Poetry” (DNB). Hannah Norsa, daughter of an Italian Jew from Mantua who kept The Punch-Bowl tavern in Drury Lane,
made the fortunes of the newly opened Theatre Royal in Covent Garden with an outstanding 1732 performance as Polly Peachum in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*.

As if in anticipated contradiction of Wagner’s later reprise, in attacking Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, of an old saw — picked up by Shakespeare in Lorenzo’s comments on Shylock — about Jews’ having a suspicious attitude and thus no intimate relation to music, Jews in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England were particularly drawn to music, which became one of the most successful areas of their acculturation. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century the Abrams sisters — the sopranos Harriet and Eliza and the contralto Theodosia — were appearing regularly on the London stage or in concert halls. Harriet, celebrated for her performances in works by Handel, had the lead role, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in *Mayday, or The Little Gipsy* (1775), written especially for her by David Garrick — the last of more than twenty plays by the celebrated actor and theatre director — with music by her teacher, the prolific composer Thomas Arne. She also gave annual benefit concerts in 1792, 1794 and 1795, in which she was accompanied by Joseph Haydn on the piano. In addition, Harriet Abrams composed several songs, two of which, "The Orphan's Prayer" and "Crazy Jane", became very popular. She also published collections of Italian and English canzonets, Scottish songs harmonised for two and three voices, and sentimental ballads. A collection of ballads that she put out in 1803 was dedicated to Queen Charlotte.

**John Braham**

John Braham — originally, no doubt, Abraham, Abrahams, or Abram (Conway, “John Braham,” 31; Sands, 203-204) — a former meshorer (choirboy assistant) to the chazzan (cantor) Myer Leon at London’s Great Synagogue, became one of the most internationally celebrated tenors of the early nineteenth century. While he was being trained — first as a boy singer by his older colleague at the synagogue, who, also sang regularly at Covent Garden under the name Michaele Leoni; then, later, after his voice broke, by the highly regarded Italian countertenor Venanzio Rauzzino (to whom Mozart had offered the lead role in *Lucio Silla* in Milan in 1772 and for whom he composed the motet *Exultate jubilate*) in the fashionable resort town of Bath — the young Braham enjoyed the practical support of the wealthy Jewish Goldsmid family. In return, he

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sometimes sang for them, along with their neighbour and occasional guest, Admiral Nelson. (Later, on Nelson’s death, he was to compose his greatest song-writing success, “The Death of Nelson,” first performed in 1811, to overwhelming applause, in an opera of his own, The Americans, at the Lyceum in London.) In 1794-95 Rauzzino arranged for his student to sing at the Assembly Rooms in Bath, where he was warmly received, and by November 1796 Braham had made his debut, to great acclaim, in Grétry’s Zemire et Azor, at the Italian Opera in London, a notable achievement for a singer born and trained in England, let alone an English Jew. His first appearance at Covent Garden took place the following year and with it the long triumphant phase of his career was launched. Braham performed before enthusiastic audiences in every major continental house – in Paris (before Napoleon’s first wife Joséphine de Beauharnais) and in Florence in 1798, at La Scala in Milan in 1798-99, in Livorno (before Nelson) in 1800, in Venice, Trieste, and Vienna in 1800-1801 — as well as in Britain (in Mozart’s Tito and Cosi fan tutte, for instance, at the Italian Opera in 1806-16). In the mid-1820s he sang Max in the first English production of Weber’s Der Freischütz with such success that Weber was invited to compose an opera for him to be sung in English and performed in England. The result was Oberon, with the ailing Weber coming over to England to conduct the rehearsals himself. Braham was given the leading role of Huon de Bordeaux, and Weber, having composed two fresh arias to suit the celebrated tenor, conducted the first twelve performances himself, starting on 12 April 1826. In June of that year, at Weber’s funeral, Braham sang in Mozart’s Requiem (Conway, Jewry, 86; Sands, 217).

Braham thus became the first English-born male singer to command a European reputation. Partly by his own choice — he regularly supported Jewish charities and causes until his marriage to a Gentile woman in 1816 — and partly because his audiences in England never let it out of their minds, his Jewishness remained a prominent feature of his persona, to the point that the nation’s leading, internationally renowned tenor was at the same time an important incarnation of “the Jew” in the British consciousness. Not surprisingly, therefore, his being Jewish could be the object of snide remarks, even by those, like Charles Lamb, who admired his art (Conway, 84-85). This was by no means always the case, however. Thus the eminent man of letters, Henry Crabb Robinson, a former barrister, journalist (foreign correspondent of The Times from 1807 to 1809), and friend of Blake, Coleridge, Lamb, and Wordsworths, wrote on March 30, 1811 of his performance in The Siege of Belgrade, a comic opera put together with music by Mozart and Salieri among others, at the Lyceum Theatre:

His trills, shakes and quavers are, like those of all the other great singers, tiresome to me; but his pure meloy, the simple song clearly articulated, is equal to anything I ever heard. His song was acted as well as sung delightfully; I think Braham a fine actor while singing; he throws his soul into his throat, but his whole frame is animated, and his gestures and looks are equally impassioned.
“He is incomparably the most delightful male singer I ever heard,” Robinson added four days later. (Robinson, 1:325, 327)

The absence of any hint of anti-Judaism in Robinson’s comment may not be an accident. Robinson was an early Unitarian and one of the founders of London University, which was set up in 1826 in response to the continued exclusion of Catholics, Dissenters, and Jews from Oxford and Cambridge.

Isaac Nathan

Isaac Nathan, a composer of light-weight dances and songs, was yet another English Jew who achieved some celebrity or notoriety in the musical world of the early nineteenth century. Born in Canterbury, the son of a Polish-born chazzan or cantor and his English Jewish wife, Nathan was and still is best known for having persuaded George Gordon, Lord Byron, to write his Hebrew Melodies to music composed by Nathan. For the most part, Nathan adapted melodies from the synagogue service. Few, if any, of these were in fact handed down from the ancient service of the Temple in Jerusalem, as Nathan claimed. Most were European folk-tunes that had become absorbed into the synagogue service over the centuries. They were, however, the first attempt to present the traditional music of the synagogue, with which Nathan was obviously well acquainted through his upbringing, to the general public. The success of Byron’s Hebrew Melodies made Nathan relatively well known. He claims to have been appointed singing teacher to Princess Charlotte, the Princess Royal, and music librarian to the Prince Regent, later George IV. His edition of the Hebrew Melodies was indeed dedicated to the Princess Royal, presumably by royal permission (Conway, Jewry, 86; Ph.D. thesis, 121-34). As for Nathan’s relation to Byron, their friendship endured, with some condescension on Byron’s part, until the poet’s departure from England, on which occasion Byron, who had already granted his collaborator the copyright to the Hebrew Melodies, gave Nathan a £50 note and Nathan reciprocated with a gift of matzos, described as “passover cakes.” A friendly exchange of letters accompanied the exchange of gifts.

John Barnett

Considerable success as a composer was also achieved by one John Barnett, the son of an Ashkenazi jeweller who had changed his name from Bernhard Beer on settling in England. Born at Bedford in 1802, Barnett sang on the stage of the Lyceum Theatre in London at the age of eleven. His good voice led to his being given a sound musical education so that, after his voice broke, he began composing songs and lighter pieces for the stage. A collection of Lyrical Illustrations of the Modern Poets appeared in 1834. An opera, The Mountain Sylph, received a warm welcome when produced at the former Lyceum theatre, newly reopened and renamed “The English Opera House,” on 25 August 1834, and was given over100 performances — an unusual
success at the time. It was followed by *Fair Rosamond*, to a libretto by his brother, in 1837, *Farinelli* in 1839, both at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and many others, none as successful, however, as the first. Even after his career as an opera composer declined and he retired to the country, he remained musically active as a singing-master in Cheltenham. *Systems and Singing-masters* was published in 1842, *School for the Voice* two years later. Barnett also wrote several songs for the theatre in collaboration with the comic actor, playwright and theatre manager John Baldwin Buckstone, as well as some instrumental works, including three string quartets and a violin sonata.

The writer Grace Aguilar (See Part II, 4 below) had a younger brother, who won recognition as a pianist, composer, and music teacher. Born in England to well educated Portuguese-Jewish parents in 1824, Emanuel Abraham Aguilar (1824-1904) studied music in Frankfurt, where he was the first to perform Chopin’s F minor concerto and where many of his own compositions were also performed, before returning to England and settling in London. He composed two operas – *Wave King* (1855) and *Bridal Wreath* (1863) as well as overtures, symphonies, cantatas (including, in 1888, in collaboration with the author, a musical setting of Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*), chamber music, and songs. He also produced piano transcriptions of music by J. S. Bach. According to James D. Brown and Stephen S. Stratton, authors of a *British Musical Biography* (1897) “his piano recitals have been for many years, a regular feature of the London musical season.

How not to conclude this short review of Jews in the English musical world of the late eighteenth century and the earlier decades of the nineteenth without mentioning Jenny Lind, the legendary “Swedish Nightingale”? With her Jewish composer husband Otto Goldschmidt, a former student of Felix Mendelssohn, Lind, who had begun to sign herself Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt, settled in England in 1856, just two years before Lionel de Rothschild’s winning permission to take his seat in Parliament ended all restrictions on the Jews of England. In 1863 Goldschmidt, who had become a naturalised British citizen, was appointed Vice-Principal of the Royal Academy of Music and in 1883 Lind-Goldschmidt became the Academy’s first Professor of Singing.

**Bibliography**

3. The Acculturation of the Jews and their Participation in English Artistic Culture.

English Jews became active in the fine arts both painters and clients by the early nineteenth century. The mid- to late eighteenth century saw successful, well-to-do Jewish brokers and traders, such as Sampson Gideon and Abraham Goldsmid, emulating the wealthy English gentry with whom they consorted socially by having their portraits painted by leading portrait artists of the day – Robert Dighton, Benjamin Long, George Henry Harlow. Other Jews became artists themselves and achieved considerable success in a world quite new to those of their faith.

Two Eighteenth-Century Women Miniaturists

One of the earliest known Jewish artists was a woman, Catherine da Costa (1679-1756), a daughter of Dr. Fernando Mendes, who had been physician to Charles II and his spouse Catherine of Braganza, and the wife of Moses da Costa, a wealthy merchant and financier. After studying with the noted English miniaturist Bernard Lens III (1682-1740), da Costa created family miniatures of her father, her young son Abraham, and herself in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century and, in 1720, an imaginary portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots. Another Jewish woman miniaturist, Martha Isaacs (c. 1755-1840), the daughter of Levy Isaacs, an embroiderer, studied with the painter Thomas Burgess, before setting out for India to earn a living making miniatures of British subjects in Calcutta. She gave up
working as an artist, however, after converting and marrying an agent of the East India Company in 1779.

**Solomon Alexander Hart (1806-1881)**

Far more productive, well remembered, still well respected, and fully in the mainstream of British nineteenth-century art, the painter Solomon Alexander Hart (1806-1881) became the first Jewish member of the Royal Academy and was on friendly terms with fellow-Academicians Sir Thomas Lawrence, J. W. M. Turner, and John Constable, among others. It was Hart, in fact, who introduced Turner to the Royal Academy Club of which at the time he was Secretary (Hart, 48-58).

Born in Plymouth to an engraver who had tried unsuccessfully to enter the school of the Royal Academy, Hart had a spotty education. “Being an Israelite,” he recounts in his *Reminiscences*, “I was debarred from entering Dr. Bidlake’s Grammar School” and “consequently was placed with [ . . . ] Unitarian Minister” with whom “I remained the best part of five years.” There was frequent caning, the French lessons were given on the Jewish Sabbath and could not therefore be attended, and “my sums were done for me” by a fellow student. “Though living at a seaport,” he “was not an expert in swimming, nor in any of the other sports most youths are more or less proficient in.” As a result, he spent much of his time indoors “scribbling and drawing” (8-10). His father showed some of his work to engravers in London and he ended up as an apprentice at an engraver’s there, committed to “seven years’ service from seven in the morning until seven in the evening.” Hoping to escape this fate of “cruelty to animals,” he went to the British Museum in 1821 and made drawings from the Elgin marbles, with encouragement from the great Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli, then Keeper of the Museum (11). In August 1823 these won him admission as a student to the Royal Academy. “The necessity of earning my bread,”
however, obliged him to accept commissions for colouring theatrical prints, making “copies of some Old Masters in miniature on ivory,” and painting miniature portraits of sitters, so that his days were taken up and he had time for study only in the evening.

His first exhibit at the Academy, a portrait of his father, left him dissatisfied, but in 1828, “to my surprise,” a small oil painting of “an Usher supervising the studies of some pupils” that he showed at the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in Pall Mall was bought for £12 12s. (12). Two years later the first major painting of this Jewish artist—Interior of a Polish Synagogue at the Moment when the Manuscript of the Law is Elevated (now at Tate Britain) — was exhibited at the Society of British Artists and was purchased for £70 by Robert Vernon, a well-known collector of British art. This success led to Hart’s getting seventeen commissions for paintings of which, since each required six months to complete, he was able to produce only three – all three, by his own account, on religious themes: “English Roman Catholic Nobility taking Communion in the time of Queen Elizabeth” for Vernon, a Synagogue picture for a client in Belfast and A Lady taking the Veil for the Marquess of Lansdowne, the Whig politician (13).

Hart relates, however, that, though he continued to produce paintings on religious subjects, he “wished to avoid the imputation of being the painter merely of religious ceremonies” and was determined to demonstrate that he was capable of doing “something of a more definite character in the expression of human emotion and strong dramatic action.” To this end he produced a work illustrating the “quarrel scene” between Wolsey and Buckingham at the opening of Shakespeare’s Henry VIII. This was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1834, as was another history painting, Richard Coeur de Lion and Saladin, in the following year. Hart now became an associate of the Royal Academy (November, 1835) and in 1840 after exhibiting a massive fourteen feet square painting of The Execution of Lady Jane Gray, on which he later claimed to have spent an entire year, he was elected to full membership of the Academy, the first Jew to achieve this public recognition. In that same year, he was commissioned by the Duke of Sussex, the sixth son of King George III and Queen Charlotte and the uncle of the reigning Queen Victoria, to paint his portrait. The Duke, widely known as a Hebrew scholar and in general as well-disposed towards England’s Jewish community, sat for him in a large room in Kensington Palace (Hart, 124-26). Soon after, in 1842, Hart produced a fairly large portrait (119.5 x 77.5 cm) of
the young Queen Victoria herself, presently in the Ben Uri Gallery and Museum in London.

Solomon Hart. Left: Portrait of Queen Victoria. 1842. Oil on canvas.119.5 x 77.5 cm. Courtesy of Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London (on permanent loan). Right: An Early Reading of Shakespeare. 1848. Courtesy of the Royal Academy.

From 1854 to 1863 Hart served as Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy, after which he became its Librarian. An observant Jew himself, he painted portraits of some prominent members of the Jewish community, such as Moses Montefiore (in 1869). At the same time, however, as the historian Richard Cohen points out, he addressed his work to the entire British art-loving community: “Though Hart left several paintings with Jewish themes, relating in particular to Jewish ritual, he expressed above all the inner desire of the Jewish artist who had broken ground and entered into a profession uncommon for Jews in the previous generation, to succeed in the general sphere. He did not want to be known as a Jewish artist engaging in merely particularistic themes relevant to only a select part of the society” (159). His work does indeed range widely, from portraiture, genre scenes, landscapes, and history painting to scenes from synagogue ceremony, from The West End of St. Alban’s Abbey in 1832, by way of The Young Falconer in 1835, The Young Queen Victoria in 1842, The Feast of the rejoicing of the Law at the Synagogue in Leghorn in 1850, The Hop Pickers in 1851, and The Plot (a representation of Iago informing Othello of his wife’s infidelity in Othello, III, 3) in 1855 to Melanchthon expounding a Text from Luther’s Bible to the Monks in 1863. He was a public figure: a committee member of the exclusive Athenæum club (founded in 1824) and a member of the “Hanging Committee” of the Royal Academy.
On the basis of a reference by Solomon Hart, Charles Towne (1781-1854) – referred to as “Charles Towne the Younger,” to distinguish him from a somewhat earlier painter (1763-1840) of the same name – has usually been considered a Jewish artist, though very little is known about him (Roth, *Jewish Art*, 534-35). Like his older namesake, he appears to have painted mostly animals (horses, cattle, hounds) and landscapes, usually with human and animal figures. One thing is certain, there is nothing “Jewish” about any of the works attributed to either Charles Towne. They were clearly commissioned by or intended for a general, not a Jewish pthe gentry.

Abraham Solomon (1824-62)

Far better known and extremely successful as professional artists were the three siblings of the gifted Solomon family – Abraham (1824-62), Rebecca (1832-86), and Simeon (1840-1905). The son of one Meyer or Michael Solomon, an immigrant from Germany or Holland – who became a prosperous hat manufacturer, Freemason, and one of the first Jews to be admitted as a Freeman of the City of London -- and his wife, Catherine Levy Solomon, an amateur painter of miniatures, Abraham Solomon entered Sass’s school of art in Bloomsbury at age thirteen, and in 1838 won a medal at the Royal Society of Arts for a drawing based on a statue. In 1839 he was admitted as a student to the Royal Academy, where in the same year he received a silver medal for drawing from the antique, and in 1843 another for drawing from life.
The prolific Abraham Solomon’s early paintings include portraits (*My Grandmother* [1840], *The Duke of Wellington* [1844], *The Letter, Countess Eugénie, The Fair Amateur*” [1860]), scenes from literary works in the Victorian anecdotal tradition (“*The Vicar of Wakefield* [1842]), and genre paintings in the same tradition (*The Breakfast Table* [1846], *Too Truthful* [1850]). In 1854, as one art historian put it recently, Abraham achieved a breakthrough in his artistic development which “not only gave him an enhanced reputation as an artist, but enabled him [. . .] through the medium of engravings and chromo-lithographs to become immensely popular on both sides of the Atlantic and lay the foundations of his considerable financial prosperity” (Daniels, 15; Lambourne, 274-86).

The originals of the engravings and lithographs referred to in this comment were two paintings of railway carriage scenes, first exhibited at the National Gallery in 1854: *First Class: The Meeting* and *Second Class: The Parting*. Both demonstrated strong technique, while at the same time appealing to the sentimental strain in the Victorian social consciousness.

Two similar works, both law court-related scenes, *Waiting for the Verdict* and *Not Guilty* or “The Acquittal” followed in 1857 and 1859.
All four paintings were well received by both art critics and the general public and engravings of them sold in large numbers. On the strength of these latest paintings, the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray urged the Royal Academy to elect Solomon to membership, which, however, it failed to do. In 1860, however, not long before his death, another work, “Drowned! Drowned!”, depicting the discovery of the body of a young woman who had committed suicide after being dishonored by a heartless man and appealing once again through popular engravings to the sentimental social consciousness of the broad Victorian public, was exhibited at the Royal Academy’s annual exhibition. This time around, Abraham was finally made an associate of the R.A.

As noted, however, Abraham Solomon’s work ranged widely. The following two works were painted in the early 1860s, just before his death.

Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886)

After receiving her earliest instruction in art from her older brother, Abraham’s sister Rebecca (1832-86), the youngest of three daughters in the Solomon family, took art lessons at the Spitalfields School of Design. Though – inevitably, as a woman artist – overshadowed in her lifetime by her artist brothers, she maintained a strong relationship with both, sharing studios with them at various London addresses from at least 1851 to 1862, the year of Abraham’s death, and thereafter with her younger brother Simeon from 1868 into at least the mid-1870s. Later in her career she became the caretaker of the errant Simeon. Contrary to what might have been expected of a woman from a traditional Jewish family at the time, she also socialised in her brothers’ wide and varied circle of gentile artistic, literary, and musical friends. Through at least the mid-1860s, for instance, George du Maurier and his wife Emma were regular guests at the elaborate receptions of the wealthy, art-, music-, and literature-loving Solomons and Rebecca in turn attended the du Mauriers’ dinner parties. Rebecca was also on friendly terms with Agnes MacDonald — later, as Mrs. Edward Poynter, the wife of a President of the Royal Academy and the aunt of Rudyard Kipling — and on at least one occasion “Aggie” stayed with “Beckie” and her family at 18 John Street, Bedford Row (Ferrari). In 1859 Rebecca joined a group of thirty-eight gentile women artists petitioning the Royal Academy of Arts to open its schools to women. This led to the admission of the first woman, Laura Herford (1831-1870), in 1860.

In 1851, preceded by that of brother Abraham, work by Rebecca Solomon was exhibited at the Society of British Artists, established in 1823; In 1852, 1853 and 1854, at the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, also known as the Pall Mall Gallery (opened in 1806); and between 1852 and 1868 at the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy, her portrait of her brother (A. Solomon, Esq.) being included (Cat.# 1055) in the Academy’s 84th Exhibition in 1852 (Garish-Nunn,19). Even after her death her work continued to be featured in the Academy’s annual exhibitions: “A Bit of old London” in the 135th Exhibition (1903, Cat.# 827), and The Fortune Teller in the 142nd Exhibition (1910, Cat.# 1174). In later years Solomon went on to exhibit at the Dudley Gallery (opened in 1864), at Ernest Gambart’s French Gallery (opened in Pall Mall in the mid-1850s and rapidly established as the leading art dealer’s in London), at the Crystal Palace (in 1870), at the Society of Female Artists (in 1874) and at Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester. While copies of paintings by celebrated artists made up a good part of her earliest production – one of her best known works is a copy, begun when she was an assistant in the studio of John Everett Millais and completed by Millais himself, of the noted artist’s controversial Christ in the House of his Parents (several critics, including Dickens, objected to Millais’ “realism,” with one critic charging that the figure of Christ looked too much like a “Jew boy “) — she was soon producing paintings of her own, such as The Morning Call (1852), Evangeline (1853, inspired by
Longfellow’s 1847 epic poem of the same name, *The Story of Balaclava* (1855) and *Behind the Curtain* (1856). A couple of visits to France, probably chaperoning her already wayward brother Simeon, resulted in *Lovemaking in the Pyrenees* and *Spending a Sou*” (both 1858).

Many of Rebecca Solomon’s paintings reflect gender and social class differences in the England of her time. Among them, *The Governess* (1854), in which a sad governess looks longingly at the well-to-do, happily married parents of the child she is charged with taking care of, and *A Young Teacher* (1861) in which a child playfully instructs her nanny. She also painted historical and literary themes, probably with the aim of winning recognition as a painter of serious subjects. *The Fugitive Royalists* (1862; also referred to as *The Claim for Shelter*), for instance, depicts a scene during the English Civil War in which an aristocrat and her son seek asylum from a Puritan mother and her sick daughter, while in *The Arrest of the Deserter* (1861), based on a scene in an 1844 play *Dominique the Deserter* by William H. Murray, the main character, dressed in seventeenth-century clothing, is about to be led away in handcuffs, while a woman at his side pleads his case. By the mid-1860s Simeon’s friendship and close association with the Pre-Raphaelites proved influential on Rebecca. Her *Woman on a Balcony* (ca. 1865) follows the pattern of the Venetian portrait-style works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, and other Pre-Raphaelite associates, with a beautiful woman leaning out on a balcony gazing into the distance. *The Wounded Dove* (1866) representing a young woman, her hair down, caring for an injured dove, and surrounded by Chinese ceramics and Japanese fans, reflects the newly popular Japonisme of the day.

At the height of her career, despite being a woman, Rebecca Solomon won recognition as a talented artist. *Behind the Curtain* (1858) was cited by a critic in Bentley’s *Miscellany* as “a first rate work.” Of *Peg Woffington’s Visit to Triplet* (1860), with its reference to Charles Reade’s recently published 1853 novel about the Irish actress, the *Art Journal* wrote, “This is really a picture of great power [.... ] gratifying,
encouraging, and full of hope [. . .Solomon] adds another name to the many who receive honour as great women of the age.” As many of Rebecca Solomon’s paintings were reproduced, like her brother Abraham’s, in the form of engravings, she was also, in her day, a popular and widely known artist.

In the last decade or so of her life, however, she fell from grace and never recovered the reputation she enjoyed in her best years. After the death of Abraham, the two younger Solomon siblings developed a closer relationship both personally and professionally. Trying to assist, restrain and reform her gifted but increasingly errant brother, she instead became herself associated with his notorious, morality-flouting ways and the bohemian company he kept. In 1873, at the height of a highly successful career as an artist, Simeon was arrested and charged with attempted “buggery” in a public urinal in England; though convicted, he managed to avoid imprisonment by paying a substantial fine, but not long afterwards, he was charged with “indecent touching” in a similar facility in France and spent three months in a French prison. Worn out by caring for her more and more roving, hard-drinking, overtly homosexual sibling, Rebecca, it is said, took to drinking heavily herself and produced less and less work of her own. Acculturation to gentile English society took an extreme form in this Anglo-Jewish woman artist.

Simeon Solomon (1840-1905)

As Simeon Solomon was primarily active after 1858, when, with the admission of Lionel de Rothschild to Parliament, virtually full emancipation had been achieved, he will be the last instance of Jewish acculturation in the visual arts to be considered here – far more briefly than this gifted and troubled artist would otherwise merit. It was in fact in that very year, 1858, that Solomon exhibited his first Royal Academy work, a drawing entitled “Isaac Offered,” along with two further drawings at the Winter exhibition of the Ernest Gambart gallery. By the mid-1860s he had produced a considerable body of work and won the respect of both the public and his fellow-artists.

Much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, with whose members and immediate successors – Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Henry Holiday – he mixed socially, he also responded, especially in the earlier part of his career, to the urgings allegedly of his sister Rebecca by producing paintings on Jewish themes (e.g. “Saul” [1859], “David Playing the Harp before Saul” [1859], “Babylon hath been a Golden Cup” [1859], “The Mother of Moses” [1860], “Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego” [1863]), as well as numerous engravings illustrating Jewish ritual (“Circumcision,” “Lighting of the Candles,” “Passover Seder,” “Jewish Wedding”) in popular illustrated magazines,
such as *Once A Week* and *The Leisure Hour*, as well as in the collection known as *Dalziels’ Bible Gallery*.

Even as an illustrator, however, he was not identifiable as different, because of his Jewish background, from other artists in the immediate succession of the Pre-Raphaelites. Many nominally Christian artists and friends – Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, William Holman Hunt, Frederick Leighton, Frederick Augustus Sandys, George Frederick Watts – also contributed in the 1860s to the volume of illustrations of the Old Testament finally put out by George, Edward and John Dalziel in 1881. While always recognized as a Jew by his friends and fellow-artists, in other words, Simeon Solomon was not thought of as either a religious Jew (whatever his “religion” or “spirituality,” it was not identifiable with any established faith) or as a painter of primarily Jewish or Old Testament subjects. His work in fact ranged widely and he borrowed from Jewish, Christian, and Classical legend to express, through his images, his own longings and ideals, physical and spiritual. His art was understood and admired by the fellow-artists, poets, and critics who were his close friends and who were similarly inspired by the aestheticism of the time: Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Walter Pater, Algernon Swinburne, John Addington Symonds.

Almost from the start and increasingly as he matured, his human figures took on the androgynous character also found in the work of several other Pre-Raphaelite artists striving to transcend the restrictive, rigid, and in their view distorting and falsifying categories and oppositions of their time: spiritual and material, normal and perverse, masculine and feminine. The same-sex love that was one of the forms taken by Solomon’s searching for peace, beauty and transcendence of the everyday – portrayed sometimes directly or by suggestion, more often through figures that are indistinguishably male or female -- did not in fact alienate him from the Pre-Raphaelite artists, essayists, and fellow-poets who were his friends. On the contrary,
some of them shared it in one form or another, and virtually none of them seems to have been in the least disturbed by it. There is even reason to surmise that Solomon and Swinburne may have had a homoerotic relationship of some kind.

The fact that virtually all his friends and associates withdrew from him and failed to assist him after he fell from grace in 1873 reflects not their own judgment of his sexuality, other than that he ought to have been more cautious and discreet, but their fear of being found guilty by association and of seeing the ill repute to which he was now subject, not only as a person but as an artist, extended to themselves. This was especially the case of Swinburne, who had indeed the most to fear. Among the consequences of Simeon’s fall from grace (an increasingly irregular life-style, homelessness, neglect of his person, and alcoholism), was the fact that he now had difficulty getting galleries to exhibit and sell his work. Symonds was unusually open on this score: “I wonder whether Hollyer [Frederick Hollyer, the well known photographer and engraver of Pre-Raphaelite art works –L.G.] would send me down for inspection any of Solomon’s drawings and pictures,” he wrote to his friend, the poet and essayist Horatio Forbes Brown, on 2 November, 1875. “I am interested by what you tell me, and I should be glad to help him. I never really liked his style as a

Simeon Solomon. **Upper left:** Frontispiece to his privately published prose poem *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep* (1871). Rare Book Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library. **Upper centre:** *The Sleepers and the One that Watcheth* (1867). Watercolour on paper 35.5 x 23.1 cm. Art Gallery and Museum, Royal Pump Room, Warwick, Derbyshire. **Upper right:** *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene.* (1864). Watercolour on paper. 33 x 38.1. Tate Gallery, London. **Lower left:** *A Youth Reading Tales to Ladies.* Oil on canvas. 35.5 x 53.4 cm. Tate Gallery London. **Lower Centre:** *Bacchus* (1867). Watercolour 50 x 37 cm. Private Collection. Wikimedia commons. **Lower Right:** *Until the Day Break and the Shadows Flee Away* (1869) Graphite and Black chalk, with bodycolour and red chalk on paper. 12.9 x 15.4 cm. British Museum, London.
man, so I do not feel any duty towards him as a previous acquaintance. But it touches me to the quick that a really great artist is in difficulties because no one will exhibit his pictures” (Symonds, 2:388, letter 980).

While Victorian English society on the whole was intolerant of any deviation from what was seen as normal love between men and women, there was some limited tolerance of same-sex love in the upper or cultured classes, provided discretion was carefully observed and the established social and moral order was not recklessly or directly challenged. It is doubtful, however, that there was a similar slackness in the Jewish community, in which male homosexuality had always been considered an abomination. Acculturation to gentile English society thus went further in the case of this noted Anglo-Jewish artist than in that of his sister Rebecca, who at least remained strictly faithful to traditional Jewish religious observances. His life after 1873 was spent in poverty and he died in a workhouse. His work in those later years, however, did not suffer the drastic decline often attributed to it. It continued to evolve and at times attained still greater originality than that of his heyday.

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4. The Acculturation of the Jews and their Participation in English Literary Culture.

It was virtually inevitable that by the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries English-born Jews would also have begun to participate in literary activity, in many cases raising in their fictions the issue of the problematic relationship of English-born Jews to their identity as Jews on the one hand and as English men and women on the other. With a few notable exceptions, Jewish men did not yet engage at this time in literary activity. Jewish women, in contrast, quickly seized the opportunities made available by gentile English society, as opposed to traditional Jewish communal life, and by their growing familiarity with the English language, and English literature.

Isaac D’Israeli

Of the male writers, Isaac D’Israeli (1766-1848) — born in Enfield, Middlesex, as the only child of a Jewish merchant and stockbroker who had immigrated from Italy two decades earlier and become an English citizen by act of denization in 1801, and “a rebellious mother who hated her religion” (Braun 9; Cesarini 22; Lee 117-20) — had become a leading English man of letters by the last decade of the eighteenth century. It has been well said of him that he “contributed significantly to the emergence of the discipline of literary history.” The first of the six volumes of his *Curiosities of Literature* was brought out in 1791. Subsequent volumes were put out in 1793, 1817, 1823 and 1834 by the already eminent publishing house of John Murray — with whose entire family that of D’Israeli, including his son Benjamin, the future Prime Minister, had established a close friendship, and at whose social gatherings in Albemarle Street D’Israeli was a regular guest, along with Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Washington Irving, and other major writers of the day (Smiles 22-26; Paston 17-22).

Anticipating many of the author’s subsequent publications, this early work of D’Israeli contained countless essays on and anecdotes about past writers, literary history, historical persons and events, unusual books, and the habits of readers and book-collectors. Unlike the author’s two novels of 1793 — *Vaurien* and *Flim-Flams! Or
the Life and Errors of my Uncle, and the Amours of my Aunt! — it sold widely, was constantly expanded and added to, reached a twelfth edition in 1841, and was still in print when the *Encyclopædia Britannica* entry on the author was written in 1911. Benjamin Disraeli reports that, on the appearance of the second part of the work — in Benjamin’s view, “much the finest” — Francis Palgrave, the compiler of Palgrave’s celebrated *Treasury* and himself the son of Sir Francis Palgrave, né Francis Ephraim Cohen, told the older D’Israeli that “I look upon it as the greatest Belles Lettres book this age has produced,” while, according to D’Israeli himself, Byron had already declared in 1812 “that he had read my works over and over again.” “I thought this, of course, a compliment,” D’Israeli commented, “but some years afterwards found it to be true” (quoted Braun, 11). Benjamin himself asserted — not perhaps without some exaggeration due to filial pride — that “The Curios [. . .] are sold at every Railway stall of the Kingdom, & are the favourite reading in this kind of the bustling & toiling millions” (*Reminiscences*, 7-8). A Dissertation on Anecdotes followed *Curiosities* in 1793, An Essay on the Literary Character in 1795, Miscellanies; or, Literary Recreations in 1796, Romances in 1799, Calamities of Authors in 1812–13, Quarrels of Authors in 1814. Amenities of Literature, published in 1841 when the author was almost blind, included many essays on early and Renaissance English history and literature, including Beowulf, Piers Ploughman, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Shakespeare’s contemporaries. It is surely not insignificant that the Preface to this work opens with the statement that it is “a history of our vernacular literature” (italics added) which “has occupied my studies for many years.” Clearly, whatever his relation to his Jewish background, Isaac D’Israeli already thought of himself as an Englishman. Another work, *The Life and Reign of Charles I* (1828), based on considerable documentary research, according to James Ogden in the *DNB*, on considerable documentary research, had in fact resulted in D’Israeli’s being awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law from Oxford University which, at the time, still did not admit Jews as students.

D’Israeli’s relationship to his Judaism appears to have been a mixture of detachment, renunciation, criticism, and residual loyalty and respect. He kept his distance from the practice of his religion, resigned from the Sephardi Bevis Marks Synagogue (the family considered themselves “Portuguese Jews”) in 1817 over a question of governance, and had his children baptised into the Church of England that same year. Still, he had followed Jewish tradition in naming them after Biblical figures, had had his sons circumcised, and subsequently published anonymously a book on Judaism — *The Genius of Judaism* (1833) — that was both critical and respectful of Jewish religious tradition. “It will not be by taking a popular view of the manners of this singular people” he declared in Chapter 1, “that we shall allay the fanaticism of Jew or Christian. We must learn to feel like Jews when we tell of their calamities and to reason like Christians when we detect their fatuity” (2). He himself never showed any interest in converting to Christianity; yet he and his wife retired in 1829 to the seventeenth-century manor house of the Buckinghamshire
village of Bradenham, where they lived like minor English gentry, and on his death in 1848 he was buried, as his wife had already been, in the local parish church of St. Botolph. “The first and second generation of the Portuguese Jews,” he had written in *The Genius of Judaism*, “resided in retired quarters in the city. [. . .] A third generation were natives. A fourth were purely English” (249-50). It is probably not fortuitous that D’Israeli tried to find a publisher for the profoundly conciliatory work of Grace Aguilar. (On Aguilar, see below.)

**Benjamin Disraeli**

D’Israeli’s baptised son Benjamin Disraeli, the long-serving nineteenth-century leader of the Tory Party, prime minister, favourite of Queen Victoria, and promoter of the British Empire, who continues to fascinate historians and biographers to this day, carried his father’s literary practice several steps further despite the enormous burden of his responsibilities as a politician. From his first novel *Vivian Grey* (1826), by way of *Contarini Fleming* (1832), *Coningsby, or The New Generation* (1844), *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1846), and *Tancred, or The New Crusade* (1847) to *Lothair* (1870), Disraeli published over a dozen novels, all of them of keen contemporary interest and, beginning with *Coningsby*, widely read. The theme of the relation of Jews to Christians and to the peoples among whom they live and with whom they in large measure identify almost always informs these works of fiction. Michael Flavin views Disraeli’s treatment of this theme as an aspect of his modern conservatism, his conviction that pragmatic responses to changing contemporary situations are necessary and advantageous but cannot without danger be undertaken by sacrificing fidelity to longstanding traditions and fundamental principles (33-35). If these are disregarded, disorder ensues. More and more conscious of his own Jewish background and ancestry (which significant sectors of public opinion did not, in any case, permit him to ignore), he wrote in glowing terms of the Jews as a gifted people or “race,” as he tended to put it — as if to underline by the use of that term the immutability of fundamentals. The character of the Jew Sidonia, who appears in *Coningsby* as the hero’s close adviser and again in *Sybil* and *Tancred* and who is widely held to be a cross between one of the Rothschilds and Disraeli himself, has been viewed by many scholars as an embodiment of essential features of Disraeli’s ideal. Sidonia is a defender of tradition and fixed – monarchical — authority, as opposed to popular or utilitarian influence, whether in Jewish history or in English history, and at the same time “lord and master of the money-market of the world, and of course virtually lord and master of everything else” (Flavin, 79-83, quoting *Coningsby*, 223). Coningsby himself outlines his friend’s synthesis of fundamental principle and pragmatism in the advice he gives another character in the novel:

> Hold yourself aloof from political parties which, from the necessity of things, have ceased to have distinctive principles, and are therefore practically only factions; and wait and see, whether with patience, energy, honour, and
Christian faith, and a desire to look to the national welfare, and not to sectional
or limited interests; whether, I say, we may not discover some great principles
to guide us, to which we may adhere, and which, if true, will ultimately guide
and control others. (Coningsby, 279)

There is, in short, no conflict between basic Judaism and basic Christianity – or
between being Jewish and being English. “The second Testament is avowedly only a
supplement. Jehovah-Jesus came to complete the ‘law and the prophets,’” the
character St. Lys declares in Sybil. “Christianity is completed Judaism, or it is nothing.
Christianity is incomprehensible without Judaism, as Judaism is incomplete without
Christianity” (130-31).

Disraeli’s position led him to favour the Sephardim, to which group he saw
himself as belonging, and to which his character Sidonia also belongs. Because he
argued that the Ashkenazim were distinct from Jews of Spanish descent, it has been
argued, he embraced the “myth of Sephardi superiority,” the idea that the
Sephardim, descended from the tribe of Judah, were different from “la foule des
autres enfants de Jacob,” as one of their number, the political economist Isaac de
Pinto, had put it in a reply to Voltaire’s negative comments on Jews in
his Dictionnaire philosophique. A Portuguese Jew from Bordeaux and a German Jew
from Metz were “deux êtres absolument différents,” de Pinto had insisted. In a
development of this argument, Abraham Furtado and Solomon Lopes-Dubec
emphasized in a 1788 report to the French government of Louis XVI that the
Sephardim adapt to the peoples among whom and the cultures in which they live,
whereas the Ashkenazim remain always apart, enclosed in their own world of rituals,
traditions, and values: “A Portuguese Jew is English in England and French in France,
but a German Jew is German everywhere” (quoted Hyman, 5; Szajkowski, 137-64).

Although influenced by these arguments, Disraeli’s father Isaac tended to avoid
radically distinguishing between Sephardim and Ashkenazim and to associate both in
a common capacity to adapt to and become part of the societies in which they had
settled. In The Genius of Judaism he had argued that the Jews were not one but
several nations, each, like the chameleon, reflecting the colour of the spot they
rested on. Hence, “After a few generations, the Hebrews assimilate with the
character, and are actuated by the feelings, of the nation where they become
natives” (Endelman and Kushner, 31-35).

Not surprisingly, as a Member of Parliament, Disraeli supported legislation to
remove the disabilities affecting all the Jews of England -- i.e. all those professing the
Jewish religion, whether Ashkenazi or Sephardi. (Converts able to take the oaths
required for various public offices and professions were obviously not affected.)
Nevertheless, there is still disagreement among scholars as to both the true
character and the impact of Disraeli’s attitude to the variegated body of English Jews and Judaism.

**Women Authors**

Whereas, with the notable exception of the Disraelis, Jewish men appear for some time to have avoided engaging in literary activity, perhaps because it was viewed as unseemly for a serious male Jew, a moderately large cohort of women writers—poets, novelists and commentators on customs, laws, and manners—emerged from the Anglo-Jewish community in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This group, moreover, enjoyed some success with the general reading public. Their never having become part of the literary canon and being almost completely forgotten until quite recently is probably at least partly attributable to the handicap of being not only female (a handicap acknowledged, resented, and for a time concealed by both the Brontës and George Eliot) but Jewish into the bargain. Their situation as Jewish women led them in fact to adopt distinctive stances toward Judaism’s relation to Christianity, British culture, and Judaism itself.

**Charlotte Dacre and Sophia King**

Moreover, not all the Jewish women writers concerned themselves with reconciling their Judaism and the Christianity of the overwhelming majority of those among whom they lived and whom they saw as potential readers of their work. Some simply sought to carve out a career for themselves as writers.

The sisters Sophia and Charlotte King (1771-1825), for instance, one of whom adopted the pseudonym Dacre, published poetry and novels in the early years of the nineteenth century that conveyed nothing of their Jewish origins. Religion is not a theme of their work despite—or because of—their being the daughters of one John King, born Jacob Rey (c.1753–1824), a London moneylender generally referred to as “Jew King,” who several times had to flee England to escape charges of fraud, and found himself imprisoned on one occasion after being declared bankrupt. The satirical magazine *Scourge* described him and his son Charles as among the most unscrupulous moneylenders in London. The influence of King and his son, it was said, was “more extensive and their plans more dangerous than those of all the other money-lenders collectively.” King, who was also a libertine, had numerous affairs, including a long-standing one (perhaps evolving into a marriage) with a Countess of Lanesborough, with whom he fled London for Italy in 1784. When his Jewish wife, the mother of his daughters, pursued him, he divorced her in rabbinical court at Livorno in 1785. He was even once charged in London, in 1798, with assaulting a couple of prostitutes. At the same time, King, who strove to be accepted in upper-class London society, lent money to Byron and Shelley and entertained writers and politicians at his dinner parties. In his younger years he had sympathised with radical
politics and was a good friend and supporter of Thomas Paine and the utopian anarchist William Godwin, who was to write in chapter XVII of his *History of the Commonwealth of England* (1828) in praise of Cromwell’s “noble design” to “put an end” to proscriptions against the Jews (4:243-51). As the years passed and his social ambitions grew stronger, however, King distanced himself from those earlier associations. Since little is known about the early life of King’s daughters and their upbringing after their parents’ divorce, we do not know whether they had any contact with their father’s literary acquaintances. However, it does appear that they lived with their father off and on at least until their respective marriages, both to Christian men (Sophia in 1801 to Charles Fortnum, possibly a relative of the founder of Fortnum and Mason; Charlotte in 1815 to the editor of the *Morning Post*). In the dedication of an early volume of poetry, *Trifles of Helicon*, that the two sisters published together in 1798, they publicly thank their father for providing them with a solid education and, in particular, a literary education:

To John King, Esq. Instead of the mature fruits of the Muses, accept the blossoms; they are to show you that the education you have afforded us has not been totally lost – when we grow older, we hope to offer you others with less imperfections.

Your Affectionate Daughters.

Charlotte King.

Sophia King.

Five novels by Sophia appeared between 1798 and 1805: *Waldorf* (1795), *Cordelia* (1799), *The Victim of Friendship* (1801), *The Fatal Secret* (1801), *The Adventures of Victor Allen* (1805) and a volume of poetry in 1804. Charlotte, better known and highly successful, began publishing poems in *The Morning Post* around 1802, under the pseudonym Rosa Matilda, and followed these up with a series of novels under the pseudonym Charlotte Dacre, by which she is still best known: *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805), *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806; French translation, 1812), *The Libertine* (1807), *The Passions* (1811). She also published a couple of volumes of poetry (1805 and 1822) under the name Rosa Matilda. Byron appears to have been one of the readers of these poems.

Around 1805 she entered into a liaison with Nicholas Byrne, the already married editor of the *Post*, and between 1806 and 1809 bore him three children. Although it is not clear whether Dacre herself renounced her Judaism and joined the Anglican Church, all three children were baptised in 1811, and in 1815 she married Byrne, now a widower. She died a decade later. Dacre is still admired today for her daring evocation of female will, independence, and sexual desire that does not shrink from violence. Victoria, the heroine of *Zofloya*, is described at one point in the novel as having passions that are
as the foaming cataract, rushing headlong from the rocky steep, and raging in the abyss below. She was not susceptible of a single sentiment, vibrating from a tender movement of the heart; she could not feel gratitude; she could not, therefore, feel affection. She could inflict pain without remorse, and she could bitterly revenge the slightest attempt to inflict it on herself. The wildest passions predominated in her bosom; to gratify them she possessed an unshrinking, relentless soul, that would not startle at the darkest crime [1:97]

Albeit in perfectly correct language, Dacre likewise evokes the experience of sexual pleasure of another of her heroines, the “syren” Megalina Strozzi, who has seduced the not yet nineteen-year old Leonardo Loredani: “With a novel delight, superior to any she had ever felt at any former conquest did the artful Florentine behold her triumph: she had sown (as she believed) the first germs of love and passion in a pure and youthful breast; she had seen those germs shoot forth and expand beneath the fervid rays of her influence, and she enjoyed the fruits with a voluptuous pleasure” (Zofloya, 2: 123). Though these aspects of her fiction provoked some negative comment from readers and critics, they are also what ensured the very considerable success of Dacre’s novel and A. C. Swinburne’s praise of it later in the century.

Dacre’s Zofloya was much admired by Shelley and, along with M.G. Lewis’s celebrated The Monk (1796), influenced the poet’s early ventures into the erotic gothic novel – Zastrozzi, of which Zofloya was “the immediate model,” and St. Irvyne, in which the name of one of the main characters, Ginotti, was borrowed from Dacre’s novel (Medwin, 24-26). Byron’s negative comments about Rosa Matilda in “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers” are at the same time an indication both of her considerable popularity and a repudiation of her influence on his own verse composition at an earlier stage of his career.

Let Stott, Carlisle, Matilda and the rest
Of Grub-Street and of Grosvenor Place the best,
Scrawl on, ‘till death release us from the strain,
Or Common sense assert her rights again. (Byron, 1:258, lines 927-30)

Celia and Marion Moss

As noted, the relations of Christians and Jews, Christianity and Judaism, do not figure in the work of Charlotte Dacre, the Jewish connection of one of the more original of the new Jewish women writers having obviously become tenuous. A couple of decades later, the two Moss sisters, Celia (1819-73) and Marion (1821-1907), in contrast, sought to respond through their writing to an ongoing campaign launched in the 1820s by the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, and directed particularly toward Jewish women. Focussing on the qualities of loving-kindness, respect, and understanding that, in its appeal to contemporary Jews and to
Jewish women in particular, the Society claimed Judaism lacked, the sisters’ tales aimed to demonstrated that Judaism was not completely identifiable with harsh obedience to law, ritual observance, and strict prohibitions. After publishing a little volume of poetry in their teen-age years, they enjoyed some success with two standard three-volume romances based on Jewish history. The then highly successful writer and politician Edward Bulwer-Lytton and the eminent statesman Lord Palmerston were among subscribers to *The Romance of Jewish History by the Misses C. and M. Moss* (1840), which had a six-line quotation from Byron on the title page, and an opening “Dedicatory Epistle to Sir E. L. Bulwer, Baronet.” In their dedication, the authors explain their reasons for writing.

That we have Authors of some eminence and celebrity among our people [i.e. the Jewish people], we believe is generally acknowledged; but our men of genius have neglected the lighter branches of literature, directing their attention almost exclusively to theology, metaphysics, and philosophy.

Even those who have desired to tread the more flowing paths of romance have been prevented from appearing before the public, from a fear that, however much they may excel, the prejudice existing against us as a nation might reflect an odium on their work and consign it to immediate oblivion.

We have allowed no such feeling to deter us; for we think otherwise. The time is now arrived, or is rapidly approaching, when such narrow-mindedness, the growth of a barbarous and priest-ridden age will disappear. (1, iv-v)

The sisters, each of whom contributed tales of her own to the shared volume, refer again in their Preface to their goal in writing what they term the “Romance of History”: “We have endeavoured by blending fiction with historical fact, to direct the attention of the reader to a branch of history too long neglected” (1, vi). They go on to explain “the circumstances which have induced us to publish the present work; namely, the fact that the English people generally, although mixing with the Jews in their daily duties, are as unacquainted with their history, religion, and customs, as if they still dwelt in their own land, and were known to them but by name.” The two writers make it clear however that “we do not intend this production to be considered in the light of a history; our wish is to call the attention of the reader to the records of our people; to awaken curiosity, not to satisfy it” (1, vii-x). Their aim, in short, is to win the recognition and respect of their English readers for the Jews by evoking the experiences of Jews of the past and thus “explaining” the Jews presently living among them and participating with them in the national culture “in much the same way” — in the words of a recent writer — as “Scott ‘explained’ the Scottish to the English in *The Heart of Midlothian*” (Zatlin, 30).
This first narrative work of the Moss sisters was apparently fairly successful, since it was followed three years later by *Tales of Jewish History, by the Misses C. & M. Moss* (1843).

**Grace Aguilar**

Grace Aguilar (1816-1847) stands out as the most courageous and original of the Jewish women writers of the time. Born into a moderately well-to-do and well-educated Portuguese-Jewish family, Aguilar addressed more directly and more persistently than almost any other writer the relation of modern Jews both to their own history and to their Christian fellow-citizens. In doing so, she confronted the tension within both Judaism and Christianity between an oppressively traditionalist and rigid idea and practice of religion (presented as mostly male) and a compassionate, humane, outreaching, and “spiritual” practice (mostly female). She makes this distinction in her theological essays and tracts, such as *Israel Defended, or The Jewish Exposition of the Hebrew Prophecies Applied by the Christians to their Messiah* (1838), a translation, undertaken at the request of her father, from the French version (1770) of the Portuguese apologist for Judaism Baltasar (a.k.a. Isaac) Orobio de Castro and “printed expressly for young persons of the Jewish faith”; *The Spirit of Judaism* (published in Philadelphia in 1842); and *The Jewish Faith* (London, 1846), a series of letters by a fictional writer designed to buttress the faith of a young Jewish girl exposed to Christianity in a small country town. They are likewise prominent in her histories (*The Women of Israel*, 1845; *History of the Jews in England*, 1847) and in her shorter fiction (the collections *Records of Israel*, 1844, and *Home Scenes and Heart Studies*, posthumously published in 1852). Aguilar’s considerable body of poetry also focuses on the religion of the heart. It is characteristic of her conciliatory outlook and approach that in the Preface to her translation of Orobio de Castro’s highly polemical work, she explains that out of respect for “the enlightened and liberal spirit with which [Jews] are regarded in this free and blessed island,” she has adopted “a much milder tone of language towards the followers of Christ than that which pervades the original.”

In view of her persistent and insightful presentations of Jewish-Christian relations, both in the past and in the contemporary world of Anglo-Jewry and of the respect in which she was held by contemporary Christian readers -- “a young lady of eminent gifts, one who was an honour to her nation and the name of whom will be held dear by all who knew her, both Christians and Jews “ according to the Rev. John Mills in his *The British Jews* (245) -- two of her novels will receive here more extensive treatment than has been accorded the work of her contemporaries.
The most popular of Aguilar’s fictional writings on specifically Jewish themes was and remains *The Vale of Cedars, or the Martyr: A Story of Spain in the Fifteenth Century*. A historical romance clearly influenced by Walter Scott -- albeit far more focussed, as a narrative, on a single overriding issue -- and probably intended in part at least as a response to the Jewish theme developed in Scott’s *Ivanhoe* of 1820, it was begun when the author was aged fifteen, completed by 1835, published in 1850, three years after the young writer’s early death, and twice translated into German and twice into Hebrew. It is set in the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella and is organized around a series of trials that test the capacity of Marie, the Jewish heroine, to withstand attempts to alter her Jewish identity. As usefully outlined by the scholar Michael Ragussis in his outstanding “The Jewish question” & *English National History*, the plot falls into three major movements: first, a proposal of marriage to Marie by Arthur Stanley, a handsome and generous English Catholic exile living in Spain, whose military skill and courage in the service of the Spanish monarchs have earned him widespread respect and recognition and who has won the heart of Marie; second, Marie’s public revelation that she is Jewish and her subsequent torture under the Inquisition with the aim of getting her to renounce her faith; and finally, the attempt of Queen Isabella to win her over to Christianity through love and compassion (142-45)

The novel opens on Stanley’s meeting with and proposal of marriage to Marie in the Vale of Cedars, a hidden, almost inaccessible mountain valley where a handsome small synagogue has been built by Marie’s secretly Jewish family, Spain’s longstanding, prosperous, and productive Jewish community having responded to persecution by going into hiding as Jews and passing themselves off as Christians in public -- a strategy which the narrator intervenes in her story to defend against the degrading charge of deceit and hypocrisy (168-69). Stanley, a double character himself in his dual loyalty to his native England and his adopted Spain, proclaims his undying love of Marie -- despite her Jewishness, which she had had the courage to confess to him in order to explain why, reciprocating his love, she could not join him in marriage. “Tempt me no more, Arthur; it cannot be; I dare not be thy bride,” she pleads. Stanley, unable to understand her attachment to a religion for which he has no less contempt than the Spaniards, is unconvinced:

And yet thou speakest of love. “‘Tis false, thou canst not love me,” and Stanley sprung his feet, disappointed, wounded, till he scarce knew what he said. “I would give up Spain and her monarch’s love for thee. I would live in slavery beneath a tyrant’s rule to give thee a home of love. I would forget, trample on, annihilate the prejudices of a life, unite the pure blood of Stanley with the darkened torrent running through thy veins, forget thy race, descent, all but thine own sweet self. I would do this, all this for love of thee. And for me, what wilt thou do? -- reject me, bid me leave thee -- and yet thou speakest of love; ‘tis false, thou lovest another better!” (21)
Marie then concedes that there is indeed “a love, a duty stronger than that I bear to thee. I would resign all else, but not my father’s God.” Stanley finally acknowledges the depth of Marie’s feeling and the agony of her choice, but sees it as related solely to her love of and loyalty to her earthly father: “I will obey thee, Marie [. . .] I will leave thee now, but not -- not for ever. No, no; if indeed thou lovest me time will not change thee, if thou hast one sacred tie, when nature severs that, and thou art alone on earth, thou shalt be mine whatever be thy race” (22).

Marie accedes to the wish of her father – i.e., as she understand it, of her people and her God – that she marry a Jewish suitor, to whom, unbeknownst to her, she had been promised many years before, her cousin Don Ferdinand Morales, and that she thus devote herself, as her faith demands, to the survival of God’s chosen people. Typically of contemporary literary portraits of Jewish fathers, Marie’s father Manuel cannot imagine that his daughter might, as a woman, love a man who is not of her people and religion, the function of love, marriage, and procreation being, as he sees it, to guarantee, in obedience to God’s commands, the survival of his chosen people. “That his child’s affections could be excited towards any but those of her own race was a circumstance so impossible and moreover a sin so fearful, that it never entered Manuel’s mind” (36-37). In addition, the feelings of the woman are not considered. It is the man, the Jewish man, who selects the Jewish woman he will take as his wife or the appropriate husband for his daughter – a situation some of Aguilar’s readers, especially her female readers, may well have recognized as not unique to Jews, but common to most communities concerned with lineage. Marie follows her father’s wishes with agonising misgivings – is it not deceitful to wed a man when she has given her heart to another? – but these are resolved when, over time, Marie’s loving nature allows a deep relationship to develop between the two spouses, who continue to practise their shared religion in secret. Having served them for years, in his guise as a Christian military commander, with courage, skill, and dedication, Morales had won the admiration and affection of the Spanish people and of their sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella. The couple were thus embraced with particular warmth and affection by Ferdinand and Isabella, both of whom Aguilar presents in a favourable light as having inherited, not initiated the Inquisition. Nevertheless, even Ferdinand, decent as he is, is seen as sharing the common contempt for Jews, “base and grovelling wretches, [. . .] accursed unbelievers, who taint our fair realm with their abhorred rites -- think of nothing but gold and usury, and how best to cheat their fellows; hating us almost as intensely as we hate them” (154).

The special affection of Queen Isabella for Marie and the bond between the two women serves to introduce two major themes of Aguilar’s novel -- and of her work as a whole: the feminine capacity and inclination to relate, whether to each other or to their God, through love rather than law, through the heart rather than through tradition and ritual observance, and the similarity of God’s love and
woman’s love. “Only a woman,” the narrator notes, “can give to woman this perfect sympathy; for the deepest recesses, the hidden sources of anguish in the female heart, no man can read” (202). God himself, Aguilar insists in the Introduction to her The Women of Israel “repeatedly sanctified the emotions peculiar to [women] by graciously comparing the love He bears us, as yet deeper than a mother’s for her child, a wife’s for her husband. [. . .] As a mother comforteth her children, so will I comfort thee” (The Women of Israel, 12).

These themes have been attributed to the influence on Aguilar of the very evangelicalism inspiring and informing contemporary English conversionist programmes, such as that of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews inasmuch as these programmes were directed especially toward Jewish women as moved more by feeling than by ritual and religious law and thus more susceptible to the Christian message than Jewish men. Aguilar almost certainly intended her writing to counter them by emphasising the affective and emotional rather than legalistic and ritualistic aspects of the Jewish faith itself.

At the same time, the very capacity for selfless love in women and between women can be a source of intense agony, as Marie and Isabella discover when Isabella’s very love for Marie leads her to try to save her from certain death by converting her to Christianity. Chapters 26 to 34 of the 35-chapter novel focus on the heart-rending conflict in both women between their deep and enduring love for each other, which in Isabella’s case also involves concern for her friend’s salvation, and the commitment of each to her faith and to love of her God.

Marie’s husband Ferdinand Morales having been murdered in the street and the murderer having cunningly ensured that there would be no witnesses and that Stanley, as the first to discover the body and be seen next to it, would be the prime suspect, especially as no other possible perpetrator had been observed or was judged likely, Marie is called upon to respond under oath to questioning she knows will be about her own and her husband’s relationship with Stanley, especially as rumour had spread (or been spread by the true perpetrators of the crime) of the latter’s having once vainly sought Marie’s hand in marriage, been rejected in favour of Morales, and retained feelings of love for Marie and resentment of his successful rival. Acutely aware that her sworn testimony would almost certainly ensure that Stanley -- already, in the changed circumstances, coming to be publicly regarded, despite King Ferdinand’s “partiality,” as no Spaniard but a “white-faced foreigner” (112) -- would be found guilty of the murder of his rival and executed, and concerned in addition that her slain husband’s secret Judaism not be disclosed and that his high reputation thus remain unsullied, Marie takes the drastic step of declaring publicly that she is in fact a hidden Jewess and thus unable to take a Christian oath. Public consternation at this avowal is more than matched by the distress of Ferdinand and Isabella, especially the latter. The queen demands, however, that her entourage continue to retain their respect and affection for the woman they too had come to
love as a woman, despite Marie’s now revealed identity as a member of a hated and despised race and religion, and she scolds them when they seek, out of fear for their mistress, to prevent the latter from visiting Marie in the room to which she has been confined.

Her eye flashed [. . .], her lip curled, every feature – usually so mild and feminine – was so transformed by indignation into majesty and unutterable scorn as scarcely to have been recognized. Her slight and graceful form dilated till the very boldest cowered before her, even before she spoke: for never had they so encountered her reproof: --

“Are ye women,” she said at length in the quiet, concentrated tone of strong emotion; “or are we deceived as to the meaning of your words? Pollution! Are we to see a young, unhappy being perish for want of sympathy and succour, because – forsooth – she is a Jewess? [. . .] Has every spark of woman’s nature faded from your hearts? [. . .] If for yourselves you fear, tend her not, approach her not – we will ourselves give her the aid she needs. And as for thee,” she continue severely, as she forced her now trembling favourite young waiting-maid Catherine to stand updright before her, “whose energy to serve Marie we loved and applauded; child as feminine – was so transformed by indignation into majesty and unutterable thou art, must thou too speak of pollution? but example may have done this. Follow me, minion, and then talk of pollution if thou canst.” And with a swift step Isabella led the way to the chamber of Marie.(156)

Marie, however, is prevented both by concern that she not, by her testimony, bring about the execution of a man she once loved and is convinced is innocent and by her own intense love of God, the God of her and His own people, from acceding either to the kindness of a gentle and well-intentioned priest or to the persistent, loving entreaties of her royal friend Isabella (232-34). Moved as she might be, she “could not be in heart a Catholic; and so she dared not be in words” (222). On her side, Isabella fears for her own salvation should she give up tormenting her friend by her efforts to “save” (i.e. convert) her. Her co-religionists and her own confessor constantly remind her that she must continue to press Marie to convert and she herself is moved to do so by her own love (156). Both women are thus loving martyrs to their deeply held faith and to the God they adore. At this point the narrator intervenes in her narrative, to utter in her own voice, a plea for mutual respect and tolerance:

Oh, that in religion, as in everything else, man would judge his brother man by his own heart; and as dear, as precious as his peculiar creed may be to him, believe so it is with the faith of his brother! How much of misery, how much of contention, of cruelty and oppression, would pass away from this lovely earth, and give place for Heaven’s own unity and peace, and harmony and love. (215)
After some time spent in virtual but seemingly protected isolation in the royal palace, Marie is abducted by a hidden wing of the Inquisition that unbeknownst to Ferdinand and Isabella – though supported by the Pope – is active throughout Spain and, it turns out later in the narrative, was behind the murder of Morales. Imprisoned in its dungeons, she is subjected to horrific torture and attempted rape, until she is finally rescued by her mother’s brother Julien and the two escape her prison -- he in his guise as “Father Ambrose,” a Benedictine monk, and she disguised as a novice. She immediately learns of the imminent execution of Stanley and, in a village where she and “Father Ambrose” stop to rest, of the discovery by the villagers of her husband’s true murderer, now revealed to have been an agent of the hidden Inquisition. Possessed of dangerous knowledge, this true murderer had been accused by his superiors of disobeying their commands, himself attacked by assassins, and left for dead at the bottom of a pit, from which the villagers had rescued him, mortally wounded. Now, on the threshold of death, he is eager to confess his crime. Enfeebled and ailing as she is from the tortures she has endured, Marie insists that she set out immediately to alert King Ferdinand and save Stanley. Still disguised as a novice, she succeeds, after a rushed, exhausting and debilitating journey on horseback with a village elder as guide -- Julien remaining behind to tend medically to the dying man -- in reaching King Ferdinand just in time to have him halt the execution and have agents sent to the village to identify and question the true murderer of Morales.

Isabella immediately recognizes in the exhausted novice the Marie she continues to love dearly and the two women embrace in tears. Marie is not able to return to the village with the elder who had accompanied her but has to stay for several months under the guardianship of Isabella, who now once again takes up her strenuous efforts of conversion, partly with the help of kindly, sympathetic priests and partly by blandishments, such as bringing Marie and Stanley together and holding out the prospect of their marrying, if only the obstinate Jewess will convert. All to no avail. Finally, thanks to the intervention of her own daughter, the Infanta, Isabella consents to Marie’s proposal that she be permitted to return to the home of her childhood, “pledging never to leave it, or mingle with her people or ours” (242). Still dressed as a novice, Marie is conducted “carefully and tenderly” to the frontier of Castile by one of the kindliest of the priests Isabella had hoped would succeed in converting her and from there finds her own difficult way over the mountains to the Vale of Cedars, where a few of her father’s former retainers still live and where she had been preceded by her uncle Julien Morales, “weary of his wanderings and of the constant course of deception which his apparent profession of a monk demanded” (243).

Though she had summoned up the strength she needed to complete her journey, Marie is worn out by her trials and travails and it is soon clear that she does not have long to live. At this point, Stanley who is aware that Marie has twice risked
her life to save him but who has been engaged in fighting on behalf of the Spanish
monarchs, gets permission to visit her in the remote and isolated Vale of Cedars.
Marie, on her deathbed, seeks to make peace among those she loves and who love
her.

“Uncle Julien,” she murmured, as she faintly extended her hand towards
him, “thou wilt not refuse to clasp hands with one who has so loved thy Marie!
And thou, Arthur, oh! scorn him not. Without him the invisible dungeons of the
Inquisition would have been my grave, and thine that of a dishonoured knight
and suspected murderer.” (248)

Stanley expresses his grief: “Oh, Marie, Marie! I thought separation on earth
the worst agony that could befall me; but what is it compared to the eternal one of
death!” Marie responds by confessing to Stanley that her marriage to Ferdinand
Morales was prescribed by their shared, hidden Jewish faith, (“Arthur, dearest
Arthur, it was no Christian whom I wedded. We had been betrothed from early
childhood though I knew it not” (249) and by expressing her conviction that all
conflicts, whether of faith or of love, are resolved in Heaven:

“No, no, not eternal, Arthur. In heaven I feel there is no distinction of
creed or faith; we shall all love God and one another there, and earth’s fearful
distinctions can never come between us. I know such is not the creed of thy
people, nor of some of mine; but when thou standest on the verge of eternity,
as I do now, then thou wilt feel this too.” (248)

Stanley, moved, “pressed his quivering lips to her forehead.” Moments later,
Marie dies, having charged Stanley with the task of informing “Isabella, my kind,
loving, generous mistress,” whose “heart loves me -- aye, still, still!” -- even though
“her creed condemns” -- “how with my last breath I loved and blessed “ (250). In the
final scene of the narrative, Julien Morales and Arthur Stanley

-- the aged and the young -- the Jewish recluse and the Christian warrior --
knelt side by side on the cold earth, which concealed the remains of one to both
so inexpressibly dear. [ . . . ] And then both arose. [ . . . ] The young Christian
turned and was folded to the heart of the Jew. The blessing of the Hebrew was
breathed in the ear of the Englishman, and Stanley disappeared. (251)

The chapter, the last but one, in the book, ends on a hymn to love transcending
all particular faiths:

Oh, love! Thou fairest, brightest, most imperishable type of heaven! What
to thee are earth’s distinctions? Alone in thy pure essence thou standest, and
every mere earthly feeling crouches at thy feet. And art thou but this world’s
blessing? Oh! They have never loved who thus believe. Love is the voice of God,
love is the rule of Heaven. (251)

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In addition to *The Vale of Cedars*, Grace Aguilar produced, as already noted, in her thirty-one years of life, several other novels. Two of those, the well-received *Home Influence: A Tale for Mothers and Daughters* (1836-37) and its sequel, *The Mother’s Recompense* (posthumously published in 1851), concern women’s domestic life and family relations and do not deal with the Jewish-Christian connection. (The characters are in fact not recognizable as other than Christian.) A third, *Women’s Friendship: A Story of Domestic Life* (posthumously published in 1850), a somewhat melodramatic romance, was focused on the relationships of people of different social strata; the relations of Jews and Christians plays no role in it. Two more novels were directly inspired by Scott: *The Days of Bruce* (posthumously published c. 1852) about the medieval Scottish hero Robert the Bruce and *Tales from British History* (written in 1833, but published only posthumously in 1908), consisting of two fictions: *Macintosh, the Highland Chief, a Tale of the Civil War*, and *Edmund, the Exiled Prince, and Wallace, the Dauntless Chief*.

Aguilar also collaborated with the extremely wealthy Jewish writer and philanthropist Charlotte Montefiore, an active promoter of the education of Jewish youth, and David Aaron de Sola, the rabbi of the Sephardi Bevis Marks Congregation and the author of several translations into English of prayers and other religious texts in Hebrew, on setting up, in 1841, “The Cheap Jewish Library.” As its subtitle — “Dedicated to the Working Classes” — indicates, this was a collection intended for readers of modest means, mainly but not exclusively Jewish. While primarily active, along with her two collaborators, as an editor of manuscripts submitted to the collection, Aguilar herself contributed *The Perez Family*, a long tale or short novel, in which she eschews the strong, interlocking structure and romantic historical setting of *The Vale of Cedars* in favour of an episodic style that allows her to address directly and in a more realistic style the various religious, cultural, social and economic problems faced by contemporary British Jews, in this case a family in Liverpool – not perhaps co-incidentally one of two stations outside London of the super-active London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. Published in “The Cheap Jewish Library” in 1844, it was picked up by Isaac Leeser, a Jewish editor and publisher in Philadelphia, who also published a fair number of Aguilar’s poems in his monthly journal *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, and brought out in volume VII (December, 1847) of the Jewish Publication Society of

The story opens on a brief description of the modest Perez family cottage “in one of those close, melancholy alleys in the environs of Liverpool,” to which the family had had to withdraw after a fire gutted their previous dwelling and Perez’s business ran into difficulties. Unlike its neighbours, however, it is clean on the outside and neat and well-kept on the inside. In addition, “the garden was carefully and prettily laid out, and planted with the sweetest flowers” (87) – thanks to its being tended by the paterfamilias Simeon Perez himself, who had been persuaded to do so by Sarah, a niece the family had taken in after the death of her mother left her in the care of her profligate father in London. Gardening, the narrator comments, “gave Perez an occupation which interested him, though he might never have thought of it himself,” since “both local and national disadvantages often unite to debar the Jews from agriculture” and “cause them to herd in the most miserable alleys of crowded cities.” Perez, however, “found pleasure in his new employment” and “in the delight it was to his poor little daughter Ruth,” blinded in the fire that had swept the family’s previous home, “to sit by his side while he worked, and inhale the reviving scent of the newly turned earth” (97). So much for the commonly alleged uncleanness of Jews and their aversion to working the land.

Unlike the usual portrait – since Shakespeare’s Shylock -- of the harsh Jewish male lording it over his daughter and preventing her from reaching out beyond the closed Jewish community, Perez is a kind, loving man, devoted to his family and unwilling to cut off or condemn his eldest son Reuben, who, ambitious and eager to join the wider world around him, refused to be part of his father’s watch-making business and aspired to make his way in the varied Christian-English world he was born in. Like his wife Rachel, who, while completely and unquestioningly faithful to her Jewish ancestry and faith, shares her husband’s basic humanity, Perez is deeply disturbed on overhearing Reuben, despite his parents’ repeated admonitions, say one day to a companion:

> What is it to be a Jew but to be cut off from every honourable and manly employment? To be bound, fettered to an obsolete belief which does but cramp our energies, and bind us to detestable trade. No wonder we are looked upon with contempt. (92)

Nevertheless, as a loving parent, Perez urges patience and forbearance. Even as he lies dying and Reuben, who had been sent to Manchester by his employer, fails to show up, even though the scheduled time of his return to Liverpool had passed, he neither denounces nor condemns his son:
“Rachel, my own dear wife, do not weep thus; he will come yet, and if he do not, oh, may God bless him still! Tell him there was no thought of anger or reproach within me. My first born, first beloved, beloved through all— for wayward, indifferent as he is, he is still my son—perhaps if he tarry until too late, remorse may work upon him for good, may awaken him to better thoughts and if our God in His mercy detain him for this, we must not grieve that he is absent.” (99)

Reuben, continuing to represent in Aguilar’s story the talented and energetic young Jew who is attracted to the wider non-Jewish world, does finally come back—to inform his family that he has become betrothed to the daughter of a fellow-clerk at his place of employment. His fanatically religious younger brother Simeon is outraged: “Jeanie Wilson— a Christian! Reuben, Reuben how have you fallen? But it is folly to be surprised; I knew it would be so!” And he recalls how Reuben never sought him out or let himself be approached for weeks at a time, being too busy herding with strangers alone; following them alike in the store and in the mart—loving what they love, doing as they do—and like them scorning, despising, and persecuting that holy people who once called you son—forgetting your birth right, your sainted heritage, throwing dishonour on the dead as on the living, to link yourself with those who assuredly will, if they do not now, despise you. Shame, foul shame upon you!” (122)

Reuben does not respond to anger with anger: “I have done nothing for which to feel shame! nothing to dishonour those with whom I am related,” he insists quietly. “If they feel themselves dishonoured, let them leave me; I can meet the world alone.” To Rachel’s appeal to her sons to “profane not the Sabbath of your God with this wild and wicked contention,” Simeon retorts that he “will own no apostate for my brother. [. . .] Others may regard him as they list, if he have given up his faith, I will not call him brother.” For his part, Reuben responds “calmly” to his brother’s hostile attack: “I have neither the will nor occasion to forswear my faith. Mr. Wilson has made no condition in giving me his daughter, except that she may follow her own faith, which I were indeed prejudiced and foolish to deny. He believes as I do—to believe in God is enough—all religions are the same before Him.” To his questioning his sisters Leah and Ruth and his youngest brother Joseph as to whether they will “all refuse to love my wife,” and his urgently assuring them that “you will not—cannot when you see and know her,” Leah replies tearfully, “As your wife, Reuben, we cannot feel indifference towards her. Yet if you had brought us one of our own people, 0 how much happier it would have made us!” Reuben responds with an expression of the broad interfaith tolerance he has espoused: “And why should it, my dear sister? Mother, why should it be such a source of grief? I do not turn from the faith of my fathers: I may neglect, disregard those forms and ordinances which I do not feel at all incumbent on me to obey, but I must be a Jew, I cannot believe with the Christian, and I cannot feel how my marriage with a gentle, loving, and most amiable girl can make me other than I am. We are in no way
commanded to marry only amongst ourselves” (122-23). To the credit of his mother Rachel, his sisters, and his wise, hard-working cousin Sarah who had become part of the Perez family and who quietly loves Reuben herself, it proved indeed “impossible to see and not to love his gentle wife” (129).

In Aguilar’s narrative, it soon turns out, however, that the religion of Reuben and Jeanie is not much more than a vague Deism. Concord has been achieved only by the sacrifice of both faiths. “He called himself, at least to his mother, a son of Israel but all real feeling of nationality was dead within him – yet he was not a Christian, nor was his wife, except in name. They believed there was a God, at least they said they did.” The matter was not pressing. As “life smiled on them, He was not needed, and so they lived without Him” (129). Jeanie’s death, however, following her giving birth to their child, leads the stricken and troubled Reuben to seek out his cousin Sarah, with whom he had always felt a shared bond, and to open his heart to her -- at the same time declaring he now realizes that his longstanding attachment to her was in fact love.

He confesses that at first he was drawn to Jeanie “because I thought a union with a Christian would put a barrier between me and the race I had taught myself to hate, would mark me no more a Jew.” However,

even when life seemed all prosperous around me, there was still a void within -- I was not happy. I had returned to virtue, turned aside from all irregular and sinful pursuits, kept steady in business and in doing kind acts towards men; more still, I had a gentle being who so loved me that she forced me into loving her more than when I first sought her. [. . .] Yet still, still, even when I did love my fair and gentle wife, when she lavished on me such affection it ought to have brought but joy, I was not happy. I was away from all who knew my birth and race; the once hated name, a Jew, no longer hurt my ears; courted, flattered, admired [. . . ], there was still that gnawing void. I tried to believe with my Jeanie and her father. But I could not. I attended their church at times, I listened to their doctrines, I read their books; but no, no, God’s finger was upon me. I could not believe in any Saviour, any Redeemer, but Himself.

Meantime Jeanie, who, “when we married, thought little of such things,” had fallen in with a “good and holy man, a pious minister of her own faith,” and become a devout Christian. As she gradually declined after her confinement, “I heard her call aloud for help and mercy from Jesus, not from God” (151-52).

His wife’s death, though it caused him ”pain and heartbreak” (153), having at the same time reinforced his gradual release from infatuation with the larger Christian world, Aguilar’s ambitious, free-thinking Reuben returns to the fold, no fanatic, to be sure, but contrite, and once again a good Jew, soon to be married to his beloved cousin Sarah. The lesson is that in the end, Jews must remain faithful to their
religion and their people, even while maintaining, as Sarah especially is frequently described as doing, warm and generous relations with their Christian neighbours and fellow-citizens. Indeed, in matters of faith, as Rachel, the most loving and forgiving of mothers, insists, “we ought to keep ourselves yet more distinct, now that we are mingled up among those who know God and serve Him, though not as we do” (123).

This is not, by any means, to say that Jews should shut themselves off from their Gentile fellow-citizens or think any the less of them because they are not Jewish. Rachel is as troubled -- if anything even more troubled -- by the fanaticism of Reuben’s younger brother, Simeon, as by the older brother’s desire to be free of the constraints of Judaism and the stigma attached to it in the Christian world. Much as he “loved and reverenced” his mother, Simeon, the reader is informed by the narrator, had adored his father. “He had all his [father’s] honesty and honour, all his energy and love for his ancient faith.” But there was one difference.

Perez could bear with, nay, love all mankind – could find excuse for the erring, even for the apostate, much as he abhorred the deed; could believe in the sincerity and piety of others, though their faith differed from his own; but Simeon could not feel this. Often, even in his childhood his father had to reprove him for prejudice; as he grew older his hatred against all those who left the faith, or united themselves in any way with other than Israelites continued violent. Prejudice is almost the only feeling which reason cannot conquer — religion may, and Simeon was truly and sincerely religious; but he loved his faith better than he loved his God. (106-07)

In the end, however, Simeon too is brought around to the moderate position for Jews that is clearly advocated by the narrator – i.e. maintaining both their distinction from the Christian society into which they have been received and which has become their home and close and friendly communication with it. On returning from London, Simeon relates, he was taken very ill. Fortunately, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Morton,

had me conveyed to his house, instead of leaving me to the care of heartless strangers at the public inn -- had a physician to attend me, nursed me as his own son -- would read and talk to me, even after he knew I was a Jew, on the spirit of religion, which we both felt. Never shall I forget the impressive tone and manner, with which he said when parting with me, ‘Young man, never forget this important truth -- that heart alone in sincerity loves God, who can see, in every pious man, a brother, despite of difference of creed. That difference lies between man and his God: to do good, and love one another is man’s duty unto man -- and can under no circumstances and in no places be evaded. Learn this lesson, and all the kindness I have shown you is amply rewarded.” (171)
Remarkably enough, the female Jewish characters in Aguilar’s tale -- Rachel, Leah, Ruth, and Sarah -- do not have to learn this lesson. Following Mr. Morton’s precepts seems to come naturally to them. The same is true of the female Christian characters in the story. It is the two younger Jewish males who need to work their way out of the rigid and, to the narrator, false alternatives of total exclusiveness and complete assimilation.

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In a poem pleading for help in countering an 1844 ukase of Czar Nicholas 1 that dissolved all Jewish communal organisations in Russia and required Jews to resettle in the Pale – the area on the Polish-Russian border which was being made into a kind of rural ghetto – Aguilar expresses her own appreciation of England’s encouragement of peaceful coexistence and collaboration of Jews and Christians. Rejected by the only paper in England devoted to Jewish interests at the time – The Voice of Jacob – the lines were published by The Christian Lady’s Magazine, which also voiced its support for their message:

Oh England! Thou hast called us to thy breast,
And done to orphans all a mother’s part
And given them peace, and liberty, and rest,
And healing pour’d into the homeless heart,
Then, oh once more, let Israel mercy claim,
And suff’ring thousands bless our England’s honour’d name.
(Aguilar, Selected Writings, 201)

And again, in her History of the Jews in England, published in Chambers’s Miscellany in 1847, the year of her death, Aguilar asserts that though “by the multitudes, the Jews are still considered aliens and foreigners; supposed to be separated by an antiquated creed and peculiar customs from sympathy and fellowship—little known and still less understood, [. . .] they are, in fact, Jews only in their religion—Englishmen in everything else. In point of fact, therefore, the disabilities under which the Jews of Great Britain labour are the last relic of religious intolerance. That which they chiefly complain of is, being subjected to take an oath contrary to their religious feelings when appointed to certain offices” (16) -- i.e. the disability that was already by then the focus of widespread efforts by Christians and Jews alike to bring about complete emancipation.

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The newly founded Jewish press in English (The Voice of Jacob, launched in 1841, The Jewish Chronicle, also launched in 1841) also acted to improve relations between Christians and Jews, and in the early 1850s, at the time of Lord John Russell’s repeated efforts to arrange for the admission of Jews as members of the
House of Commons, the Chronicle (July 30, 1852) carried a strikingly friendly and conciliatory message, which ran as follows:

To the sincere and not mere professing Christian, do we address ourselves. Brethren, we have been too long divided; let not difference of conscientious opinions over which no man has control, counsel you to withhold from us that hand, as a bond of brotherly union, which we extend towards you. Let bygones be bygones, and let us together march forward, hand in hand, as pioneers in the civilization of the world. Grant us your aid, so that we may be, as is our legitimate right, placed on an equality in the land which has given birth to both. Let not the interested cause division, where only unison should dwell. Do this, and you will have done more to make your religion respected, than all the endeavours of such apostate missionaries effect to the contrary. (Quoted by Mills, 247-48)

Bibliography


5. Evolving Views of Jews among English Clergy and Theologians

To the acculturation of many English Jews in the period between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century corresponded a growing readiness among Christian English writers of the time to consider and represent the condition of the Jews in a sympathetic light. J.F.C. Harrison’s *The Second Coming* and Andrew Crome’s *Christian Zionism and English National Identity* offer broad overviews of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century millennialism that is related to these changing attitudes. Late eighteenth-century Christian writings on the Jews, notably those of Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, and the Baptist theologian and Hebrew scholar John Gill, indicate that the millennialism of the seventeenth century was still alive. For example, Newton’s *Dissertations on the Prophecies; which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the world* (1754), which saw multiple reprintings in 1766, 1789, 1793, 1824, and 1825, argued that

the preservation of the Jews is really one of the most signal and illustrious acts of divine Providence. [. . .] What but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner as none other nation upon earth hath been preserved. Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies, than in their preservation. [. . .] We see that the great empires, which in their turn subdued and oppressed the people of God, are all come to ruin. [. . .] And if such hath been the fatal end of the enemies and oppressors of the Jews, let it serve as a warning to all those, who at any time or upon any occasion are for raising a clamour and persecution against them.

Similarly, in *In An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies Concerning the Christian Church* (1772), consisting of twelve sermons, Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, argued that as the prophecies of the dispersal of the Jews had been fulfilled to the letter, so
would prophecies of their restoration, and the Baptist Gill made the same point in his *Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (1767).

The theme of the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to their homeland in Palestine was given an original twist, however, by Joseph Priestley, best known now for his work in the sciences, but active in his own time as a Unitarian minister. Inspired perhaps by the Jewish Christians of the first century A.D., Priestley proposed in *Letters to the Jews inviting them to an Amicable Discussion of the Evidences of Christianity* (1787) that, though lamentably the Jews had had to endure much suffering at the hands of so-called Christians, ignorant of the true teaching of Christ, Judaism and Christianity (as the Unitarian Priestley understood it) were in fact so close that both religions could be united or held together. While converting to Christianity, the Jews should therefore, as God's chosen people, preserve their own traditions and rites, such as circumcision. They would then be restored to their homeland in Palestine.

Priestley had presented his argument for the perpetuity of the rites and institutions of the Jews the year before in *Hermas; Of the Perpetuity of the Jewish Ritual*. As was only to be expected, his position was not widely shared, especially by Jews. Priestley's work elicited a response, rejecting the proposal of conversion and affirming the independence of the Jewish faith, from David Levi (1742-1801), a self-taught but widely respected English-Jewish Hebraist, translator, poet, and authority on, and champion of Judaism. (On Levi, see Popkin, “David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian.”) Levi's response elicited a further *Letter* from Priestley, which in turn provoked a second response from Levi. As a friendly, respectful, and conciliatory relation to the Jews and to Judaism was characteristic of Priestley's writing, the exchange between the two men was consistently courteous and respectful.

Another purportedly Jewish response came from one Solomon de A.R. (possibly a Christian using a pseudonym) who objected in his *Reply of the Jews to the Letters Addressed to Them by Dr. Joseph Priestley* (Oxford: J. Fletcher, 1787): “You say that the law of Moses is of perpetual obligation, and that if we become Christians we are still to continue Jews and observers of the law of Moses. What then would have been the end and design of the mission of your Jesus, we profess we are unable to discover” (5). Christians who challenged Priestley's views were in most cases themselves well disposed toward the Jews, however. Thus James Bicheno, a dissenting clergyman and author of several politico-theological tracts, such as *Friendly Address to the Jews* (1787) and *Signs of the Times* (1792-94), argued in *The Restoration of the Jews, the Crisis of all Nations* (1800) that the wars currently ravaging humanity (i.e. the Napoleonic Wars) pointed to the early restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land.
Responding to the reflections of Priestley, Levi, and Bicheno on the status of the Jews, Thomas Witherby, a former solicitor in London and a lay member of the Church of England, published three works remarkably favourable to the Jews and to their religion: *Observations on Mr. Bicheno’s Book entitled The Restoration of the Jews* (London: Richardson, 1800), *An Attempt to Remove Prejudices concerning the Jewish Nation by Way of Dialogue* (London: Hatchard, 1804), and *A Vindication of the Jews by Way of Reply to the Letter Addressed by Perseverans to the English Israelite, Humbly Submitted to the Consideration of the Missionary Society and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews* (London: Hatchard, 1809). In all three Witherby deplored the “very reprehensible conduct of the Christians toward the Jews” and the contempt and persecution the Jews had had to endure, not least at the hands of Christians. “The Jewish nation,” he claimed, “should be highly honoured and respected as the benefactors of mankind. [. . .] Even when under the greatest national afflictions, the Jews have shown themselves to be a noble nation” (*An Attempt*, xiii-xiv). In the last of the three books, he also took issue with hyperactive conversion endeavours, such as those of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, founded in 1809 by a Polish-Jewish convert who, baptised in Germany in 1798, had come to England in 1801 and had already worked among the Jews of London on behalf of the already existing London Missionary Society (founded in 1795 by a Welsh Congregationalist with support from other non-conformists and some Anglican evangelicals). Witherby argued that these endeavours were “unadvised, rash, and unauthorised.” Given their “truly exemplary [. . .] attachment to their religion,” the Jews – rightly, Witherby held -- would never accept the kind of conversion, requiring abjuration of their own faith, that the Society’s missionaries and tracts sought to have them agree to (*An Attempt*, xiv). In his earliest work, he had already expressed the modest hope, as formulated in the Preface to the *Observations on Mr. Bicheno’s Book*, that his own reflections would “tend to the increase of that respect with which your nation is treated by those Christians who are well instructed in the New Testament” and, at the same time, “would also tend to soften those prejudices, which the misconduct of Christians in times past have given you too much reason to consider as well grounded” (iv).

Witherby’s view was that “the misconduct of Christians towards the Jews and the errors of Christians concerning them” had been “the means of keeping them from the investigation of the Christian religion” and that “the opinion that the Jews are now suffering because of their fathers’ having required our Saviour to be crucified cannot (after an examination of scripture concerning it) be retained without impiety towards our blessed Saviour himself” (*An Attempt*, xvi). As Michael R. Darby explained recently, Witherby believed that a desire to exalt the Christian religion at the expense of the Jewish religion was the greatest, as well as the earliest heresy which had disgraced the Christian church. [. . .] The Jewish and the Christian religions were so inseparably united that, unless the true foundation, the Jewish
religion, were preserved, the Christian church would become weak and unstable. [ . . . ] Writing in the generation following Priestley’s, Thomas Witherby arrived at similar conclusions about the position of Jewish Christianity in the economy of God. He lamented the lack of a Jewish Christian Church, supported the view that Jewish believers should retain their national distinctions without renouncing the law of Moses, and advocated the integration of the rites of Judaism within worship. (Darby, 42, 44)

In Witherby’s own words, as reported -- and condemned -- by a reviewer of *An Attempt to Remove the Prejudices Concerning the Jewish Nation*, “as to [the] idea, that no one can be a Jew and a Christian at the same time, permit me to ask, were not all our Lord’s apostles Jews as well as Christians? Is there a single passage in the New Testament which intimates that a Jew by becoming a Christian, was to be less a Jew, or less regardful of the law of Moses, than he was before he became a Christian?” (*Critical Review, or Annals of Literature*, 3.3 [1804]: 443)

The more straightforward conversion efforts, directed chiefly at the poor Ashkenazi community, of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews -- though motivated, as one scholar has put it, by charity, rather than, as in the past, by hatred, generously financed by the growing numbers of evangelical Christians (William Wilberforce, for instance, the champion of the movement to abolish slavery, was one of the Society’s founding members), and supported by some advocates of full emancipation, such as Lord Bexley, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1812 to 1823 and proposer of a Jewish Emancipation Bill in the House of Lords in 1830 -- were nonetheless aimed at completely appropriating an element in society perceived as alien. Indeed, their conversion efforts may well have been indirectly, as the historian Michael Ragussis argued, to the development of nationalism in the age of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. In fact, however, they did not come near to achieving their goal. The number of converts was never significant: 829 by the end of 1859, of whom only 367 were adults, i.e., “an average of only sixteen converts annually since 1809, and a mere seven adults per year” (Smith, 283; Scult, 3-17). Though, in contrast, a considerable number of Sephardi Jews did convert, “few (if any) did so out of religious conviction, they made no pretense of having done so.” They were motivated rather by “the desire of many to assimilate into the larger culture of which they felt themselves a part, and from which they were barred by legal disabilities and communal restrictions” (Smith, 287). The celebrated economist David Ricardo who converted on marrying a Quaker, was not untypical. Even those who did not themselves convert on taking Christian wives usually raised their children as Christians.

Whether in the conciliatory theological speculations of a Priestley or a Witherby or in the proselytising endeavours of evangelicals, it is hard not to discern, in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth, a new and more vigorous outreach in British society toward the Jews, an
acknowledgment of the severe mistreatment they had had to endure at the hands of Christians, including English Christians, and an increased interest in understanding them and in moving towards some form of reconciliation and integration. On their side, the Jews themselves felt encouraged to contribute to the growing literature attributing their alleged “degradation” (ignorance, narrow-mindedness, financial greed and obsession, low-level street trading activities, lack of interest in either agriculture or the new manufacturing industries) to their treatment over the centuries by Christians, while at the same time pointing to their many contributions – economic, cultural, and also military -- to societies such as Denmark, the United States, and post-Revolutionary France, in which they had been emancipated from all disabilities.

Among the most respected of those Jewish writers was Sir Francis Henry Goldsmid (1808-1878), England’s first Jewish barrister, a future M.P., and a son of the wealthy financier Sir Isaac Leon Goldsmid (1778-1859), himself the first Jewish baronet, an activist for complete Jewish emancipation, a supporter of the Jewish Reform movement, and one of the founders of University College, London. F. H. Goldsmid produced several tracts, among them: _The Arguments advanced against the Enfranchisement of the Jews considered in a Series of Letters_ (1833, 2nd ed. 1838) and _Remarks on the Civil Disabilities of British Jews_ (1838), both put out by the notable London publisher, Richard Bentley. In _The Arguments advanced against the Enfranchisement of the Jews_, Goldsmid noted that during the year 1832 every civil privilege has [ . . . ] been extended to the Jews of Barbadoes and Lower Canada: and as it has been found in England that many of those most sincerely attached to Christianity have been among the foremost to claim true freedom of conscience for their Jewish brethren, so also in Canada none was more active than a pious Divine of the Established Church [the Rev. Mr. Stevens, Chaplain of the Forces at Montreal] in seeking to obtain for the Jews of that province equality of political rights, to which, from his acquaintance with their conduct as men and as citizens, he felt that they were fully entitled. But I do not rely chiefly on the example of those places where the enfranchisement of the Jews is still recent.

Instead, Goldsmid points out that in those countries where Jews have the same rights and duties as other citizens, they have made important contributions. For example, “in the United States, where for nearly half a century, and in Denmark and Holland, where during twenty years, the Hebrews have been free from any disability or restriction, the most beneficial effects have flowed from their equalization with their fellow-citizens.” In particular the experience of the Netherlands demonstrates that the Jews have been no less zealous and active than their countrymen in asserting what has been regarded by the Dutch as the interest of the nation; that a very large number of them, it is believed above 10,000, have served with
ardour in the armies of Holland, and that a considerable body of Jews, which
formed part of the garrison of the citadel of Antwerp, has been stated by
General Chassé to have shown remarkable valour, fully equal to that displayed
by any other portion of his troops, in the obstinate defence of that fortress
against the French.

The same, Goldsmid claimed, is true of the Jews in France where granting Jews the
civil rights of other citizens removed many of those qualities that gentiles find
objectionable. Goldsmid quotes from a speech by Mérilhou, French Minister for
Public Instruction at the time, in the Chamber of Deputies:

The Israelites of our days [. . . ] must not be confounded with that unfortunate
class of former times—unfortunate because it was persecuted, for oppression
has always the effect of debasing its victims. They are no longer, in France at
least, given up exclusively to usury, as was the case before the Revolution of
1789, because they were then denied the possibility of being anything else,
being excluded from all liberal professions. The blame must rest solely with
their persecutors. But since the Constituent Assembly has placed the Israelites
on a footing with other citizens, they have partaken of our glory and
misfortunes; their blood has flowed on the same fields of battle as ours; their
children have been brought up in the same schools with those of their Christian
brethren; they have imbibed the same principles, adopted the same habits,
and have become most deserving members of the State. (Goldsmid, 2-4,
Postscript, April 1833)

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### 6. Jews in English Literature

The literary work of some Christian writers of the period also manifests a serious effort to evoke in the reader a sympathetic understanding of the situation of the Jews as a minority to be integrated into Christian society, even if stereotypical representations of them remain along with impatient denunciations of their resistance to the complete identification – i.e. conversion to Christianity -- that for many Christian English people was the only path to integration. The present writer cannot do better than refer the reader who would like to explore this topic in depth to Michael Ragussis’s outstanding *Figures of Conversion: “The Jewish Question” & English National Identity* (1995). For the purposes of this essay, a few examples will have to suffice, with two now little read novels of the time being presented in some detail.

**Tobias Smollett and Richard Cumberland**

As early as 1753 – the year of the ill-fated Jew Bill – the popular Scottish novelist Tobias Smollett introduced a “worthy” and “benevolent” Jewish character, “Joshua Manesseh, merchant of London,” into his novel *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom*. Forty years later, in 1794, Richard Cumberland’s play *The Jew* (later re-titled *Sheva the Benevolent*) was put on at the Drury Lane Theatre in London.
According to Sir Walter Scott, “In *Count Fathom* is to be found the first candid attempt to do justice to a calumniated race. The benevolent Jew of Cumberland had his prototype in the worthy Israelite, whom Smollett introduced with very great effect into the history of *Fathom*” (155). In a collection of essays entitled *Observer* and published in 1785, Cumberland had already created a character named Abraham Abrahams, who at one point observes: “I verily believe the odious character of Shylock has brought little less persecution upon us, poor scattered sons of Abraham, than the Inquisition itself.” Abrahams served as a template for Sheva, the “benevolent” title character of Cumberland’s play, who was thus specifically intended to serve as a counter-model to the traditional mean and miserly stage character of the Jew -- Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Barabas in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*. The tremendous success of the initial production of *The Jew* prompted Cumberland to observe later: “The benevolence of the audience assisted me in rescuing a forlorn and persecuted character, which till then had only been brought upon the stage for the unmanly purpose of being made a spectacle of contempt, and a butt for ridicule. In the success of this comedy I felt of course a greater gratification, than I had ever felt upon a like occasion.”

**William Hazlitt**

Many other prominent Christian writers at the time took a similar liberal position toward the growing Jewish community in Britain. In the opening sentence of an essay on “Emancipation of the Jews” that appeared in Leigh Hunt’s magazine *The Tatler* in March 1831, William Hazlitt declared unambiguously that “The emancipation of the Jews is but a natural step in the progress of civilisation.” “We throw in the teeth of the Jews,” he went on,

that they are prone to certain sordid vices. If they are vicious it is we who have made them so. Shut out any class of people from the path to fair fame, and you reduce them to grovel in the pursuit of riches and the means to live. A man has long been in dread of insult for no just cause, and you complain that he grows reserved and suspicious. You treat him with obloquy and contempt, and wonder that he does not walk by you with an erect and open brow. We also object to their trades and modes of life. [. . . ] The Jews barter and sell commodities, instead of raising or manufacturing them. But this is the necessary traditional consequence of their former persecution and pillage by all nations. They could not set up a trade when they were hunted every moment from place to place, and while they could count nothing their own but what they could carry with them. They could not devote themselves to the pursuit of agriculture, when they were not allowed to possess a foot of land. You tear people up by the roots and trample on them like noxious weeds, and then make an outcry that they do not take root in the soil like wholesome plants. You drive them like a pest from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, and then call them vagabonds and aliens.”
A true Christian, in contrast, does not

forget the original character of the Jewish people, and will not say anything
against it. We and modern Europe derived from them the whole germ of our
civilisation, our ideas on the unity of the Deity, on marriage, on morals. [. . .] The great founder of the Christian religion was himself born among that
people, and if the Jewish Nation are still to be branded with his death, it might
be asked on what principle of justice ought we to punish men for crimes
committed by their co-religionist near two thousand years ago?

As a liberal, Hazlitt cannot condone the entrenched resistance of the Jews to
any alteration of their ancient practices and rituals. “Their blindness and obstinacy is
to be lamented; but it is at least, under the circumstances, a proof of their sincerity;
and as adherents to a losing cause, they are entitled to respect and not contempt”
(461-65).

Charles Lamb

Less even-handed and more prejudiced attitudes toward Jews persisted, to be sure,
into the nineteenth century, among many writers, including those who moved in
distinguished literary circles. In one of his Essays of Elia, after expressing his irritation
with the Scots, Charles Lamb turns his attention to the Jews, another ethnicity for
which, friend of the liberal Leigh Hunt as he might be, he has an “imperfect
sympathy.”

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn
antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond
the pyramids. But I should not care to be in the habits of familiar intercourse
with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their
synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. [. . .] Centuries of injury, contempt,
and hate, on the one side, -- of cloaked revenge, dissimulation, and hate on the
other, between our and their fathers, must, and ought, to affect the blood of
the children. I cannot believe that [. . . ] a few fine words, such as candour,
liberality, the light of the nineteenth century, can close up the breaches of so
deadly a disunion. A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. [. . . ] I boldly confess
that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become
so fashionable. The reciprocal endearments have, to me, something
hypocritical and unnatural in them. I do not like to see the Church and
Synagogue kissing and congeeing in awkward postures of affected civility. If
they are converted, why do they not come over to us altogether? Why keep up
a form of separation, when the life of it is fled? . . . I do not understand these
half convertites. Jews christianizing -- Christians judaizing -- puzzle me. I like fish
or flesh. A moderate Jew is a more confounding piece of anomaly than a wet
Quaker. The spirit of the synagogue is essentially separative.
Lamb goes on to expose what he alleges is the deep-seated Judaism in John Braham, the celebrated tenor, referred to earlier in the present essay. The very fact that “he sings with understanding,” reveals that “the Hebrew spirit is strong in him, in spite of his proselytism. . . How it breaks out when he sings ‘The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!’ The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph” (61-62).

**Lord Byron**

Even George Gordon Lord Byron, the author of *Hebrew Melodies* (1815), presents the Jews ambivalently. In that work the plight of the Jews is lamented in several poems, such as “By the Rivers of Babylon We Sat Down and Wept,” “The Wild Gazelle” and “Oh! Weep for those that wept by Babel’s stream” with its tragic final lines:

Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
How shall ye flee away and be at rest!
The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country – Israel but the grave. [1905 ed., 217]

But a year or so earlier, before he was contacted by Nathan about producing words for the latter’s musical compositions, Byron had written “Magdalen,” an evocation of the Crucifixion, in which “Israel’s swarthy race” figures much as in traditional anti-Semitic representation and language:

The hour is come – of darkness and of dread—
That makes Earth shudder to receive the dead,
When the first Martyr to his offered creed,
The man of heaven – the Son of God – must bleed.
The hour is come of Salem’s giant Sin;
> The doom is fixed – the bloody rites begin.

There be loud cries on Sion’s lofty place,
And struggling crowds of Israel’s swarthy race.
Stamped on each brow an idiot hatred stood,
In every eye an eagerness of blood.
Each scornful lip betrayed its wayward thirst

And in 1823, Canto XII of *Don Juan*, represents the wealthy merchant and stockmarket Jew, albeit not perhaps without some Galgenhumor, as the hidden power running the entire world. The Jew Rothschild and “his fellow Christian Baring,” the reader is told,
Are the true lords of Europe. Every loan
Is not a mere speculative hit,
But seats a nation or upsets a throne.
Republics also get involved a bit;
Columbia’s stock hath holders not unknown
On ‘Change; and even thy silver soil, Peru,
Must get itself discounted by a Jew.

... The lands on either side are his: the ship
From Ceylon, Inde, or far Cathay, unloads
For him the fragrant produce of each trip;
Beneath his cars of Ceres groan the roads,
And the vine blushes like Aurora’s lip;
His very cellars might be kings’ abodes;
While he, despising every sensual call,
Commands – the intellectual lord of all. (McGann ed., 5:496-97)

So too, in The Age of Bronze (xv) of the same year, a similar evocation of the super-rich international Jewish financier and merchant as hidden ruler of the universe:

How rich is Britain! Not indeed in mines,
Or peace, or plenty, corn, or oil, or wines;
No land of Canaan, full of milk and honey,
Nor (save in paper shekels) ready money:
But let us not to own the truth refuse,
Was ever Christian land so rich in Jews?
Those parted with their teeth to good King John,
And now, ye kings!, they kindly draw your own;
All states, all things, all sovereigns they control,
And waft a loan ‘from Indus to the Pole.’

... On Shylock’s shore behold them stand afresh,
To cut from nations’ hearts their ‘pound of flesh.’ [McGann 7:22]

**Henry Mayhew**

By mid-century, Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* published in the 1840s in the form of articles for the newspaper *The Morning Chronicle* and in book form in 1851, not not only presented a fairly impartial general overview of the history of the Jews in England, their current fairly wide range of occupations, and their chief places of residence in London, but also challenged what he acknowledged to be the prevailing view, especially among the common people, of street-Jews (pedlars, old-clothes men), namely that they are all thieves and swindlers, living in filth. Not only are the Jews being replaced as street traders by poor Irish immigrants,
Mayhew objects, they live more orderly lives than the Christian poor imagine and “are generally far more cleanly in their habits than the poorer classes of English people.” In addition “the Jews are generally, when married, most exemplary family men. There are few fonder fathers than they are, and they will starve themselves sooner than their wives and children should want. Whatever their faults may be, they are good fathers, husbands, and sons.”

On the other hand, he admits, it is true that money is still the overriding concern and interest of street-Jews. Many “are far from being religious in feeling, or well versed in their faith and are, perhaps, in that respect on a level with the mass of the members of the Church of England.” They also have little or no interest in politics, an indifference that they share to some extent with their better-off coreligionists, according to Mayhew, who disapproves strongly of this detachment. On the other hand, their indifference to politics, along with their lack of any patriotic sentiments “may be accounted for in a great measure, perhaps,” he concedes, “from an hereditary feeling. The Jew could hardly be expected to love a land, or to strive for the promotion of its general welfare, where he felt he was but a sojourner, and where he was at best tolerated and often proscribed.” At the same time, the Jew’s constant uprooting has also made him inattentive, not to say indifferent to the condition of Jews in other lands. Wealthy Jews “with powerful influence in many a government” are often similarly indifferent “to the lot of their poorer brethren” (2:115-18, 120, 126-27). So much for the solidarity that allegedly prevented the Jews from ever truly identifying with the peoples among whom they lived.

Three novelists: Maria Edgeworth, Sir Walter Scott, Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Maria Edgeworth

In 1817 Maria Edgeworth – not much read nowadays, but hugely successful in her time and much admired by Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott – published Harrington, a novel narrated in the first person. The hero, William Harrington Harrington, is an upper-class young Englishman. The widowed mother of his best friend as a boy and a young man always presents herself as the Countess de Brantefield, “a Countess in her own right” with “an estate in her own power,” while his own father is “not only a member of parliament but a man of “some consequence with his party” who, though he had “usually been a staunch friend of government, […] had voted, when he first came into parliament, nine or ten years before, […] against the […] bill for the Naturalization of the Jews of England” (14). The novel is the record of Harrington’s learning first to overcome and then to combat both the primitive anti-Semitism of his own boyhood years and the less openly aggressive but no less hateful and pervasive
anti-Semitism of his family and entire social environment. Over the years he comes
to respect and establish friendships with Jews and indeed to defend them against
widespread dislike, distrust, and disdain; and, on reaching manhood, he falls in love
with the daughter of an extremely wealthy, but also extraordinarily kind and cultured
Spanish-born London Jewish merchant by the name of Montenero whom he comes
to know and admire and in whom he immediately recognizes a perfect gentleman.

Edgeworth wrote the novel, as her father and collaborator acknowledged in his 1817
Preface, in response to “an extremely well written letter” from one of her American
readers, “a Jewish lady, complaining of the illiberality with which the Jewish nation
had been treated in some of Miss Edgeworth’s works” (iii). In The Absentee (1812),
the Jewish coachmaker and money-lender Mordecai is indeed an extremely
unattractive character, and while Lady Rackrent in Castle Rackrent (1800) is herself
badly treated by the landed Irish gentleman who married her for her fortune (in the
form of a rich collection of Jewellery, which he expects her to hand over to him), she
is herself presented in an unfavourable light. Edgeworth puts a reference to this
aspect of her earlier publications into her character’s personal narrative. Just as he
was overcoming his early fear and hatred of Jews, Harrington relates,

I became fond of reading, and I never saw the word [Jew] in any page of any
book, which I happened to open, without immediately stopping to read the
passage. And here I must observe that not only in the old story books, where
the Jews are sure to be wicked as the bad fairies, or bad genii, or allegorical
personifications of the devils and the vices in the old emblems, mysteries,
moralities, &c.; but in almost every work of fiction I found them represented as
hateful beings; nay, even in modern tales of very late years, since I have come
to man’s estate, I have met with books by authors professing candour and
toleration – books written expressly for the rising generation, called, if I
mistake not, Moral Tales for Young People; and even in these, wherever the
Jews are introduced, I find that they are invariably represented as beings of a
mean, avaricious, unprincipled, treacherous character. [12-13]

As her readers would almost certainly have known, Edgeworth was herself the
author of Moral Tales for Young People, published in 1802.

Fear and dislike of Jews, the hero recalls, were first inculcated in him as a small
child by his nanny, who liked to tell him

at midnight, about a Jew who lived in Paris in a dark alley, and who professed
to sell pork pies; but it was found out at last that the pies were not pork – they
were made of the flesh of little children. His wife used to stand at the door of
her den to watch for little children, and, as they were passing, would tempt
them in with cakes and sweetmeats. There was a trap-door in the cellar, and
the children were dragged down; and ---- Oh! How my blood ran cold when we
came to the terrible trap-door. Were there, I asked, such things in London now?

The answer was “Oh, yes! In dark narrow lanes there were Jews now living, and watching always for such little children as me; I should take care they did not catch me.” The young lad’s almost pathological aversion to Jews (he began to suffer not insignificant psychic disorders) was reinforced when he noticed that it had won him favourable notice in his and his parents’ social milieu. No doubt “in our enlightened days and in the present improved state of education,” the mature Harrington observes,

it may appear incredible that any nursery-maid could be so wicked, as to relate, or any six year old so foolish as to credit such tales; but I am speaking of what happened many years ago [. . .], and in further proof of the progress of human knowledge and reason, we may recollect that many of these very stories of the Jews, which we now hold too preposterous for the infant and the nursery-maid to credit, were some centuries ago universally believed by the English nation, and had furnished more than one of our kings with pretexts for extortion and massacres. (2-3)

The nursery-maid having inspired terror in the young boy by threatening to hand him over to Simon, a Jewish pedlar who comes by the Harringtons’ house from time to time with his bag of old clothes, the boy’s mother pays the Jew to stay away. But the prospect of getting paid to stay away simply attracts “another and another Jew, each more hideous than the former” – except that, as the hero discovers later, these were in fact “good Christian beggars, dressed up and daubed, for the purpose of looking as frightful, and as like the traditionary representations and vulgar notions of a malicious, revengeful, ominous looking Shylock as ever whetted his knife” (10). At home the young Harrington hears his father “talk with horror of some young gentleman who had been dealing with the Jews.” To his request for an explanation, his father responds: “When a man once goes to the Jews, he soon goes to the devil. So Harrington, my boy. I charge you at your peril, whatever else you do, keep out of the hands of the Jews—never go near the Jews: if once they catch hold of you, there’s an end of you my boy” (12). Soon enough, Harrington begins asking himself the question “whether they [the Jews] ought to be let to live in England, or anywhere” (16).

The anti-Semitism of Harrington’s mother remains relatively subdued. It appears chiefly in her concealing a letter of introduction to Montenero that her son had been given by a Cambridge University Hebrew teacher, with whom he had later struck up a good relationship as a student -- and to whom he had in turn been introduced by a Jewish boy he had, as a schoolboy, first defended and in her unremitting refusal, on learning of her son’s serious interest in Montenero’s daughter Berenice, to have anything to do with the Monteneros. His father’s deep-
seated anti-Semitism is expressed more frequently and violently, culminating in an unshakable threat to disinherit his son if he should ever marry “a Jewess” (167-68).

As Harrington is about to leave his home, letter in hand, to seek out Montenero, he encounters his father “who after looking at the direction of the letter, and hearing that I was going on a visit to a Spanish Jew, asked what business on earth I could have with a Jew – cursed the whole race – rejoiced that he had five and twenty years ago, voted against their naturalization in England.” (ch. v, p. 36). Later, after he has learned of his son’s interest in Montenero’s daughter, Berenice, “‘Then it is all true,’ said my father. ‘It is all very well, Harrington – but take notice, and I give you notice [ . . . ] that by Jupiter – by Jupiter Ammon, I will never leave one shilling to my son, if he marry a Jewess! Every inch of my estate shall go from him to his cousin Longshanks in the North, though I hate him like sin. But a Jewess for my daughter-in-law I will never have – by Jupiter Ammon!’” (109)

Even Harrington’s skilful physical defence of Montenero’s property, where Lady de Brantefield and her daughter had found refuge from a mob pursuing them during the Gordon riots of 1788, cannot win unreserved praise from his father.

Harrington’s vigorous rejection of his society’s endemic anti-Semitism becomes all the more determined as he encounters it everywhere, in all classes – his own upper class social milieu, the populace, and the middle class, as represented by a Mrs. Coates, the wife of an alderman supposedly on good terms with Montenero. “It’s my notion,” Mrs. Coates opines at one point in the narrative, as she is putting Berenice down, “that the Jews is both a very unsocial and a very revengeful people” (99).

His escape from the prejudice inculcated in him as a child, Edgeworth’s hero explains, began at school when, on the death of a Scottish pedlar who used to stop by the school every Thursday evening to supply the students’ “various wants and fancies,” two candidates presented themselves to take his place. One was an “English lad,” who had worked in the family of Harrington’s best friend, known as Lord Mowbray, the son of “Lady de Brantefield,” and who was admitted by Mowbray to be “a rogue”; the other was “a Jew boy of the name of Jacob.” The schoolboys themselves had the right to elect the successor of the deceased Scottish pedlar. The school quickly divided into two camps, one supporting the “English lad,” the other the “Jew boy.” Reminding him of his strong fear and dislike of Jews, Mowbray “easily engaged me to join him against the Jew boy,” Harrington relates. The competition was resolved, however, when one of the simplest of the schoolchildren told the assembled young voters how he had in secret tried to get the Jewish boy to accept his silver pencil-case in exchange for a top, only to have Jacob refuse the deal, explaining to him that the silver pencil-case was worth multiple tops. By this spontaneous act of honesty and generosity, by his refusal to take advantage of the
schoolboy’s naivety, Jacob won both the students’ respect and the election, and became the school’s weekly pedlar. “Mowbray and I, and all our party, vexed and mortified, [. . .] determined to plague and persecute him, till we should force him to give up.”

Every Thursday evening, the moment he appeared in the school-room, or on the play-ground, our party commenced the attack upon “the Wandering Jew,” as we called this poor pedlar; and with every opprobrious nickname, and every practical jest, that mischievous and incensed schoolboy zealots could devise, we persecuted and tortured him, body and mind. We twanged at once a hundred Jew’s-harps in his ear, and before his eyes we paraded the effigy of a Jew, dressed in a gabardine of rags and paper. In the passages through which he was to pass, we set stumbling-blocks in his way, we threw orange-peel in his path, and when he slipped or fell, we laughed him to scorn, and we triumphed over him, the more he was hurt, or the more his goods were injured. We laughed at his losses, mocked at his gains, scorned his nation, thwarted his bargains, cooled his friends, heated his enemies – and what was our reason? He was a Jew. (18-19)

But, patient and enduring, “he was as unlike to Shylock as it is possible to conceive,” Harrington has to note. And he asks himself retrospectively how he, who “was not in other cases a cruel or ill-natured boy, could be so inhuman to this poor, unprotected, unoffending creature.” Finally, having seen how Mowbray tried to cheat the young Jew by buying watches from him and refusing to pay for them on the grounds that he had been overcharged, and then threatening to make him regret it if the young pedlar should appeal to the schoolmasters, Harrington began to question his support of his domineering friend Lord Mowbray. Further developments in the episode -- the interference of Mowbray’s haughtily “aristocratic” mother after her son was finally reprimanded and told to return the watches or be expelled from the school; her accompaniment of the money owed to Jacob with strong reproof to her son, not for cheating the young pedlar, but “for his folly in ever dealing with a Jew”; the insulting manner in which Mowbray threw down the money to Jacob (“There’s your money, take it -- aye count it [. . .] and thank Heaven and my friends, the pound of flesh next my heart is safe from your knife, Shylock”); and Jacob’s restrained and dignified response – led him to cry “Shame” to Mowbray. “‘I could not use a dog so,’ said I. ‘A dog, no! Nor I,’” Mowbray responds; “‘but this is a Jew.’ ‘A fellow-creature,’ said I.” Soon the two friends come to blows as Mowbray accuses Harrington of being “a Jew at heart” and Harrington retorts, winning the support of all the other boys, “more of a Christian – by sticking more to the maxim ‘Do as you would be done by.’”

The upshot is that – for the sake of peace among the schoolboys, and to the regret of almost all of them, from both parties, those favouring the Jew, but also those who had favoured the “English lad”-- Jacob resigns. “Young Lord,
and dear young gentleman,” he says to Mowbray and Harrington, “let poor Jacob be no more cause now, or ever, of quarrel between you” (26).

Fortuitously – this is, after all, a fiction – Harrington, bound for Cambridge years later to continue his studies, runs into Jacob again on the road and the two bond together in kindness, affection, and mutual respect. Jacob, who turns out to be the son of the pedlar Harrington’s nanny used to evoke to strike fear in him as a child, has a pile of books in a pedlar’s box and begs Harrington to take one of them, a biography of Moses Mendelssohn, “the Jewish Socrates.” Noticing that one of the books is addressed to a Mr. Israel Lyons, Cambridge, Harrington explains that he is on his way to study there and, urging Jacob to visit him, gives him directions to his college. A few days later, Jacob shows up and, as Mr. Lyons is out of town, asks Harrington to deliver the book to him on his return. Having heard Lyons described by Jacob as “a learned rabbi [. . .] the son of a Polish Jew,” currently employed as a teacher of Hebrew to Cambridge scholars, albeit also the author of books on mathematics and botany, Harrington -- liberated from prejudice as he believes he is -- expects, when he calls on him to deliver the book, to find “a man nearly as old as Methuselah, with a reverend beard, dirty and shabby.” Instead, he relates, “I saw a gay looking man, of middle age, with quick, sparkling black eyes, and altogether a person of modern appearance, both in dress and address.” He is so taken aback that he thinks he may have made a mistake. But no. “Though he was a Hebrew teacher, he was proud of showing himself to be a man of the world. I found him in the midst of his Hebrew scholars, and moreover with some of the best mathematicians, and some of the first literary men in Cambridge.” The two soon enter into conversation, “much to our mutual relief and delight,” allowing Harrington to find “by his conversation, that though he was the son of a great Hebrew grammarian, and himself an accomplished Hebrew scholar, and though he had written a treatise on fluxions, and a work on botany, yet he was not a mere mathematician, a mere grammarian, or a mere botanist, nor yet a dull pedant” but “a man of a remarkably fertile genius,” with a “carelessness about money” and “disregard, on all occasions, of pecuniary interest” that convince the young Harrington of “his liberal spirit.”

The relationship, sustained during Harrington’s years as a student at Cambridge, led to the young man’s telling Lyons, as he was taking his leave of him, of his early anti-Semitism, how “even as a schoolboy,” he “had conquered this foolish prejudice,” and how much he appreciated that at Cambridge it had been his “good fortune to become acquainted with one, whose superior abilities and kindness of disposition” had formed in his mind “associations of quite an opposite nature” where Jews were concerned. To confirm him in those sentiments, the young Harrington relates, Mr. Lyons gave him a letter of introduction to a good friend in London, “Mr. Montenero, a Jewish gentleman born in Spain who had early in life quitted that country, in consequence of his horror of tyranny and persecution,” been “fortunate enough to carry his wealth, which was very considerable, safely out of Spain,” and to
settle “in America, where he had enjoyed perfect toleration and freedom of religious opinion,” before moving finally to England itself (ch iv, 30-34). Thus began what was to be the central experience of Harrington’s life, his friendship with Montenero and his love of Montenero’s daughter Berenice.

Edgeworth pursues her fictional hero through a number of dramatic episodes illustrating his to Montenero, the latter’s humanity, generosity, and culture (he is a connoisseur of art and has a fine collection of paintings), the mean-spiritedness and narrow-mindedness of those prejudiced against Jews, no matter how high the latter may have succeeded in placing themselves in the social register, the hidden hostility of his supposed friend Mowbray in contrast to the loyal friendship of Jacob, and, at the centre of it all, his love of Berenice, who, after turning down Mowbray, accepts his marriage proposal. In light of Montenero’s generosity in bailing them out of a serious financial difficulty, Harrington’s father and mother finally come around to accepting, uneasily, the marriage of their son with “the Jewess.” At the end, however, in the final pages of the novel, it is revealed, to the immense relief and delight of Harrington’s parents, that Berenice is not in fact Jewish. Montenero does indeed consider her and love her as his daughter, “but her mother was a Christian, [. . . ] daughter of an English gentleman, of good family, who accompanied one of your ambassadors to Spain,” and in accordance with “my promise to Mrs. Montenero, Berenice has been bred in her faith—a Christian—a Protestant” (203). The novel does not close on this convenient revelation, however, but on an act of compassion and generosity on the part of Montenero the Jew.

Edgeworth has been criticised for ultimately evading the difficult issue of intermarriage— as Scott was to be later when he has Ivanhoe marry Rowena rather than Rebecca. To some critics, the revelation that Berenice is, after all, an English Protestant, points to what they see as a wider shortcoming of the novel as a whole, namely that the other (the Jew) in general is acceptable as a member of English society insofar as he or she has in fact adopted Christian values and behaviours, as have Jacob, Mr. Lyons, and Montenero. According to Rachel Schulkins, “the means through which Edgeworth attempts to ‘overturn’ the traditional Jewish stereotypes are by portraying the Jew as essentially a good Christian” (477-78; for a different view of Harrington, as a utopian novel, see Howitt, 293-314). In other words, complete acculturation is the condition of integration and emancipation. From the point of view of modern multiculturalism, this is no doubt a serious limitation; in the early nineteenth century, however, integration and emancipation through acculturation and without conversion was a progressive, modern position.

**Sir Walter Scott**

Unlike Maria Edgeworth’s Harrington, Sir Walter Scott’s Ivanhoe, published three years later, in 1820, is still, after two hundred years, a widely known and readily
accessible classic, even if, like the other works of the once internationally best-selling 
anthor of *Waverley*, it is nowhere near as widely read as it once was. The modern 
reader should nevertheless be reminded not only of the very considerable place 
Scott gave in *Ivanhoe* to representation of and reflection on Jewish-Christian 
relations in medieval England, the relevance of which to their own time could not 
have escaped his contemporary, early nineteenth-century readers, but of the 
generosity and understanding with which the theme is explored. In the words of the 
late distinguished professor of chemistry and writer on Jewish history Milton Kerker, 
“Myriads of readers were unfamiliar with Jewish history, except for the Bible. In 
*Ivanhoe*, Scott not only introduced them to the suffering of Jews in medieval 
England but by enlisting sympathy for Jews, he may even have served to ameliorate 
the view of many readers about contemporary British Jewry.”

The social and political context of Scott’s extensive treatment of the place of 
the Jew in a predominantly Christian society is central to the novel: As a Scot, he 
himself belonged to a minority in a country that had come to include different 
ethnicities -- English, Welsh, Scots, and Irish -- and different religions -- 
Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Unitarian, etc. He had been trained 
in Scots law (still the law of the land in the northern kingdom), had a keen interest in 
Scottish folk songs, poetry, and native traditions, and did not want these expressions 
of a particular and unique culture to disappear. Scott believed that different “races” 
or ethnicities, as we would say in 2020, and different cultures should not cancel each 
other out but find a *modus vivendi*, a way of living together and enhancing each 
other’s humanity, without losing their distinct identities. As A. N. Wilson pointed out 
in his Introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of *Ivanhoe*, what Scott wrote a few 
years later in *Letters of Malachi Malagrowther* (1826) is relevant to the political 
import of *Ivanhoe*: “For God’s sake [ . . . ] let us remain as Nature made us, 
Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen, with something like the impress of our several 
countries upon each.” Wilson himself draws the implications of that view for our 
reading of *Ivanhoe*:

If the book has a political message, it seems to have two very incisive points of 
view, hard, but necessary to reconcile. One is that there is a wickedness in 
failing to preserve our racial and ethnic heritages; that Jews and Saxons and 
Normans are all totally different, and it is grotesquely dishonest to suppose 
otherwise. At the same time, no society can work without recognizing our 
interdependence and our common good. (xxvii-xxix)

In this regard Scott would seem to have a more complex and broadly tolerant view of 
the integration of different ethnicities and religions into a single society than 
Edgeworth, for whom, as we saw, modern critics allege integration meant adopting 
the manners, culture, and outlook of the dominant social group.
In the late twelfth century context, in which the action of *Ivanhoe* unfolds, the population of England is divided into two major, mutually hostile ethnicities – Saxons resentful of their defeat and Normans made haughty and domineering by their victory. The Jews are a tiny, but — because of their role in finance and commerce — critical minority. In Scott’s original and imaginative vision, however, the problem of the relation of Jews, with their own faith and their own traditions, and Christians, with theirs, is not fundamentally different from that of the relations of Normans and Saxons. Without giving up their native cultures or, in the case of the Jews, their faith, they all have to learn to respect and get along with each other. In the case of the Jews, Scott points out repeatedly as the narrative unfolds, an end to cruel persecution and strictly enforced exclusion from the general life and activities of Christian societies (such as landholding, farming, everyday commerce) would remove those negative features commonly attributed to them by all classes of society and in fact often enough, but not always or at all times found among them: avarice, cunning, false obsequiousness, fear and timidity, dislike of Christians and Christianity.

Rebecca, the daughter of the moneylender Isaac of York, who represents the Jew in *Ivanhoe* as Cedric represents the Saxon, offers the notable example of a Jewish woman who, along with physical beauty and gracious deportment, is endowed with intelligence, talents and skills, along with a kind and compassionate nature, respect for the faith of others, and a deep commitment to her own faith. But old Isaac of York himself is not, as some readers, including some modern readers, assert, simply another version of Shylock. Scott presents him as a complex figure, capable of responding to threatening or dangerous situations with courage and of acting toward Christians as well as Jews with sympathy, generosity, and general human concern.

The end of the novel -- the marriage of Ivanhoe to Cedric’s Saxon ward, the rather bland and colourless Rowena, rather than to Rebecca, who had tended to him and nursed him back to health after he was severely wounded in a tournament, for whom he had appeared to have developed feelings of love and who, on her side had developed strong feelings of love for him -- was regarded by many readers as a disappointment. The novelist, it was widely felt, should have had her wed Ivanhoe. Scott, however, resisted this supposedly happy ending. For one thing, unlike the relation of Shylock and Jessica, Rebecca’s relation to Isaac (and thus to her own inherited Jewish religion) is a deeply loyal and loving one. For another, after she informs Ivanhoe that she is a Jewess, Rebecca notices a cooling in the Saxon’s feelings for her; and, on her side, while she remains deeply attached to him, she knows — and knew from the beginning -- that their love can never lead to marriage, given both the prejudice against Jews in Christian society and the prohibition in Judaism against marrying a non-Jew.
Scott’s ending should not, therefore, be seen as simply a retreat from what would have been a challenging and probably controversial conclusion to his fiction. It was, as he himself explained, simply an acknowledgment of the real-life, historical situation of Jews in England at the end of the twelfth century. It was also, in all likelihood, a realistic reminder to his own readers, Christians and Jews alike, that a marriage between a Christian and a Jew was still no simple matter in a modern, enlightened age, especially when neither party was ready to convert to the faith of the other.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Elected to Parliament first as a Liberal (1831-1841), then as a Tory (1851), Bulwer-Lytton was a friend of both Isaac D’Israeli and his son Benjamin Disraeli. He was also a prolific novelist. Since Leila, the novel in which we propose to look into his presentation of Jews, is now, like Edgeworth’s Harrington, little read, our account of it will be more detailed and descriptive than would otherwise be called for.

Set, as was Aguilar’s Grove of Cedars, in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain (Aguilar wrote her novel several years before Leila appeared, but it was published only later), Leila presents Torquemada’s vision of the Jews in all its ugly hatefulness. Lytton has his principal Jewish male character, the “enchanter” Almamen, side first with the Moors against the Christians, then with the Christians against the Moors, and finally once again with the Moors against the Christians. Almamen devotes his life to a single overriding cause — the preservation of the line of Israel, pure and unsullied, until the prophesied appearance of its saviour. To this end he raises his treasured daughter Leila in isolation, preserving her from all outside influences or associations, and ultimately sacrificing her, when, despite his precautions and admonitions, she does finally succumb to such influences.

Encountering Bulwer-Lytton’s description of her fairy-tale like isolation, the reader is not surprised when, like Rapunzel, she is discovered by a king’s son — Muza, heir to the Moorish kingdom of Granada, who falls in love with her and scales the high walls of the building in which she has been sequestered by her father in order to see and communicate, albeit minimally, with her, and to whose feelings for her, disregarding his religion, she responds. Nonetheless, she cannot answer Muza’s repeated inquiries about her identity. “I know nothing of my birth or childish fortunes, save a dim memory of a more distant and burning clime; where, amidst sands and wastes, springs the everlasting cedar, and the camel grazes on stunted herbage withering in the fiery air!” She dimly remembers her mother whose “soft songs hushed me into
sleep” but she has “passed from childhood into youth within these walls [. . . ] and those who have seen both state and poverty, which I have not, tell me that treasures and splendour, that might glad a monarch, are prodigalised around me.” She knows nothing of her family, other than that, as she tells Muza, “my father, a stern and silent man, visits me but rarely—sometimes months pass, and I see him not.” In fact, she does not even know his name. Ximen, the “chief of the slaves” who take care of her, has told her that if her father learns of her visitor, “you will have looked your last upon Granada. Learn,’ he added, (in a softer voice, as he saw me tremble,) 'that permission were easier given to thee to wed the wild tiger, than to mate with the loftiest noble of Morisca! Beware!” (18-19)

After Almamen’s move to the Christian side, from which he hopes to achieve more for the Jews, Leila finds herself in “one of a long line of tents, that skirted the pavilion of [Queen] Isabel.” Dejected and fearful, she hears “the deep and musical chime of a bell summoning the chiefs of the army to prayer” -- for Ferdinand, the narrator observes, “invested all his worldly schemes with a religious covering, and to his politic war he sought to give the imposing character of a sacred crusade.” In this he was assisted by the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada. Recognizing in the sound of the bell the call to prayer of the “Nazarenes,” Leila sees herself as a “captive by the waters of Babylon,” and “sinking to her knees,” pleads with God to “succour and defend me, Thou who didst look of old upon Ruth standing amidst the corn, and didst watch over thy chosen people in the hungry wilderness, and in the stranger’s land.”

At this point in the story Leila encounters the libertine Don Juan, heir to the Spanish throne, who tries to seduce her, promising, “Be but mine, and no matter, whether heretic or infidel, or whatever the priests style thee, neither church nor king shall tear thee from the bosom of thy lover." Still faithful to Muza, Leila is terrified, but matters become even worse when the villain of the novel, the Dominican Tomas de Torquemada, having overheard the prince, intervenes to remind him that a good Christian hates and distrusts all infidel Jews. Torquemada assures the libertine, who, “as if struck by a thunderbolt, released his hold and, staggering back [. . . ] seemed to cower, abashed and humbled before the eye of the priest, that his attempts to seduce the young girl are not his fault: ‘Prince,’ said the friar, after a pause, ‘not to thee will our holy church attribute this crime; thy pious heart hath been betrayed by sorcery. Retire.’” In other words, the Jew Almamen has used his sorcery to create, for his own nefarious purposes, the Christian prince’s attraction to the Jewish girl. Torquemada then turns his attention to Leila, inquiring about her religion and that of her father. The ignorant girl knows only that “he disowns, he scorns, he abhors, the Moorish faith” believing in “the one God, who protects his chosen, and shall avenge their wrongs — the God who made earth and heaven; and who, in an idolatrous and benighted world, transmitted the knowledge of Himself and his holy laws, from age
to age, through the channel of one solitary people, in the plains of Palestine, and by
the waters of the Hebron."

With that information in hand, Torquemada leaves her with a smile — “a smile
in which glazing eyes and agonising hearts had often beheld the ghastly omen of the
torture and the stake.” He seeks King Ferdinand to whom he offers a source of
desperately needed funds to finance a war that will drive the Moors from Spain.
Other Christian kings, “avaricious and envious,” have refused to finance such a
religious war, but the friar points out that the royal couple can simply take money
from “men of enormous wealth” which “they have plundered from Christian hands,
and consume in the furtherance of their iniquity. Sire, I speak of the race that
crucified the Lord.” When King Ferdinand demurs, “The Jews — ay, but the excuse?”
Torquemada responds by pointing to Almamem’s having moved back to the side of
the Moors.

This traitor with whom thou holdest intercourse, who vowed to thee to render
up Granada, and who was found the very next morning, fighting with the
Moors, with the blood of a Spanish martyr red upon his hands, did he not
confess that his fathers were of that hateful race? Did he not bargain with thee
to elevate his brethren to the rank of Christians? and has he not left with thee,
upon false pretences, a harlot of his faith, who, by sorcery and the help of the
Evil One, hath seduced into frantic passion the heart of the heir of the most
Christian king? [. . .] The arts that seduced Solomon are employed against thy
son [. . .] so that, through the future sovereign of Spain, the counsels of Jewish
craft may establish the domination of Jewish ambition. How knowest thou [. . .]
but what the next step might have been thy secret assassination, so that the
victim of witchcraft, the minion of the Jewess, might reign in the stead of the
mighty and unconquerable Ferdinand?”

Like Aguilar, Bulwer-Lytton places primary responsibility for the persecution of
the Jews on Torquemada and the Catholic Church rather than on the reigning
sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, both of whom are shown to have misgivings,
though those of Ferdinand are easily overcome by political considerations. Having
acceded in principle to the Inquisitor’s demands, the king is uneasy and seeks “the
solace of confession.” What he confesses to, however, are minor omissions in his
religious practice. He cannot bring himself to acknowledge that “he persecuted from
policy,” but instead “believed, in his own heart, that he punished but from piety.”
Neither the prince nor the monk, as the narrator takes care to point out, could
imagine that there was “an error to confess in, or a penance to be adjudged to the
cruelty that tortured a fellow-being, or the avarice that sought pretences for the
extortion of a whole people” (81-83).

Again like Aguilar, Bulwer-Lytton imagines the development of a mutual
affection, in this case a loving mother-daughter relationship, between Queen Isabella
and the young Jewish girl left behind in the Christian camp after her father’s defection to the Moors. Isabella’s kindness and compassion, seconded by that of the motherly woman to whom the queen entrusts her, lead Leila to emerge from the blind submission imposed on her by Almamen, to form a more positive view of Christianity, and to recognize that her own feelings are not in any way un-Christian. Quite the contrary. The Jewess will be redeemed, the reader can anticipate, by converting of her own free will, as Isabella had hoped and planned, to the true religion. As in Aguilar’s novels, love – especially that leading one woman to reach out to another – is far more effective in resolving differences and conflicts than the doctrines and arguments favoured by men. “Take comfort, poor child,” Isabella tells the fearful and deeply troubled Leila.

“Weep not: all have their cares; our duty is to bear in this life, reserving hope only for the next.” [. . .] The queen [. . .] spoke with a prophetic sadness which yet more touched a heart that her kindness of look and tone had already softened; and, in the impulse of a nature never tutored in the rigid ceremonials of that stately court, Leila suddenly came forward, and falling on one knee, seized the hand of her protectress, and kissed it warmly through her tears. “Are you, too, unhappy,” she said, — “I will pray for you to my God!” The queen, surprised and moved [...] left her hand in Leila’s grateful clasp; and laying the other upon the parted and luxuriant ringlets of the kneeling maiden, said, gently, “And thy prayers shall avail thee and me when thy God and mine are the same. Bless thee, maiden! I am a mother, thou art motherless — bless thee!” (92-93)

Transferred, at Isabella’s command, to a large fortress, Leila finds herself in the company of a kind and thoughtful older woman, Donna Inez de Quexada, “the only lady in Spain, of pure and Christian blood, who did not despise or execrate the name of Leila’s tribe. Donna Inez had herself contracted to a Jew a debt of gratitude which she had sought to return to the whole race.” As she herself explains to Leila, her wayward, wandering son had twice been saved from dangerous robbers by a young Jew, with whom he had then formed a close friendship, so that, on her son’s succumbing to an illness, he had, on his deathbed, made his mother swear that she would not share the general prejudice against Jews but help them as best she could. Much later in the narrative it is revealed that her son’s Jewish saviour and friend was none other than the youthful Almamen -- still “dignified and stately” at the time, according to Donna Inez, and bearing “no likeness to the cringing servility of his brethren” (96, 119-20) — in other words, not, as he has come to be, like other Jews. The episode seems intended to convey to the reader that Leila’s father had been a kind and generous human being before the Spanish Christians’ hatred of Jews, along no doubt with doctrinaire Judaism, transformed him into a scheming fanatic.

As the fiction progresses through episode after lively episode in the political and military struggle for Granada between Christians under Ferdinand and Isabella,
and Moors under Boabdil (Muhammed XII), Leila’s father, who has somehow managed to slip behind the Christian lines to visit her, warns her never to abandon the commitment to Judaism that he has instilled in her. She is nonetheless drawn to Christianity, having come to see it as the fulfilment of Judaism: “Often she [...] startled the worthy Inez, by exclaiming, ‘This, your belief, is the same as mine, [...] — Christianity is but the Revelation of Judaism” (100). In this conviction, she converts and resolves to end her days as a nun in a convent. But before she can take her vows a trio of men try to dissuade her. Learning of her conversion, Almamen, accompanied this time by Muza, the Moorish prince, again finds a way to reach the convent where his daughter is to take vows. They are preceded by Don Juan, now magically transformed from a libertine into a true lover, who pleads passionately with Leila not to cut herself off from the joys of the world but to join him in a loving and protective union. Touched by his appeal, which reminds her of her love for Muza, Leila confesses that another had already won her heart.

"Prince, I trust I have done with the world, and bitter the pang I feel when you call me back to it. But you merit my candour: I have loved another; and in that thought, as in an urn, lie the ashes of all affection. That other is of a different faith. We may never — never meet again below, but it is a solace to pray that we may meet above. That solace, and these cloisters, are dearer to me than all the pomp, all the pleasures, of the world. Go, then, Prince of Spain, son of the noble Isabel, Leila is not unworthy of her cares. Go, and pursue the great destinies that await you. And if you forgive — if you still cherish a thought of — the poor Jewish maiden, soften, alleviate, mitigate the wretched and desperate doom that awaits the fallen race she has abandoned for thy creed."

Invoking a blessing on her, the prince withdraws in sadness. “I thank thee, Heaven, that it was not Muza!” Leila mutters, “breaking from a reverie, in which she seemed to be communing with her own soul; ‘I feel that I could not have resisted him.’ With that thought she knelt down, in humble and penitent self-reproach, and prayed for strength. Her warmest wish now, was to abridge the period of her noviciate, which, at her desire, the church had already rendered merely a nominal probation.”

Soon after, Almamen appears on the scene, mounted behind Muza on the latter’s horse after an exhausting and dangerous ride behind the Christian lines. About an hour into their journey, Almamen had paused.

“I am wearied,” said he, faintly; “and, though time presses, I fear that my strength will fail me.” “Mount, then, behind me,” returned the Moor, after some natural hesitation: “Jew though thou art, I will brave the contamination for the sake of Leila.” “Moor!” cried the Hebrew, fiercely, “the contamination would be mine. Things of the yesterday, as thy prophet and thy creed are, thou canst not sound the unfathomable loathing, which each heart, faithful to the Ancient of Days, feels for such as thou and thine.” (174).
The relations of Jews and Moslems are clearly hardly any more harmonious than those of Jews and Christians.

The scene of the arrival of Almamen at the convent, the highpoint of the novel, deserves to be quoted at length. The men first catch sight of the convent from a distance.

On a gentle eminence, above this plain or garden, rose the spires of a convent; and, though it was still clear daylight, the long and pointed lattices were illumined within; and, as the horsemen cast their eyes upon the pile, the sound of the holy chorus — made more sweet and solemn from its own indistinctness, from the quiet of the hour, from the sudden and sequestered loveliness of that spot, suiting so well the ideal calm of the conventual life — rolled its music through the odorous and lucent air. But that scene and that sound, so calculated to soothe and harmonise the thoughts, seemed to arouse Almamen into agony and passion. He smote his breast with his clenched hand; and, shrieking, rather than exclaiming, "God of my fathers! have I come too late?" buried his spurs up to the rowels in the sides of his panting steed. Along the sward, through the fragrant shrubs, athwart the pebbly and shallow torrent, up the ascent to the convent, sped the Israelite. Muza, wondering and half reluctant, followed at a little distance. Clearer and nearer came the voices of the choir; broader and redder glowed the tapers from the Gothic casements: the porch of the convent chapel was reached; the Hebrew sprang from his horse. A small group of the peasants dependent on the convent loitered reverently round the threshold: pushing through them, as one frantic, Almamen entered the chapel, and disappeared. A minute elapsed. Muza was at the door; but the Moor paused irresolutely ere he dismounted. "What is the ceremony?" he asked of the peasants. "A nun is about to take the vows," answered one of them. A cry of alarm, of indignation, of terror, was heard within. Muza no longer delayed: he gave his steed to the bystander, pushed aside the heavy curtain that screened the threshold, and was within the chapel. By the altar gathered a confused and disordered group — the sisterhood, with their abbess. Round the consecrated rail flocked the spectators, breathless and amazed. Conspicuous above the rest, on the elevation of the holy place, stood Almamen, with his drawn dagger in his right hand, his left arm clasped around the form of a novice, whose dress, not yet replaced by the serge, bespoke her the sister fated to the veil: and, on the opposite side of that sister, one hand on her shoulder, the other rearing on high the sacred crucifix, stood a stern, calm, commanding form, in the white robes of the Dominican order: it was Tomas de Torquemada. "Avaunt, Abaddon [Prince of Darkness—L.G.!!]" were the first words which reached Muza's ear, as he stood, unnoticed, in the middle of the aisle: "here thy sorcery and thine arts cannot avail thee. Release the devoted one of God!" "She is mine! she is my daughter! I claim her from thee as a father, in the name of the great Sire of Man!" "Seize the sorcerer! seize him!" exclaimed the inquisitor, as, with a sudden movement, Almamen cleared his way through the scattered and dismayed group, and stood, with his daughter in his arms, on the first step of the consecrated platform. But not a foot stirred
— not a hand was raised. The epithet bestowed on the intruder had only breathed a supernatural terror into the audience; and they would have sooner rushed upon a tiger in his lair, than on the lifted dagger and savage aspect of that grim stranger. "Oh, my father!" then said a low and faltering voice, that startled Muza as a voice from the grave — "wrestle not against the decrees of Heaven. Thy daughter is not compelled to her solemn choice. Humbly, but devotedly, a convert to the Christian creed, her only wish on earth is to take the consecrated and eternal vow." "Ha!" groaned the Hebrew, suddenly relaxing his hold, as his daughter fell on her knees before him, "then have I indeed been told, as I have foreseen, the worst. The veil is rent — the spirit hath left the temple. Thy beauty is desecrated; thy form is but unhallowed clay. Dog!" he cried, more fiercely, glaring round upon the unmoved face of the inquisitor, "this is thy work: but thou shalt not triumph. Here, by thine own shrine, I spit at and defy thee, as once before, amidst the tortures of thy inhuman court. Thus — thus — thus — Almamen the Jew delivers the last of his house from the curse of Galilee!" "Hold, murderer!" cried a voice of thunder; and an armed man burst through the crowd, and stood upon the platform. It was too late: thrice the blade of the Hebrew bad passed through that innocent breast; thrice was it reddened with that virgin blood. Leila fell in the arms of her lover; her dim eyes rested upon his countenance, as it shone upon her, beneath his lifted vizor — a faint and tender smile played upon her lips — Leila was no more. One hasty glance Almamen cast upon his victim, and then, with a wild laugh, that woke every echo in the dreary aisles, he leaped from the place. Brandishing his bloody weapon above his head, he dashed through the coward crowd; and, ere even the startled Dominican had found a voice, the tramp of his headlong steed rang upon the air: an instant — and all was silent. (177-80)

Leila’s fate confirms the generally held view among Bulwer-Lytton’s Christian readers, that Jewish women were more sensitive and more susceptible to the appeal of Christianity, more open to conversion, than Jewish men. Unlike Scott’s Rebecca or Aguilar’s Marie, both of whom, without being fanatically committed, remain deeply loyal to their Jewish faith, Leila willingly converts to Christianity. Indeed, her martyrdom at the hands of her own father transforms her into a Christ-figure, rejected and crucified by her own people. At the same time, the novel implies that as long as persecution and extortion of the Jews continue, so too, on their side, will disloyalty, dissimulation, and fanaticism, extending to violence and even, in an extreme case, to infanticide.

Bulwer-Lytton nevertheless cautiously and uncertainly evokes the possibility of some form of coexistence and mutual respect. As a young man, Almamen, as we saw, was not a narrow-minded fanatic but a generous human being eager to help out an endangered fellow human being, who happened to be a Christian. More guardedly, at the end of their bloody conflict Bulwer-Lytton depicts the enemies -- Ferdinand and Isabella on the one hand, Boabdil on the other, the victorious Christians and the defeated Moor — parting on a note of limited mutual respect, the
victors having imposed relatively moderate peace conditions on their defeated enemy, even though their profound religious and political estrangement remains unresolved. Ferdinand graciously refuses to allow Boabdil to dismount and offer the obeisance of the conquered to the conqueror. "Brother and prince," he tells him. "[ . . . ] forget thy sorrows; and may our friendship hereafter console thee for reverses, against which thou hast contended as a hero and a king—resisting man, but resigned at length to God!" Thereupon Boabdil has his men present the keys of the city to Ferdinand. "O king!" he says. "Accept the keys of the last hold which has resisted the arms of Spain! The empire of the Moslem is no more. Thine are the city and the people of Granada: yielding to thy prowess, they yet confide in thy mercy." With the Spaniard’s response, the novel closes:

"Since we know the gallantry of Moorish cavaliers, not to us, but to gentler hands, shall the keys of Granada be surrendered." Thus saying, Ferdinand gave the keys to Isabel, who would have addressed some soothing flatteries to Boabdil: but the emotion and excitement were too much for her compassionate heart, heroine and queen though she was; and, when she lifted her eyes upon the calm and pale features of the fallen monarch, the tears gushed from them irresistibly, and her voice died in murmurs. [. . . ] There was a momentary pause of embarrassment, which the Moor was the first to break. "Fair queen," said he, with mournful and pathetic dignity, "thou canst read the heart that thy generous sympathy touches and subdues: this is thy last, not least, glorious conquest. But I detain ye: let not my aspect cloud your triumph. Suffer me to say farewell." (194-96)

Ferdinand, in return, takes a generous farewell of his defeated enemy. "Go, my brother, and fair fortune with you! Forget the past." Thereupon "Boabdil smiled bitterly, saluted the royal pair with profound and silent reverence, and rode slowly on, leaving the army below, as he ascended the path that led to his new principality beyond the Alpuxarras" (194-96).

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This lengthy but highly selective review of Jewish participation in English literature, music and the visual arts at the close of the eighteenth century and in the early decades of the nineteenth and of Christian attitudes to Jews as reflected in the work of a few notable Christian theologians and literary men and women in the same period was intended to demonstrate the increasing role of Jews in English culture and society and the increasing, though still incomplete acceptance of Jews into that society and culture. These discussions have provided the context for the political struggle for complete emancipation of the Jews in the first half of the nineteenth century, and to this we shall now turn.
Bibliography


PART III

Towards Full Emancipation in the Victorian Age

The ever increasing acculturation of English Jews, the liberal and humanitarian ideas of the Enlightenment, and theological views of the people of God differing among many Christian sects from those of the established Church of England led to growing pressure for the removal of every remaining piece of discriminatory legislation affecting the Jews of England, less subject as they already were to being discriminated against than the Jews of many continental countries. At the same time, opposition to full emancipation did not vanish, by any means. Partly the persistence of such opposition can be attributed to traditional theologically inspired misgivings and partly it was motivated by centuries-old prejudices, distrust, and outright hostility.

In addition, the immediate political context of the long debate and of the repeated rejection by Parliament of bills brought forward in favour of full emancipation should not be overlooked. The Napoleonic Wars and the fervent nationalism they encouraged focused attention on the Jews as a stubbornly persistent minority, a nation within each nation, sharing a national identity with fellow-Jews dispersed in other nations rather than with the nationals of the country in which they resided, made their living, and may well have been born. Were English Jews, in short, as fully English, as unequivocally dedicated to the English state as English Christians? Could their loyalty be counted on? Or did their remarkable, centuries-long survival as a distinct people, a nation in its own right, set them so much apart that, as long as they continued to insist on their identity as Jews, the possibility that essential state functions might be entrusted to them provoked misgivings and outright opposition. It was almost inevitable that the process leading to full emancipation of the Jews would be longer and more difficult than that which led to the undoing of restrictions imposed on Dissenting Christians and Roman Catholics, even though the latter suffered from a not altogether dissimilar distrust because of their alleged primary loyalty to an international church and its leader, the Pope.

Not all Jews themselves, moreover, favoured or cared about emancipation. The poor, street Jews and even some who had moved up in the world somewhat were often so completely absorbed in making a living that they were both indifferent to and ignorant of politics. Occasional public meetings organised by the emancipationists to get them engaged were largely ineffective. There is little reason to doubt the basic truth of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s claim in 1841 that emancipation measures “might satisfy the ambitious view of a few individuals but [ . .
cannot increase the comfort or happiness of the great proportion of the Jewish people” (Quoted Finestein, 127). In articles written in the 1840s for the *Morning Chronicle*, Henry Mayhew recounted that “I found among the Jewish street-sellers and old-clothes men with whom I talked on the subject [. . .] a perfect indifference to, and nearly as perfect an ignorance of, politics” (127). A decade later, in its issue of 10 January, 1850, the London correspondent of the New York Jewish weekly, the *Asmonean*, reported that “the Jews as a body are quite indifferent in England to Jewish emancipation. It appears to me,” he wrote, “that it is but the ambition of a few individuals in the Jewish community in England who care at all about it” (Quoted Finestein, 133). The view that only a few Jews cared about emancipation was so entrenched that on 11 April, 1833, a letter was sent off to Robert Grant, the M.P. then leading the case for a second emancipation bill in Parliament, asserting that the alleged view was unfounded. However, since of the sixty-eight signers of the letter, three were Rothschilds, six Goldsmids, and five Mocattas (an extremely wealthy, well established Sephardi family, some members of which were in business partnership with the Goldsmids), along with various other prominent emancipationists, the assertion was less than overwhelmingly convincing.

Some better educated Jews even opposed political emancipation on the grounds that it would spell an enfeeblement of the Jewish identity, faith, and religious commitment that had endured for thousands of years. Thus, for example, the Hungarian-born Joseph Crooll, a teacher of Hebrew at Cambridge and former preacher at the Manchester Synagogue, argued in a work of 1829 entitled *The Last Generation* that Jewish “separateness” was a divinely ordained condition pending the messianic restoration of God’s people to the Holy Land. Emancipation, he feared, would wean Jews from Judaism. “London,” they would say, “is our Jerusalem; we have no need of any other Jerusalem.” Inevitably this position was exploited by the opponents of emancipation. Thus Sir Robert Inglis, M.P. for Oxford University, one of the most persistent of the latter, as well as a no less persistent opponent of any move towards Roman Catholic emancipation or parliamentary reform, maintained in the House of Commons, at the time of Robert Grant’s second introduction of an Emancipation Bill in 1833, that “birth does not make a Jew an Englishman” and that “those Jews who preserve their scriptural character do not desire the boon of emancipation.” In similar vein the Archbishop of Canterbury, another regular opponent of the emancipation bills, declared that “the greater portion of the Jews are perfectly indifferent about the Bill. I know that some of them are decidedly hostile to the measure and sincerely deprecate it on conscientious grounds” (Quoted Finestein 116-17).

George Eliot summed up something akin to the anti-emancipation position of some Jews when she had it presented, with an extreme emphasis on the identity of religion and race or nation, by Mordecai, the ailing but passionately Jewish Jew who attaches himself to the hero Daniel Deronda in her novel of that name, published in
1876 but set in the 1860s (i.e. only a couple of years after full emancipation had in fact been realised and Jews had finally been officially permitted to take their seat in Parliament). The rationalist Gideon in the poor man’s “philosophers” club that Mordecai frequents outlines a favourable Jewish view of emancipation and gradual assimilation:

I’m a rational Jew myself. I stand by my people as a sort of family relations, and I am for keeping up our worship in a rational way. I don’t approve of our people getting baptised, because I don’t believe in a Jew’s conversion to the Gentile part of Christianity. And now we have political equality, there’s no excuse for a pretense of that sort. But I am for getting rid of all of our superstitions and exclusiveness. There’s no reason now why we shouldn’t melt gradually into the populations we live among. That’s the order of the day in point of progress. I would as soon my children married Christians as Jews. And I’m for the old maxim, “A man’s country is where he’s well off.”

To this “modern” and emancipationist statement Mordecai responds emotionally, rejecting both the desirability and the possibility of assimilation for an authentic Jew – a position articulated at several points in Eliot’s novel:

What I say is, let every man keep far away from the brotherhood and inheritance he despises. Thousands on thousands of our race have mixed with the Gentiles as Celt with Saxon, and they may inherit the blessing that belongs to the Gentile. You cannot follow them. You are one of the multitudes over this globe who must walk among the nations and be known as Jews, and with words on their lips which mean, ‘I wish I had not been born a Jew, I disown any bond with the long travail of my race, I will outdo the Gentile in mocking at our separateness,’ they all the while feel breathing on them the breath of contempt because they are Jews, and they will breathe it back poisonously. Can a fresh-made garment of citizenship weave itself straightway into the flesh and change the slow deposit of eighteen centuries? What is the citizenship of him who walks among a people he has no hardy kindred and fellowship with, and has lost the sense of brotherhood with his own race? It is a charter of selfish ambition and rivalry in low greed. He is an alien of spirit, whatever he may be in form; he sucks the blood of mankind, he is not a man, sharing in no loves, sharing in no subjection of the soul, he mocks it all. (381-82; Book VI, ch. xlii)

* * *

Despite the indifference of many poorer Jews and the resistance of others fearful for the continuation of the Jewish religion and of the Jews as a people, the chosen people, despite the hostility, more or less deeply ingrained of significant sectors of Christian society, including members of the political class, the movement for
complete emancipation of the Jews in England was not abandoned by its supporters. In the concluding section of this study an attempt will be made to map out the essential lines of the protracted and complicated process of emancipation in nineteenth century England.

For a century and a half the Corporation and Test Acts of 1661 and 1673 had excluded anyone who did not take Holy Communion in the Church of England from serving as the mayor of a town or a member of the town corporation and from holding civil and military office. In February 1828, with the Tory Duke of Wellington as Prime Minister and Robert Peel as Home Secretary, the Liberal Lord John Russell, under whose government the great Reform Act of 1832 was soon to be passed, introduced the Sacramental Test Bill, which aimed at the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. With the support of the Tories and the House of Lords, including many Anglican bishops, his Bill was passed three months later, with the result that all civil and municipal offices were opened to Protestant Dissenters, including Unitarians, Methodists, and Quakers. As if in anticipation that the Jews would seek to take advantage of the repeal, the Bishop of Llandaff managed to have the words "upon the true faith of a Christian" incorporated into the new oath on taking office – despite the strong opposition of Lord Holland, the most prominent Liberal in the House of Lords. It took another year, an explosion of pamphlets and persistent agitation on the part of champions of emancipation led by the indefatigable Daniel O'Connell, for public offices, including Parliament itself, to be opened to Roman Catholics. The Catholic Relief Act abolished a requirement of the Sacramental Test Act that all M.P.s take the oath of abjuration and declare against transubstantiation, the invocation of the Virgin Mary, and the sacrifice of the mass. O'Connell believed that the principles underlying Catholic emancipation also supported emancipation of the Jews and he urged his Jewish fellow-citizens to continue to agitate for the emancipation of their co-religionists, promising to help in every way possible. (See Appendix B)

That turned out, however, to be a much more difficult and protracted affair, proceeding slowly, step by step, for the next thirty years. Opposition to Jewish emancipation, in particular to the admission of Jews to Parliament, proved to be deeply entrenched in influential social milieux.

It will be useful to begin by outlining briefly what some of the disabilities affecting the Jews of England were. It should be borne in mind, however, that the mere knowledge that disabilities existed, no matter how slight, no matter how rarely encountered or experienced, was inevitably accompanied, especially among the super-wealthy and well established, by a more general feeling of remaining, in some measure, tolerated and respected outsiders rather than the full fellow-citizens, English men and women who happen to be Jewish by religion, as the more educated
and well-to-do Jews in general wanted themselves to be seen and felt themselves to be.

The most prominent and successful Jews, it will be recalled, were financiers, stockbrokers and prominent merchants engaged in the West Indies and China trades. This in itself was in part the consequence of the restrictions to which Jews were subject. As we shall have occasion to mention again shortly, retail trade within London, for instance, was not permitted to Jews, since the regulations of the City of London prohibited all but freemen of the City from engaging in retail trade inside the city limits and all persons of Jewish birth, even if converted to Christianity, were barred from the freedom of the City. Jewish professional men were likewise few. Until 1833 Jews were excluded from the Bar and although some can be found in the lower branch of the legal profession, the number of solicitors was still small. As already noted, Jews were excluded from serving as mayor of a town or member of the town council and from holding civil and military office. Even in the field of medicine, where Jews had always been active, Jews were not numerous. As the Anglo-Jewish historian and British civil servant Albert Hyamson put it a century ago in his *History of the Jews in England* (1908):

The number of disabilities under which the Jews of England laboured was considerable, but they varied in their pressure. Several were theoretical rather than practical, and the sole inconvenience to which they gave rise was the doubt in which the position of the Jews was placed. For instance, varying positions were held as to the right of Jews to hold land, and no definite interpretation of the law on the point was accepted. There were, however, a number of legal enactments that differentiated against the Jewish inhabitants as compared with their Christian neighbours. Of these disabilities some were invariably enforced, others were sometimes enforced and at others ignored, while still others had apparently been allowed to become dead letters but were always liable to revival. Summing up, English law as it affected Jews in 1830 excluded them from Parliament, from high rank in the army and navy, from membership of the University of Oxford, and from degrees, scholarships, fellowships, and positions of emolument in the University of Cambridge. There were, in addition, positions from which they might be excluded if those in authority so wished. Jews might be debarred from voting at parliamentary elections if the returning officers cared to exercise their powers to the full. Their admission to the Bar depended entirely upon the attitude of the Inns of Court. It was only at the will of individual corporations that Jews could be admitted to offices connected with them. (320-21; also Finestein, 113)

The weakening, under pressure from Dissenting Protestants, Roman Catholics, Liberals, and even some Tories, of the traditional establishment notion that the British state and the Church of England were in some way a single indivisible entity, and the passing of the Catholic Relief Act in 1829 led to what seemed to many a logical consequence: the introduction in 1830, by Robert Grant, a liberally inclined
member of a family from North-Eastern Scotland, M.P. for Inverness, and future Governor of Bombay, of a bill for the emancipation of the Jews of Great Britain – or, as the text of the Act always has it, “of His Majesty’s subjects professing the Jewish religion.” (The opening paragraph of Grant’s bill can be read below in Appendix C). The same oath on the Old Testament, acceptable to Jews and already accepted in courts of law by testifying Jews, was henceforth to apply to all offices requiring the swearing of an oath.

Though the Tory prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, had been at first not unsympathetic to the bill and had in fact recommended that for practical purposes its introduction be delayed until the turmoil over the Catholic Relief Act had subsided, the government opposed Grant’s bill on its second reading and the bill, which had been passed on the first reading in a fuller House by 115 votes in favour to 97 opposed, was defeated on the second reading by 265 votes opposed to 228 in favour. Most liberals supported the bill on the basis of freedom of religion – prominent among them Lord John Russell, a leader of the Liberals in the fight for the 1832 Reform bill, Thomas Babington Macaulay, the great historian, who wrote up his powerful pro-emancipation maiden speech in the Commons for publication as a widely read article in the *Edinburgh Review* (January 1831) and who intervened again in support of the 1833, 1834, and 1841 bills, and Lord Holland, the nephew of the Liberal Charles James Fox, along with a leading Tory, William Huskisson, M.P for Liverpool. In addition, petitions in favour of the bill were submitted from Christians in the trading ports of Bristol and Liverpool, the latter with more than 2,000 signatories, including not only “the Mayor and many members of the Corporation, but every banker, and almost every merchant of weight in the town.” An honourable friend of his, Huskisson informed his fellow M.P.s, had told him that “he had never known any petition from Liverpool more numerously and respectably signed. It was also signed by several clergymen of the Church of England” (Hansard, 4 May, 1830). Opponents of the bill – Robert Peel, William Gladstone, Lord Shaftesbury -- argued that a country that was not governed by an exclusively Christian legislature could not be considered a Christian country and, moreover, that the Jew was cosmopolitan rather than English, French, or Prussian and did not look on the country of his domicile in any light but that of a temporary resting place (Hyamson, 325).

In 1833 Grant reintroduced a Jewish emancipation bill virtually identical with the 1830 bill. As the Liberals were now the governing party, the outlook for passage must have seemed more propitious, and Grant’s bill did this time win acceptance in the lower house with 189 votes in favour and only 52 against. In the Lords, the *Duke of Sussex*, the liberally minded younger brother of King William IV (who was known to oppose the bill) and an accomplished Hebrew scholar, presented a petition in the bill’s favour signed by 1,000 distinguished citizens of Westminster. But the House of Lords again rejected the bill by 104 votes to 56, with Wellington now among its active opponents. A further attempt to get a bill passed in 1834 met with a similar
fate, being defeated in the House of Lords by a majority of 92 votes. In 1836 a bill was again introduced late in the session and succeeded in passing its first reading in the Lords, but was dropped owing to the lateness of the session.

Even as bills for general emancipation were failing in Parliament, more and more of the relatively small number of disabilities affecting English Jews were being removed, one after another. In 1831 Jews were admitted as Freemen of the City of London, which thus opened up the retail trade in the capital to them. In 1833 Francis Henry Goldsmid, son of the financier Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, was admitted to the Bar after taking an oath, modified so as to be binding on his conscience, on a copy of the Old Testament. In theory, voters in an election might be required to take an oath, the Oath of Abjuration, in order to be permitted to exercise the franchise. This requirement would have deprived English Jews of the right to vote in elections, since the oath was unacceptable to them as Jews, but in fact it was hardly ever applied and an Act passed in 1835 officially relieved voters of the necessity of taking any oath.

As noted, Jews were barred from the office of mayor as well as from the corporations of the country’s towns and cities. Thanks to the action of one man, David Salomons (1797-1873), this restriction was removed by the early 1840s. The son of Levi Salomons, a prominent Ashkenazi stockbroker, David Salomons became himself a member of the Stock Exchange in 1823 and a Lloyds underwriter in 1834. As a founder of the London and Westminster Bank in 1832, he was one of a small number of Jews who participated in the development of joint stock banking in Britain. In 1835 he decided to run for election as Sheriff of London and Middlesex and won election to the office, but objections were raised to his serving, on the ground that it would be necessary for him to make the declaration on oath required of all holders of corporate offices.

The question was speedily settled on the initiative of Lord John Russell, who introduced and passed through Parliament a measure declaring that for admission to the office of sheriff the declaration was unnecessary. Salomons accordingly served his year of office, and was succeeded two years later by another Jew, Moses Montefiore. In 1836 Salomons was also elected an alderman of the City of London. Presenting himself to take the municipal oaths of office, he asked to be excused from making the statutory declaration in the prescribed form and to be permitted to make it in a form acceptable to him as a Jew. The Court of Aldermen had the right to grant this dispensation, as the Corporations of Portsmouth, Birmingham and Southampton had already done, but it refused. Though Salomons was repeatedly elected by different wards of the City, the Court of Aldermen would not budge from its decision. Salomons appealed to the courts of law. The Court of Queen’s Bench decided in his favour, but the decision was reversed on appeal. Salomons then petitioned Parliament to enable him to perform the duties for which he had been duly elected, and in 1841 a bill was introduced into the House of Commons “For the Relief of
Persons of the Jewish Religion elected to Municipal Offices.” Though the Lords at first rejected the bill, it was reintroduced by Sir Robert Peel’s government four years later and became law. All municipal offices were thus opened to Jews and Salomons himself served with distinction as Mayor of London in 1855. Jews soon served as magistrates and high sheriffs of their counties and Queen Victoria honoured three of them with the title of baronet before any Jew was able to take a seat in Parliament.

It should be noted that converted and baptised Jews were NOT excluded from Parliament, since they could and did take the required oath. Converted Jews had in fact served as MPs from the 1770s on. Benjamin Disraeli is only the best known of them. Among them, as of 1770, Sampson Eardley (or Gideon), son of a Jewish banker (Gideon) who had advised the government in the 1740s; as of 1802 Sir Menasseh Masseh Lopes, born in Jamaica of a former Portuguese Jewish family; as of 1814 his nephew Sir Ralph Lopes. All three were Tories. Another son of a Sephardi merchant, Ralph Bernal, known as a Shakespearean actor and outstanding orator, served as Liberal M.P. for Lincoln (1818-1820), then Rochester (1820-41 and 1847-52), while his son Ralph Bernal Osborne, after beginning his career in the Highland Light Infantry and the Royal Fuseliers, also ended up serving as a liberal M.P., in his case, for Middlesex, Dover, Liskeard, Nottingham and Waterford City in succession (1841-74). He was, in addition, First Secretary to the Admiralty (1853-58).

The failure to achieve passage of the various acts of emancipation introduced in the 1830s meant that the erosion of the remaining disabilities affecting English Jews still left the most prominent and essential of those in place: the right of every one of His or Her Majesty’s subjects (Victoria acceded to the throne in 1837) to hold a seat in Parliament and serve the country as M.P. Rather than continue the unsuccessful practice of introducing general emancipation bills, a new tactic was now tried – similar to the one that had worked for Daniel O’Connell in opening up Parliament to Roman Catholics and that had enabled Salomons to serve as an alderman of the City of London, that is, presenting a candidate and winning election. Accordingly, in the election of 1847 Baron Lionel de Rothschild, a leading figure in both the Anglo-Jewish community and the City, was nominated as Liberal candidate for the City of London, along with Lord John Russell, the Liberal Prime Minister. Though the Tories did well in this election, of the four individuals duly elected, Rothschild came in third. When Parliament assembled, the new member for the City presented himself at the table of the House of Commons to be sworn in, but as he declared himself unable to take the required oath “on the true faith of a Christian,” he was refused permission to take his seat. In face of the paradox of an elected individual’s being unable to take his seat, the Prime Minister introduced a bill for the removal of the disability that excluded Jews from Parliament. Russell’s bill aroused wide interest and petitions for and against it came from all parts of the country, with 300,000 petitioning for and 56,000 against and a notable appeal to Christians in the Jewish Chronicle on July 30, 1852. The bill also won support in the Commons,
including from some distinguished Tory members (Lord George Bentinck, Sir Robert Peel) and passed through all its readings, only to be rejected by the House of Lords. The same fate befell a similar measure introduced the following year. Rothschild resigned his seat, stood for re-election and was again returned to the House. We can turn once more to Albert Hyamson for a succinct account of the events that followed:

Despite the result of the election, the Government decided for the time being not to urge forward the legislation necessary to enable the member for the City to take his seat. His constituents thereupon held a meeting, and resolved to ask their member to present himself at the House of Commons and offer to take the oath in the form binding on his conscience. Rothschild again presented himself at the House, and his request to be permitted to be sworn on the Old Testament was granted after debate. He then proceeded to take the oath, but on omitting the phrase to which he took objection he was requested to withdraw. The House proceeded to discuss the situation, and resolved that, though Rothschild could not act as a member of the House until he had taken the oath in the prescribed form, his seat was not vacant. Finally, it adopted a resolution to the effect that, at the earliest opportunity in the following session, the House would take into consideration the form of the Oath of Abjuration, with a view to relieve Jewish subjects. The resolution was acted upon in 1851, with the result that had attended previous efforts in the same direction. (329-30)

That is to say that the Lords again rejected the change approved by the Commons.

In 1853, a version of the old Emancipation Bill was re-introduced by Lord Aberdeen, the Tory Prime Minister in a coalition government of Liberals and “Peelites”—Tory followers of Sir Robert Peel, the former Tory prime minister and leader of his party who had broken with the party majority over his support of free trade— with, once again, the usual result. A different course of action was therefore decided upon. Since most disabilities from which Jews had suffered had been removed in the course of the previous two decades, it was held, an emancipation bill similar to the earlier ones was no longer required; it was enough to deal with the parliamentary oaths alone. A bill was therefore introduced to the Lords by Lord Lyndhurst, the Tory former Lord Chancellor (born, as it happens, in Boston as the son of the prolific and highly successful American painter John Singleton Copley), for the purpose of simplifying the oaths by striking out such parts of them “as were inoperative, idle, and absurd.” The Lords, however, rejected this Oaths Bill not only on this occasion but in the three successive years when it was reintroduced.

In 1857, however, the government accepted an amendment to the bill stipulating that no Jew should hold the office of Regent of the kingdom, Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor or Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Introduced yet again in the 1857-1858 session, the bill was this time not rejected by the Lords. It was amended, however, by
removal of the clause providing that a Jew elected to Parliament, when taking the oath, might omit the words containing the reference to Christianity. The Commons refused to accept the amendment, since it would merely have consolidated the oaths to be taken by new members, while leaving the key question of removal of all disabilities affecting Her Majesty’s subjects of the Jewish faith unresolved. A conference ensued between the two Houses and a compromise was suggested by a Tory peer, Lord Lucan, to the effect that each House should be empowered to determine the form of the oath to be administered in that House by persons professing the Jewish faith. The Lords would not even accept this suggested compromise. It did, however, form the basis of legislation adopted on a motion of the Tory Earl Derby’s government in 1858, which allowed each House to administer its own oath. On 16 July of that year Lionel de Rothschild was able, finally, to take his seat in due form in the House of Commons -- eleven years after first being elected as M.P. for the City of London.

Complete emancipation of British Jews had at long last been achieved. It was consolidated in 1866 by passage of another Act, by which the three oaths to be taken on admission to Parliament were replaced by a single one containing absolutely no words to which a Jew might object. This measure made it possible for Jews to be admitted to both Houses and in 1886 on being raised to the peerage as Lord Rothschild, Nathan Rothschild -- a son of Baron Lionel de Rothschild -- duly took his seat in the Lords as the first unconverted Jew to be admitted to the Upper House.

Bibliography


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POSTSCRIPT

Since achieving complete emancipation in the second half of the nineteenth century Jews have contributed substantially not only to the literary, dramatic, and artistic culture of Great Britain, but to its broader political culture; and those contributions have come not only from Jewish families settled in the country at the time of the legal admission of Jews to Parliament in 1858, but from the large numbers of Eastern Jews who immigrated to Great Britain in the wake of deadly pogroms in the Russian Empire (1881-84, 1903-06). Some of the best known names in modern British art are of artists of Jewish extraction (Sir William Rothenstein, David Bomberg, Mark Gertler, Lucian Freud) and the same holds for writers, especially playwrights and directors (Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Peter Brook) and musicians (the great cellist Jacqueline Du Pre, the pianist Dame Myra Hess, the composer Gerald Finzi). Most notably, Jews have played a prominent role in British politics, a majority of them as Liberal or Labour M.P.s, but with some of the most distinguished among them as members of the Conservative party and serving in Conservative governments. To conclude this study of the Jews in England from expulsion to emancipation, some randomly selected examples in roughly chronological order will help to demonstrate how integral a part of British society and culture the nation’s Jews have become since complete emancipation was achieved in 1858.

Rufus Daniel Isaacs (1860-1935; 1st Marquess of Reading as of 1926), Liberal M.P. for Reading 1904-1913, was appointed Lord Chief Justice of England in 1913, and served as Ambassador to the U.S. in 1918 and 1919, and as Viceroy of India from 1921 until 1926. In 1931, he served as Foreign Secretary in the government of Ramsay MacDonald and as Leader of the House of Lords. He is buried in the Jewish Cemetery of Golders Green, a heavily Jewish middle-class district of London.

Herbert Samuel, (1870-1963, 1st Viscount Samuel as of 1937), a Liberal M.P. (1902-1918 and 1929-36), was Leader of the Liberal Party from 1931 to 1935. He served as Home Secretary in the national government of Labour M.P. Ramsay MacDonald in the crisis years 1929-31 and, despite his Jewish ancestry, aligned himself in the years after 1933 with Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy towards Adolf Hitler, urging that Germany be cleared of its 1914 war guilt, and that the German colonies lost after WWI be returned. In 1938, however, he supported the Kindertransport movement for refugee children from Europe with an appeal for homes for them. As High Commissioner for Palestine (1920-25), he tried to mediate between Jews and Arabs though he failed to win the confidence or support of either.

Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879-1924), Liberal M.P. for Chesterton and then Cambridgeshire 1906-22, was the third practising Jew to serve in the British cabinet.
Under Prime Minister A. A. Asquith he was named Under-Secretary of State for India (1910-14) and under Lloyd George, he served as Secretary of State for India from 1917 until his resignation in 1922. In that role he had the interests of the Empire chiefly in mind and opposed extreme nationalist movements. Montagu was primarily responsible for the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms which led to the Government of India Act of 1919, committing the British to the eventual evolution of India towards dominion status. Montague was a good friend of other notable figures in British politics – Asquith, Gertrude Bell, Duff Cooper.

Arthur Samuel (1872-1942), from a family of Ashkenazi Jews, was Lord Mayor of Norwich (1912-1913) and Conservative M.P for Farnham (1918-1937). Under the premiership of Stanley Baldwin, he served as Secretary for Overseas Trade (1924-27) and as Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1927-29) He was raised to the peerage as Baron Mancroft in 1937.

Keith Joseph (1918-1994) was Conservative M.P. for Leeds North East (1956-87). His father headed the vast family construction and project-management company, BOVIS, and was Lord Mayor of London in 1942-43. At the end of his term as Lord Mayor he was created a baronet and on his death in 1944, his son inherited the title. At the end of WWII, during which he served as a captain in the Royal Artillery, Keith Joseph became a director of the BOVIS company and was elected Alderman of the City of London. In 1956 he began his parliamentary career and within a few years, under the premierships of Edward Heath and Alec Douglas-Home, he was appointed Minister for Housing and Local Government (1962-64), under the premiership of Edward Heath, Secretary of State for Social Services (1970-74) and under Margaret Thatcher successively Secretary of State for Industry (1979-81) and Secretary of State for Education and Science (1981-86). He is best known as a friend and adviser of Prime Minister Thatcher (who referred to him as her closest political friend) and as a strong influence on her social and economic policies. He collaborated with her in setting up, in 1974, the Centre for Policy Studies, a think-tank designed to develop policies for the reformed free-market Conservatism that they both favoured.

Nigel Lawson (b. 1932, as of 1992, Baron Lawson of Blaby), scion of a wealthy Jewish family from Hampstead, and Conservative M.P. for Blaby in Leicestershire (1974-1992), served successively in Margaret Thatcher’s cabinet as Secretary of State for Energy (1981-83) and Chancellor of the Exchequer (1983-1989). A key proponent of Thatcher’s policies of privatisation of major industries and monetarism (according to an article in the Glasgow Herald for 15 September 1981, Mrs. Thatcher thought of him as “my golden boy”) Lawson oversaw the deregulation of financial markets in 1986, commonly referred to as the “Big Bang,” which shifted the centre of gravity for the world’s financial markets to London from New York City – and, as he himself subsequently acknowledged, inadvertently paved the way for the financial crisis of 2008. The immediate effect of his and Thatcher’s economic policies, however, was
the “Lawson boom,” with a striking decline in British unemployment. Lawson was also a sceptic on the issue of climate change and an early advocate of what has come to be known as “Brexit.” The UK vote to withdraw from the European Union, he claimed, by then retired and speaking in the House of Lords, was a “historic opportunity” to finish the work Margaret Thatcher started and make Britain “the most dynamic and freest country” in Europe.

Malcolm Rifkind, born in Edinburgh (1946) to a Jewish family that, like many Scottish Jews, had immigrated from Lithuania in the 1890s, was elected Conservative M.P. for Edinburgh-Pentlands (1974-97) and for Kensington and Chelsea (2005-10). Rifkind was one of only five Ministers to serve throughout the whole eighteen years of the Governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major -- the longest uninterrupted Ministerial service in Britain since Lord Palmerston in the early 19th century. He was successively, under Thatcher, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (1979-82), Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1982-83), and Minister of State for Europe (1983-86), and under John Major as Prime Minister, Secretory of State for Scotland (1986-90), Secretary of State for Transport (1990-92), Secretary of State for Defence (1992-95), and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1995-97). In addition, he was appointed Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (2010-15).

Bibliography


I should here make an end concerning the Church of Rome, but that a question incident to the mater, which last was spoken of, being moved by many, & diversly answered, doth summon me to deliver up my conjecture also; and that is, upon what ground of equity or policy the Pope should suffer both the Jews and Greeks to have publick exercise of their religion in Italie, yea in Rome itself, under his Holiness nose, and only the poor Protestant must be persecuted and chased, if it be possible, out of the world; no view of his religion to other, no exercise of it to himself permitted. For as for the Greeks, they have a Church at Venice, with an Archbishop of Philadelphia, a Bishop of Origo, and sundry other Priests to govern it. And the Italians also do often repair unto thier Mass. They have their Mass also in Greece with leavened bread & other schismaticall ceremonies at Rome itself and in Naples they say their priests retain their wives still by permission from the Pope; in regard that in these places they acknowledge the Popes preheminence and power, which at Venice they do not, but a meer primacie of order, which the auncient Councils thought good to give him. No more do Greeks in Apuglia, and Calabria, about Otranto, and at Cassana, nor in Corfu, & other Ilands adjoyning to that coast, being the old remaines of the Occidentall Greeks, and who have alwaies, and doe still followe the Greek Church in all things, though these in Calabria, and Apuglia be subject to the King of Spaine, and in his power to roote out when soever himself listeth. And yet even in Italy it selfe doth he suffer them and their Religion, who never could be induced to tollerate the Protestants in any the remotest corner of his huge scattered Monarchie, though the Greeks are condemned Heretiques, even in matter of the Trinitie, and perpetuall oppugners of the Papall right and authoritie. Then for the Jews, they even swarme in the most of the chiefe parts of Italie, at Rome specially where the least number I could ever heare them esteemed at, is ten thousand and upwards, though others say twice as many. They haue there, at the least, fower or fiue Synagogues, both there & else-where; their Circumcision, their Liturgies, their Sermons in publick, and all that may resort vnto them: yea, in means of enriching themselves, they are so much fauoured, that in all places they are permitted to straine up their usurie to eighteene in the hundred vpon the Christian, (for among themselves they no where use it) whereas also that summe in a Christian is not tollerated, which causeth many of the Christians to use these Jews under-hand, in improving their unlawful rents to their utmost proportion. They have also in some places & it may be in all, a peculiar
Magistrate, to decide any controversie betweene Christians and them, with particular direction to favor them in their trades. And lastly, where France hath banished that race, in Avignon only the Popes citie are they harbored & retained. Some answere to this demand in defence of the Pope, that the Church hath no authoritie to chastice the lewes, who never were within the Church, but are as enemies in euen termes, whereas the Protestants are either unnaturall or rebellious children, who haue flung out of the Church; or the issue of such, against whom her authoritie is endlesse, & unrestrained, to take all courses possible to reclaime them for ever. This answere seemes faultie, both as short of the question, seeing it extendeth not to the Grecians, who are in the very same role of Hereticks, & Schismaticks, flingers out of the Church; & for that there is difference betweene exercising iurisdiction in punishing an enemie, & not harboring & cherishing him, and his unlawful and scandalous religion in our verie bosoms, as is done in Italie, who have called the lewes in thither, yea, & stil do entice them whom Fraunce, England, & Spaine, have banished from them long since. Others leaving these quirkes of iustice, hold by the text of Charitie, That it is a Christian act to harbor a harmelesse enemie, & especially that it is of al other most befitting the Church, who hath hereby also better meanes to reduce them to the Faith: And so in fine to save their soules, which is the summe of their endevors. And in fortifying this answere, there is to bee alledged for the first point, that the lewes have their Service in Hebrew, and the Grecians in Greeke, which Italie understands not, yea, and that they haue purged the Hebrewe Liturgy from all points wherein they did impugne or scandalize Christianitie. And for the second point; that the lewes are bound to repaire at some times to the Christian Sermons by which meanes some few of them have beene convereted and more may be when God shall please so. But neither seems this answer so perfect as were requisite, for the lews doe make their Sermons or expositions of the Lawe in the Italian language, though the text of Scripture they cite in the originall. And although they have purged their Liturgies, as they say, yet leaving them Circumcision, they tollerate that which is now intollerable. And as for their gayning of any soules among them, if they gained not more Crownes, that reason would not stand: for if any credit may be given to the Hebrewes themselves, as many Friars become Iewes, as lewes become Friars, of both sorts some, but few of eyther. But of the good provision they have taken to convert them, and of the fruites thereof I shall speake hereafter: In the meane time, this I aske: would they suffer the English Protestants to have an English Church there, none understanding their language, neyther in service, nor Sermons, yea and purging their Lyturgy of whatsoever may seeme to impugne or deface their religion (if there be any thing in it of that offensive qualitie) as for my part I know nothing, but thinke rather, with great iudgement it was purposely so framed out of the grounds of Religion, wherein both sides agree, that their verie Catholickes might resort to it, without scruple, or scandal, if faction more then reason did not sway. Then for repayring to their Sermons they know by experience they will not be backward, especially having the opinion of great men (as some say) that it is not unlawfull. And lastly, what reason why they should not be as hopefull to
gaine English mens soules as Iewes? yes, their hope is greater, else would they not bee at such cost upon the one abroad, and bestow so little labour upon the other at home. To this question they would aunswere; first, that there were more daunger of flocking away their people, if they should have but once a bare view of our Churches, as being more infectious, therefore no policie. And secondly, to what purpose the making of any such motion, what need unto us, and unto them what profit? This answer deduced from policy and profit I take to be the right answer. Also to the first principall question, and neyther of the former drawne from Iustice or Charitie; For there is no cause of any feare at all, eyther of the oppressed Grecian, or of the obstinate lewe, bearing a marke of ignominie and reproach in all places, yea, they remaine rather as examples, and spectacles among them, of contempt and miserie; the one for the ungratefull refusall of Christ himselfe; the other for his sedition against the Vicar of Christ, as they inferre against him: whereas to give the Protestant any foot amongst them, were the next way to leave themselves no foote to stand on: On the other side, by extending pitie towards the afflicted, and dismaid Graecian, whom the verie hand of God hath laid as low as the verie dust, they saw some hope of regaining him againe vnder their subiection, which were to them a reputation and strength inestimable, and such as they cunningly by false bruits, cause the wicked daily to feede on. Then for the lew, the profit by him is exceeding great, and greater in proportion of number then by the verie Curtesans, and that as well to the Pope, as to other Princes of Italy, to whom they pay a yearely rent for the very heads they weare, besides other meanes, to racke, and wracke them in their purses at pleasure: which gaine, as it is a peece of a cause why the beastly trade of the one; so it is the entire reason why the cruell trade of the other is permitted: they being used as the Friars, to sucke from the meanest, and to be sucked by the greatest; insomuch, that the Pope besides their certaine tribute, doth sometimes (as is said) impose on them a subsidy for ten thousand crownes extraordinarie for some seruice of state.

Now to consider a little, what probabilitie of their conuersion there is in these parts. And by the way to touch somewhat of their religion, and usage. Thus standeth their case; they haue a religion, though something strange to our conceits, as being framed, not only out of the law of the old Bible, but also out of sundry capricious fancies & fables of their Rabbins, yet so hansomly peeced and glued together, that one part seemes to hang to the other not absurdly. And that which they hold, they are so perfit in, that they wil give both a probable account of it out of certaine Morall Philosophie, & reason, (wherin they are wel seen) as also make some shew for it out of the Bible it self, wherin they are the skilfullest men (I beleeeve) in the world. And needes must they be so, setting their children to the Hebrew language at three yeeres olde, and following no other studie save of the Bible, and writings upon it all their life long, except some few that betake themselves to Physicke. Touching God and his nature: Their opinions are for the most part very honorable and holy, save that they deny the trinitie. Touching Angels, but weake, and soyled with much Poetrie, Touching the nature and condition of man, very exquisite, and for the most
part, drawing neere unto truth. But for the three states of the soule of man, they run
some more strange courses, holding the creation of them altogether with sundry of
the antient, and others, the 〈 in non-Latin alphabet 〉 of Pythagoras (though not to
different species) and Platoes Purgatorie of Vertue and Vice, and mans course; in
both they thinke not much amisse, so that to the expiation of sinne, they hold
nothing necessary but the repentance of the sinners, and the mercie of the Forgiver,
which in that case is alwaies readie; For reward, that it commeth wholy from the
bountie of God, without desert, yet different in degree, according to the works of
each man. That the generall law of all men is the law of nature onely, which who so
keepes, it shall lead him to blisse, in what Religion soever, though the Hebrewes,
unto whom the law of Moses was peculiarly given, by observing it shall haue a
prerogative of glory.

They preferre the ciuill life before the solitarie, and Marriage before Virginitie,
as being to Nature more agreeable, to mankinde more profitable, and consequently
to God more acceptable. Their beleefe of the end of the world, of the finall
judgement, of the restoring of mens bodies, and of their happinesse everlasting in
the height of the heauens, is good in the generall: But as they thinke it a bad opinion
which some men seeme to hold, That God in his everlasting and absolute pleasure
should affect the extreame miserie of any of his creatures, for the shewing of his
iustice and severity in tormenting them; Or that the calamitie, casting away, and
damnation of some should absolutely and necessarily redound more to his glorie
than the felicitie of them all, considering that his nature is meere goodnessse and
happinesse, and hath no affinitie with rigour or miserie: so contrariwise they thinke
with Origen, That hell, in the end, shall be utterly abolished: And that the Divels
themselves after a long course of bitter repentance and punishment shall finde
mercie at his handes that did create them, That the World may bee entirely restored
unto that puritie wherein Almighty God at the first did make it. And to that
perfection and happinesse whereto each part of it in his severall degrees was
destined by him, from whom nothing but goodnessse and blessednesse could
proceed: Their Lyturgie in the kinde of it, is not much different from ours, consisting
in Psalmes, and Prayers with sundrie short Hymnes and Responds of Lessons: One
out of the Lawe, and read by some chiefe person, an other out of the Prophets,
correspondent unto the former in Argument, but is read by some boy or meane
companion; For they will in no sort doe honour, neyther attribute they that
authoritie to any other part of the Bible that they doe to their Law, which they doe
usually carrie about their Synagogue at the end of their Service in procession, with
many ornaments of Crownes and Scepters, the children kissing it, as it doth passe by
them. And sometimes doe they make proclamation, who will give most to their
treasure, to have the honour of that time of taking out of the Law. But for the
manner of performing their service and their behauior therat, it is different from all
other that ever I saw; They chaunt it in a strange wilde halowing tune, with imitating
sometimes trumpets, and echoing one to another, and winding up by degrees from
a soft or silent whispering to the highest and lowdest notes that their voyces will
beare, with continual great wagging of their bodies, and exultation, as it were, in
some sause and raging solemnitie, sometimes all springing up lightly from the
ground, and with as much varietie as wilde worke will receive, They weare certaine
Ornaments of imbrodered linnen, cast mantle-wise about their shoulders, which are
their Philacteries edged with knotted, fringe, according to the number of the
Commandements, and serving as locall memories of the Lawe. The reverence they
shewe, is in standing vp at times, and the gesture of adoration in bowing forwards of
their bodies; for kneeling they vse none, no more than doe the Graecians; neither
stirre they their bonets in their Synagogue to any man, but remaine still covered:
They come to it with washed hands, and in it, they burne Lamps to the honour of
God: but for any shewe of devotion, or elevation of spirit, that, yet in Iewes could I
never discerne; but they are as reverend in their Synagogues, as Grammer boyes are
at Schoole, when their master is absent: in summe, their holinesse is the very
outward worke it selfe, beeing a brainlesse head and soulesse bodie. For
circumcision they use it to the dead as well as to the living, yet no way thinke it
necessarie for the infants salvation: They are a subtill and advantagious people, and
wonderfull eagre for gaine, insomuch, that whoso deales with them, needes let his
wit goe with his believe, or else his findings shall come short to his expecting; as
earnest to make Proselits as ever were their ancestors, and as obstinate against
Christ as the Priests that condemned him. In other points they are, perhaps, rather to
be commended than otherwise. Their care of avoiding fornication is such, that they
doe marie their sons at eighteene yeares: but adulterie they would punish with
death, if they had liberty; when they break the Lawe, they come to their
Rabbi for
punishment, yet without any particular disclosing of their fault: they kepe their fasts
and feasts verie duely: But as the Christians fast the night, so they the noone alwaies:
They are charitable among themselves, leaving no poore unrelieved, no prisoner
unransomed, which maketh them good price upon everie pretence. And although for
their usurie and guilefull dealing they are generally hated there, and handled like
verie dogges, yet some of them I have knowne men of singular vertue and integritie
of minde, seeming to want no grace but the faith of a Christian: Each Synagogue hath
his Rabbi to expound their Lawe, to instruct their children, to decide their
differences. For their Messias, they say now, seeing hee stays so long, hee shall bee
a fore-runner of the end of the world, and shall gather by his power, all nations into
one folde, and so resigne them up into the handes of that eternall Pastor. But it doth
seeme they expect him out of the East, whither the Spanish Iewes fled, and have
exceedingly multiplied, for those doe they holde to bee of the Tribe of Iuda, and the
other in Germanie and in Italie to be of the Tribe of Beniamin, who in honour of the
more noble Tribe, and to correspond with them the better, do learne the Spanish
tongue which those still retaine.

But now to come to the point which I principally intended, which is, what
probabilitie there is of their conversion in Italie: Three great impediments, besides
their naturall and inrooted obstinacie I suppose there are which hinder it. The
scandals of the Christians, the want of means to instruct them, & the punishment or
losse which by their conversion they incurre. A scandal it is to see mans lawe
preferred before Gods, to see so great a matter made of eating flesh upon a friday:
and that adulterie should passe for so ordinarie a pastime; a scandal are all these
blasphemies darted up with hellish mouthes against God and our Sauiour, so
ordinarily and openly, that some of them are become verie Interiections of speech to
the vulgar, and othersome meere phrases of gallantry to the braver: a scandal is the
forging and packing of myracles, wherein the Friars and Iewes concurre in equall
diligence, the one in contriving, the other in discovering them. And surely this is an
exceeding great scandal to them; seeing truth is of so pure and victorious a nature,
that it refuseth to be in league with any falshood in the world, much more disdaineth
to be assisted by it: neither can there bee a greater wrong done to a true conclusion,
then to indeavour to prove it by an untrue allegation: a scandal is the alterations
which they are forced by the inquisitors to make in their Authors and monuments of
antiquitie, thinking that these devises are our best evidences. But of all these
alterations, they keepe a note for a time: A scandal is the vowing and praying to
Angels and Saints, which they hold to be the duties peculiar to God onely, and so
hath it beeene esteemed among them in all ages: yea, and they note that the
Christians pray more often and more willingly unto Christs mother, then unto Christ
himselfe, or to God. But the greatest scandal of all others, is their worshipping of/Images, for which both Iewes & Turkes call them Idolatrous Christians. Now this is so
much the greater, & of more indignitie, for that they generally conceiue it to be a
thing which Christ himselfe expressly commanded, and that in the Gospel of Christ,
written by the Evangelists themselves; that the Decalogue should be recited with
omission of the second Precept, as one of their greatest Rabbines contested with me,
beeing induced into that error by some Catechisme of the Christians, which he had
seene with that fault. Now when they come to conference with the Priests & Friars,
(as somtimes they do), they vpbraid this as a peremptorie exception against Christ:
those good men deny it not for feare of scandalizing their own, but letting it passe
for currant; that Christ, whom the Iewes call a Carpenters son, was an Image-maker:
or howsoever, an Author of the worshipping of them, seeking to save up the gash
which they have made in the plaine words of that Law which was written by the
finger of God, with their speculative plaisters of distinguishing betweene the Image
of the true God, and the Idolls of the false gods, of 〈 in non-Latin alphabet 〉 & 〈 in non-Latin alphabet 〉 of intention instrumental, & finall in worship; all which are
the vnfavorest dregs to the Iew in the world, who faith; there was never yet Nation in
the world vnder the Sunne, so blockish as to worship a stocke and stone, as a finall
obiect, but onely as a representer of some absent divinитye, and that the heathen
themselves call them the 〈 in non-Latin alphabet 〉 and similacra of other; yet such Effigies, as
that the divine power by his vertue, did sometimes inhabite & work miracles by, even
as our Lady doth in her images in divers places of Christendome; whereby, if the
poore ideot were deceived among the Pagаs, to thinke sometimes that very image
some diviner persō, as cleare it is, that the like befalls infinite simple christians, seeing their images either to grone or to weepe and bleede, as they doe often, and so infinite cares wrought by viewing and touching them: And for their degrees of worshippe betweene Gods image & the Saintes, they cannot perceive them, they kneele to them alike, they pray to them alike, they vow to them alike, they incence them alike, they burne candles to them alike, they clothe them alike, they offer giftes to them alike: the difference (if it be any) is in their mentall affections, which whether the blunt and undistinguishing witts of the vulgar doe observe, they suppose a small measure of discretion may conjecture. In like sort, for their distinction betweene the images of the true God, and of the false gods: they tel them that in other cases that might have his place; but now in this law, it being expounded in other places as prohibiting this base & sensuall seducing kinde of worshiping God himselfe by an image (if any image of God were possible to be made) That thus the law it selfe doth plainly deliver: thus they which received the law understood it, thus al their holly ancestors & learned doctors have still interpreted it and thus hath their nation in all ages beleived: and therefore they say, for their comming to the Christians sermons; that as long as they shall see the Preacher direct his speech and prayer to that little wooden crucifixe that stands on the pulpit by him, to call it his Lord and Saviour, to kneele to it, to imbrace it, to kisse it, to weepe upon it, (as is the fashion of Italy) this is preaching sufficient for them & perswades them more with the very sight of it, to hate Christian religion, then any reason that the world can alleadge to love it: and those be the scandals which I heard themselves alleadge they take on that side, besides their Transubstantiation, which they can at no hand digest: The particular scandals from the Protestants, is their mutual dissentions which they hold to proceed from the want of the unity of truth in their foundations, otherwise save for their generall exceptions against Christianity, they hold their religion very conformable to the law of Nature, which they account the principal. But were all the unneeedefull scandals in those parts removed, yet is their no good meanes there of the lewes conversion used. They complaine first, that the new Testament, being the ground of our religion, they cannot see it. That Italian translation which they had, is called in, and taken from them, it is printed in Hebrew letters, but not in Hebrew language, at leastwise, not in such as they can understand. With Greeke and Latine their nations never medled: besides which, the Inquisitors have inhibited and taken from them, all bookes that were ever published in that theame on either side, as well those that have bin written in defence of christian religion, as also the contrary against it, alleading they will have no disputing in matter of religion either way, much like to an Edict set up at Dola, in the frence County, where the lesuies reside, forbidding any talke of God, either in good sort, or in bad. Then lastly, for those few sermons they are bound to repaire to, seldome are they directed to the pointes they stick on, but holde on their usuall tenour, as respecting meerely the Christians. The last discouragement to men, especially of their mettall, is, that at their conversion to Christianity, they must quitte their goods to the Christians. And the reason is, for that in baptisme they reenounce the divell and all his workes, part whereof, are the lewes
goods being gotten, eyther of themselves, or of their ancestors by usury. Now this is such a cold comfort to a man set on the world, (as that Nation is wonderfully) that for my part I have not heard of any converted in those parts, save some Phisitians, with some of their children, who by friendship to the Pope, have obtained dispensation to retaine their goods stil, in as much as they were gotten by their honorable profession. But if on the contrarie side, the Christians would againe in their charity, give somewhat for the competent entertainment of such as for Gods sake did give up their owne, I could not but well commend that rigor of iustice, which the bountifulnesse of this mercy did mitigate and asweeten. But being no such matter, there remains nothing for a ew converted, but to be friared, a trade which of all other they lest can fancy, as being contrary (as they alledge to Nature it selfe) which hath made man sociable, and each helpfull to other in all civil duties, a trade never commanded or commended by God, never practised nor counselled by their renowned ancestors, who received continuall instruction and inspiration from above, which none of their Patriarces or Prophets hath given example of. Onely in three or foure thousand years, Elias and some one other, hath beene found, upon verie extraordinarie cause, to haue taken also an extraordinarie course of life, though of other nature, and to other purpose then the votaries of our times. And these are the termes that the Iewes stand on in those parts: and so must I leave them to the mercifull care of God, an unblessed and forsaken people, obstinate within, and scandalized without, indefatigable in their expectations, untractable in perswasion, worldly, yet wretched, received of their enemies, but despised and hated, scattered ouer all countries, but no where planted, daily multiplying in number, but to the increase of their servitude, and not to their power. In summe, a long conti[nued and marked example of Gods iust severitie to abate their pride, that glory even as they in their ancestors and founders, Gods Temple, and Oracles, promises, and many prerogatives, long continuance in honoured estate and glorie, (which things, if they were sufficient to preserve any seat in the world, even their seat had beene preserved by them) and to proclaime to the whole world, that there is no assurance of the fauour, protection, and assistance of God, (without which all falls to ruine) but in beleeving in his Sonne, and in keeping his commandements. And this also may serve touching the Church of Rome sufficient.

Appendix B

Letter from Daniel O’Connell to Sir L Goldsmid, 11.19.1829

My dear Sir, I am much obliged to you for your kind congratulations on the event of the Clare Election. I also gladly avail myself of this opportunity to offer you my very sincere thanks for the great kindness which my son and I received from you and your amiable family while we were in London. I assure you I should be most happy, if any event should induce you to visit the "Green Isle," to show you my sense of your kindness in the best manner in my power. Ireland has claims on your ancient race, as it is the only Christian country that I know of unsullied by any one act of persecution of the Jews. I entirely agree with you on the principle of freedom of conscience, and no man can admit that sacred principle without extending it equally to the Jew as to the Christian. To my mind it is an eternal and universal truth that we are responsible to God alone for our religious belief and that human laws are impious when they attempt to control the exercise of those acts of individual and general devotion which such belief requires. I think not lightly of the awful responsibility of rejecting true belief but that responsibility is entirely between man and his Creator, and any fellow-being who usurps dominion over belief is to my mind a blasphemer against the Deity, as he certainly is a tyrant over his fellow-creatures. With these sentiments you will find me the constant and active friend to every measure which tends to give the Jews an equality of civil rights with all other the King's subjects -- a perfect unconditional equality. I think every day a day of injustice until that civil equality is attained by the Jews. Command my most unequivocal and energetic exertions in Parliament to do away with the legal forms and the Laws which now ensnare or impede the conscientious Jew in seeking for those stations to which other subjects are entitled. I have not ability to offer you, but I have zeal and activity. Allow me at once to commence my office of your advocate, and to begin by giving you advice. It is: Not to postpone your claim of right beyond the second day of the ensuing session. Do not listen to those over-cautious persons who may recommend postponement. Believe an agitator of some experience that nothing was ever obtained by delay, at least in politics. You must to a certain extent force your claims on the Parliament. You cannot be worse, recollect, even by a failure, and you ought to be better by the experiment. As far as you and your friends may entrust the measure to me, I will bring it forward in twenty different shapes if necessary to advance its success. Of course I wish your cause committed to more able and to infinitely more influential hands than mine. I only speak of myself to indicate the mode in which I think you ought to be served. Confided or not confided in, my course will be the same, that is, I will, on every practical occasion, struggle to extend the full effect and operation of the principle of freedom of conscience You must, I repeat, force your question on the Parliament. You ought not to confide in English liberality. It is a plant not genial to the British soil. It requires a hot-bed. The English were always persecutors. Before the so-styled Reformation the English tortured the Jews and strung up in scores the Lollards. After that Reformation they still roasted the Jews and hung the Papists. In Mary's days the English with their usual cruelty retaliated the tortures on the Protestants. After her short reign there were near two centuries of the most barbarous and unrelenting cruelty exercised towards the Catholics, a
Appendix C

Opening paragraphs of Sir Robert Grant’s 1830 Bill for the emancipation “of His Majesty's Subjects professing the Jewish Religion.”


Whereas, by the operation of various laws, His Majesty's Subjects professing the Jewish Religion are subject to certain restraints and disabilities: AND whereas it is expedient that the same should be removed, and the Subjects of His Majesty professing the Jewish Religion be placed in the same state and condition, as to all civil rights and privileges, as His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects;

May it therefore please Your MAJESTY,

That it be Enacted, and may it be enacted, by the KING'S most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, THAT from and after the passing of this Act, it shall be lawful for any of His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion to have and enjoy all such and the same civil rights, franchises and privileges, and to hold, exercise and possess such and the same offices, places, employments, trusts and confidences as the subjects of His Majesty professing the Roman Catholic religion are now by law able and competent to have, enjoy, hold, exercise and possess, and under the same restrictions: Provided always, That His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion shall in all cases in which His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects are by law so required to do, take, in the form and manner and under the modifications hereinafter mentioned, and subscribe the Oaths set forth and appointed in and by an Act passed in the last Session of Parliament, intituled, "An Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects," and make and subscribe the Declaration prescribed by an Act passed in...
the ninth year of His present Majesty's reign, intituled, "An Act for repealing so much of several Acts as impose the necessity of receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as a Qualification for certain Offices and Employments."

Provided always, and be it further Enacted, That when any of His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion shall take the said Oaths or subscribe the said Declaration, the words "on the true faith of a Christian" shall be omitted.

And be it Enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That whenever any of His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion shall at any time hereafter present himself or be required to take the said Oaths appointed and set forth in and by the said Act passed in the said last Session of Parliament, or any other Oath or Oaths, all the said Oaths shall be administered to and taken by such person professing the Jewish religion in like manner as Jews are admitted to be sworn to give evidence in courts of Justice; and the same shall be deemed a sufficient and lawful taking of such Oaths on all occasions whatsoever.