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THE GRACIOUS AMBIGUITY OF GRACE AGUILAR (1816–47):
ANGLO-JEWISH THEOLOGIAN, NOVELIST, POET, AND
PIONEER OF INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Daniel R. Langton*

ABSTRACT: Grace Aguilar was an early nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish writer who concerned
herself with the reform of Jewish religion and its relationship to Christianity in her theological works,
novels, and poetry. She was interested in challenging the ways in which Jews and Christians represented
each other in their teachings, tried to present both perspectives on the vexed question of Christian
mission to the Jews, and sought to demonstrate that the theological barriers constructed between the
two faiths were often less immoveable than tradition would have it. As a female Jewish theologian
writing well before her time, she offered a remarkably innovative conception of female spirituality that
allowed her to cross and re-cross the boundaries between the Jewish and Christian religious cultures
she inhabited.

Any student of the history of Jewish-Christian relations is interested in Jewish views of
Christianity. These views include ‘relational theologies’, that is, focused attempts by Jews to
create a theological space for Christianity or to highlight the special relationship between
Judaism and Christianity. As anyone familiar with the history of Jewish-Christian intercourse
will know, such relational theologies have rarely been positive, and have tended to concentrate
upon the construction and maintenance of the barriers that separate the two faith systems.¹
Over the centuries, Jews have traditionally regarded the Christian as the idolatrous oppressor
who denies the unity of God, prays to saints, worships icons, and abrogates the Torah. The
Christian is perceived to have misinterpreted the scripture and to be profoundly mistaken in
claiming that the messianic age has begun. At best, Christianity has been understood as an
instrument of God to help prepare the pagan world for the coming of the Jewish messiah, or
to test the faith of his Chosen People. Against this backdrop, a positive, or constructive, or
appreciative Jewish view of Christianity stands out starkly. In particular, positive relational

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¹ Some well-known studies that emphasise the antagonistic nature of Jewish and Christian conceptions of the
theologies, which have only begun to emerge in significant numbers in the modern period, are often regarded by Jewish commentators as inauthentic, or heretical, or unJewish. Examples might include theologians such as Claude Montefiore, or historians such as Joseph Klausner, or writers such as Scholem Asch and Franz Werfel. And this raises a host of questions about the nature of appreciative Jewish theologies of relation. What historical, social and personal factors account for such a theological endeavour? How do different ideological assumptions and different methodological approaches affect the reception of such an attempt? At the heart of the matter lies the issue of authenticity and a sense that the line has been crossed. What is it about the generation of an appreciative theology of relation which appears to undermine the theologian’s Jewishness? Or to put it another way, does the brush with Christianity leave an enduring trace, and is it this which accounts for such suspicions?

This is the context for the following discussion of the theology of Grace Aguilar. Rather than offer a literary analysis or historical contextualization of her writings, which can be found elsewhere, the focus here will be on the theological meaning and implications of her positive appreciation of Christianity and Christians for her conception of Judaism. In her writings, which span a wide range of literary genres, Aguilar was struggling to define the precise nature of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. While she offers a positive appreciation of Christianity on many levels, we must acknowledge from the start her

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2 The biblical scholar and co-founder of Anglo-Liberal Judaism, Claude Montefiore, with respect to his Synoptic Gospels (1909) was criticised by Ahad Ha-Am who claimed he had detected “a subservience of the Jewish thinker to the Christian doctrine”. Ahad Ha-Am, ‘Judaism and the Gospels’, reprinted in American Hebrew Journal, LXXXVII, no. 21 (23 September 1910) from The Jewish Review, I (3 September 1910), 203.

3 Klausner, a prominent Zionist and disciple of Ahad Ha-Am, saw his historical study Jesus of Nazareth (1929) attacked as ‘a trucking and kow-towing to the Christian religion, and an assertion of great affection for the foggy figure of its founder, a denial of the healthy sense of our saintly forefathers’. Aaron Kaminka in Ha-Torah (New York) May 1922, cited in H. Danby, The Jew and Christianity; Some Phases, Ancient and Modern, of the Jewish Attitude Towards Christianity (1927), 102–103.

4 Amongst the many and varied criticisms Asch incurred for his Christian-themed novels The Nazarene (1939), The Apostle (1943), and Mary (1949) was a book-length polemic, published in 1953, in which he is described as having ‘carried on in the course of years a missionary activity on a scope never before known among Jews’ and in which his treatment of Paul was castigated as a betrayal of Judaism. Chaim Lieberman, The Christianity of Sholem Asch: An Appraisal from the Jewish Viewpoint, trans. from the Yiddish by A. Burstein (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 1, 139.

5 In response to a barrage of inquiries as to his baptismal status, following the debut of his play Paul Among the Jews: A Tragedy (1926), Werfel insisted in one newspaper interview: ‘I have never moved away from Judaism, I am in feeling and thinking a conscious Jew.’ Interview with Israelisches Wochenblatt (1926), cited in L.B. Steiman, Franz Werfel (1985), 222n3.

ambiguity. It will be argued that this ambiguity can be explained in part by the complications attendant to drawing upon Christianity in her reforming programme for Judaism – and her keen awareness of the dangers she ran in the eyes of many of her co-religionists. It will be suggested that Aguilar’s ambivalent presentation of Christianity and unfamiliar ways of expressing her Jewish identity are instructive in terms of understanding why some theologies of relation are so often regarded as somehow inauthentic or compromised.  

Aguilar’s is not a systematic theology, and some of the interpretations offered here are necessarily tendentious. In particular, one might ask: How sound is a methodology that frequently attributes to Aguilar’s fictional characters her own opinions? How much weight can be given to writings that were published posthumously and which she herself might never have wished to publish? In answer to such questions, the defence made here is that it is only when similar ideas can be found elsewhere in her written corpus that her fiction or posthumous writings will be treated as reliable expressions of her own theology. Likewise, the unsystematic nature of her work makes it particularly vulnerable to mistaken emphases and misunderstandings, and so an attempt will be made to focus upon themes and ideas that appear repeatedly in a wide variety of her writings. In the systematic survey that follows, then, Aguilar’s views of Judaism and Christianity will be organised according to three themes crucial to her religious identity. That is, we will consider the way in which she (i) drew upon and privileged her individual or personal experiences, (ii) related this to her tradition and scriptures, and (iii) related both of these to her community and to the relationship between Jews and Christians.

Biographical remarks

Grace Aguilar (1816–1847) has been described as the most important female Jewish writer in the nineteenth-century, and, as already mentioned, it is literary critics who have taken the
greatest interest in her. She belonged to a traditionally observant Sephardic family from Hackney, London, although, in her youth, she made Christian friends and attended Protestant services near her family’s somewhat isolated rural home in Devonshire and later in provincial Brighton. There is no evidence that she ever seriously contemplated conversion and she herself records that she attended these services in some trepidation, fearful that people would think she had abandoned her faith. According to one report, Aguilar solved the problem for herself by “altering those parts of the prayer-book which she could not join to her belief.” While she herself regarded her attendance at these Christian services as a way of clarifying her own Jewish sensibilities, there can be little doubt that this exposure to Christianity is also important in terms of familiarising her with how Judaism and Jews were represented within Christian culture. For most of her life she taught at a private boy’s boarding school run by her mother where, amongst other things, she taught Hebrew. She was of fragile health, and died while convalescing in Germany, aged only 31.

Aguilar had been a precocious child, reading and writing voraciously from an early age. Of her 15 books, seven were published posthumously by her mother. A series of her letters to Isaac D’Israeli, from 1840 until 1844, now held at the Bodleian in Oxford, make clear with just what difficulty she won literary patrons and assistance for publishing her works. Despite this, after her death a number became what we would now call best-sellers, specifically her novels Home Influence (1847) and The Vale of Cedars (1850). The readership of her books was mixed. It is clear from dedications and prefaces that she intended Jewish and Christian mothers and daughters to benefit from her novels and from her anthologies, such

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8 As several have noted, Aguilar is a constant fixture in modern anthologies of Jewish women writers. Scheinberg, Women’s Poetry and Religion in Victorian England, 146. Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer, 135.

9 In a work which arguably should be read semi-autobiographically, Aguilar writes “Our very position as aliens in a land whose religion is not ours. . . in a small country town almost entirely surrounded by Christians. . . must increase the mental difficulties you are now enduring. . . Like my own early youth, circumstances have thrown you almost entirely among Protestants; and from your peculiar disposition, longing unconsciously for the high and pure, you have always made those your intimate friends who are serious thinkers”. Grace Aguilar, The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope (Philadelphia: L. Johnson, 1846), 34.

10 There are several examples of this among the poetry contained in her handwritten manuscripts. ‘Aguilar Papers’ (1831–1853), MS ADD 378 University College London.

11 Lask-Abrahams quotes a letter from an unnamed Christian sent to Aguilar’s mother, “Her love for many Christian friends, and her desire to search after truth in every garb, induced her to attend Trinity Chapel [Brighton] frequently on a Wednesday when there was a lecture on the Old Testament, and she joined in the prayers and there with the congregation, altering those parts of the prayer book where [sic] she could not join to her own belief.” Lask-Abrahams, “Grace Aguilar: A Centenary Tribute”, 139.

12 An advertisement in the Voice of Jacob (March 1842) indicates the range of subjects taught: “Mrs and Miss Aguilar’s Preparatory Establishment for Young Gentlemen, from four to ten years of age, No. 5 Triangle, Hackney, with liberal board, and instruction in Religion, the English and Hebrew languages, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography and History.” Cited in Ibid.: 141.

13 Before her death she published The Magic Wreath (1839), Israel Defended (1838), The Spirit of Judaism (1842), The Perez Family (1843), Records of Israel (1844), Women of Israel (1845), The Jewish Faith (1846), ‘History of the Jews in England’ (1847). After her death, her mother edited and published The Vale of Cedars (1850), Woman’s Friendship (1850), A Mother’s Recompense (1851), Days of Bruce (1852), Home Scenes and Heart Studies (1832), Essays and Miscellanies (1853), Sabbath Thoughts and Sacred Communings (1853). One must obviously be extremely cautious about any conclusions reached from readings of posthumous works which the author herself had not had published.


15 These ran into very many editions, and adverts for her works can be found in the end-pages of Dickens’s Bleak House, as Galchinsky points out. Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England, 135, 139.
as Women of Israel (1845). The same was true for her more formal theological works, such as The Spirit of Judaism (1842) and The Jewish Faith (1846) – although in writing these studies she was also highly conscious of a male audience, again both Christian and Jewish. Aguilar’s mid-nineteenth-century historical context was that of Victorian religiosity and the emergence of Anglo-Reform Judaism and the establishment of the West London Reform Synagogue in 1840, which she appears to have regarded with mixed feelings. The influence of her Sephardi background is also important. Crypto-Jewish families in early-modern Portugal or Spain, that is, Jewish families pretending to be Christian on pain of death or expulsion, could only have risked expressing their Judaism within the secret realm of the home, the territory of the mother. Aguilar believed that her own family history offered a precedent for a woman storyteller who took responsibility for the generational transmission of Jewish identity.

What were Aguilar’s aims, broadly speaking? From even a cursory glance at her various works, it is clear that she had set out from the beginning to persuade Christians to respect Judaism, and to encourage and develop among Jews, especially Jewish women, a pietistic form of spirituality. She was concerned to break down the fence that separated the true exponents of the two faiths, or, at least, she was concerned that the fence should not be allowed to impede the development of good relations between neighbours. And from a collection of copied newspaper clippings and letters now held at the UCL archives, there is no doubt that she was indeed an inspiration to many in these regards. That she was influential in her own day is demonstrated by the national weekly Jewish Chronicle’s front page treatment of her death.

(i) Aguilar’s Personal Understanding of the Essence of Religion: Spiritual piety

Although Aguilar wrote works of formal theology throughout her life, The Spirit of Judaism (published in 1842, after having lost the original 1837 draft) was the only example printed before her death. This systematic treatment used the text of the Shema as a means by which to teach the key characteristics of Judaism; each chapter was an exegesis of a section from the Shema. Its pious tone meant that it acted as a kind of devotional commentary at the...
same time as exploring a variety of theological themes and controversies. That this was an unusual undertaking for an English Jewess is suggested by its publication through the offices of an American rabbi, Isaac Leeser.\footnote{Isaac Leeser (1806-1868) was a Philadelphia-based lay minister of religion, prolific author, translator, and founder of the Jewish Publication Society. Aguilar’s argument is constantly undermined by Leeser’s patronizing corrections and often openly critical claims of exaggeration or inaccuracy (e.g. regarding her apparent exaggeration of the number of converts to Christianity; and of the extent of Jewish neglect of Bible). His rare agreements tend to be in the form of provision of biblical or rabbinic references or of a fuller/better explanation of the point.} Within The Spirit of Judaism, Aguilar presented religion as powerfully connected with emotion. “Religion” she said, “is strongest, loveliest, in those hearts ever susceptible to emotion, whether pleasure or pain; the love of their God glows warmest in such bosoms.”\footnote{“Precept is too often doubted; we look on professors of religion with a jealous eye; and if they fail, the effect of their most eloquent appeal is lost entirely. But very different is the effect of discovering religion to be the secret source in each and all of those gentle and loveable qualities which in the first instance attracted us. At first we admire and revere at a distance, then as we draw near and love, comes the question, why cannot we too ‘go and do likewise?’ . . . When well-selected words flow glibly from eager lips, and an ardent eloquence appears to bear all its hearers along with it: the spirit is ready to condemn others, as far as its inferiors in religious fervour, simply because they cannot speak so well; and yet, while the lips may speak so piously and well, the heart may remain stubborn and unmoved.” Ibid., 94, 184.} Feeling was certainly as important as traditional learning, which could not generate the gentle and loveable qualities of the person of true faith.\footnote{“And yet does the presumptuous and haughty Hebrew, imitating the Pharisee of old, dare to say, their prayers are less acceptable than his [the meek and lowly]?” Ibid., 19.} Those who disagreed with her, she said, devalued the prayers of the unlearned and were presumptuous and haughty “like the Pharisees of old,”\footnote{The editor, Leeser, commented that “my friend has adopted without sufficient care the opinions [regarding the Pharisees] which our opponents entertain of these people.” Ibid.} a comparison that riled her editor.\footnote{“Is he [the Hebrew] accused of having no faith, let him prove he has more need of faith, and feels it yet more deeply than the Nazarene . . . Is he told his is a stern, cold, spiritless religion, that can only look to a rigid and exacting Judge, in whom mercy is lost in justice: let him bring forward his Bible to prove that a God of love was revealed to the Israelites, many centuries before the birth of him the Christians call their messiah.” Ibid., 90.} The long-suffering Jew, she argued, had greater need of this kind of faith than the Christian, and could easily point to his Bible to demonstrate Israel’s original discovery of the God of love.\footnote{“[Religious ceremonies] are given to aid and strengthen the spirit of piety, resting within this spirit, yet NOT to take its place. . . The form . . . springs from, and yet assists the spirit resting within. Thus should every Hebrew rite be considered, and reason, not superstition, be traced as its foundation.” Ibid., 216, 227.} External forms and religious ceremonies were of far less importance than was the life of the spirit,\footnote{Ibid., 85.} and she drew on her own family history of Iberian crypto-Jews to make this point.

The determination, in secret to adhere unchangeably to the Law of Moses, incited many to live a holier life, and ponder frequently on Him, in whose service their very lives were risked. When occupying posts of high trust and favour in the Spanish court, their lineage unknown, their race unsuspected, though they could scarcely keep the forms, the SPIRIT glowed more warmly within.\footnote{See for example, the classic study of the worldwide movement, Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also the slightly more recent study of Anglo-Reform Judaism, Anne Kershen and Jonathan Romain, Tradition and Change (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995).}

This sounds like the familiar classic Anglo-Reform Jewish argument which set spirit against form.\footnote{See for example, the classic study of the worldwide movement, Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also the slightly more recent study of Anglo-Reform Judaism, Anne Kershen and Jonathan Romain, Tradition and Change (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995).} But in fact Aguilar went on to argue that the ideal was obedience to God’s ordinances, \begin{em}including external forms,\end{em} through the power of the spirit. She wrote,
Yet while we feel and acknowledge the insufficiency of form alone: the sons of Israel must beware of the contrary extreme. . . If they adhere not to the rites of their forefathers, they cannot take unto themselves the gracious promises made to the children of Israel; for their religion degenerates into that, which is termed, natural theology; in a word, they are Deists not Hebrews, and they deprive themselves alike of faith, hope, and comfort. . . There are many, very many laws, which, if the Hebrew would still manifest himself as the first-born of the Lord, he can still implicitly obey . . . the religion of no Hebrew is perfect, unless the form be hallowed by the spirit, the SPIRIT quickened by the FORM. 31

Again drawing upon her Sephardi heritage, Aguilar argued that it fell to Jewish mothers to inculcate the true spirit of Judaism within their children, for they did not enjoy the same cultural encouragements for religion that Christian children did at home and in the wider society.

The Hebrew child has not these advantages [of the Christian child]. Debarred from the public exercise of devotion on his Sabbath day; never hearing public prayers in a language he can understand; – having no public minister on whom he can call for that instruction he may not have received at home; – never hearing the law expounded, or the Bible in any way explained: to his mother alone the Hebrew child must look, on his mother alone depend for the spirit of religion . . . We find the root of דַּרְשַׁיִּים, ‘and thou shalt speak of them’ to be רַפָּא to utter one’s sentiments aloud, to speak or to converse together. . . Yet when do we speak of these things? When, even amidst a domestic circle, does conversation turn upon these topics which would enable us to obey this command? 32

Aguilar went on to suggest that powerful tools in this sacred duty of education included the study of God’s providential work within history, the reading of edifying literature 33 and the cultivation of wonder at his creation of the natural world. 34 Once the Jewish child had been sensitized spiritually, the result would be a proud Hebrew, fully able to relate the traditions of his fathers to his loving Heavenly Father. As she put it,

[Properly educated by his mother] It will be [the Hebrew’s] pride to prove to the nations the spirit of his faith. . . He will not throw off the bondage of our [external] forms, he will not condemn their dictates; for he will trace their minutest regulations to the same merciful Father, whose love supports, whose arm sustains him. 35

31 Ibid., 235-236, 254.
32 Ibid., 147-148, 150, 181, 182.
33 “There is scarcely any profane history which, if read attentively, will not afford matter for instruction, thought, and subsequent conversation on the wonderful providence of the Lord. . . Did the spirit of piety pervade, as was intended, the intellect, those very works read for profane instruction would assist to promote obedience to the command we are regarding. Nor is it only history that may do this. There are tales, simple, domestic, highly moral tales, which, though as a whole fictitious, are in the main point but narrations of what, could, but we lift up the veil of the world, is continually passing around us.” Ibid., 192-193.
34 “There are others again who, continually eulogizing Nature, yet never seem to cast a thought, or speak a word of God. . . The mind thus capable of admiring Nature for herself, is peculiarly fitted to adore and love her God. Nature is not herself a deity. She is the frame, not the FRAMER, the created, not the CREATOR.” Ibid., 197–198. This interest in nature was non-trivial. In her eulogy for Aguilar, Anna Maria Hall wrote that Aguilar ‘had made acquaintance with the beauties of English nature during a long residence in Devonshire; loved the country with her whole heart, and enriched her mind by the leisure it afforded; she had collected and arranged conchological and mineralogical specimens to a considerable extent; loved flowers as only sensitive women can love them; and with all this was deeply read in theology and history.’ Ana Maria Hall, ‘Pilgrimage to the Grave of Grace Aguilar’ in Galchinsky, Grace Aguilar: Selected Writings, 339.
35 Ibid., 161.
Such a spiritual education would result in a Jewish faith that would properly testify to the surrounding Christian nations and support the eternal truths of Judaism. Aguilars felt obliged to make this point because she knew that her emphasis upon the need to inspire spirituality within the Jewish community would sound suspiciously alien to many within that community. And, indeed, this provoked criticism that The Spirit of Judaism was not so much a work of Jewish theology, but rather one that drew too heavily upon her own idiosyncratic experiences in the Christian community for its conceptualisation of spirituality. To gain a clearer picture of this ideal Jewish spirituality, it is useful to consider Aguilar’s epic mix of scriptural commentary and literary imagination entitled Women of Israel (1845). In this multi-volume work of 576 pages, Aguilar used the lives of biblical and historical Jewish women as a source of spiritual strength and inspiration for modern Jewish women. One biographical sketch, that of Deborah, will suffice. Aguilar viewed Deborah as an excellent role model for Jewish women, combining as she did prophet, judge, military instructor, poet and sacred singer; her very existence and accomplishments demonstrated that Jewish women were not degraded within Judaism, as some claimed. But while recognition of poetic abilities was granted, Aguilar felt that this was not where Deborah’s true greatness lay. Nor was it in her military role in Barak’s victory over Sisera. Crucially, Aguilar played down Deborah’s outward power and public triumphs and emphasised instead her private role, focusing in particular upon her influence as a local judge after she returned home. The important thing to notice here, Aguilar claimed, was that Deborah’s quiet, low-

36 “Every Hebrew should look upon his faith as a temple extending over every land, to prove the immutability, the eternity of God, the unity of His purposes, the truth of the past, the present, and the future; and regard himself as one of the pillars which support it from falling to the ground, and adds, however insignificant in itself, to the strength, the durability, and the beauty of the whole.” Ibid., 245.

37 “Many Hebrews may perhaps object to the lengthened consideration of the second verse of the SHEMANG, which the three preceding chapters contain; that it is following the false lights of the Nazarene, and spiritualizing and mystifying a simple truth; that the command to love the Lord with all our heart, and soul, and might, simply means to pray to Him and praise Him, and obey His laws as far as lies in our power.” Ibid., 109.

38 For example, Lask-Abrahams comments, “One also has the feeling that her frequent decrying of traditional usages represents a form of Jewish Protestantism drawn from her early close association with non-Jewish acquaintances. . . [This] led her sometimes to oppose the Bible to the traditions of the Rabbis and minimize the role of the Rabbis in the development and spirituality of Judaism.” Lask-Abrahams, “Grace Aguilar: A Centenary Tribute,” 142.

39 “Had there been the very least foundation for the supposition of the degrading and heathenizing of the Hebrew female, we should not find the offices of prophet, judge, military instructor, poet and sacred singer, all combined and all perfected in the person of a woman.” Grace Aguilar, The Women of Israel, or, Characters and Sketches from the Holy Scriptures and Jewish History, Illustrative of the Past History, Present Duties, and Future Destiny of the Hebrew Females, as Based on the Word of God (London: Routledge, 1845), 12.

40 “[After her and Barak’s victory over Sisera] We next find Deborah exercising that glorious talent of extempro poetry only found among the Hebrews; and by her, a woman and wife in Israel, possessed to an almost equal degree with the Psalmist and prophets, who followed at a later period. . . We find her taking no glory whatever to herself, but calling upon the princes, and governors, and people of Israel to join with her in ‘blessing the Lord for the avenging of Israel.’ . . . The simplicity and lowliness of the prophetess’ natural position is beautifully illustrated by the term she applies to herself — neither princess, nor governor, nor judge, nor prophetess, though both the last offices she fulfilled — ‘until that I, Deborah, arose, until I arose a MOTHER in Israel.’ She asked no greater honour or privilege for herself individually, than the being recognised as the mother of the people whom the Lord alone had endowed her with power to judge.” Ibid., 214–215.

41 “[Deborah’s] judgments, her works, are covered with a veil of silence, but we learn their effects by the simple phrase, that ‘the land had rest for forty years’ — the land, the whole land, not merely that which was under her direct superintendence. Virtue, holiness, and wisdom, though the gifts of but one lovely individual, are not confined to one place when used, as were Deborah’s, to the glory of God, and the good of her people. Silently and perhaps unperceived, they spread over space and time; and oh, how glorious must be the destiny of that woman, who,
profile, unassuming work as a local judge, profoundly influencing the local community, so that “the land had rested for forty years” – a far more powerful demonstration of what a woman can achieve than were military exploits. This, she went on, offered a model for the present and future duties of contemporary women of Israel, even if the situation in the real world meant that they “can no longer occupy a position of such trust and wisdom in Israel”. Women should embrace their role as influencers – without feeling the need to do so publicly. Married women can influence their husbands and their households and will thereby “influence society at large, secretly and unsuspectedly indeed, but more powerfully than [they] can in the least degree suppose.” With many such examples in Women of Israel, Aguilar made it clear that her ideal of womanly spirituality was a reassuringly traditional one, non-threatening in its refusal to compete with men in the public sphere.

Several years later, in a work of literary fiction called The Jewish Faith (1846), Aguilar returned to the subject of form over spirit. This was ostensibly a series of letters of religious advice from a Sephardi Jewess called Inez Villena to a young girl called Annie, who was contemplating conversion, having had only a nominal Jewish upbringing. Interestingly, Aguilar here reversed her earlier claim that the crypto-Jewish experience had encouraged a spiritual understanding of their faith. Instead, she now argued that that kind of Anglo-Judaism which privileged external form over spirituality had had its origins in the Sephardi experience of Inquisition and crypto-Judaism. Their lives had been habituated to caution and hurried, superficial observance, and their imposed tradition of “soulless obedience… [in which they] adhered so very strictly to the form, to the utter exclusion of the spirit of their religion”, had continued upon their arrival in England. This state of affairs was, while understandable, a matter of regret.

Attitudes were changing, of course, sometimes too without one moment quitting her natural sphere, can yet by precept, example, and labour, produce such blessed efforts as to give the land peace, and to bring a whole people unto God! “Ibid., 216. “[T]he greatness of Deborah consisted not at all in outward state, in semblance of high rank, or in any particular respect or homage outwardly paid her; but simply in her vast superiority of mental and spiritual acquirements which were acknowledged by her countrymen, and consequently revered.” Aguilar, The Women of Israel, 212.

42 “Yet the history of Deborah in no way infers that she was negligent of her conjugal and domestic duties. There is an unpretending simplicity about her very greatness. To a really great mind, domestic and public duties are so perfectly compatible, that the first need never be sacrificed for the last.” Aguilar, The Women of Israel, 217-218.

43 “Every married woman is judge and guardian of her own household. She may have to encounter the prejudices of a husband, not yet thinking with her on all points; but if she have really a great mind, she will know how to influence, without in any way interfering. She will know how to serve the Lord in her household, without neglecting her duty and affection towards her husband; and by domestic conduct [she will be able to] influence society at large, secretly and unsuspectedly indeed, but more powerfully than she herself can in the least degree suppose.” Ibid., 217.

44 Such views reflected wider cultural norms, of course, as demonstrated by the popularity of contemporary authors such as Sarah Stickney Ellis who wrote The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits (London: Fisher, 1839), a work with which Aguilar was very familiar.

45 “In Portugal, as you know, to be even suspected as a Jew exposed our ancestors to all the horrors of the Inquisition, sequestration, torture, and often, death. The religion of our fathers, therefore, was instilled with such impenetrable secrecy, and so burdened with caution and the constant dread of discovery, that, to do more than attend to its mere elements, and keep the mind faithful to the doctrine of the Divine Unity and the perpetuity of the Jewish Faith, in contradistinction to the bewildering dogmas of saints, martyrs, infallibility of the Roman Church, masses, etc, was impossible. To become spiritual was equally so, for the Bible was a forbidden book to the Catholics, and therefore equally so to the secret Jews. Those, therefore, who from some immanent pressure of danger fled to other countries, were unable to throw off the caution of centuries. They could not realise that the yoke was so far removed from the necks, as to permit the public practice, and open confession of their faith. To speak of, or impart it, by means of reference to, and discussion upon the Bible, had so long been an utter impossibility; that it was scarcely unnatural, they should suppose it impossible still, when in reality no impossibility existed. This is the reason why so
violently for Villena/Aguilar’s own liking, but “a mighty movement”, by which she meant Reform Judaism, had thankfully begun.\(^\text{46}\) The artifice of placing her own words in the mouth of an eminently sympathetic woman gave Aguilar greater intellectual freedom than she had had in *The Spirit of Judaism*. Here, in this work which did not purport to be a formal work of theology, she could talk at length about non-theological aspects of religion, including attitudes and feelings and, in so doing, draw heavily upon her own personal experience without fearing the attentions of religious authorities. (*The Spirit of Judaism* had received some poor reviews). It was undoubtedly written with Jewish and Christian audiences in mind, concerned as it was to present Judaism in a positive light and to challenge common Christian misconceptions which, she felt, also influenced the Jews’ own self-understanding. In this work, support for Reform Judaism seems less muted, as if Aguilar had begun to believe that it held the hope for Jewish spirituality.

Spirituality is a complex thing, of course, notoriously difficult to capture in dry works of theology. In addition to the fictional series of letters and the biographical studies of biblical women, Aguilar also experimented with historical romance. Although only published in 1850, Aguilar’s *The Vale of Cedars* had been composed in the early 1830s and is a gothic tale of torture, persecution and unrequited love set in fifteenth-century Spain.\(^\text{47}\) It tells the adventures of a young crypto-Jewess, an intimate of Queen Isabella called Marie, her innocent Christian former beau who is blamed for the murder of her noble husband (also a crypto-Jew), and the consequences Marie must face when the truth of her Jewishness is revealed. Others have found in its pages a clear appeal for Jewish emancipation.\(^\text{48}\) Here, we are more interested in the way Aguilar uses this particular novel to explore unfamiliar forms of spirituality. To a Christian readership, the Jewess Marie is presented as a paragon of steadfast loyalty to her father and the religion of her fathers, a potential martyr with the sweetness of an angel, easily contrasted with the unspiritual, murderous dungeon-keepers of the Catholic Inquisition. For the Jewish audience, however, one is struck by the remarkable presentation of Catholic queen Isabella as a deeply spiritual and wise Christian, whose profound yet unseen influence upon her husband, Ferdinand, made her the epitome of womanly religious virtue.\(^\text{49}\) With somewhat broad brush-strokes, history is re-written to reveal that the Isabella has been tragically misunderstood, and that only under considerable duress from Torquemada was she reluctantly persuaded to institute the Inquisition and expel

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46 “If we compare the thoughts and sentiments on the religion of the Hebrews in almost all countries of the present day with those of fifty years back, we shall find that there has been, indeed, a mighty movement; though, as merely looking on the present, we may feel the movement is so small as to be almost invisible, and we sometimes are led to despond more than hope. We may watch too, with dread, the too violent reforms, the too indiscriminate clipping away of the old established, and so somewhat treasured forms; but better, far better, this agitation, than the stagnant waters of apathy and indifference, in which fifty years ago all Judaism was plunged.” Aguilar, *The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope*, 35-36.


48 Ibid., 137ff.

49 “Isabella’s real influence on the far less lofty and more crafty Ferdinand was so silent, so unobtrusive, that its extent was never known, either to himself or to his people, till after her death...” Grace Aguilar, *The Vale of Cedars, or the Martyr* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1850), 218.
the Jews. The queen is central to the story-line and her actions and prayers fill the climactic pages of the novel, as she struggles to see beyond Marie’s heretical Jewish shell, and love her – and free her – despite her refusal to convert to Christianity. There are two observations that can be made about Aguilar’s Isabella. Firstly, the painful irony that Isabella has such perversity difficulty in recognising the closely-related spirituality of the Jewess is a dramatically effective and poignant warning to the reader concerning contemporary Christian attitudes towards Jewish spirituality. Secondly, it is revealing that in the story Marie’s primary concern in disclosing her Jewish identity is not that she will have to face the Inquisition, but that she will lose the love of her adored Christian patroness. This fear of Christian disapproval is a theme found in a number of Aguilar’s writings.

In this brief survey of different works by which means we have explored Aguilar’s personal understanding of Jewish spirituality, and in particular her call to a specifically womanly conception of spirituality, we might note an ambiguous attitude towards Reform Judaism, both cautious and hopeful. The same is true of her attitude towards Christianity. Aguilar is concerned to refute the claim that the importance she places upon spirituality reflects a Christian emphasis, and she is keen to make it clear that this focus is one way of preventing conversion. On the other hand, she values her interactions with Christians, adopts the Christian negative view of Pharisees, admires Christian family and social encouragement to religion to the extent of creating a caricature, and is concerned not only to convince Christians of the reality of Jewish spirituality but even hints at a fear of receiving their disapproval.

(ii) Relating to Tradition and Scriptural Resources

Integral to Aguilar’s conception of true faith in her theological treatise The Spirit of Judaism was the need to base it upon an authoritative foundation. This foundation was to be the divinely inspired Bible as transcribed by Moses, which would provide all the defences a Jew needed against the temptations and threats of a Christian world. Her rationale makes this clear.

50 “Isabella had within herself all the qualifications of a martyr. Once impressed that it was a religious duty, she would do violence to her most cherished wishes. . . This spirit would, . . . have led her a willing martyr to the stake; as it was this same spirit led to the establishment of the Inquisition, and the expulsion of the Jews – deeds so awful in their consequences, that the actual motive of the woman-heart which prompted them is utterly forgotten, and herself condemned.” Ibid., 194. Torquemada, “the wily churchman” found it difficult to convince Isabella, and was only able to achieve it by emotional blackmail. Aguilar, The Vale of Cedars, or, the Martyr, 242–243, 292.

51 Isabella’s fear for Marie’s soul obliges her to attempt her conversion, but the failure of the disputation (which features a learned cleric’s doctrinal arguments), which certainly disappointed Isabella, did not stop her protecting Marie from “the necessity of severity” for which Torquemada called.

52 Marie, alluding to the imminent revelation of her secret Jewish faith, cries “Oh, madam, thou wilt hear a strange tale tomorrow – one so fraught with mystery and marvel, that thou wilt refuse to believe it . . . And then, if thou hast ever loved me . . . whatever thou mayst hear, do not condemn me . . . do not cast me from thee.” Aguilar, The Vale of Cedars, or, the Martyr, 135.

53 “It signifies little whether Moses received them [the Laws] literally from the mouth of the Lord, or felt within his soul the infused eloquence and wisdom, which impelled him to proclaim them to his countrymen. Every page of the Bible breathes the voice of God.” Aguilar, The Spirit of Judaism, 92. Aguilar assumes throughout the divine revelation to Moses (chapter 2 explicitly affirms this).
It is alleged that it is dangerous to associate intimately with those of other creeds, that it is as dangerous to our faith as the open warfare of old. They are mistaken who thus think; were the Jewish religion studied as it ought to be by its professors of every age and sex; were the Bible, its foundation and defence; were its spirit felt, pervading the inmost heart, giving strength and hope, faith and comfort; we should stand forth firm as the ocean rock, which neither tempest nor the slow, still constant dripping of the waters can bend or shake. . . . [To] enable us to mingle amongst those of another creed, without fearing to imbibe it. . . the Bible must be our constant study. . . Faith indeed is the golden key to unlock its stores, for without faith its pages are in truth ‘sealed’. . . Those who deny its divine truths are neither Jewish nor Christian; for the acknowledgement of its divinity is equally binding to the one as to the other.  

Aguilar called for educational programmes that would familiarize Jewish youth with the texts themselves, enabling them to defend their beliefs. The Word of God was the only means by which the poor and uneducated could come to understand His will for them and abandon their “superstitions of tradition and prejudice which have shackled them for so long”. Like the Reform minister David Woolf Marks, Aguilar felt that any “inventions of man” such as rabbinic tradition that “choke up the law of Love which came direct from Heaven. . . and confine the soaring spirit”, should be set aside, for the Word of God alone was the source of all Jewish ethics. She was quick to condemn those who valued the rabbinic tradition over the Bible itself, arguing that this was a common cause of conversion, and she called for a Jewish translation of the Bible into English, which did not exist at that time. There is a debate around the origins for the bibliocentric, that is, bible-based, characteristics of many reform-minded British Jews in the mid-nineteenth-century, but it is certainly reasonable to read it as evidence for the influence of Evangelical Christian critique.
of Judaism, which was also vehemently anti-Talmudic. Aguilar’s protestation that her vision of biblical Judaism would prevent conversion might appear to undermine such an interpretation, but it certainly failed to convince many of her contemporaries otherwise.

A little earlier we saw how the biographical sketches in *Women of Israel* could be understood as a platform upon which Aguilar sets out her vision of ideal womanly spirituality. But Aguilar claimed that it was also very important to her that her Jewish contemporaries did not have to look to Christian moral literature or religious commentary for such guidance. She was determined that there should be no necessity for Christian writings to “make Israel spiritual.” One way to avoid this was to return to the Divine Word. As she put it, “[T]he Bible must become indeed the book of life to the female descendents of that nation whose earliest history it so vividly records. . .” In drawing upon the Bible, primarily, she sought to generate a set of edifying lessons for her community that was entirely dependent on Jewish sources. With examples such as Deborah, *Women of Israel* aimed “to prove that we have no need of Christianity, or the examples of the females in the Gospel.”

In the fictional series of letters collected together in *The Jewish Faith*, Aguilar continued with this theme, when, as the Sephardi matron Villena, she sought to convince Annie, the Jewish girl who was considering conversion, that the inspirational texts of promise, narrative and spiritual guidance, that sounded as though they belonged to the New Testament, actually belonged to their own Bible. At times, this was not always obvious, and it was often necessary to look beyond the surface meaning in the “search for divine lessons.” Even so, she said,

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61 In this context, the editor, Isaac Leeser, comments, “Again I must remark that Miss A. has relied too much upon the calumniators of the Jewish character as authority.” Aguilar, *The Spirit of Judaism*, 52.
62 “With such [biblical] writings we have no need of Christianity, or the works of Christian divines to make Israel spiritual?” Aguilar, *The Women of Israel*, 569.
63 Ibid., 15.
64 Ibid., 18.
65 “In the constant study of the Word of God, you will be very often startled to find that a similar style of promise, narrative, and spiritual guidance, which you thought were only revealed in the New Testament, were found in our’s ages and ages before; and that it is our utter neglect and disregard of these precious things which has so concealed them, as to cause the supposition that they were given to the stranger rather than to us. . . [Y]ou always supposed that they [comforting verses] came from the New, not the Old Testament, and were, especially, the privileged possession of Christians, as they were frequently quoted in Christian books, and those of your own people with whom you have ventured to speak on the subject, knew nothing about them. . . [Y]ou have sometimes found yourself longing to believe in the New Testament, parts of which, seemed so much more simple and clear than the [86] old.” Aguilar, *The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope*, 40-41, 59-60, 83-86. Aguilar gave several examples. “There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine who have not sinned,” is a sentiment found in the Gospel; and therefore supposed to be the spirit of the Christian religion, [179] in contra-distinction to that of the Jew. But this, like many other similar assertions, is a great mistake. It was the essence of the Jewish religion first, and thence, and by *Jesus*, was preached to the Christians.” She cites Rabbi Abraham Belais (sic), ‘Biblical Expositions’, 44, 88. Aguilar, *The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope*, 178-179. Abraham Belais (1773–1853) was a Tunisian rabbi with a history of financial mismanagement who spent time in Algiers and Nice before arriving in London in 1840; he published *Biblical Expositions* himself in 1844 in Hebrew and English.
66 In the context of immortality and Elijah’s ascent, which reminds those who suffer that ‘their souls were deathless, and their dwelling was above’, she writes, ‘Do not regard this rendering of the translation of Elijah as the mere dream of an enthusiast, dearest Annie. The word of God is granted us to be our guide, not merely by precept, but by examples – not only by revelation in direct words, but by analogy. We are to look upon all it records as instruction, and the search for divine lessons, not be content with merely those which lie upon the surface.’ Aguilar, *The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope*, 360.
We must remember the Old Testament is OURS. That of the glorious truths it reveals, and the
precepts it bestows, no-one can deprive us, unless we disregard them ourselves, and by indifference
and neglect, permit others to think that we have neither right nor interest in them.67

Villena/Aguilar observed with some pleasure that modern expressions of Judaism were
increasingly dependent upon the Bible, suggesting that erroneous teachings would soon be a
thing of the past,68 for, she said, the Talmudic sages had never intended that their ingenious
commentaries would have taken the place of the Word of God.69 The same would be true of
contemporary un-biblical hopes such as the much-discussed Jewish return to Palestine.70
There was a dire need for religious, edifying literature for Jewish women in the English
vernacular,71 for whom the wisdom of the Jewish sages was impossible to master. (It is
interesting to hear a sense of regret in this observation).72 And although many other modern

67 Ibid.
68 “That the doctrine [of transmigration] may be found in the writings of the Hebrews is very probable; but it
must be found in the Bible to be Judaism.” Ibid., 275. “That there may be in certain portions of our theological
works in which the Jewish doctors of the early ages wrote such an idea as Milton embodied in his ‘Paradise Lost,’
[i.e. ‘the Christian doctrine of heaven and hell, Jesus and Satan’] with the exception of Jesus, as some Christians
assert, I cannot deny; for I am not acquainted with the deep Jewish works in question. But even if it did, their
opinions can no more be adopted as articles of belief than the poem of Milton for the New Testament gives no
more foundation for the latter than the Old for the former.” Aguilar, The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral
Guidance and Immortal Hope, 435–436.
69 “The ancient sages, whose notions we have been considering [in the context of outlining how the four
elements, earth, fire, water, air, are representative of characteristics and connotations to take the
place of that venerable Word, which was their foundation, but merely as an intellectual exercise to amplify and
define.” Aguilar, The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope, 57. Aguilar’s chapter on
spirituality was highly dependent on the four sermons of Abraham Belash (sic), concerning earth (‘which, they say
incites to indulgence and laziness in work’ 55), fire (’incites pride, overbearing, haughtiness, wrath, envy, jealousy,
covetousness and ambition’ 54), water (‘incites to mercenary craving for worldly treasures and pleasures’ 55), and
air (‘tends to all those petty levities and abuses of speech’ 54). Ibid.
70 “Palestine, struggled for by Christian and Mahometan (sic), and still lying waste, as the Lord ordained, giving
not to strangers the fruition, and the beauty, and luxury, which were given, and will again be given, to the Jews:
— Palestine, still regarded with an eye of longing by the true Hebrew, as his only home; by the Christian as
indissolubly linked to the Past, — is not Palestine itself, then an evidence of the truth of revelation. . . .” Ibid., 127.
“I am aware, that many amongst us, and even amongst Christians, imagine that the repeopling of Judea, will be
accomplished naturally (so to speak); and occasional efforts have been made, and pamphlets have been written, to
manifest the wisdom of a co-operation of certain nations, or promulgation of certain statutes, compelling or
holding out rewards and privileges, for the Jews to return to Judea: but to my feelings, these efforts are utterly
useless. It is impossible to read the Prophets with any attention, and not to perceive, that our return will be attended
by miracles yet more stupendous than those which marked our progress from Egypt; by a regeneration of the heart,
and annihilation of all inclination to sin, which, in the present state of man, is impossible; and by the resurrection
of the dead, which will not be till the end of days ‘when the sun shall not give light by day; nor the moon by night,
but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and they God thy glory. / Our promised restoration, then, is a
confirmation, instead of a denial of our soul’s immortality; for every reference to it marks the triumph of the spiritual
over the merely corporeal, and this in itself is proof of our mingled nature, and of the continued existence of the spirit,
however the body may lie in corruption. . . Such and such alone, is the promise attendant on our restoration;
and how shall we call this temporal greatness and human subjection of the nations? Dearest Annie, banish the mistaken
thought. It has no foundation in our Scriptures; therefore it is wrong, and has no part in Judaism.” Aguilar, The
71 “To women especially, a religion in which love is the vital essence, is imperatively needed. And, therefore, am
I so earnest in endeavouring to display its true spirit to you.” Aguilar, The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral
Guidance and Immortal Hope, 93. It was the editor of The Spirit of Judaism, Isaac Leeser, who fulfilled this call, publishing
the first Jewish translation of the Bible into English in 1845.
72 “For them [our FEMALE YOUTH], there is literally no help in the way of vernacular religious literature. For
our young men, there are the works of ancient sages; there are ministers and teachers to instruct in their obsolete
authorities had proved a bitter disappointment. Villena/Aguilar had found inspirational the biblicentric Reform minister David Woolf Marks’ attempt to reconcile the threat of the law with the comfort of the prophets.

So, what can we say about how Aguilar orientated herself to her faith’s sacred writings? Certainly, she repeatedly claims to have founded her faith upon the Hebrew Bible, of which she wanted a Jewish translation into English, and thus she regards the Talmud as a very secondary text, quite unnecessary for appreciating the true essence of Judaism. In this context, her attitude towards Christianity once again appears torn in two directions. On the one hand, she remains vocally opposed to conversion, determined to offer Jewish alternatives to Christian devotional literature and to reaffirm the Old Testament (rather than New Testament) origins of so many spiritually uplifting texts. On the other, despite an occasional note of regret that she was denied access to the wisdom of the rabbis, she appears to have internalised the anti-Talmudic critique of contemporary Evangelical Protestant Christians along with their conviction that the bible was the sole authority.

(iii) Relating to the Community in terms of both Jews and Christians

In *The Spirit of Judaism* Aguilar had argued for the need to stress spirituality over the external forms that characterized much of Judaism as she found it, and had denigrated rabbinic learning insofar as it distorted the pure teachings of scripture. In so doing, she was redefining what constituted an authentic Jew. But in this theological work she also sought to redefine the relationship between Jews and Christians or, at least, between those Jews and those Christians who she believed shared common religious sensibilities. There were undoubtedly serious doctrinal issues on which Jews and Christians could not agree, such as the Jewish concept of the unity of God as taught in the *Shema*, or the Christian need for a saviour which resulted in them seeing “our beautiful law as one of fire and blood”. But Aguilar was primarily concerned to stress the common religious outlook. She observed that many Protestants were philo-Semites who believed that the restoration of Israel was connected with their final redemption and who looked at the Jews with a mixture of admiration, awe and love. She

and difficult languages, and explain their often puzzling and metaphysical sense. There is a vast fund of Hebrew learning and theology open to them. Their larger intellect, deeper reasoning, greater intensity and power of concentrating thought, will enable them to enter into, and master them; but this to woman is utterly impossible. Destined for home and home duties; to enliven and rejoice all members of the home, be they parents, brothers and sisters, husbands and children.” Ibid., 8–9. Traditional authorities mentioned by Aguilar included sages 152–3, Joseph Albo 156–158, Maimonides 202, 209, 228, 230–, 429.

Regarding Mendelssohn’s *Phaedon* (1767), she wrote, “The feeling of disappointment with which I laid down the book was absolutely painful. There was no evidence of the Hebrew within its pages; the follower of any creed might have compiled it. It could not teach the Christian the immortal hope and spiritualised faith of the Jew...” Ibid., 423.

This was second-hand knowledge, Aguilar commenting, “I do not know the exact words, not having heard, or read his sermon.” Ibid., 193.


Aguilar discussed at some length the Christian need for a saviour in contrast to the Hebrew creed – “one of the great distinctions between the Hebrew and Christian” – and of the law – “They look on our beautiful law as one of fire and blood”. Ibid., 219.

“Do not the enlightened and earnest members of the Protestant church all acknowledge, their final redemption will be, in some way, connected with the restoration of Israel? Do not the truly religious of all sects look upon us with feelings near akin to admiration and awe, ay, and even love?” G. Aguilar, *The Spirit of Judaism* (1842), 16.
could readily sympathize with their spiritual concern for those trapped within loveless, lifeless traditional forms of Judaism, asking “Why should we so condemn the [ir] custom of seeking converts? . . . Why should we be angry with the [ir] wish to lead us where these blessings are supposed to be found?” Between a true Christian and a true Jew the points of agreement were many, and the differences, however important, were few and “need never be brought forward”. The similarities were only natural, for, as we have seen, the source of their knowledge of the God of love was the shared text of the Old Testament, from which the simplified New Testament with its much-lauded ethics was derived. She therefore condemned those Jews who misrepresented Christianity, just as she did those Christians who misrepresented Judaism. For this reason, and adopting the opposite position to that presented in Women of Israel, Aguilar argued that the Jews could and should profit from the wealth of Christian devotional resources.

Likewise, she argued that Jews might profitably emulate the evangelical practice of identifying fulfilments of biblical prophecies as proofs of their own faith. She writes,

The Christians seize with avidity the fulfilment of the prophecies, particularly those relating to Edom, Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Palestine itself, as proofs and evidences of the truth of their religion. How easy it would be to select portions from these very books for the instruction of our children; for the fulfilment of these prophecies only proves the truth and eternal nature of our law, of the whole Book of Life, according to our belief. . . . Proofs of the truth of Christianity are to the young Hebrew, proofs of the truth of Judaism. Conversion cannot take place on either side; but mutual esteem and charity will take the place of such desire; for if both religions appear to have the same foundation, it is evident God alone in His own good time can remove the veil which each believes flung over the other.

78 She went on: “Why should we so condemn the [Christian] custom of seeking converts? If but to too many the Jewish religion is allowed to bring no comfort, no devotion, no spirit, and it is from those misguided ones, the whole religion is regarded; why should we be so angry with the wish to lead us where these blessings are supposed to be found. If there be aught to condemn, it is the lukewarmness and ignorance of those of our own people, who declare there is no comfort, no spirit in their faith. . . .” Aguilar, 22-23.

79 She continued: “[T]he points of agreement are many, so many that our conversation might ever be of our mutual Father which is in heaven, of His glorious works, and attributes and love – [as] though that in which we differ never mingled with it.” Ibid., 23.

80 “This is the God the Nazarene [i.e. Christian] emphatically calleth love; this is their God and OUR God, for it is from us – from us alone – that they have learned in part to know Him.” Ibid., 36.

81 “Why do we only too often hear even amongst professing Hebrews, that the morality of the New Testament infinitely surpasses in beauty and charity that of the Old? . . . [T]he whole system of morality preached by the founder of Christianity is that, in which WE were instructed by God Himself, either in direct communion with Moses, or through His chosen servants the prophets! Its only change is from the lofty language of inspiration which the chosen of the Lord alone could be supposed to understand, to the brief and simple phrases better suited to the comprehension of the heathen to whom it was addressed. . . . Shall we declare the Christian Ethics are the best, when we know nothing, seek to know nothing of our own?” Ibid., 54–56.

82 “This [making manifest the spiritual beauty of Judaism] would be evincing our love to our universal Father, and our desire to exalt His glory, much more to the improving of our own hearts, and to the enlarging of charity towards our fellows, than the endeavour, too often made in scorn and hate, to found the truth of our own belief on the falsity and degradation of the Christian.” Ibid., 88.

83 Ibid., 102.

84 Ibid., 162–163.
In this passage we are reminded that while Aguilar certainly disapproves of conversion, yet she clearly believes that the common biblical foundation of both religions belied the differences that each saw in the other. It is entirely possible to read The Spirit of Judaism as an impassioned plea for Jew and Christian to recognise himself in the other; and to see that the biblically-based spiritual Jew shared more in common with the biblically-based spiritual Christian than either did with formalists in their own camps. Likewise, in a work of historical fiction, Records of Israel (1844), Aguilar puts the case that Christians have unfairly failed to interpret the historical persecution of the Jews in the same way as they do persecution of their own members, namely, as “proof of truth, fidelity, and divine support.”

The two romantic tales concerning the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the troubled lives of crypto-Jews in Lisbon in 1755, were fictional narratives designed, she said, “to bring [this] historical truth more clearly forward.”

In Women of Israel, this interest in identifying one’s true community is played out in a female-only environment. In the introduction to this extended meditation upon the individual experiences of Jewish women, ancient and modern, she was certainly prepared to take issue with some female Christian authors. These, she said, had misrepresented the ideal of true womanhood as a specifically Christian virtue. In particular, she took exception to the role they gave to Christ in their construction. Their works, which, like her own, sought to draw inspiration from the lives of biblical women, were written for the Christian world and, as she put it,

Education and nationality compel them to believe that ‘Christianity is the sole source of female excellence’. . . nay, more, that the value and dignity of women’s character would never have been known, but for the religion of Jesus; that pure, loving, self-denying doctrines, were unknown to women; she did not even know her relation to the Eternal; dared not look upon Him as her Father, Consoler, and Saviour, till the advent of Christianity. . . We feel neither anger nor uncharitableness towards those who would thus deny to Israel those very privileges which were ours, ages before they became theirs; and which, in fact, have descended from us to them. Yet we cannot pass such assertions unanswered. . .

Aguilar was concerned throughout to defend Judaism against the charge that it had degraded its women. She was not even prepared to accept that the Talmud had devalued women in any way, even though elsewhere she was quite keen to dismiss it.

85 ‘The Edict; a Tale of 1492’ and ‘The Escape; a Tale of 1755’. In her preface, Aguilar writes, “[If] persecution and intolerance be always the signs of divine chastisement, how shall we account for the massacres and cruelties inflicted on the Protestants, and, in the early stages of supremacy, by them on the Catholics? Yet in both these cases, martyrdom has always been considered the proof of truth, fidelity, and divine support; the seal, as it were, to the divinity of the cause for which they suffered. Why, then, should not the faithfulness to a religion far more persecuted than any other in the world, be considered in the same glorious light when applied to the children of God?.. Yet who draws examples from the Jew?” Grace Aguilar, Records of Israel (London: J. Mortimer, 1844), vi.

86 Ibid., viii.

87 “Female [Christian] biographers of Scripture have, we believe, often appeared; although the characters of the Old Testament are so briefly and imperfectly sketched, compared to those of the New, that little pleasure or improvement could be derived from their perusal.” Aguilar doubts whether the writings of Sanford, Ellis, and Hamilton “with ‘women’s mission’ marked so simply, yet so forcibly; in the little volume of that name” have done enough to teach women of every race and creed their duty. Aguilar, The Women of Israel, 10.

88 Ibid.

89 “To the Gentile assertion, that the Talmud has originated the above-mentioned blessing, and commanded or inculcated the moral and mental degradation of women, we reply, that even if it did so, which we do not believe it
We see no proofs of the humanizing and elevating influence of Christianity, either on man or on woman, till the reformation opened the Bible, the whole Bible, to the nations at large, when civilization gradually followed. If, then, the situation of even Christian women was so uncertain, but too often so degraded, for nearly fourteen centuries after the advent of Jesus, who His followers declare was the first to teach them their real position, was it very remarkable that the vilified and persecuted Hebrew should in a degree have forgotten his nationality, his immortal and glorious heritage, and shared in the barbarity around him?  

Aguilar thus reacted angrily to the implied claim that Christianity had a monopoly on spirituality and that it should serve as a model for Jewish women. Despite these reservations concerning Christian women’s arrogance, however, Aguilar was inclined to see a good deal in common between her idea of true spirituality and that of many Christian women. She could speak of “the spiritual system common to Protestants and Jews,” and in terms of defining what she called “spiritual essence”, she felt comfortable drawing upon a range of Christian women novelists to make her point. The work of one was described as “so essentially SPIRITUAL, that...we know it must be the religion of God’s word”. This attitude had implications for her fiction.

As we saw with Queen Isabella in The Vale of Cedars, Aguilar was quite capable of presenting a Christian woman sympathetically as a spiritual model in a Jewish historical romance. However, in several of her novels in which she is engaged in illustrating the spirit of true piety, Aguilar tells the stories entirely without reference to Jews or Judaism, the cast of characters being exclusively Christian. In the introduction to her best-selling novel Home Influence, which was published in 1847 (although written ten years previously), she acknowledged that some Christian mothers might be suspicious of her reputation as a Jewish author and “explainer of the Hebrew Faith”. She was quick to appease them.

[The author] begs to assure them, that as a simple domestic story, the characters in which are all Christians, believing in and practising that religion, all doctrinal points have been most carefully avoided, the author seeking only to illustrate the spirit of true piety.
This tendency to appeasement, the sense of a nagging fear of Christian disapproval, permeates a lot of Aguilar’s writing. Her poem ‘The Hermit’, one of her earliest publications from a collection of poems entitled, *The Magic Wreath of Hidden Flowers* (1935), is but one example. In it she calls a friend to accompany her to “the old monk’s cell”, describing its ever-joyful occupant as “a good old man and kind.” She confesses, “once I feared his shrouding hood, His strange coarse fashion’d gown” but, over time she has come to see that “now I find he is so good, I only fear his frown”. Her feelings towards this romantic image of the Christian other whose inner spirituality cannot be denied, neatly captures Aguilar’s own experience: her one-time fear of Christianity as a threat had long-since been replaced by her acknowledgement of its goodness and by her fear, rather, of its disapproval.

Aguilar’s later devotional poetry was more ambiguous with regard to Christianity, however. In a poem entitled, ‘A Visit to Jerusalem: While Listening to a Beautiful Organ in One of the Gentile Shrines’ (1844), Aguilar turns on its head the traditional convention of reading Christian meanings into Jewish biblical texts and history. Ostensibly describing the Christian organ-music, priest’s vestments, altar, and congregational worship, her use of biblical language and symbols transforms this Church service into the noisy, colourful ancient world of biblical Jewish celebration and spiritual ecstasy.

Methought the cymbals’ sacred sound came softly on my ear,  
The timbrel, and psaltery, and the harp’s full notes were near;  
And thousand voices chaunted, His glory to upraise,  
More heavenly and thrillingly than e’en in David’s days. (lines 5–8)

Methought the sons of Levi were in holy garments there,  
Th’anointed one upon his throne, in holiness so fair,  
That all who gazed upon him might feel promise be fulfill’d,  
And sin, and all her baleful train, now he had come, were still’d. (lines 9–12)

My country! Oh my country! Was my soul so enrapt in thee  
One passing moment, that mine eyes might all thy glory see?  
What magic power upheld me there? – alas, alas! it past,  
And darkness o’er my aspiring soul the heavy present cast. (lines 17–20)

I stood ALONE ‘mid thronging crowds who fill’d the stranger shrine,  
For there was none who kept the faith I hold so dearly mine:  
An exile felt I, in that house, from Israel’s native sod, –  
An exile yearning for my home, – yet loved still by my God. (lines 21–24)

The poem can be understood on at least two levels. It could be read as a gentle swipe at the Christian tendency to think of biblical Judaism only in terms of how it prophesied Christian truths. By doing the reverse, by portraying the Gentile shrine as a type or shadowy representation of the glorious Temple, the Christian reader finds herself in unfamiliar, slightly uncomfortable territory, whereby the very conventionality of the supersessionist practice is subtly undermined. But one could as easily interpret Aguilar’s last verses here to

96 “Oh come with me to the old monk’s cell,/ He’s a good old man and kind,/ And joy, though he will dwell alone,/ He ever seems to find./ Oh once I feared his shrouding hood,/ His strange coarse fashion’d gown;/ But now I find he is so good,/ I only fear his frown./ Come, Lucy, you who love to hear;/ Old tales, or legends wild,/ He’ll tell you many; do not fear;/ He loves a gentle child.” G. Aguilar, ‘The Hermit’ in Grace Aguilar, *The Magic Wreath of Hidden Flowers* (Brighton: W.H. Mason, 1839).
suggest that a glorious platonic reality lies behind the shadows of the humble Christian service, and that while, for a Jew, the spirituality of this lost, great world of biblical Judaism can only be occasionally glimpsed, it is not so very far away and might even be recovered by those with appropriate spiritual sensitivity, that even among the Nazarenes, one might say, this fragile flower of spirituality blooms. Thus the poem appears to reflect at the same time both antagonistic and sympathetic attitudes towards Christianity.

It is in The Jewish Faith, that collection of letters to Annie, a Jewish child who was tempted to convert following the loss of her family, that Aguilar wrestled most profoundly with the relationship between the two religions, and where we can find bound together many of her complex, even conflicting, views. The attractions to Christianity were many, it was admitted, including the comforting, ever-vaunted hope of a re-union with lost loved ones, the devotional literature that explained religion and gave strength and comfort in affliction, the apparent life of peace and happiness reflected in the enviable way in which certain Protestant families lived their religion in stark contrast to Jewish families. For example, she writes to Annie,

[W]hen I wrote to you in my first letter of the necessity, the strength and peace of religion, you had felt that, if you were a Christian, you might hope to experience all this, but that as a Jewess, it was impossible – that there were so many books, not merely to explain the Christian religion, but to give sympathy and comfort in every affliction – that there were churches to frequent, and so many home-speaking, heart-appealing prayers to help them to lift up their thoughts to God, that could you but be a Christian, you might be comforted, and even happy – that you have been tempted most strongly to adopt the Christian faith. . . [W]henever you asked any questions regarding religion, your friend had entreated you to seek information from your own – that in her family, as in other of your Protestant friends, religion was actually taught, made a rule for life, and you could not recall any Jewish family in which this was the case, even your own. . . I agree with you in the many and far superior advantages of the Christian over us [Jews]. Religious books adapted for our youth and sympathising in our feelings, we have not indeed. With the sole exception of one Synagogue in London, our houses of worship cannot be to our youth as the Christians’ are to theirs. . .

But such grounds, Villena/Aguilar argued, were not reason enough to convert, for the doctrine of immortality had been a Hebrew one before Christian, and it was not a Christian

97 “[Y]ou cannot help sometimes drawing a comparison between the sentiments of your Christian and Jewish friends. In the one, the thought of belief in, Immortality seemed so ever present, that even the heaviest bereavements were soothed by the hope, not only of the happiness of those who were gone, but of an everlasting re-union; and, of course, Death lost its deepest horror: that amongst your Jewish acquaintance, it was a subject always shunned, the thought of immortality so vague and undefined, so little able to console in bereavement, so clothed in fanciful hypothesis, that it seemed to you, that it could have no solid foundation, and really was wanting in our religion. . . [Y]ou could neither think of those you had lost, nor of death, as it related to yourself, without a shuddering dread, which made you long to embrace the faith of Christians.” Aguilar, The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope, 226–227.

98 Ibid., 32–33.

99 In the context of her own experience of loss, she writes, “As if to tempt me from my sole Rock of help and salvation, the belief of the Christian came to me, as if it had come to you, and promised comfort and redemption, if I would but accept and believe in the sacrifice of Jesus. So strong was the temptation, that I often think the sin of apostasy must have been mine, had not the infinite mercy of my God so blessed a mother’s instructions, so as to lead me to His word for my sole guidance and relief. . . I saw no need for embracing another faith, when the religion of my father gave me not only all I required both for heart and mind, but showed me that if I deserted that, I could not embrace the Christian faith, for all that the Christian’s [sic] taught of death and immortality was the Hebrew’s centuries and centuries before. . . How then can we, dare we, by indifference and silence, by living as if we had no
life which gave peace, but rather one properly centred on the Bible. More problematic was the fact that Villena/Aguilar was prepared to acknowledge throughout that, when it came to matters of spirituality, there was little to distinguish Christian from Jew. Why, then, concern oneself about the label? Why not convert? Her answers included loyalty to one’s birth-religion, and the observations that spontaneous prayer was as Hebrew as it was Christian, that adherence to Christianity was no guarantee of spirituality, because the Christians were fragmented amongst themselves, and that many forms of Christianity suffered from superstitious teachings, too, which had nothing to do with the teachings of its founder. But in the light of her obvious high regard for Christian spirituality, none of these were terribly

thought or hope beyond this earth, give a colouring to the mistaken idea that all our knowledge of and belief in Immortality is derived, unconsciously to ourselves, from our intercourse with Christians; and that it forms, and formed, no part of the Jewish faith! How can Jew or Christian read the Old Testament, and yet read this?" Ibid., 270–271, 410.

"[But] it is not the actual creed which marks the difference in individuals or families. It is the study or neglect of the Bible. The spiritual, the consoling and strengthening piety to which you allude, as characterising your friend and her family, does not proceed from the fact of her being a Christian, but from her having made the Bible her sole rule of action." Ibid., 34.

"Ask any enlightened Protestant, and he will tell you that the actual doctrines of belief are of little moment, compared with the spirit which he supposes that doctrine breathes, and which the preaching of Jesus and his apostles diffused over a benighted world. And that spirit (but wholly and entirely distinct from doctrines, on the precise nature of which, not two congregations could be found to agree as early as the second century after its propagation) had its origin, its influence, its infallibility, in the wider spread and universal acknowledgement of that blessed Word, which for centuries before, for our especial benefit, God had inspired holy men to write." Ibid., 41.

Ibid., 60. You will very probably ask me, if I consider all religions alike in the sight of our Father in Heaven and the earnest worshippers of each equally acceptable to Him, why I am so desirous that you should remain a Jewess. Because, dearest Annie, it is a widely different thing to be earnest and faithful to the creed we have imbibed from infancy, to deserting it, without examination, for another.

"[A]nd yet to bring up our petitions before God was not commanded in the Jewish dispensation, as in the Christian – was not taught in direct words, because it was already, and had been, from the time of Seth, the vital breath of those individuals from whom God’s chosen race descended, and was by them, of course, transmitted to their sons and immediate followers. . . We have specimens of it [its secret and individual practice] from the king to the private female, from the law-giver to the captive, from Noah, and Abraham to Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah; besides instances innumerable in the Psalms and Prophets; and who then can say, because there is no direct command to pray in the Old Testament, that it formed no part in the Jewish dispensation? // In the New Testament, we find the exercise enjoined in direct words, ‘pray always,’ ‘pray evermore,’ ‘pray without ceasing.’ Too long petitions were justly rebuked and a model given, but why was this? Because the nations to whom Christianity was preached, as preparatory to a knowledge of the God of Israel, were sunk in ignorance and Heathenism.” Aguilar, The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope, 283.

"I am no Christian. Nay, I have been, the last four years associating with such unenlightened members of the Greek and Roman churches, that, had I been narrow-minded enough to judge only by them, the Christian would be to me but a term for superstition, irreligion, and utter ignorance of God’s word, compared with which, the most ignorant of my own faith would seem infinitely superior. . .” Ibid., 34–35.

"Were your circle wider, you would find nominal Christians exceeding the number of nominal Jews, and so divided amongst themselves, that, were you really bent upon deserting your faith, which I do not believe you are, you would find it difficult to decide which of these various thinkers and speculative it would be safest and best to join. I do not write this from any feeling of disrespect or uncharitableness: as conscience dictates, so it is right to worship; and if our Father in Heaven looks with an eye of love and has compassion on all His creatures, bearing with error itself in the mode of service, for the sake of the love and zeal borne towards Himself, how dare we, weak, finite mortals of a day, judge harshly of one another?’" Ibid., 60.

Aguilar argues that the fact that some Jews believe in transmigration “no more interferes with the purity and holiness of Judaism, than the strange and childish superstitions of Romanism have to do with the religion of the true Christian. . . The Romanists believe in purgatory, and the efficacy of masses for the dead, . . . visionary ideas . . . which Jesus did not teach.” Ibid., 272, 274.
convincing. And Villena/Aguilar admitted as much when she said that if Annie could not be satisfied with Judaism, then she would not hold her back from conversion.\textsuperscript{107} Aguilar’s position seems to have been a ready acceptance that Anglo-Jewry was in a poor, lifeless state, but she remained convinced that there was no need for the spiritually-minded to lose hope and abandon their ancestral faith. What was required was the re-vitalisation of Judaism. To achieve this, one needed to return to the Bible, of course. But another effective means was to learn from the example offered by spiritually-minded Christians.

Villena/Aguilar develops in The Jewish Faith a theory of Christianity that could be reconciled with Judaism and valued positively. Christianity was a part of God’s providential plan for the nations, fulfilment to a promise made to Abraham that “In thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Jesus had been a Jew whose followers had taught the Gentiles the knowledge of the Lord and the Moral Law in “simpler words.”\textsuperscript{108} Consequentially, she rejoiced at the efforts of “those noble and pure-spirited” Christian missionaries who brought “some knowledge of the divine commands... to benighted lands”.\textsuperscript{109} Of course there were enemies among the Nazarenes, who had forgotten the debt they owed Israel,\textsuperscript{110} but where Christians dedicated themselves to the Bible, there had been less persecution of the Jews.\textsuperscript{111} And, undoubtedly, certain doctrinal differences, such as the Jewish

\textsuperscript{107} “If, when you have stated every doubt and prejudice, my answers fail to make manifest the fullness, and the comfort, and the beauty of our spiritual faith; if, after due and patient examination, your heart and mind shall decide in favour of the Christian, I will not keep you back, grievous as it would be that so wide a barrier was flung between us.” Ibid., 61.

\textsuperscript{108} “Even by the most prejudiced of our opponents, it is acknowledged, that Jesus was himself of a Jew, and his Apostles taught the Gentiles, in simpler words, the knowledge of the Lord, and of the Moral Law, already revealed to us. From us, then, the blessing of revelation certainly came, whoever might be the ministers to bear it, mingled with some human error permitted for a time, over the known world. “In thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,” God said to Abraham centuries before the advent of Moses; and in our dispersion, in the wider spread of OUR scriptures, in the immortal hopes, and glorious future destiny they reveal, in the ennobling aspirations they inspire, in their very revelation of a Father, who has dearer and tenderer, more enduring and more forebearing love, than any earthly parent, — I know this promise also fulfilled, and, in the revelation vouchsafed to the seed of Abraham, every nation blessed?” Ibid., 104–105.

\textsuperscript{109} “I do indeed rejoice, when I hear of the efforts of those noble and pure-spirited men, whom the world so often deride and contempt [sic], the missionaries, who seek to preach even their gospel to benighted lands, and so win them to some knowledge of the divine commands. I know that many would loudly condemn this as an entirely anti-Jewish idea: but believing as I do, and as my Bible authorizes me to believe, that all the present systems of Revealed Religion are working God’s will, and gradually bringing nearer that glorious day, when all darkness, all error shall be removed, and when, our chastisement being ended, we shall be restored to our own land, and all nations flow unto us, and acknowledge with us that God is One: and believing, too, that unless the earth is brought in some degree to know God, this will not be accomplished — I must rejoice at every effort (be it of individuals or nations) to remove ignorance and reveal the Bible, or (as in the case of the Koran) some part at least of Revelation.” Ibid., 160–161.

\textsuperscript{110} “I have already called your attention to the principles of the two great systems, Christianity and Mahomedanism, which, grafted on the Mosaic revelation, have been permitted to spread over the earth, as to forget their [Jewish] origin and believe in individual infallibility; and in the utter rejection of that people and that law, without whom both systems must fall meaningless to the ground.” Ibid. 69.

\textsuperscript{111} “Of course there are exceptions to this fearful treatment of a people [constantly endeavouring, but without success, to vilify and exterminate the Jews], for whom those moral laws [contained in the Word of God] were compiled, and to whom that pure knowledge of the Lord was given, from which all nations and all people benefit. The more the Bible, the whole Bible, is made the guiding star of the land, and the Old as well as the New Testament studied, the more consideration the Jews receive; the less we read of persecution.” Ibid., 96.
insistence on God’s unity,\textsuperscript{112} and the Christian insistence on original sin\textsuperscript{113} and on the meaning of sacrifice,\textsuperscript{114} had to be maintained. But the only criteria that really mattered, she maintained, were those of “feeling” rather than of “doctrine”,\textsuperscript{115} for both systems ultimately upheld the same moral truths and principles.\textsuperscript{116} There was therefore no need to convert these fellow “heirs to Immortality” to Judaism.\textsuperscript{117} Despite their differences, her attitude was manifested in the exclamation: “I respect, from my very heart, the true spiritual believing

\textsuperscript{112} “Christianity, again, approaching infinitely nearer to us [than Mahomedanism], in its spirit and its laws, and acknowledging the same guiding books, and therefore the same God, far advanced as she is in spirituality and enlightenment, and in holding forth many a bright example to us, of true and beautiful piety still, even she cannot embrace the doctrine of the one sole indivisible God, cannot realise the perfection and unity of His attributes, without the intervention of a mediator, and a holy spirit, distinct from, yet unified with Himself. It often appears strange, that where we have so much, so very much in common, the Christian idea of the Godhead should be so distinct from that of the Hebrew; that where a religious system has advanced so very near the sublimest truth, it should yet pause, incomplete, and present a stumbling block, which the enlightened Jew can never over-leap. It would appear still more strange, if I did not firmly believe it ordained in fulfilment of that word, which has declared, we should be a distinct people for ever, and which [humanly speaking] would be still more difficult of accomplishment, if the Christian idea of the Eternal were in all points like our own.” Ibid., 67.

\textsuperscript{113} “The Christian creed is, that not only did Adam’s sin bring death into the world, but condemned his own soul and that of all his unborn descendants, even the spotless babe, to everlasting perdition; that man has no power whatever in himself to pursue the good and strive for Heaven; that unless baptised, and so, through his sponsors, receiving Jesus, he is lost eternally; that only the acknowledgment of the Infinite Atonement can bring salvation; and without such acknowledgement, every effort after righteousness is futile, and the most earnestly pious lover of God and man condemned, without hope of redemption or escape; while the greatest and most impious sinner may be saved, if he only declare his belief in Jesus. I do not tell you this is the belief of all Christians. I know many who would shrink from it; but it is undoubtedly the general doctrine of Christianity, and so accounts for their anxious desire to convert all people to the same saving creed. . . You see, then, though the groundwork of both faiths is the same, the superstructure is very different, and ought to be clearly defined to every young Hebrew. The Christian believes that every thought and act of man is clogged with sin. The Hebrew cannot believe so; because his Bible tells him, that there are thoughts, actions, ay, and even feelings, which are pure, and holy, and acceptable to his God.” Ibid., 186–187, 190.

\textsuperscript{114} “This is the grand distinction between the Christian and Jewish ideas on the subject of sacrifice. The former, regarding their every mention in the Old Testament as types of the great sacrifice on which their faith is founded, must consider them of such primary importance, that all heart worship was imperfect without them. The latter, on the contrary, are taught, both by their Law and their Prophets, that they are merely secondary; but part of the outward and ceremonial rite, which was of no merit or importance whatever in itself, and by itself, but was accepted as obedience, or rejected as abomination, according to the inward spirit in which it was offered.” Ibid., 221.

\textsuperscript{115} “I am quite aware, that the assertion of similitude between religious, whose doctrines of belief are so opposed, would meet with violent opposition, from many who term themselves orthodox Hebrews; but opposition will not alter truth, and I am ready to agree with them that between the formalist and the spiritualist, there is indeed a barrier which can never be passed; but this holds as good between Jew and Jew, Christian and Christian, as between Hebrew and Protestant. It is not the doctrines, but the feelings which are so impassably opposed. I would not check your intimacy with any Christian friend.” Ibid., 31–32.

\textsuperscript{116} “Christianity in all, save its actual doctrine of belief, is the offspring of Judaism; and as one of our most enlightened and purest feeling Divines very lately said, ‘The differences between Christianity and Judaism, however great and weighty in their speculative doctrines, disappear in the moral truths and principles alike upheld by both.’ And the more we know of each other’s faith and practice, the more clear and striking becomes this fact.” Ibid., 12–13. The reference is to Rev. M.J. Raphall, Jewish Chronicle of 9th January, 1846.

\textsuperscript{117} “We have no need to make converts. We are, indeed, the first-born, first-beloved; but all who look to Him, and love God, according to the law they follow, are our brothers, and equally with us heirs of Immortality! We do not believe that God has mercy, and has opened the gates of His Heaven to the Jews alone. You will, no doubt, often be told by the nominal Jew, as well as by the nominal Christian, that this is only an individual, not a Jewish notion; but do not let your faith be shaken by such remarks. Our Bible tells us, that the law of Moses is incumbent on the Jews alone, not on the nations; and our ancient fathers (men with deep learning and profound wisdom, who of the present day can compare?) have told us in clear and simple words, ‘The Righteous among the Nations of the World have a Share in the World to Come.’” Ibid., 158, 162–163.
This vision of Christianity helps account for why Villena/Aguilar encourages her young protégé to maintain close relations to her Christian friends, telling her to ignore the gossip of Jewish observers because there was no reason to fear conversionary efforts from a "true and enlightened Protestant." It was true that Anglo-Judaism was in a poor state but this had nothing to do with exposure to its Christian surroundings. Quite the reverse — Anglo-Judaism was lagging behind Anglo-Christian spirituality and intellectualism. Therefore it would do no harm and much good if the girl was to draw upon Christian devotional literature, for example, for a thorough grounding in one’s own religion would keep one alive to the rare possibility of confusion of doctrine. Annie would be spiritually uplifted, and should not be afraid. As she explained,

Till that is obtained [i.e. Jewish spiritual literature is published], if we would seek aid for serious thought, we must go to Christian books, choosing, of course, those which are more spiritual than

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118 “Remember, I do not wish to touch on the Christian faith as regards themselves. As I have said repeatedly, I trace the workings of the Eternal in its progress, as a preparation for that great and glorious day when we shall all know Him. I respect, from my very heart, the true spiritual believing Christian. I only wish to make it clear to you, why, as children of Israel, neither you nor I could accept the first grand doctrine of the Christian faith [i.e. sacrificial atonement].” Ibid., 209.

119 “Not thinking very deeply, they [the only Hebrews you have known] imagine it quite impossible for any serious Christian, to take an interest in a young Jewess without desiring her conversion; and that Hebrews and Christians may have much, very much in common; that the very link between them may be religion, entirely and wholly distinct from the doctrines of creed, is so utterly incomprehensible, that they not only disbelieve in its possibility, but are always looking for some ulterior motive. I have no such feelings. No true and enlightened Protestant, ever yet descended to the petty and wicked meanness, of tampering with the faith of a young and almost friendless girl as yourself. Mistaken zealots there are, indeed, who deem the attempt to convert the most meritorious act they can perform; but these are seldom found among calm, enlightened Protestants. Know your own religion well, observe it from mental as well as loving conviction, and you will find yourself and your faith too truly respected, ever to fear even an attempt at conversion. [As if to a Christian audience:] It is the mere formalists amongst us, who have thrown such odium on the Jewish faith; but you must not judge the whole nation by the few with which you are thrown.” Ibid., 30-31.

120 “I am aware that it is said repeatedly, that the Jews of England cannot feel as the Jews of former times; because they must have imbibed, from association with Christians, so many of their religious ideas.” Ibid., 418.

121 Aguilar admits, “we are so far behind our Christian brethren in spiritual and intellectual religion.” Ibid., 445.

122 “Our huge tomes of Hebrew wisdom and learning are inaccessible to woman. . . [But] All she requires, is to understand the unspeakable comfort, and the religion she follows, so as to obey its dictates from the calm conviction of the mind, as well as from the heart. Many suppose that this comes intuitively, and requires neither instruction nor sympathy. It may be for some: but the generality of our youth demand it, yearn for it with such an intensity of feeling, that, finding no books of their own, they are compelled to seek the works of Christian writers — and then we are astonished, if they are more Christian than Jewish in their thoughts. A charge, by the way, incomprehensible to us individually, as we know not, and never could discover, the distinction between Jewish and Christian spirituality, on which some good, but prejudiced persons, lay so great a stress. The distinction of creeds is, indeed, very clearly to be understood and defined, as also the difference in their respective ordinances and modes of thought; but spirituality is common to every creed and to every nation who earnestly seek to know and love the Lord, according to the dictates of the Laws that each believe that He has given, and so observe. And if this be the case with every creed, how much more in common ought those to have, who acknowledge the same Book, and the same foundation? / But if the imbibing of Christian spirituality will do our young sisters no harm whatever, for it is Jewish spirituality as well, the imbibing of the peculiar creed of the Christian undoubtedly will, and this is the great evil to be counteracted in the indiscriminate perusal of Christian books.” Ibid., 9–10. In addition to the Gospels, other Christian sources cited by Aguilar included Thomas Carlyle 75, Humphrey Davys 89–90, Gibbon 127, and Rev. Robert Anderson’s of Trinity Chapel, Brighton, 340.

123 “From having no serious books of our own, fitted for our females and youth, those who are inclined to serious reflection, are compelled to turn to works, by serious Christian authors. There they will find sympathy and pleasure, but so intimately mingled with the peculiar bearing of the Christian faith, that unless fully and thoroughly versed in our own, it is next to impossible not to share the writer’s belief in the excellence of his own religion, over and above that of any other.” Ibid., 40.
doctrinal. The spirit of the Christian religion is equally the spirit of the Hebrew; for both owe their origin to the same Bible. We have but clearly to understand our own, and a glance will divide our doctrinal points from theirs. Nay, more, you will find, the more you study and examine your own, that the very books which confirm Christians in their faith will confirm you in yours. One especially, a very beautiful work, ‘Keith’s Evidence of Prophecy,’ was once lent me, not with any wish for its religious doctrines to convert me (that I knew from the upright character of the lender), but for the exquisite beauty of its language and sentiments. It is many years ago, for I was scarcely older than you are now, and just beginning to think for myself. Well do I remember the trembling with which I began its perusal – trembling lest my dawning hope and trust should be shaken by this Christian book. But both were strengthened, dearest Annie. It was a strange, an almost indefinable effect; but so it was. Every evidence of prophecy fulfilled, proved so convincingly that others were still to be accomplished; and the truth, the perpetuity, the unchangeableness of my holy faith, the impossibility of its ever merging into another, stood before me clearer and more convincingly than had ever done before. I have no fear of you perusing similar works.

Nor should she concern herself with those who were suspicious about the influence of Christianity in this construction of a spiritualised Judaism. Those who denied such a thing only strengthened the hand of Christian critics who regarded Judaism as unspiritual. This account, synthesized from the letters, is as close to a coherent theology as we are likely to find. And yet it remains riddled through with problematic aspirations.

In discussing Aguilar’s sense of community, one is impressed by her conviction that it was entirely possible to learn true spirituality from the lives and actions of Christians, both real and fictional. She is remarkably sympathetic to the attraction of Christian life, and readily acknowledges the spiritual poverty of contemporary Anglo-Jewry. By emphasising a shared community of spiritual Jews and Christians, she can explain why there is no need to convert each other. Arguably, she was defining her community in spiritual terms to include many among the Christian faith. And yet the ambiguity remains. Aguilar insists, of course, on

124 Ibid., 144–145. Aguilar is referring to Alexander Keith’s Evidence of Prophecy (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1823), which aimed to support the truth of Christianity by demonstrating the historical fulfilment of biblical prophecies; of less interest to Aguilar was Keith’s argument for a restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland.

125 “But what can we say for those who amongst themselves can assert any thing so absolutely and scripturally, and even talmudically false, as the non-spirituality of their thrice holy faith? It is to me so marvellous, so incomprehensible, that any Jew can read his Bible, and its commentaries by many of our earliest sages, and yet believe this, that the only possible way to explain it, is the supposition that he actually cannot know the meaning of the word spirituallity; and, by a strange mystification of ideas, associates it with the mere doctrines of Christian creed, particularly that of the ‘Holy Ghost’ and so rejects it as anti-Jewish, and tending to mislead him. This is the only tangible and rational reason I can find for this extraordinary error, which I have known take the possession of some minds so strongly, that the very word, ‘spirit,’ or ‘spirit of God,’ even in only a poem, terrifies from the perusal, or causes its condemnation as too Christian for the approval of any Jewish mind.” Ibid., 52.

126 “Concerning this mistaken charge of non-spirituality in a religion which preceded from the mouth of God himself; that God whom we only know as SPIRIT, without form or substance, a pure essence pervading Heaven and Earth, and whom we are expressly commanded to worship in spirit and in truth, it seems to me that Christians have adopted and asserted it, simply from the mistaken supposition that we now receive and follow the ordinances of and superstitions of man, in lieu of the word of the living God. They suppose this partly from observation, and partly from the received, yet erroneous, assertions of books. Now, there is no such thing as ancient and modern Judaism. . . When our opponents bring forward the constantly reiterated assertion, that the Hebrews have mingled all sorts of petty and enslaving customs, and binding forms, which we cannot find in the Word of God, I answer, It is quite true; but human weakness and human error cannot tarnish the intrinsic beauty, nor interfere with the ordained perpetuity of the Mosaic system. And if we examine the origin of these human additions, we shall find they proceed from the intense desire of our ancient sages, to preserve the undying spark of religion alive within us by means of outward ordinances, which, by their constant occurrence, would bring our Creator to our thoughts, when, from slavery and misery, we were debarred from all more spiritual communion.” Ibid., 46.
maintaining the distinction between Jewish and Christian doctrines, even as she undermines these distinctions with her attempts to convince Christian readers of their shared worldviews. She suggests emulating Evangelical use of fulfilled biblical prophecy and she recommends the use of Christian literature, but also bitterly regrets the need to use it and denounces the Christian misrepresentation of the treatment of women in Judaism. She admires the morality and bravery of Christian missionaries but dismisses their New Testament as a simplified, compromised set of ethical teachings. Her poetry captures this ambiguity most perfectly, in the way it both emphasises the similarity of spirit, and at the same time subtly asserts Jewish superiority. It is as if she is always in a state of flux, moving between admiration and criticism of Christianity, often revealing an anxious hope of Christian approval.

**Conclusion**

Any attempt to define precisely how Grace Aguilar conceived the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is complicated by the fact that she was engaged in a one-woman programme of Jewish reform. It is not easy to define Christianity in relation to Judaism if one’s view of Judaism is not yet fixed. It is even more complicated when one recognises that her reforming programme for Judaism drew heavily upon Christian influences. In this regard it is worth stressing her independence from the Anglo-Jewish Reform movement whose synagogue was established only seven years before her death. In sharp contrast to the London reform community, Aguilar stressed women's spirituality as the paradigm for a refashioned Judaism. Furthermore, while the first minister of the Reform Synagogue, David Woolf Marks, might have shared Aguilar’s sensitivity to an Evangelical, bible-based, anti-rabbinic Christian critique of Judaism, and therefore also espoused a bibliocentric emphasis, he did not share Aguilar’s sense of a shared spiritual community with, and her profound empathy towards, Christianity.¹²⁷

Aguilar’s particular interfaith project should be categorized as an ‘appreciative relational theology’ in that it sought to portray ‘the other’ in a way that encourages mutual understanding and respect. But Aguilar was more than simply a reform-orientated Jew with a burning desire to convince Christians of the respectability of Judaism. ¹²⁸ She was developing an ideological framework that aimed to prevent conversion and to justify why one should remain a Jew, that presented a robust critique of Christianity’s distinctive doctrines, and that granted it a positive value-judgement, even to the extent of encouraging a sense of identification with, and emulation of, it. In this she was not entirely successful. Let

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us end now with a summary of the development of her theology in five stages. (i) Aguilar began with the desire to relate to Christianity in a positive way, which can no doubt be attributed to positive personal experiences in her youth and a growing sense of dissonance in seeing how each community tended to regard the other in wholly negative terms. (ii) Aguilar found herself re-assessing the assumptions that defined her own religious identity in exclusivist Jewish terms. Thus she recognised that neither Judaism nor Christianity could claim a monopoly over what she regarded as the essence of true religion, namely an emotive, romantic form of spirituality, which was to be prioritized over tradition. Likewise she acknowledged the shared claim to those sacred texts which she regarded as most authoritative, namely the Hebrew Bible. And in focusing upon the feminine perspective, she developed a sense of community that embraced a Christian as well as a Jewish sisterhood. (iii) As a result of her appreciation of Christianity, she committed herself to a process of reform: on the one hand, reform of Christian misconceptions of an authentic, spiritual form of Judaism. On the other hand, reform of Judaism itself so as to bring this authentic, spiritual form of Judaism into existence. As a result, there would no longer be a need for Christian missionaries to inculcate a ‘living religion’ among her brethren. (iv) Aguilar became obsessed with the goal of capturing and conveying the ephemeral sense of relation, of shared-but-distinct identity, between Jew and Christian. It was not easy for her to articulate this perceived reality and she drew upon all her skills, expressing the complex sense of religious identity in different literary forms and genres. This observation is useful for explaining Aguilar’s unusual combination of writing styles, which range from the ‘edifying literature’ of her novels, poetry, and dialogues, to formal works of exegesis and theology. Finally, (v) the ambiguity of Aguilar’s appreciation of Christianity reflects the fact that her analysis was not a linear investigation offering a definitive conclusion, but rather a dynamic process. The evidence from her writings strongly suggests that she was forever oscillating between that which differentiates or pushes apart and that which binds together or unifies.

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FROM THE CHRIST-KILLER TO THE LUCIFERIAN:
THE MYTHOLOGIZED JEW AND FREEMASON IN
LATE NINETEENTH- AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY
ENGLISH CATHOLIC DISCOURSE

Simon Mayers*

ABSTRACT: Conventional wisdom in studies of English antisemitism has tended to suggest that by
the nineteenth century religious prejudice had largely been secularised or replaced by modern socio-
political and racial forms of hostility. This may have been the case in the general English discourse, but
in the English Catholic discourse at the turn of the twentieth century, traditional pre-modern myths,
with their cast of Jewish and Masonic diabolists, were still a pervasive feature. This article examines a
range of sources, including the published works of prominent and obscure authors, the pastoral letters
and sermons of cardinals, bishops and priests, articles and editorials in newspapers and periodicals,
letters, and a small number of oral testimonies, in order to bring to light an English Catholic discourse
which, with the exception of the published works of Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, has largely
gone unexamined. Prominent mythological villains in the English Catholic discourse during the late
nineteenth- and early twentieth-century included “the Pharisee,” “the Christ-Killer,” “the Ritual
Murderer,” “the Sorcerer,” “the Antichrist” and “the Luciferian.” This article examines the continued
presence of narratives in which Jews and Freemasons were assigned one or more of these villainous
roles.

This article presents some of the results of an investigation into the representations of “the
Jew” which existed in English Catholic discourse during the final years of the nineteenth
century and the early decades of the twentieth century (circa 1896 to 1929). Three main
types of representation were considered during the investigation: the roles assigned to the
Jew in traditional Christian myths, contemporary stereotypes of the Jew and composite
constructions which combine themes drawn from myths and stereotypes. For the purpose
of the investigation, stereotypes were broadly speaking defined as crude, powerful, resilient
but protean representations, which take so-called human vices and virtues, often distorted
and magnified, and project them onto all individuals within the stereotyped group. In
the English Catholic discourse, the stereotyped Jew was greedy, cowardly, unpatriotic
and secretive. He was also depicted as smart, but his intelligence was not considered a
virtue. Myths were in essence defined in the investigation as important and persistent stories.

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1 The distinction between these types of representation is discussed in more detail in: Simon Mayers, “From ‘the
Pharisee’ to ‘the Zionist Menace’: Myths, Stereotypes and Constructions of the Jew in English Catholic Discourse

2 These stereotypes are examined in Mayers, “From ‘the Pharisee’ to ‘the Zionist Menace,”’ ch.3.

3 For example, the so-called “Hebrew genius” was portrayed as an antagonist and contrast to the “Catholic
spirit” in William Barry, “Sign of the Times II,” Catholic Times, 6 November 1920, 7. Hilaire Belloc argued that one
of religious or cultural significance which have been treated as truthful representations of past events. Myths are resilient but adaptive narratives that serve an important psychological or sociological function, such as justifying the creation and ongoing existence of a religion or culture, or the usurpation and suppression of a rival religious and cultural group. In the English Catholic discourse, the mythologized Jew was a stubborn Pharisee, the rejecter and murderer of Christ, a ritual murderer, a sorcerer and the Antichrist.

Whilst the term “construction” has been used in various ways in studies examining how discourses shape reality, it was used in this investigation to specifically signify distinct composite creations which combine contemporary stereotypes and traditional myths. Whilst individual authors created their own constructions, a pervasive construction in the English Catholic discourse was the “Masonic-Jewish Camarilla.” “The Freemason” was stereotyped as a secretive, plundering, unpatriotic, anti-social, anti-national, anti-Christian agitator and mythologized as a Lucifer-worshipping, host-desecrating diabolist. In these constructions the Jew was often depicted as the ally and fellow conspirator of the Freemason. Of the three types of representation examined in the investigation, the focus in this article is the mythologized Jew and the mythological component of constructions of the “Masonic-Jewish Camarilla.”

Conventional wisdom in studies of English antisemitism and Anglo-Jewish history has tended to suggest that by the nineteenth century religious prejudice had largely been secularised or replaced by modern socio-political and racial forms of hostility. This may of the marks of the Jew is the “lucidity of his thought.” He was “never muddled” in argument and his inescapable reasoning thus has in it “something of the bully.” A man arguing with a Jew, Belloc contended, may know the Jew to be wrong, but his “iron logic” is “offered to him like a pistol presented at the head of his better judgement.” Hilaire Belloc, The Jews (London: Constable, 1922), 81.

According to Hyam Maccoby, on the surface the Christian foundation myth is not dissimilar in function to the “dispossession” or “usurpation” myths of other civilisations. Maccoby explains that in the case of the Christian “usurpation myth,” the “very self-image of a community” was the “target of a take-over bid.” Rather than a mere territorial usurpation, the myth has been used to “annex the position of being the true Israel.” Maccoby suggests that the Christian “usurpation myth” is uniquely complex, consisting of a “multiplicity of mythological motifs.” A distinctive feature is that the usurped characters, i.e. the Jews, have been assigned an important “continuing role within the landscape of the Christian myth.” Hyam Maccoby, A Pariah People: The Anthropology of Antisemitism (London: Constable, 1996), 63–65, 82–113; Hyam Maccoby, The Sacred Executions: Human Sacrifice and the Legacy of guilt ([London]: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 134.

One study which uses the term “construction” in a different way to this investigation is Bryan Cheyette’s Constructions of “the Jew” in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875–1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). According to Cheyette, there was a “bewildering variety of contradictory and over-determined representations of ‘the Jew.’” Cheyette suggests that these contradictions were so extreme that they were “particularly threatening to those who would wish to exert a sense of control and order over an increasingly unmanageable ‘reality.’” Whereas this investigation examines structures of discourse, Cheyette focuses on the absence of structure. He argues that constructions of the Jew were “radically unstable,” “indeterminate,” “ambiguous,” “contradictory,” “over-determined” and “fluid” (8–9, 268–269). However, in this investigation, whilst the potential permutations of composite constructions based upon stereotypes and myths were large, the reality was that the constructions of the Jew of one English Catholic author were rarely radically different to those of another; they were varied and distinct, but there were always points of similarity, and they were by no means protan to the point of being fluid.

For example, Canon William Barry, a prominent English Catholic priest and author, drew upon stereotypes of Jewish greed, foreignness and secrecy, and myths about a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy and the Jewish Antichrist, to produce his own distinctive construction of the Jew.

The other pervasive composite construction of the Jew in the English Catholic discourse was “the Zionist Menace.”

well have been the case in the general English discourse, but conversely, in the English Catholic discourse at the turn of the twentieth century, traditional myths, with their cast of Jewish and Masonic diabolists, were still a pervasive feature. This article examines the main guises of these persistent mythological villains: the Pharisee, the Christ-Killer, the Ritual Murderer, the Sorcerer, the Antichrist and the Luciferian.

The Pharisee and the Christ-Killer

At the dawn of the Christian era, the foundation was established for a complex and protean myth: the long awaited Jewish messiah whose coming was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures was rejected and killed by the Jews. Two key roles, sometimes rendered distinct but often conjoined, were assigned to the Jews in this myth. The first role, “the Pharisee,” was depicted as blind, arrogant, stubborn, mean, manipulative, hypocritical and legalistic. According to the foundation myth, the Pharisee would not embrace the truth of God’s new covenant. The second role, “the Christ-Killer,” was the paramount villain of all time, who rejected, hounded and called for the death of the messiah. According to the myth, by rejecting the messiah and the new covenant, the Jews rejected God. God in turn rejected them, and replaced them with the Church as the “new Israel.”

The most common source within the English Catholic discourse for the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer were the sermons and pastoral letters of priests and bishops. Selective elements from traditional myths were drawn upon to make salutary points about Christian virtues and non-Christian vices. One of the masters of this form of sermon was a prominent convert from the Anglican to the Catholic Church, Ronald Knox, a celebrated priest, theologian and novelist. Many of his sermons have been collected into volumes and published. His sermons were often peppered with references to Jews and Pharisees, especially those dealing


9 Trachtenberg points out that it was believed by some Christians that the Jews were willful rather than ignorant in their rejection. For example, some early Church Fathers, such as Jerome and Justinian, complained that the Rabbis “deliberately perverted the meaning of the original text.” Medieval scholars even accused Jews of “tampering with the text of the Bible in an effort to destroy its Christological meaning.” Joshua Trachtenberg, The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jews and its Relation to Modern Antisemitism (1943; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 15, 153.

10 Ronald Knox (1888–1957) was a close friend of Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. Knox was born into a wealthy Anglican family. His father, Edmund Knox, was the Anglican Bishop of Manchester. Knox was ordained an Anglican priest in 1912, converted to Roman Catholicism in 1917 and was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1919. His sermons were crafted with meticulous care, highly articulate and in demand. According to Kevin Morris and Ulrike Ehret, Knox developed sympathies for fascism, though he subsequently opposed Nazism (as it infringed upon the rights of the Church). Kevin L. Morris, “Fascism and British Catholic Writers 1924–1939,” Chesterton Review, XXV, no.1&2 (February 1999), 31, 38; Ulrike Ehret, “Catholics and Antisemitism in Germany and England, 1918–1939,” PhD thesis, University of London (2006), 177.
with the parables of Jesus. According to Knox, “the Pharisee” in Jesus’ parables represents “the Jews, and especially the strict Jews.” He argued that the Pharisees were full of “pride and blindness,” trusted in their “own righteousness” and “misinterpreted the meaning of the old dispensation.” “The Pharisees,” Knox concluded, “could not accept Christ” because of “their hatred of everything Gentile” and their “blind traditional interpretations of the law.” “The Jews had rejected their God” and so “God rejects his people.” Knox explained that “the Jews have so long been accustomed to being the sole beneficiaries of God’s covenant with man that it seems incredible to them now that God should be able to do without them.” According to Knox, as the Pharisees listened to the parables of Jesus, they were sure there was something blasphemous about them, something that could only “be expiated by a cross.” When they realised that Jesus was “speaking of them,” the only thing that prevented them seizing Him there and then was their fear of “the multitude.” This was, he suggested, the “prelude to Gethsemane and to Calvary.” “God’s patience,” he stated, “lasts very long,” and thus he did not reject “the Jews” until they “crowned their apostasy with the murder of his own Son.” Knox repeated these narratives in articles published in *The Cross*, the periodical of the Passionists based in Dublin. He suggested that the Pharisees were obsessed with fulfilling “the old law.” Christians should, he argued, go beyond “the Scribes and Pharisees,” not by adding “a series of codicils, as lifeless, as uninspiring as the rest.” They should not add even more rules, but carry out God’s commandments “in the spirit” rather than “in the letter.” His point was that unlike the Pharisees, “Christians ought to have a law, written not on tables of stone, but on our inmost hearts; a principle of active charity which ought to supersede the necessity for commandments.”

Since the early centuries of the Christian era, a variety of Jews have been held accountable for crucifying Christ, and often this multiplicity would be found in a single narrative. This was also the case in the modern English Catholic discourse. For example, Knox explained that it was not just the “Pharisees” who “rejected and crucified our Lord.” The Jewish “Zealots” expected a military leader. They were ready to support Jesus until “they discovered that his kingdom was not of this world” and that his warfare would not be “against the Roman oppressor.” The “Sadducees” considered Jesus “a political menace.” According to Knox, whichever type of Jew they were, fanatical Zealot, obscurantist Pharisee or worldly Sadducee, “they all crucify Christ.” Father Bernard Vaughan, brother of Cardinal Archbishop Vaughan, was a popular clergyman in his own right, and like Knox, his sermons

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13 Ronald Knox, “Equality of Reward” (1928), in *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 120.
14 Ronald Knox, “Parable” (1928), in *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 8.
17 Ronald Knox, “Equality of Reward” (1928), in *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 119.
18 The Passionists are members of a Catholic order (the Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ), founded in the eighteenth century. *The Cross* often contained articles by prominent English Catholics, including Knox, Belloc and G. K. Chesterton.
20 Ronald Knox, “Reprobation” (1928), in *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 80–81.
were in demand all over the country. Also like Knox, he explained that all varieties of Jews were responsible for the murder of Christ. In an address delivered at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in 1907, he stated that “Priests and Levites, Pharisees and Scribes, Sadducees and Herodians, servants and soldiers, young men and women, and children innumerable, all came forth to see the end, the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.” Invoking the moment for his audience, he asked them to “picture for one moment the wild and mad Eastern mob, tossing to and fro, screaming and gesticulating in their flowing garments of every shade.” He observed that “they are, most of them at any rate, discussing the situation, and congratulating one another on the verdict which rids their nation of another arch imposter.”

Sermons by other priests also referred to the rejection of Christ. For example, Father Bede Jarrett, the head of the English Dominicans and the founder and president of the Catholic Guild of Israel, combined the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer in a sermon delivered in 1915. According to a report of this sermon in the Catholic Times, Jarrett pointed out that Christ was “done to death” as a result of a “political accusation.” According to Jarrett, the noteworthy thing was that Christ was “accused by the Pharisees because He adopted their political ideas.” His teachings were too pure and sincere for the Pharisees and so, in their “sheer hypocrisy,” they denied their own politics in order to denounce Him. A sermon in 1915 by the auxiliary Bishop of Salford, John Stephen Vaughan (another brother of the Cardinal Archbishop), stated that when the world goes astray and “is in danger of forgetting Him, God does not abandon it, but He rises up and visits it with the most unmistakable signs of His displeasure.” As an example he cited the fate of the Jews: God summoned up “the Romans with their armies,” and used them to wrought destruction upon Jerusalem, “in punishment of the sins and crimes of the perfidious Jews.”

In addition to these sermons, the follies of Jewish “legalism” and the rejection of Christ also featured in the carefully constructed pastoral letters of the bishops and archbishops of the English hierarchy. Edward Ilsley, the first Archbishop of Birmingham, one of the largest and most important Roman Catholic divisions in England, referred to the Jews in a number of his pastoral letters. In his mid-Lent pastoral for 1916, he stated that the Jewish

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23 “Christ or Caesar: Sermon by Father Bede Jarrett, O.P.,” Catholic Times (London edition only), 29 October 1915, 7. The sermon was delivered at St James’ Roman Catholic Church, Spanish Place, London. Bede Jarrett (1881–1934) was the head of the English Dominicans from 1916 onwards. He founded the Catholic Guild of Israel in 1917 in order to improve efforts to convert the Jews in England.
24 John Stephen Vaughan, “The Scourge of War,” The Catholic Pulpit, Universe, 13 August 1915, 6. This sermon was delivered at Salford Cathedral on 5 August 1915. John Stephen Vaughan (1853–1925) was the youngest brother of Cardinal Archbishop Vaughan. He was the auxiliary Bishop of Salford.
25 For a nuanced discussion of “legalism,” see Bernard Jackson, “Legalism,” Journal of Jewish Studies, XXX, no.1, Spring 1979, 1–22. Jackson observes that the notion of “legalism” is a Christian concept and one that ideally neither Jews nor lawyers would have to deal with.
26 Edward Ilsley (1838–1926) was Bishop (1888–1911) and Archbishop of Birmingham (1911–1921). After the reintroduction of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, England consisted of one ecclesiastical province (the Archdiocese of Westminster and several suffragan dioceses). Due to rapid growth, the Catholic Church in England was reorganised in 1911 into three ecclesiastical provinces (Westminster, Birmingham and Liverpool). Francis Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster, was made a Cardinal at the same time. Ironically, Bourne had less power as Cardinal-Archbishop than he did previously. The Archbishop of Westminster continued to enjoy certain privileges, but he was now in effect the first amongst three equals. Bourne sought permission to use the title, “Primate of
sacrifices could have but little efficacy for the “remission of sins.” “At the best they came from a tainted source,” he stated, and “possessed no worth which could make them pleasing to God.” The sacrifices of “the Old Law,” he maintained, “availed only to give the Jews an external, ceremonial purification, but were powerless to cleanse the soul from sin.” In a pastoral for Quinquagesima Sunday in 1916, Ilsley stated that God repeatedly visited “the infidelities of the Jewish people with the scourge of war and of pestilence, and finally of national ruin and rejection.” This was because they “repeatedly rejected Him.” Ilsley referred back to this pastoral letter in the following year, pointing out again that “the history of the human race, and especially of the Jewish nation, brings home to us the truth that Almighty God punishes sin not only in the next life, but also in this.” “Time after time the infidelities of the Jewish people,” Ilsley stated, “were visited by the death of thousands.”

In another pastoral letter, Ilsley declared that “the revealed truth of the Divinity of Christ was refused to believe it.” Archbishop John McIntyre, Ilsley’s friend and assistant for many years and his successor at Birmingham, similarly stated that, “God turned to the Gentiles and called them to inherit His ancient promises which the Jews had fallen away from by reason of their infidelity.”

Pastorals by many other bishops referred or alluded to the murder of Christ and the emptiness of Jewish legalism. William Gordon, the Bishop of Leeds, did not explicitly link the “awful death of Calvary” to the Jews, but he did state that on the night before his death, he closed “the Jewish dispensation” and instituted “the New Covenant with His Christian people.” George Ambrose Burton, the Bishop of Clifton, alluding to a passage in Luke 18:32, stated that: “He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put him to death.” Burton went on to state that the Passion of Christ continues to hold an “abiding significance” even though it has been “some two thousand years since the wild shouts of the Jewish people filled Pilate’s praetorium.” William Cotter, the Bishop of Portsmouth, stated in 1916, that “it would be a great mistake to suppose that by the mere exterior act of fasting, we should fulfil all our obligations to Almighty God.” “The Jews,” Cotter continued, “fasted even according to the letter of the precept; but God answered them with a reproach.” The important point is not, England and Wales,” in order to solidify his position. Archbishop Ilsley, one of two new archbishops, was one of the leading voices of objection. Bourne was not granted the title of Primate and over the following years a heated rivalry developed between Bourne and Ilsley over the boundaries of the dioceses. See Mary McInally, Edward Ilsley: Archbishop of Birmingham (London: Burns & Oates, 2002), 309–329, 342–344.

Edward Ilsley, pastoral letter, Mid-Lent Sunday 1916, pp.6–7, Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives.

Edward Ilsley, pastoral letter, Quinquagesima Sunday 1916, pp.5, Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives. Quinquagesima Sunday was the Sunday before Ash Wednesday (fifty days before Easter Day). The term has largely fallen out of use since Vatican II.

Edward Ilsley, pastoral letter, Quinquagesima Sunday 1917, pp.3–4, Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives.


he suggested, to observe every rigour of the law with proud passion, but rather to fulfil
the spirit of the law with humility and “deep sorrow for our sins.”34 In 1924, Cotter informed his
flock, that “in the story of the passion of Our Lord there is an incident which causes us a
special horror.” According to Cotter, “when the Jews were offered by Pontius Pilate the
choice between Jesus and Barabbas,” they shouted out, “take away Jesus: let him be
 crucified.” This incident should, he suggested, cause us to “shudder with horror.” This
sermon provides an example of the representation of the Jew as Christ-Killer being used to
instruct Christians about the dangers of sin. Cotter suggested that Christians should not be
complacent, as they too are guilty of rejecting God and turning away from Jesus every
time they place their “sinful whims” over the love of God. This was, Cotter suggested, even worse
than the crime of “the Jews,” since they at least “knew not what they were doing.”35

These sermons and pastoral letters, for the most part repeated key aspects of traditional
myths about the Jews, mainly taken or adapted from the New Testament. The main function
of the mythological villains in these addresses, would seem to have been to provide a foil
against which Christian virtues could be favourably contrasted. It seems unlikely that these
sermons and pastoral letters were intended by their authors as templates for the deliberate
stereotyping of contemporary Jews, but it is likely that these and countless sermons and
pastorals just like them fulfilled an important function in preserving and replicating the myth
of the Jew as a diabolic villain. In this respect they were similar in function, if milder in tone,
than corresponding sermons from the early centuries of the Christian era and the Middle
Ages. They helped to ensure that myths about the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer survived
into the next generation.

These sermons and pastoral letters may have been ostensibly innocent, at least by
intention, but the myth of the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer was sometimes formulated in
such a way that the contemporary Jew became a part of the narrative. For example, Ronald
Knox suggested that the character of the Jewish “race” has been shaped by their rejection of
Jesus. According to a sermon by Knox, “with each fresh rejection of God’s messengers the
habit of rebellion has grown deeper into the Jewish heart.” “Their character,” he stated, has
been moulded by “act after act of apostasy.”36 Another example is provided by a sermon
preached at a meeting of the Catholic Guild of Israel by the Rev. Dr. Arendzen, a respected
scholar, author and member of the Catholic Missionary Society.37 Arendzen argued that
“the history of the world is the history of a school.” “Israel,” the first pupils of “God’s
school,” had “a contempt and disdain for all the world.” They would not accept the teachings
of Jesus and instead “crucified him on the hill of Calvary.” “The Jews” were thus replaced
by “the gentiles,” who “became the good school of God.” Bringing the story forward to the
present day, Arendzen argued that Israel “have gone their own way for these two thousand

34 William Timothy Cotter, pastoral letter, Quinquagesima Sunday 1916, pp.7–8, Acta Episcoporum Angliae,
Salford Diocesan Archives. Cotter (1866-1940) was born and trained as a priest in Ireland, ordained in 1892,
appointed Canon of Portsmouth in 1900, and Bishop of the same diocese in 1910. See Who Was Who, 1929–1940,
291.
35 William Timothy Cotter, pastoral letter, Quinquagesima Sunday 1924, pp.5–6.
36 Ronald Knox, “The Patience of God” (1928), in Mystery of the Kingdom, 62.
37 Rev Dr John Arendzen (1873–1954) held a PhD from Bonn University, a Doctor of Divinity from Munich and
a BA and MA from Cambridge. He was an expert in philosophy, theology and Arabic, and the author of many
books and articles on religion. He was a member of the Catholic Missionary Society and the Catholic Evidence
Guild. He attended a number of meetings of the Catholic Guild of Israel, though it is not clear if he attended as a
guest or as a member.
years. They still have their old school books, the old testament, and the Jews know their old testament very well in the old Hebrew language. The Jews are a proud people and they despise all others.”

The Guild minutes described his address as “a beautiful sermon on behalf of the people of Israel.”

Arendzen’s sermon was clearly focused not only on the mythologized Jews from the traditional foundation myth, but also on contemporary Jews, who, he alleged, continue to despise all non-Jews. These sermons no longer merely replicated myths. They incorporated mythological roles (i.e. the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer) and stereotypes (i.e. prideful, disdainful, spiteful, powerful, rebellious Jews), into contemporary constructions of the Jew.

Whereas sermons and pastoral letters tended to replicate and preserve the myth of the diabolic Jewish villain, and in some exceptional cases were formulated in such a way as to generalise the villainy to contemporary Jews, the Catholic Herald conversely had a much more overt role in combining the myths with modern stereotypes in order to create a complex construction.

Charles Diamond, the owner-editor of the Catholic Herald and a political firebrand and maverick, was not particularly concerned about the deep theological significance of the Jew in Christian myths. Diamond saw himself as a champion of Catholicism, Christian civilisation and Irish nationalism.

It seems that he disliked Jews and Freemasons, not as a consequence of theological concerns, but because he saw them as a foreign and threatening presence within Christian civilisation. He felt that the European nations should have the right to expel the Jews. “His civilisation is not Christian,” the newspaper warned, and “his ethics, his morality, are not Christian. He has a deadly hatred of Christianity.”

Whilst he was not concerned with theology per se, Diamond was happy to draw upon aspects of the Christian foundation myth in order to make his constructions of the Jew more powerful. The main function of the foundation myth for Diamond seems to

38 John Arendzen, sermon, 28 November 1921, Catholic Guild of Israel Archives, Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter, London.

39 Guild Minute Book, entry for 28 November 1921, taped into minute book at page 50, Catholic Guild of Israel Archives.

40 The Catholic Herald was founded in 1893 by Charles Diamond. He owned and edited it until his death in 1934. The Catholic Herald was the most vehemently anti-Jewish of the English Catholic organs in the early twentieth century. For more about the Catholic Herald, see Owen Dudley Edwards and Patricia J. Storey, “The Irish Press in Victorian Britain,” in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, eds., The Irish in the Victorian City (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 172–176.

41 Charles Diamond (1858–1934) was born in Ireland in 1858. He was M.P. for North Monaghan from 1892-1895. He also contested districts of London for the Labour Party in 1918, 1922 and 1924. Diamond was a maverick who frequently got into trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities. He was repeatedly criticised by the English bishops, not for his hostile articles about Jews, but because he tended to disrespect and undermine their ecclesiastical authority. A resolution was passed by the bishops in 1910, expressing their distaste with the Catholic Herald, which tended to “lessen the respect due from all Catholics to ecclesiastical authority.” Acta of the Bishops’ Low Week and Autumn Meetings, 5 April 1910, file EP/A/1, Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives. Diamond also got into trouble with the British authorities when one of his articles suggested that a failed attempt to assassinate Lord French, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, should not be considered an attempted murder. He argued that the action was justified since “English government in Ireland is not government. It is simply usurpation, brutality, and oppression.” As a result he spent several months in Pentonville Prison (January–August 1920). For the article that got him into trouble, see “Killing no Murder,” Notes and Comments, Catholic Herald, 27 December 1919, 6–7. For an article that described his experiences in prison, see “Mr Diamond’s Release: Story of His Experiences in Pentonville,” Catholic Herald, 14 August 1920, 3. Diamond articulated a mixture of left-wing politics, energetic Catholicism and Irish nationalism in the Catholic Herald, which attracted a large working class Catholic readership despite his fragile relationship with the bishops. For more on Charles Diamond, see Kester Aspden, Fortress Church (Leominster, Hertfordshire: Gracewing, 2002), 33–34, 88, 96.

have been to give the newspaper’s construction of the villainous Jew the added weight of scriptural authority. If the original function of the Christ-Killer myth was to justify the usurpation of the Jewish claim to be the true Israel, it was now used to justify the continued suppression of the Jews living in Christian society. An editorial in 1914 provides a useful example. This editorial was written in response to a report that a rabbi-chaplain had been killed whilst attending a dying Catholic soldier on the battlefield with a crucifix to ease his passing. The editorial stated that this story was improbable. It went on to suggest that there is “ample evidence” to show that most Jews are more than willing to “trample upon the Christian name” and to treat the crucifix with anything but respect. The editorial argued that the Jews had pillaged the Church in France and that their houses are filled with the plunder. The editorial made its construction of the Jew more diabolic by drawing upon the foundation myth. The newspaper thus combined myths about the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer with stereotypes about Jewish greed. It stated that “the First Christian of all and the Founder of Christianity [was] put to death, the supreme tragedy of history, by the Jewish people.” The editorial concluded with the following question: “If our Jewish brethren still live under the Old Law, the old dispensation, which permitted ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ and which made it lawful to ‘spoil the Egyptians’ and all others who were not Jews, and if they have in certain specific and proved cases shown themselves ready and willing to act on these principles, are we to take it that the mere mention of the fact is evidence of a bigoted and persecuting spirit?”

Charles Diamond reinforced his construction of the Jew with scriptural myth in several other issues of the Catholic Herald. In “The Jew and the World Ferment” (1919) and “Jewry” (1920), in addition to depicting the Jews as gamblers, usurers, parasites, tyrannical bullies, pathetic sycophants and vulgar materialists, Diamond also stated that

the Scribes and Pharisees, the wealthy Israelites, and most of the selfish and hard hearted multitude, sought only power, and glory and pre-eminence for their nation, and led by their rulers, the high priests and the body of the priesthood, they committed the paramount crime of all time.

The “paramount crime of all time” was, of course, the murder of Christ. Diamond suggested that whilst it is “beyond our province even to speculate” as to “how much of what Christians and non-Christians despise in them and denounce is due to what they have endured during the two thousand years of expiation of their unparalleled crime,” it was apparent that “their sufferings have not improved them.” Other articles and editorials in the Catholic Herald also combined references to “pharisaically dishonest action,” “haters of the Christian name” and “a denial of the Divinity of Christ,” with stereotypes of Jewish greed, cowardice, cunning, secrecy, treachery and the myth of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. The paper later complained that Jews had used their influence to have a movie, The King of Kings (1927), modified so that

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44 “The Jew and the World Ferment,” Catholic Herald, 14 June 1919, 6 and “Jewry,” Catholic Herald, 26 June 1920, 11. The paper later argued that even if their “worst characteristics” can be traced back to their sufferings, “it may be said that they were not persecuted without reason.” “An Israelite without Guile,” Catholic Herald, 17 August 1929, 4. Even the bars of a prison cell did not prevent Charles Diamond making such claims. “Jewry,” signed “C.D.,” was published whilst Diamond was serving time in Pentonville.
responsibility for the murder of Christ was confined to the Roman authorities and Caiaphas the High Priest, rather than “the Jewish race as a whole.” This was, the Catholic Herald suggested, a gross falsification of the “historical record.”

The Tablet also contained articles which referred to the Pharisees and Christ-Killers, though less frequently and with a measure of ambivalence which was absent from the Catholic Herald. For example, an article in 1920 about pogroms in Poland deplored the violence that had been perpetrated against the Jews, but suggested that the problem was partly the result of a “Jewish population which has not assimilated with the Polish people, but perpetuates in itself an archaic polity, curious customs, and as meticulous an observance of its religious ordinances as that of the Pharisees 2,000 years ago. It is a foreign body in the very heart of the State, an Oriental civilization hitherto racially insoluble.”

A review in the Tablet of Herford’s What the World Owes to the Pharisees (1919), deprecated the Pharisees in traditional terms – their rejection of Christ and “unworthy conception of God” – suggesting that the “fundamental lie of Pharisaism” was that the “oral tradition” had “Divine authority.” This lie, the reviewer continued, separated the Pharisees from the “earlier Old Testament religion.” The reviewer concluded by linking the Pharisees with Zionism. He stated that “at the present time, when Zionism is so much in the air, one cannot but feel anxious as to what this Pharisaism, still so dominant among the Jews, is likely to produce, should they acquire political ascendancy in Palestine.”

Articles in other English Catholic periodicals linked critiques of Zionism to the rejection and murder of Christ. For example, according to an article in The Month, the periodical of the British Jesuit society, it would be intolerable for the Jews to be “encouraged to overrun” the Holy Land. Donald Attwater, an English Catholic author and journalist, listed a number of reasons, but foremost was the religious. He stated that the Jews were once “the Chosen people,” but as a result of their role in Christ’s “shameful death,” they have become “the accursed people.” It is, he suggested, one thing to forgive the Jews (though he pointed out that “neither the Jews as a people, nor their religious leaders, have ever made manifestation of any repentance for their crime”), but forgiveness does not entail a remission of their sentence. The “punishment of this race,” Attwater concluded, was “exile from the Promised Land.”

The myth of the Christ-Killers once again justified their reduction in status from a chosen people to a wandering witness people. Attwater’s narrative about the rejection of Christ was far from atypical of English Catholic constructions of the Zionist Menace. For example, Cardinal Archbishop Bourne, the head of the English Catholic hierarchy from 1903 to 1935, provides another example. He stated in a speech to the Catholic Truth Society in September 1921 that it would be “a gross outrage to the whole sense of Christianity were these sacred lands and the Holy Places which have been wrested from the hands of the Jews to be again graven by the hand of man.”

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46 “Jewish Culpability for the Crucifixion,” Notes and Comments, Catholic Herald, 14 January 1928, 8 and “To Please the Jews,” Catholic Herald, 21 January 1928, 8.
49 Donald Attwater, “Religious Conditions in Palestine,” Month, CXLVIII (October 1926), 354. Attwater was an author and journalist. He worked with Herbert Thurston on the revised edition of Alban Butler’s Lives of the Saints (see footnote 82).
infidel by the soldiers of England, to be placed now under the domination of those who have rejected the name of Christ.” Shortly after Bourne’s speech, the Catholic Herald explained that Zionism could never be a just aspiration as “the sacrifice of Christ, desired by a people that declared itself responsible for itself and for its children, before God, and before man, constitutes an enormous prescription of right before history, and before civilisation (which be it remembered, is Christian).”

There is only scant evidence upon which to speculate about the effect that these myths about the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer, repeated in sermons and pastoral letters, and incorporated into constructions of the Jew in English Catholic newspapers, had on the so-called “ordinary” lay Catholic. Though anecdotal, oral testimony has been found that reinforces the suggestion that these myths did have at least some impact on “ordinary” Catholics during the 1910s and 1920s. For example, Mary Brady, a Catholic from Salford, admitted in her recollections that she used to shove and shout at Jews. She stated that “we always thought they killed our Lord you know. Who killed Christ we used to shout.”

David Freedman, a correspondent for the Jewish Chronicle whose parents immigrated from Lithuania and Poland, remembered encountering “antisemitism” as a boy. He recalled that this was often from boys his own age, “mostly from Catholic schools,” such as St. Chad’s. They would shout taunts such as: “dirty Jew, who killed Christ? You killed Christ.”

Harold Jenner, an English Catholic from Manchester and former pupil of St. Chad’s, stated that he remembered Jewish lads blaspheming Christ and taking His name in vain. According to Jenner,

in those days, the feeling between the Christians and Jews were still present underneath, religious feelings, because if we had an argument, they’d start blaspheming at Christ. Some of them would. And we resented this, the Christian lads.

Jenner also expressed a profound fear of being set upon and killed when entering a Jew’s house. He stated that he was “frightened actually, as a child, was always frightened to go in the Jew’s house, because I used to hear these tales about Christian children being, you know,
you’ve heard about them, about them being garrotted.” The continued presence in English Catholic discourse of the myths about Jews murdering innocent Christian child is examined in the following section.

The Ritual Murderer and the Sorcerer

The ritual murder accusation was a medieval development of the Christ-Killer myth. Usually the accusation involved the murder of a Christian child, an innocent martyr and symbolic stand in for Jesus. 56 In some cases it was even suggested that the child was nailed to a cross in mockery or reenactment of the original crime. The ritual murder myth did not disappear with the conclusion of the Middle Ages. In 1899, as the primary events of the Dreyfus Affair were drawing to a close, another drama was just beginning. In April 1899, in the Czech town of Polna, a young woman, Anežka Hružová, was murdered and dumped in a section of the town inhabited by poor Jews. A destitute Jew, Leopold Hilsner, was accused of having murdered Anežka. According to the indictment, the body “had been completely bled” and “the traces of blood found under the body did not correspond to the amount of blood one would expect to find.” 57 The implication was that Anežka was murdered in order to obtain as much of her blood as possible. Scientists and so-called experts in Jewish ritual murder were called in to examine the evidence and express their opinion on whether the murder was committed for religious ritual purposes. The trial of Hilsner became a concern for Jewry as a whole as it was not just Hilsner but Jews in general who were once again accused de facto of practising ritual murder. 58

In 1898, Herbert Thurston, a well respected Jesuit scholar and prolific author, outlined his views about the likely development of the ritual murder accusation in two works. 59 He published an article on ritual murder in the Month and discussed the accusation in a book he edited on Saint Hugh, the Bishop of Lincoln. 60 The article and book were written a year before the Hilsner Affair. According to Thurston, the article was prompted by the publication of two works which accused the Jews of ritual murder: Les Juifs devant l’Église et l’Histoire

55 Harold Jenner, birth date: circa 1910, audio tape (recorded 1976), MJM: J131, Manchester Jewish Museum. It is difficult to exactly date these recollections. Based on dates mentioned in his testimony and the fact that they seem to include his adolescent childhood fears of entering a Jewish house and his memories as a lad of fighting Jews over their alleged blasphemy of Christ, they probably relate to an interval stretching from circa 1916 to the mid-1920s.
56 The victim was not always a child. In the case of the Hilsner Affair, the victim was a young woman (aged 19).
58 A good examination of the Hilsner Affair can be found in Červinka, “The Hilsner Affair,” 135–161.
59 Herbert Thurston (1856–1939) was a conservative figure within the Church who had a diverse range of interests, including saints’ lives, the ritual murder accusation, Freemasonry, spiritualism and poltergeist phenomena. According to Mary Heimann, Thurston published over a dozen books and nearly 800 articles. He was a respected scholar who was often cited by Catholics and Jews (including Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler), as an authority on the ritual murder accusation. For more on Thurston, see Joseph Grehan, Father Thurston: A memoir with a bibliography of his writings (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952); Mary Heimann, “Herbert Thurston,” in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, vol. 54 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 728–729; Who Was Who, 1929–1940, 1552.
60 Herbert Thurston, “Anti-Semitism and the Charge of Ritual Murder,” Month, XCI (June 1898); Herbert Thurston, The Life of Saint Hugh of Lincoln (London: Burns and Oates, 1898). Saint Hugh, the Bishop of Lincoln, should not be confused with Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln, the “child martyr.”
(1897) by Father Constant and the peculiarly named book by Richard Francis Burton, *The Jew, the Gipsy, and El Islam* (1898).\(^6\) Thurston refuted, at length, the charge that the Jews were required by rituals in their religion to murder Christian children and to use their blood for religious purposes. However, he suggested that Jews had, on occasion, murdered innocent Christian children in “odium fidei” and that it would have been “a matter of comparatively little moment” if Father Constant had “regarded these alleged murders as isolated and unauthorised outbreaks of fanaticism, reprobated with horror by the higher and better feeling of educated Israelites.”\(^6\)

In his appendix to *The Life of Saint Hugh of Lincoln*, Thurston referred to an account in the Hebrew chronicles of Rabbi Joseph Ben Joshua Ben Meir, as evidence that “in some cases murders were undoubtedly committed by Jews.”\(^6\) The account in the chronicles does refer to the murder of a Christian child by an insane Jew. According to the account, on the 7th day of Adar in the year 4957 (1197 CE), “a Hebrew, a foolish man, met a Gentile girl and slaughtered her and cast her into the midst of a well, before the face of the sun, for he raved with madness.”\(^6\) This was presumably intended by Thurston as evidence that Jews could murder in *odium fidei*, but the chronicles seem only to depict a spontaneous and motiveless murder by a crazed individual who happened to be Jewish. There is no indication that the girl had been murdered because she was Christian let alone as a consequence of *odium fidei*. But for a turn of fate the victim may well have been Jewish.

Murder in *odium fidei* was not the only explanation Thurston provided for the murder of Christian children. The other possible explanation was that the blood was required for Jewish sorcery. In his notes to *The Life of Saint Hugh of Lincoln*, Thurston stated that he was “inclined . . . to adopt a suggestion,” made in a review in the *Academy*, that “the use of human blood taken from some innocent victim, really did enter into the magic spells of the professors of the black art.”\(^6\) He found this explanation to be compatible with what St. John Chrysostom had said about “magicians who are said to decoy children to their houses and cut their throats.”\(^6\) “Sorcery,” Thurston continued, “was practiced amongst the Jews as it was practiced among Christians, and if Christian writers can be trusted, a great deal more so. It is quite possible that some individual Jewish sorcerers may at all periods have combined

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\(^6\) Thurston, “Anti-Semitism and the Charge of Ritual Murder,” 567, 569.

\(^6\) Thurston, *The Life of Saint Hugh*, 609. Thurston went on to observe that “a very vindictive spirit against the Christian breathes in the pages of some of the mediæval Jewish Chronicles. The tone is quite the tone of Skylock, and we can well conceive that a Jew who thought he could avenge himself with impunity upon some solitary Christian, whether child or adult, might perhaps have felt little scruple in doing so” (610).


\(^6\) Thurston, *The Life of Saint Hugh*, 286-287; a review in the *Academy* did suggest that the blood of a murdered innocent was sometimes used in sorcery and that “the charge of ritual murder” may have sprung from the reputation that Jews had for “magic arts” rather than from a hatred of Judaism. “St. William of Norwich,” review of *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*, by A. Jessopp and M. R. James, eds., *Academy*, 27 February 1897, 251.

\(^6\) Thurston, *The Life of Saint Hugh*, 287n1.
this very evil magic with their religious beliefs.” According to Thurston, “Judaism as a system [emphasis mine] can certainly not be held responsible for these outrages. None the less, it is very difficult to waive away the evidence of some Jewish complicity in such murders by declaring them all to be the fabrication of popular prejudice.”

Each issue of the Tablet contained a section, Topics of the Day, which consisted of an article on a subject of topical interest. On 25 November 1899, the topic of interest was the “ritual murder” charge. The article, written in response to the Hilsner affair, did denounce “the sort of blind and fanatical hatred which demands the persecution of the Jew as though that were part of the duty of a Christian.”

Nevertheless, whilst ostensibly defending Jews from the ritual murder accusation, the same piece had no problem with what it called “a political and economical conflict” against the Jews, which “in particular countries or districts may be justifiable enough.” It suggested that no one is likely to complain if “in this or that country Jewish attempts to squeeze Christians out of a particular industry are met by organized resistance, or if strenuous opposition is offered to an attempt in whatever country, to obtain exclusive control of the Press or the money market. If in parts of France or Austria or Russia the Jews so conduct themselves as to invite economic or political reprisals they have only themselves to blame.” The Tablet thus seemed to reject a particularly unsavoury form of medieval hostility, the ritual murder accusation, whilst endorsing social-economic stereotypes about Jewish greed. More importantly, the article’s ostensible rejection of the ritual murder accusation was far from unequivocal. Closely following Herbert Thurston’s narrative, the article stated that “an entire disbelief in the ritual-murder calumny is quite consistent with the admission that in a few individual cases Christian children may have been murdered by Jews, and even murdered in odium fidei, i.e., because they were Christians.” The Tablet reasoned that it was likely that some Jews had murdered innocent Christian children as a result of being “stung to madness” by the “tyrannous oppression under which they laboured.” The Tablet cited as an example the same account from the chronicles of Rabbi Joseph Ben Joshua Ben Meir that Thurston had cited the previous year. The Tablet stated that “there are certain forms of homicidal mania in which the very knowledge that Jews were suspected of such deeds would supply just the determining cause for an act of blood if the lunatic chanced to find himself alone with his opportunity.” “In such a case,” the paper continued, “we could quite believe that this same knowledge might produce the enactment of the very horrors – crucifixion, bleeding to death or what not – which were impressed so vividly upon the maniac’s brain.” The fact that the chronicles by Rabbi Joseph did not specify or imply that the girl was killed because she was a Christian, only that she was a Christian, and nothing suggested the crime was premeditated, involved crucifixion or bleeding to death, seems to have been dismissed as irrelevant detail. The paper concluded that “in any case it is quite easy to conceive how innocent children may sometimes have suffered outrage from the Jews precisely on account of their Christianity, and in such instances they may have been honoured locally as martyrs.”

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Another ritual murder accusation began in 1911. Mendel Beilis, a Ukrainian Jew, was accused of murdering a thirteen-year-old Christian child for ritual purposes in a cave just outside Kiev. He was incarcerated, tortured and interrogated and finally brought to trial in September 1913. Though Eastern Orthodox Christianity was generally hostile to Roman Catholicism, the accusation received the backing of a Roman Catholic priest, Father Pranaitis, and much of the European Catholic press. A number of articles in the Catholic press informed readers in gruesome detail of numerous supposed ritual murders of Christian children by Jews. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a Catholic periodical constitutionally connected to the Vatican, published two articles which set out to present “medical opinion” to the effect that “death was brought about in three stages: the boy was stabbed in such a manner that all his blood could be collected, he was tortured, and finally his heart was pierced.” This alleged evidence was held to indicate “ritual murder, which only Jews could perpetrate, since it required long experience.”\(^{69}\) As a supposed “expert on Judaism,” Father Pranaitis was present during the trial to support the accusation that the Jews murdered Christians in order to obtain their blood for rituals commanded by Jewish law.\(^{70}\)

The *Tablet* published an article in its Topics of the Day in response to the Beilis trial. The article vehemently denounced the ritual murder accusation. This time, unlike during the Hilsner Affair, the *Tablet* did not blame Jews for provoking the incident through attempts to dominate the press or money markets. It did however once again suggest that in the past some Jews had been responsible for the murder of innocent Christian children, not for religious ritual reasons, but as a result of *odium fidei*. According to the article, even if “little Simon of Trent, Andrew of Rinn, Hugh of Lincoln, and other such child martyrs were canonized, this approval of solemn cultus does not in the least touch the question of ritual murder.” The article clarified that “the Church might recognize that these children were put to death by Jews in *odium fidei*, and therefore truly martyred, without in any way pronouncing that such a practice had its foundation in the ritual of the Jewish religion.” A distinction was thus again maintained between ritual murder sanctioned by Judaism and murder by Jews in *odium fidei*. The article then went on to clarify that in any case none of these child martyrs had received “any proper canonization,” though it acknowledged that two of them had “been beatified by Papal decrees.”\(^{71}\) A similar point was made back in 1898 by Herbert Thurston. According to Thurston, in at least two cases – Simon of Trent and William of Rinn – the child-martyrs were granted “an equipollent beatification,” which fell short of “a formal beatification,” being only a “conditional approval” rather than an approval based on “the infallible authority of the Church.”\(^{72}\) The theological distinction between “equipollent” and “formal” beatification is not entirely clear, and perhaps more importantly, it is unlikely that the distinction would have been widely understood or appreciated by many “ordinary” Jews and “ordinary” Catholics. Despite the “equipollent” nature of the beatification, Simon

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\(^{72}\) Thurston, “Anti-Semitism and the Charge of Ritual Murder,” 569.
of Trent was nevertheless recorded in the official Roman Catholic Martyrology, where he remained until after the Second Vatican Council.

Herbert Thurston also wrote an article about ritual murder in response to the Beilis trial.\textsuperscript{73} Thurston and the \textit{Tablet} were once again largely in agreement in terms of the distinction made between religious ritual murder and murder in \textit{odium fidei}. Whilst Thurston stated that “the immolation of Christian children is in no way sanctioned by the \textit{Jewish religion as a system} [emphasis mine],” he nevertheless reasoned that “considering the incredible and brutal oppression to which the Jews were commonly subjected from the tenth century onwards, it seems extremely likely that in a few isolated instances some half-crazy Israelite may have welcomed the opportunity of venting his spite upon a defenceless Christian child or girl.” In other words, murder in \textit{odium fidei} rather than murder for religious purposes. Thurston again referred to the Hebrew chronicles of Rabbi Joseph Ben Joshua Ben Meir as evidence that at least one such case “did actually happen.” As he had in 1898, Thurston also argued that another possible explanation for the emergence of the accusation that Jews murdered Christian children was Jewish Sorcery. He pointed out that during Pesach:

one of the practices which stood almost first in importance in the mind of the less educated Hebrews was the preparation of the \textit{Mazzoth} or cakes of unleavened bread. These were often preserved with veneration and used medically and, it is probable, magically. Further, we know that magic was much employed among the Jews, and on the other hand the use of blood was so frequent in all magical rites that it is difficult to suppose that the Jews can have escaped the infection.\textsuperscript{74}

Thurston concluded, “not that the Jews really made use of Christian blood for \textit{liturgical} [emphasis mine] purposes, but that the idea of its employment was sufficiently familiar to lead to the belief that in these cakes, which the Jews were known to treat with superstitious reverence, there must be some latent magical power, such as blood might be supposed to impart.” Thurston implied that this was how the ritual murder accusation established itself. In an ostensibly balanced but fallacious argument – of the kind that suggests that in any conflict there are faults on both sides – Thurston stated that:

once a belief that the Jews sacrificed Christian children in order to use their blood in the \textit{mazzoth}, was established and propagated abroad, it would be impossible to eradicate it from the popular mind. Nay, it seems even probable that such beliefs exercised a sort of hypnotic effect upon the victims themselves, in such sort that they also came to think and possibly even to do, in a few isolated cases, the very things of which they were suspected.\textsuperscript{75}

In other words, because they were suspected of using Christian blood in sorcery, some of “the victims” of the accusation – i.e. the Jews – started to do so. Referring to the Spanish inquisition trial for the murder of \textit{el santo Niño de la Guardia}, Thurston concluded that the records indicate that the accusation was not concerned with “ritual sacrifice” (i.e. an accusation against \textit{Judaism}), but “with the procuring of blood for Jewish magical purposes by taking the life of a Christian child” (i.e. an accusation against “superstitious Jews” who believed in the efficacy of magic). Thurston acknowledged that scholars have argued that “the confessions elicited from the accused were worthless” because of the “diabolical

\textsuperscript{73} Herbert Thurston, “The Ritual Murder Trial at Kieff,” \textit{Month}, CXXII (November 1913).
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 511–513.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 512.
ingenuity of their torturers.” Thurston however concluded that this was not the case. He stated that “after a careful study of the records, we have come round to the opinion of Mr. Rafael Sabatini in his recently-published volume on Torquemada. We believe that in this particular trial the admissions made in the examinations before the Inquisition were faithfully reported, and in substance, accurate as to the facts.”

A similar equivocation can be detected in a speech by Father Joseph Bampton, a Jesuit colleague and friend of Herbert Thurston, at a meeting about the ritual murder accusation organised by the English Zionist Federation in October 1913. Bampton’s speech was quoted in the Jewish Chronicle and the Tablet. Bampton stated that before coming to the meeting he had consulted with “an expert in these matters, my friend Father Thurston,” and that he thus felt “fortified by his authority.” Bampton expressed “complete incredulity” at the “ritual murder charge,” but like Thurston, he seemed to narrowly define it as the accusation that Jews murder Christians in compliance with their religious rites. Whilst Bampton acknowledged that “no such rite exists,” he nevertheless stated that “there can be no question that at different times and in different places throughout the Christian era Christian children have been put to death by members of the Jewish race out of hatred for Christianity, and that such children are venerated as child martyrs, and that veneration is approved by the Catholic Church.” Bampton implied that these children were murdered not by orthodox Jews, but by “a parcel of fanatics” that happened to be Jewish. This should not, he suggested, be taken as “evidence of any precept of the Jewish law or any accordance with any Jewish rite.” He stated, presumably in mitigation, that “I suppose Jews have murdered Christians and Christians have murdered Jews at different times, but because Christians have murdered Jews, we have never heard of any charges of ritual murder brought against Christians.”

According to the account in the Tablet, Bampton clarified that

we must remember that the accusation we are concerned with and the one we are here to protest against is a charge of ritual murder, i.e., of murder of Christians by Jews, committed in compliance with some precept or ritual observance of the Jewish law [emphasis mine]. We are not here to declare that no Christians, whether children or adults, have ever been murdered by Jews out of hatred to the Christian faith, any more than we are here to declare that no Jews have ever been murdered by Christians out of hatred to the Jewish faith.

Bampton’s equivocal defence, as reported in both newspapers, sounds balanced on the surface. However, it is problematic for at least three reasons. Firstly, he suggested that Jews

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76 Ibid, 512–513. Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950) argued that the child was murdered, not as “an instance of Jewish ritual murder,” but for the purpose of extracting his heart to use in a Jewish enchantment. The crucifixion was unnecessary to the enchantment, but was nevertheless done, Sabatini suggested, merely “in derision and vituperation of the Passion of Jesus Christ.” Sabatini therefore argued that the child was murdered both in odium fidei and for magical purposes. Rafael Sabatini, Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition (1913; repr., Thirsk, North Yorkshire: House of Stratus, 2001), 254. Sabatini was a prolific author of novels, short stories and non-fiction. His mother was English, his father Italian, and he spent most of his life in England.

77 Joseph Bampton (1854–1933?) was the rector of Farm Street Church (the home of the British Jesuits) and Beaumont College. See Catholic Who’s Who or Year Book, 1933 (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1933), 16.


80 Bampton’s formulation was of a type summed up by Anthony Julius (whilst discussing anti-Jewish passages by G. K. Chesterton): “a nicely balanced formulation, one that appeals to a kind of fair-to-both-sides, ‘six of one, half a dozen of the other’, sentiment.” Julius, Trials of the Diaspora, 422.
had murdered Christian children and Christians had murdered Jews, but he never suggested that Jewish children had been murdered, let alone in the diabolic manner traditionally associated with accusations of murder in odium fidei (i.e. with crucifixion or blood draining). Secondly, the Christian children, allegedly murdered out of “hatred for Christianity,” became the subject of veneration as Bampton acknowledged, and thus acquired theological significance. These were therefore not murders, or accusations of murders, in a mundane or conventional sense. The medieval narratives which arose about these “murders” helped to reinforce the resilient image of the diabolic Jew in traditional Christian myths. Thirdly, Bampton made the relationship between Jews and Christians sound very bilateral, with Jews oppressing Christians as much as Christians oppressed Jews, but this does not correspond to the power dynamic that existed in Christian Europe.

Whereas the Rome based Catholic newspaper, La Civiltà Cattolica, produced unequivocal articles cataloguing cases of ritual murder, arguing that the Jews not only killed innocent Christian children out of odium fidei but also because they needed to consume their blood to satisfy religious commandments, it seems plausible that the equivocation of Thurston and Bampton reflected a genuine desire to defend Judaism (rather than all Jews) from the charge of ritual murder. No doubt they felt they had to develop a defence which on the one hand demonstrated religious tolerance and on the other hand did not challenge already existing child-martyr cults. It is possible that they would have been less equivocal if the cults and shrines of the child martyr saints had not existed. On the other hand, Thurston felt little compunction about using the ritual murder accusation to balance out certain Protestant anti-Catholic myths in a way that suggests he did believe the accusation had supporting evidence. He stated in an article published in 1894 (and republished in 1902), that “the evidence for the Jewish murder of Christian children is simply overwhelming beside any evidence which ever has been adduced or is ever likely to be adduced for the walling-up of nuns. In the former case we have at least full details of names, place, and time, we have judicial inquiries, we have the record of contemporary documents, we have the testimony of witnesses on oath.”

Significantly, the Jewish Chronicle expressed its appreciation for many of these equivocal refutations of the ritual murder charge. The Jewish Chronicle lavished praise on Father Thurston’s June 1898 article for its “enlightened effort to nail the abominable falsehoods that pass current amongst anti-Jews to the counter.” It neglected to mention that Thurston had suggested that some Jews had murdered innocent Christian children in odium fidei. The Jewish Chronicle also applauded – and very selectively quoted from – the article which

81 See Klein, “Civiltà Cattolica on Ritual Murder.”
appeared in the *Tablet* in November 1899.\(^8^4\) It similarly praised the speech by Father Bampton in October 1913.\(^8^5\) Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler wrote a letter to Thurston on 10 June 1898 to thank him for his article.\(^8^6\) He also recommended Thurston’s “scholarly article” in a letter to the *Tablet*.\(^8^7\) Israel Abrahams seems to have been the only English Jew who noticed that Thurston only “half-heartedly” defended Jews from the charge of ritual murder.\(^8^8\) Despite the thanks that the equivocal defences by Thurston, Bampton and the *Tablet* elicited from the *Jewish Chronicle* and the Chief Rabbi, only a thin line separated them from the more overtly polemical uses of the ritual murder myth by other English Catholics, such as Montague Summers and the Chesterton brothers.

Cecil Chesterton, like his close friend Hilaire Belloc and his brother G. K. Chesterton, frequently discussed the Jew in his newspaper articles.\(^8^9\) Cecil drew upon the myth of the ritual murder as part of his wider construction of Jewish villainy and foreignness. In 1914, in the *New Witness*, in response to the Beilis Affair, he characterised Russian pogroms as something horrible, but also something to be understood as part of an ongoing “bitter historic quarrel between [Israel Zangwill’s] own people and the people of Russia.” The evidence, he argued, points to a “savage religious and racial quarrel.” He suggested that it was sometimes the “naturally kindly” Russians who were “led to perpetrate the atrocities,” and sometimes it was the “equally embittered” Jews, who, “when they got a chance of retaliating, would be equally savage.” Referring to the Beilis affair, he stated that:

An impartial observer, unconnected with either nation, may reasonably inquire why, if we are asked to believe Russians do abominable things to Jewish children, we should at the same time be

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\(^8^5\) According to the correspondent for the *Jewish Chronicle*, Father Bampton “held the audience spell-bound while he explained the consistent attitude of denunciation of his church of the foul and monstrous charge which had from time to time been brought against the Jewish people” (26). The correspondent did not mention the equivocation in Bampton’s speech. However, whilst Bampton’s speech implied that Jewish “fanatics” had murdered Christian children, the speeches by the president of the English Zionist Federation, Sir Francis Montefiore, and the Chief Rabbi, Joseph Hertz, both denied the charge that “obscure sects” of uncivilised Jews engaged in such murders (28, 30). Francis Montefiore pointed out that this charge was in some ways more insidious, as whilst the ritual murder charge was “bound to fail” when levelled against “the Jews generally,” it may sound believable when levelled against an “obscure sect” (28). “Beilis: Great Protest Meeting in London,” *Jewish Chronicle*, 31 October 1913, 26, 28, 30.

\(^8^6\) Hermann Adler to Herbert Thurston, 10 June 1898, in Crehan, *Father Thurston*, 102.

\(^8^7\) Hermann Adler, Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*, 24 February 1900, 295.


\(^8^9\) Cecil Chesterton, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc were all involved in the *New Witness* newspaper and shared similar social and political views. Cecil Chesterton (1879-1918) converted to Roman Catholicism in 1912, ten years prior to G. K. Chesterton. Cecil Chesterton was one of the main agitators during the Marconi Affair. G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was a journalist and prolific author of poems, novels, short stories, travel books and social criticism. He also wrote books exploring philosophical and theological ideas. Caricatures and stereotypes of Jews regularly appeared in his fictional and non-fictional works. Throughout his early adult life, Chesterton was an Anglo-Catholic (a form of Anglicanism which accepted aspects of Roman Catholic liturgy, theology and practice, without embracing the authority of the Pope). Chesterton may not have been a *de jure* Roman Catholic before his formal conversion in 1922, but his worldview had long been Roman Catholic. Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953) was born in France but most of his childhood was spent in West Sussex. Belloc’s father was French and his mother was English. After completing his education at John Henry Newman’s Oratory School in Birmingham, Belloc served in the French army before returning to England to study at Balliol College. He naturalised as a British citizen in 1902. Belloc was MP for Salford from 1906 to 1910. He wrote a number of critiques about the English political system, the decline of European civilisation following the Reformation, the Jews, the Freemasons and Bolshevism. He also wrote a number of novels in which these themes were often explored.
asked to regard it as incredible . . . that Jews do abominable things to Russian children – at Kieff, for instance.

Cecil Chesterton also revived the host desecration myth. He stated that “the Jews may or may not have insulted the Host, as was alleged. I do not know.” “But,” he continued, “I do know that they wanted to; because I know what a religion means, and therefore what a religious quarrel means.”90 This insight into what he considered expected conduct in a “religious quarrel” – and his belief that Jews would care about the destruction of host wafers, which have a place in Christian myths but hold no significance in Judaism – is revealing of his polemical mind-set. Israel Zangwill, a prominent Anglo-Jewish author and playwright, countered Cecil Chesterton’s accusation by stating that following his logic we should have to accept that if hooligans throttle Quakers then Quakers must also be throttling hooligans. Furthermore, he argued, it is incredible that Jews would murder a Christian child for ritual purposes when no such rite has ever been found in Jewish texts.91 In response Cecil Chesterton stated that “as to ‘ritual murder’, Mr. Zangwill, of course, knows that no sane man has ever suggested that [ritual murder] was a ‘rite’ of the Jewish Church any more than pogroms are rites of the Greek Orthodox Church.” He then proceeded to clarify that what he and others had suggested, is that “there may be ferocious secret societies among the Russian Jews,” and that “such societies may sanctify very horrible revenges with a religious ritual.”92 Cecil’s brother, G. K. Chesterton, also incorporated the ritual murder myth into his construction of the Jew. He argued that members of the “Hebrew race” had engaged in the murder of children. In the Everlasting Man (1925), he stated that:

The Hebrew prophets were perpetually protesting against the Hebrew race relapsing into idolatry that involved such a war upon children; and it is probable enough that this abominable apostasy from the God of Israel has occasionally appeared in Israel since, in the form of what is called ritual murder; not of course of any representative of the religion of Judaism, but by individual and irresponsible diabolists who did happen to be Jews.93

Herbert Thurston was not alone in suggesting that one explanation for the ritual murder accusation was Jewish sorcery. Montague Summers, an idiosyncratic Catholic clergyman

91 Israel Zangwill to the editor of the New Witness (Cecil Chesterton), in Cecil Chesterton, “A Letter from Mr. Zangwill,” 593.
93 G. K. Chesterton, The Everlasting Man (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1925]), 136. Whilst this seems to have been the only occasion that Chesterton claimed that “diabolist” Jews engaged in ritual murder, constructions of the diabolic Jew did also appear in his fiction. For example, in “The Duel of Dr. Hirsch” (1914), the Jew, Dr. Hirsch/Colonel Dubosc, is modelled on a diabolic composite of Judas Iscariot, Captain Dreyfus, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Hirsch sets up a second Dreyfus affair, playing simultaneously the role of the accused villain and the accusing hero. Hirsch succeeds in his complex scheme to be vilified, vindicated and heralded as a hero. At the conclusion of the story, he is seen by Father Brown’s assistant, half way through his metamorphosis from Colonel Dubosc to Dr. Hirsch. His face with its “framework of rank red hair” looked like “Judas laughing horribly and surrounded by capering flames of hell.” G. K. Chesterton, “The Duel of Dr. Hirsch,” in G. K. Chesterton, The Complete Father Brown Stories (1914; repr., London: Wordsworth Classics, 2006), 224. This short story is examined in Cheyette, Constructions of the Jew” in English Literature and Society, 192–193. The final image of Hirsch/Dubosc is reminiscent of a “devil-worshipper” that Chesterton claimed he once knew, with “long, ironical face . . . and red hair,” and when seen in the light of the bonfire, “his long chin and high cheek-bones were lit up infernally from underneath, so that he looked like a fiend staring down into the flaming pit.” G. K. Chesterton, “The Diabolist,” Daily News, 9 November 1907, 6.
and once a popular author with interests in witchcraft and demonology, provides another example, though unlike Herbert Thurston, Summers made no pretence of even equivocally defending Jews. He claimed in *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (1926) that the Jews were persecuted during the Middle Ages not because of their religion, but as a result of their “practice of the dark and hideous traditions of Hebrew magic.” According to Summers, “closely connected with these ancient sorceries” were a whole series of “ritual murders” committed by “certain rabbis.” “In many cases,” he concluded, “the evidence is quite conclusive that the body, and especially the blood of the victim, was used for magical purposes.”

Cohn stated in 1975 that some of the basic contentions in *The History of Witchcraft* “continue to be taken seriously by some historians down to the present day.” One might hope that the assertions in *The History of Witchcraft* are no longer taken too seriously, but what can be said with some confidence is that there is still a market for the volume. It has been republished many times since 1926 and was recently reissued by Routledge in November 2009.

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**The Jewish Antichrist**

The Christian foundation myth, being protean, evolved over time, as did the role of the Jews within it. Paul’s second epistle to the community at Thessalonica warned that the second coming of Christ will be preceded by the appearance of “the man of sin” who will work false miracles and exalt himself over God, setting himself up in God’s Temple, all in accordance with the plans of Satan (2 Thess 2:1–17). The “man of sin” was subsequently linked to the Antichrist mentioned in John’s first and second Epistle (1 John 2:18-22, 4:3, 2 John 1:7). Various diabolic figures from the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation have also been interpreted as relating to the Antichrist. These allusions to a diabolic character were fleshed out over time. It was perhaps inevitable that the Jews, already key villains in Christian myths, and the Antichrist, would coalesce into a new mythological role, “the Jewish Antichrist,” whose arrival would mark the beginning of an apocalyptic conflict. The early Church Fathers increasingly linked the prophesied Antichrist with the Jews.

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96 Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons*, 160.


98 The earliest explicit reference to a Jewish Antichrist in the texts of the Church Fathers seems to have been by St. Irenaeus in the 2nd century. In *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies), Irenaeus concluded that the Antichrist will one day come and he will be from the tribe of Dan. See Irenaeus, *Five Books of S. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, trans. John Keble (Oxford: James Parker, 1872), bk. V, chap. XXX, 519–522.
they declared, would be a Jew and would be worshipped by the Jews as their messiah. According to Norman Cohn, these constructions of the Jew were “revived and integrated into a whole new demonology” during the Middle Ages. Cohn stated that “from the time of the first crusade onwards Jews were presented as children of the Devil, agents employed by Satan for the express purpose of combating Christianity.”

During the Middle Ages, Satan and a host of demons were pivotal to explanations of important world events. The Antichrist was regarded as an authentic manifestation of evil, who would lead Satan’s forces in a war against the followers of Christ shortly before the Second Coming. The Antichrist was thus intertwined with millenarian expectations of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. As Trachtenberg observes, in the modern era the Antichrist myth may be “easily dismissed as pure fantasy, merely another of the fabulous motifs that entertained the Middle Ages, without exerting any momentous influence upon the thought and action of the common people.” However, as Trachtenberg rightly concludes, the Antichrist was considered “a terrifying reality.” The arrival of the Antichrist, as Cohn observed, was considered no mere “phantasy about some remote and indefinite future but a prophecy which was infallible and which at almost any given moment was felt to be on the point of fulfilment.” Momentous events, such as “the Turks” advancing into the heart of Europe, the Crusades and the Black Death, were interpreted as signs that the Antichrist or Lawless One was in the world.

For some English Catholics in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, Satan and the Antichrist were more than just narrative artefacts from the Middle Ages. Satan and a host of malign spirits were often described as very real agents responsible for a number of the world’s woes and fighting the Church for the souls of men. The Antichrist was invoked by English Catholic newspapers to explain modern developments, such as the collapse of the Papal States, the massacre of Catholics in Mexico and the rise of Bolshevism. The Antichrist was a resilient theme which was by no means dependent on the presence of the Jew. For example, a popular English Catholic newspaper, the Universe, contained two articles in 1914, one in June and the other in November, which revolved around the Antichrist. According to the June article, the arrival of the Lawless One was part of “the history of the everlasting unseen war of spiritual forces, repeating itself with cyclic fury.” The paper suggested that “the forces of evil have ranged themselves in most furious onslaught on humanity.” Every degenerate anti-Christian and anti-Church impulse of modern society, such as the vulgarisation of speech and deterioration of manners, “unbridled sensuous indulgence” and “resurgent women, who renounce the sacredness of home” and the eruption of hatred and the anti-Christian revolution, can be traced, the article suggested, to the spirit of “lawlessness” and the “dethronement of Christ in the hearts of men, and the

102 Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium, 35.
erection of the throne of Satan.” The article reasoned that the “cultus of evil spirits” and an increasing interest in “fortune-telling,” “crystal-gazing,” “necromancy,” “astrology” and “overt devil-worship” were “portents of evil,” “symptoms of minds diseased” and evidence that the “Lawless One is abroad.”

Referring to anti-Catholic atrocities occurring in Mexico, the destruction of Catholic property, the desecration of alters and sacred vestments and the massacring of the sick and wounded, the November article argued that the “spirit of Antichrist is, indeed, ranging the earth.” According to the article, the malice in Mexico and elsewhere reveals a hatred of God “beyond the power and limits of mere human malice.” The article stated that “those who believe in the presence of unseen forces that surround us and enter the currents of human action, are compelled to see in all these revelations the manifestation of the ‘the mystery of iniquity.’” “The ‘Man of Sin’ openly proclaims himself,” the article reasoned, and “the spirit of Antichrist in its hideous malignity unmasks itself in Mexico, as it did in Portugal and in France.”

This piece prompted a number of letters to the Universe which debated the nature of the Antichrist. The Tablet was also not immune to this millenarian vocabulary. An editorial in the paper observed that whilst “Modernists will smile at us as hopelessly old-fashioned, we do not hesitate to say that the prevailing evils are not wholly to be explained as by-products of the Great War. There is something Satanic about it all.” The paper concluded that the “present struggle between Christ and Anti-Christ” had been accurately prophesised by Cardinal Newman and that Catholics should pray that the “Prince of the Heavenly Host will be with us in this day of battle.”

Whilst English Catholic narratives about the Antichrist did not necessitate the presence of the Jew, the two did on occasion firmly coalesce. Canon William Barry, a senior cleric within the English Catholic hierarchy and a prolific author, developed a complex construction of the Jew which drew upon stereotypes of Jewish usury, capitalism, Bolshevism and secrecy and myths about a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. Barry also incorporated the myth of the Jewish Antichrist into this construction as a core component. The Jewish Antichrist myth served much the same function as the Christ-Killer narrative. It was used as a justification for treating Jews as a menace to Christian civilisation that needed to be kept under control.

Barry’s incorporation of the Jewish Antichrist into his construction of the Jew was influenced by Henry Manning’s formulation of this traditional narrative. Manning also had a profound influence on other English Catholics such as Hilaire Belloc and Cardinal Vaughan. It is thus instructive to first examine Manning’s representation of the Jewish Antichrist even though it was constructed a little early to be considered the late nineteenth

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104 “The Lawless One,” Universe, 19 June 1914, 8.
106 “Antichrist,” Letters to the Editor, Universe: 4 December 1914, 4; 11 December 1914, 4; 18 December 1914, 4; 24 December 1914, 4.
107 News and Notes, Tablet, 28 September 1929, 397.
108 Dr William Barry (1849–1930), Canon of Birmingham archdiocese, was a well connected figure within the Church. He was a scholar, theologian, prolific writer and a supporter of Ultramontanism. His parents were Irish. Barry wrote numerous articles for the Catholic Times and was described by the paper as “a soldier of Christ.” He was the recipient of the “Holy Father’s congratulations and blessings on his efforts as a priest and public writer” and honoured as a Protonary Apostolic of the Roman Court. See Catholic Who’s Who & Year Book, 1928 (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1928), 21–22 and “Mgr. Canon Barry’s Retirement,” Catholic Times, 3 August 1928, 2. According to Ehret, he was respected by senior ecclesiastics including Cardinal Bourne and Archbishop McIntyre, both of whom encouraged his work. Ehret, “Catholics and Antisemitism,” 154. For more on William Barry, see Sheridan Gilley, “Father William Barry: Priest and Novelist,” Reconvert History, 24, no.4 (October 1999).
century. Manning discussed the arrival of the Antichrist in a series of lectures delivered in 1861. These were published in 1862, a time when most of the Papal States had been seized by the Risorgimento. The collapse of the Papal States was often blamed on Jews and Freemasons. At this time Father Manning, who had converted to Catholicism in 1850 and was advancing rapidly within the Church, was it seems quite willing to accept the Jew as a scapegoat for this catastrophe. Whilst he later adopted more positive stereotypes of the Jews, he nevertheless republished these lectures verbatim with a new preface in 1880. By this time he was Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and thus the official head of the English Catholic hierarchy. Manning explained in these lectures that whilst it may “run counter to the popular spirit of these times,” for someone who believes in revelation, it is inconsistent to try to explain contemporary history without taking prophecy and the Divine will into consideration. The theory, that politics and religion have different spheres, Manning argued, “is an illusion and a snare.” Manning stated that it is a “master-stroke of deceit” to attempt to allay fears by dismissing the Antichrist as a mere “spirit or system” of the times rather than “a person.” The prophetices of Revelation, he explained, describe the Antichrist with “the attributes of a person” and “to deny the personality of Antichrist, is therefore to deny the plain testimony of Holy Scripture.” Manning informed his audience that the “[Church] Fathers believed that Antichrist will be of the Jewish race.” He stated that such was the belief of “St. Irenaeus,” “St. Jerome,” “St. Hippolytus,” “St. Ambrose” and “many others.” He concluded that they were probably correct considering that “the Antichrist will come to deceive the Jews, according to the prophecy of our Lord.” Manning explained that whilst the Antichrist will at first pretend to believe in the Jewish laws, he will only do this “in dissimulation.” Afterwards he will “reject the law of Moses, and will deny the true God who gave it.” The Antichrist will be received by the Jews because they are still awaiting the coming of their messiah and “they have prepared themselves for delusion by crucifying the true Messias.” It is not “difficult to understand how those who have lost the true and divine idea of the Messias may accept a false,” Manning stated, and that “being dazzled by the greatness of political and military successes,” they will pay that honour to the Antichrist that “Christians pay to the true Messias.” The Antichrist, Manning argued, will be “a temporal deliverer, the restorer of their temporal power; or, in other words, a political and military prince.” Manning explained that the only thing that will hinder the arrival of the Antichrist is “Christendom and its head,” as “the lawless one” has no “antagonist on earth more direct than the Vicar of Jesus Christ.”

110 After graduating from Oxford with first class honours, Manning (1808–1892) first turned to the Colonial Office for employment before deciding that his vocation lay within the Anglican Church. At first he was a committed Anglican, believing that the Church of England was a branch of the Catholic Church. He later decided that this was not the case and converted to Roman Catholicism in 1851. He rose rapidly through the ranks and was elected Archbishop in 1865 and Cardinal in 1875. Manning was a fervent advocate of Ultramontanism and one of the strongest supporters of papal infallibility during the First Vatican Council.
111 Manning, The Temporal Power, 81.
112 Ibid, 102–103.
113 Ibid, 103–104.
Cardinal Manning later expressed admiration for the communal solidarity and organisation of the Jews and raised his voice in defence of Jews on a number of occasions. In an address delivered at a meeting organised by the Lord Mayor of London in 1882, Manning condemned the persecution of Jews in Russia and praised the virtues of Jews in England, France and Germany. Manning asked, “for uprightness, for refinement, for generosity, for charity, for all the graces and virtues that adorn humanity where will be found examples brighter or more true of human excellence than in this Hebrew race”? Manning lamented the ritual murder accusations, on which subject he corresponded with Chief Rabbi Herman Adler. He was presented with an illuminated address of thanks by the Chief Rabbi and frequently praised by the Jewish Chronicle. Considering the support that Manning provided the Jewish community in the late nineteenth century, it seems strange that he embraced the Jewish Antichrist myth. In this, Manning followed a not uncommon precedent of excoriating the Jew theologically whilst defending Jews socially. After addressing the question of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council (1868-1870), Manning became less concerned with theological problems and more focused on the social needs of English Catholics. This change in focus may explain why his acceptance of the Jewish Antichrist myth was subsequently accompanied by an admiration for Jewish communal organisation. For example, he argued that Jews were doing more for their working girls in the East End of London than Catholics were doing for their own struggling poor. He also stated, in a letter written to Sir John Simon in 1890, that the Jews are:

a race with a sacred history of nearly four thousand years; at present without a parallel, dispersed in all lands, with an imperishable personal identity, isolated and changeless, greatly afflicted, without home or fatherland; visibly reserved for a future of signal mercy. any man who does not believe in their future must be a careless reader, not only of the old Jewish Scriptures, but even of our own.

Though this portrayal was not overtly negative like constructions of the Jewish Antichrist, it was still an essentialistic and patronising image of a “changeless” mythologized people.

In a four part article published in the Catholic Times in 1920, William Barry, like Manning before him, expressed his fears that “the end of an age is upon us, and we are not ready.” Like Manning, Barry had a “highly coloured vision of history as the unfolding of the will of God.” Barry argued that the “long-drawn anti-Christian movement, centuries old,” was poised to defeat Christendom having been “quickened by victory after victory.” Barry cited Manning at length and blended his own impressions of the arrival of the Jewish Antichrist with those found in Manning’s lectures. Closely following Manning’s lectures, Barry also asserted that the Antichrist would be Jewish, an arch-medium, a protector of the Jews who would be worshipped by them as their messiah. Barry stated that it is clear from “St. Paul’s

117 Transcript of speech by Cardinal Manning, in “Persecution of the Jews in Russia,” Times, 2 February 1882, 4. My thanks to Dr Peter Nockles for bringing this to my attention.
120 Cardinal Manning to Sir John Simon, 8 December 1890, cited by Leslie, Henry Edward Manning, 485-486.
doctrine” and what “St. John and the Fathers have left us concerning the Antichrist,” that the question of the Jew’s role in the fate of Europe will be, as Manning argued, the “most vital and most decisive of all.” Manning was concerned that it might “appear strange to attach much importance to any event the sphere of which seems to be the Jewish race.”

The state of affairs in the present day, Barry suggested, should overcome any such temptation to dismiss Manning’s prophetic warning. The years, he argued, are “bringing Antichrist nearer,” and many voices other than Manning’s now announce his approach “to the City of God.” “All the portents,” Barry concluded, “have been fulfilled in Russia, not to say elsewhere.”

According to Barry and Manning, there are only two agencies in the history of the modern world that are independent of and more powerful than any of the nations, and these are mutually antagonistic: “the Jewish people” and “the universal Church.” Drawing upon the stereotype of the Smart Jew, Barry stated that “the Catholic spirit and the Hebrew genius” have been locked in unending conflict as a result of “Israel’s rejection of the Gospel.” The oppression of Paul and his fellow Christians was just the beginning. “Israel,” he informed his readers, “did surely fulfil the prophets when it gave birth to Christ.” It is doing so yet again, Barry concluded, but this time it is paving the way not for Christ but for the Antichrist. Following Manning, he suggested that only the “remnant of the Christian society” can hold back the “antichristian power.” Barry did not however hold much hope for the coming battle, for he believed that the Christian remnant had been torn apart by the Reformation and that the Protestants had deserted the battlefield. Manning’s so-called prophetic warning was not the only one that Barry listened to. He also detected “prophecies” and “forecasts” about the Jews in the works of Benjamin Disraeli, Édouard Drumont, Peter Kropotkin and Friedrich Nietzsche. According to Nietzsche, one of Barry’s supposed prophets, “that the Jews could, if they wanted . . . quite literally rule over Europe, is certain; that they are not planning and working towards that is equally certain.” Alluding to this passage, Barry stated that “according to Nietzsche, the Jews, thirty-five years ago, could have seized the supremacy over Europe. They did not want it then, he believed. They surely want it now.”

Barry returned to the Antichrist a few years later. Again referring to scriptural teaching about the ‘Man of Sin’” and Manning’s interpretation of prophecy, he concluded that the events in Russia, the triumph of atheism over Christianity, demonstrate that the Antichrist is “now in the world.” Barry observed that the Church Fathers predicted “the persistence of

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126 Barry, “Sign of the Times I.”
127 William Barry, “Sign of the Times II,” Catholic Times, 6 November 1920, 7 and Manning, The Temporal Power, 146. Belloc made a similar observation. Belloc stated that “there are two, and only two, organized international forces in Europe to-day with a soul and identity in them. One is the Catholic Church, and the other is Jewry.” Belloc, The Jews, 172.
128 Barry, “Sign of the Times II.”
129 According to Barry, Disraeli was a commendable Jew, who recognised the significance of race and secret societies. Barry nevertheless stressed that “English he never could altogether be; he looked, thought, and felt as an Israelite, moving about in a foreign world.” William Barry, “Disraeli the Jew,” Catholic Times, 24 July 1920, 7.
Israel though scattered among all peoples” and “their enmity to the Church, their certain rise to power in Christendom, and their strange alliance with the ‘Man of Sin,’ who will, however, be himself a Jew, though most likely a renegade from his faith and tribe.” According to Barry, this was an amazing “stroke of divination,” which has been “accomplished in Russia to the letter.” Karl Marx, Barry suggested, was “the false prophet of the Apocalypse,” and Lenin, “a monster of blood and impiety.” “Lenin,” Barry suggested, “is an unspeakable murderer, a usurper of all public rights, God’s enemy, man’s oppressor.” In other words, Lenin was the Antichrist and Marx was his evangelist. According to Barry, Cardinal Manning regarded “the Revolution,” “the evil elements in emancipated Judaism” and “the assailants of Papal Rome,” to be “associated in a common Unholy Alliance.” Barry concluded that “history justifies the forecast which he made of a coming Antichrist, now looming large upon our Christian inheritance.”

The Jewish Antichrist was a less prominent theme in the English Catholic discourse than the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer. References to the Antichrist, the Lawless One, the Man of Sin, princes of darkness, Satan, servants of the Devil and other malign spirits, were quite common in English Catholic newspapers, but in most cases these were discussed without mentioning Jews. Manning and Barry’s formulation of the Jewish Antichrist myth was however endorsed and adopted by the Month. An editorial in the Month approved of Barry’s “notable article.” According to the Month, “in Soviet Russia Manning’s prophecy has actually been realised.” The editorial stated that “Antichrist, in the person of those apostate Jews, is already in power” and “Marx, another apostate Jew, is his evangelist, and Christianity, especially the Catholicism of Rome, is the object of his bitterest hatred.”

The Jewish Antichrist was also a theme in English Catholic constructions of the Luciferian Freemason.

The Luciferian Freemason

The Diana Vaughan hoax was a long-running anti-Masonic episode which came to its dramatic conclusion in 1897. In 1885, Léo Taxil (formerly Marie Joseph Gabriel Antoine Jogand-Pagès), a French writer, lapsed Catholic and expelled Freemason, started to invent elaborate stories about devil worship and sinister rituals in certain Masonic lodges. Taxil wrote a series of fanciful anti-Masonic works such as L’Antichrist ou l’origine de la franc-maçonnerie (the Antichrist and the origins of Freemasonry). Taxil pretended to be a repentant Catholic. Among the admirers of his writings were the Bishops of Grenoble, Montpellier, Coutances and Port-Louis and the editors of La Croix, L’Univers, and La Civiltà Cattolica. There were also reports that Taxil had a personal meeting with Leo XIII in 1887. Though it is difficult
to verify whether this meeting really occurred, Leo XIII certainly expressed a similar if less colourful antipathy towards the Freemasons in official documents.\(^{137}\)

In the 1890s, Taxil crafted the memoirs of Diana Vaughan, a fictitious female apostate from “Palladian” Freemasonry whom he claimed to know and represent (the \textit{Mémoires d’une Év-Palladiste}).\(^{138}\) He also wrote \textit{Le Diable au XIXe siècle} under the pseudonym of Dr Bataille. These works contained elaborate tales about a circle of Satanic Freemasonry, the so-called Palladian lodges, which had supposedly been set up by Albert Pike.\(^{139}\) The tales included bizarre accounts of host desecration, magical rites which employed “the skulls” of “martyred missionaries” and the literal manifestations of Lucifer, Asmodeus and a number of other demons.\(^{140}\) In August 1895, the \textit{Tablet} stated that “much attention has recently been called to the doings of the various sects of Freemasons abroad by the sudden conversion of one of their high priestesses, Miss Diana Vaughan, ex-Grand Mistress of the Luciferians or Palladians.” Taking the \textit{Mémoires d’une Év-Palladiste} at face value, the \textit{Tablet} reported that prior to converting to Catholicism, Diana had tried, unsuccessfully, to set up a reformed sect of Palladium Freemasonry, because despite “the strange perversion of mind” which had led her to “the worship of Lucifer,” she was not blind to the “degrading character of the rites practised by her fellow-worshippers.”\(^{141}\) In 1896, Arthur Waite published a study, \textit{Devil Worship in France or the Question of Lucifer}, which refuted the myth of the existence of “Palladian” Freemasonry.\(^{142}\) The \textit{Tablet} responded in October with an equivocal endorsement of his efforts. The paper first responded to his refutation in a book review. The \textit{Tablet} concluded that \textit{Devil Worship in France} is a “clever but not convincing book of an honourable opponent.” According to the book review, Waite succeeded in casting some doubt upon the lady herself, Miss Diana Vaughan, but not the evidence of Satanism in Masonic lodges. The paper

\(^{137}\) On 20 April 1884, Leo XIII promulgated an encyclical, “Humanum Genus,” which condemned Freemasonry. This can be accessed via the Vatican website, www.vatican.va. In 1902, Leo sent out an apostolic letter, “Annum Ingressi.” The apostolic letter declared that the very purpose of Freemasonry is to “urge war against God and against His Church.” The letter stated that Freemasonry embraces in its “vast net almost all the nations, and allying itself with other sects which it sets in motion by means of hidden strings, first attracting and keeping its hold on its members by means of the advantages which it secures to them, binding governments to its purposes, now by promises, now by threats, this sect has succeeded in permeating all classes of society.” It stated that Freemasonry is “filled with the spirit of Satan, who . . . knows how, on occasion, to transform himself into an angel of light.” Freemasonry thus puts forward “a humanitarian programme” but in reality it “sacrifices everything to its sectarian designs.” Leo XIII, “Annum Ingressi,” 18 March 1902. A copy of this apostolic letter can be found in the Leeds diocesan archives: Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, 1902, Acta Ecclesiae Loidensis, vol. XII, Leeds Diocesan Archives.

\(^{138}\) On 20 April 1884, Leo XIII promulgated an encyclical, “Humanum Genus,” which condemned Freemasonry. This can be accessed via the Vatican website, www.vatican.va. In 1902, Leo sent out an apostolic letter, “Annum Ingressi.” The apostolic letter declared that the very purpose of Freemasonry is to “urge war against God and against His Church.” The letter stated that Freemasonry embraces in its “vast net almost all the nations, and allying itself with other sects which it sets in motion by means of hidden strings, first attracting and keeping its hold on its members by means of the advantages which it secures to them, binding governments to its purposes, now by promises, now by threats, this sect has succeeded in permeating all classes of society.” It stated that Freemasonry is “filled with the spirit of Satan, who . . . knows how, on occasion, to transform himself into an angel of light.” Freemasonry thus puts forward “a humanitarian programme” but in reality it “sacrifices everything to its sectarian designs.” Leo XIII, “Annum Ingressi,” 18 March 1902. A copy of this apostolic letter can be found in the Leeds diocesan archives: Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, 1902, Acta Ecclesiae Loidensis, vol. XII, Leeds Diocesan Archives.

\(^{139}\) Albert Pike was a prominent lodge master in American Freemasonry.

\(^{140}\) See Arthur Edward Waite, \textit{Devil Worship in France or the Question of Lucifer} (London: George Redway, 1896), 67, 104–109, 144–156, passim.


remained “profoundly convinced of the strict justice of the Church’s attitude towards Masonry, strongly persuaded that there is an inner Masonry whose workings are unknown to the general run of Masons,” and “that Satanism is practised under circumstances at least pointing to Masonic association.” “The net result,” the review concluded, “is that we should receive all evidence as to Palladian masonry with caution, and suspend a final judgement until we have exacted evidence as irrefragable as the nature of the case admits.” A week later, the Tablet reported that the Anti-Masonic Congress144 had set up a “special committee” to deal with the “burning questions” relating to Diana Vaughan. On the one hand the report acknowledged that the “fantastic and legendary accretions” in the “writings published under the pseudonym of Diana Vaughan” may have “unduly discredited” some of the more sober reflections on the anti-religious hostility and “demonolatry” of Freemasonry. However, the report went on to state:

That there is in France a sect devoted to the worship of Lucifer, as the champion of rebellious humanity, is, we believe, a well-attested fact, and the propagation of this diabolical creed has been ascribed by M. Taxil and M. Ricoux to an inner ring of the Masonic body called Palladic Masonry.

The report then referred back to the review of Devil Worship in France which appeared in the previous issue of the Tablet, stating that “we reviewed in these columns last week the work in which Mr. Waite, on behalf of Masonry, traverses and impugns these statements, but without any conclusive refutation of their general drift.” Referring to Waite’s volume, the Tablet concluded that in attempting to refute the evidence of a connection between Satanic sects and Freemasonry, “the Scotch verdict of ‘Not proven’ is . . . the most favourable that can be registered on his review of the situation.” The editor of the Tablet was, it seems, reluctant to dismiss the core accusations of Satanic Freemasonry found in Mémoires d’une Ex-Palladiste and Le Diable au XIXe siècle. Significantly, Diana Vaughan was not the only item on the agenda at the Anti-Masonic Congress. The role played by the Jews in the Masonic movement was also discussed at the Congress. One speaker claimed that the “leading spirits of the craft were Hebrews” and that as Freemasonry is entirely in the hands of the Jews, “Anti-Semitism was the most efficacious weapon with which to counteract its pernicious effects.” “For this reason,” the speaker continued, “all true Catholics should support the Anti-Jewish crusade.”


144 The Anti-Masonic Congress was an annual gathering inaugurated in 1895 to enable Catholics from different countries to meet and rally their forces against the threat of Freemasonry. “The Anti-Masonic Congress,” Tablet, 17 August 1895, 250–251. The Anti-Masonic Congress was still debating the existence of a conspiracy to destroy all nations and found a universal Masonic republic in their place in 1912. It was suggested that Freemasons planned to break down national identities by replacing all other languages with Esperanto. “Esperanto and Freemasonry,” Catholic Herald, 13 April 1912, 7.


As the *Tablet* was sympathetic to the myth of Palladian Freemasonry, it unsurprisingly became the main forum in England for individuals to share their views about the Diana Vaughan Affair.\(^\text{147}\) Diana Vaughan had some fervent admirers. One reader, Herbert Jones, a member of the Canons Regular of the Lateran,\(^\text{148}\) expressed his admiration for the “noble-minded lady who has left the Satanic Society.”\(^\text{149}\) According to Jones, those who doubt the existence of Miss Vaughan and “talk of deception in the matter are themselves the real dupes of Jew Masons.” He cited a letter from the Bishop of Grenoble which stated that Nathan, Freidel and other prominent Freemasons have been “sent about to cast discredit on Miss Vaughan’s damaging attack on masonry.” According to Jones, Nathan is an English Jew and the “present Grand Master of French and Italian Freemasonry,”\(^\text{150}\) whilst “Freidel, the other Masonic deceiver, . . . has been very busy spreading the report that Diana Vaughan is a nonentity.” Jones also stated that “it is well known in Holland that . . . a certain M. Rosen, in reality a spy of the Italian Archmason Lemmi, has been visiting many Dutch ecclesiastics and repeating to them that Diana Vaughan is a myth.” Jones claimed that Rosen “pretends to be a convert from Masonry,” but in reality he is a “Jewish Rabbi and a leading mason.”

Jones lamented that there are “credulous Catholic journalists” who are being convinced by these Freemasons that Diana Vaughan does not exist. “It is,” he concluded, “a Masonic plot to cast discredit on the damaging revelations of Masonic devilry revealed by Diana Vaughan.”\(^\text{151}\) Another reader of the *Tablet*, Francis Merrick Wyndham, a convert from Anglicanism who went on to become Canon of Westminster Cathedral, sent many letters to the *Tablet* contributing “evidence” of Diana Vaughan’s existence.\(^\text{152}\) He also published a booklet in the same year containing extracts from Masonic texts to demonstrate that a person from any religion, including “a Jew or a Mohammedan,” can be admitted to Freemasonry just as long as they believe in the Great Architect of the Universe. He stated that it logically follows that “a Luciferian or a Satanist” can be admitted to Freemasonry, just as long as he accepts that “Lucifer or Satan is the Great Architect of the Universe.”\(^\text{153}\)

In response to an announcement that Diana Vaughan would soon make a public appearance, another Catholic advocate of the lady expressed hope that when she appears, sceptical journalists will not continue to “attack a defenceless woman” but rather “give her a fair hearing.”\(^\text{154}\)

Credulity over Diana Vaughan’s revelations was not confined to the pages of the *Tablet*.

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\(^{147}\) For letters discussing Diana Vaughan and Palladian Freemasonry, see: *Tablet*, Letters to the Editor: 24 October 1896, 660–661; 2 January 1897, 21–23; 9 January 1897, 64–65; 16 January 1897, 102; 23 January 1897, 138–139; 20 February 1897, 299; 6 March 1897, 379; 10 April 1897, 577; 17 April 1897, 617–618; 24 April 1897, 657.

\(^{148}\) A Roman Catholic religious order based in Rome but with a presence in England.

\(^{149}\) Herbert Jones, Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*, 10 April 1897, 577.

\(^{150}\) Jones probably had Ernesto Nathan in mind, who was Jewish and a Freemason. He became mayor of Rome in 1907.

\(^{151}\) Herbert Jones, Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*, 23 January 1897, 138–139.

\(^{152}\) Francis M. Wyndham, Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*: 2 January 1897, 21–22; 16 January 1897, 102; 23 January 1897, 139; 20 February 1897, 299; 10 April 1897, 577. Francis Merrick Wyndham was born into an illustrious family. He was the son of Colonel Charles Wyndham, the 3rd Baron Leconfield, and Elizabeth Scott, daughter of the 4th Lord Polwarth. Wyndham took Anglican Orders but converted to Roman Catholicism in 1868. He was ordained priest of the Congregation of Oblates of St Charles in 1871, was elected Superior of the Bayswater Community in 1891 and was appointed Canon of Westminster in 1909. See F. C. Burnand, ed., *Catholic Who’s Who & Year Book* 1915 (London: Burns & Oates, 1915), 478.


\(^{154}\) Archibald J. Dunn, Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*, 6 March 1897, 379.
Baroness Mary Elizabeth Herbert, a close friend and associate of Cardinal Archbishop Vaughan, wrote a review article in the *Dublin Review* about two books by Domenico Margiotta on the subject of Freemasonry and the worship of Lucifer.\footnote{Mary Elizabeth Herbert, review of *Adriano Lemmi: Supreme Head of the Freemasons and Le Palladismo; Or the Worship of Lucifer*, both books by Domenico Margiotta, *Dublin Review*, CXVIII (January 1896), 192–201.} Margiotta was one of Léo Taxil’s “auxiliary” assistants.\footnote{Bernheim, Samii and Serejski, “The Confession of Léo Taxil,” *Heredom*, 137–168.} Herbert announced that “in spite of the superhuman efforts to conceal their proceedings made by the freemasons throughout the world,” the “true nature” of Freemasonry is becoming known through the revelations of former members “of the sect.” She accepted Margiotta’s claims that Adriano Lemmi, a prominent Italian Freemason, was a convicted thief, a secret Jew convert and a Satanist schismatic (Margiotta claimed that a rift existed in Freemasonry between the Palladian “Luciferians” and the Satanic schismatics). She also accepted at face value his lengthy discussion of Diana Vaughan’s “noble and generous character” and her consistent refusal to “profane a consecrated Host,” even though this was, according to Margiotta, insisted upon by “the order.”\footnote{See Bernheim, Samii and Serejski, “The Confession of Léo Taxil,” *Heredom*, 137–168.}

On 19 April 1897, a large audience, consisting largely of Catholics and Freemasons, gathered in the auditorium of the Société Géographique in Paris in order to finally meet Diana Vaughan. The audience was consequently stunned when Taxil rather than Diana Vaughan appeared on the stage and announced that the whole tale of Palladian Freemasonry was a hoax. Diana Vaughan, the illusive ex-Grand Mistress of the Luciferians, did not exist. Taxil thanked the Catholic bishops and editors who had encouraged his exposés of Satanic Freemasonry.\footnote{The Diana Vaughan Hoax,” review of *La Fin d’une Mystification*, by Eugène Portalé, *Month*, LXXXIX (April 1897), 442. The reviewer pointed to claims in Diana Vaughan’s memories about the arrival of the Antichrist and the election of a Pope who would renounce Christ for Lucifer. He wrote a long letter to the *Tablet* on 13 April 1897 in response to letters by Francis Wyndham and Herbert Jones. Wyndham and Jones had accused him of not reading Diana Vaughan’s memoirs carefully, as the references to the Antichrist in her memoirs were not her views but those of “the Palladists.” For the two letters, see Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*, 10 April 1897, 577. The reviewer explained that he had focused on the Antichrist myth because being a familiar Christian narrative it was easy to discuss succinctly. He went on to summarise and dismiss some of the more absurd narratives about so-called Palladian Freemasonry, such as “the birth story of Sophia Walder, begotten and suckled by a devil,” “the embracing of the chaste Diana by the beautiful demon Asmodeus,” “the proclamation of hosts” and “the blasphemous parodies of Masses and devotions.” Reviewer, Letters to the Editor, *Tablet*, 17 April 1897, 617–618. The *Tablet* later acknowledged “the sagacity” which led to the Month seeing through the hoax. Notes, *Tablet*, 24 April 1897, 648.}

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Herbert Thurston was no friend to Freemasonry. Nevertheless, in 1898, as part of an article which discussed the ritual murder accusation, he stated that the “Diana Vaughan episode” was a “pitiable exposure of credulity.” He concluded that the end of the anti-Masonic episode, the “disappearance into thin air of the impalpable ‘luciferians,’” seems only to have “added new zest to the pursuit of the unquestionably very real and substantial Israelites.” Other Catholics were angry. The Tablet directed its anger at Taxil. The Universe also focused on the “discreditable” actions of Taxil, regarding it as no surprise that he only “narrowly escaped personal chastisement at the hands of his dupes.” Conversely, the Paris correspondent for the Catholic Herald vented his frustration on the credulous Catholics who had lapped up the “ridiculous and grotesque stories” about Palladian Freemasonry and the Catholic newspapers that swallowed the alleged revelations as if they were gospel. The correspondent reported that every absurd story about Diana Vaughan was raised “to the height of a dogma” and Catholics who refused to accept them had been branded as “a traitor to the Church and perhaps nearly a Freemason, too.”

After Taxil’s announcement, narratives about Palladian and Satanic Freemasonry largely faded from English Catholic discourse. They did not however completely disappear. Colonel James Ratton, an English Catholic, retired army doctor and author, helped to keep them alive for a little while longer. In 1901, he published X-Rays in Freemasonry. This repeated traditional stereotypes about the anti-Christian nature of Freemasonry and its alleged war against the Church. It repeatedly emphasised Jewish involvement in Freemasonry and informed readers that the Jews killed Christ and have clung onto their “anti-Christian”

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160 Herbert Thurston published a number of articles and books which were highly critical of Freemasonry, though they were written without the hysterical diabolisation of some of his contemporaries. His main concerns seem to have been that Freemasonry was deistic, secretive, revolutionary, conspiratorial, anti-Christian, anti-clerical and anti-Catholic. See for example Herbert Thurston, Freemasonry (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1921); Herbert Thurston, “The Popes and Freemasonry,” Topics of the Day, Tablet, 27 January 1923, 108; Herbert Thurston, “The Church’s International Enemy,” Month, CXLVIII (November 1926), 385–397; Herbert Thurston, No Popery: Chapters on Anti-Papal Prejudice (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), 55–86. His criticisms were mainly directed at “continental” Freemasonry. However, he observed that whilst English Freemasonry was “convivial,” “philanthropic” and not driven by an anti-clerical animus, when it came to the practices of their continental brethren, they were only slightly less culpable as they simply “shrugged their shoulders and looked another way.” Thurston, “The Popes and Freemasonry,” 108.

161 Thurston, Anti-Semitism,” 562. Thurston wrote a letter to the Tablet in January 1897, the nature of which suggested that he already believed the Diana Vaughan revelations were “an exploded myth.” Herbert Thurston, Letters to the Editor, Tablet, 2 January 1897, 22–23.


165 Though articles about the influence of Satan and Antichrist, especially in Russia and Mexico but also in modernist and spiritualist movements in the West, continued to be quite common in English Catholic periodicals.

166 Ratton was by no means considered eccentric. He published a number of books on diverse, not exclusively religious subjects. Several of his books were however concerned with the Antichrist and the apocalypse. The Catholic Who’s Who observed that Ratton had “made a special study of the Apocalypse, and is the author of several well-considered works.” F. C. Burnand, ed., Catholic Who’s Who & Year Book, 1908 (London: Burns & Oates, 1908), 335. During the early years of the twentieth century, Ratton accepted the myth of the Jewish Antichrist. Ratton’s views about the Antichrist and the apocalypse did however change significantly sometime between 1904 and 1914. He still referred to the Jews’ rejection of Christ, but he no longer believed in the Jewish Antichrist. He argued that Nero was the Antichrist prophesised by Daniel, and that all subsequent millenarian traditions of the Antichrist are based on the exegetical writings of St. Irenaeus (which he suggests were faulty). James Ratton, Antichrist: An Historical Review (London: Burns and Oates, 1917); James Ratton, “Antichrist,” Letters to the Editor, Universe, 4 December 1914, 4.
principles and ideals ever since. According to Ratton, these ideals include “the expectation of another Messiah, who, we know, will be Antichrist.” He argued that Freemasonry is Satanic and that “the Bnai-Bèrith,” whose goal he suggested was to dominate all forms of Freemasonry and re-establish King Solomon’s Temple, is a branch of Jewish Freemasonry closed to non-Jews with the exception of visits by the “Inspectors General of the Palladium.” Ratton added new material when he republished X-Rays in 1904. He argued that Zionism is of interest because it has been prophesised that when the Jews return to Jerusalem, “anti-Christ will appear in their midst.” According to Ratton, Freemasonry, guided by the Jews, is preparing to move its headquarters to Jerusalem, and when the “Bnai-Bèrith” joins them, “then will anti-Christ appear in alliance with the Sovereign Pontiff of Freemasonry, and incite the international Masonic forces to persecute the Church in such fashion as has never been before.” Montague Summers, an eccentric convert to Catholicism, continued to argue that Albert Pike, the alleged founder of Palladian Freemasonry, had been the Grand Master of “societies practising Satanism.” Father Cahill, an Irish Jesuit, argued in Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement (1929), that Freemasonry is associated with occultism, Satanism, the Antichrist, Judaism, Jewish rites, the Cabala and a Judaeo-Masonic anti-Christian movement. He concluded that the Diana Vaughan hoax was probably a plot to discredit the “reliable evidence” that Freemasonry is associated with Satanism. According to the Catholic Times, Father Cahill, unlike prominent Freemasons, does not expect readers to accept “even a single point” from his book on faith, for he “proves everything.”

Conclusion

The scriptural authority of the New Testament has given the myths about the Pharisee and the Christ-Killer a highly resilient quality. The most prominent source of these myths in English Catholic discourse during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century were the sermons, pastoral letters and public addresses of priests, bishops and archbishops. Hostility towards contemporary Jews was probably not intended by most of the authors of these public addresses. The Christ-Killer and the Pharisee often served as caricatures to represent everything reprobate, obsolete, non-Christian or anti-Christian. They were thus convenient symbols which could be drawn upon to contrast with Christian virtues and illustrate non-Christian vices. However, whilst many of the authors of the sermons and pastoral letters probably had biblical figures in mind rather than contemporary Jews, there was an

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167 James Ratton [A. Cowan, pseud.], X-Rays in Freemasonry (London: Effingham Wilson, 1901), passim.
168 Ibid, 104–123.
170 Summers, The History of Witchcraft, 8.
171 Edward Cahill, Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement, 2nd ed. (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1930), 67–95. The first edition was published in 1929.
essentialistic quality to these representations and it seems likely that in many cases little consideration was given to any such distinction. In some cases the sermons were framed in such a way as to generalise Jewish villainy to the “Jewish race”, past and present. Furthermore, certain authors, such as the Chesterton brothers, William Barry and Charles Diamond, were happy to combine the Jewish diabolist from traditional Christian myths with modern stereotypes of Jewish villains in order to create their own distinctive constructions of the Jew.¹⁷⁵

The Pharisee and the Christ-Killer were not the only representations of the mythologized Jew in English Catholic discourse. The Antichrist, Man of Sin or Lawless One, was described as a very real and very frightening individual rather than merely a symbol or spirit of the times and he was called upon to explain a number of contemporary evils. The Antichrist was often invoked independently of representations of the Jew. Whilst the Jewish Antichrist was a relatively rare representation of the Jew, it was found in the narratives of some prominent individuals, including Father Henry Manning (subsequently Cardinal Archbishop of the English hierarchy) and Canon William Barry. Barry wrote numerous articles about the Jews and the Jewish problem. Citing Manning’s lectures as if they were prophetic forecasts, Barry combined the myth of the Jewish Antichrist with contemporary stereotypes of Jewish greed, secrecy, disloyalty, Bolshevism and anti-Christian hostility, to produce a construction of the Jew that was second only to constructions by the Catholic Herald for the multiplicity of its themes. The Month supported Barry’s construction of the Jewish Antichrist, suggesting that he was already in power in Russia and that Marx had been his evangelist.

Freemasons, like the Jews, were also associated with the prophecy of the Antichrist. They were also accused of devil worship and Satanic practices. The Tablet equivocated about the specifics of the Diana Vaughan revelations but it remained “profoundly convinced” that an inner circle of highly secretive Satanic Freemasonry existed. However, whilst these accusations of literal diabolism were found in letters and articles appearing in the Tablet and Dublin Review during the Diana Vaughan Affair, they were relatively rare after it was revealed to be a hoax. The embarrassment of the Diana Vaughan episode may explain why The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, when it appeared in England, was almost totally ignored by the English Catholic press. There was however little reprieve in the vilification of Freemasonry in the English Catholic discourse. Freemasons continued to be vilified, but the main accusations in the early twentieth century became provoking social unrest, inciting revolution, supporting Bolshevism, anti-clericalism, anti-Christianity, secrecy and plundering the Church in France, rather than Satanism (though accusations of Satanism by no means entirely disappeared). Many of these accusations and stereotypes were shared with the Jews. Constructions of the Jews and the Freemasons were often linked in a Jewish-Freemason camarilla, alliance or conspiracy. In some cases the Jews and the Freemasons were accused of waging a campaign to exonerate Alfred Dreyfus irrespective of his guilt or innocence, and exploiting the Dreyfus Affair to destroy the army and the Church.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Modern stereotypes of the Jew in English Catholic discourse by these authors are examined in Mayers, “From ‘the Pharisee’ to ‘the Zionist Menace,’” ch.3.

¹⁷⁶ For a more thorough examination of constructions of the Jewish-Masonic camarilla in the English Catholic discourse, including an examination of the Dreyfus Affair and its aftermath, constructions of the Jew and the Freemason by the Catholic Federation, and responses to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, see Mayers, “From ‘the Pharisee’ to ‘the Zionist Menace,’” ch.4.
One of the more troublesome myths that survived into the twentieth century, albeit often with some adaptation, was the ritual murder accusation. This accusation resulted in trials, convictions and massacres. Some prominent Catholic periodicals in Italy and France, most notably Civiltà Cattolica, but also L’Unita Cattolica, L’Univers, Osservatore Romano and Osservatore Cattolico, embraced the myth of the Jewish ritual murder. As far as the editors of Civiltà Cattolica were concerned, the Jews murdered innocent Christian children to satisfy religious commandments. Conversely, English Catholic reformulations of the accusation were usually divorced from criticisms of Judaism as a religion. Though sometimes presented using polemical language and sometimes ostensibly as a defence of Jews, it was common in either case to argue that the Jews had murdered innocent Christian children, with all the paraphernalia of crucifixion and blood draining, but that this was neither sanctioned by Judaism nor necessitated by Jewish rituals. It was usually argued that such murders were the result of the odio fidei of fanatical Jews or that they had been committed by superstitious Jews who believed in the efficacy of innocent Christian blood for magical purposes. The myth of Jewish ritual murder did not cease to exist, but it survived by adapting itself (thus demonstrating the resilient but protean nature of the myth). The Ritual Murderer thus underwent a partial metamorphosis into alternative representations, such as the Fanatical Murderer and the Jewish Sorcerer. Despite a willingness to exonerate Judaism “as a system” from the charge of sanctioning the murder of Christians, it was, it seems, impossible to abandon the myth that the Jews had murdered innocent Christian children in various diabolic ways, in some cases in reenactment or mockery of the Passion.

It seems clear that representations of the Jew in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century were not always modern in character. In the case of the English Catholic discourse, they were often pre-modern or anti-modern. Many existing studies of English antisemitism argue that by the late nineteenth century, constructions of the Jew based on traditional Christian myths had largely, though not entirely, been replaced by modern socio-political and racial forms of antisemitism. This study however demonstrates that traditional religious myths about the Jews continued to thrive and function in the English Catholic discourse. Their continued existence was not confined to a handful of narrative artefacts from a bygone era. The Jew was thus mythologized as the Pharisee, Christ-Killer, fanatical murderer, sorcerer and Antichrist. The Jew (and the Jewish Antichrist) was portrayed in conjunction with the Freemason, who was diabolized as a servant of Lucifer or Satan. In some cases the language used to describe the Jew and the Freemason drew upon a vocabulary which suggested an apocalyptic war between the forces of good and evil.

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*Secondary Sources*


ABSTRACT: Amy Levy (1861–1889) was an Anglo-Jewish author, poet, essayist, and translator of works, while Lily Montagu (1873–1963) was a prolific writer and the founder of Liberal Judaism in England. Despite their differing backgrounds, Levy and Montagu produced novels that converge in their portrayals of how a religion of “ritual,” Reform Judaism, failed to meet the needs of a Jewish community more and more equating morality with personal spirituality. Indeed, Amy Levy’s novel, Reuben Sachs (1888), is a critique of the recently founded Anglo-Reform congregation. Similarly, Lily Montagu’s Naomi’s Exodus (1901) expands on Claude Montefiore’s theology of Liberal Judaism that was itself a response to the stagnation of Anglo-Reformism. In these novels the religious discourse hinges on comparable portrayals of the West End Jewish community in London. This essay will for the first time connect the works of Levy and Montagu. In the process, we will examine the ways in which they attempted to deal with the late nineteenth-century pressures on Anglo-Judaism to assimilate the religious, primarily Evangelical, norms of Protestant culture and to address the concerns of a community that was reading the idealistic poetry of the Romantics and the novels of Charles Dickens and George Eliot, among others.

Amy Levy (1861–1889) was an Anglo-Jewish poet, essayist, and translator of works born in Clapham, London, while Lily Montagu (1873–1963) was a prolific author and the founder of Liberal Judaism in England. Levy’s biographical and literary reputation is currently in the process of being restored by scholars of feminist and minority literature across a range of disciplines. This process has been made all the more difficult given the destruction of her personal papers following her unexplained suicide. Indeed, what makes Levy interesting to current historians and critics working in the fields of Anglo-Jewish and feminist literary criticism is the way in which contemporary issues converge in the Levy corpus. Cynthia Scheinberg rightly argues that “Levy’s critical resurrection is also linked to the fact that so many of the issues she addresses in her writing speak to concerns of the contemporary critical moment.”1 By contrast, Lily Montagu was involved in the foundation of Liberal Judaism in England. She was the first woman to minister to a synagogue in England and in 1918 she became the first to preach a sermon. Montagu’s liturgy, Prayers for Jewish Working Girls, was the first Liberal Jewish prayer-book.2 Despite their differences, both Levy and

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Montagu produced novels that converge in their portrayals of how a religion of “ritual,” namely Reform Judaism, similar to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglicanism, failed to meet the needs of a community more and more equating morality with inner-spirituality. Reform Judaism in England, rather than nurturing the spiritual and religious needs of its congregants, fed and fostered a culture of materialism in the West End.

Indeed, Amy Levy’s novel *Reuben Sachs* (1888) is a critique of the recently founded Anglo-Reform congregation at Upper Berkeley Street, London. Similarly, Lily Montagu’s *Naomi’s Exodus* (1901) develops and expands on Claude Montefiore’s theology of Liberal Judaism that was itself a response to the conservatism and stagnation of Anglo-Reformism. In these novels the religious discourse hinges on comparable portrayals of the West End Jewish community in London. These novels examine and critique the authors’ envisaged communities and negotiate the means of spiritual transformation through analyses of the failure of Reform Judaism and the activation of theological discourse centred on the Christian Evangelical notion of the redemptive woman. In this reading of *Reuben Sachs* and *Naomi’s Exodus* I will for the first time connect the works of Levy and Montagu. This will include an examination of their responses to the issues of acculturation and secularization, and their critique of the estrangement of female spirituality and the excessive limits on women’s subjective agency. In the process, we will explore the ways in which they attempted to tackle the late nineteenth-century pressures on Anglo-Judaism to assimilate the religious, predominantly Evangelical, norms of Protestant culture and to address the concerns of a community that was reading the idealistic poetry of the Romantics and the novels of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and, Anthony Trollope.

Lily Montagu, in contrast to Amy Levy, was part of a reformatory organisation—Liberal Judaism—that had proto-feminist aspirations at its very core. It was in a speech at the West London Reform Synagogue on February 1, 1896 that Claude Montefiore envisaged a progressive Liberal Judaism in England. In the new Judaism, to be a “good” Jew was to be a productive citizen and to lead an honest and righteous life. The application of ritual and the traditional observances would be personally subjective and dependent on the individual and their conscience rather than being based on *halakhah* or the *Torah*. Thus, progressive Liberal Judaism would encourage moral conduct and the assimilation of the host culture in the place of Jewish specificity. According to Montagu,

> Judaism is the hallowing of existing ideals, and ideals shift from generation to generation. A religion which rests on conscience is a robust religion, and makes a supreme demand on all human faculties. It claims the highest life from its devotees. The close connection between religion and life is clearly the ideal which all cults emphasise.

In theological terms, individuals were considered not only part of a community, but able to personally commune with the divine whether at home or in the synagogue. Furthermore, Montefiore committed Liberal Judaism to the equalization of the sexes. Montagu took up and developed this theoretical mantle with great earnestness by transforming the daily lives of the Jewish women of her West Central Club and her congregation. Through her affluent upper-class family, connections to the Anglo-Jewish elite, and friendship with Montefiore,

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Montagu could rely on moral, financial, political, and intellectual support. This is not to say that Montagu was unconcerned about money. Indeed, Montagu’s commitment to the Liberal Jewish cause led to estrangement from her strictly Orthodox father. Samuel Montagu warned that his daughter’s inheritance would be forfeited if she continued to promote the religious movement. He was duly ignored. Montagu was more at home with the working-class and socially disadvantaged girls of her Club, as she would later admit: “I learned about many home tragedies, and especially of the tragedy of unfulfilled aspiration. So many of my girls had wanted to be something different, and to achieve certain purposes which seemed to be denied them just through the hardness of circumstances.” Montagu always “felt deeply moved by any effort at social amelioration, especially when based on a definitely religious foundation.”

On the other hand, Amy Levy’s upper-middle-class, acculturated background did not afford her access to Anglo-Jewry’s communal, intellectual, financial, or political leadership. This is despite her father’s friendship with the editor of the Jewish Chronicle which led to her producing a series of essays for the paper. Even given Levy’s association with non-Jewish intellectuals, her research at the British Museum, and her membership of various free-thinking and bohemian clubs, and, as we will see, her disappointment with the conservatism of Anglo-Reformism, she was never part of any organised movement geared towards transforming contemporaneous Judaism. Unlike Lily Montagu, Levy was not a public speaker or confident orator. In fact, Levy possessed, according to a contemporary, a “delicate little Oriental face dreamy.” She was plagued by excessive shyness, as well as a list of medical ailments that included anxiety, depression, neuralgia, deafness, abscesses, and eye infections. In contrast, Montagu was able to overcome an early childhood illness, and a spiritual crisis. She believed herself destined to revitalize traditional Jewish theology, ethics and ritual, and set about reforming and reinvigorating Anglo-Jewry. Montagu would confess in retrospect, “I felt compelled by a strong desire to found a movement to revitalize Judaism and rekindle the ancient lights so that these should cast a glow over the whole of life for all time.” Levy’s activism, if we can call it that, similar to many Anglo-Jewish women writers of the period, was confined to the written word. According to Michael Galchinsky, “Women writers thus used the novel to argue not only for women’s emancipation in the Jewish world, but for Jewish emancipation in the Victorian world.” Furthermore, Levy’s elementary and university education was secular/Christian. Similar to the majority of Jewish women in the period, she was formally prohibited from the study and interpretation of the sacred texts of traditional Judaism and instead reliant on her reading and research at the British Museum. In fact, Levy was potentially more familiar with Christianity and the King James Bible than she was with the rabbinic texts.

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6 Devine, Lily Montagu’s Shekhinah, 2.
9 Katherine Tynan, Memories (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh Press, 1924), 37.
10 Sharona Levy, “Amy Levy: The Woman and Her Writings” (Ph.D. Diss., Oxford University, 1989), 16.
12 Montagu, The Faith, 27.
Conversely, Lily Montagu was educated by the Reverend Simeon Singer, Minister of the New West End Synagogue, and instructed in Christian and Jewish theology by Claude Montefiore, among others. Singer introduced the young Montagu to the Hebrew prophets. They regularly discussed the prophets in depth, as well as the “ideals of Judaism” and how they could be transformed into social service. Montagu was allowed to choose her own course of education which was supplemented by numerous tutors and extensive reading on social philosophy.\(^{15}\) Montagu was blessed with natural oratory skills and was able to draw on the self-belief of divine mission and on the resources of the Anglo-Jewish elite. These resources effectively cushioned her from the realities of anti-Semitism. By comparison, Amy Levy was plagued with self-doubt and confusion regarding her Jewish identity. Indeed, Levy was marginalized by those around her. She would always be a Jew among Christian acquaintances who maintained private anti-Semitic prejudices. But as a childless, unmarried, independent New Woman, she was alienated by the Anglo-Jewish community. Even though religious observance was becoming sporadic, Judaism traditionally places emphasis on marriage and the family. Marriage creates the necessary environment for the fulfilment of the mitzvah of peru urevu, “be fruitful and multiply.” More so, Levy was spiritually alienated by the religious institutions of her day.\(^{16}\) According to Iveta Jusova, Levy was an “Anglo-Jewish, middle-class woman living in the increasingly anti-Semitic London of the 1880s, . . . Levy’s life and work illustrates the ruthless splitting of ‘the outsiders’ from the self-declared privileged insiders.”\(^{17}\) Thus, we can see how Naomi’s Exodus would come to emphasize universalistic perspectives and openness to cultural exchange between Christianity and Judaism, given Montagu’s sheltered childhood. For Levy, however, being educated in Christian society, and the experience of anti-Semitism, however casual, made her sceptical of Jewish emancipation and the extent of acculturation. She would question her own identity, contributing to a critique of Christian literary and theological hegemony in her poetry and a critical account of the Jewish emancipation in Reuben Sachs.\(^{18}\)

Reuben Sachs and Naomi’s Exodus are underpinned by the alienation of women’s spirituality in the synagogue and the limits on women’s subjective and intellectual agency in the community. Both novels are critical analyses of the Anglo-Jewish marital economy, the legalism of traditional Judaism, Anglo-Jewry’s inability to modernize, its cultural philistinism, its slowness to assimilate the religious norms of the host culture, its physical and moral degeneration, and its “oriental” treatment of women. Like Amy Levy, Lily Montagu reserved particular scorn for West End Jews, particularly those with little connection to religion. She would claim in “Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism To-Day” that:

The racial Jew, devoted to self-seeking and ostentation, and arrogant of his race, although destitute of spiritual faith, is indeed deserving of every scorn. His Judaism is not of his own seeking, and he consequently makes no sacrifice to follow it; he cherishes a materialistic ideal, which threatens the highest good of our age.\(^{19}\)

\(^{15}\) Montagu, The Faith, 11.

\(^{16}\) See Devine, From Anglo-First-Wave.

\(^{17}\) Iveta Jusova, The New Woman and the Empire (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 131.


By contrast, Levy had little knowledge of, or contact with, the East End of London. For Levy, Anglo-Reformism was stagnant, but while she was able to outline the dynamics of gender alienation and the necessity of communal transformation, she was not able to translate this into reformative discourse. Instead, Montagu believed her mission predestined and spiritual, even transcendental. She envisaged communal reform and unlike Levy was well-placed to implement it.

The acculturated, upper-middle-class Levy family were members of the recently founded Reform congregation, the West London Synagogue of British Jews, a breakaway congregation of the Bevis Marks Synagogue. Reform Judaism in England was from the outset conservative. The synagogue immediately became an enclave for those well-to-do Anglo-Jews unable or unwilling to accommodate their anglicized lifestyles, including their employment commitments, social habits, and connections with the non-Jewish world, to the religious commitments of Orthodox Judaism. Amy Levy was a child of the political emancipation of Anglo-Jewry that was partially completed in 1858 (it is worth noting that a number of ministerial offices continued to preclude Jews). She was schooled in Christian society, first at the Brighton High School Girls’ Public Day School Trust. She then became the first Jewish woman to attend Newnham College, Cambridge, although for reasons unknown she did not finish her degree. In her own lifetime Levy was a respected author and poet. In 1881 her first poetry anthology, *Xantippe and Other Verse*, was published. In 1884 a second poetry anthology followed and in 1888, along with Reuben Sachs, Levy published *Romance of a Shop*. *Miss Meredith* went into print the following year, along with the final poetry anthology, *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse*. Levy completed the final anthology in the weeks before she committed suicide by charcoal asphyxiation. Throughout her life Levy maintained informal links with many non-Jewish social commentators, writers, and intellectuals. Her friends included Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis, Karl Pearson, Eleanor Marx (the daughter of Karl Marx), Beatrice Webb (née Potter), Dollie Radford, and Olive Schreiner. In her own mind, and in the eyes of her contemporaries, however, Levy was an outsider marked by her Jewish identity. She was a Jewish woman operating in Christian and secular circles that continued to be hostile, even anti-Semitic, whether in public or in private, in their analyses and personal opinions of Anglo-Jews.

*Reuben Sachs* contains various complex strands, subplots, and underlying social Darwinist, Reformist, and proto-feminist perspectives that are open to a number of interpretations. The novel caricatures assimilated Anglo-Jewry’s supposed physical degeneracy and materialist culture. The upper-middle-class Jewish community is portrayed as morally vacuous, culturally backward, and physically repulsive. In describing the West End enclave, the character Leo Leuniger confesses that “we are materialists to our fingers’ ends.” Similarly, Reuben Sachs, the eponymous namesake, reminds that “This is a material age, a materialist country.” In the novel traditional Judaism “is the religion of materialism. The corn and the wine and the oil; the multiplication of the seed; the conquest of the hostile tribes – these have always had more attraction for us than the harp and crown of a spiritualized existence.” Leo laments Anglo-Jewry’s financial avarice:

Ah, look at us. . . where else do you see such eagerness to take advantage; such sickening, hideous greed; such cruel, remorseless striving for power and importance; such ever-active, ever-hungry

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vanity, that must be fed at any cost? Steeped to the lips in sordidness, as we have all been from the cradle, how is it possible that any one among us, by any effort of his own, can wipe off’ from his soul the hereditary stain?21

Leo is convinced that Anglo-Jewry is destined for “disintegration” and “absorption” into the Christian host culture. The community’s moral degeneracy is manifested in its revolting physical traits. Throughout Reuben Sachs the characters are described as “sallow,” “pale,” “lifeless,” “dark,” “wrinkled,” “black eyed,” “black-haired,” and with “yellow” features (4–5, 15, 56, 119, 123, 128, 157, 190). More so, Reuben’s mental and physiological ailments, as well as those of the majority of characters, are a case in point. Indeed, internalising contemporary medical discourses about Jewish susceptibility to nervous diseases, upper-middle-class Anglo-Jewry is figured as overly prone to neurasthenia and hysteria. Reuben’s eventual death is born out of nervous “exhaustion”:

It was a case of over-work, of over-strain, of nervous break-down, said the doctors; no doubt a sea-voyage would set him right again, but he must be careful of himself in the future.

“More than half my nervous patients are recruited from the ranks of the Jews,” said the great physician who Reuben consulted. “You pay the penalty of too high a civilization.” (3)

The exception to Levy’s culture of hereditary degeneration (“the ill-made sons and daughters of Shem”) and the rampant materialism of the community is Judith Quixano, the beautiful heroine, who is of noble Sephardic ancestry. She is intellectually and physically superior to the other acculturated Anglo-Jews of the novel who we are to assume are of Ashkenazi stock (152). The idea of Sephardic racial hegemony was popular throughout Europe at the fin-de-siècle. Judith is descended from “a family of Portuguese merchants, the vieille noblesse of the Jewish community” (32). She possesses unacknowledged love for Reuben, although he is committed to the pursuit of political power that will ultimately lead to his untimely death. This is despite the fact that Reuben “knew by now that he was in love with Judith Quixano” (44). Through a Darwinist perspective the reader is aware that Judith could have redeemed Reuben’s degenerative ancestry. “With her beauty, her health, and her air of breeding, surely she was good enough, and more than good enough, for such a man as Reuben Sachs, his enormous pretensions, and those of his family on his behalf notwithstanding?” (75–76). Instead, Judith succumbs to the materialist impulse that has been enforced by her adopted family. They have little interest in biological concerns.22 Thus, Judith marries a false convert to Judaism who is merely seeking social advancement. The degenerative as well as the regenerative aspects that underpin the novel, according to Nadia Valman, tap into notions of Sephardic hegemony disseminated by Benjamin Disraeli, Grace Aguilar, and Jewish anthropologists who equated the Sephardim with “Aryanism.” For Valman, Levy’s heroine is “a paragon of dignified racial pride and openness to intellectual inquiry and cultural integration.” The doomed romance between Judith and Reuben implies that the progress of civilization subverts the operation of Darwinian natural selection.23

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The anti-materialistic elements of Reuben Sachs are bound up in late nineteenth-century criticisms made by the Anglo-Jewish press and religious leaders that upper-middle-class Judaism was in moral decline due to its unbridled financial avarice.24 According to Todd Endelman, “Most middle-class Jews at the time were not well-educated or inclined to take an interest in art, literature, or science. . . . Among others, the Rev. Simeon singer of the Bayswater Synagogue . . . thought the community was ‘far too much addicted to card-playing as the one unfailing resource to kill the demon of ennui.”25 Indeed, throughout Reuben Sachs the decor reveals the extent of materialist, worldly culture: “plush ottomans, stamped velvet tables, and other Philistine splendours” abound. “The great vulgar, over-decorated room, with its garish lights, its stifling fumes of gas,” and the “old-fashioned splendours of the drawing-room, where card-playing went on” (7, 29, 58) are central. The women are committed to transitory, self-serving pursuits. “Bayswater nodded to Maida Vale, and South Kensington took Bayswater by the hand, . . . love of gossip [could] have free play.” Even more, Reuben Sachs is imbued with acquisitiveness. “From his cradle he had imbibed the creed that it is noble and desirable to have everything better than your neighbour; from the first had been impressed on him the sacred duty of doing the very best for yourself” (71, 126). The novel’s characters are bound by “material advantage; things that you could touch and see and talk about.” This covetousness gradually infects Judith Quixano and becomes the “unspoken gospel” of her life (232). The risk of marrying for money (as is the unfortunate case with Judith) over suitable racial preference was ever present in late nineteenth-century discourse. Revealing reading of Francis Galton and his work on hereditary, Reuben Sachs implies that the imperative of race will become associated with “chief religious obligations.”26

Indeed, in the novel Judith Quixano’s repression is a product not only of the upper-middle-class milieu that suppresses her personal liberty, she is also spiritually estranged by the Reform Judaism of the West London Synagogue. Reflecting Christian Evangelical criticisms of traditional Judaism as legalistic,27 Judith’s congregational observance is characterized by obedience rather than inner-piety:

Judith Quixano went through her devotions upheld by that sense of fitness, of obedience to law and order, which characterized her every action.

But it cannot be said that her religion had any strong hold over her; she accepted it unthinkingly. These prayers, read so diligently, in a language [Hebrew] of which her knowledge was exceedingly imperfect, these reiterated praises of an austere tribal deity, these expressions of a hope whose consummation was neither desired nor expected, what connection could they have with the personal needs, the human longings of this touchingly ignorant and limited creature? (92–93)

When read in the context of contemporaneous Reform Judaism and its conservative approach to the “Woman Question,” the novel reveals Amy Levy’s own dissatisfaction that the proto-feminist proposals of the classical German Reformers had not been enacted by the

24 Valman, The Jewess, 175-76.
Anglo-Reform synagogue. At the Reform Conference of 1845, held in Frankfurt, Germany, Rabbi David Einhorn, who would later become a leader of the Reform movement in the United States, along with Samuel Adler, and A. Adler discussed several radical proposals with regards to the “Woman Question.” These were reprinted in a six point resolution for the 1846 Breslav conference. Einhorn suggested that women could be obligated to perform the time-bound mitzvot reserved for men, that women could form a minyan, that women should be given legal independence in divorce, that the age of religious majority should be thirteen for both sexes, and that the gender exclusionary morning prayer during which the male congregants thank God for not having been made a woman should be abolished. The proposals, however, were never enacted in England. The Anglo-Reformers were merely concerned with making the synagogue accessible to Anglo-Jews and not with wide ranging reforms. In fact, Reform Judaism was a response to Christian Evangelical criticisms of Judaism as ritualistic and devoid of spirituality. Indeed, David Feldman has argued that Christian Evangelicalism was a significant influence on Anglo-Reformism. Similarly, Daniel Langton contends that the charge of the “Christianisation” of Reform Judaism is a convincing one.

Reform Judaism in England was the product of an exclusive elite. The social background of the Reformers who instituted the West London Reform Synagogue was made up, in the main, of Anglo-Jewry’s upper-class aristocracy. The congregants were predominantly professionals or rich business men living in the fashionable West End. This close-knit elite was bound together by intertwined business and family connections. The twenty members of the Bevis Marks congregation who signed up for the initial reforms included ten from the Mocatta family, two from the Henriques family, three from the Montefiore family, and three from the Goldsmids. The West London Synagogue had a distinctly upper and upper-middle-class character and the price of seats, as in the Orthodox community, was enough to exclude even the middle-classes. In Reuben Sachs, it is only “old” Solomon who is interested in the prayers; the other characters are not spiritually affected. Similarly, Montague Cohen “belonged to that rapidly dwindling section of the Community which attaches importance to the observation of the Mosaic and Rabbinical laws in various minute points”:

He was proud, Heaven knows why, of his personal appearance, his mental qualities, and his sex; this last to an even greater extent than most men of his race, with whom pride of sex is a characteristic quality.

“Blessed art Thou O Lord my God, who hast not made me a woman.”

No prayer goes up from the synagogue with greater fervour than this. (48–49, 108, 110)

In the novel, Levy describes the Day of Atonement, or “Fast Day,” with a sense of irony as many of the congregants have breakfasted. It is only “public opinion” that forces “lax” Anglo-Jews to attend the Reform Synagogue on Upper Berkeley Street, with its “simplified service, the beautiful music, and other innovations” (86-88) brought about merely to bring

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the Reform congregation in line with Protestant styles of worship. Esther Kohnthal, who refuses to attend synagogue, reveals her own spiritual alienation (internalising the sexist morning benediction): “When I was a little girl, . . . a little girl of eight years old, I wrote in my prayer-book: ‘Cursed art Thou, O Lord my God, Who hast had the cruelty to make me a woman.’ And I have gone on saying that prayer all my life – the only one” (193). Alternatively, those congregants with traditionalist backgrounds arouse resentment, as is the case with Adelaide Sachs and the “dreadful” Samuel Sachses who are deemed “a remarkable survival” (85). In fact, Anglo-Reformism, with its conservative modifications, was little different to the traditional congregation that had also responded to the influence and critique levelled by the Christian Evangelicals against Judaism. According to Stephen Sharot reforms and innovations by the Orthodox synagogues actually made the denominations more alike. The *Jewish Chronicle* observed that there was little to differentiate the leadership of either camp as they acted in unison for the Board of Guardians, the Board of Deputies, and the Jewish Religious Education Board. Reform and Orthodox members attended each other’s synagogues for ceremonies and ministers performed the same roles and maintained virtually the same beliefs.  

Moreover, the Orthodox synagogues, like the Reform congregations, took on the Church model. Synagogues became larger, rabbis dressed like Christian clergy, congregations introduced choirs, there were sermons in English rather than in Hebrew, elaborate pulpits, and the use of quintessentially Protestant titles such as warden, guardian, reverend, and vestry were introduced. The leadership of both denominations was made up of the Anglo-Jewish elite who continued to maintain close social ties. Significantly, the Reform prayer book included only minor alterations and the wearing of prayer shawls and phylacteries continued. Certainly, in the 1880s and 1890s Reform Judaism was unable to generate any sizable defection from the Orthodox community. No other Reform congregations were founded in London at the time. As David Feldman notes, “In all but their decision to dispense with some customary holidays, the doctrinal innovations of Reform Judaism in Britain were notably moderate.”

As we have seen, Amy Levy’s *Reuben Sachs* portrays West End Anglo-Jewry as a materialist, culturally retrogressive society that denies women intellectual and spiritual subjectivity. The community is in moral and physical decline and is even on the brink of social absorption into the host culture. Levy’s response to the Evangelical critique of Judaism is framed around the inability of contemporaneous Anglo-Reform Judaism to implement the radical proposals of classical Reformism. Specifically, Anglo-Jewry’s deterioration is linked to its secularisation and the eradication of the vital binding and guiding force of traditional Judaism. In the absence of “meaningful” religious experience a perceived spiritual void had been created that would eventually be filled by Lily Montagu’s Liberal Judaism.

Indeed, as Amy Levy was alienated by the Reform Judaism of the period, Lily Montagu was equally spiritually and intellectually estranged by the Orthodox community of her childhood and the strict upbringing, even given their upper-class, affluent status, enforced by her traditionalist father. Montagu was never convinced of the spiritual validity of the traditional ritual in either the Reform or Orthodox communities. She enjoyed the festivals

and the observances but they seemed legalistic – ritual for ritual’s sake – rather than being spiritualistic or promoting inner sanctity (kavannah). In fact, Montagu could not relate any type of spiritual experience with the Orthodox liturgy, synagogue, or the meagre commandments assigned to women (nerot, challah, and niddah). She was distraught that traditional Judaism had not given Jewish women roles applicable to their Evangelical defined status as moral and spiritual redeemers. Following a spiritual crisis, Montagu became an activist, social worker, and theologian. She was the author of numerous monographs, essays, novels, sermons, liturgies, and letters for the Liberal Jewish Monthly, the Jewish Quarterly Review, and as part of the Papers for Jewish People series. Montagu also held lectures, made numerous speeches, delivered prayers, and led synagogue services. This is not to say that Claude Montefiore did not theorize the philosophical, theological, and intellectual underpinnings of the movement. Rather, it was Montagu who initiated its inception when she began the process of sounding out supporters among the Anglo-Jewish social and religious elite. Indeed, Montagu recalled that it was Montefiore who agreed to help her in the pursuit of her “big adventure.”

Naomi’s Exodus contains autobiographical elements and tells the fictional story of Naomi Saul who is a young Jewish girl estranged, as Lily Montagu was, by the legalism of traditional ritual. The novel, similar to Reuben Sachs, internalizes the contemporaneous Evangelical cult of true womanhood that invests women with moral and spiritual qualities that are best applied in the service of others, domestically, and through volunteer philanthropy. In the mid-Victorian period, the Protestant emphasis on women’s inherent domestic virtues was transformed into the cult of domesticity. Indeed, women were thought to endow the home with spiritual and transcendental qualities. The late nineteenth-century cult of true womanhood was a product of, but in line with, the ideology of separate spheres (the division of the domestic and public spheres according to gender with women assigned to the home). Contemporaneous Christian Evangelicalism idealised women who, through their natural attributes of moral purity, tolerance, kindness, tenderness, and compassion, could as ethical protectors and being themselves protected usher in the moral regeneration of society. According to Olive Banks the cult of true womanhood, the idea of female superiority and the “feminization of religion” became widely endorsed concepts by the fin-de-siècle. Banks argues that “The cult of domesticity became transformed into the ideal of female superiority, and the doctrine of separate spheres into the attempted invasion of the masculine world not simply by women, but, potentially even more revolutionary in its impact, by womanly values.” These ideas penetrated the Anglo-Jewish community. Indeed, Naomi is an ethical and regenerative paradigm not necessarily for religious reform per se, but for the infusion of traditional ritual with inner-piety, renewed spirituality, and contemporary relevance. In the novel, Naomi, who like Montagu experiences a type of spiritual crisis of faith, embarks on a

37 The “feminization” of religion refers to the growing number of women participating in Christian ritual and Church activities, as well as the compassionate emphasis on the forgiveness of a loving God in comparison to the idea of an all embracing judge. In the Jewish community also, particularly in the Reform Synagogue, women often outnumbered the male worshippers.
39 Devine, Lily Montagu’s Shekhinah, 31–32.
redemptive journey and in the process learns to understand and appreciate the nature of “true” universal religion. Naomi is invigorated by her spiritual association with the ancestral faith and the ties of inherited memory:

Naomi had behind her the racial pride of her ancestors. The persistent, dogged tenacity with which they [Jews] had clung to their religious inheritance, even deifying its casings in their passionate zeal; the fiery jealousy with which they had cherished their isolation among all the peoples of the earth; these seemed suddenly to make their influence felt on the girl. She had been born a Jewess, and no spiritual yearnings, no discontent, no remorse could rob her of this birthright. Even though she had no understanding of the ancient religion, in spite of all her recent self-questionings and misgivings, a passionate devotion of Judaism was indelibly stamped in her blood. It only required her aunt’s question, expressed as it was with suspicion and apprehension, to fill her heart with intense anger that her loyalty had been challenged. Yet mingled with this anger was a feeling of acute pain, for Naomi had suddenly become conscious that in this home, which was so dear to her, she could never again be happy.\(^{40}\)

Following her spiritual journey of awakening, Naomi is able to return to the rigidly Orthodox house of her aunt who “fully appreciated the righteousness of her rigidly orthodox life and relished the comfortable certainty that it had brought her prosperity” (x). Naomi is now able to enjoy the Shabbat celebrations with renewed appreciation for their inner sanctity:

There was the high dresser, with its rows of plates and dishes shining as brightly as they did on that Sabbath eve – now so far distant – when Jacob had come to celebrate the anniversary of their engagement. But the prosaic application of hot water could never have given them the splendour with which to Naomi’s tired eyes they seemed endowed on this evening of her home-coming. The familiar Sabbath candles, too, appeared strangely unfamiliar to-night. The glow which they threw on the spotless tablecloth, seemed possessed with a mysterious sanctity which Naomi had never noticed before. (190–91)

It is the unthinking nature of contemporaneous religion that requires reinvigorating with renewed spiritual impetus. Moreover, through personal communion with God, Naomi comes to understand (as per Liberal theology) that the divine can be experienced in everyday life and that personal faith is compatible with modern daily living.

Naomi Saul’s spiritual crisis enables her to develop a personally subjective and immanent relationship with the deity through which she is able to call out to the divine in pious moments of need:

“Oh God, what shall I do? Oh, God, help me”!

That was the first prayer Naomi Saul had ever made.

Almost immediately her troubled spirit seemed somewhat soothed. The tension on her feelings was relieved as she gave herself up to the Power not herself of which she was becoming conscious. She lay for a whole hour, half waking, half-sleeping, in communion with her God. (26)

Naomi is at first uncomfortable with personal and private communion, but later in the novel is able to renew her plea for cosmic direction that will unearth “[t]he purity of her soul, the strength of its nobility”:

After a time her head leaned up against the iron leg of the bedstead, and her lips murmured, “God! God! What shall I do – God”?\(^40\)

\(^{40}\) Lily Montagu, *Naomi’s Exodus* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), 40–41. Subsequent citations will be given in text.
The prayer was spoken in utter exhaustion of spirit; the soul realized its weakness, and could no longer find rest within itself. It threw itself on the God without for help in its sore need. And the help was given. Naomi was much too tired to know how she reasoned, or whether she reasoned at all. It seemed as if she snatched from the inmost depths of her being the love, faith and hope which she had planted there for Clement, and with that cry to God threw them at His feet. And He accepted them. (162, 207)

Naomi is a young woman upset and confused by the breakup of her relationship with Clement Marks. Lily Montagu perhaps envisages Clement as Claude Montefiore. Indeed, Naomi “dared to love this great clever man, and since his indifference could not stifle her feeling, it should, at least, not disgrace him” (189). But it is “the God of love Who gave this girl the power of loving, even while He withdrew the human object of her love, came into her heart and gave her courage” (165). It is this immanence that would become central to Liberal Judaism. “The God to Whom she had appealed in her terrible loneliness, . . . that God in His infinite pity had led her into communion with Him. Yes, happiness meant free development, and striving towards God she would grow in godliness” (196). With the completion of Naomi’s spiritual journey we are told that “the child had gone forever, and in her stead had come a young woman, wise and gentle” (195).

Naomi Saul’s home is a “little Ghetto shop,” but the implication is that they do not live in the “East” of the city (12, 196). Lily Montagu is envisaging the recent immigrants. Naomi is one of them; her mother died in Poland (xii). As a religious minister and social worker, Montagu welcomed the new arrivals to her West Central Jewish Girls’ Club and defended the immigrants’ rights to the press by appealing to England’s “passion for liberty.” Indeed, Montagu began social work in the early 1890s. She was acutely aware of the social and religious differences between the East and West Ends of Anglo-Jewish London:

The “East End Jew,” whose religion is vigorous in spite of its deformities, has no confidence in the shadowy faith of the “West End Jew,” and refuses to be taught by “West End” methods. Examining this distrust, I find that it arises from the recognition of the dissimilarity in the two religions. The “East End Jew” is determined to follow the worship of his fathers, and spurns the flaccid religion of his “West End” brothers. To the pious “East End Jew” religion is obedience glorified into a cult; for him, God exists as a just Law-giver, ready to forgive and help those who obey the Law, delivered by him to his people through his servant Moses, and having misfortune and failure in reserve for the rebellious and indifferent.

Echoing Amy Levy, Montagu was convinced that the West End Jews were not spiritually motivated. Instead, they were merely affiliated to a Jewish denomination because it was considered respectable in non-Jewish society. These religionists were concerned with the length of the service rather than its sanctity as Judaism had no influence over their daily lives. According to Montagu, these Anglo-Jews either deteriorate into “materialism” or instigate religious understandings of their own choosing (a criticism of the interpretive/subjective nature of Reform theology). Their religiosity is about personal convenience even though they may imagine a “revived and ennobling Judaism.”

41 Devine, Lily Montagu’s Shekhinah, 60, 63.
Lily Montagu, like Amy Levy, was critical of alleged Anglo-Jewish cultural philistinism and ineptitude, insularity, and tribalism. Naomi Saul’s community, similar to Levy’s upper-middle-class enclave, is inward-looking and narrow-minded. Mrs Saul, Naomi’s aunt, in her ignorance, is wrongly convinced that she has converted. She threatens, “I tell you that Schickes have got hold of our Naomi and are leading her by the nose, and if you don’t put a stop to this business I will!” Mrs Saul is convinced that Naomi is lost forever: “my Naomi is never – never a Meshummadás, is she?” Moreover, Naomi is ashamed of the showiness, materialism, and even vulgarity of her companions. She is loath to be associated with them:

For the first time Naomi was ashamed of her companions. She had not before noticed that the men’s dress was shabby, that the girls’ hats were objectionable, that they had all been talking much too loudly and attracting a great deal of vulgar attention. . . . That young lady was enjoying herself immensely. She was dressed in a tailor-made costume, with gold buttons. She wore white shoes and stockings, and a large hat with feathers decorated her hair, which was loosely dressed about her ears. (18–19)

The group of friends move quickly through the palace and its gallery as the “pictures bored them.” What is more, the novel is underpinned, similar to Reuben Sachs, by the lack of agency assigned to women. Naomi is subject to her suitor, Jacob Mann, who is able to castigate her as he sees fit. The merest of insubordination results in his ire. He warns, “You’ve made a fool of me, young lady. You’d better look out” (20–21). But the novel is primarily concerned with the universality of “true” religion. From the outset (and to the finish) Naomi’s Exodus focuses on Orthodox attention to ritual and observance over and above inner-piety. The anti-ritualism perspective is Evangelical influenced and sets up a contrast with the openness to cultural exchange through which Naomi maintains a friendship with the Christian, Mrs Finch. In the opening scene, we read of Mrs Saul’s close attention to ritual:

The kitchen at the back of a small chandler’s shop in a Jewish quarter of West London was decked in all its Sabbath-eye brightness. The row of plates, cups, saucers and dishes (specially preserved on the high dresser outside the region of breadcrumbs from one Passover season to the next) had an almost aggressively shining appearance. The table was spread with a spotlessly white cloth and burdened with cold fried fish, sliced Dutch herring, coffee, and bread and butter. Two candles stood on the table, and Mrs Saul, mumbling a Hebrew blessing, was applying a match to light them. (ix)

Conversely, Naomi’s friendship with Mrs Finch suggests universality, culture, the aesthetical, philanthropic responsibility, and religious awakening (8) in contrast to the legalism and particularity of traditional Judaism. Naomi is inspired and will eventually take up social service by becoming a nurse: “Yes, happiness meant service . . . Having once realised the existence of God within and without her, she would never again lose him. She would find Him in the ritual customs of her people, in the small duties of her daily life, in her neighbours, in the world around her” (196–97). The close of the novel reveals Naomi’s reengagement with the tradition and her ability to take up personal prayer with infused kavannah.

As we have seen, Lily Montagu’s novel idealises Naomi Saul (resonant of Judith Quixano) and her potential to redeem while castigating the community, comparable to Amy Levy in her analysis of upper-middle-class Anglo-Jewry. Like Levy’s Reuben Sachs, and its envisioning of West End Jews, there is longing for reconnection. Indeed, Naomi eventually returns to the Orthodox home of her aunt, and Judith, who is in exile married to the convert Bertie.
Lee-Harrison, laments “Her people – oh, her people! – to be back once more among them! When all was said, she had been so happy there” (258). Both novels have in varying dimensions redemptive conclusions. Naomi is able to appreciate the sanctity and necessity of traditional ritual and prayer and the necessity of faith in daily life, while Judith is pregnant and her child will be Jewish:

The ways of joy and the ways of sorrow are many; and hidden away in the depths of Judith’s life – though as yet she knows it not – is the germ of another life, which shall quicken, grow, and come forth at last. Shall bring with it no doubt, pain and sorrow, and tears; but shall bring also hope and joy, and the quickening of purpose. (266–67)

In sum, both Reuben Sachs and Naomi’s Exodus respond to the needs of a society more and more equating morality with spiritual, emotional, and sentimental feelings. The impact of Christian Evangelicalism is evident. The adoption of Reform Judaism, and its failure, was perceived by some Evangelicals as a step towards the embracing of Christianity. Montagu and Levy intended their novels to respond to the impending “threat.” Levy did so through a critical account of Reform Judaism and its alleged fostering of materialist culture. Montagu expanded on Claude Montefiore’s theology of Liberal Judaism while at the same time elucidating similar criticisms of acculturated, West End Anglo-Jewry. Moreover, she adopts the language of Christian Evangelicalism and notions of Christian universality to demonstrate that Anglo-Jews can also be spiritual and progressive without having to convert. The heroines of these novels fulfill Evangelical notions of spiritual regeneration and female superiority. In different ways they express spiritual alienation and its remedies. When read alongside Montagu’s novel, Levy’s critique of Reform Judaism seems prophetic. Unfortunately, however, Levy had already committed suicide prior to the onset of Liberal Judaism in England.

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ABSTRACT: On 9 May 1945 the unconditional surrender of Germany signified the end of World War II in Europe. One of the greatest challenges faced by the international community was the fate of the refugees, those people who for various reasons could not or did not want to return to their pre-war homeland. An especially significant place within this category was taken by the Holocaust survivors – the last remnants of the ten million strong pre-war Eastern and Central European Jewish community. The relief effort undertaken in helping this group, by mid-1947 numbering around 250,000 people, was a task of unprecedented scale and difficulty. Among the challenges of that time, the education of children and adolescents was of particular importance. Military authorities, non-governmental organizations (both Jewish and non-Jewish) and finally the survivors, all devoted themselves to helping those who lost their childhood and youth in concentration camps, forced labour and in hiding. This article will discuss this issue through the case-study of the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training (ORT) and its undertakings among Jewish refugees in Great Britain.

ORT was set up in Russia in St. Petersburg in 1880 as the Society for the Promotion of Trades and Agriculture among the Jews in Russia, a philanthropic organization designed to assist Jewish artisans, workers and cooperatives, by providing them with cheap credit and establishing vocational schools.1 After World War I, ORT expanded into Eastern Central Europe, France and Germany and by the mid-1930s, despite growing anti-Jewish legislations, organized a comprehensive network of trade schools responding to the needs of the Jewish community. The British branch of ORT, set up in 1921, focused for the first years of its existence on fundraising and propaganda. This situation changed abruptly on 29 August 1939, two days before the outbreak of World War II as 104 teenage students and seven teachers from the ORT school in Berlin left Charlottenburg Station on a train heading for London.

The school in Berlin (Private jüdische Lehranstalt für handwerkliche und gewerbliche Ausbildung auswanderungswilliger Juden der ORT Berlin), located at Siemensstrasse 15, was one of ORT’s most significant undertakings in the interwar period and a major centre offering vocational training to Jewish youth.2 The school was opened in 1937 as an answer to

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1 On the history of ORT see Leon Shapiro, The History of ORT: A Jewish Movement for Social Change (New York: Schocken Books, 1980) and Jack Rader, By the Skill of Their Hands (Geneva: World ORT, 1970). I would like to thank Rachel Bracha and colleagues from the World ORT Archive in London for their help with gathering material for this article.

2 For more on the ORT school in Berlin, see Monica Lowenberg, “The Education of the Cologne Jawne Gymnasium Children and the Berlin ORT School Boys in Germany and England”, German-speaking Exiles in Great
the rapidly escalating anti-Semitic Nazi policy limiting educational opportunities for young German Jews.\(^3\) The Nazi authorities allowed for it to open on the understanding that it would train only Jews who were planning to emigrate, and could confirm that, in order to safeguard its equipment from confiscation, all machinery and tools used in the school officially would belong to the British ORT. Under the protection of the British Government the school remained the only Jewish institution which functioned unaffected by the Kristallnacht, and indeed by late 1938 had enrolled 215 students, offering 3-year courses to adolescents aged 15 to 17 and 18-month training courses to adult students. Yet with the persecution intensifying and the spectre of war looming on the horizon, the leadership of the school decided to ensure the safety of the students by relocating to Great Britain. After negotiations with the British Ministry for Labour and the Home Office, as well as the Gestapo, it was agreed to move the school, together with all its equipment, to Leeds. The transfer, carried out by Colonel J.H. Levey of British ORT, was prepared by ORT together with OSE (Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants – the Organization to Save the Children). As already mentioned, the first group of students (without the equipment, which at the last moment was confiscated by the Nazis) left Berlin on 29 August. The second group, headed by the director of the school, Werner Simon, was scheduled to leave on 3 September 1939. Neither Simon, nor the boys, ever made it out of Berlin. Almost all of them were later murdered in the Holocaust.

The 104 teenage boys who reached London on the outbreak of the war could not have anticipated the fate that awaited their families left behind in Germany. Most of those who were in the transport recalled their relocation as a great adventure. It is clear however that parents saying their goodbyes at the station and those who welcomed them in Great Britain were fully aware of the gravity of the situation and, as one of the boys remembered, the group was met in London by weeping Jewish women from the East End.\(^4\) As the school in Leeds was not yet prepared for their reception, the boys and their teachers were first accommodated in the Kitchener reception camp at Sandwich, Kent, which housed about 4,000 German and Austrian refugees. Already in November, however, the first group was transferred to Leeds. ORT’s leaflet ‘From Despair to Hope: A Constructive Form of Help’, devoted to the work of the Technical Engineering School in Leeds, recalled its beginnings:

A technical school should first be planned and then constructed. In the case of the ORT school there was no time, no money, and no material available for such a project. After a long and arduous search, the most suitable building that could be found, with a floor area of about 12,000 square feet, was rented. It is situated about a mile from the residential hostels. Tools, equipment, and machinery were purchased, and the students, under the guidance of the instructors (all from Berlin), installed the machinery, connected it with the electric power supply, and made all fittings possible in the workshop of the school. The students of the plumbing and sanitary section of the school erected lavatories, wash-houses etc., and within a short time the school was at work.\(^5\)

\(^3\) For more on this, see Solomon Colodner, *Jewish Education in Germany under the Nazis* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1964).


The school began functioning full time in December 1939. It was divided into five
departments: (1) Welding, Turning and Fitting, (2) Sanitary Engineering, (3) Electrical
Engineering, (4) Mechanical Engineering, (5) Carpentry and Joinery. There was also a
market-gardening section, which organized six-month courses under the supervision of an
agricultural director from Palestine. All lessons in school were to be conducted in English,
even though, as one of the students remarked on leaving the school, ‘as the Masters are
really too busy and old, they cannot be expected to pick up the language as easily as young
people.’ One day of the five day school week was allotted to theoretical classes in
mathematics and science. More advanced students also attended classes in the Leeds School
of Technology.

Students who arrived from Berlin, referred to as the ‘old boys’, continued the studies
which they had begun in Germany, but in time the school also began admitting new students,
both girls and boys, aged fifteen to eighteen. These were mainly teenage refugees from
Eastern and Central Europe who arrived as part of the Kindertransport. The majority of
students resided in one of five hostels in the school vicinity, each housing 25 to 30 students
and staff members of the school. In charge of each hostel was a hostel master responsible
for the discipline and conduct of the students. There were two to six students in each room
sleeping on bunk beds, with a room leader responsible for rules and regulations being carried
out. The school was run by its director, Colonel Levey, with military precision. Students
woke up at 6.00 am (6.30 in the winter), and classes lasted from 8.30 am till 12.30 pm and
again from 1.30 pm till 4.00 pm. All students had to be back in their rooms by 10.00 pm.
Most equipment in the school was constructed by the students, who also did all the
redecoration in the building and took turns cleaning the school premises on Sunday
mornings.

The school had a decidedly Jewish character. It was closed on all Jewish holidays and on
Sabbath and all food served was strictly kosher. However, as the ORT booklet made clear,
the institution was ‘a Technical School and not a religious educational establishment’[6] and
students were free to carry out whatever religious observance they wished. Attendance in the
synagogue was not compulsory and while students were able to participate in Jewish
education classes, these were also not compulsory. There was no religious instruction held in
the hostels. At the same time, the small group of Orthodox students from among the school
community was given full support in religious observance and allowed to build a small
synagogue on the school’s premises.[7]

There is no doubt that the leadership of the school placed great importance on the well-
being of the students. Students were provided with facilities to practice indoor and outdoor
sports; there was a student theatre, orchestra and a choir, a study circle and a debating

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[7] The transfer of refugee Jewish children from Nazi Germany and German-annexed territories to Great Britain
between 1938 and 1940 (the Kindertransport) has recently been a subject of numerous monographs. For a general
account, see Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, Into the Arms of the Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport
(London: Bloomsbury, 2000). See also Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies 23:1 [Special Issue:
society. Lectures and concerts were also arranged ‘as far as war conditions permitted.’ Yet, even with the best will and dedication of ORT teachers and counsellors, not all problems faced by young refugees could be solved.

The main issue troubling boys in Leeds was the fate of their families left behind in Germany. Some reflection of their experiences can be found in a collection of letters from former students published by ORT in 1942, where one boy remarks that ‘for the first time since I left Austria, I was able to feel and enjoy the comforts of a real home,’ while another refers to a female ORT employee treating the boys ‘like a mother.’ The boys were allowed to send one letter a month to their real families, but with the progress of the war even such communication became impossible. One of the boys recalled: ‘Communication with our parents became very scarce and difficult. We wrote via the Red Cross or through relatives in the U.S.A. or South America. [...] I think it was only after four or six months that we missed our parents very badly, but as war developed in earnest we had to tell ourselves that millions of others were in no better position.’

The boys in Leeds were also seriously affected by the way that the Anglo-Jewish organizations perceived the attitude towards refugees prevalent in British society at the time, especially towards those from German-speaking countries. In each room of every hostel students could find a printed copy of rules and regulations prepared by the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the German Jewish Aid Committee, which they were to follow or else face immediate expulsion from the school. A copy of these rules, preserved in the ORT Archive, reveals the everyday reality of life for Jewish refugees in wartime Great Britain. Students were above all encouraged to avoid any actions that might stir anti-refugee emotions from both the authorities and the wider population of the city. Boys were informed: ‘DO NOTHING at any time to arouse the slightest hostility, and do not attract attention. [...] Never speak German in the streets, so that you can be heard. Try not to speak German at all if you can help it, and if any speak very quietly. [...] Do not have any conversations in trains, cars, or buses. Do not, at any time in the streets, discuss the war situation.’ The rules underlined that Britain was not to be perceived as a place of permanent settlement and that students were to consider themselves to be temporary guests in Leeds.

After arrival the boys automatically became ‘enemy aliens’ – refugees from states with which Britain was at war – and as such were examined by the Aliens Tribunal set up at the outbreak of the war. Even though, like the vast majority of the 78,000 refugees screened, they were categorized as no threat to the state, the boys were reminded in the opening paragraph of the rules and regulations: ‘Although you have all passed the Tribunal, you are, in the eyes of the Leeds Christian people, members of an enemy country at war with

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16 WOA D04a010, Futter, *Memories of ORT Old Boys*.
18 WOA D07a154b, *Regulations of the Leeds ORT Technical and Engineering School*. 
England.’ The situation deteriorated further in the spring of 1940, when, in the panic following the invasion of France, Winston Churchill ordered the mass internment of all refugees. Among the wider society the fear of potential spies – ‘fifth columnists’ and the ‘enemy in our midst’ – bordered on mass hysteria. By June 1940 around 27,000 refugees had been detained. 7,000 were shipped off to camps in remote areas of Canada and Australia, among them about 40 boys from the ORT school in Leeds, some of whom lost their lives after SS ‘Arandora Star’, heading for Canada with a transport of German and Italian internees, was sunk by a German U-boat on 2 July 1940. Even boys who were not interned still had to comply with the ‘limited internment measures’, which, after May 1940, were to be applied to enemy aliens between the ages of 16 and 70. For example, students over 16 had to report to the Leeds Police for permission to change their address.

As a large portion of the school maintenance was paid by the American Joint Distribution Committee, the school in Leeds lost its funding after the United States entered the war in 1941 and as a result was closed down. Those of the boys who were already trained found jobs and while some were interned as enemy aliens, others went on to serve in the British armed forces, and fought with them in the later stages of the war.

We do not know how much information about the events that were taking place in Europe at the time reached the boys who were training in Leeds. There is no doubt, however, that the school’s leadership had a relatively clear picture of the Holocaust since, alongside other relief and welfare organizations, ORT’s activists continued their work in the Jewish communities after the outbreak of the war. The school in Berlin functioned until 10 June 1943, when SS squads occupied its premises and ordered the deportation of almost all students to Auschwitz. The school’s director, Werner Simon, who masterminded the relocation of the boys to Leeds, was deported to Theresienstadt, and from there to Auschwitz in October 1944, where he was murdered. ORT courses were also being conducted in a number of Eastern European ghettos. The two ghettos where ORT was the most active were Warsaw in Poland and Kovno in Lithuania, where they contributed to the idea of ‘rescue through work’ – that is utilizing work projects to make as many Jews as possible indispensable to the German war economy, thus delaying the destruction of the ghettos. The workshops in Warsaw continued to work until 4.00 pm on 18 April 1943, the last day before the heroic but doomed Warsaw Ghetto Uprising started, and the ghetto ceased to exist. Simultaneously, ORT courses for refugees were being established in the countries where Jews were forced to flee: in the internment camps in France and among Jewish refugees in Switzerland, Shanghai, Cuba and New York.

The second phase of British ORT’s work with Jewish refugees began at the end of World War II with vocational courses, which were organized in Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Straight after liberation, a handful of veteran ORT workers

20 WOA D10a020, ‘The ORT and OSE’, 7
21 For more on ORT’s wartime work, see Rader, By the Still of Their Hands, 50–64.
who were in the camp at Landsberg, near Dachau, established the first vocational course in the American occupational zone of Germany. In December 1945, the first training centre in the British Zone was instituted at Bergen-Belsen by another group of former ORT instructors. Machines and equipment were brought in. Hundreds of instructors were recruited from among surviving ORT personnel, DP engineers, educators and craftsmen. Classes and workshops were set up wherever there were groups of survivors and by the end of 1947 ORT had become a network of over 700 courses located in the DP camps of Europe. 22,620 people were enrolled that year, almost one-tenth of the DP population of the time. 934 teachers taught more than fifty trades, including metal machining, shoemaking and carpentry – traditional Jewish trades – but also automobile motor repairing, dental mechanics, millinery designing, typesetting, gold-smithing, watch repairing and such relatively complex fields as optics and surveying. ORT’s work was also conducted among survivors outside DP camps, both in Eastern and Western Europe. In Great Britain ORT ran three projects: a training farm, a training ship where maritime classes were conducted, and a trade school in London.

The first project, ORT’s training farm, was set up in October 1946 in Bedfordshire. It followed the organizational framework of agricultural training farms (Hachsharot), usually associated with socialist Zionist youth groups and provided vocational training aimed directly at preparation for emigration and the establishment of kibbutzim in Palestine.23 Their goal was to create the first generation of Jewish farmers who would be ready to prepare Palestine for settlement. The Goldington ORT centre was established in association with a Zionist group Hechalutz B’Anglia and provided practical training in general farming, poultry keeping and market-gardening. Set up within the farm was also an ORT workshop where students learned to do their own repairs of farming equipment. The training course lasted two years, and due to limited facilities was based on the premise of short, three to four month courses, enabling pupils to get training in various branches of agriculture. The practical course was supplemented by nine hours of theoretical classes a week and additional lectures in general science. There is no doubt that as in similar establishments in DP camps, the educational task was taken very seriously. Students attended various extra-curricular classes and lectures. For example, towards the end of 1947 they had a lecture organized for them at the Institute of Animal Pathology at Cambridge University.24 Aside from vocational training, all students at Goldington received classes in general topics, with a clear focus on Jewish studies. The curriculum included English and Hebrew language, mathematics, general science, Jewish history and, according to ORT materials, ‘such cultural activities as Oneg Shabath, discussions of current affairs, music lessons, excursions, social gatherings etc.’25 ORT’s undertaking in Goldington was strongly influenced by the fact that, unlike the Leeds boys, the youth in Goldington came from a wide variety of backgrounds, both in terms of previous education as well as wartime experiences. Among them were both Nazi camp survivors, youth who arrived in Great Britain as part of the Kindertransport and young British Jews.26 Their schooling was therefore a very complex undertaking, often

23 For more on such training see, for example, Yehudit Baumel, *Kibbutz Buchenwald: Survivors and Pioneers* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
24 WOA D07236, ORT Weekly Summary II:5, 2.
25 WOA D07236, ORT Weekly Summary I:38, 5.
26 See, for example, the story of David Jedwab from the Kindertransport, in Susan Kleinman and Chana Moshenska, “Class as a Factor in the Social Adaptation of the Kindertransport Kinder”, *Shofar* 23:1 (2004), 28–40.
slowed down by students’ language difficulties as well as a shortage of contract work and material.27

As of December 1947, there were seventeen pupils enrolled in Goldington: six training in mechanics and eleven in agriculture.28 Twenty-three others who were preparing to resettle to Palestine did not attend regular classes, but only received partial training and were engaged in work, both in and outside the centre. As groups of students left they were immediately replaced with new trainees. As a result in 1947 alone, altogether six students were trained in poultry farming, three in cow-shed maintenance, two in rabbit rearing, four in gardening, five on the tractor and agricultural machines, three on the truck, twelve in the fields and agricultural machines and three in administration and management.29 Six ORT employees ran classes: five instructors and one supervisor.30

Another form of training aimed directly at preparing students for future life in Palestine was training young men for careers as merchant navy officers and navigators. ORT’s Marine Training Scheme was set up in agreement with its subsidiary, the Jewish Marine League, in 1946 with the aim of supplying the growing merchant army of the Yishuv (the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine under the British mandate) with qualified sea officers. Training Scheme was set up in agreement with its subsidiary, the Jewish Marine League, in 1946 with the aim of supplying the growing merchant army of the Yishuv (the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine under the British mandate) with qualified sea officers. T[training] S[hip] ‘Joseph Hertz’, the ship used for the training scheme, was built in 1920 as a destroyer and was originally called ‘The Cutty Sark’. Between 1925 and 1939 it belonged to the Duke of Westminster and served as a ‘Floating Gin Palace’. During World War II it was taken over by the Royal Navy and employed first as an anti-submarine vessel and later as a submarine escort out of the Holy Loch base. After the war, the ship was acquired by ORT, and converted into a training ship capable of accommodating sixty boys. It was renamed the ‘Joseph Hertz’, in memory of the chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth between 1913 and 1946 and moored off Grays, Essex. Describing the training on board the ‘Joseph Hertz’, ORT Chronicle reported:

The director of the school and commanding officer of the ‘Joseph Hertz’ is Captain N.F. Israel D.S.C., who has made several cruises around the world and who distinguished himself in the last war in the Pacific and the Battle of the Atlantic as well as in the invasion of Europe. Lately, the boat went on a rather extensive voyage in the course of which the pupils proved themselves fit for all the hardships of a sailor’s and diver’s life and observed the strictest discipline.31

Most of the students on the TS ‘Joseph Hertz’ were aged sixteen to eighteen. They were all displaced persons, mainly concentration and labour camps survivors. The first intake of twenty-one boys included seventeen former inmates of the Bergen-Belsen. During their training the boys wore Royal Navy uniforms with a Star of David badge attached to their sleeves. The scheme proved highly successful and a number of qualified officers were trained on board. Many of them ultimately left for Israel where they served both in the merchant navy and later in the newly created Israeli navy.

The third undertaking, the ORT school at 24/36 Roland Way in Kensington in London, opened in July 1946 in order to train young refugees – former inmates of the concentration camps in Germany – who were lodged in London hostels for refugees. The majority of

27 WOA D07236, ORT Weekly Summary II:5, 2.
28 WOA D07236, ORT Weekly Summary II:5, 2.
29 WOA D07236, ORT Weekly Summary I:30, 4.
30 WOA D07236, ORT Weekly Summary II:11, 2.
31 WOA D07a007, Chronicle ORT (ORT Union Geneva), 18.
students came originally from Eastern and Central Europe and were aged between fifteen and twenty-five. In the first year students were given all-round engineering training and in the second they received specialized tuition in a particular branch of technology. The specializations offered included general engineering, tool making, electrical work, woodwork and radio technology. A dressmaking section was opened for the girls. According to an ORT publication, the director of the school, Mrs. Wilkinson, was able not only to guide the trainees in their work, but also to help them to acquire a working knowledge of the English language, ‘the lack of which was a great hindrance to the understanding of English measurements and technical terms, and would have been a serious obstacle in finding employment [. . .] – a fact which gives encouragement to the refugee girls themselves, who at first found it somewhat difficult to adapt themselves to the conditions of a country formerly quite unknown to them.’

Aside from technical training, students also attended classes in general education subjects such as mathematics and history as well as in English. On finishing the school they were provided with a set of tools to practice their trade. Alongside full time projects, the school also ran refresher courses for students whose studies were interrupted by the war or those who used to practice their trade before the war. There were also short intensive courses for students preparing for emigration. In October 1947 there were fifty-seven students enrolled in the school: forty-eight boys and nine girls. During that month fourteen students left the school and fifteen new ones were accepted. Throughout its existence the Kensington School trained around 200 students.

All of ORT’s undertakings were to be only temporary measures aimed at enabling refugees to immediately begin to support themselves in a country in which they should eventually settle. Training on the TS ‘Joseph Hertz’ was terminated on 10 October 1947 after difficulties in finding new trainees and jobs on merchant ships for foreign Jewish boys proved to be impossible to overcome, and Commander Israel gave up his position. The Kensington School in its initial form was closed in July 1949 when it was decided that the vast majority of refugees had already found employment in industries. From August 1949 the London centre was reopened at Belsize Lane in Hampstead in order to conduct evening classes, mainly in tailoring, for older refugees. The school ceased operating in April 1954. The activities of the Goldington training centre also gradually declined after the establishment of the state of Israel, even though it continued (in a much-reduced form) until the early 1960s. As Monica Lowenberg pointed out in a discussion of the lives of former ORT students, whether for financial reasons or lack of qualifications, access to university, and thus liberal professions, remained out of reach for the majority of ORT graduates. Their vocational training allowed them, however, to secure employment amidst the uncertainties of the post-war years and many of the young refugees found work in commerce, retailing, industry and engineering.

Though the immediate positive results of work undertaken by ORT among Jewish refugees were clear, its approach towards young Holocaust survivors was not free from controversy. ORT, like many Jewish and non-Jewish philanthropic organisations operating at

the time, believed that in order to overcome the trauma of the Holocaust their students had to be immersed in a Western Jewish community. In a report from its work in Goldington, ORT observed:

It must be remembered that we faced the difficult task of fusing two entirely different groups of people; the youth group of boys and the girls from the camps, and the Hehalutz group consisting of Anglo-Jewish youth and the continental youth who came over from the continent before the war. The fundamental idea of this scheme was the belief that it is vital for this type of youth who have suffered the horrors of the concentration camps, to live together with other Jewish youth and not to be isolated in closed societies amongst themselves. This scheme has gained the praise of many people and has proved to be successful. During this time the common life between the groups has resulted eventually in the establishment of one social group to the benefit of both sides.36

This view stood in clear contrast to the official policy of the Zionist leadership of Holocaust survivors, who claimed that the place of young people who were not yet granted permission to go to Palestine or did not yet undertake this journey through illegal channels was with their own people in the camps. Contrary to the Jewish organizations in the West, DPs often believed that the best way for adolescents and children to process trauma was to work through their experiences. As Margarete Myers Feinstein explained:

Remaining with other survivors provided the children with opportunities to work through their past experiences. They did not stand out as oddities as they would in a normal environment. In the DP camps survivors talked about their experiences almost incessantly, and they wrote and performed plays about the ghettos, the partisans, and the concentration camps. DP's poetry, music, and art worked through the horrors of the Holocaust. In DP schools they were not the only children who were too old for their grade level, and survivor teachers understood their outbursts, their silences, their difference. Group bonding between child survivors facilitated their adaptation to post-war life. The Belsen Committee wisely recognized that the children could best work through their issues not isolated in a comfortable British home, but in the difficult conditions of post-war Germany, where they were together with others who shared their background and their language.37

As a result of this, in 1945 the DP leadership rejected the offer of 1,000 visas for Jewish children and adolescents, which were lobbied for by the British-Jewish agencies. DPs believed that the children would find adjustment to life in England too difficult, justifying their decision with the experiences of children who arrived there as part of the Kindertransport.38 To explain its stance, the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria passed a resolution in October 1945 stating that ‘they have no confidence in the intentions and hospitality of the Public of Great Britain who wish to accept Jewish children from the camps, and that they protest strongly against sending the children to England. The meeting instructs the Central Committee to ensure that not one single child should, under any circumstances, be allowed

36 WOA D071236, ORT Weekly Summary I:38, 5
38 These are further discussed in Iris Guske, Trauma and Attachment in the Kindertransport Context: German-Jewish Children Refugees’ Accounts of Displacement and Acculturation in Britain (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009).
to emigrate to any other country than to the only possible haven for them – Palestine.\(^{39}\) In the end, only children with immediate family members in England were allowed to leave the camps.

At the same time, young people themselves often made independent decisions to take up the opportunities of British entry visas, even if it went against the opinion of the Zionist leadership. It can be assumed that the majority of those who came to England saw it as a way of reaching Palestine and it was Palestine that they would put as their final destination when filling in the documents upon entering Britain.\(^{40}\) In reality however, by the time of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the majority was rooted strongly enough in Britain to decide to remain there. The fears of DP authorities were therefore justified. Yet there is no reason to believe that attendance in vocational courses had a negative influence on the young people’s Jewish identity.\(^{41}\) On the contrary, it can be claimed that collective living within a Jewish environment provided adolescent survivors with a sense of belonging and re-enforced their Jewish identity. As a result, the vocational schools were not only equipping students with new skills but above all with the confidence to imagine a future in which they could use them. Discussing the role played by the vocational courses in the life of the DP community, Samuel Gringauz, President of the Congress of Liberated Jews in the U.S. Zone, explained: “The importance of these schools is not explained by the fact that they supplied valuable vocational training to thousands of uprooted people. The importance of the school centers in the fact that they gave a valuable ideology to thousands of young people; that they helped thousands of young people in a heroic self-assertion; that they created the spirit admired by the whole world”.\(^{42}\) This sense of hope that was instilled in those who lost their childhood and youth in the Holocaust alone makes the vocational courses for Jewish refugees, however briefly they may have lasted, one of the significant undertakings in the educational history of Europe immediately after the end of World War II.

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A MULTIFACETEDNUPTIAL BLESSING: THE USE OF
RUTH 4:11–12 WITHIN MEDIEVAL HEBREW EPITHALAMIA

Avi Shmidman*

ABSTRACT: When bestowing poetic blessings upon newly married couples, the medieval
Hebrew poets often advance analogies to biblical figures, indicating their wish that the
couple should merit the good fortune of, for instance, the forefathers Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob, or of later biblical figures such as Moses, Zipporah, Phinehas, or Hannah. The most
common analogy offered, however, is that of the matriarchs Rachel and Leah, as per Boaz’s
nuptial blessing from Ruth 4:11: “May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your
house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom build up the House of Israel!” In this study,
the usage of this recurring motif throughout medieval Hebrew epithalamia will be considered,
so as to demonstrate its role as a focal point of poetic creativity.

The medieval Hebrew poets composed hundreds of epithalamia, celebrating nuptial
occasions within the Israelite nation, while offering blessings on behalf of the newly married
couples. Many of these blessings center upon comparisons with biblical figures. For instance,
one anonymous Palestinian poet writes: ozrem uvarkhem ke’ish nitbarekh bakkol (ozrem uvarkhem ke’ish
nitbarekh bakkol, “assist them and bless them as he who was blessed in all things”), praying
that the bride and groom should merit the blessings of Abraham. Similarly, the Palestinian

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catalogs and collections: The Ezra Fleischer Institute for the Research of Hebrew Poetry in the Genizah; the
Academy of the Hebrew Language; the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the Jewish National and
University Library in Jerusalem; and the Friedberg Genizah Project. Translations of scripture within this paper
follow the JPS translation of 1917. Translations follow the general guidelines for Hebrew and Semitic languages
specified in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., v. 1, 197. Where relevant, citations of poems are accompanied by their
 corresponding index number, as per Israel Davidson, Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry, 4 vols (New York: Jewish
Theological Seminary, 1924–38) (Hebrew). Finally, a note regarding my use of the term “epithalamium”: etymologically,
an epithalamium is a song intended specifically for the bridal chamber (based on the Greek “θαλαμος”); however, following modern English usage (see The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., s.v. “epithalamium”),
the term will be used herein to refer to nuptial poems in general.

1 For a chronological survey of Hebrew epithalamia through the ages, see Meir Bar-Ilan, Ateret Hatanim (Ramat
Halevi”, Dukhan 11 (1977), 27–33.

2 From the grace-after-meals poem ḥuna ḥuna ve-haftarah (isharta hana vekhallah), intended for recital at the conclusion of
a wedding meal; see Avi Shmidman, The Poetic Versions of the Grace after Meals from the Cairo Genizah: A Critical Edition,
Ph.D. Thesis (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2009) (Hebrew), 630. “He who was blessed in all things” is a reference to
Abraham, based upon Gen. 24:1: כה בתקף בבראשית אברים (cordona berakh et Avraham bakkol, “and the Lord
had blessed Abraham in all things”).
poet Pinḥas adduces a comparison to Isaac and Rebecca: (ūkheiyizḥak ukhele'ah asher banu sheteihem et beit yisra'el va'aseh ha'im sar; “may the groom rejoice as he who wrestled with a ministering angel”)

And in a third poem, Jacob appears at the point of comparison: (yismah h אצט את איל אשקר אשת תמר לה תמר וליהודה)

This verse effectively established a biblical paradigm for the blessing of a bride and groom, and its impact upon medieval Hebrew epithalamia was considerable. The comparison to Rachel and Leah recurs again and again throughout medieval Hebrew epithalamia from all centers of Hebrew poetic activity, including Palestine, Babylonia, Italy, Spain, and Ashkenaz.

Notably, as we shall see, the impact of the verse transcends the liturgical/paraliturgical boundary; appropriations of the verse occur within epithalamia composed for a diverse array of poetic settings. With regard to synagogue poetry, we find the verse incorporated in poetry intended for the Sabbath following a wedding (Shabbat hatan), both within strictly liturgical compositions such as qedushato (poems recited as part of the amidah prayer), as well as within reshut poems recited prior to calling the groom to the Torah. Outside the synagogue, the verse finds expression in many grace-after-meals poems, intended for recital at the conclusion of nuptial meals, as well as within various free-standing zemirot (songs) and pizmonim (refrain poems), devoid of any specific liturgical context.

To be sure, recurring motifs are often prone to formalization. When a motif is so common that it is simply included as a matter of course, its effect within the poetry may be severely minimized. Nevertheless, a survey of medieval Hebrew epithalamia demonstrates that the
poets responded successfully to this challenge, creatively integrating the Rachel-and-Leah comparison in new and innovative ways, breathing new life into this old motif.

[2]

In many instances, in their reuse of the biblical comparison to Rachel and Leah, the medieval Hebrew poets incorporated the original blessing formulation from Ruth 4:11–12. As an initial example, I shall cite a few stanzas from an epithalamium authored by the Spanish poet Yosef ibn Abitur: 

May God make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah  
[Refrain:] Regarding procreation and proliferation  
May she be upright like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah

May God, exalted above all Gods, give strength to the bride  
As with Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the house of Israel  
[Refrain: “Regarding procreation. . .”]

May He bless the work of your hand, and strengthen your goodness  
May your wife be like a fruitful vine within your house  
[Refrain: “Regarding procreation. . .”]

Prima facie, the extended verbatim citations of Ruth 4:11–12 in lines 1, 2, 4 and 6 might seem lacking in originality. Nevertheless, a surprise is in store for the reader who has prior knowledge of the verses. As a result of the restructuring of the quote in the first two lines, a natural rhyme emerges within the biblical formulation: התאמה / ukhele’ah (habba’ah/ukhele’ah). This effect is obscured within the biblical text, because, according to the syntactic structure of the verse, enforced by the accompanying cantillation marks, it is the word הישתת (ha’ishah) that ends the prior syntactic unit, not התאמה (ukhele’ah).

6 From the reshit נ随处 מיר (yevorakh batani), intended for recital on a Shabbat hatan, when the groom is called to the Torah; see Ezra Fleischer, “Beḥirut beshirato shel rabi yosef ibn abitur”, Asafot 4 (1989), 170. The text cited here differs slightly from Fleischer’s text, based upon an inspection of the original manuscript (Ms. Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schechter K25.25), and in accordance with the readings of the Historical Dictionary project of the Academy of the Hebrew Language.

7 Transliteration: na yitten adonai et ha’ishah habba’ah / el beitekha kerahel ukhele’ah.

8 Transliteration (refrain): ufryah veriyah kevet perez amudah / asher yaledah tamar libudah.

9 Transliteration: ye’ammez kallah el ram al kol el / kerahel ukhele’ah asher banu sheleben et beit yisa’el / ufryah [refrain].

10 Transliteration: yevarakah ma’aseh yadakh ya’azim tovalahk / estikha kegefen poriyah beyarketei beitekha / ufryah [refrain].

Nonetheless, by use of poetic enjambment, the poet is able to repackage the verse as a poetic couplet.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, it is worth highlighting how the extensive quotes from Ruth affect the speech situation of the poem as a whole.\textsuperscript{13} The nuptial blessing in Ruth 4:11 entails a very specific speech situation, in which a blessing is offered to the groom, \textit{about} the bride. The comparison to Rachel and Leah is applied specifically to the bride, while the overarching blessing is directed, in the second person, towards the groom. And, indeed, within this poem, not only does the verse citation continue to function in this vein, but the additional material added by the poet expands upon the same speech situation. In line 5, the poet’s words \textit{אלה תציל אל כל אלה חיה (ye’ammez kallah el ram al kol el, “May God, exalted above all Gods, give strength to the bride”)} echo the blessing of “May God make the woman . . .” from the verse. The poet does not address God directly, but rather, while addressing the groom, expresses his hope that God should bless the bride. Similarly, in the subsequent stanza, the poet continues to address the groom in the second person (“the work of your hand”, “your goodness”), concluding the stanza with another direct biblical quote, this time from Psalms (128:3), which also matches the speech situation of Ruth 4:11.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, the direction of the poem as a whole can be seen as an outgrowth of the original biblical scene from Ruth.

In other instances, in contrast, poets integrate the original blessing formula, yet they escape its particular speech situation by couching it within a larger framework. For instance, one unpublished epithalamium from a Cairo Genizah fragment opens with the following stanza:\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{quote}
Rejoice with the groom, without calamity or misfortune
And say, with an elevated and joyous soul:
May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah
\end{quote}

In this stanza, the poet calls upon his audience to bless the groom with Ruth’s nuptial blessing. To use Austin’s speech act terminology, in Ruth 4:11 the blessing comprises an illocutionary act of offering a blessing to the groom, whereas here the poet’s words form a perlocutionary act, causing the audience to perform the illocutionary act of offering a blessing to the groom.

\textsuperscript{12} This technique is also found in the poem \textit{al be’emunato veh el be’emunato veh el} (el be’emunato veh el) by the Babylonian poet Joseph Al-Baradani (discussed at length below in section [5]), as well as in the \textit{zulat} poem \textit{el be’emunato veh el} (\textit{yafu inrei tohar}) composed by the Spanish poet Isaac ibn Ghiyyat, and intended for recital on a \textit{shabbat hatan} (see: Yonah David, \textit{The Poems of Rabbi Isaac ibn Ghiyyat} [Hebrew; Jerusalem: Al’ishav Publishing House, 1987], 374). Ibn Abitur preceded ibn Ghiyyat, but it is possible that he learned the technique from Al-Baradani; see below, note 62.

\textsuperscript{13} Regarding the term “speech situation” and its use in the analysis of medieval Hebrew poetry, see Tzvi Novick, “Praying with the Bible: Speech Situation in the \textit{Qetishot} of Yannai and Bar Megas”, \textit{Masoret Hapiyyut} 4 (2008), 7–39.

\textsuperscript{14} This speech situation is also maintained in the two subsequent stanzas. However, it should be noted that the very first stanza of the poem is not addressed directly to the groom, but rather refers to the groom in the third person.

\textsuperscript{15} This poem is structured as a \textit{pizmon} (refrain-poem), and does not appear to be intended for any specific liturgical setting. It is found in Ms. Jewish Theological Seminary, Adler Collection, ENA 2953 f1.

\textsuperscript{16} Transliteration: \textit{sisu vehutan belo shod vesho’ah / ve’immeru benefesh sason illu’ah / yitten adonai ishah ba’ah el beitekha kerahel vele’ah}.
Although the net effect is the same – that is, in either case, the end result is that the blessing is conferred upon the groom – the extra layer frees the poet from the shackles of the original speech situation, allowing him to phrase the surrounding lines from his chosen perspective, even as he quotes Ruth’s blessing in full.

A similar technique is used by Yehuda Halevi, in his incorporation of the “house of Perez” analogy from Ruth 4:12:16

All, please, exalt God, and to my beloved reply:
“Groom, may your house be like the house of Perez” — 石榴、石榴

Here too, Halevi prefaces the biblical blessing with a call to his audience to pronounce it. This case is particularly striking because the poem is of the reslut lekaddish genre; that is, it was intended for recital immediately prior to the Kaddish. Normally, in a poem of this sort, the poet calls upon the congregation to rise and sanctify God’s name in the upcoming prayer. Thus, by including the groom’s blessing from Ruth 4:12 inside an appeal to the congregation, the poet has adapted the speech situation of the nuptial blessing to match the speech situation of the poetic genre. The end result, as Ephraim Hazan has previously highlighted, is quite astonishing: the congregation, on the verge of pronouncing praise to God, is instead instructed to direct its blessings towards the groom.20

Finally, in one anonymous Palestinian poem, we find the verse couched within a prayer to God:21

Sadness remove from their hearts
Deprive not their souls from gladness of heart
Proclaim for them happiness and joy
Delight them with the blessing of the ten people

As it is written, “All the people at the gate and the elders answered, ‘We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom build up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem!’” — 亚述

17 John Langshaw Austin, How to Do Things with Words (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 98–119. Admittedly, it is possible to view the original blessing in Ruth 4:11 as a perlocutionary act supplecating God to bless the bride; if so, the poetic stanza cited here contains a perlocutionary act whose goal is to cause the audience to bless the groom with a statement that itself effects a further perlocutionary act vis-à-vis the Divine.

18 From the poem yigdal kevod hashokhni rum erez; Davidson, Yod 198, a reslut poem intended for recital prior to kaddish on the days of Hanukkah, in the presence of a groom; see Dov Jarden, The Liturgical Poetry of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, 4 vols (Jerusalem: self-published, 1978–85) (Hebrew), IV: 984.

19 Transliteration: na gaddelu la’el ve’el dodi anu / h atan yehi veitu kha kemo veitu parez

20 Hazan, Shirei ha-Hatuna, 28.

21 From the grace-after-meals poem arusim asher nit’arsu (yigdal kevod hashokhni rum erez) for betrothal meals. See Shmide, Grace after Meals, 613.

22 Transliteration: manon millibbam hasinah / nafsham mittaw lev al tehasserah / sason vesimhah otam tesassera / addenem bevikaro amashim asarah.

23 Transliteration: kakkatuv vayyomeru kol ha’am asher ha’sh’at vehazekenim edim yitten adonai et ha’shah haba’ah el beitekha kerah el ukhele’ah asher hanu shetteilehem et bet yissra’el va’shevet hemen be’efratah ukeran shem bevit lahem.
To be sure, in this case the verse is not incorporated within the poem itself, but rather it is cited subsequently as a prooftext.24 Within the stanza Ruth’s blessing is only hinted at, via the phrase bevirkat asaram asarah (bevirkat anashim asarah, “with the blessing of the ten people”), which refers back to Ruth 4:2: vayikkah asarah anashim mizziknei ha’ir, “Then [Boaz] took ten elders of the town”). Thus, instead of appropriating Ruth’s blessing into the present situation, the poet references it as a prior historical event, supplanting God to bless the newly married couple with the same blessing that was conferred upon Boaz and Ruth.

[3]

In the previous section we examined a number of instances in which the poets cleverly alter the speech situation of the nuptial blessing from Ruth 4:11. Nevertheless, in their incorporation of the comparison to Rachel and Leah, they all maintain the basic framework of the original verse, in which the comparison is applied specifically to the bride. In other cases, in contrast, the poets abstract the model of the matriarch comparison without its overarching blessing formula, allowing them to redirect its import. For instance, in the following anonymous grace-after-meals poem, the comparison is applied to both bride and groom:

25

He shall make them renowned and famous, and he shall shield them from all disease, and they shall rejoice together in happiness, forever, like Rachel and Leah.

By omitting reference to the preceding phrase within the verse (לו מיציח להשם ולחנה והמשים את ביתה, yitten adonai et ha’isha habba’ah el beitehah), the poet is able to expand the range of the comparison to include both bride and groom. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the poet does not disregard the continuation of the verse; the phrase לשם ולחנה (leshem veltihullah, “renowned and famous”) in the first line of the stanza echoes the phrase לש הרה (ukera shem, “and perpetuate your name”) from the continuation of the verse. Thus, the poet maintains a clear connection to Ruth 4:11, while at the same time rephrasing the blessing in order to shift its application.

Similarly, the 7th century poet Qallir applies the analogy to the collective home of both bride and groom in the following lines:

27

24 Many Palestinian poems conclude with the citation of one or more verses, termed a pesukim (sharsheret pesukim, “verse chain”); regarding this phenomenon see Shulamit Elizur, “The Chains of Verses in the Qedushta and the Ancient Benediction”, Tarbiz 77 (2008), 425–75 (Hebrew).

25 This poem, which begins לברך והוגר עולמים (avarekh lezor olamim), was intended for recital at the conclusion of a shabbat不间断 meal; see Shmidman, Grace after Meals, 686.

26 Transliteration: lamo yayish leshem velitehillah / eyishmerem mikkol mahalah / eyismehu tahad begilah / nezah keravel ubdel’ah.

27 These lines are excerpted from the Qallirian qedushta (nhazat ne’urim), intended for recital during the morning amidel prayer on a Shabbat不间断; see Ezra Fleischer, Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 2007) (Hebrew), 154.
As a planted stock shall they be raised
Blessed with seed like Rachel and Leah

Here, too, the Rachel-and-Leah comparison is abstracted and reapplied to both bride and groom. Additionally, as in the previous example, the continuation of Ruth’s blessing does still impact upon the poetry; Qallir’s explicit use of the word זרה (zera, “seed”) was likely influenced by the appearance of the word in Ruth 4:12. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the term receives a significant metaphorical boost within the poem, where it is expanded to a קנות נטismatch (“planted stock”).

A Palestinian poet by the name of Yehudah employs an alternative method in order to offer blessings to both bride and groom. This poet applies the matriarchal comparison specifically to the bride, as in the original verse. However, he complements it with a corresponding blessing for the groom, comparing the groom to the patriarch Jacob. The two juxtaposed stanzas read as follows:

The groom shall rejoice and be happy
Over the lot that he has been given
[…] shall not end
And he shall succeed with sons like the mild man

And the bride shall be happy and rejoice
Over the portion in which she has been included
She shall raise tribes as a planted grapevine
She should be as Rachel and Leah, famous and renowned

Thus, the poet retains the biblical model of Ruth’s nuptial blessing, yet extends it with Rachel and Leah’s corresponding patriarch, in order to present complementary blessings to bride and groom.

A parallel shift, in the opposite direction, occurs in a poem by Yehudah Halevi. The starting point for the poem is the formulation of Ruth 4:12: ויהי ייבאת נביא קפרא (“vihi veitkhah keveit perez,” “and may your house be like the house of Perez”), which applies specifically to the groom. Halevi makes one slight morphological adjustment, changing נביא (veitkhah, “your

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28 Transliteration: kannat neti’im otam lehassi’ah / lehitbarekh b’zerah kerah ukhele’ah.
29 The poem discussed herein is signed with an acrostic of “Yehudah”; however, there are a number of distinct Palestinian poets by the name of Yehudah (see: Wout Jac. van Bekkum, Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity (Leiden: Brill, 1998), xv–xvi), and the poem cannot be ascribed to any single one of them with any degree of certainty.
30 These stanzas are excerpted from the poem יברח אד דאג מברכתי, a grace-after-meals poem intended for recital at a meal celebrating the signing of the wedding contract (ketubbah). See Shmidman, Grace after Meals, 634.
31 The phrase “mild man” is an autonomasia for Jacob, based upon Gen. 25:27.
32 Transliteration: yagel veiyisnah hatan / bannuma vehelek asher lo nitam / […] lo yittam / veyaziy’ah bevanim ke’ish tam.
33 Transliteration: vetatis vetagel kallah / baggoral asher bo nikhalalah / degalim ta’amid kegefen shetulah / heyot kerahel ukhele’ah leshem veitihihiolah.
34 Indeed, the two blessings are parallel in content as well; in each of the stanzas, the poet uses the comparison specifically regarding the bearing and rearing of the next generation. Coupled comparisons to Rachel, Leah and Jacob are found in a number of additional poems as well, situated within a longer series of comparisons to multiple biblical figures; such cases will be examined below in section [3].
[singular] house") to veitam ("their house"), thus expanding the groom’s blessing to both halves of the couple.35

Their seed shall be established like the sun’s light
And so should their house be like the house of Perez

[4]

Other poets distance themselves even further from the biblical formulation of Ruth 4:11, expressing the ancient Rachel-Leah comparison in new terms. For instance, a Palestinian poet named Tuvia offers the following blessing to the bride:37

Pure lass, entering the canopy
Fairest of women
Of proper lineage and well-versed in modesty
May her fountain be blessed as Rachel and Zilpah

Here, surprisingly, the maid-mother Zilpah takes the place of the matriarch Leah, completing the rhyme with הprésent (lupah, "wedding canopy"). To be sure, Zilpah was Leah’s maid-servant (Gen. 29:24), and on this basis, we can view Zilpah’s appearance here simply as a metonymic reference to Leah herself. Nevertheless, the highly irregular metonymy serves to break the monotony of the common “Rachel and Leah” phrase.39

In another case, Qallir makes the comparison to Rachel and Leah without mentioning either of them by name: lulavim keshtei ayot yafrih ("may the palm branches blossom from them, as with the two sisters").40 Apparently, Qallir’s audience was already quite familiar with the common use of the comparison to Rachel and Leah within nuptial blessings, such that the simple mention of “two sisters” sufficed. Indeed, such an audience would presumably have appreciated the novelty of the more subtle reference.

Some five hundred years later in Spain, Yehuda Halevi appeals to the same matriarchal comparison in an even more subtle fashion, in an epithalamium which opens with the following stanza:41

35 From the epithalamium zuri zamen tomei zamen hafekh; Davidson, Zidi 243, intended for recital at a wedding canopy. See Jarden, Yehuda Halevi, IV: 993.
36 Transliteration: nakhon yehi zar'am ke'or shemesh / gam yiheyeh veitam keveit parez.
37 From a fragmentary grace-after-meals poem for a wedding meal, the extant part of which begins (rabbot banot); see Shmidman, Grace after Meals, 674.
38 Transliteration: tehovah hannikhmea lebopah / vehi bannashim yafah / bat kesherim zeni'ut me'alilafah / yevorakh mekorah kerah ellezila.
39 Interestingly, in her article on Leah in the Jewish Women encyclopedia, Prof. Tikva Frymer-Kensky notes: “In Israelite tradition, the maid-mothers were forgotten, but Rachel and Leah were remembered” (Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, “Leah: Bible.” Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia, Jewish Women’s Archive. http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/leah-bible. Accessed October 25, 2011); in demonstrating this point, she notes the exclusive mention of Rachel and Leah within Ruth’s blessing. Yet, at least in this poem, the maid-mother Zilpah does receive her due, within this very same nuptial blessing.
40 From the grace-after-meals poem ba'havah bat'tana'min, intended for recital at the conclusion of a Shabbat ha'at meal; see Shmidman, Grace after Meals, 683. Regarding the poem’s Qalliriian authorship see ibid., 59–60.
41 Jarden, Yehuda Halevi, IV: 983 (Davidson, Shin 1510); this nuptial poem does not appear to have been written for a specific liturgical setting.
O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young
And pluck the fruit of your happiness
You and the wife of your youth
Who is coming into your house

In these lines, Halevi does not explicitly advance an analogy between the bride and any biblical figures. However, in his appeal to the groom, Halevi refers to the bride as נבאה אל ביתך (habba’ah el beitekha, “[she] who is coming into your house”) — a direct quote from Ruth 4:11. The Spanish Hebrew poets were known for their use of a technique termed שיבוב מרחיב (shibbuz marḥîb, “broadening intertextual appropriation”), in which a quote from one part of a verse serves to bring an additional part of the verse to bear upon the poem. In this light, Halevi’s use of the phrase נבאה אל ביתך (habba’ah el beitekha) from Ruth 4:11 may well have been intended to invoke the conventional Rachel-and-Leah comparison from the continuation of the verse. Thus, at the end of the day, Halevi adds the same biblical comparison used by so many other poets before him, yet he avoids the usual explicit formulation, sufficing with only a hint for the intertextually sensitive reader.

Finally, in two poems the comparisons of Ruth 4:11–12 are shifted out of their blessing context, and used instead to refer to the present or the past. For instance, in one Ashkenazi poem, we find the following line: תְּ וְּתַ לֹא הָאָה נֶאֶ רוֹ (when nase‘ah / me’od na‘ah / kerah ukhele’ah, “and she has found favor, and she is exceedingly pretty, like Rachel and Leah”). Here, Rachel and Leah serve as models of the bride’s current beauty, in contrast with their use in Ruth 4:11, where they model the bride’s future flourishing family.

Similarly, in an epithalamium found in a Cairo Genizah manuscript, we find the following lines:

And God has commanded that you should be
blessed like the sons of Perez
That Tamar birthed,
And may there be blessings in the land

Instead of offering a blessing for the future, the poet confidently states that a Divine blessing has already been secured for the groom. In truth, the poet is most likely using the rhetorical technique of the “prophetic past”, in which the past tense in used to convey strong confidence regarding a future outcome; in effect, then, this poem is in fact offering a blessing for the future. Nevertheless, the incorporation of the comparison from Ruth 4:12 into the prophetic past results in a remarkable departure from the original biblical formulation.

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42 Transliteration: semah bahar beyaldutekha / ve’ere peri simḥatekha / attah ve’eshet ne’urekha / habba’ah el beitekha.
43 Regarding this poetic technique see: Shulamit Elizar, Hebrew Poetry in Spain in the Middle Ages, 3 vols (Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel, 2004), III: 377–92.
45 From the poem יָעַר לָהּ פְאָנִי (ya‘ar lāh pānāʾi), bearing the acrostic יַעֲשָׂה (yosef); see Shraga Abramson, “Q’roboth for the Bridegroom”, Tarbiz 15 (1943), 62 (Hebrew). The poem does not contain any indication of a specific liturgical setting.
46 Transliteration: vadanai amar otakh levoorakh kienui favez / asher yaledah tamar utehi verakah bekeren ha’avez.
In the poems examined thus far, the poets have related to the bride and groom via comparisons to Rachel and Leah and to the house of Peretz, as per Ruth 4:11–12. In other poems, however, we find a far more extended series of comparisons, based upon Jewish biblical figures throughout the ages.

As an example of this phenomenon, I shall cite here, in its entirety, a previously unpublished epithalamium from a Cairo Geniza manuscript:\(^{47}\)

May the groom be dressed with splendor like Abraham
May the bride be blessed as Sarah was blessed
The two of them are blessed

May the greatness of the groom be as the strength of Isaac
May the bride be remembered as Rebecca was remembered
The two of them are blessed

May the splendor of the groom be as that of Jacob
And like Rachel and Leah shall be the bride
The two of them are blessed

May the radiance of the groom be as that of Joseph
May the piety of the bride be like that of Asenath
The two of them are blessed

May the goodness of the groom be as that of Judah
May the affection of the bride be as that of Tamar
The two of them are blessed

Your glory, groom, shall be as that of Moses
The heart of the bride shall be like that of Zipporah
The two of them are blessed

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\(^{47}\) Ms. Paris AIU IVC 397. This nuptial poem does not provide any indication as to its author, nor does it appear to have been composed for a specific liturgical setting. I wish to thank my colleague Dr. Michael Rand for his help in preparing the transcription. The poem contains a mix of Hebrew and Aramaic (for instance, the groom is interchangeably referred to as הָעָרוֹם [hatar] and הִתָּן [hanta], and similarly the bride is referred to as both לִבּוֹת [keles] and לָכְתָה [kalel]. In a couple of instances the scribe appears to have erred regarding the Aramaic conjugations of the root יֵשָׂע (‘hesayad’) as follows: in line 6, the form יֵשָׂע in the manuscript has been corrected here to יֵשָׂע, and in line 8, יֵשָׂע has been corrected to יֵשָׂע. Additionally, in line 7, the aberrant spelling of לִבּוֹת has been corrected to לִבּוֹת.

\(^{48}\) Transliteration: eder ke’avraham yulbash kekatan / berukha kesarah tevoraḥ kallah / sheneihem berukhim.

\(^{49}\) Transliteration: geve kezyeʃak gedilat hatan / derusha kerickah tidros kallah / sheneihem berukhim.

\(^{50}\) Transliteration: hadhat hatan yhevei keya’ikov / akherel ushele’ah tehevei kallah / sheneihem berukhim.

\(^{51}\) Transliteration: zevath dehatat yhevei keyesef / haśidat kallah yhevei ke’asenat / sheneihem berukhim.

\(^{52}\) Transliteration: kesadak hatan yhevei kemoshe / libah dekhalletah yhevei keẓipporah / sheneihem berukhim.

\(^{53}\) Transliteration: kevudah hatan yhevei kezoom / libah dekhalletah yhevei keẓipporah / sheneihem berukhim.
This poem blesses both bride and groom by adducing comparisons to a list of six biblical couples: Abraham and Sara, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel/Leah, Joseph and Asenath, Judah and Tamar, and Moses and Zipporah. At first glance, this poem might seem to have little connection with Ruth’s blessing. Although the comparison to Rachel and Leah is mentioned, it is both preceded and succeeded by comparisons to other couples, and it does not stand out in any particular way. Nevertheless, the impact of Ruth 4:11–12 becomes evident upon considering the selection of Judah and Tamar in the penultimate stanza. Judah and Tamar hardly comprise an ideal couple, nor was Tamar in fact wedded to Judah; nonetheless, their appearance can be understood on the backdrop of the latter verses, which specifically mention that it was their union that produced the blessed house of Peretz.\(^5\) In this light, we may view the entire list of comparisons in this poem as an expansion of the original nuptial blessing of Ruth 4:11–12.

Similarly, in one of his epithalamia, Qallir presents a long series of comparisons, from Abraham until Esther, with Rachel and Leah sandwiched in the middle. Yet, when he does mention them, he presents the comparison in terms that clearly hark back to Ruth 4:11: קֶרֶא (ukherah vele’ah asher banu bayit tevorakh kallah, “and like Rachel and Leah, who built up the house, shall the bride be blessed”).\(^5\) Furthermore, he continues afterward with Judah, Perez and Zerah, underscoring the connection to Ruth’s blessing.

One particularly interesting example is found in a poem composed by the Babylonian poet Joseph Al-Baradani.\(^6\) Over the course of the poem, Al-Baradani adduces comparisons to a series of biblical forefathers: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. However, despite the exclusively male focus of these comparisons, the poet also consistently integrates mention of the corresponding matriarchs: each stanza concludes with a שִׁיְמוֹת מיקְרָאִים (siyyomet mikra’im, “scriptural clauses”) which references, however indirectly, the relevant female figure. Thus, for instance, in the third stanza, we find a direct comparison to Isaac (camel נָא לְאַכֶּס עְשֵׁר אַמַּה מֻשְׂכָּל, “like he who found one hundred measures of produce”),\(^5\) while the last line contains a quote from Gen. 24:50, describing the divine nature of the choice of Rebecca as his wife: מְדָדוּנַי יָזֵה הַדָּבָר, “the matter was decreed by the Lord”). Similarly, in the stanza for Moses, we first find a direct comparison to Moses (הָעַטָפֵה בֵּינֵי רבֶּהֶד רֵאָב, ke’al benot yeter ri’hem, “like he who had mercy upon the daughters of Jethro”), and then a citation of Ex. 2:20 (כְּאָל לְרַד אֲלֵיכֶל לָהֶם, kir’en lo veyokhal lahem, “Ask him in to break bread”), in which Jethro instructs his daughters to invite Moses into the house, immediately preceding Moses’ marriage to Zipporah in Ex. 2:21. Likewise, earlier in the poem, the poet brings verses for Eve (אַשָּׁה לְעַל נָעַר נַעַדו, e’eseh lo ezer kenegdo, “I will make a

\(^5\) It is also worth noting the phrase קֶרֶא (ukherah ukhele’ah) in line 8 of the poem. On its own, the phrase appears too generic to forge an intertextual connection. However, now that we have shown that the Ruth verses do indeed stand at the backdrop of the poem, we can also view this phrase as an echo of the words קֶרֶא (kerah) from Ruth 4:11.

\(^6\) From the Qedushta poem cited earlier (note 27); see Fleischer, Hebrew Liturgical Poetry, 161.

\(^5\) The poem begins חַג בְּעֵנָם וְהָעַטָפֵה עִבְרָסו (el be’emunato ve’emasho), and it appears to have been intended for recital on a Shabbat havan, when a groom is called up to the Torah. See Tova Beeri, The “Great Cantor” of Baghdad: The Liturgical Poems of Joseph ben Haggyim Al-Baradani (Jerusalem: The Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002) (Hebrew), 378–81. Regarding the determination of the setting for which the poem was intended (and for an analysis of the features of the poem in general), see ibid., 155.

\(^5\) This epithet for Isaac is based upon Genesis 26:12: וַיְצָה אַכֶּס מַכְּל שַׁבָּת וֶיָּלַע עַל הַטָּמֹא אַמַּה מֻשְׂכָּל (ve’yizak ba’mez hahi vayinza bashana hahi me’ah she’arim, “Isaac sowed in that land and reaped a hundredfold the same year”).
fitting helper for him”, Gen. 2:18, Noah’s wife (שים אשה אשת א协会会长, shenayim ish ve’ishto, “two, a male and its mate”, Gen. 7:2), and Sarah (שה יולדת לה ישירה, yoledet lekha ben, “shall bear you a son”, Gen. 17:19). On this backdrop, it is illuminating to examine the stanza regarding Jacob, Rachel and Leah:

Your ways in going,
And those in coming, shall be successful for you
As with he who dreamt and saw a ladder
And who rolled a stone with prophetic power
May the Lord make the woman who is coming into
Your house like Rachel and Leah

As with ibn Abitur’s poem cited in section [2], here too, Al-Baradani structures the quote from Ruth 4:11 in lines 5–6 as a naturally rhyming couplet, and adopts the speech situation of the verse for the surrounding lines. However, in this case, the appearance of the Ruth verse is particularly surprising. As we have seen, in all of the other stanzas of the poem, the matriarchs are not presented as models for comparison, but rather they are simply referenced in a descriptive manner with their historical context. In contrast, in this stanza Rachel and Leah are indeed cited as exemplary models via which the bride is blessed. To a certain extent, this singular quality may be a result of the underlying structure of the poem, which

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59 In this case, the original verse refers generally to all of the species that entered the ark. Nevertheless, within the context of the poem, its focus narrows to Noah and his wife.

60 These two lines are ostensibly drawn from the Divine blessing to the Israelite nation in Deut. 28:6: "ברוך אתה ו_FAMILY NAME_ במשפחתו" (barukh atta b’ FAMILY NAME v’havratu w’im v’veyatemu, “Blessed shall you be in yourcomings and blessed shall you be in your goings”). Yet, the choice of this blessing within a nuptial poem is likely due to the potential for a double entendre (the root ב’ו את ב’יהויה את, Blessed shall you be in yourcomings and his going>), see, for instance, Mishnah Qiddushin 1:1. Furthermore, within Talmudic literature, the paired terms ב’את and אשת [bi’ah] serve together in discussions of the sexual act; see, for instance, bShavuot 14b: "[mit’emi she’yez v’havanah lo kevi’ato] “because his exit is as pleasurable as his entry”). Indeed, references to this verse do recur relatively frequently within medieval Hebrew epiphalamis. For instance, in the poem פִּכְשָׁת בֵּית אֶלֶּה יִשְׂרָאֵל (me’reshut el elot elot yisra’el), Davidson, Mem 2451), a reshet lehatan written by Barukh of Mainz: (gam barukh yishayu b’ Family NAME v’o wey etema”, “and blessed he should be in his coming and his going”); Solomon Zalman Schocken, Reshafat lehatan (Tel Aviv: Haaretz Publishing House, 1996) (Hebrew), 36; similarly, in the poem פִּכְשָׁת בֵּית אֶלֶּה omenah (me’reshut elot elot omenah), Davidson, Mem 2458), a reshet lehatan from Ephraim of Bonn: (ברוך ב’אתו יומן ו’מקא, “those who see you shall say, ‘blessed be your coming’”; Abraham Meir Habermann, “Liturgical Poems of Ephraim bar Yaaqob of Bonn”, Studies of the Research Institute for Hebrew Poetry in Jerusalem 7 (1958) (Hebrew), 282; and, in Spain, Yehudah Halevi incorporates the entire verse verbatim in his epithalamium (משנה בחוץ בהלדעתך: Davidson, Sin/Sin 1510; Jarden, Yehuda Halevi, IV: 986; no liturgical setting specified).

61 These epithets for Jacob are drawn from Genesis 28–29.

62 Transliteration: derakhkha voyayyez’ah / yazit’ah lekha vosadai / kehalam vesuvlaam ra’ah / veggel eem berahah nevu’ah / yitten adonai et ha’isheh habahu’ah / el betekha kerahel ukhele’ah.

63 Chronologically, Al-Baradani preceded ibn Abitur by approximately one generation, and it is certainly possible that ibn Abitur learned the technique from Al-Baradani. On the other hand, it is also possible that both of these poets, living in the 10th century, at a time when enjambment was finally accepted as a valid possibility within Hebrew poetry, independently chose to format the verse in this way. Indeed, Fleischer has emphasized that throughout the preclassical and classical periods of early Hebrew poetry (through the 8th century), enjambment was virtually never used; see: Fleischer, Hebrew Liturgical Poetry, 121.

64 Specifically, it is this stanza and the stanza before it that are phrased as second-person blessings directed to the groom, in accordance with the speech situation of the verse. However, the stanzas prior to these relate to the groom in the third person, and the subsequent stanza is directed to both groom and bride alike.
mandates a direct quotation from Scripture within the concluding line. Indeed, it is only with regard to Rachel and Leah that there exists a Scriptural verse adducing their model in the offering of a blessing. Nevertheless, the use of this verse still comprises an aberration within the poem. In all of the other stanzas, the verses are drawn from Genesis, from sections dealing directly with the matriarchs and their marriage. Here too, the poet could easily have chosen one of the many verses in Genesis discussing Jacob’s matrimony with Rachel and Leah. From this perspective, the choice of Ruth 4:11 within the poem reflects a deliberate departure from the overarching structure of the poem. Thus, although the comparison to Rachel and Leah might seem to occupy an unremarkable position here in the middle of a much longer list of biblical comparisons, the singular nature of this particular comparison is nevertheless highlighted within the poem.

Within the list-based epithalamia discussed so far, the role played by Ruth 4:11–12 is relatively subtle. However, in a few cases, we find the verses playing a key role in the presentation and structure of the lists. For instance, in one Qallirian poem written for a wedding meal, the author begins with the marriage of Adam and Eve, continuing with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and finally, Jacob with Rachel and Leah. The final stanza in the progression reads as follows:\n
This lily, entering the canopy
Twelve may she blossom forth, with reverence
May she be blessed with fruitful produce
Build the house of the groom and bride as that of Rachel and Leah!

As it is written, “All the people at the gate and the elders answered, ‘We are. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom build up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem!’”

In this final stanza, the poet wishes the bride a set of children modeled after Jacob’s twelve, continues with an explicit mention of the model of Rachel and Leah, and concludes with a citation of the full verse from Ruth 4:11. It would seem, however, that the verse is not simply a prooftext for the specific comparison that preceded it; rather, it is effectively positioned here as the culmination of the entire series of biblical couples, from Adam and Eve, through Rachel and Leah.

An additional example, from the reverse direction, is found in a poem from Ephrayim of Bonn:\n
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64 From the grace-after-meals poem (ashmia’ bemaqhelot; Shmidman, Grace after Meals, 651. Regarding the Qallirian authorship of the poem see ibid., 59–60). Note that although this stanza concludes the portion of the poem dedicated to the aforementioned series of biblical couples, it is not the final stanza of the composition; the poem includes one additional section, in which the poet shifts his attention to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

65 Transliteration: shoshanah zot asher leh uppah va’ah / sheneim asar ta’ana beysir’ah / tevarakh bi’fri tevu’ah / tivneh beit batan vechallah kerahle’ehah.

66 From the reshut lehathan poem (ne’reshut elohei olam; Davidson, Mem 2458), intended for recital when calling a groom to the Torah on a Shabbat. See Habermann, “Ephrayim of Bonn”, 282.
Here, the poet begins with Rachel and Leah, and then continues to bless the bride via the models of three additional biblical women: Hannah, Rebecca, and Tamar. The initial words are all drawn from Ruth 4:11, but the sentence is then expanded to include the rest of the women within the continuation of this very sentence. The verse thus stands as the basis from which all of the other comparisons emerge.

Finally, in one Italian poem, the words (vihi veitkha, “and may your house be”) from the start of Ruth 4:12 appear as a structurally repeated phrase at the beginning of each stanza, introducing each one of the comparisons in the poem. The poem opens with a reference to Abraham: (vihi veitkha keveit av hamon, “and may your house be like that of ‘the father of many’”); regarding Isaac, the poet writes: (vihi veitkha keveit gulla bi’ndarim, “and may your house be like that of he who was ensnared in arguments over promises”); and regarding Jacob: (vihi veitkha keveit holekh al habbekhorah, “and may your house be like he who walked on [the path of] the birthright”). In effect, the poet has imported each of the additional comparisons into Ruth’s original nuptial blessing.

In all of the examples examined heretofore, Ruth’s blessing was used, in one way or another, in order to relate to the newly married couple. However, in one exceptional poem, we find Ruth 4:11 quoted from a different angle altogether. This composition, a grace-after-meals poem intended for recital at a betrothal celebration, begins with a discussion of portions of

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67 These lines refer to Rebecca and Tamar. Rebecca covers herself with a veil in Gen. 24:65, and bears twins in Gen 25:24; Tamar veils herself in Gen. 38:14 and bears twins in Gen. 38:27.

68 Transliteration: kadosh yitten habba’ah leveitekha / kerah el ukhele’ah ukheh / annah / ukhishtayim shennitkassu vezarovif / veyaledu te’omim belidtenna.

69 The choice of Tamar and Rebecca as additional female models is, of course, not random. As noted earlier in this section, the inclusion of Tamar as a biblical model for the bride is presumably influenced by her mention in Ruth 4:12. Rebecca, in turn, is included due to her remarkable commonality with Tamar, as indicated within the poem itself. Nevertheless, what is noteworthy here is that the comparisons to these extra characters are incorporated within the original biblical blessing that was fashioned around the Rachel-Leah comparison.


71 The epithet “the father of many” is a reference to Abraham, based on Gen. 17:4–5.

72 This epithet is somewhat cryptic. Presumably it refers to the agreement between Abraham and the Philistines over the wells, which was subsequently violated during Isaac’s lifetime (Gen: 26:15); however, it is possible that the text is corrupted.

73 The phrase הולך אל החבקורה (holekh al habbekhorah, “went on [the path of] the birthright”) is admittedly somewhat awkward; presumably it is based upon Gen. 25:32, in which Esau states: (hine anokti holekh lamat selamah zeh li bekhorah, “I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?”). The poet, picking up on Esau’s use of the verb הולך (holekh; literally, “walking”), applies the reverse to Jacob – if Esau is “walking” to death, away from the birthright, than Jacob is walking to the birthright.
Jewish law pertinent to the occasion. After poetically enumerating the three primary methods of betrothal (as per Mishnah Qiddushin 1:1), the poet continues to discuss the requirement for official witnesses:74 75

Long ago, He who restores the lonely [i.e., God] warned The elders of the seed of the congregation of Jews That regarding this law [the law of betrothal], it shall be attested: The commencement [of the betrothal] shall be performed with witnesses

As it is written, “All the people at the gate and the elders answered, We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom build up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem!”

The verse is positioned here as a biblical prooftext, providing a legal precedent for the presence of witnesses at a betrothal ceremony. Indeed, the verse relates explicitly to the role of the elders as witnesses.76 Nevertheless, one can imagine the astonishment of the audience who, expecting the conventional citation of Ruth 4:11 within a blessing to the newlyweds, suddenly encounter its appearance in a purely legal setting.

In conclusion, we have traced here the usage of a single motif throughout medieval Hebrew epiphthalamia. In all of the cases considered, the poets made use of the same basic nuptial blessing from the book of Ruth. Yet, we have found remarkable diversity regarding the ways in which this blessing comes to the fore within the poems.

Some poets inject the blessing into a new speech situation. For instance, in a number of the poems, the blessing—originally addressed to Boaz alone—is adjusted to relate equally to both bride and groom. In other compositions, poets shift the focus more drastically, repackaging the blessing within an appeal to God, or within an appeal to the audience as a whole. To a certain extent, the choice of speech situation is guided by the liturgical setting of the poem. Thus, the reshot lehatan poems, intended from the outset as a blessing to the groom, tend to keep the focus upon the groom as in the original verse. And, conversely, in the grace-after-meals poems, which were presumably recited in the presence of both groom and bride, we generally find the blessing reapplied to both of them in an equal fashion. Nevertheless, the speech situation does not always align as expected with the liturgical position. Thus, on the one hand, Qallir blesses the bride and groom together within his qedushta poem, intended

74 From the poem asher idden aruh (asher idden aruh hittah; Shmidman, Grace after Meals, 618).
75 Transliteration: zher me’az moshic yehidin / zikni zera makhelat yehidin / bukka zoa hayot me’idim / b’gysul al pi edim.
76 It should be noted, however, that the Talmudic discussion regarding the requirement for witnesses (bQiddushin 63b) confines itself to Pentateuchal sources, and does not actually adduce a legal precedent from the Ruth verse.
for recital within a synagogue context, while on the other, it is specifically within the grace-
after-meals poetry, rather than within the synagogue poetry, that we find Ruth’s blessing
redirected to God in the second person.

Other poets see the verse as a starting point, expanding it into a whole series of
comparisons to biblical figures. Others poetically adapt the biblical phraseology to suit the
new poetical setting by using enjambment to turn the verse into a poetic couplet, or by
replacing an explicit reference with a literary allusion. Finally, in a few poems, the
appropriation of the verse does not occur within a blessing context at all; rather, it is reworked
to serve a different purpose, such as providing a description of the current state of the bride
and groom, or presenting a legal precedent regarding the presence of witnesses at the
ceremony. In this manner, far from turning into a banal and formalized component, the use
of Ruth 4:11–12 emerges as a focal point of poetic creativity within medieval epithalamia.

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--- See the discussion above regarding the poem הַכְּנַשְׁנָה (ahavat ne’urim), near the beginning of section three.

--- Thus in the poem אישים that נאמרו (arumim asher nitaru), discussed above at the end of section two, as well as
in the poem אישים be-nagled (ashmi’ benagled), discussed above towards the end of section five.


