

THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF JEWISH EVANGELISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY
GREAT BRITIAN: THE LONDON SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY
AMONGST THE JEWS

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For the last 2,000 years of history, there have been many efforts to convert God's Chosen People, the Jews, to Christianity. In his book, *The Emergence of The Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Michael Darby quotes famous British Christian twentieth century author and professor, C.S. Lewis, on his interpretation of what a converted Jew is:

“In a sense the converted Jew is the only normal human being in the world. To him, in the first instance, the promises were made and he has availed himself of them. He calls Abraham his father by hereditary right as well as by diving courtesy. He has taken the whole syllabus in order as it was set; eaten the dinner according to the menu. Everyone else is, from one point of view, a special case, deal with under emergency regulations. To us Christians the unconverted Jew (I mean no offence) must appear as a Christian manqué; someone very carefully prepared for a certain destiny and then missing it. And we ourselves, we christened gentiles, are after all the graft, the wild vine, possessing ‘joys not promised to our birth,’ though perhaps we do not think of this so often as we might. And when the Jew does come in he brings with him into the fold dispositions different from, and complementary of, ours; as St. Paul envisages in Ephesians 2:14-9.”¹

In the history of Great Britain, the Jews have had an important role in their own development as a people and for British society. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, perspectives began to change about Jews in Britain. The question over how to evangelize to Jews became a concern for many Britons throughout the Empire and at home. Among the many questions that were asked

¹ Michael R Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 2.

during the nineteenth century was the Jewish Question, which played a key role in Great Britain's opinions and interactions with the Jewish population at home and throughout the Empire. It is important to know the implications on what it meant to be a converted Jew, and even more so during the nineteenth century. Britain in the nineteenth century, put forth many different missionary efforts at home and abroad. In particular, Jewish missions were a significant part of these missionary efforts. One missionary group took on the task to answer the Jewish Question by means of Jewish evangelism. The most prominent and influential evangelist organization, exclusively for evangelism toward the Jews that emerged in the nineteenth century, was the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (often referred to as the LSPCJ or the London Society).²

William T. Gidney, author of *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, who was the Secretary of the LSPCJ at the time, describes how it was founded in 1809 by Joseph S.C.F. Frey, a converted Jew and German immigrant.³ His book thoroughly chronicles the one-hundred years of the LSPCJ by segmenting chapters into different periods of its existence. For Great Britain, the establishment of the London Society would prove to have a significant impact on the Jewish community, the attitudes about Jews and diminishing anti-Semitism, and indirectly on what would become the Zionist movement. Many scholars and historians attribute that its importance to examples of success, including its period of success of genuinely converting Jews to Christianity, its outreach and help to the poorer Jewish community in London, its establishment as a non-denominational organization, and its influence for Jewish evangelism in Europe, the United States, and other

² Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain up to the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 97.

³ W.T. Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908* (London: LSPCJ, 1908), 34.

parts the world.⁴ The LSPCJ established Jewish Christian churches and schools for Jewish converts and auxiliary institutions in Great Britain and throughout the British Empire. They also printed pamphlets and Hebrew New Testaments, and passed out informational tracts to the Jewish community in England, especially in East London. Most significantly, the LSPCJ helped lead to the rise of what became known as the Hebrew Christian movement in Great Britain.⁵ Although the history of Jewish Missions and the emergence of Hebrew Christianity in Great Britain are not widely discussed, their significance is important to understand on the impact they had as a whole and the implications of their attitudes toward Jews and Jewish evangelism on the British population, as well as their indirect influence on the emancipation of the Jews and the developing Zionist movement in Great Britain.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were approximately 20,000 to 26,000 Jews living in England. Among those, 15,000 to 20,000 lived primarily in London.⁶ Jewish immigrants, most of which were from Eastern Europe, primarily settled in East London. The majority of the Jewish population of London during the nineteenth century lived in Spitalfields or Whitechapel. During the eighteenth century, Sephardic Jews made up two-thirds of the wealthy Jewish population.⁷ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a large portion of London's Jews were Ashkenazic, although there was also a small but influential body of Sephardic Spanish Jews who were wealthy and prosperous. The status of London's Jews ranged from merchant princes to peddlers and hawkers. Already, by the nineteenth century, a significant portion of London's Jews were becoming increasingly Anglicized. Typically synagogues held services in Hebrew, and the Jews who attended had a traditional Torah observant lifestyle.

⁴ B.Z. Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity: The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: Wiley, 1974), 139.

⁵ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 8.

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

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

However, these “Anglicized” Jews went to Reform Synagogues which held services in English, and did not adhere to certain practices, in some cases rejecting the Talmud altogether.⁸ By 1850, England’s Jewish population was approximately 35,000, with about 18,000 to 20,000 living in London alone.⁹

Primarily throughout their history, the Jews were often marginalized for not being Christian and for not believing in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Jews in Great Britain, as a whole, were more tolerated and were better off than their fellow Jews on the Continent, particularly in Eastern Europe. Many Jews immigrated during the mid-1700s to 1800s to England, because of the religious tolerance and better standard of living.¹⁰ In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the majority of the Jewish population in Britain was part of the middle class, although they were only a very small portion of this demographic. As the nineteenth century progressed, there was a significant influx of Jewish immigrants who were mostly poor, uneducated, and were seen as aliens to native Britons. Despite these initial hindrances, throughout the nineteenth century, the Jewish community prospered in Great Britain.¹¹ Biases between Gentile Christians and Jews still existed. Moreover, Jews did not have the same legal status as their Anglican counterparts, similar to how Dissenter denominations did not either. Jews wanting to make a new life in Britain were under pressure to convert, because of many restrictions that were placed on people who were not members of the Church of England. The Jewish Naturalization Act, which was passed in 1753, granted Jews the same rights as other non-Anglican British citizens. However, Jews were still not allowed to hold a seat in Parliament or vote. Attempts were made in 1833, 1834, and 1836 for Jews to be in Parliament, but were turned down by the House of Lords. By

⁸ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 29-30.

⁹ Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950*, 9.

¹⁰ T.M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), 76-77.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

1858, Parliament passed the bill and the full emancipation of the Jews of England was finally accomplished.¹²

Even in the first decades of the nineteenth century, evangelism to the Jewish people was a difficult subject to address. Many Christians, even in Britain, believed that the Jews were the ones responsible for crucifying Jesus and that they no longer had God's divine blessing, despite the fact that most of the first century believers were in fact Jewish followers of Jesus Christ.¹³ In return, many Jews viewed Christianity as an alien religion to Judaism that did not support God's plan and had persecuted them for centuries. However, prior views on how to deal and interact with Jews were changing among Anglican and Dissenters in Britain. R.H. Martin discusses how already many Gentile Christians saw Jews as "half Christians" because they followed and understood the "Old Testament Faith."¹⁴ In many ways, Jewish evangelism was sought by missionaries as a way to remove the biases of both Christians and Jews in Britain. Moreover, there was an increased desire among many Christians, who were genuinely concerned about the salvation and welfare of the Jews not only in Britain, but throughout the world.¹⁵ As a result, more emphasis and reasons were put in place, primarily in the nineteenth century, for Jewish evangelism in Great Britain. Furthermore, as historian R.M. Smith asserts, it is important to understand that the efforts of Missions for the Jews in Great Britain began as an interdenominational cause that sought their conversion and salvation.¹⁶

¹² Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 28-29.

¹³ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 3.

¹⁴ R.H. Martin, "United Conversationist Activities among the Jews in Great Britain, 1795-1815: Pan-Evangelism and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews," *Church History* 46 (1977): 441.

¹⁵ Hannah Adams, *A concise account of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews* (Boston: Printed by John Eliot., 1816)UNIV OF OKLAHOMA LIBRARIES's Catalog, EBSCOhost : 2.

¹⁶ R.M. Smith, "The London Jews' Society and Patterns of Jewish Conversion in England, 1801-1859," *Jewish Social Studies* 43 (1981): 284.

To completely convert the Jews to Christianity and allow them to forget who they were as God's people with a rich biblical tradition and observance of the Mosaic Law, the Torah, was an attitude that many Gentile Christians in Britain shared. However, many Biblical scholars, theologians, missionaries, and churchmen before the nineteenth century believed and proposed that Jewish Christians should continue their Torah observant lifestyle. In simplest terms, they could still be Jews while believing in Jesus as the Messiah.¹⁷ However, this view was not shared by other such scholars, particularly those of the Anglican Church. Jewish evangelism emerged out of the need to convert the Jews to Protestant Christianity in a way that was directed toward the Jews personally. This, in many ways, was the most crucial aspect and reason for the emergence of Jewish evangelism in nineteenth century Britain. It became a priority to missionaries and theologians to change the attitude that spreading the Gospel should be "to the Jew first"¹⁸ and that the Jews were not in the same category as "heathens" who needed to be converted. Rather, they were a people who also followed the same God, but who did not fully accept Jesus Christ.¹⁹

In the nineteenth century, it became important for Great Britain to evangelize those who were not already believers of Jesus Christ in the British Empire. To many, it was viewed and accepted that converting those at home would lead to more success in converting those abroad. Moreover, this notion provided grounds and reasons for converting Jews to Christianity in a way that was directed toward who they were as the People of Israel. There are many reasons and theories behind why Jewish evangelism gained prominence during the nineteenth century in Great Britain, although historians and scholars on the subject have varying opinions for the

¹⁷ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 35.

¹⁸ See Romans 1:16 and 2:10.

¹⁹ R.H. Martin, "United Conversationist Activities among the Jews in Great Britain, 1795-1815: Pan-Evangelism and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews": 437.

causes. Was Jewish evangelism just a disguise for Jewish assimilation or just a better way to treat the Jews? Or rather, was it just another component of greater missionary movements in nineteenth century Britain? Moreover, could it have been connected to the growth of social reform movements or to the growth of millenarian beliefs? John M. Yeats maintains that the underlying cause for British Missions to the Jews was part of the primary effort for global evangelism and expansion of the Empire.²⁰ In other words, Jewish evangelism was another facet of general missionary growth in the nineteenth century. Inevitably, if the British were able to convert those who were known for so long for their rejection of Christianity, than not only would their other missionary movements succeed, God would ultimately bless the Empire for her good work. *A Concise Account of the LSPCJ*, which was written in 1816 and gives a general overview of the London Society, furthers this claim in that “The ultimate triumphs of Christianity itself are represented, as in a measure, suspended upon the conversion of the Jews. The world is to wait for them.”²¹ With the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, there would be no better or more successful people to deliver the message of God to the rest of the world.²²

In many ways, the emergence of Jewish evangelism of the nineteenth century is linked to the millenarian beliefs of the eighteenth century. Historian T.M. Endelman holds a slightly different view and assesses that “the associated conviction that the conversion of the Jews was linked to the Second Coming and that England had a special role to play in ushering it in,” rather than the general growth in evangelist missions. Moreover, different resources such as pamphlets, sermons, and tracts that shared these millenarian views, were very popular during the

²⁰ John M. Yeats, "To the Jew first": conversion of the Jews as the foundation for global missions and expansion in nineteenth-century British evangelicalism." *Southwestern Journal Of Theology* 47 (2005): 208.

²¹ Adams, *A concise account of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*, 10.

²² Yeats, "To the Jew first": conversion of the Jews as the foundation for global missions and expansion in nineteenth-century British evangelicalism": 215.

Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. This time of political turmoil made many Christians in Britain believe that the new millennium was upon them.²³

The Restoration of the Jews to Israel was one of the primary goals of Jewish evangelism of the nineteenth century. Restoring the Jews to Israel meant fulfilling God's ultimate promise to His People. N.I. Matar expounds upon this assessment in his analysis of the Restoration movement of the Jews to the land of Israel. He states that during this period "Restoration was now part of the white man's burden and of the colonial enterprise that would dominate the nineteenth century."²⁴ In a variety of ways, the Restoration movement was a precursor to the Zionist movement. Both Anglicans and Dissenters were part of the movement for Jewish evangelism. From the stand point of many Anglicans, they believed that the Church of England was the true and most blessed Church of God. Therefore, the Restoration must be orchestrated by efforts of evangelism from the British toward the Jews. To return to Israel as believers in Christ was the ultimate plan of God. Moreover, to be the cause of the Redemption of the People of Israel meant a role of great importance to Great Britain. *A Concise Account* of the LSPCJ explains this further:

"Great Britain, in particular, is eminently distinguished for the variety and importance of her benevolent institutions; among which the London *Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews*, must be peculiarly interesting to all who are devoutly waiting for the redemption of Israel."²⁵

In other words, Great Britain's distinguished position as the world's global power and her benevolent nature made her the most qualified to pursue evangelizing efforts to the Jews and

²³ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 200*, 69-70.

²⁴ N.I. Matar, "The Controversy over the Restoration of the Jews: From 1754 until the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews." *Durham University Journal* 82 (1990): 39.

²⁵ Adams, *A concise account of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*, 2.

help return God's People to the Holy Land to be blessed. Her example would lead to many more societies and organizations with similar pursuits.

The London Missionary Society (LMS), which was an interdenominational group established in 1795, was the primary organization for evangelism in London and other parts of Great Britain.²⁶ Under the umbrella of the LMS, initial attempts of proselytizing Jews and for Jewish Evangelism were made. One man saw that the effort to promote Christianity among the Jews was not sufficient. As a result, Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey founded the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews in 1809. Born in Franconia, Germany in 1770, he was the son of Samuel Levi Frey, a Jewish private tutor.²⁷ Frey describes in his biography, *The Narrative of the Reverend Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey*, how he was trained to be a synagogue Cantor and ritual slaughterer for ceremonial religious services.²⁸ His narrative also describes how he became a converted Jewish Christian and the early years of the growth of the London Society, as well as his involvement. Frey came to England in 1801 to work for the London Missionary Society where he desired to reach out to his fellow Jews in London and preach the Gospel.²⁹ Frey would often visit different synagogues in London and would talk about the Gospel wherever he traveled. His involvement with the LMS and devotion to his Jewish brethren gave him the desire to focus more attention on sharing Jesus Christ with them. Frey believed that,

“The conversion of the Jews to Christianity, whether it be considered with regard to the glory of Jehovah—their own degraded and guilty state—or with reference to that happy

²⁶ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 33.

²⁷ Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey, *Narrative of the Reverend Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey* (New-York : W.B. Gilley, 1817) UNIV OF OKLAHOMA LIBRARIES's Catalog, EBSCOhost: 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁹ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 33.

influence upon the Christian church, and the world at large, which the Holy Scriptures encourages us to anticipate, is a most desirable object.”³⁰

However, he perceived that the work the LMS was doing was not helpful for truly evangelizing the Jews of London. Moreover, he saw that the transitional period for Jews after conversion was crucial and needed more attention. Since converted Jews were coming from a different background than most new Christians, they needed to deal with their identities as Jews and as new Christians. He proposed a variety of ways to expand outreach to the Jews, such as establishing an industry house to provide jobs to poor Jewish immigrants. Yet all of his ideas were rejected.³¹ The leaders of the LMS felt there was not enough money for such specific projects and would hurt the organization. As a result, Frey resigned from the LMS with the reason that the mission of Jewish evangelism had not worked in helping in their transition and livelihood. Thus, in 1809, he formed the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews which became the first organized missionary movement specifically to evangelize the Jews in England.³²

The primary purpose of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews was both spiritual and temporal. The LSPCJ was established to help the Jews in London, not only with the spiritual aspects of their lives, but with their overall well-being also. After leaving the LMS, Frey’s movement gained popularity and needed a larger space to preach in. Frey would preach to large crowds on Sundays and have lectures during the week to hundreds of his “Jewish brethren.” The LSPCJ leased an eighteenth century Huguenot Church building on Church Street in Spitalfields in London, which already had a large Jewish population of immigrants, and named

³⁰ Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey, *Narrative of the Reverend Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey* (New York: J.K. Moore, 1834 [11th edn.]) *Princeton Theological Seminary Library*. 119.

³¹ Martin, “United Conversationist Activities among the Jews in Great Britain, 1795-1815: Pan-Evangelism and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews”: 442.

³² Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain up to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, 96-97.

it the Jews' Chapel.³³ This chapel, as Michael Darby assesses, “was the first modern Hebrew Christian congregation to be established in Britain by a Jewish missionary society, although non-Jewish worshippers were also welcomed.” Moreover, it was in this chapel that the foundations of the Hebrew Christian movement originated.³⁴ Many LSPCJ institutions, like the Jews' Chapel, encouraged involvement from Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians.

The London Society primarily evangelized to the Jews of East London, who were mostly of the poorer classes.³⁵ *The Concise Account* describes that “Men of piety and benevolence, of talents and learning, of influence and rank, of nobility and royalty, have come forward to assist in promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of the Jews.”³⁶ The LSPCJ's mission to help the Jews, both in spiritual and temporal spheres, was a major aspect of Frey's outlook on Jewish evangelism. It promoted education, social welfare, and missionary training among those involved and with the new converts. The LSPCJ was not a Jewish emancipation or Zionist movement, nor was it a social welfare organization. Although, it had a great amount of influence in many of these areas, Mel Scult describes its main objective was to evangelize the Jews in Great Britain, and eventually reach the Jews of the world.³⁷ The LSPCJ made use of tracts and pamphlets which they created, printed, and passed out to the London Jewish community. One of the London Society's pamphlets, *Missions to Jews*, lists the premise of their sevenfold work focus, which were: Evangelistic and Pastoral, Educational, Bible distribution, Prayer Book distribution, Tract distribution, Colportage, and Medical Missionary.³⁸ In particular the London Society stressed the importance of producing Hebrew translations of the New Testament to use as a way to

³³ Frey, *Narrative of the Reverend Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey* [11th edn.], 125.

³⁴ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³⁶ Adams, *A concise account of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*, 3.

³⁷ Mel Scult, “English Missions to the Jews: Conversion in the Age of Emancipation,” *Jewish Social Studies* 35 (1973): 13.

³⁸ W.T. Gidney, *Missions to Jews* (London: LSPCJ, 1899 [5th edn.]), 56.

evangelize the Jews. The first Hebrew New Testament was published in 1817. By 1819, over 10,000 copies of a second edition were printed.³⁹ Moreover, the Hebrew New Testament was a crucial tool for LSPJC missionaries to use. *The Manchester Guardian* on October 24, 1865, describes how “A general restlessness of heart and mind existed among the Jewish people; an increasing demand for the New Testament continued to be a marked feature of every missionary station.”⁴⁰

The temporal aspects of the society were important to the LSPCJ, but the spiritual outreach was the primary focus. For example, the LSPCJ tried to provide jobs and ways for converted Jews to make a living after being rejected by the Jewish community. In 1810, The London Society established a House of Industry to manufacture cotton for candle wicks; however this effort failed after a year and became a printing office in the Jews’ Chapel.⁴¹ More jobs were also created for a short period initially. The printing office, which made tracts, Hebrew New Testaments and other publications of the LSPCJ was able to pay for its own expense and furnished “useful employment to the Jewish youths under the Society’s care.”⁴²

Patronage to the London Society was one of the primary sources of funding for the LSPCJ, along with donations and collection funds. The Society would often preach collection sermons on tithes and donating money. However, the amount of support was not enough to initially fund the efforts of the LSPCJ. An issue of the *Christian Observer* in 1818 reported on the committee meeting and dealings of the Society, and said that improvements were made with the various financial needs. The report stated that “The debts with which it has so long been burdened are now fully discharged, and the system of economy, what has been so vigorously

³⁹ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 56.

⁴⁰ "Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews." *The Manchester Guardian (1828-1900)*, Oct 24, 1865.

⁴¹ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 56.

⁴² London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews." *Christian Observer, Conducted by Members of the Established Church (1802-1842)* 17, (1818): 857.

pursued during the last two years, may be considered to have produced its full effect.” The account goes on to say that more money came through from several other departments to pay older debts. It also discusses how the printing and distributing of Hebrew New Testaments were primarily funded by contributions from individuals and associations.⁴³ Much of the other various funds went both to temporal and spiritual relief efforts. Gidney states that when the London Society was first established, “the temporal benefit of Jews was as much an object as their spiritual; but as early as 1819 the first of the then ‘Rule and Regulations’ was altered, and the Society’s sole object was declared to be purely spiritual.”⁴⁴ However, he recounts that the need in the Jewish community was still great and that some means needed to be found to assist them. He explains that it was the Temporal Relief Fund and other charitable groups, such as the Operative Jewish Converts’ Institution and the Wanderer’s Home, which helped toward this effort.⁴⁵

The leadership, missionaries, theologians, supporters and patrons were crucial for the development of the London Society. Besides Frey, who was the founding father of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, there were many other prominent spiritual and temporal leaders who were influential and important in British society. At the time, even the Prince Regent, George IV, was asked to become the first Patron of the LSPCJ, but he declined the offer. However, the Duke of Kent, future father of Queen Victoria, was elected to the position in 1813 and held it until 1815.⁴⁶ He had an integral part in helping the LSPCJ establish the first Jewish Christian compound for Jewish converts, which included a church and school, called Palestine Place. At the grand opening, it was described that the foundation, both spiritual

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 218.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 219.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 37.

and temporal, “was laid by His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, on April 7th, 1813, in the presence of nearly 20,000 spectators.” Not only was the Duke of Kent there as a significant presence, there were other prominent supporters, too including slavery abolitionist William Wilberforce and religious activist Lewis Way.⁴⁷ Members of the Clapham Sect, a group of Anglican social reformers, such as Wilberforce and Charles Simeon, were firm supporters and patrons of the London Society. Others included Lord Shaftesbury and Lord Bexley, President of the LSPCJ from 1848-1885, and Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1812 to 1823, respectfully.⁴⁸ Lord Shaftesbury had “an ardent desire for the complete redemption of God’s people Israel, and for their restoration both to His favor and to their own land.”⁴⁹ Their support and patronage, along with many others from Parliament and the Church of England, provided the necessary backing to continue and expand the LSPCJ’s efforts for Jewish evangelism.

Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli is considered to be one of the most famous Jewish Christians of the nineteenth century. Although he was not a direct supporter or a product of the Society, Disraeli was the ideal Jewish Christian who the Society promoted. Nadia Valman describes that the LSPCJ saw “as exemplary for his philosemitic Christianity: ‘Though a Christian, he was proud of his Jewish origin, and ever upheld the traditions of his race.’”⁵⁰ By 1816, missionary work in London grew and that “lectures to the Jews and also to Christians on Jewish subjects were continued in Ely Place Chapel, St. Swithin’s, London Stone, Bentinck Chapel and elsewhere.” The Jews’ Chapel at Spitalfields had to be given up, because the bishop refused to allow it to be a place of worship for the Anglican Church.⁵¹ Frey had already by this time decreased his involvement in the Society and in May that same year resigned from the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁸ Scult, “English Missions to the Jews: Conversion in the Age of Emancipation”: 3.

⁴⁹ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 402.

⁵⁰ T.M. Edelman. and T. Kushner, eds., *Disraeli’s Jewishness* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), 80.

⁵¹ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 57.

Society and left for the United States, where he would be involved in Jewish Missions and teach Hebrew.⁵² After Frey left, his work was carried out primarily by Reverend Lewis Way, the Secretaries, and the Chaplin.⁵³

The London Society was founded on the principle in which “the Established Church and Christians of various denominations of Dissenters can cordially unite.”⁵⁴ The LSPCJ was originally founded as a non-denominational organization that allowed for Anglicans and Dissenters to work together to evangelize the Jews. Initially, LSPCJ helped create a bond between Anglicans and Dissenters, in order for them to come together on the common ground of trying to convert Jews to Christianity. However, problems arose when issues, such as the sacraments and establishing churches for these newly converted Jewish Christians, became prevalent. The problem over Baptism, for example, “was a rock sufficiently dangerous to wreck the Society, to say nothing of other theological differences.”⁵⁵ Denominational issues forced the LSPCJ to have two different types of lectures to preach to the Jews on Sundays: one by the Dissenters, the other by the Anglicans.⁵⁶ The issue of ordination also caused tension in the management and affected the mission of the London Society. Although Frey had been ordained by the London Mission Society in 1805, it was also a non-denominational group and not a church. As a result, he was not allowed to deliver the sacraments. When the LSPCJ was established, Frey wanted to become fully ordained. However, many of the Anglicans in the Society were apprehensive to ordain him.⁵⁷ R.H. Martin maintains that this pan-evangelistic movement “was based on the hope that if Anglicans and Dissenters could cooperate in a

⁵² Frey, *Narrative of the Reverend Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey*, 144-150.

⁵³ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 58.

⁵⁴ Adams, *A concise account of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*, 5.

⁵⁵ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 46.

⁵⁶ Martin, “United Conversationist Activities among the Jews in Great Britain, 1795-1815: Pan-Evangelism and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews”: 446.

⁵⁷ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 55.

common mission to the Jews, they could also resolve ecclesiastical differences that had divided them for centuries.”⁵⁸ Although the primary goal of the London Society was to evangelize Britain’s Jews, it did earnestly seek to unite not just Jews and Christians, but also Anglicans and Dissenters. Ultimately, this outcome did not occur and was a failure as a nondenominational movement.⁵⁹ After more disagreements and theological issues, the LSPCJ fell under Anglican leadership and control by 1816.⁶⁰

The London Society established churches, schools, and other institutions in London, Great Britain, and throughout the Empire during the nineteenth century. Palestine Place was founded as a center for the first Jewish Christian church and schools acquired by the London Society in Bethnal Green. It was “accomplished to the glory of God and the salvation of many Jews.” The church was opened on July 16th 1814 and “was the first place of worship set apart in England for Christian Jews.” Moreover, Palestine Place was the center of Jewish missionary work in London for over eighty years. Within the London Society, forty-one converted Jewish believers assembled as a group called The Children of Abraham, which was established on September 9th, 1813 in the Jews’ Chapel. This was the first exclusive Hebrew Christian Association to be established in history.⁶¹ The Children of Abraham allowed the LSPCJ to communicate and have public knowledge of the current state of the poorer Jewish community.⁶² Other associations such as the Hebrew Christian Prayer Union were established during this period of the emergence of Hebrew Christianity. By 1889, it was renamed the Hebrew Christian Union and had over 630 members. The Society also published different journals and other news

⁵⁸ Martin, “United Conversationist Activities among the Jews in Great Britain, 1795-1815: Pan-Evangelism and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews”: 448.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁶⁰ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 41-43.

⁶² Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 61.

sources such as *Jewish Intelligence*, which became *Jewish Missionary Intelligence*, *The Jewish Expositor* which was originally called *The Jewish Repository*, *Israel's Advocate*, and *The Voice of Israel*, as well as the Annual Reports which chronicled the annual dealings of the Society.⁶³ Hebrew Christian churches and centers, such as Palestine Place and what became known as the Episcopal Jews' Chapel, were seen as acceptable to the Christian community in the neighborhood and many had taken an interest in the "salvation of Israel."⁶⁴

Along with established churches and centers of worship, providing schooling and education for young Jewish children and their parents was also part of the London Society's outreach. The value of education that Jewish parents stressed for their children was important for the schools of the LSPCJ, particularly at Palestine Place, and was a factor that significantly aided the London Society in its mission and work. By 1822, almost "300 Jewish children had enjoyed the benefit of Christian instruction given by the Society."⁶⁵ Moreover, according to Gidney, for over 75 years at Palestine Place, "the schools received, boarded, and educated 1253 Jewish children."⁶⁶

The London Society stressed the importance of recruiting and training both Gentile and Jewish Christians to be missionaries for the LSPCJ. By 1899, the Society employed "a staff of 174 Missionaries – Ordained, Lay, Medical, Parochial Agents, Scripture Readers, Colporteurs, Schoolmasters and Mistresses, Depôt Keepers, &c." Among the missionaries, eighty-two were Jewish Christians. Missionary candidates would be "trained at the St. John's College of Divinity, Highbury, and reside in a Hostel, under the charge of the Rev. S.T. Bachert."⁶⁷ The Hebrew College opened in Palestine Place in 1840 in order to train missionaries, and Dr. McCaul was

⁶³ Gidney, *Missions to Jews*, 78.

⁶⁴ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 87.

⁶⁵ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 532.

⁶⁷ Gidney, *Missions to Jews*, 57-59.

placed in charge, because of his “experience and special qualifications.”⁶⁸ The Society established auxiliaries between 1810 and 1815 in places such as Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Halifax, Brighton, Leicester, York, Cambridge, Liverpool, Manchester, Norfolk, Bristol, and Weymouth. These auxiliaries and other committees that were established by the LSPCJ helped build and finance this missionary cause. Gidney describes, in particular, how the Westminster Auxiliary Committee, which was composed of Dissenters, “rendered much help in the way of funds and counsel, and was regarded as the premier Auxiliary ‘both from its contiguity and superior importance.’”⁶⁹

The international and transnational pursuits and missionary stations by the LSPCJ were examples of the growing movement of Jewish evangelism in the Empire. By 1822, the LSPCJ grew in its transnational and international pursuits, and more British Missionary Societies to the Jews were established. In Scotland and Ireland, The Church of Scotland Jewish Mission in 1840, the Free Church of Scotland Mission in 1842, and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Mission, in 1842, were established. In Great Britain, the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews (BSPGJ) was established in 1842.⁷⁰ Frey and The London Society knew from the beginning that the Jewish population in London was only a small fraction of all the Jews in the world who needed to be reached. Gidney describes how the LSPCJ’s goal was to evangelize the Jews in London. However, they “could no longer be content with such a restricted field as our own country offers, with its mere handful of a few thousands of the scattered race.”⁷¹ Their pursuits for missions abroad in the Empire were part of their work and they established auxiliary committees and missionary centers in Europe, Palestine, and other areas of the Empire. Including

⁶⁸ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 216.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

the original location in London, the LSPCJ's pamphlet, *Missions to Jews*, gives a list of forty stations and the year of their establishment ranging from 1809 to 1897. Some include prominent European cities such as Vienna, Paris, and Rome, as well as other significant sites like Jerusalem.⁷² During the nineteenth century, the London Society also established schools in Jerusalem, Damascus, Tunis, Bucharest, Safed, Isfahan, Tehran, and Constantinople.⁷³ Gidney stresses that for the LSPCJ "Wherever the Jews are, there lies the Society's work. Moreover, the Jews abroad are not surrounded by the same pure and sound Christian principles and life as those in England, and their spiritual need is proportionately greater." Here Gidney expresses England's view about their role in the world and further explains reasons for Jewish evangelism according to the London Society. The LSPCJ asserted that its main priority was to evangelize the Jews of London.⁷⁴ Jews in Britain had more of an opportunity to learn about the Gospel, that was why it was also imperative for the London Society to spread their movement abroad. The new societies and other missionary groups did take some focus away from the LSPCJ. However for a growing cause and movement, it was inevitable that more Jewish missionary organizations would emerge as a result. Gidney assesses, "We suppose that, in the onward march of events, the multiplication of agencies having the same end in view was inevitable. Still, we cannot forget that until the year 1875 the Society was alone in the field, and enjoyed the undivided support of Churchmen interested in the cause."⁷⁵

It was a primary goal and desire of the LSPCJ to change the attitudes about Jews among Gentile Christians in Britain. Archdeacon Sinclair of the London Society describes that,

"We must not treat the Hebrew as if he personally had rejected the Lord whom we believe to be the Messiah. Nineteen centuries of unnatural and unchristian treatment have

⁷² Gidney, *Missions to Jews*, 56.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁴ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 55-56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 414.

made it impossible for him to share our faith. He has been thrown back upon himself, and he has not thought of Christianity as even a possibility.”⁷⁶

However, Hebrew Christians experienced persecution from both Gentile Christians and unconverted Jews. Many Jewish Christians were alienated in their communities and lost their jobs as a result of their conversion. Both sides questioned the authenticity of conversion for many of these new Jewish Christians and were skeptical about their actions.⁷⁷ On November 1, 1854, *The Manchester Guardian* reported in its article “Conversion of the Jews” that many non-converted Jews and Gentile Christians in Britain questioned the sincerity of Jewish converts and that Jewish converts were deceitful. The issue criticized why Jews would want to become Christians in the first place,

“What did they gain by becoming Christians? The society did not support them; for one of their fundamental laws was that not 6d. of the general funds of the society could go for the temporal support of a Jew or Jewish convert... When a Jew was converted, this society had nothing more to do with him; he dropped into the next Christian congregation, or made his way in the world as best he could. The object of the society was to convert Jews, not to support them.”⁷⁸

This point of view that the LSPCJ and Jewish converts had was a negative consequence of the Society’s change in focus on temporal relief. Violent and abusive actions against Jewish converts also occurred. Many Jewish Christians, who worshipped at the Jews’ Chapel in Spitalfields, were socially isolated and ostracized, and deprived of employment within the Jewish community. Moreover, Hebrew Christians were not only harassed by non-converted Jews, but they were also rejected by Christian Gentiles.⁷⁹ Opposition (from both Jews and Gentile Christians) to the LSPCJ rose because of its primary purpose to evangelize the Jews of England. Several pamphlets were written and produced to counteract the Jewish evangelism, including one called *The*

⁷⁶ Gidney, *Missions to Jews*, 114-115.

⁷⁷ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 625.

⁷⁸ “Conversion of the Jews.” *The Manchester Guardian (1828-1900)*, Nov 01, 1854.

⁷⁹ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 55.

London Society Examined. Gidney describes that they were “written with an unconcealed desire to damage the cause and bring it into public disrepute, have fallen into limbo of forgetfulness as they well deserved to do.”⁸⁰ However, despite these setbacks for converted Jews, the LSPCJ was able to continue their outreach to them. By the end of the nineteenth century, a total of 2,022 Jews were baptized in London by missionaries of the LSPCJ.⁸¹

There were many problems that faced the London Society, such as funding, baptism, need for a separate church, temporal relief, and educating new missionaries.⁸² Increasingly with Jewish converts, the need for keeping some traditional aspects of Judaism in accordance with Christianity caused many theologians and preachers (both Jewish and Gentile) to reevaluate worship and organization in LSPCJ churches. Moreover, as more Jews were being converted by LSPCJ missionaries, the desire for a Hebrew Christian church/denomination emerged. However, as Darby assesses, “It is apparent that the LSPCJ was intent on incorporating its Hebrew Christian converts within a community of Gentile and Jewish Church of England worshippers rather than allowing them the freedom to establish their own independent Hebrew Christian church.”⁸³ Under the Rules and Regulations of the Society, rules eight and nine state that the LSPCJ was under the Church of England, and therefore all missionary matters and styles of worship would be in agreement with Anglican theology.⁸⁴ Alexander McCaul, who was the leading theologian of the London Society in the 1830s, was instrumental in the organization of Hebrew services. It was not that having literature or services in Hebrew was negative, in fact there was Anglican liturgy available in Hebrew; rather it was assumed that eventually converts would assimilate and go to regular Anglican churches. Moreover, he like many desired the

⁸⁰ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 78.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 533.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 629.

⁸³ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 96.

⁸⁴ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 53.

conversion and Restoration of the Jewish Nation to Palestine, and “When prejudice of the Gentiles had been overcome he wished to see some of them preach to the Jewish people.”⁸⁵ The London Society was not ready for Jewish Christians to establish their own denomination nor was it the intent. Moreover, another problem that faced the LSPCJ and the Anglican Church was too much emphasis was placed on converts becoming missionaries. The Society felt that making Jewish converts into missionaries would help the growth of the LSPCJ and help more Jews become Christians. However, many were unqualified and needed more education. This was true also for Gentile Christian missionaries of the London Society.⁸⁶

The emergence of Hebrew Christianity in Great Britain was a direct reflection of the missionary work of the London Society and other organizations that were established afterward. The need for a separate Hebrew Christian church was important for many Jewish converts in Great Britain, because it allowed them to hold on to their identity as Jews while believing in Jesus Christ. Although he founded the LSPCJ and had no aspiration to create a separate church, Frey believed that the ceremonial observances of Judaism were no longer necessary, and in comparison to Christianity were more of a burden. Michael Darby assesses that “Despite these reservations, Frey was motivated to assemble Jewish converts in ethnic association for mutual encouragements and edification, and can justifiably be characterized as the father of Modern Hebrew Christianity.”⁸⁷ However, there were many advocates of Jewish converts retaining their practices and becoming Christian believers. Moreover according to Darby, “It can be seen that the LSPCJ was eager to promote the restoration of the Jewish people to Palestine but was not yet

⁸⁵ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 95.

⁸⁶ H.J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity from the First to the Twentieth Century*, (London: Duckworth, 1936), 231.

⁸⁷ Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 67.

ready to allow Jewish Christians the opportunity to develop a theological system of their own.”⁸⁸ Therefore, it was not up to the LSPCJ or the Church of England to help Jewish converts make their own Hebrew Christian church, because they had not been restored to their homeland yet. However, Hebrew Christianity and missions to Jews in nineteenth century Great Britain had a significant impact on the next century for Christian-Jewish relations at home and throughout the world. More importantly, the Hebrew Christian movement laid the ground work for its successor—modern Messianic Judaism.

Whether or not the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews was ultimately successful is up for debate. The period of 1830 to 1850 is considered to be the “palmy days” of the entire history of the LSPCJ.⁸⁹ This is the period where not only were more Jews being led to the Gospel, but the London Society had continually reached out to the Jewish community at home and abroad. The society had also circulated approximately 60,000 publications.⁹⁰ More importantly, the number of New Testaments sold to Jews by 1909 grew significantly, “considering the amount of persuasion and effort attending the sale of each volume. Nearly a million Old Testaments have been circulated and 25,723 copies of the Liturgy of the Church of England in Hebrew, and over five million tracts.”⁹¹ The LSPCJ did have a significant impact on the lives of Jews and Christians in Britain during the nineteenth century and beyond. Darby summarizes the contributions in that:

“The LSPCJ brought about the most important changes in the civil, political, literary and religious conditions of the Jews in Britain. Its supporters removed much of the prejudice which oppressed the Hebrew people in the realm, initiated a general kind attitude among

⁸⁸ Ibid., 119.

⁸⁹ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 217.

⁹⁰ "Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews." *The Manchester Guardian (1828-1900)*, Oct 24, 1865.

⁹¹ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 625.

the English towards the Jews and thus paved the way for the removal of their civil and political disabilities.”⁹²

The Manchester Guardian cited that the LSPCJ reported that by 1865 “of the 50,000 Jews in England the Society counted about 4,000 converts” and considered this to be a great accomplishment.⁹³ Although the number of Jews who converted were a small percentage of the Jewish population in Great Britain, the impact of the London Society was still great. Both Gentile and Jewish Christians worked together to spread the Gospel and help the Jewish community in London and abroad. In doing so, it helped implement a new mindset among the British about the Jews and removed many anti-Semitic tendencies. Moreover, the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews planted the seeds and ideals that would be crucial aspects of the Zionist Movement in Great Britain.

The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews has had a lasting impact and legacy for a number of reasons. The LSPCJ remained the largest Jewish missionary organization into the twentieth century. What is even more significant is that the London Society still exists today under a different name as the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People (CMJ).⁹⁴ It is hard to quantify the total impact of the LSPCJ, but there are significant remnants of its legacy. According to data gathered by A.E. Thompson, who wrote *A Century of Jewish Missions*, the Society had over 200 missionaries in 52 different sites. By 1903, the annual income of the London Society was a quarter of a million dollars.⁹⁵ The London Society had its times of success and stagnation, but through all of this it was able to reach and impact Great Britain in a variety of ways. Gidney assesses that “There is little doubt that the known results of Missions to Jews, when the restriction of the field and the means to cultivate it are taken into account, will be found

⁹² Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 137.

⁹³ "Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews." *The Manchester Guardian (1828-1900)*, Oct 24, 1865.

⁹⁴ For more information look at CMJ Website, <http://www.cmj.org.uk/>.

⁹⁵ A.E. Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions* (New York: 1902), *Supplemental Index*, EBSCOhost, 279.

to be quite as great as in any other missionary cause.”⁹⁶ N.I. Martar argues that the Restoration movement in Great Britain was a key reason why the LSPCJ was established, along with other Jewish Missions. Not only did the Restoration of Israel mean for Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah, but it also meant to return them to Palestine.⁹⁷

Zionism was not a central focus of the LSPCJ, yet the growth of its popularity was important to the Society. Gidney discusses Austrian Jew Theodore Herzl’s 1896 pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, which launched the Zionist movement and “seemed to offer an escape from Anti-Semitism in Russia.” The first Zionist conference was held in 1897 with “kindled wide-spread enthusiasm.” In 1900, the fourth Congress was held in London.⁹⁸ Although the LSPCJ did not claim to be a Zionist organization, its work in different Jewish communities helped with attitudes and planted the early seeds of Zionism in Britons. Moreover, the LSPCJ helped establish the Hebrew Christian movement which would effect centuries to come. Semitic language expert and historian H.J. Schonfield assesses that,

“It must be clearly recognized, however, that the Missions to the Jews, mainly founded in the nineteenth century, paved the way directly for the reconstitution of Jewish Christianity as an organic spiritual community, not only because of their high-souled efforts won thousands of Jews for Christ and so provided the living materials for such a reconstitution, but because some of them sponsored and assisted for the first hesitant steps of Jewish Christians to unite with one another in a corporate existence.”⁹⁹

The London Society was truly an innovative and remarkable movement of nineteenth century Great Britain. Although it did not achieve all of its goals, it impacted and influenced many attitudes among the Jews and Christians in Britain. Many scholars believe the LSPCJ failed as an Evangelistic institution; however it influenced better attitudes toward Jews and Hebrew Christianity. Moreover, it marked a point in history where tolerance to Jews became more

⁹⁶ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 625.

⁹⁷ Matar, “The Controversy over the Restoration of the Jews: From 1754 until the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews”: 32.

⁹⁸ Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, 519, 587.

⁹⁹ Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity from the First to the Twentieth Century*, 209.

widespread. It was part of the genuine outgrowth of concern for God's people and their welfare from Gentile Christians, and was another aspect of the general missionary and Evangelical interests in British society.¹⁰⁰ This Jewish missionary movement, along with others that were established during the nineteenth century, laid the foundation and was an instrumental part of the Hebrew Christian movement.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, "The London Jews' Society and Patterns of Jewish Conversion in England, 1801-1859": 286.

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