



**University of Southampton**

***'An Englishman of the Jewish Persuasion;  
Claude Montefiore, Christianity, and Liberal Jewish Thought'***

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

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‘An Englishman of the Jewish Persuasion;

Claude Montefiore, Christianity, and Liberal Jewish Thought’

by Daniel Robert Langton

This thesis attempts to place Claude Montefiore in the context of Jewish thought during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (chapter one), before considering in what ways he was profoundly influenced by his Christian surroundings (chapter two). As an intellectual history of a Jewish religious thinker, it focuses upon his thought rather than upon his life story. In particular, it seeks to demonstrate that Montefiore’s own personal conception of Liberal Judaism should be regarded as more than simply a progressive Jewish denomination, and rather as an attempt to re-mould Reform Judaism in terms of, or with special reference to, contemporary liberal Christianity.

Montefiore’s fascination with the relationship between Christianity and Judaism means that a large proportion of the thesis concentrates upon his approach to the two central figures of Jewish-Christian dialogue, namely Jesus (chapter three) and Paul (chapter four). These last two chapters are thematic in character and should be regarded as comparative studies in which Montefiore’s theology and scholarship are contrasted with those of other Jewish thinkers. It is suggested that his utilisation of New Testament study as an opportunity to propound his Liberal Jewish agenda was made all the more remarkable by the extent to which he incorporated the teachings of both Jesus and Paul into his own ethical and theological musings.

As a British intellectual Jew living in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the challenges facing Claude Montefiore and his conception of ‘the Englishman of the Jewish persuasion’ included, firstly, the general threat of modernity and the consequent challenge of religious apathy. Secondly, the related conflict between nationalist and non-nationalist conceptions of Jewishness. Thirdly, the question of how to reconcile loyalty to Judaism with admiration of the cultural, intellectual and even theological achievements of the surrounding Christian environment. Fourthly, and lastly, the need to correct anti-Jewish biblical scholarship. It is argued here that the formation of Anglo-Liberal Judaism and the development of its distinctive theological views came about as the result of one man’s highly individualised response to these historically conditioned dilemmas.

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## Abbreviations

### Archives

AJAC	American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, United States
Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CZA	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Israel
DWL	Dr William's Library, London
HUNL	Hebrew University National Library, Jerusalem, Israel
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives

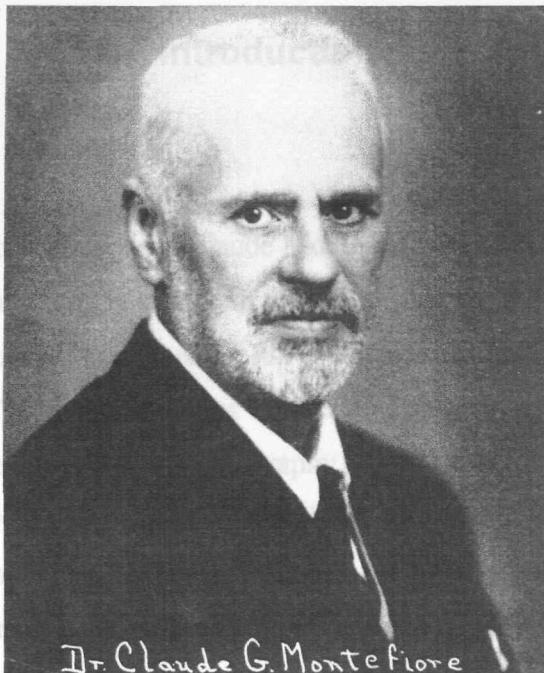
### Other Abbreviations

AJA	Anglo-Jewish Association
JBD	Jewish Board of Deputies
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JRU	Jewish Religious Union
LJS	Liberal Jewish Synagogue
LSSR	London Society for the Study of Religion
PFJP	Papers for Jewish People

### Note on the System of Reference

Full details of the partial references given in the text can be found in the bibliography, which is divided into Reference Works; Books; Pamphlets, Papers and Sermons; Articles in Journals; and Unpublished Papers and Theses.

E.g. L Cohen, *Some Recollections* = Lucy Cohen, *Some Recollections of Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore 1858–1938* (London: Faber & Faber, 1940).



Dr. Claude G. Montefiore

This thesis will also examine the ways in which Montefiore's ideas during the late nineteenth century differed from those of other Jewish thinkers in the same period. The focus will be on the intellectual history of the period, and the thesis will concentrate on the relationship between Montefiore's ideas and those of other Jewish thinkers. The thesis will also examine the relationship between Montefiore's ideas and those of other Jewish thinkers.

rest of Jewish thought, before consideringings (chapter two). It is

Claude Montefiore (1858–1938)



Laying the foundation of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (1911)

## Introduction

This thesis will attempt to place Claude Montefiore in the context of Jewish thought during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (chapter one), before considering in what ways he was profoundly influenced by his Christian surroundings (chapter two). It is an *intellectual history* of a Jewish religious thinker and as such will focus more upon his thought than upon his life story; it is not a biography. In particular, Montefiore's fascination with the relationship between Christianity and Judaism means that a large proportion of the thesis will concentrate upon his approach to the two central figures of Jewish-Christian dialogue, namely Jesus (chapter three) and Paul (chapter four). These last two chapters are more thematic in character than the first two and should be regarded as comparative studies in which Montefiore's theology and New Testament scholarship will be contrasted with those of other Jewish thinkers.

The introductory chapter is split into two parts. The first half is a brief outline of Montefiore's early life and education, his career, and his character. The second half is a survey of the material that has been written on Montefiore in the past. It will identify the gaps that need to be filled and the avenues which need to be explored.

## I – A Sketch of Montefiore's Life

### *i – Family and Early Life, Education and Influences*

Claude Joseph Goldsmid-Montefiore,<sup>1</sup> the Jewish philanthropist, biblical scholar and founder of British Liberal Judaism was born 6 June 1858, the year when full civil equality was granted to British Jews. The Montefiores, a distinguished Anglo-Jewish family originally of Italian Sephardim stock, had been in England since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Claude was great-nephew of Sir Moses Haim Montefiore, the renowned Victorian philanthropist, sheriff of London and the first Jew to be knighted by an English sovereign.<sup>3</sup> He was also the nephew of Anna-Maria Goldsmid and Sir Francis Henry Goldsmid and the

great-grandson of Mayer Amschel de Rothschild.<sup>4</sup> As a member of ‘the Cousinhood’ or the Anglo-Jewish élite, Claude’s background was therefore very much one of privilege.<sup>5</sup> His mother, Emma, was the fifth daughter of Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid who had been a prominent figure in the struggle for Jewish emancipation, a founder of the non-sectarian University College, London, and an early member of the (West London) Reform Synagogue.<sup>6</sup> Emma was the religious force in the family so that Claude was brought up as a Reform Jew and remained a member of the West London Synagogue throughout his life, even occasionally preaching there.<sup>7</sup> Claude’s father, Nathaniel Mayer Montefiore, was only nominally Orthodox but took his duties as a Montefiore seriously and served as lay head of the Spanish and Portuguese Bevis Marks Synagogue.

Claude grew up comfortably, his parents owning a country estate at Coldeast, near Southampton, and a house in Portland Square, London. He had three older siblings (Alice, Leonard and Charlotte) and was taught by German tutors and governesses. Poor health following a severe attack of pneumonia had made going away to school impossible, and his delicate constitution remained a constant throughout his life. Mr (later Sir) Philip Magnus was tutor to the young Montefiore for his general education<sup>8</sup> while his religious education was provided by Rabbi David Marks of the West London (Reform) Synagogue.<sup>9</sup> From the age of seventeen, in preparation for University entrance, Montefiore was taught by Christian tutors, including Arthur Page, the future Dean of Peterborough, and when Page could not get to Coldeast, by another clergyman, Mr Glazebrook, the future headmaster of Clifton and church dignitary at Ely.<sup>10</sup> Reputedly learning Greek in eight weeks, Montefiore matriculated at London University in the top ten percent before leaving for Oxford.<sup>11</sup>

In 1878 Claude went to Balliol College, Oxford, where he obtained a First Class in Greats (the school of *Literae Humaniores*) in 1881.<sup>12</sup> Due to his delicate health he lived with one of his tutors, Baron Paravicini, a Catholic Italian aristocrat. Other tutors included the Shakespearean scholar AC Bradley<sup>13</sup> and the philosopher RL Nettleship.<sup>14</sup> In terms of overall influence, however, the most significant tutor for Montefiore was the liberal Anglican scholar Benjamin Jowett (to whom we shall return in chapter two), who convinced him that his life’s work lay in “an ideal life... the study of your own people and their literature, and the means of improving and elevating them”.<sup>15</sup> He also encouraged his student to investigate the relationship of Judaism with other religions.<sup>16</sup>

Following graduation, Montefiore moved to Berlin with his widowed mother and sister, his intention being to train as a rabbi at this renowned centre for German Jewish learning.<sup>17</sup> His exposure to biblical critical studies in Germany and liberal Anglican thought at Oxford took its toll, however, and in the end he decided against the rabbinate. Nevertheless, he studied rabbinics and rabbinical lore under the Rumanian Solomon Schechter at the *Hochschule (Lehranstalt) für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the Liberal College for Jewish Studies)<sup>18</sup> and even brought him back with him upon his return to England as his private tutor.<sup>19</sup> In the preface of his *Hibbert Lectures* (1893) Montefiore expressed his indebtedness to four other teachers in addition to Schechter, and these included the Protestant scholars B Stade,<sup>20</sup> J Wellhausen,<sup>21</sup> A Kuenen,<sup>22</sup> and TK Cheyne.<sup>23</sup> Their influence in biblical matters will be examined in later chapters.

Thus various distinct traditions were woven into Montefiore's make-up, giving him his particular temper, presuppositions and method. Nineteenth-century Christian liberal culture deeply influenced him with its emphasis on classical thought, Hegelian dialectic, and the theory of evolution and biblical criticism. Judaism gave him his sense of purpose, a deeply felt obligation to his fellow Jews and the bulk of his subject matter. True to both Jewish rabbinical tradition and Victorian sentiment his outlook on life was religious rather than philosophical. The attitude behind all his writings and work, which were theological rather than historical in character, was that of one who had a spiritual message to proclaim. The emancipated status of Anglo-Jewry, his association with the West London Synagogue and, to a limited extent, his personal contacts with the Reform Movement in Germany from his time in Berlin<sup>24</sup> all assisted in directing Montefiore's interest towards the great cause in his life, Liberal Judaism.

## *ii – Montefiore's Philanthropic and Religious Concerns*

Montefiore inherited a large fortune (£456 000) from his father Nathaniel and from his mother (£1 million).<sup>25</sup> Other fortunes came his way from his brother Leonard who died of rheumatic fever while travelling in America in 1879 (Leonard had himself inherited a large fortune from their uncle Sir Francis Goldsmid) and from his father-in-law, Lazar Schorstein, of Reuter's Agency. Amply endowed with wealth, learning and leisure, Montefiore used these freely in furthering both Jewish and non-Jewish charitable and educational ventures, and in promoting the cause of Liberal Judaism. His devotion to

Jewish theology and religious learning was exceptional for a member of the Anglo-Jewish elite.<sup>26</sup>

Although he often complained that his responsibilities kept him from his studies, Montefiore was dedicated to his philanthropic works, performing his duties as a wealthy Jewish patron with enthusiasm, great attention to detail and a high sense of responsibility. Israel Zangwill was inspired to write of him,

Of men like you  
Earth holds but few,  
An angel with  
A revenue.<sup>27</sup>

Inheriting obligations with regard to public work on behalf of the Jewish community, he joined the board of the Froebel Institute in 1882 as honorary secretary and soon became chairman of this progressive educational establishment.<sup>28</sup> He was Chairman of the Managers of three Jewish Schools<sup>29</sup> and President of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, an organisation concerned with the welfare of underprivileged and exploited women; Montefiore was drawn to its work, at least in part, to salvage the reputation of the Jewish community which, around the turn of the century, was associated with white slave trafficking.<sup>30</sup> He was also on the Council of the West London Synagogue,<sup>31</sup> and was associated with Lily Montagu in the work of the West Central Club for Jewish girls and with Basil Henriques in the Bernhard Baron settlement in the East End.<sup>32</sup> He helped maintain the Cambridge lectureship in Rabbinic Studies, fostering the works of Schechter, Israel Abrahams and Herbert Loewe,<sup>33</sup> and had particularly close ties with University College, Southampton, later the University of Southampton. He was vice-president there in 1908, president from 1915 until 1934,<sup>34</sup> and chairman of the General Purposes Committee which was set up in 1927 (to ensure that proposals put to the Council had been fully investigated).<sup>35</sup> Amongst numerous other gifts and contributions, he presented University College with an 11-acre sports-ground at South Stoneham during the early days of his presidency, and a large tract of land (between the Common and the Union Building) towards the end. There are several buildings named after him in his honour, and the university college presented him with a volume of essays on his seventieth birthday (*Speculum Religionis*, 1929).

As a leading member of Anglo-Jewish elite, Montefiore was president of the Anglo-Jewish Association, an important representative body whose purpose was to look after the interests of Jews in foreign lands, from 1895 until 1921.<sup>36</sup> His period of office thus covered a crucial period in Anglo-Jewish history: the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe, the rise of Zionism and the Balfour Declaration (which he attempted to prevent). Soon after joining the AJA, he became the president of the Jewish Colonisation Association, which aided Jewish settlers abroad, and which entailed regular visits to Paris.<sup>37</sup> In his concern to disseminate Jewish learning, Montefiore became involved in journals such as the *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* of which he was the president from 1899 until 1900, and the *Jewish Quarterly Review* which he and Abrahams founded and edited (he became editor in 1888) until 1910 when the work-load became too much and the rights were transferred to Dropsie College, Philadelphia. For 15 years he helped to finance and wrote for the weekly *Jewish Guardian*, which was more liberal and less orthodox than its old established rival, the *Jewish Chronicle*.

Montefiore's financial and administrative support was crucial to the survival and development of Liberal Judaism in England. By his spiritual leadership the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism was set up in 1902, and when the World Union for Progressive Judaism was founded in 1926, Montefiore was elected as its first president, recognised throughout the world as the leader of Progressive Judaism. He had been president of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, in St John's Wood, London, from 1910. He was involved in early inter-faith dialogue and founded with the Catholic theologian Baron Von Hügel the London Society for the Study of Religion in 1904, a bi-monthly forum in which the religious issues of the day could be discussed and debated by members of various faiths.<sup>38</sup> He was also associated with the work of Israel Mattuck, the first minister at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, who had played an important rôle in the founding of the London Society of Christians and Jews in 1924.<sup>39</sup>

Montefiore was a prolific writer. He made his name as the first Jew to give the Hibbert Lectures, which he delivered in 1892 at Oxford on 'The Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Hebrews' and published the following year.<sup>40</sup> His most distinctive contributions, however, were in the field of New Testament scholarship where his sympathetic and constructive use of rabbinic material proved influential. *The Synoptic Gospels* (1909, 1927), was a commentary on the

Gospels primarily for Jewish readers, and was followed by the Benjamin Jowett lectures at Oxford in 1910 on ‘Some Elements of the Religious Teaching of Jesus According to the Synoptic Gospels’, published the same year. *Judaism and St Paul* (1914) was an original attempt to present the Apostle of the Gentiles sympathetically to Jews. Counter-balancing such studies in Christianity were his writings on Judaism. John Rayner has suggested that “in his [Montefiore’s] religious thought all roads lead to Liberal Judaism” and that to understand his conception of Liberal Judaism was all that was required to understand his religious teaching.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, its theology was the backcloth to all his writings, especially as expressed in *Aspects of Judaism* (1895), a collection of sermons together with Israel Abrahams, *Liberal Judaism* (1903), *Outlines of Liberal Judaism* (1912, 1923), and *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism* (1918). Despite his liberal leanings, his concern to defend the Rabbis against Christian criticism was clearly reflected in *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (1930) and *A Rabbinic Anthology* (1938), which is still used as an introduction to rabbinic theology today.<sup>42</sup> *The Old Testament and After* (1923) encapsulated his essential (Liberal Jewish) teachings, which remained remarkably consistent throughout his lifetime. His writings were concerned with the problems facing religion generally, and Judaism in particular, in the modern world. While they were intended to bring obscure but significant ideas to the attention of an intelligent lay readership, they were more often of greater interest to scholars, and only his *The Bible for Home Reading* (in its final form in 1896), which went into three editions, was widely appreciated.

Lastly, in this section, we need to consider a few further details regarding Montefiore’s personal history and character. Claude Montefiore married twice. First, in 1886, to Thérèse Schorstein who died three years later giving birth to Montefiore’s only child, Leonard, nicknamed Robin. In 1902 his mother, Emma Goldsmid, died and Montefiore married his second wife Florence Ward the same year (she died in December 1938). Florence had been vice-principal of Girton College, Cambridge, and they had first met when Montefiore interviewed her for a position in one of the Jewish schools.<sup>43</sup> In deference to his mother’s wishes, he had promised not to marry Florence (who was a convert) during his mother’s lifetime and this had entailed a seven year wait.<sup>44</sup>

Montefiore was well regarded for his clarity of understanding and his powers of empathy. Bentwich spoke of “his wonderful talent for stating the case he opposed fairly and

almost convincingly" concerning the Zionist question;<sup>45</sup> and Kessler noted the occasion of a meeting of the JRU in which Montefiore had excused the behaviour of demonstrators who stormed his platform, stating their views more clearly than they could themselves.<sup>46</sup> His scholarship was well regarded by contemporaries and he received many honours for his contributions to both Jewish and Christian theology.<sup>47</sup> His honorary degrees included Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) from the University of Manchester (1921); an honorary degree from the Jewish Institute of Religion, New York (1921); Doctor of Hebrew Law from Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati (1924); a doctorate of letters (D.Litt.) from the University of Oxford (1927); and the British Academy Medal for Biblical Studies (1930).

Montefiore had an arresting appearance.<sup>48</sup> A close friend of his, the historian and statesman Herbert Fisher, wrote of "the erect figure, the high dominant brow, the deep-set glowing brown eyes, the clear ringing voice and the upright and downright ways of speech" which gave Montefiore "an impression of commanding force".<sup>49</sup> His cousin, Lucy Cohen, also remarked upon his eyes for their "strange radiance and soft glow as if lit by some inner fire like a spark of the shechina (the indwelling of God)".<sup>50</sup> He wore a short beard, his hair was close-cropped and he had a pale complexion.<sup>51</sup> As regards character, there was certainly a less attractive side to him, generally overlooked by his biographers. Strongly influenced by a highly class-conscious mother, Montefiore could on occasion be accused of snobbery.<sup>52</sup> Conservative by nature and Tory by instinct, he was suspicious of socialism and, at times, (unintentionally) patronising to those who worked closely with him.<sup>53</sup> Despite his non-nationalist concept of Judaism, his patriotism for England sometimes bordered upon jingoism.<sup>54</sup> Overwhelmingly, however, he is remembered for his modesty, self-effacing manner, and a quaint, dry sense of humour, which often comes across in his writings. He had an intensely social personality and could write up to thirty or forty letters a day, especially in his later life when deafness and asthma curtailed his activities.<sup>55</sup> Even taking into account the hyperbole used to describe the man in letters, sermons and memoirs, Montefiore comes across as a kindly, humorous gentleman who deeply impressed those around him with his intellectual rigour, high-mindedness and quiet determination. Rabbi Leo Baeck said of Montefiore, who died in London, 9 July 1938,

The most impressive work of art is that which man makes of his life – it is granted only to specially favoured men to create such a work. When we think of all that Claude Montefiore has given to so many of us, the noblest and greatest gift is surely his own life, the living personality which revealed itself in everything that emanated from it.<sup>56</sup>

## II – Historiography

Considering his importance to Anglo-Jewry in terms of his communal leadership and representative responsibilities, his founding rôle in Liberal Judaism, his eminence as a scholar, and his philanthropic activities, remarkably little has been written about Claude Montefiore. Apart from the unwieldy and unrepresentative biography by Lucy Cohen, *Some Recollections of Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore* (1940), Maurice Bowler's short treatment of *Claude Montefiore and Christianity* (1988), and Edward Kessler's anthology of Montefiore's writings in *An English Jew* (1989), there have been no books specifically concerned with Montefiore's life or his thought.<sup>57</sup> It is not difficult to find further material, however, since his influence and writings impinged upon many areas of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought. Thus the remainder of the historiography relating to Montefiore is composed of historical studies of Reform Judaism and Anglo-Jewry, together with articles and tributes from works of Jewish thought, Jewish-Christian relations, and biblical and New Testament studies. A representative survey of these now follows.

### *i – Major Treatments*

Lucy Cohen's *Some Recollections of Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore* (1940), published only two years after his death, was never intended as a true biography or analytical history. Rather, it was an admiring relation's attempt to preserve and record something of the essence of the man. Approached as such, it provides important information about his character, and his familial and social surroundings. In terms of primary source material, it is most useful from 1918, when Montefiore was 60 and Cohen became a more intimate confidante.<sup>58</sup> As a consequence, much of the earlier biographical detail depends upon the reminiscences of mutual friends and associates. The loose, anachronistic composition of the book, whose form is largely dependent upon recurrent themes in the correspondence between Montefiore and Cohen, makes it difficult to contextualise his thought or to understand it. There is a chapter, for example, entitled "Chassidic Myths" (Cohen translated some of Martin Buber's writings on the subject with advice from Montefiore) whose inclusion has encouraged more than one scholar to over-

estimate the significance of mysticism to Montefiore.<sup>59</sup> Nor does the fact that Cohen “did not feel equal to making a more exhaustive selection from his letters to other friends”<sup>60</sup> make the task of tracing the development of his thought any easier. As she admitted in the preface, “a great part of [Montefiore] will remain unrevealed; what mattered most to him was his religion, and with this I am quite inadequate to deal”<sup>61</sup> Despite her interest in Montefiore’s religious activities, Cohen was unfamiliar with the development (both intellectual and institutional) of Liberal Judaism, nor could she have commented critically on the more original aspects of his thought, including his treatment of Jesus and Paul or what he described as the theology of the Rabbis. Considering that *Some Recollections* is the most commonly cited work in writings about Montefiore, these points are worth bearing in mind. As Basil Henriques, a disciple of Montefiore, wrote privately, “Miss Lucy Cohen’s biography is very inadequate, although it gives a good pen picture of his character.”<sup>62</sup> Her memoir certainly gives a sense of what it meant to belong to the Anglo-Jewish élite at that time; it also occasionally hints at his sense of alienation from the Anglo-Jewish community. In addition, it presents a less austere, more whimsical picture of Montefiore than one would otherwise have obtained from his writings.

The best introduction to Montefiore’s thought is Edward Kessler’s *An English Jew; the Life and Writings of Claude Montefiore* (1989). While his thematic presentation of selected extracts from Montefiore’s writings can only skim the surface (Montefiore wrote 18 books, 22 lectures and essays, 24 ‘Papers for the Jewish People’ and 51 miscellanea),<sup>63</sup> it does provide access for the modern reader who does not have the time to wade through volumes of Montefiore’s beautifully written but often heavy prose. Kessler includes a short biographical piece, largely dependent upon Cohen’s *Some Recollections*, and introduces each section (on the Hebrew Bible, Christianity and the New Testament, Torah and Rabbinic Judaism, and Modern Judaism) with brief explanatory notes. In his sometimes uneven conclusion, he considers Montefiore as an eclectic scholar, a radical theologian, a defender of Rabbinic Judaism, and a liberal leader, but at no point does he ever engage with Montefiore’s writings in the light of modern thought or scholarship.

Kessler’s view of Montefiore is somewhat idealised. The book is, as Louis Jacobs’ review reminds us, Kessler’s “account of his hero’s life and thought”<sup>64</sup> Regarding Montefiore’s scholarship, for example, Kessler concludes, “The fact that Christian scholars attacked him for being too Jewish and Jewish scholars for being too Christian is one

indication that he approached the neutral position which he sought.”<sup>65</sup> In fact it was Montefiore’s determination to demonstrate the superiority of Liberal Judaism over both Christianity and Judaism (in their conventional forms), that put him in this position, since many of his Jewish critics associated his Liberal Judaism with Christianity and his Christian critics often mistakenly believed that he spoke for Judaism. Thus Kessler confuses neutrality with an alternative bias of Montefiore’s own making. Similarly, in an earlier article, he argued that Montefiore had been “the least tendentious” scholar among both his Christian and Jewish contemporaries,<sup>66</sup> which is acceptable if by this he meant that Montefiore was as likely to criticise Judaism as he was Christianity. But Kessler appears at times to overlook the fact that Montefiore certainly had a religious agenda of his own and was concerned to advance it. No one is arguing that Montefiore was a *bad* scholar, but his writings cannot be properly appreciated unless the dialectical relationship between the scholarship that informed his Liberal Judaism, and the Liberal Jewish agenda that lay behind his scholarship, is recognised. His writings *were* designed to advance a cause, and in that sense they may be called tendentious.

In the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue there is a common view of Montefiore that Kessler endorses when he describes him as “the interpreter *par excellence* of Judaism to Christians and Christians to Jews”.<sup>67</sup> This view fails to fully comprehend that Montefiore belonged to a rarefied minority of thinkers, mainly liberal Christians, whose views of the two religions would have satisfied very few members of either faith community. It can (and will) be argued that Montefiore, as an outsider, spoke for neither camp. In making claims associated with Jewish-Christian dialogue, Kessler can be criticised for failing to have adequately stressed Montefiore’s religious beliefs as essentially individualist, and for neglecting to have considered in what ways Montefiore had misunderstood or misrepresented both Christianity and Judaism. He makes no attempt, for example, to address apparent paradoxes or tensions in Montefiore’s loyalties, such as his fierce defence of the Rabbis and Torah (against Christian critique) and his championing of liberation from the Law and authority, tensions that disappear when the nature of Montefiore’s allegiance to each camp is properly understood.<sup>68</sup>

A more significant omission, however, is Kessler’s failure to attempt to explain precisely what it was about Montefiore that provoked Jewish accusations of crypto-Christianity and ‘un-Jewishness’. The answer to this complex question is hinted at but

never tackled head on, yet it provides the key to understanding Montefiore – namely, the influence of Christianity. Both in terms of social influences (such as the environment in which he grew up, and his Oxford education) and in terms of intellectual influences (such as contemporary Christian theology, and the teachings of Jesus and Paul), Montefiore absorbed and re-cast Christian thought to suit his own needs. In failing to explore the depth of this dependence and the factors responsible for his hero's attraction to non-Jewish sources, Kessler's work leaves many questions unanswered. His anthology outlines Montefiore's thought admirably, but it does not go further and ask "What made it so?"

Maurice Bowler's *Claude Montefiore and Christianity* (1988) was published in the Brown Judaic Studies series (edited by Jacob Neusner) a year before Kessler's *An English Jew*. A combination of a MPhil thesis and some previously written articles, this short work shows signs of hasty composition and a certain amount of repetition.<sup>69</sup> Its great strength, however, lies in its perception of the importance of Christian influences upon Montefiore and his thought. Bowler highlights the fact that Protestant Christianity was "the dominant factor" of the time and surroundings,<sup>70</sup> regards Montefiore as very much the product of Christian Victorian England, and finds it significant that "a vital factor of Jewish life, the close interaction of a tightly knit [Jewish] community, seems to have been missing from his life".<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to Kessler, Bowler attempts to analyse Montefiore's reaction to Christianity, which he describes as "a Jewish synthesis". Thus he focuses upon Montefiore's hopes that one day there would be a merging of the best of the two religions.<sup>72</sup> From this point of view, Montefiore's sympathies for and interest in Christianity seemed, to Bowler, entirely explicable:

A businessman engaged in a desperate struggle for survival against a rival firm might denigrate his rival's products. But if he could foresee a future take-over of the rival firm, it would be in his interests to praise and protect everything in the rival establishment which he intended to incorporate into his own enterprise.<sup>73</sup>

While the metaphor of a hostile corporate take-over is probably overdoing it, there is no doubt that Montefiore believed that many of the Orthodox trappings of Christianity were falling away and that the two religions were coming closer together, theologically. Rather than view them as rivals, he saw Judaism and Christianity as offering complementary teachings, and he felt free to incorporate any Christian teachings that added to and enhanced what he regarded as the basic truths underlying Judaism. Unfortunately, Bowler's work is

weakened in two ways. Firstly, in common with the majority of writings on Montefiore in the context of Jewish thought or Jewish-Christian relations, Bowler fails to analyse in any detail how Montefiore felt about specific New Testament passages, why they were of relevance to Liberal Judaism, and how they could actually be used.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, he never really gets to grips with the nature of Liberal Judaism.<sup>75</sup> ‘Christianity’ and ‘Judaism’ remain as theological abstracts, and the one attempt made to identify a historical Christian parallel from which Montefiore drew inspiration (Newman’s Tractarianism) is quite unsatisfactory.<sup>76</sup> Bowler’s study is a good example of the need for augmentation by historically informed treatments.

## ***ii – Historical Studies of Reform Judaism and Anglo-Jewry***

David Philipson’s history, *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1931), deals fleetingly with Montefiore in a chapter entitled, ‘The Latest Developments in Europe’.<sup>77</sup> Primarily interested in the institutional growth of British Liberal Judaism, from spontaneous attempts to revitalise Jewish religion via the Jewish Religious Union to the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, Philipson is unconcerned with Montefiore’s thought. He is portrayed as a pro-active, reform minded Jew (whose rôle is exaggerated at the expense of Lily Montagu), anxious to retain British Jews who were abandoning Judaism in response to modernity.<sup>78</sup> The image of a reluctant schismatic is encouraged by the absence of references to Montefiore’s writings. Thus there is no mention of his hostility towards Zionism, his non-nationalist conception of Judaism, or his fascination with Christianity.

An unpublished thesis by Frederick Schwartz, ‘Anglo-Jewish Theology at the Turn of the Twentieth Century’ (1959),<sup>79</sup> represents the earliest serious attempt to understand elements of Montefiore’s thought in a historical context. Specifically, Schwartz points to Benjamin Jowett’s teaching and Hellenistic thought as the main influences upon Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism and his views on Jesus and Christianity.<sup>80</sup> Jowett’s writings are combed for parallels to Montefiore with illuminating results, but Schwartz’s analysis of Hellenistic concepts is less satisfactory, mainly due to his failure to take into account the way in which classical thought had been unconsciously modified in the late nineteenth century. Another failing is that, despite his emphasis upon Montefiore’s belief in the (Christian) principle of love as an antidote to particular dangers in Judaism,<sup>81</sup> Schwartz continues to treat Christianity as a subject which this particular Jew approached out of

personal interest, rather than as part of a symbiotic relationship that ultimately shaped both the content and expression of Montefiore's theology.

Chaim Berman's history of the Anglo-Jewish gentry, *The Cousinhood* (1971), has a chapter on Montefiore. As one might have expected, Berman paints his subject in bright, bold colours and succeeds beautifully in portraying him as an eccentric member of the Anglo-Jewish élite, a turn-of-the-century gentleman-scholar whose quintessential Englishness was as important to him as was his Jewishness. In particular, his anti-nationalist stance against Zionism ("it certainly frightened Montefiore") and his ambivalent attitude towards intermarriage – both issues which divided the Cousinhood – are treated with considerable insight.<sup>82</sup> Montefiore's charitable activities (including his work for the Jewish Association for the Protection of Women and Children), and his educational concerns (including his rôle in developing Southampton University) are covered in some detail, but his life's work of Liberal Judaism and his scholarship are poorly handled and, in several cases, seriously misrepresented. At one point his Liberal Jewish theology is equated to Unitarianism,<sup>83</sup> and, at another, simplistically explained as differing from Orthodoxy mainly in terms of revelation and authority.<sup>84</sup> No mention whatsoever is made about his writings on Christianity, or its relation to Judaism. Berman's reliance on Cohen's *Some Recollections* is one of the factors contributing to this superficial treatment (despite being full of human interest) of the man they both described as a Prophet.

After Montefiore the Prophet comes Montefiore the Mystic. Steven Bayme's essay, 'Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and the Origins of the Jewish Religious Union' (1982),<sup>85</sup> makes two claims of particular interest. Maintaining that Montefiore's thought did not diverge noticeably from that of Geiger and other Reform theologians, he argues instead that "Montefiore's originality lay *in his mysticism and his approach to Christianity*" (Italics mine).<sup>86</sup> He also suggests that Montefiore's opposition to religious legalism was limited by the need to endorse "whatever would bind people together", including Sabbath worship, dietary laws and intermarriage.<sup>87</sup> As has already been mentioned briefly regarding mysticism, Bayme in fact over-emphasises a marginal and often misunderstood aspect of Montefiore's thought. No distinction is made between the sort of mysticism which Montefiore consistently eschewed (as found in Chassidism, for example) and his concern to cultivate a sense of intimate devotion within the individual (largely in emulation of certain Christian circles).<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Bayme underestimates Montefiore's commitment to follow

through his principle of freedom from scriptural and ‘ecclesiastical’ authority. While Montefiore was not fundamentalist in his opposition to religious legalism and certainly made concessions on various issues, the centrality of religious freedom and rationalism to his liberal theology cannot be over-stressed. (In point of fact, while Montefiore did himself observe the dietary laws, he argued against them in principle, was involved in many non-Sabbath worship activities, and not only encouraged a sister to marry a professing Christian but later married a gentile convert himself). Bayme’s unconventional assessment is not so much the result of misreading Montefiore but rather a failure to place Montefiore’s comments in context and to weigh them against the rest of his writings.<sup>89</sup> On the positive side, the essay provides a needed corrective to the traditional down-playing of Lily Montagu’s rôle in the Jewish Religious Union, while at the same time recognising that “the movement owed more to the intellectual leadership of a single man than did its counterparts in Europe and America”.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to other American historians, Bayme readily admits that Montefiore “gave Liberal Judaism in Britain particular forms not found in any other Reform movement” and properly identifies Montefiore’s “serious inspection of Christian teachings” as a main factor in this.<sup>91</sup>

Michael Meyer’s seminal work, *Response to Modernity* (1988), is the long awaited replacement of Philipson’s history of the world-wide Jewish Reform movement. As far as Montefiore and Anglo-Liberal Judaism are concerned, it is a vast improvement both in terms of institutional and intellectual history.<sup>92</sup> Even so, in a book of almost 500 pages, there is only one short section on ‘Liberal Judaism in England and France’ with less than 8 pages dedicated to Montefiore. One reason for this is Meyer’s concentration upon German and American Reform and his assumption that, crudely speaking, Anglo-Reform Judaism is best understood as German Reform Judaism with an English accent. Thus Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism “resembled the German variety which he had discovered [at Oxford]”, and its characteristic teachings included ethical monotheism, the Mission of Israel, anti-nationalism, and a view of ritual as inessential.<sup>93</sup> This need not be the case, however. It can (and will) be argued that Montefiore’s conception of Liberal Judaism was greatly influenced by English liberal Christianity, principally Broad Church (Oxford) Anglicanism. In their respective responses to modernity, German and English Jews had taken different models (the Germans looking to Lutheran Protestantism and Rationalism) and had expressed themselves independently. Having an indigenous alternative that can account for many of the characteristics of Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism means that the parallels with German

Reform Judaism need not indicate the priority of German influence. Crucially, Meyer also fails to adequately explain the extent of Montefiore's fascination with Christianity and the degree to which he set himself the task of responding to the challenge of Christian theology, despite citing Montefiore's belief that Jowett's religious teaching "can be translated, and it needs to be translated, into Jewish".<sup>94</sup> His portrayal of Montefiore does not fully appreciate the man's individual creativity, and although, at times, he seems close to sensing how much Christianity was part of Montefiore's psyche,<sup>95</sup> his assessment is marred by the long shadow cast by German Reform. One might also complain that, in the light of Lucy Cohen's memoirs and the evidence of his correspondence, Meyer's Montefiore is too stuffy and humourless.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, it is worth considering briefly the ways in which Montefiore is represented in general Anglo-Jewish histories, and the limitations imposed by adopting an exclusively socio-political approach. Invariably, he is categorised in one of two ways. Those historical studies with a sociological bent tend to refer to Montefiore in the context of the Anglo-Jewish élite and in terms of assimilation, while those with a political emphasis concentrate upon Montefiore's anti-Zionist, pro-English activities. Both types neglect his development of a theological Judaism and his proto-dialogue with Christians.

Of the first kind, David Englander's article, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' (1988),<sup>97</sup> provides an essential key to understanding Anglo-Jewish psychology, especially that of the Cousinhood, namely, the influence of the British Establishment and the established Church. From a comparative perspective, Englander identifies those characteristics of both Reform and Orthodox Judaism that embarrassed nineteenth- and early twentieth-century middle-class Jews and which led them to emulate English socio-religious norms. In so doing, he provides a useful background for analysing what it was that Montefiore found lacking in conventional Anglo-Jewish religious practice and in what ways he believed his Liberal Judaism could offer an alternative. Touching upon Liberal Judaism itself very briefly, Englander portrays Montefiore and "the liberal separatists" as somewhat eccentric and their movement as "denationalised spiritualism".<sup>98</sup> Writing from a similar perspective, Todd Endelman's *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History* (1990) contains two references to Montefiore. In the first case, he uses Montefiore's early life as an example of the way in which the Anglo-Jewish élite surrounded themselves with non-Jewish company (quoting

Montefiore's claim that "Our environment was entirely uncosmopolitan and purely English.")<sup>99</sup> The second reference concerns Montefiore's unhappy confirmation that anti-Jewish feeling was on the increase at the time of Morris Joseph's paper 'Anti-Semitic Tendencies in England' (1913).<sup>100</sup>

Historical studies of the second category include Geoffrey Alderman's *Modern British Jewry* (1992), which focuses upon Montefiore's anti-Zionist agenda in the context of the League of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association.<sup>101</sup> The Liberal Jewish movement is also viewed from this angle and is described as "a religious refuge for anti-Zionists in the inter-war period".<sup>102</sup> In *Englishmen and Jews* (1994), David Feldman is only interested in Montefiore's early article 'Is Judaism a Tribal Religion?' (1882), and in setting Montefiore beside Chief Rabbi Herman Adler as a British proponent of the idea of Judaism as a religious rather than a racial phenomenon. Thus he quotes Montefiore's claim that even Orthodox Judaism was now taught as "pure religious universalism"<sup>103</sup> and also picks up on Montefiore's belief in the 'Mission of Israel' and the important rôle a non-tribal Judaism could play in the Progress of Mankind. Montefiore is portrayed as a super-patriot and a representative of a modern, universal faith whose aims were compromised by the influx of the first large wave of eastern immigrants the 1880s.<sup>104</sup> Finally, there is Anne Kershen and Jonathan Romain's *Tradition and Change; a History of Reform Judaism in Britain* (1995), which, as an institutional history, is best approached for the organisational development of Liberal Judaism. In addition to the usual references to Montefiore the Anti-Zionist, he is also referred to in the context of the Jewish Religious Union where he comes across as ultra-radical, despite the fact that the authors are uninterested in his thought and make no mention of his relations with Christianity or its influence upon him.

### ***iii – Studies in Jewish Thought and Jewish-Christian Relations***

Very few of the articles, essays and tributes that attempt assessments of Montefiore in the context of 'Jewish thought' or 'Jewish-Christian relations' examine his writings in any depth. This in itself is enough to warrant a more extensive study, but there is also the fact that almost all of them fail to heed Montefiore's own warnings that he looked at Christianity and Judaism "through the spectacles of Liberal Judaism".<sup>105</sup> Without

understanding the nature and roots of his peculiar theology and recognising the centrality of its principles to his thought, most writers are not able to contextualise his writings on Judaism and Christianity, and consequently over-emphasise the significance of one aspect or another. They are either at a loss to explain his sympathy for Christianity, or else they categorise him as an apologist for the traditional enemy. None succeeds in producing a balanced portrait of Montefiore which, without a sense of artificiality, can reconcile his sympathetic approach to Christianity, his criticisms of Orthodox and Reform Judaism, his academic defence of rabbinic Judaism and the Law, and his own independence of thought and theology. Crucially, none views Montefiore as a Liberal Jew whose beliefs incorporate (and therefore must defend) elements of Christian thought. The result has been a certain amount of confusion, much of which has never been resolved.

VE Reichert's 'The Contribution of Claude G Montefiore to the Advancement of Judaism' (1928) is one of the earliest assessments of Montefiore, written by an American while its subject was still alive, and therefore provides an interesting perspective.<sup>106</sup> In particular, it is one of the few assessments that highlights the theological nature of Montefiore's conception of Liberal Judaism. Montefiore's hopes for the future of religion, combining complementary aspects of Judaism and Christianity, are viewed as "condensations of the essentials of the moral law into good precepts". Reichert contrasts Montefiore's "extravagant emphasis upon utopian precepts" with the traditional Jewish concern for concrete teaching indispensable for actual conduct in life. In so doing, he accurately captures the spirit of Montefiore's religion.

From such practical considerations Mr Montefiore is by temperament removed. *His approach to Judaism is literary and theological.* He moves in a world of ideals. He is content to be a dreamer of prophetic Judaism that shall be wholly spiritual and universal.<sup>107</sup> (Italics mine).

This highlighting of the theological nature of Montefiore's teaching is significant because it demonstrates how American Reform Jews felt Montefiore's Judaism differed from their own. In fact, Reichert is keen to differentiate between mainstream Anglo-Liberal Jewish teaching and Montefiore's more radical thought; Montefiore's writings are not even to be regarded as "an official deliverance" although, as Reichert puts it, "his ties with the Liberal Jewish Synagog are very close".<sup>108</sup> Thus from an early stage, Montefiore's Judaism had something about it with which neither German nor American Reform rabbis were quite comfortable. (This is a qualitative difference which Meyer's treatment, among others, fails

to detect).

Arnold Wolf, in his article, ‘The Dilemma of Claude Montefiore’ (1959), also identifies a distinctive theological angle. In considering Montefiore’s interest in Christianity as one of various Jewish responses to “the problem of Christianity”, he suggests,

[The problem] is not, as Klausner thinks, a national one; nor as Sandmel, a historical one; nor as Asch, mythopoetic. It is an issue, perhaps Montefiore would have said, *the issue*, of Jewish theology.<sup>109</sup>

For Wolf, this realisation that Montefiore’s interest in Christianity was theologically driven explains the relative fierceness of Jewish criticism Montefiore received, in comparison with other scholars interested in Christianity, such as Buber. For while Buber was unmistakably Jewish in theology, Montefiore found himself “impaled on the horns of Liberalism”.<sup>110</sup> The liberal theology which animated his studies, and which placed truth above any creed, was Jewish only because, generally speaking, he found that ‘Judaism’ coincided with ‘truth’. But this only raised the question in Jewish minds: What if it did not? The conclusion can only be that, as regards his theology, Montefiore was first a Liberal, and second a Jew. Wolf’s analysis is let down, however, by his dismissal of the importance of Christianity to Montefiore and to his liberal outlook, when he comments, “What seems to be his ‘acceptance’ of Christianity is often no more than the patronising friendliness of the nobleman.”<sup>111</sup> A key element in the make-up of Montefiore’s Liberal Jewish theology is thus overlooked.

Walter Jacob’s *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes* (1974) likewise fails to understand the relevance of Christianity for Montefiore’s Liberal Jewish thought, although for different reasons. Puzzled by his apparent enthusiasm for the traditional enemy, Jacob describes how Montefiore “became an apologist for Christianity, seeking to present the best of that religion to his fellow Jews”.<sup>112</sup> While this is not incorrect, Jacob misses an important point by approaching Montefiore’s sympathy for Christianity from the wrong perspective. Montefiore was not so much for or against Christianity, as for *Liberal Judaism*. Once the influence of Christian theological expression and certain teachings have been recognised (something which Jacob fails to appreciate), it becomes clear that Montefiore’s alleged defence of Christianity is better understood as a defence of Liberal Judaism, in that Montefiore had absorbed and, in a sense, identified with, Christianity. Unfortunately,

Jacob's view is reproduced in the most recent study of Montefiore, Dan Cohn-Sherbok's *Fifty Jewish Thinkers* (1997), where Montefiore is again compartmentalised as "an apologist for the Christian faith".<sup>113</sup>

Approaching Montefiore from a completely different angle is AT Hanson's article, 'A Modern Philo' (1977). It begins unpromisingly with a description of Liberal Judaism as "a back to the Bible movement, comparable to the Karaite movement, but even more radical".<sup>114</sup> (This is most unhelpful considering that Montefiore spent so much time refuting the absolute authority of the Bible and since he regarded the rabbinic literature as a legitimate part of Jewish religious literature). It goes on, however, to compare Montefiore to the first-century Jew, Philo, since both had incorporated into their Judaism "the best culture of his day".<sup>115</sup> This is interesting not least because Montefiore had himself referred to Philo approvingly on many occasions in his writings. While Hanson distinguishes between Philo's use of Hellenistic philosophy and Montefiore's use of modern, scientific thought, in fact, the two men were closer than he imagined. It can (and will) be argued that Montefiore consciously sought to enrich Liberal Judaism with Hellenistic thought, although in a modified form, better described as assimilated or Christianised Hellenism. Hanson also suggested that Montefiore's religion was one of "high principles and idealist philosophy" (echoing Reichert). As a result, Montefiore had, like Philo, "left one thing out, the God of history, the personal God who addresses men".<sup>116</sup> Since this is a risk that all liberal theology runs, whether Christian or Jewish, Hanson's treatment amounts to a critique of Montefiore's liberalism (echoing Wolf).

A neat summary of how Montefiore and his liberal movement have generally been regarded within 'Jewish thought' studies is provided in Jacob Agus' article 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism' (1959).

While in its basic tenets this group was merely the English branch of the world-wide Reform movement, Claude G Montefiore was concerned principally with the diminution of the nationalistic elements in Judaism and with the revision of the Jewish attitude towards Jesus and the New Testament.<sup>117</sup>

Agus goes on to deal more controversially with what he describes as Montefiore's "shocking" central thesis, "namely, that Liberal Judaism accept the New Testament along with the Hebrew Bible and Talmud in its treasury of sacred literature".<sup>118</sup> This is a serious

accusation and one which, if it were widely accepted, would explain much of the hostility Montefiore has received at the hands of his co-religionists. Reichert recognises this when he insists, “But [Montefiore] has been very careful, despite the charge of some critics, to maintain that ‘at this time of day it is impossible for the Jew to make his Bible include the New Testament.’”<sup>119</sup> It is also an accusation at odds with the assessments of other writers, such as Louis Jacobs who maintains, “Montefiore was opposed to any attempt at placing the New Testament on a par with the Hebrew scriptures or having readings from the New Testament in any act of Jewish worship.”<sup>120</sup> It can (and will) be argued that Montefiore’s feelings on the matter were ambiguous and that Agus greatly overstated his case. However much Montefiore might have wished to incorporate parts of the New Testament into the Liberal Jewish repertoire (and there is certainly evidence that he did wish to do so), there is no doubt that he simultaneously recognised the impracticality of the idea for his own time, a fact which Agus neglects to mention.

Agus also complains that Montefiore misunderstood rabbinic Judaism in choosing to contrast it with the Prophets. He suggests, “Montefiore failed to take account of the prophetic ardour in legalism itself.”<sup>121</sup> The harshest modern critique of Montefiore’s approach to rabbinic Judaism, however, is to be found in Lou Silberman’s ‘Prolegomenon’ to the 1968 edition of Montefiore’s *The Synoptic Gospels*. Astounded at what he sees as Montefiore’s “priggish” and “condescending” attitude, Silberman condemns it as a “wrong-headed interpretation of the rabbinic attitude towards and understanding of Holy Scriptures”.<sup>122</sup> Yet both men note (with some puzzlement) Montefiore’s consistent defence of the Rabbis against poor Christian scholarship. Once again scholars are split on how to read Montefiore, for it is this side of his work which other Jewish writers choose to emphasise. Walter Jacob, for example, praises him for his “fine understanding of rabbinic Judaism”.<sup>123</sup> And Frederick Schwartz’s ‘Claude Montefiore on Law and Tradition’ (1964), the most sophisticated treatment of Montefiore’s understanding of rabbinics and Torah, fully recognises his positive appreciation of the Law and of the Jewish veneration of the Law.<sup>124</sup> Schwartz differs from Silberman in his ability to distinguish between Montefiore’s view of modern and pre-modern approaches to Torah. Thus Schwartz does not find it patronising (as Silberman did) for Montefiore to have sympathised with and even praised the pre-modern Rabbis who had done so much with so little. On the other hand, he recognises that Montefiore rarely spoke positively of Torah in modern times unless it was in the sense of a moral Law.<sup>125</sup> It can (and will) be argued that Montefiore’s apparently

paradoxical approach (both for and against Rabbinic Judaism) is, in fact, quite consistent and comprehensible in the light of his Liberal Jewish theology.<sup>126</sup> Schwartz's subtle analysis goes a long way towards this by avoiding the easy solution (that Montefiore was biased against rabbinic Judaism), and confronting instead the rationalist assumptions behind his belief that Reason had priority over authoritative texts.

The question of Montefiore's Jewishness is a complex one, and will be treated extensively in the following chapters. Opinions differ widely among the writers concerned with 'Jewish thought' as to which particular aspects of his teaching could be regarded as Jewish. Almost without exception, however, all have acknowledged the independence and originality of his thought, together with his intellectual honesty. We have already seen Reichert's observation that Montefiore's teachings should be distanced from official Liberal Jewish teaching, and Herbert Danby puts it even more strongly, warning his readers that Montefiore's views "must on no account be supposed to be in any sense typically Jewish".<sup>127</sup> Silberman criticises *The Synoptic Gospels* as "a party document, that party being a party of one",<sup>128</sup> while Hugh Montefiore praises him for "the intellectual courage to think out *on his own* his attitude to Christianity".<sup>129</sup> Jonathan Magonet feels that of the "eminent figures" of Anglo-Liberal Judaism, Montefiore was "perhaps the most creative".<sup>130</sup> As regards 'Jewish-Christian relations', Montefiore is remembered less ambiguously. Vivian Simmons, a younger contemporary of Montefiore, marks him out as "the first man who undertook the great, though perhaps thankless, task of enlightening the English Jew about the religion of Christianity and its relation to Judaism".<sup>131</sup> Reichert puts this down to a conscious decision to set aside "the unholy memories of Christian intolerance and persecution"<sup>132</sup> while Wolf praises his determination to face apparent contradictions between Jews and Christians.<sup>133</sup> Walter Jacob goes so far as to suggest that Montefiore "came closer to a dialogue with Christianity than any other thinker up to his time".<sup>134</sup> It can (and will) be argued that in terms of inter-faith dialogue, Montefiore's position, both practically and theoretically, was exceptional among Jewish thinkers of his day. One of the ways in which he broke new ground was in his non-polemical, even sympathetic, treatment of the Christian scriptures.

#### **iv – Biblical and New Testament Studies**

One of the earliest assessments of Montefiore's contributions to biblical scholarship

was FC Burkitt's essay in *Speculum Religionis* (1929). It begins by remarking that Montefiore was born the same year as *Essays and Reviews* (a collection of controversial essays by leading liberal scholars at Oxford, the theological equivalent to Darwin's *Origin of Species*) was published. For Burkitt, Montefiore's approach to biblical studies is best explained in terms of Jowett and Oxford. As "a champion of the Rabbinic Religion", Montefiore had succeeded where other Jewish writers had failed largely because of his scholarly credentials and his familiarity with mainstream New Testament scholarship. This had given his challenge an academic legitimacy that was difficult to ignore.<sup>135</sup> His writings on Jesus were, on the other hand, more important for their specialist Jewish knowledge, and Burkitt is impressed by Montefiore's view of Jesus as that of "a prophet rather than a reformer".<sup>136</sup> His approach to Paul is described as his "most original contribution to Biblical study", although it is also criticised for some of the assumptions made.<sup>137</sup> Overall, Burkitt is correct to identify Oxford liberalism as intrinsic to Montefiore's method and conclusions, and to recognise his achievements in denigrating the Protestant view of the Jewish Law. But his assessment of Montefiore's Pauline studies is flawed by ignoring his interest in Paul's relevance for Liberal Judaism.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, it can (and will) be argued that Montefiore's view of Jesus was, contrary to Burkitt, very much one of a reformer.

In large-scale surveys of New Testament scholarship, Montefiore tends to be looked upon with a certain amount of interest for his novelty factor. WG Kümmel's *The New Testament; The History of the Investigations of its Problems* (ET 1973) focuses on Montefiore's significance as a Jewish scholar with rabbinic knowledge capable of accurately comparing and contrasting the New Testament and the rabbinic literature. Quoting only from *The Synoptic Gospels* (1927) and *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (1930), he makes no mention of Montefiore's Pauline studies, nor does he criticise any of Montefiore's actual findings. Stephen Neill and Tom Wright's survey, *The Interpretation of the New Testament* (1989), takes a similar view. It acknowledges the contribution of Jewish scholars such as Montefiore and Buber, but adds that "the Christian feels himself to be in possession of certain keys which are not in their hands".<sup>139</sup>

Montefiore's views on Jesus are accurately summarised as early as 1931 in Thomas Walker's small book, *Jewish Views of Jesus*. There is no comment or analysis, however, and the choice of Montefiore as representative of the Liberal Jewish position with respect to Jesus is unfortunate since it can (and will) be demonstrated that Montefiore's high view of

and warm regard for Jesus were very much his own. Samuel Sandmel's *We Jews and Jesus* (1965) is less a survey of Jewish views than it is a presentation of Sandmel's own, in the light of mainstream critical research. Montefiore is held up as the chief Jewish example of objective, well informed New Testament scholarship.<sup>140</sup> The way in which Montefiore dealt with specific passages is ignored, however, and it is left to Donald Hagner in *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (1984) to quote from Montefiore's writings in detail and to set him in the context of both mainstream Jesus scholarship and Jewish approaches to Jesus. In so doing, he also corrects Walter Jacob's 'Claude G Montefiore's Reappraisal of Christianity' (1970), in which Montefiore is accused of having an amateur approach to New Testament scholarship.<sup>141</sup> What all of these assessments of his writings on Jesus fail to consider in sufficient detail is the practical importance to Montefiore of Jesus' teachings in the support of his own Liberal Jewish agenda. Without an understanding of this, it is impossible to fully appreciate his unique approach to Jesus.

Montefiore is also treated at length in two of the most important post-war Pauline studies, WD Davies' *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1955) and EP Sanders *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Davies' introduction is, in fact, a comprehensive critique of Montefiore's denial that Paul belonged to mainstream first-century Judaism. That Montefiore is regarded as "a convenient starting point"<sup>142</sup> reflects how seriously his criticism of Paul was taken. Sander's introduction also features Montefiore, where he is praised for his challenge of the traditional Protestant understanding of both Paul and the Law. While Sanders agrees with some of Davies' criticisms of Montefiore, he goes on to suggest that Pauline scholars have failed to engage with Montefiore's main point: why is it that what is essential to Rabbinic Judaism is missing from Paul and is not taken account of by Paul?<sup>143</sup> Neither Davies nor Sanders considers anything but the bare essentials of Montefiore's thesis, and neither is interested in his hermeneutical treatment of Paul, especially his belief in the relevance of Paul's ethical teachings for Liberal Judaism. Nor are they interested in setting Montefiore in the context of Jewish approaches to Paul, the best example of which has been Donald Hagner's essay, 'Paul in Modern Jewish Thought' (1980). As we shall see in chapter four, however, there are problems with Hagner's treatment. These include his conclusions regarding the direction in which Jewish scholarship is moving, and his presentation of Montefiore's approach, which is limited to a few lines. No analysis of Montefiore's views on Paul has, to date, quoted him at length or considered his attitude towards specific texts in any detail.

## **v – Conclusion**

One result of the compartmentalisation of his thought into various categories (Reform and Anglo-Jewish history, Jewish thought, Jewish-Christian relations, and biblical studies) has been a fragmented view of Montefiore. More so than for most thinkers, his thought remained remarkably consistent throughout his life, and can almost always be traced back to a single, consistent set of principles, which he defined under Liberal Judaism. To consider any aspect of his writings apart from his Liberal Jewish agenda is to potentially misunderstand him. It is to tear a seamless web, in effect. The main conclusion to be drawn from the preceding survey of historiographical material is that any comprehensive analysis of his thought must begin from a clear understanding of his conception of Liberal Judaism, and what this meant to him historically and theologically.

This thesis will attempt to harmonise the findings of previous scholarship so as to clarify areas of contention and to produce a coherent picture of Montefiore's thought. Regarding his Jewishness, it will consider the relationship of Liberal Judaism to the concrete, historical expressions of Judaism (especially Reform) around him. It will also explore Montefiore's views of an 'essence of Judaism' from a theological perspective. Related to this will be questions concerning his attitude towards authority, tradition and nationality – and how he might have reacted to the Holocaust and the State of Israel. Regarding Montefiore's approach to Christianity, the thesis will set out to demonstrate more comprehensively than has so far been achieved the effect of Christian theology upon his own. This will depend largely upon understanding his particular conception of Christianity, and analysing the influence of Hellenistic philosophy upon Christian thought around the turn of the century. One of the main objectives will be to ascertain whether or not accusations of crypto-Christianity have been justified. Finally, the thesis will answer the need for a full-length treatment of Montefiore's views on both Jesus and Paul and, in particular, the ways in which he utilised them for the cause of Liberal Judaism. By setting his writings in the context of other Jewish approaches and in the light of modern research, it will also clarify Montefiore's contribution to the development of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

# **Chapter One**

## **Montefiore in the Context of Jewish Thought**

### **I – Introduction**

Claude Montefiore's vision of Liberal Judaism was the product of both Jewish and non-Jewish influences. This chapter will concentrate upon the Jewish context, and will leave the more complex question of how Christianity and Christian society affected Montefiore for the following chapter. It should be borne in mind, however, that the very considerable impact of Christian culture and thought upon Western Judaism means that this distinction is somewhat artificial.

The chapter will begin, in section II, with an overview of British Reform Judaism in the context of related movements in Germany. It will then consider, in section III, the development of Montefiore's movement as a response to the challenges of modern historical criticism and religious apathy, and as an alternative to both British Reform and Orthodox Judaism. After considering the ways in which Liberal Judaism provoked controversy within the Anglo-Jewish community, an attempt will be made to establish the limits of influence of German and American Reform Judaism upon it. The chapter will then move on to outline those aspects of Montefiore's thought which, when compared and contrasted with other Jewish thinkers, can help in an understanding of his unusual conception of Judaism. In particular, section IV will touch on Montefiore's view of Rabbinic Judaism, section V will look in detail at the relationship between Judaism and nationalism, and section VI will consider the question of exactly what constituted the "essence of Judaism". Section VII will examine Montefiore's concept of a theological expression of Judaism, and the content of some of the more contentious theological issues. This will be followed, in section VIII, by a consideration of Montefiore's contributions in terms of Jewish-Christian dialogue, involving a general treatment of the idea of Judaism and Christianity playing complementary roles.

## II – Aspects of Anglo-Jewish Reform

### *i – Early Reform Judaism in Germany and Britain*

A common assumption among historians interested in Montefiore has been that the ideas and practices of German-Jewish thought must have featured heavily in his own advanced, non-orthodox theology. Some suggest the direct influence of German Reform writings.<sup>1</sup> Others imply indirect German influence through his exposure to Anglo-Reform, viewed largely as an extension or echo of German Reform.<sup>2</sup> Montefiore was brought up attending the West London Reform Synagogue, remained a member of its congregation all his life, had a place on its council, and occasionally preached there.<sup>3</sup> While no one would doubt that it left an indelible trace upon his religious thought, the extent to which it can be regarded as a conduit for German influence is debatable. It would be sensible, then, in attempting to assess the relevance of German influence, to begin by examining the growth of the British Reform movement and its relations with the Continent, before considering the degree to which Montefiore and Anglo-Liberal Judaism absorbed German Reform thought directly.

The phenomenon of Reform Judaism first emerged in Germany in the first two decades of the nineteenth century and was followed by similar movements in Britain and France in the 1840s and 1850s. It was primarily a protest movement in which intellectual, middle-class Jews of Europe rebelled against the Orthodox world-view with which they had found themselves increasingly at odds since the time of the Jewish Enlightenment or *Haskalah*. The impetus and pressure came mainly from laymen who pressed for specific socio-religious reforms, although a certain amount of theological rumination soon followed as ministers or rabbis were brought in to justify the need for reform. Typically, a climate of critical opinion was created which affected reforms even among the Orthodox congregations.<sup>4</sup> Chronologically, it appears a straightforward matter that German Reform must have had a considerable influence upon British Reform but, in fact, a comparison of German and British Reform developments reveals important differences and a higher degree of independence than is often supposed.

For example, there were significant distinctions regarding the influence of

Government upon the development of Reform Judaism in the two countries. In Germany, the various State authorities had considerable power in regulating religious life and allowed the Jewish communities very little room to manoeuvre. Their common aim was to encourage Jewish conversion and assimilation. Some States achieved this by supporting Jewish attempts to embrace modernity and religious reform (for example, Hamburg)<sup>5</sup> while others prevented it so as to emphasise and contrast the 'backwardness' of Orthodox Judaism (for example, Prussia).<sup>6</sup> The majority of German Jews in the early nineteenth century came to view conformity to German socio-religious norms as their best hope for political emancipation. As for the influence of the Jewish communal authorities, the establishment of two of the most important Reform centres in Berlin (1815) and Hamburg (1818) was accomplished without 'official' sanction.<sup>7</sup> In Britain, on the other hand, where the Jewish population had already achieved a relatively high degree of autonomy, there was no governmental interference in religious reform. While emancipation politics certainly played a part in the development of British Reform Judaism, it was more a matter of internal dispute among the Jewish community. For Jews such as Moses Montefiore, president of the Orthodox dominated Board of Deputies, who feared assimilation as the inevitable result of total political emancipation, the best policy was to gently attempt to extend already existing privileges. For others, such as Francis Goldsmid, who were resentful of the Board's procrastination, an alternative power-base was required if true emancipation and full rights were ever to be attained, and the Reform movement seemed to fit the bill. Nevertheless this political dimension of British Reform Judaism had almost nothing to do with State power and was far less significant for its development than had been the case in Germany. What both the early Reform movements did have in common, of course, was finding themselves marginalised by the steadfastly Orthodox community authorities. This was more easily achieved in Britain, where the influential Chief Rabbi and the centralised Board of Deputies combined to make a concerted, sustained attack against Reform, than it was in Germany, where the Orthodox authorities were de-centralised, dispersed and often without State support.<sup>8</sup>

There were also important differences with respect to the character of the religious and intellectual contexts of German and British Reform. In both countries, the context was essentially Christian. Enlightenment Protestantism in Germany did not seem so far from *Haskalah* Judaism, and its forms of expression were often emulated; various Reform synagogue services adopted German Christian socio-religious patterns of decorum, music,

clerical dress, and regular, edifying sermons.<sup>9</sup> Some Reform Jews also came to see the biblical-critical research of Protestant scholars as a model for approaching their own religious texts. Thus, interwoven with practical, external reforms came historical criticism and an undermining of the fundamentalist approach to scripture, as evidenced in the work of the leading Reform Rabbi Abraham Geiger.<sup>10</sup> These new 'Jewish Science' principles were incorporated institutionally in several German rabbinical colleges that were set up in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> One consequence was that the bible was not regarded as any more divine than was the rabbinic literature or, at least, that there was not much of a difference. In England where biblical-criticism did not make much of a general impact until the close of the century, the Christian tendency was towards biblical literalism. This had consequences for Anglo-Jewry where Reform thought (in the writings of the first minister of the Reform Synagogue, David Marks) took on these characteristics.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Claude Montefiore appears very much a pioneer, standing alone in publicly and consistently arguing for a biblical-critical approach to Jewish religious texts as early as 1891.<sup>13</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that a rabbinical training college incorporating modern critical scholarship, Leo Baeck College, was not established in Britain until 1956 (and came about largely as a result of the efforts of *German* Jewish refugees).

To establish precisely the way in which native British developments combined with and absorbed German Reform practices and theory is not easy. The first factor to clarify is the degree of exposure to German thought, and the manner in which it was generally received. Certainly, the cultural and political character of Anglo-Jewry in the 1820s and 1830s was not conducive to the Reform movement. This was partly because change was associated in the minds of many Englishmen with revolution, and partly because conformity to an established Anglican Church (or Orthodox Synagogue) was characteristic of those aspiring to Establishment status.<sup>14</sup> By December 1836, however, a petition had been presented to the governing board of the Orthodox Synagogue, Bevis Marks, asking for "such alterations and modifications as were in the line of changes introduced in the Reform synagogue in Hamburg and other places".<sup>15</sup> Quite understandably, this first mention of the German movement in England was interpreted by David Philipson (and many historians since) as indicative of the growing influence of German Reform.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the Reform Prayer Book, which appeared in 1841 following the establishment of the West London Synagogue in 1840, also made favourable references to contemporary Continental developments, seems to support the view.<sup>17</sup> In *Response to Modernity* (1988), Meyer offers

further evidence which indicates that “British Reform was not so isolated from its counterparts elsewhere, nor so completely different from them.” He identifies close personal ties between leading British Reform figures and German ones, notes the admiring way in which German sermons were translated, and cites the regular reports in the *Jewish Chronicle* concerning the progress and anti-ritualism of German Reform synagogues. He points out that bibliocentrism and the abolition of the second day of festivals (both conventionally regarded by historians as peculiarly characteristic of early British Reform) had had their foreshadowing in the proposals of German rabbis. And, despite admitting that the West London Synagogue was “something other than simply an extension of the German Reform movement”, Meyer cannot help but seize upon the Reform congregation in Manchester, established in 1856, as a clear example of where “the German influence was more obvious and direct”.<sup>18</sup>

At this point, it is useful to ask oneself, ‘What exactly does such evidence demonstrate?’ The matter of decorum can just as easily be explained in terms of the self-consciousness of middle-class London Jewry in the light of Anglican norms of decorum and sensitivity to the relative laxity of their own synagogue services. The Prayer Book actually contained no theological revolutions (for example, it retained the texts calling for the restoration of Israel, the reestablishment of the sacrificial cult, and the coming of a personal messiah, in contrast to the more radical German Reform liturgies).<sup>19</sup> Reports in the *Jewish Chronicle*, while indicating public awareness, were almost universal in their condemnation and suspicion of German Reform theology as divisive and irreligious.<sup>20</sup> Bibliocentrism and reforms concerning the second day of festivals, like many of the external innovations, can be accounted for by other indigenous factors, not least the direct emulation of Anglican services and the impact of the Christian critique of Judaism (as we shall see in chapter two). In point of fact, while it formed a pivotal subject for discussion, the second day of festivals was never actually abolished.<sup>21</sup> Nor is the example of Manchester of much help in demonstrating the dominance of German influence, since Bill Williams has argued convincingly on a socio-intellectual level in *The Making of Manchester Jewry* (1976) for the essentially British roots of reform there.<sup>22</sup> Therefore the extent of the effect of German Reform upon British Reform is debatable and has undoubtedly been over-estimated by certain historians. Even if one were to accept a German source of influence, the remarkably un-radical modifications of decorum and externalities clearly demonstrates the limits. At this time there was no hint of dissatisfaction with the underlying theology behind the

Synagogue services in Britain, and this is something that set it apart from the older and more developed Continental Reform movement.<sup>23</sup> In fact, it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that the Continental rabbis who came as refugees to Britain began to have a more direct influence on Anglo-Reform theology.<sup>24</sup>

The whole issue of the place of theology in early British Reform Judaism is a fascinating one. In contrast to its sister movements in Germany and to a lesser degree the United States where ‘synods’ and ‘platforms’ respectively attempted doctrinal expressions of Judaism, there were no assemblies of Anglo-Reform rabbis. The long tradition in Britain of subservience to lay authority meant that the Reform rabbis had no encouragement, nor felt under any pressure, to formulate theological justifications for the external reforms that were mostly brought about by the social concerns of upwardly mobile Jewish laymen. In contrast to what had happened elsewhere, opposition from the Orthodox in Britain stemmed entirely from the reformers’ act of breaking away from ‘ecclesiastical’ control in 1840, and had little or nothing to do with the actual reforms (many of which were duly adopted by the Orthodox themselves) or a radical Reform theology (which simply did not materialise). Unlike the German reformers who, by and large, shared certain theological premises borne out of a common response to modernity, there was not a prevailing theological agenda among Anglo-Jewish reformers. In this sense, the Reform movement in Britain lacked the power and cohesion of a true religious movement.<sup>25</sup> Those few attempts at theological writings were certainly less systematic and more individualist in character, as we shall now see.

German Reform theology emphasised from very early on the idea of Progress. Following the trends in Christian scholarship, ‘Jewish Science’ postulated that from biblical times until the contemporary day and on into the future, Judaism and its understanding of God should be regarded as an evolving phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, for David Marks, minister at the West London Synagogue from 1840 until 1893, Jewish Reform had more to do with returning to earlier, purer forms of Judaism than it did with forging new understandings. One obvious consequence was that while many German reformers regarded the rabbinic literature as an improvement and development over the more primitive religion of the Hebrew Bible, Marks (along with many British Jews) was vehemently anti-Talmudic.<sup>27</sup> Marks’ position, as traced out in his *Forms of Prayer* (1841), has been described as one of ‘Rational Piety’.<sup>28</sup> He argued that the ethical, behavioural and attitudinal teachings of Torah were universal in nature and that therefore Judaism was ultimately

rational. On the other hand, he did not wish to ignore the particularist and dogmatic elements of Jewish biblical tradition, which he accepted uncritically as an act of piety, and so urged general observance. Despite speaking and writing of the “pure principles” of Judaism, echoing the polemic of the German Reform movement (which in turn echoed the common expression of nineteenth-century Liberal Religion),<sup>29</sup> Marks was uninterested in the theological investigations of ‘Jewish Science’ and epitomised the English concern for practical and edifying teaching. Thus in explaining the criteria he used in selecting material for his Prayer Book, he simultaneously argued (i) that “the prayer should be perfectly intelligible... [and that] the sentiments which it expresses should be of a pure and elevating character”, and that (ii) “These sublime portions [of the common ritual] we trust we shall be found to have carefully preserved.”<sup>30</sup> Here, as elsewhere, his innovations should be understood as an individualist, unsuccessful attempt to reconcile rationalism with pious observance. Another important key to understanding British Reform at this time through Marks’ writings, was the effect of Christian critique of Judaism. Modifications such as increased decorum and sermons in the vernacular reflected Christian practices, as did the bibliocentric basis for arguing for banning the second day of festivals.<sup>31</sup> It is difficult to see direct, clear emulation of German Reform practice in Marks’ essentially non-theological reforms.

Morris Joseph succeeded Marks as minister of the Reform Synagogue in 1893. His style of Judaism was based upon rabbinism and was more normative than Mark’s anti-Oral Law theology. Best described as ‘Conservative Reform’, he defined his position in *Judaism as Creed and Life* (1903) as

midway between Orthodoxy which regards the *Shulchan Aruch*, or at least the Talmud, as the final authority in Judaism and the extreme liberalism which, settling little store by the historic sentiment as a factor in the Jewish consciousness, would lightly cut the religion loose from the bonds of tradition.<sup>32</sup>

Even more so than Marks, Joseph emphasised rationality, arguing, “Judaism asks us not for credulity, but for true faith – based on reason.”<sup>33</sup> Theological developments were possible, he felt, as long as no attempt was made to negate “certain recognised principles” which were intrinsic to Judaism. Thus he was able to highlight the continuity of contemporary Judaism with previous historical expressions, especially with regard to the dogmas of God’s existence, unity, spiritual nature, providence, and selection of Israel.<sup>34</sup> Yet, just as Marks’

piety had been tempered by rationality, so Joseph's rationality was tempered by faith and mystery. He admitted,

There must always be a region into which we cannot penetrate, a mystery we cannot solve. When the intellect has done its uttermost, we must still have recourse to faith. Where we cannot know we must be content to trust.<sup>35</sup>

Explorations into theological realms were, for Joseph, necessarily limited and he preferred to depend upon traditional theories of religious philosophy. This is reflected in the fact that, for a Reform treatise, *Judaism as Creed and Life* was uncharacteristically concerned with the ceremonial and ethical aspects of Judaism. Ultimately then, Joseph, like Marks, did not attempt to justify Reform innovations by any consistent theological or theoretical position in the way that German reformers had tried.

## ***ii – The Paralysis of Reform Judaism in Britain***

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the German conservative reformers, now known as Liberals (to be distinguished from the more radical *Reformgemeinde* or 'Friends of Reform' in Berlin), included most religiously minded Jews in Germany among their ranks.<sup>36</sup> The neo-Orthodox, despite reassessing their situation and making certain concessions, had nevertheless become entrenched and isolated from much of the surrounding world. Like the *Reformgemeinde*, they were small fringe groups with little or no religious authority and less political clout.<sup>37</sup> In England, on the other hand, it was the reformers who had been sidelined and who survived in the margins, and the neo-Orthodox who retained the dominant position. Institutionally, the reformers' situation had improved considerably from the low point in January 1842, when Chief Rabbi Hirschell pronounced a *herem* on anyone using the Reform Prayer Book. The ban itself was lifted in 1849 and a licence to register marriages in the West London Synagogue was granted in 1856.<sup>38</sup> Yet there was little expansion of the movement in Britain during the nineteenth century. No attempt was made to establish an academic institution to train Reform rabbis or to contribute to Anglo-Jewish scholarship, and new Reform congregations emerged only at Manchester in 1856 and Bradford in 1873.<sup>39</sup> In practice, many Orthodox customs continued to be observed.<sup>40</sup> As Philipson observed in 1931, British Reform "has continued along the lines first laid down, but has not made much further headway in this direction; in fact it has become quite wedded to its traditions as are

the orthodox congregations to theirs".<sup>41</sup>

There are many factors which contributed to this paralysis and which meant that, from a world-wide perspective, Reform did not really become a 'movement' in Britain until much later in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>42</sup> Contrasting British Reform Judaism in the early stages with the German experience, one can conclude that, firstly, the lack of a rigorous reappraisal of Jewish tradition and the absence of a distinct, consensual theological position, were important causes of its failure to gain as popular a following as that enjoyed on the Continent. Secondly, the dearth of vibrant leaders with a radical vision cannot have helped. Thirdly, the Orthodox took much of the wind out of the reformers' sails by replacing their own elderly, out-of-touch leader with Nathan Adler, who had been college-educated and who was prepared to institute regular vernacular sermons and to increase standards of decorum.<sup>43</sup> Fourthly, the Anglo-reformers failed to offer a viable alternative to Orthodoxy in answering the challenge of modern historical criticism. One result of this was that Reform Judaism was no more successful than Orthodoxy had been in combating religious apathy. Fifthly, in contrast to their German counterparts the Anglo-Orthodox had adapted by following the example of the Church of England in asking only for a generalised adherence to vague principles. Membership of a body with establishment status (which did not require strict observance) proved decisive in retaining the support of a conservative Anglo-Jewish élite.<sup>44</sup> This last factor is worth considering in greater detail.

Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore's immediate background was that of the Anglo-Jewish élite or 'the Cousinhood' as Chaim Bermant has called it.<sup>45</sup> Both the Montefiore and Goldsmid families had been in England for a number of generations, and by 1858 were well established. While in so many ways Montefiore epitomised the upper-middle class Anglo-Jewish gentleman, in matters of personal religion and theological rigour he can be regarded as atypical. In particular, his distaste for what he regarded as the superficiality of establishment Orthodox worship set him apart.

The Anglo-Jewish élite's attachment to the faith of their forefathers is not a straightforward matter to analyse. While there were few among them whom the European Orthodox would consider properly orthodox, Moses Montefiore being a celebrated exception, they were in general respectful of tradition. Among the wealthy Jewish families who had been settled in England for some time, defection to Christianity was rare, occurring

most often in cases of intermarriage. Todd Endelman argues that this was because conversion had ceased to be as *useful* to English Jews as it was to German, Hungarian and Russian Jews who struggled for social acceptance in Christian society.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in comparison with the Jewish élite of other European countries, the Cousinhood's Jewish self-identity was evident in their punctual observation of the major Jewish festivals and of the Sabbath, and in keeping (loosely) to the dietary laws.<sup>47</sup> This is not to say that within the Cousinhood there was unanimous Orthodox observance. This was obviously not the case. For example, at university the Montefiore brothers, Leonard and Claude, spent their Sabbaths visiting and entertaining the elderly inhabitants of the local workhouse.<sup>48</sup> Samuel Montagu, father of Lily Montagu (who founded the Jewish Religious Union with Claude Montefiore), allowed his household to play tennis on Sabbath yet prohibited croquet because chipped mallets constituted "work".<sup>49</sup> And Montefiore's disciple, Basil Henriques, was brought up by his mother without synagogue ritual, was taught to kneel in prayer, and understood his Judaism to be based on faith and love of God rather than upon a body of ceremonies, all of which echoed contemporary Evangelical Protestant practices and left him almost entirely unfamiliar with those of Orthodox Judaism.<sup>50</sup> Generally speaking, however, as Englander demonstrated in 'Anglicised but not Anglican' (1988), the upper-middle classes were content to practise their Judaism with the same sort of Victorian religiosity as the British Establishment practised their Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the fact that rigorous Orthodox practice was uncommon among the Anglo-Jewish élite, very few showed much enthusiasm for the reformation of Judaism. Instead, they tended to adopt a midway position, somewhere between the inconvenience of full observation of Orthodoxy and what they considered the somewhat unseemly, unnecessary disturbances and tensions caused by Reform Judaism (which was, as we have seen, quite mild in comparison to the radicalism of American and German Reform Judaism). Endelman explains this in political terms, suggesting that the popularity of Reform within German Jewry was due to the socio-political pressure on nineteenth-century German Jews to make Judaism "acceptable" to the Christian majority so as to win emancipation. In contrast, due to the relative tolerance of English government since the seventeenth century, there was comparatively no pressure upon British Jews to divorce themselves from Jewish "particularism".<sup>52</sup> While failing to adequately explain the undeniably *theological* aspects of German and American Reform Judaism, this explanation is useful for understanding the psychology of the Anglo-Jewish élite and their general aversion to Reform. Having adopted

Victorian religiosity and patterned themselves on the Anglican upper-middle classes, they felt more secure of their societal position than did their European counterparts, and could afford a greater degree of ideological relaxation. In terms of self-identity, they were more concerned about bonds of ethnicity – failure to concern oneself with the theological tenets of Orthodox Judaism by no means alienated one from the Cousinhood nor prevented one from fully participating within the Anglo-Jewish community. For example, despite his agnosticism, Arthur Cohen played an important rôle in Jewish affairs, including holding the vice-presidency of the British rabbinic training academy, Jews' College, for 25 years.<sup>53</sup> As a result there developed among the upper-middle classes a conservative interest to preserve the Jewish status quo. Their general lack of interest and even hostility towards reforming tendencies can be understood as opposition to what was regarded as meddling for the sake of meddling.<sup>54</sup> The Reform Synagogue, in its institutional form, was viewed suspiciously by the élite as the harbinger of tension and schism. Montefiore's Liberal Judaism was to face a similar reaction.

### **III – The Development of Anglo-Liberal Judaism**

#### *i – Modern Historical Criticism and Progress*

The response (or lack of response) to biblical criticism has been cited as an important factor in understanding the paralysis of Reform Judaism in Britain. As we have seen, the German Reform movement had taken such developments into account from before the 1830s, applying it to their progressive view of Judaism. In England, the historical-critical analysis of religious texts did not become a topical issue until the late 1850s at the very earliest, by which time Anglo-Reform had already taken shape.<sup>55</sup> The result was that, while in Germany the reformers could offer a modern, scientifically informed alternative to Orthodoxy, in Britain the reformers were as unprepared and unfit to answer the challenge of evolutionary theory (as applied to the study of the Bible) as were the Orthodox. David Marks' Karaite-like over reliance on the Bible had proved disastrous for Anglo-Reform in the long term.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, biblical criticism had been well and

truly accepted by British universities and by the Christian clergymen they produced. Liberal thought and the idea of Progress were in the ascendant. Amongst the very earliest Anglo-Jewish thinkers to face the inevitable question, ‘Should Judaism follow suit, and if so, how?’ was Claude Montefiore. His article, ‘Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion’ was published in 1891 and laid open the way for a fresh alternative to the Judaism espoused by either the Bevis Marks Synagogue or the West London Synagogue. He argued that should Jews incorporate the findings of historical-critical methodology, the two foundation stones of Judaism would remain unaffected, namely, the belief in a personal, theistic God, and the Moral Law. In line with other Reform thinkers, Montefiore was convinced that it was the ‘Mission of Israel’ to disperse these fundamental truths throughout the world. Significantly, he recognised the fact that in themselves such beliefs did not differentiate Judaism from other religions, that the practices and rituals peculiar to Jewish tradition were, in themselves, non-essential to the Gentile world.<sup>56</sup>

In that he was more concerned with the nature of God and His relationship to mankind than were Marks or Joseph, Montefiore can be said to have had the most ‘theological’ approach of the non-Orthodox contributors in the pre-Second World War period.<sup>57</sup> A central key to his theology was the idea of a progressive revelation, such that those aspects of rabbinic and biblical teaching that offended Liberal religious philosophy could be rejected as ‘early developments’ and Judaism proper could emerge as intellectually satisfying and religiously relevant to the modern world. The effect was all the more convincing in being reinforced by his comprehensive scholarship and his fervent nineteenth-century confidence in nineteenth-century rationalism.

Montefiore was the most consistent (and thus radical) of the reform-minded leaders in applying the consequences of this rationalism to Jewish practice.<sup>58</sup> For Morris Joseph, the framework of Jewish life had been provided by religious festivals, the Sabbath, the Decalogue, and so on. For Montefiore, these traditional institutions were of interest primarily for their universalist and ethical teachings. Once this dimension of their practice had been comprehended, the actual observance itself was inevitably seen in a different light. Concerning the dietary laws, for example, Montefiore wrote,

For if I do not believe that they were specially ordered by God, and if I know that they do not belong to the specific teachings of the prophets... how can I recommend their observance?<sup>59</sup>

In contrast to Marks, he did not commend observance of the traditional Jewish institutions as an act of piety, nor did he believe them intrinsic and essential elements of Judaism, like Joseph. Rather, his criteria were based upon his belief that what was intrinsically good, noble and uplifting was inspired by God, and that the rest was of human construction and could be set aside. Acceptable ritual, he felt, while it should not be “anti-social, nor improperly burdensome, is interesting in itself, is suggestive and useful to children, possesses many valuable symbolic meanings”.<sup>60</sup> Thus Montefiore could, for example, remain committed to preserving the special character of the Sabbath as, ideally, a day of rest.<sup>61</sup> This apparent freedom to select what one wished from the Jewish tradition, at the same time as claiming a historical continuance with it, brought down upon Montefiore a great deal of criticism. He himself recognised the argument that his theology was not an authentic expression of Judaism. His primary answer was that of the ‘Mission of Israel’ and the idea that Judaism played a special rôle in convincing the surrounding world that life should have an ethical basis and be orientated towards a God who was immanent in both history and personal experience. The truth of “ethical monotheism”, he claimed, comprised the essential teachings of Judaism.<sup>62</sup> Montefiore explained all this in a private letter to Lily Montagu as early as 1899.

If the ‘old Jews’ can say that they are ‘bidden to hold together for a religious purpose’, this is not essentially different from a proposition which would assert “the object and justification of our holding together are to effect some religious end and influence.” Here, then, we find a vital principle of ‘old Judaism’ which extends equally to ‘new Judaism’ as well. Jews have a religious mission. The ‘new Jews’ can also say that the ‘Unity of God’ is the main content of our teaching, though we conceive it less abstractly. It is the close conjunction of God with morality and truth, and of morality with God, which we emphasise at present.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, there was a tension between his emphasis on universalism and his recognition of the unique truth of Judaism (‘Judaism’ as viewed through the spectacles of Liberal Judaism). There was also a difficulty in his definition of what made a Jew. In *Liberal Judaism* he called any man who put a ‘Torah’ of moral principles into action a Jew,<sup>64</sup> that is, he seemed to accept a kind of self-definition, whereby Jewish identity relied upon an individual’s personal interpretation of what Judaism required of him. In one of the few works treating Montefiore’s theology purely in the context of Reform thought, Goulston concluded,

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that a good deal of his work on the problem of sin, the relationship of God to man, of ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ religion, and of ‘religious inwardness’ was nothing but Liberal Religion in its nineteenth century form, asserted by people who claimed status as Liberal Jews.<sup>65</sup>

## *ii – Religious Apathy*

Religious apathy and secularisation characterised both Christian and Jewish communities throughout nineteenth-century Europe and provided a subject for much heated debate. In contrast to Montefiore, many Jews believed assimilation posed a mortal threat to Judaism and that their future in Western society looked likely to see a slow, lingering death for Jewish culture and religion. In a letter to Montefiore in 1907, Israel Zangwill wrote,

Nothing has more convinced me than my visit to the provinces of the absolute necessity for a Jewish renaissance, whether territorial or religious. Manchester and Birmingham are object lessons in Jewish disintegration. The communities are in a state of rapid decay, and are honeycombed not only with indifferentists but with converts. Almost every family of the better class is a house divided against itself... I see no sign of any inherent strength in the Jewish fabric to resist the environment, and if your Religious Union is to build a dam it will have to go about the work much more strenuously.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast with those who blamed their Christian or secular environment for the crisis, Montefiore felt that the high number of “nominal” Jews was not merely due to “indifferentialism, ignorance or sloth”. Although he recognised the contribution of these factors to the deteriorating situation, he did not think that they fully accounted for the facts. What was missing, he insisted, was a Judaism that answered the modern Jew’s feelings of “aloofness or estrangement... [and] dissatisfaction” with regard to the Orthodoxy.<sup>67</sup> He saw with Zangwill that a more pro-active approach was needed, urging that, unlike his “traditionalist brother”,

the Liberal Jew has not merely to sit tight and keep still, guarding the rampart, maintaining the fort, he has to go forward and, in going forward, to grow... We have to do what we can to persuade, to alter, to convert.<sup>68</sup>

Montefiore agreed with contemporary Jewish wisdom that, as a result of secularisation or “materialism”, things were changing for British Jews. Where he differed

was in failing to view the “prevailing indifference and growing apostasy” as inevitable unless Jews closed ranks and fought against the on-coming tide of assimilation. Rather than fight it, he felt that they should embrace it, and gloried in his doctrine of “the Englishman of the Jewish persuasion”. What was more, in contrast to the Reform and Orthodox Synagogues, he did not find the idea of a radical reformulation of Judaism unthinkable. Quite the contrary, he saw the need for a progressive Judaism, one that would complement the findings of science and biblical criticism, as essential for its survival; general Jewish indifference and atrophy simply illustrated the failure of the Reform and Orthodox to meet the challenges of modernity. It could hardly be said, he felt, that “the so-called reform synagogue in London, with its allies in Manchester and Bradford,” had achieved the organised presentation of Judaism necessary for retaining “modern Jews”.<sup>69</sup>

### *iii – Liberal Judaism as an Alternative to Orthodoxy and Reform*

It should be apparent that, unlike early Reform, Liberal Judaism began with a period of intellectual reflection and theological musing before taking on an institutional form. Montefiore’s movement away from the Orthodox and Reform synagogues was by no means abrupt and, in fact, it seems more accurate to speak of a gradual shift from liberal Jewish thought *within* the official camp to Liberal Judaism *outside* it. That is not to say that he ever regarded himself as Orthodox. In an address to the Unitarian students of Manchester College, Oxford, in 1896, he felt rather that he was “speaking as a reformed, liberal or unorthodox Jew, whichever adjective one may choose to adopt”.<sup>70</sup> But in writings as late as 1900, he was defining “liberal Jews” as those *within* the Orthodox and Reform communities for whom “the Jewish religion, as it is currently expounded, and as in outward form and embodiment it actually exists, does not seem to appeal”.<sup>71</sup> This somewhat negative self-definition did not yet suggest a permanent split. Rather, Montefiore urged liberal Jews to “attempt a reform from within [the existing synagogue organisations]”.<sup>72</sup> It seemed that at this time he was prepared to sacrifice “theological difference and difficulties” in the interest of religious brotherhood,<sup>73</sup> and was prepared to accept, albeit with dissatisfaction, that “liberal Judaism” in England had “no organised expression or embodiment”.<sup>74</sup>

Thus the founding of the Jewish Religious Union (JRU) in 1902 marks an important stage in Montefiore’s development, the point at which he felt that some institutional effort

would be more effective in rejuvenating Anglo-Judaism than would continued exhortation and essays. The success of this institutional effort, however, was largely the result of the work of Lily Montagu, as Ellen Umansky has demonstrated in *Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism* (1983). Involved in the Liberal cause from early on, Montagu had written an article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* on 'The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today' (1899), which gave vent to the "vague thoughts and aspirations which were seething in the minds and hearts of [Montagu's] co-religionists".<sup>75</sup> By 1902 she had persuaded Montefiore to make the transition from scholar-thinker to what she described as "the great protagonist of the Liberal cause".<sup>76</sup> Dependent upon Montefiore's theology and spiritual leadership, Montagu focussed her energy upon the administration of the growing movement (and occasionally preaching).<sup>77</sup> Deeply committed to the cause, there are indications that she was sometimes frustrated with Montefiore's cautious approach.<sup>78</sup>

At this early period of the JRU's existence, however, it is important to bear in mind that the group was conveniently amorphous and vague enough to meet the needs of a wide variety of individuals. It included a number of ministers belonging to the Orthodox United Synagogue, such as Simeon Singer, and the Reform Synagogue, such as Morris Joseph, in addition to lay preachers like Israel Abrahams and Montefiore himself (who was a warden of the West London Synagogue at the time).<sup>79</sup> JRU services were denounced as 'un-Jewish' because the group was perceived to be breaking with tradition; the private services were characterised by a paucity of Hebrew prayers, no reading from the Scroll, and Christian-like hymns.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of members would have regarded themselves as remaining under the authority of the Chief Rabbi. At this point in time, the JRU saw itself as "merely as an élitist intellectual movement which was retaining the interests of Jews who might otherwise have eschewed religion or defected to Christianity".<sup>81</sup> Within a few years, however, dissonant voices began to be heard, and cracks began to appear, regarding self-definition and Union policy.

In his paper 'The Jewish Religious Union and Its Cause' (1908), Montefiore commented that he had come to see that the original rôle of the JRU as "something more than a society, something less than a synagogue" was not enough. If, he reasoned, the JRU had been in complete sympathy with the theory and practice of official Judaism, then its existence could never have been justified. Yet if it really did represent something different

to that which Orthodoxy or Reform could offer, then the time had come to move on and develop. The negative definition – the stripping away of what was unnecessary – was no longer satisfactory. As he wrote elsewhere,

The liberalism which comes to a man from his *reaction* against tradition is *not* the liberalism which is good for him. This [is] not the *positive, warm, eager* inspiring liberalism which I want from him.<sup>82</sup>

Instead, the JRU should be understood as the representative of the “Cause and the Idea” of progressive, Liberal Judaism (upper case ‘Liberal’ replacing lower-case ‘liberal’). He was at pains to make it clear that this did not mean a fixed or dogmatic creed but rather “certain progressive principles”; in this way he was able to distance himself from the Orthodox whilst at the same time avoiding committing himself to a position which would be clear enough to divide or to offend. He concluded the paper by hinting that a clear break from Orthodox Judaism, although not the original intention, seemed to be the direction in which they were heading.

It may be true that some of us, when this Union was first founded, did not realise fully what we were doing and whither we were going. It may be true that the real reason for our existence and the Cause to which we pay allegiance,... have to a certain extent been only revealed and realised since our establishment.<sup>83</sup>

In 1909 the decision to form a new congregation was made, resulting in the resignation of the Orthodox ministers. In contradiction to the original charter of the JRU, which had forbidden the establishment of an independent congregation, a manifesto of the breakaway Liberal group was issued in September of that year and this resulted in the departure of four members of the Committee. With the establishment of a Liberal Jewish synagogue in 1910, Montefiore signalled his own and his fellow Liberal Jews’ disassociation from both the Orthodox and the Reform positions.

Montefiore had been working on a theological framework to describe his movement from before the 1903 publication of *Liberal Judaism*. By the time of his 1920 article, ‘Is there a Middle Way?’, the theological distinctions between Liberal Judaism and Orthodoxy were not only obvious, but formed the main argument. While a certain nebulousness remained – inevitable if the ideas of progression and evolution were to have any meaning for the future – Montefiore could now confidently define Liberal Judaism theologically as<sup>84</sup>

1. accepting the results of biblical criticism;
2. abandoning the doctrine of verbal inspiration;
3. accepting the human element in the Hebrew bible;
4. accepting the moral imperfection and growth within the Hebrew bible;
5. accepting the concept of progressive revelation;
6. regarding “the past” as authoritative but not binding;
7. separating the “universal” from the “particular”;
8. emphasising the Mission of Israel to the world.

Such an outline of the central tenets of Liberal Judaism offered a straightforward challenge to “Historic or Traditional Judaism”, Montefiore argued, since a middle ground was impossible: if the traditional Jew could accept elements (1) to (6), then he would be “really much nearer to Liberal Judaism than to Orthodox Judaism”. Yet if these doctrines were accepted, then the idea of a “national religion... as different as possible from its environment and, especially, as different as possible from Christianity” seemed too much “a sad and narrow conception” to satisfy.<sup>85</sup>

#### ***iv – Inter-Jewish Controversy***

Inevitably, conflict arose between the new Liberal Jewish movement and the established orders, and some of it was very bitter indeed.<sup>86</sup> The sermons and writings of Chief Rabbi Joseph H Hertz, for example, often contained criticisms of Montefiore and are useful in indicating the areas in which Liberal Jewish teaching was perceived as heretical. Over the years Hertz condemned Montefiore’s “notorious article” on higher criticism for undermining the authority of the Pentateuch,<sup>87</sup> denounced his failure to respect the rabbinical Law in matters of marriage and divorce,<sup>88</sup> and refused Montefiore’s request that the qualification ‘Orthodox’ be added to any future ‘Jewish’ pronouncements.<sup>89</sup> Similarities with Christian practice made it especially easy to question the authenticity of Montefiore’s ‘Jewishness’. Thus his experiments with Sunday Synagogue worship were regarded as “a menace to Judaism calculated to undermine and sap the most sacred institution of our race”,<sup>90</sup> and his abrogation of Jewish Law was “an echo of Paul, as of every Jewish apostate since Paul’s day, and is at absolute variance with the truth”.<sup>91</sup> Not unsurprisingly it was his

conciliatory approach to Christianity which provoked the fiercest recriminations. Hertz, once a disciple of Solomon Schechter from his time at the Jewish Theological Seminary, sided with those who felt that “the London movement” was an “attempt to start a Jewish Christianity”.<sup>92</sup> In one highly public dispute, he went so far as to imply that Montefiore was trinitarian.<sup>93</sup>

Although Todd Endelman has demonstrated that nineteenth-century Christian conversionist efforts did not actually have a very great effect upon Anglo-Jewry and that relatively few converted,<sup>94</sup> Jewish religious leaders were deeply suspicious of and generally hostile towards interaction with Christianity, partly for fear of conversion. This attitude found its way into the Jewish media – the *Jewish Chronicle* of the period is full of articles refuting Christian teaching and theology<sup>95</sup> – and into the popular Jewish consciousness. Combined with the threat of Christian conversion was the very real threat of the dilution of Jewish culture by the effect of the surrounding Christian culture (a matter to which we shall return in chapter two). Together with the traditional anti-Christian bias, these fears explain the angry opposition Montefiore’s attitude towards Christianity met with from many Jews.<sup>96</sup>

Such conflicts emerged in spite of the fact that Montefiore went to great lengths not to antagonise his opponents unnecessarily. Areas in which he was prepared to sacrifice certain liberal principles for the higher sake of continuity and to avoid offence included: retaining a ‘traditional’ stance on circumcision and the regular Saturday Sabbath, remaining officially against intermarriage, and rejecting the use of the New Testament in synagogue services. In his concern lest Liberal Jews be cut off by themselves from “the great general mass of Jews with whom we desire to keep in touch”,<sup>97</sup> he curtailed many of the progressive reforms to be found in the German and the US liberal movements. This concern to preserve what Jewish unity he could was reflected in correspondence with Lily Montagu before the JRU was formed. “Clearly we must, especially as regards public worship and the outward embodiment of religion, keep... our relation with other Jews. There must be a certain unity amid variety... There is something very valuable in historical continuity.”<sup>98</sup> And writing as late as 1935 in an open letter for the Governing Body of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Montefiore publicly reiterated his ‘live and let live’ policy with regard to the Orthodox.

For many generations yet there will be many Jews who will find this [Orthodox] way to God, who will

continue to believe in him and love him, through the medium, and on the basis, of Orthodox Judaism. Let them do so. Let us neither disturb them nor fail to do them honour.<sup>99</sup>

The rôle of Progressive Judaism was, he reiterated, simply to keep within the Jewish fold those for whom “modern science and philosophy” made the traditional path impossible.

It is instructive to compare Montefiore here with his Orthodox friends Israel Abrahams and Herbert Loewe. Both were able to maintain their liberalism within the confines of Orthodoxy in a way that Montefiore could not allow for himself. To his credit, he did not condemn them for what he would have regarded for himself as ‘sitting on the fence’, for attempting to combine what could not be combined. Montefiore rationalised Abrahams’ position arguing that, in his view, towards the end of his life Abrahams had been more “extreme” than many members of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. He preferred to see Abrahams, the co-founder of the JRU, as more of a “defender of Orthodoxy” and a “Reconciler” than as an *bona fide* Orthodox member, in spite of how others remembered him.<sup>100</sup> But as Loewe put it in the prologue to *A Rabbinic Anthology* (1938), which was itself an example of co-operation and acceptance between Orthodox and Liberal, their theological differences were very often only a matter of degree.<sup>101</sup> The remaining differences, while causing conflict, were not necessarily to be despised. He valued Montefiore’s liberal contribution as essential to the continued enrichment of Judaism, explaining the apparent “conflict” as part of God’s overall plan.

In other words, until the Messiah come, the two forces of youth and age, tradition and progress, experience and venture, Orthodoxy and Liberalism, will continue in equipoise – nay, in apparent conflict. He will reconcile them, for it is only in the end that the truth will become manifest: it needs infinity for two parallel lines to converge. Every conflict that is in the name of heaven is destined to endure, for God’s world would be the poorer, would be incomplete, if one of the two forces were spent.<sup>102</sup>

Montefiore’s intense sense of intellectual integrity and radicalism meant that he could not fully understand his friends’ positions, although his generosity of spirit ensured that it did not get in the way of their friendship and academic partnership. He would certainly have agreed with Loewe that “Labels are not religion and must not be mistaken for religion.”<sup>103</sup>

In more general terms, the psychological and social effect upon Anglo-Jewry of Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism was not inconsiderable. On the one hand, the concern

generated by the setting up of a Liberal Jewish Synagogue focussed the minds of both Reform and Orthodox ministers considerably with regard to modernisation. On the other, there was also a direct ‘ripple effect’ of Montefiore’s theology as his own notoriety grew and people were forced to take sides. For example, the radical minister of Manchester Reform Synagogue, Harry Lewis, a supporter of the JRU, resigned his position after the synagogue’s lay leadership refused to sanction sermons by Montefiore and Israel Mattuck.<sup>104</sup>

#### **v – The Influence of German Judaism on Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism**

Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism shared a number of characteristics with the German Reform movement. Together with the earlier Anglo-Reform theology, Anglo-Liberalism emphasised the idea of the ‘Mission of Israel’, an idea which had first gained currency with Mendelssohn. There was also the conception of the essence of Judaism as ‘ethical monotheism’, as popularised by Hermann Cohen. Unlike the early Reform movement in Britain, there was a further parallel between Anglo-Liberal Judaism and the more radical Reform theology in Germany (as practised in Berlin) in that it shifted priority towards the ‘inward’ aspects of religion, such as faith and ethical behaviour, and away from the ‘outward’ traditional observance of ceremony and almost exclusive use of Hebrew. The Liberal Jewish Prayer Book (1903) was also theologically ahead of that of the Anglo-Reform, and in line with that of the more radical German thought. Negatively, the new liturgy had expunged all petitions for a return of the Jewish people to Palestine, for the restoration of the State of Israel, and for the reinstitution of the sacrificial cult. Positively, it stressed both the election and responsibility of Israel, and emphasised the universalist interpretations of numerous elements of Jewish tradition.<sup>105</sup> As the German reformers had done, Montefiore’s new emphases were justified as the inevitable consequences of Progress.

Parallels do not necessarily indicate emulation, however, and therefore the assumption that Montefiore was directly influenced by German Reform should be carefully examined. In *Response to Modernity* (1988), Meyer writes that “While still at Oxford, Montefiore steeped himself in the writings of the German Reformers” and cites several articles in which Montefiore referred to them positively.<sup>106</sup> In particular, and quoting Montefiore in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1889), he suggests that Montefiore regarded the radical *Reformgemeinde* movement as the one with which he felt “the deepest and closest

spiritual kinship".<sup>107</sup> A closer inspection of the text, however, reveals that despite his praise, Montefiore by no means adopted it uncritically as the model for his own innovations.

*Without by any means agreeing with all that the Berlin Reformgemeinde has done*, it is with this movement... that I feel the deepest and closest spiritual kinship.<sup>108</sup> (Italics mine).

What is more, only a few years later in 'Liberal Judaism in England' (1900), a paper dedicated to justifying and describing its development, Montefiore made absolutely no reference to Germany. Partly, this change can be explained by Montefiore's recognition of the inevitably negative repercussions in England of pointing to German Reform as an example. But it could also be argued that, by this time, Montefiore had become so confident in the unique potential of British Liberal Judaism that he no longer felt the need to hark back to a German forerunner for justification.

Nor is there any real evidence that Montefiore's educational background had saturated him in German Reform thought as Meyer implies. Although Oxford and Cambridge Universities had technically opened their doors to Jewish students, Montefiore would have found himself among a very small number of fellow Jewish undergraduates. Probably, prior to 1914, there would never have been more than 25–30 Jewish undergraduates at Oxford at any one time.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, modern communication should not be assumed; cultural and intellectual isolation between Britain and Germany was significant at this time. In chapter two it will be argued that Montefiore's education was essentially *Christian* in character. For now it is enough to understand that an Oxford education at that time would certainly not have given Montefiore much exposure to what might be considered Jewish thought or influences.<sup>110</sup> As for his time spent in Berlin, it should be remembered that this only lasted six months and that most of this time was spent studying rabbinics with Schechter. Undoubtedly, Montefiore was well informed about the Reform experience in Germany and had read the writings of its leaders, but it would be going beyond the evidence to suggest that Montefiore had become fanatically pro-German Reform or had consciously modelled his movement upon what had happened there. In fact, despite Meyer's argument, it is remarkable that amongst the many Christian scholars cited throughout his writings, Montefiore only very rarely included references to Jewish writers – Montefiore's apparent silence regarding Jewish scholarship has often been a cause for criticism among later Jewish writers.<sup>111</sup>

## **vi – The Influence of American Judaism on Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism**

Montefiore’s dealings with American Judaism are more straightforward to analyse. Throughout his life, he kept in frequent contact with the Liberal institutions in the States, and carried out correspondence with, among others, Dr Julian Morgenstern, President of Hebrew Union College,<sup>112</sup> and the Zionist Dr Stephen Wise of the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York.<sup>113</sup> Despite the fact that his books sold badly in America,<sup>114</sup> Montefiore was well received during a tour of Reform and Liberal Synagogues in 1910 according to the accounts given in the *American Hebrew* at the time.<sup>115</sup> Upon his return, Montefiore spoke enthusiastically to the West London Synagogue Association of what he had seen: in contrast to the prevailing customs in England, men and women sat together in the pews; the sermon took a more central part in the service; the services themselves were successfully performed on Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays; and interchange between pulpits was common.<sup>116</sup> Despite his generally warm regard for American Jewish practices, however, Montefiore remained cautious of adopting non-British patterns of Synagogue worship. Even after the establishment of a Liberal Jewish Synagogue, he was keen to play down any hopes of following the American model too closely. As he explained to Isadore Singer in 1910,

The movement, or rather the new synagogue, which I and others are trying to found is not, and will not be, more radical than the [American] synagogues of Dr Hirsch and Dr Wise, but distinctly *less*. We do not, for example, propose to transfer or abolish the Saturday Sabbath. Our *main regular* service is to be on Saturday afternoon, though we also propose to try a monthly service on Sunday afternoon. Moreover, in other respects, the Synagogue... will be less radical than those of Dr Hirsch and Dr Wise.<sup>117</sup>

The situation became more ‘radical’ for Anglo-Liberal Judaism upon the arrival in January 1912 of Rabbi Israel Mattuck, a graduate of Hebrew Union College, who had been hand-picked for the London pulpit by Montefiore.<sup>118</sup> Generally speaking, the two men got on well. Mattuck himself referred to Montefiore as “our leader” and “teacher” and was content to work under Montefiore who continued with the Presidency of the Liberal Synagogue and JRU.<sup>119</sup> He was well received by the members of the Liberal Synagogue, and the increased attendance under his permanent leadership delighted Montefiore who was quite aware of his own limitations.<sup>120</sup> By 1915 its members numbered 416 and by 1925 it’s

congregation of 1500 exceeded that of the West London Reform Synagogue.<sup>121</sup> Mattuck's spirited reforms included giving women permission to preach (1918) and to read prayers from the pulpit (1920).<sup>122</sup> Sunday services took place from 1920 in Mortimer Hall until they became a regular feature of the religious activity of the congregation in 1926.<sup>123</sup> Thus Mattuck offered the London Liberal congregation a window onto American developments.<sup>124</sup>

Inevitably there was a certain amount of tension between Montefiore and Mattuck, but this more was more due to differences in style and attitude than due to specific reforms. As Montefiore once tried to explain,

My world – the world of the Emancipation and Mr Marks and Sir Francis Goldsmid and Lord Palmerston – was a good world – and a far better world than some of you think – but its *so* different from this world in which we live. You must forgive a nearly complete stranger like me finding it very hard to move about in it, and understand the rights and the wrongs of it, its wishes and its ideals. We think in a quite unaccustomed light. Our light was a good light: the new light is doubtless also a good light; but they are oh! such *different* lights!<sup>125</sup>

There were two main characteristics of Mattuck's American Liberal Judaism with which Montefiore struggled, as evidenced in their correspondence.<sup>126</sup> Firstly, Mattuck's dogmatic approach to Judaism which clashed with Montefiore's more aristocratic, individualist views.<sup>127</sup> Secondly, and more interestingly, Mattuck's antagonism towards Christianity, about which Montefiore complained at considerable length. In one letter he wrote,

The something else which I object to, and consider fallacious, in your sermons is common to you and heaps of other Jews. It is common to most American Rabbis, so far as I know, common to their Teachers, common to the Teachers of their Teachers... It is a constant side reference to, and depreciation of, Christianity. It is a constant attempt to make up differences between Judaism and Christianity, to the great advantage of Judaism... I wish, when you revise your sermon, you could blot out from your mind the very existence of Christianity! I wish you could imagine yourself in a purely Buddhist or Confucian majority, or that you could forget all other persons but Jews!<sup>128</sup>

In particular, Montefiore objected to the contrast between a very modern Judaism with an illiberal Christianity, that is, a Christianity of isolated texts from the New Testament or evangelical tracts. If one was to confront Christianity on equal terms, he argued, then it had to be Liberal Christianity taken at face value.<sup>129</sup> Deep down, however, what Montefiore

reacted to was not so much Mattuck's defining of Judaism in terms of Christianity, so much as his aim to demonstrate the superiority of the one over the other. As we shall see in chapter two, Montefiore was himself engaged in defining Judaism in terms of Christianity, but with a quite different goal; while Mattuck defined Judaism negatively, Montefiore attempted to define Judaism in terms of those positive elements which the two faiths had in common.

#### **IV – Influences upon Montefiore's View of Rabbinic Judaism**

Bowler has suggested that a vital factor in Jewish life, namely, the close interaction of a tightly knit community, was missing in Montefiore's early life.<sup>130</sup> But although his parents encouraged non-Jewish friendships and associations,<sup>131</sup> this was not in itself unusual for a wealthy Jewish family of the period. If anything, Montefiore's up bringing was more Jewish (certainly in a religious sense) than it was for many of the contemporary Anglo-Jewish élite. Nevertheless, it is significant that in a study of one of the most important English religious Jews in recent times, the list that can be drawn-up of Jewish influences upon Montefiore seems relatively short in comparison with the list of non-Jewish influences. A case in point is rabbincics.

During their childhood, Montefiore and his siblings attended the Berkeley Street Reform Synagogue with their mother.<sup>132</sup> Receiving his early religious instruction and tutoring in Hebrew from its first minister, David Wolf Marks, meant that Montefiore grew up under the auspices of the father of Anglo-Jewish Reform.<sup>133</sup> The importance of this lies in the fact that Marks wrote and preached extensively against "rabbinism" and Jewish particularism, arguing that Reform was necessary to preserve Judaism from external attack, that is, Christian criticism. He was keen to be seen to be as respectable and spiritually minded as he perceived contemporary Christians to be; David Feldman has even offered evidence that in formulating his reforms for the West London Synagogue, Marks consulted one of the most anti-rabbinical Christian conversionists of the time, Alexander McCaul.<sup>134</sup> This anxiety to imitate and react to Christian critique reflects a high regard for contemporary Christian practice and intellectualism. Montefiore undoubtedly absorbed a great deal from Marks – he was fond of referring to his influence in his letters<sup>135</sup> – and it is tempting to

locate the source of Montefiore's positive view of Christianity and correspondingly relatively low opinion of the rabbinic writings in Marks' assumed value-judgements. Montefiore, whose Liberal Jewish views were a good deal more radical than those of Marks, himself wrote,

I have no doubt that the roots of my belief *are* through Mr Marks... A man often and often rebels against his tradition and is *really* deeply influenced by it all the same. Don't you think so?<sup>136</sup>

As mentioned in the Introduction, following his graduation from Oxford, Montefiore moved to Berlin with his widowed mother and sister. His intention was to train to be a rabbi and he began with rabbinics and rabbinical lore under the Rumanian Solomon Schechter (1847–1915)<sup>137</sup> at the *Hochschule (Lehranstalt) für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the Liberal College for Jewish Studies). Describing him later as “one of the greatest Rabbinical scholars of the world”,<sup>138</sup> Montefiore was impressed enough to bring Schechter back with him upon his return to England as his private tutor. To Schechter, Montefiore felt he owed his “whole conception of the Law and its place in the Jewish religion and life... most of the rabbinical material on which that conception rests was put to my notice and explained to me by him”.<sup>139</sup> That this is no exaggeration can be seen from their extensive correspondence at this time. Subjects that turn up repeatedly in their letters included the joy of the Law, dogmas of Judaism, and queries regarding the Talmud and the Hasidic mystics of Schechter’s home environment.<sup>140</sup> Schechter contributed to Montefiore’s *Jewish Quarterly Review* and even wrote an appendix for his *Hibbert Lectures* (1893). In return, Montefiore provided generously for his tutor, and helped him in composing and publishing his articles.<sup>141</sup> Montefiore’s high regard for his friend was expressed rather curiously: “There is no orthodoxy which would receive you. You would be too original for any creed... You can call yourself what you please, but to me you are a liberal all round”.<sup>142</sup> Yet while Montefiore accepted Schechter’s teachings regarding rabbinism, the two men differed significantly on their interpretation and understanding of modern Judaism and also with regard to Zionism. As Norman Bentwich commented,<sup>143</sup> Schechter was from a “low synagogue”, ghetto background; he retained a love of mystic saints and mystic yearning, and composed no systematic theology but worked intuitively, like the Rabbis. He emphasised tradition and the continuity of past and present Judaism; he vehemently opposed schism. Montefiore, on the other hand, had been educated in Jowett’s Oxford, home of Liberal Christianity. His approach to Judaism was coloured by his view of Progress, rather than continuity; he

rejected tradition as binding and eventually broke away to form a liberal branch of Judaism. He imbibed much of the Christian doctrine and attempted to produce a positive Jewish attitude towards it, in contrast to Schechter who was traditionally negative and very sensitive to Christian anti-Semitism.<sup>144</sup> Eventually, much to Montefiore's regret, the tension that developed between them ended their friendship.<sup>145</sup> Schechter left for America to found Conservative Judaism in the same year (1902) that Montefiore initiated the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism.

Until 1902 Montefiore had depended heavily upon Schechter for his rabbinic expertise and intellectual support. Schechter's place at Cambridge was filled by Israel Abrahams (1858–1925). Montefiore and Abrahams had worked together as joint-editors of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1888–1908) and had jointly published *Aspects of Judaism* (1895), a collection of sermons. It was, however, for his support in the founding of the JRU that Montefiore was most grateful to Abrahams, especially during the early, most difficult stages from 1902–1912.<sup>146</sup> As with Schechter, Montefiore claimed Abrahams as "an enthusiastic Liberal Jew",<sup>147</sup> his admiration and affection making it possible for him to breeze over their theological differences. But Herbert Loewe was probably more accurate when he observed,

Abrahams was more a man of the Jewish Religious Union than of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue... The Liberal Jewish Synagogue had his warm support but he played a much greater part in the Jewish Religious Union... Criticism appealed to him but he was essentially conservative... Generally [he] was Orthodox.<sup>148</sup>

Certainly, the Law was of central importance to Abrahams' understanding of Judaism, and he criticised the early reformers for having rejected its authority and ignored its permanent value – "In his first sermon, the late Prof. Marks proclaimed this rejection, and declared with thorough-going emphasis, that the Bible and the Bible alone is the authoritative and inspired guide to Jewish life".<sup>149</sup> This was a mistake, Abrahams felt, which had kept them blind to an important truth. Just as people were coming to accept that man had played a part in the production of the Bible, through the findings of biblical criticism, so it was the case that God had played a part in the Tradition. "If the Bible is not all of God," he asked, "is the Talmud all of man?" The idea of the evolution of religion allowed a modern Jew to rediscover a value in the recently denigrated texts of his religion. This was, he asserted, "the great

discovery of our time, and it is the Talmud that has helped us to the discovery". For the Talmud presented the processes as well as the results of religious thought, and in it could be seen "religious evolution in action... The Talmud comes into line with modern theories of the evolution of religion".<sup>150</sup>

Personifying Montefiore's ideal of 'an Englishman of the Jewish persuasion' and as anti-Zionist as Montefiore, Abrahams was an important friend, collaborator and supporter.<sup>151</sup> Both were especially concerned with correcting the erroneous views of the Law in mainstream biblical scholarship and worked hard to increase the respectability of Judaism in academic circles. Thus Abraham eloquently supported Montefiore's criticism of Schürer's misportrayal of Torah-centric Judaism in his article, 'Prof. Schürer on Life under the Law' (1899).<sup>152</sup> Using an argument which Montefiore would later adopt as his own, Abrahams claimed, "I have enough sympathy with the Law to do it justice, and not enough sympathy to do it the injustice of unqualified flattery."<sup>153</sup>

Abraham's successor at Cambridge was Herbert Loewe (1882–1940), remembered for his tolerant and informed Orthodoxy. Like Abrahams, Loewe was regarded within English academic circles as the chief representative of Anglo-Jewish scholarship.<sup>154</sup> Oddly enough, just as his grandfather, Louis Loewe, had been the confidant and advisor of Moses Montefiore, so Herbert became a close friend to Claude. Together, they produced *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* and the renowned *A Rabbinic Anthology* (1938) in which both the Liberal and the Orthodox points of view were set down next to each other. Loewe's fifty page prologue was concerned to contrast their positions and yet, significantly, he finished by describing his co-author as "My master, my guide and my intimate friend".<sup>155</sup> In spite of, or perhaps because of, their great respect for one another, each was comfortable enough to disagree openly without compromise. This had not been possible with Schechter, whose condemnations of his former pupil's anti-Zionism in the *Jewish Chronicle* came as a shock and a great hurt to the latter. Nor had it really been possible with Montefiore's exact contemporary, Abrahams, whose position as co-member of the fragile JRU had left him little room to manoeuvre.<sup>156</sup> Thus Loewe and Montefiore were able to use each other as foils in order to better clarify his own position within the Jewish tradition.

Despite his defence of the rabbinic veneration of Torah, Montefiore ultimately rejected rabbinic authority. Down through the years, this has provoked two main responses

from Jewish scholars. On the one hand, there are those who concentrate upon his attempt to champion Jewish teachings to Christians, such as Walter Jacob, for whom Montefiore's correction of erroneous views of the Law (*à la* Paul) reflected his "fine understanding of rabbinic Judaism".<sup>157</sup> On the other hand, there were those who specialised in rabbinic thought and who detected a certain superficiality. In his lecture, 'Montefiore and Loewe on the Rabbis' (1962), Louis Jacobs found Montefiore's observation that "these old gentlemen" could have benefited from a course in Greek philosophy "rather condescending".<sup>158</sup> He also criticised the attempt to portray rabbinic thought almost exclusively from *haggadah* (the non-legal, ethical material in the rabbinic literature) rather than *halakhah*, and regarded Montefiore's justification for doing so (namely, that the *halakhic* material was in modern times regarded as "distant and obsolete... a waste of mental energy and time") as quite unsatisfactory.<sup>159</sup> Lou Silberman was similarly astounded at what he described as Montefiore's "priggish" and "condescending" attitude. In his 'Prolegomenon' to the 1968 edition of Montefiore's *The Synoptic Gospels*, Silberman condemned Montefiore's treatment as a "wrong-headed interpretation of the rabbinic attitude towards and understanding of Holy Scriptures".<sup>160</sup> However, the most sophisticated analysis of Montefiore's understanding of rabbinics and Torah, Frederick Schwartz's essay 'Claude Montefiore on Law and Tradition' (1964), manages to reconcile Montefiore's negative comments with his positive appreciation of the Law (and therefore with his defence of the Jewish veneration of the Law).<sup>161</sup> He does this by distinguishing between Montefiore's view of modern and pre-modern approaches to Torah. Thus Schwartz does not find it patronising, as Silberman and Jacobs did, for Montefiore to have sympathised with and even praised the pre-modern Rabbis who had done so much with so little. On the other hand, he recognises that Montefiore rarely spoke positively of Torah in modern times unless it was in the sense of a moral Law.<sup>162</sup> Montefiore's apparently paradoxical approach (both for and against Rabbinic Judaism) is, in fact, quite consistent and comprehensible in the light of his Liberal Jewish theology. In his eyes, what was once useful in bridging the gap between man and God had, in modern times, become a barrier. As Schwartz put it, "In the final analysis, Montefiore wants nothing binding between the Jew and God."<sup>163</sup> Ultimately, it is the rationalist assumption that Reason has priority over authoritative texts, rather than any bias against Rabbinic Judaism, which accounts for Montefiore's treatment of the Rabbis. Such confidence and belief in man's ability to discover the Truth could be found, to a lesser extent, in the writings of his tutors in rabbinics. But Montefiore's radicalism, the degree to which he was prepared to sacrifice the rabbinic roots of his Jewish faith, marks him out more as the disciple of Jowett

than of Marks, Schechter, Abrahams or Loewe.<sup>164</sup>

## V – Judaism and Nationalism

The modern dichotomy between Jewish religion and/or Jewish nation originated with the Enlightenment and its effect upon Jewish thought. Moses Mendelssohn, described by Arthur Cohen as “a Jewish Luther” whose God was “a confessional God”, is generally credited with the innovation of severing the interconnection of the Jewish faith and people. Mendelssohn was both a cultured European and a religious Jew, and made credible to Europe the existence of rational Judaism and the possibility of what Cohen calls “the de-Judaised Jew”.<sup>165</sup> The ultimate influence of Mendelssohn’s conception of a rational Jewish religion, to be distinguished from Jewish culture, is traceable in Montefiore’s position, although his definition of Jewish religion differed hugely from Mendelssohn’s.<sup>166</sup>

Montefiore was resolutely opposed to the nationalism and particularism of many of his contemporaries, especially in the political form it often took. Quite possibly, this was partly to do with his early upbringing and, specifically, the influence of Philip Magnus.<sup>167</sup> After serving at the West London Reform Synagogue in the 1860s, Magnus had made a name for himself as an educationalist and had been selected as one of Montefiore’s private tutors, responsible for his general education. He continued to guide and work alongside Montefiore for the rest of his life. Along with his former pupil, Magnus was among the group of ‘representative Jews’ approached by the government in 1917 for their opinion on the proposed Balfour Declaration, and, like Montefiore, he opposed the recognition of Palestine as “*the* national home for the Jewish people”. He was also a founder of the League of British Jews formed after the Declaration.

Certainly, Montefiore was highly antagonistic to Zionism. Lucy Cohen recalls that it was “the *one* point to which his tolerance did not stretch”.<sup>168</sup> He described the plans for a mass return to Israel as “the fashionable Zionist Baal”<sup>169</sup> and “the disease of Jewish nationalisation”.<sup>170</sup> His opposition was, however, consistent and well argued. He believed that Zionism was dangerous because it ultimately provoked greater anti-Semitism: the desire for their own homeland seemed to give the lie to the generations of Jews who had protested their sole allegiance to their adopted countries. He felt that the Jews would no longer be able

to participate in the social, cultural and political life of their host countries. He also cautioned that anti-Semites in the Jews' adopted countries would see the establishment of Israel as an excuse for ridding their country of them.<sup>171</sup> Most of all, Montefiore opposed Zionism for its negative effect upon the growth of a future universalist Judaism. He was convinced that "Zion and Jerusalem for us are terms of purely spiritual significance. Whether Jews prosper and multiply in Israel has nothing to do with the future of Judaism."<sup>172</sup>

In a paper delivered at the London Society for the Study of Religion, 'A Die-Hard's Confession' (1935), Montefiore recounted a meeting with Herzl in which the Austrian Zionist attempted to win him over to the cause and persuade him to become "his English Zionist Lieutenant". With rather muddled imagery, Herzl had compared the Jews in the world to water in a sponge, arguing that when too much water was added, or too many Jews, anti-Semitism trickled out. Montefiore was almost convinced at the time, but rejected the sponge theory upon reflection:

Not so: at least the percentage must vary greatly in different countries, and, then, is *nothing* to be allowed for any progress in toleration, in understanding, in appreciation, in good will? Must these hatreds continue forever?<sup>173</sup>

The Zionist activities of Herzl's successor, Chaim Weizmann, were likewise disapproved of, although the man himself, likewise admired.

Weizmann is abler than all the other Jews in the world lumped together... He is a Jewish Parnell, but even abler, and alas respectably married... But Hitlerism is, at least partly, *Weizmann's creation*.<sup>174</sup>

Against the collective forces of "Zionism, and Nationalism and anti-Semitism",<sup>175</sup> Montefiore forwarded his "counter-theory of 'an Englishman of the Jewish persuasion'", the idea that one could be an Englishman by nationality and a Jew by religion.<sup>176</sup> He believed that by ridding Judaism of its nationalistic overtones, he could do away with "the Jewish problem".<sup>177</sup> "One thing is certain", he told the Jewish cabinet minister Herbert Samuel,<sup>178</sup>

namely, that the Jewish position in England, our emancipation etc, etc, were achieved by the works of men who held my views and not the views of the Zionists. Had Zionism then existed, the Jews would never have won their victory. The debates and pamphlets of the time make this clear.<sup>179</sup>

In a pamphlet of his own for the Jewish Religious Union, Montefiore defended the case for outright cultural assimilation, arguing that Liberal Judaism should be understood to have developed parallel to the civil and political emancipation of the Jews of *Western* Europe and America in the nineteenth century. Thus, while Emancipation was the external freedom, Liberal Judaism was the internal. With this definition he went far beyond the boundaries of the traditional Jewish position, for although no one but the ultra-Zionists would have supported a purely nationalistic view of Judaism, it seemed that Montefiore belonged to a very small minority when he denounced *completely* all nationalistic Jewish sentiments.

Tension between the purely national or racial definition and the religious definition had been evident in popular Anglo-Jewish thought for some time. In 1876, the *Jewish Chronicle* had claimed that “Benjamin Disraeli belongs to the Jewish people, despite his baptismal certificate. His talents, his virtues and short-comings alike, are purely of the Jewish cast.”<sup>180</sup> Yet, when the historian Goldwin Smith then extrapolated upon this theme, suggesting that a Jew could not then be “an Englishman or Frenchman holding particular theological tenets”, it fiercely condemned him.<sup>181</sup> As Feldman has argued, many British Jews were prepared to use the notion of “race” until it brought them trouble, when they would switch to the ‘religious brotherhood’ concept.<sup>182</sup> It was this dichotomy which, Montefiore and other like-minded Jews felt, led to a confusion of the issues and resulted in the Judaeophobia of the late nineteenth century.<sup>183</sup>

Many Jewish leaders and the Anglo-Jewish press worked hard at developing ways to convey a sense of their collective identity as Jews which did not contradict their obligations as English nationals. Montefiore found himself heavily involved in one such institutional effort, as president of the Anglo-Jewish Association from 1896 until 1921. The AJA was a representative organisation which attempted to reconcile the defence of Jewish interests around the world with the demands and duties of English citizenship and patriotism. Montefiore’s period of office covered a crucial period in Anglo-Jewish history, including the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe, the rise of Zionism and the Balfour Declaration. However, in a letter to Lucien Wolf, another anti-Zionist campaigner and a leading member of the AJA, he admitted that he had trouble reconciling what he described as “my own rather extreme views” with his official duties. He was well aware that his AJA colleagues would view any partisan behaviour as inappropriate for the president of such a body.<sup>184</sup> His anti-

Zionist activities were maintained with a somewhat guilty conscience, evidenced by a request to Wolf to destroy a copy of a fiercely anti-Zionist letter he had written to Herbert Samuel.<sup>185</sup>

Montefiore eventually overcame his inhibitions and publicly and officially expressed his anti-Zionist concerns. In June 1917, his open support of *The Times*' anti-Zionist manifesto attracted great criticism and demands for his resignation as chairman of the AJA.<sup>186</sup> And only a few weeks before the Balfour Declaration (November 1917), Montefiore was involved in the establishment of a League of British Jews, which openly opposed the Zionist belief that "the Jew was an alien in the land of his birth" and was determined to "uphold the status of British Jews professing the Jewish religion".<sup>187</sup> As for the Balfour Declaration itself, Montefiore was responsible (as a member of a select group of Jewish leaders asked by the cabinet for their assistance) to modify the clause which described Palestine as "*the* national home for the Jewish people" to the final draft of "*a* national home for the Jewish people".<sup>188</sup> As he wrote in a letter to Herbert Samuel, "The Zionists are exceedingly active and those who, like myself, regard their policy and aims as most dangerous and false, can no longer afford to go to sleep..."<sup>189</sup> Essentially then, Montefiore was against Zionism because he understood it as a form of nationalism and because his understanding of Judaism had no room for nationalist sentiments. The issue was not quite as clear-cut for others, for whom Montefiore appeared to be over-simplifying the problem.<sup>190</sup> To understand this contemporary criticism, it is worth considering the positions of two of his most well-known critics, Ahad Ha-Am and Solomon Schechter.

For Ahad Ha-Am, the eloquent prophet of Zionism, disunity was the inevitable product of Montefiore's concept of Judaism and the essential factor that made it impractical. He reasoned that if people "of the Jewish Persuasion" had agreed for the sake of Emancipation to deny the existence of the Jews as a people, preferring to regard Judaism simply as a religion, then their hopes for future Jewish unity rested entirely upon *religious* unity. However, because emancipation had demanded certain practical changes in religious matters, and because not everyone had accepted this, schisms had resulted and the *religious* unity of what he called "the Jewish Church" now depended wholly upon "its theoretical side – that is to say, certain abstract beliefs which are held by all Jews". With the scientific developments that had shaken the foundations of every faith, Ahad Ha-Am reasoned, it was becoming increasingly impractical to hope to ensure Jewish unity on religious terms.<sup>191</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am's Zionist vision of Palestine as "the *spiritual* centre" for Jewish art, thought and activity, had, in one sense, come about as a reaction against Emancipation as leading to a dead end if its supporters understood themselves only in religious terms. In another sense, it had come about as the only means for cultural self-expression. Ahad Ha-Am was passionate in his belief in Judaism's superiority over Christianity and the importance of its contributions to world culture. Yet he admitted, "now that we have left the ghetto and begun to participate in European culture, we cannot help seeing that our superiority is only potential". The Jewish genius had not been allowed to shine free of non-Jewish influences and Zionism was the consequence, resulting from "the sense of this contrast between what is and what might be". It offered the possibility to "order our life in our own way".<sup>192</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am has been criticised for his emphasis on Israel that left the Jews of the Diaspora somewhat out in the cold, too dependent upon Israel for their 'life' impulse.<sup>193</sup> For Montefiore, whose Liberal Judaism was very much a product of the Diaspora communities of the West, Ahad Ha-Am's argument was critically flawed: the essential thing was not, as Ahad Ha-Am maintained, the preservation and encouragement of Jewish culture, but rather the preservation of encouragement of Jewish religious truth. Essentially, Montefiore valued only the religious contribution of Jewish culture. What is more, he believed it could be improved upon by continued synthesis with Western (Hellenistic and Christian) philosophy. Ahad Ha-Am, on the other hand, did not believe it was possible to extract the religion from the culture, and saw its preservation and natural development as possible only by keeping it safe from non-Jewish influences in a wholly Jewish cultural environment. The diametrical opposition of the methods by which their objectives were to be achieved came about as a direct result of their respective prioritisation of what each recognised as of permanent value within Judaism.

Solomon Schechter's attacks on Montefiore's conception of a purely religious definition of Judaism were, if anything, even fiercer than those of Ahad Ha-Am. In his 'Four Epistles to the Jews of England', published in the *Jewish Chronicle* in late 1900 and early 1901, just prior to his departure to the US, Schechter contested the idea, revived by the Boer War, that Jews could be merely Englishmen of a different faith. He concluded,

The doctrine professed by those who are not carried away by the new fanatical ‘yellow’ [sc. cowardly] theology is, there is no Judaism without Jews and no Jews without Judaism. We can thus be only Jews of the Jewish persuasion.<sup>194</sup>

Montefiore was not being over-sensitive when he construed the articles as being targeted against his own teachings. Schechter’s harsh criticism cut him to the quick and he appealed to his former tutor privately,

Considering all things, when and since you know that the doctrine ‘Englishmen of the Jewish Persuasion’ is my heart’s blood doctrine, for which I labour and give my life, *you* might be more courteous than to call it a “sickly platitude” ...<sup>195</sup>

He believed that Judaism should be universalised and Westernised since it was intrinsically a religion of and for the West. But Schechter was unmoved. He felt that, wrapped up in his hopes for his Universalist Jewish theology, Montefiore suffered from tunnel vision. For Schechter, it was not only impossible but also self-destructive to separate the cultural and national elements of Judaism. Montefiore’s concentration upon Western Liberal Judaism at the expense of Eastern Orthodox Judaism was, he wrote, actually postponing the universalisation of Judaism.

The religious energies of all our brethren of the West and East in closest communion will be required. We in the West have the money, and a good deal of system too; but they have the simple faith, they have the knowledge of Jewish lore, and they have the strength, inured as they are by suffering, to live and die for their conception of Judaism. They permit no free love in religion. Universality means to them what it meant to the prophets and their Jewish successors, that the whole world should become Jewish. We have the method, they have the madness; only if we combine can victory be ours.<sup>196</sup>

While Schechter would have been as unhappy about a purely nationalistic definition of Judaism as Montefiore, his conception of “Catholic Israel” and his appreciation of what the different traditions could contribute meant that, like Ahad Ha-Am, he recognised the validity of a cultural or racial aspect to Judaism.

Thus for many Jewish thinkers, including both Ahad Ha-Am and Schechter, Judaism was a garment in which the two strands of nationalism and religion were closely interwoven. Israel Zangwill, among others, put it forcibly in a letter to Montefiore, “Our [Jewish] past has undoubtedly been nationalistic as well as religious, and it was a mis-statement of the

facts ever to have denied it".<sup>197</sup> As we have seen, however, Montefiore opted for a wholly religious definition in the best Reform tradition. To put it another way, the two strands were, for him, separable and represented quite different things. As he remarked in a letter to a cousin,

There should really be *two* words. (1) say "Jew" = man of Jewish race or Jewish "nationality" just as he himself preferred to call himself; (2) say "Israélite", man who believes in and practices the (hitherto called) "Jewish religion".

(1) Could be "Israélite" or not. He could also be a Christian or an Atheist; (2) Could be either a "Jew" or not... e.g. Florence [Montefiore's proselyte wife] is an ardent Israélite, but not a Jew.

This would prevent (a) all confusion; (b) my temperature going up.

His characteristic ability to see the validity of another's point of view allowed him to effectively subdivide Jewry into two groups. In this way he could insist on distinguishing between the two aspects whilst at the same time acknowledging both religion and nationalism as part of the Jewish experience. This solution also afforded him an opportunity to have another dig at what he saw as the self-contradictory position of the Zionists. He argued that the national position was valid only when it did not confuse itself with the religious concept, which was exactly what he accused the Zionists of doing.

The absurd thing is that your Zionist has no objection whatever to the Combination Jew + Atheist but he does consider the Combination Jew + Christian absurd. Yet! It is *he* who is absurd. If "Jew" = a man of a particular nation, then, just as an Englishman can be a Christian, an Israelite or an Atheist, so a "Jew" must be able to be an Israelite, a Christian, or an Atheist. My logic is impeccable.<sup>198</sup>

Towards the end of his life, Montefiore seemed to recognise the ultimate failure of his doctrine of "the Englishman of the Jewish faith" and the apparent victory of the Zionists. He was well aware that Zionism was gaining ground and complained in his letters that the nationalists seemed to be the only motivated party among European Jewry,<sup>199</sup> and that he was often tempted to give up the struggle.<sup>200</sup> He also became more sensitive to anti-Semitism. Whereas in 1898 he had criticised Schechter for his "anti-anti-Semitic fever", maintaining that "I don't see these horrors in England",<sup>201</sup> by 1913 he was gloomily seconding Morris Joseph's claim that there had been an increase in anti-Jewish feeling.<sup>202</sup> In a paper given to the LSSR, 'A Die Hard's Confession' (1935), he spoke of himself as "a disillusioned, sad and embittered old man". Some have wondered if he might have changed

his position had he lived a few years longer and witnessed the destruction of European Jewry.<sup>203</sup> But they have underestimated the centrality of the non-nationalist, anti-Zionist stance to his theology. Almost certainly he would have maintained his ideals.<sup>204</sup> The tone of the paper was bitterly defiant and he spoke of his refusal “to succumb to Jewish nationalism, on the one hand, or to gentile anti-Semitism on the other” believing, as he did, that the one stimulated the other. To Montefiore, Zionism represented both the cause of anti-Semitism and the greatest obstacle to his dream of a universalist Judaism. His disagreement with the Zionists boiled down to the question of Jewish identity, and abandoning the religious definition of Judaism would have meant abandoning his Liberal Judaism. In Montefiore’s eyes, the nationalist view of Judaism amounted to a betrayal of the very essence of Judaism.

## VI – The Essence of Judaism

As Yosef Yerushalmi has argued in *Zakhor* (1989), the recent phenomenon of Jewish historiography has led to an approach to Judaism as something to be qualified temporally and spatially rather than as something to be viewed as an eternal “Idea”.<sup>205</sup> Modern scholarship has thus tended away from the idea of an “essence of Judaism”. It has become impossible to speak of “Judaism” without constant reference to its development through history, or to think of it in generalised terms rather than in its concrete manifestations in time. Even the concept of a normative Judaism, the essentials of which constitute a common denominator of differing Judaisms, has been largely discredited.<sup>206</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and even into the early decades of the twentieth, however, the idea of an “essence of Judaism” was very much in vogue. It took centre stage in internal disputes and theological wranglings among Jewish intellectuals, and gave a sharper edge to inter-faith relations. This philosophical or theological approach made inevitable Leo Baeck’s *The Essence of Judaism* (1905) as a Jewish response to Harnack’s *The Essence of Christianity* (1901).<sup>207</sup> Since then, an increasingly historical outlook has blurred the lines of what exactly makes a Judaism or a Christianity. Chilton and Neusner’s *Judaism in the New Testament* (1995) is a good example of an attempt to treat early New Testament Christianity as a legitimate Judaism instead of looking for what is “Jewish” in a “Christian” or non-Jewish collection of writings. And Michael Hilton’s *The Christian Effect*

*on Jewish Life* (1994) highlights the numerous ways in which Christian practice down through the centuries has influenced Jewish practice and thought, both directly and indirectly. Such works reflect the modern historical trend to question the meaning and usefulness of the traditional definitions of “Jewish” and “Christian”. Just what is it that makes something “Jewish” or “Christian”? This section will examine some of the theological attempts of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Jews to answer this question and will compare them with Montefiore’s own distinct view. The related question of whether it is actually possible to speak of Judaism in theological terms will be set aside for the time being.

It seems sensible to begin with an outline of Montefiore’s thought with regard to Liberal Judaism since this represented the very essence of Judaism for him. The whole point of the Liberal Jewish exercise, as far as Montefiore was concerned, had been to clear away the debris of tradition, particularism and ignorance that had built up around the essential doctrines and teachings of the Jewish religion over the centuries. It included those aspects of Judaism that could be salvaged from the Orthodox and Reform traditions, traditions which nonetheless he had regretfully felt obliged to disassociate. But it was more than this. Montefiore believed that Judaism was very much an evolving phenomenon. Man’s understanding of it had developed and would continue to develop, for it had not yet arrived at its final form. For Montefiore, then, the essence of Judaism was not completely fixed, and so Liberal Judaism was characterised by a certain nebulosity or flexibility. A second point to keep in mind is that, to an extent unparalleled in other Jewish Reform movements, Liberal Judaism was an attempt to describe the essence of Judaism from a purely theological point of view.

Montefiore’s Liberal Judaism has been described as monotheism with special reference to the Hebrew prophets as great revealers of the monotheistic faith; a sort of ethical theism.<sup>208</sup> He committed himself to a prophecy-orientated position in contrast to the Law-orientated position maintained by the Jewish Orthodoxy, arguing “The great prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah) are primary: the Law is secondary; secondary in both importance and date.”<sup>209</sup> Although Montefiore no more rejected the Law than his critics rejected prophecy, the relative importance of the Prophets’ teaching in his thought can be gauged from his one-time suggestion that, in the future, it would be proper when building a synagogue to house the Prophets’ writings in the ark, the most sacred place, rather than the

Pentateuch.<sup>210</sup> Not surprisingly, such a difference in emphasis and priority polarised the Liberal and Orthodox positions.

Lucy Cohen has commented that the difference between Montefiore's faith and that of the Prophets was that he regarded his belief in God as "a venture", a theological search, while to them the existence of God was the greatest certainty in their lives. His belief was founded, he had told her many times, on the perception of the good in mankind, and in the order of the universe, which made it easier for him to believe in a supreme personality characterised by "Wisdom and Love" than in chance or "toss up".<sup>211</sup> He described his faith as a "childish religion", and admitted that there was no authority for it, except in the soul of man. But this "difficult belief", he felt, was the surest foundation for faith. It also led to independence of thought and of action, and Montefiore clung fiercely to the concept of free will.<sup>212</sup>

To Montefiore, the essence of Liberal Judaism was freedom. It was freedom firstly from the trappings of Orthodoxy and the rabbinical 'hedge around the Law', that is, freedom from human authority. It aimed to harmonise the traditional religious rites and institutions with a universal doctrine that emphasised the prophetic element and minimised the priestly and legal elements. Secondly, it offered intellectual freedom, and specifically freedom from the fear of the consequences of biblical criticism; as a theological Judaism, it possessed validity regardless of the date or authorship of the biblical writings. Hence Liberal Judaism offered, through the use of Reason, "A happy and serene freedom, ready to pick and choose, to accept and reject, to adapt and adopt, to purify or universalise."<sup>213</sup>

To avoid the mistake of viewing this seemingly arbitrary method as a purely *ad hoc* religious exercise, two points need to be kept in mind. Firstly, a man's conscience, the instrument of Reason, was for Montefiore to be an *instructed* conscience, that is, one which had learned from the mistakes and achievements of past religious thought; it was thus rational and not, in fact, arbitrary. As he wrote in a paper on 'Authority',

But what is he [the Liberal Jew], and what is his reason? What is his moral judgement? What is his religious judgement? They have all been formed by the Bible; formed before his birth, on the Bible they largely depend... He is their child.<sup>214</sup>

The Jewish scriptures, as a record of man's past spiritual experiences, were not to be viewed so much as an infallible authority but as a source of guidance whose advice could be qualified or augmented in the light of modern thought and personal enlightenment. In a sense, the religious texts illustrated for him his own preconceived opinion of what was right or wrong. But it should be remembered that his "preconceived opinion" had been very much shaped by these very religious texts, in addition to Classical philosophy and modern thought. One consequence of this "free" position with regard to scripture was that Montefiore was more concerned with the religious value of the teaching than the 'legitimacy' of its source. For example, he argued for accepting many of the ethical teachings of the New Testament when they appeared superior, even when they differed from the traditional Jewish ones, since "All the light has not shone through Jewish windows."<sup>215</sup>

The second point that should be borne in mind is that Montefiore's apparent arbitrariness in fact characterises liberal thought and method in general. His high estimation of, and dependence upon, rationality was the logical consequence of abandoning Scriptural or hierarchical authority. As he rather dramatically put it,

No creed, no tradition, can Canute-like, prevent the on-set of criticism and historical enquiry... If all the creeds in the world were to tell me that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and the accredited specialists, with entirely negligible exceptions tell me that he did not, the creeds weigh nothing in my reason's scales.<sup>216</sup>

Any fear he had concerning the weakness of his position, that is, of the fallibility and limitation of the human mind, was counter-balanced by his trust that God was guiding the evolution of understanding, a commonly held contemporary belief, and a subject to which we shall return in the next chapter. Incidentally, the tremendous value Montefiore set by reason can by no means be viewed as something that sidelined him from traditional Jewish thought. No less an authority than the philosopher Maimonides (1135–1204) had maintained that Judaism was *essentially* reasonable, in contrast to other faiths. Described by Ahad Ha-Am as "the supreme rationalist", Maimonides had argued that Jewish Law was the best means by which an unreasoning mankind could hope to attain a life-style pleasing to God.<sup>217</sup> Moses Mendelssohn would later say that it was this very reasonableness of Judaism which commended it to all men and that once Christians had abandoned their irrational beliefs, a common faith might one day be possible (a view which was not so very different from Montefiore's own).<sup>218</sup> Thus no Jewish thinker would have suggested that Montefiore's

emphasis upon rationality was, in itself, wrong. What set him outside the Orthodox fold, however, and what many have criticised him for, was his determination to value Reason above tradition.

Montefiore and the Liberal community believed that Orthodoxy had run its course and was now dying out. This was because of the out-of-touch nature of its worship, which was uninspiring and little understood by the everyday Jew, and its out-of-touch doctrines, which flew in the face of modern, enlightened thought and civilisation. According to Montefiore's analysis,<sup>219</sup> the present state of affairs was due to the fact that in recent times Jews had defined their Jewishness in terms of what set them apart. Overly influenced by Mendelssohn,<sup>220</sup> they had laid too great an emphasis upon rites that distinguished them from other theists. The ancient theological doctrines regarding God's nature and unity, his moral order, immortality, and so on, were reckoned to be too similar – "and thus the essence of Judaism [was] altogether removed from the sphere of religious belief".<sup>221</sup>

Mendelssohn was not the only Jewish authority who was to blame for Jewish atrophy in the face of modernity. In the same paper, Montefiore argued that Orthodox Jews clung to particularistic beliefs which were based upon several of Maimonides' Principles, including belief in: the words of the prophets (6), that Moses was the greatest of the prophets (7), in the revelation at Sinai (8), in the immutability of the Revealed Law (9), in the coming messiah (12).<sup>222</sup> Such doctrines did not represent the essential teachings of Judaism for Montefiore, and only impeded the understanding of the core of Jewish theology.

The answer to the dilemma, he felt, was to be found not in external modifications of religious ceremonies, such as advocated by the Reform community, but in self-examination and re-interpretation at a more profound level: a theological reappraisal of the essence of Judaism. According to Montefiore, only Liberal Judaism offered a system that concentrated more on meaning and significance than on historical tradition or scholarship; it alone freed itself from the chains of both history and academic criticism. It had the capacity for development, absorbing what was useful and rejecting what was not, in accordance with the fundamentals of Judaism. And yet, to his mind, Liberal Judaism remained a historical religion that honoured its roots; while it differed from other expressions of contemporary Judaism, yet it remained united with them in the essentials of its faith. Rather than offering a dry religious legalism, Liberal Judaism offered the alternative of a living, vibrant faith that

had stripped away the superfluous to leave belief in God at its centre. Perhaps most significantly of all, it attempted to realise the capacity of Judaism to become universal, that is, to universalise its monotheistic and ethical message. These essentially theological goals led away from what he saw as the destructive nationalism and particularism of Orthodoxy.<sup>223</sup>

What makes Montefiore's view of the "essence of Judaism" stand out from that of other liberal Jewish thinkers is not so much its content as the consequences that he drew from it. As Montefiore would have been the first to admit, very little of his thought was original. He was simply more radical and was prepared to go further than others in attempting to make visible and viable his understanding of the essence of Judaism to the modern world. It is rather the particular emphasis he placed upon ethics, theology and a liberal outlook and methodology that made him unusual. This should become clearer after comparison with some other Jewish thinkers' views regarding the "essence of Judaism".

For a great many Jews, the whole question of what constituted the "essence of Judaism" could be boiled down to the question of one's regard for the *halakhah*, the legal/ritual teachings. This is as true nowadays as it was before the turn of the century. Any notion of *halakhah* as non-essential to Judaism, as Montefiore and liberally minded Jews maintained, met with stiff opposition and hostility from the Orthodox. A series of Montefiore's letters in 1926 reveals the clash between his own ideology and that championed by the Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz. Referring to a radio sermon in which Hertz had spoken about the importance of Law, Montefiore commented,

The fixed separation between the Laws of God and Laws of man (a side hit at Liberal Judaism) will not work in the last resort; even the ethical laws of the Ten Commandments are man made. But it does not follow that they are not divine as well. The matter is unfortunately very difficult to explain... but it is certain that there are no Laws of God in the C[hief] R[abbi]'s sense at all.<sup>224</sup>

The American Kaufmann Kohler (1843–1926) is a good example of a liberally minded Jew whose thinking on this matter reminds one of Montefiore. For Kohler, who was probably the most influential US Reform theologian in the early twentieth century, the essence of Judaism lay plainly in its ethics and theology; like Montefiore, he emphasised its universalist teachings over its *halakhah*. As he put it, "The Torah, as the expression of Judaism was never limited to a mere system of Law", and by setting its teachings (*Lehre*)

over its Law (*Gesetz*), he effectively de-legalised the Torah.<sup>225</sup> In contrast to Montefiore, however, Kohler was unwilling to relegate the traditional scriptures to a position below modern thought when conflict between the two occurred. In line with most other liberal Jews, he could not imagine Judaism without the Hebrew bible, albeit with certain qualifications, taking a central position.

This was also true of Hermann Cohen (1842–1918).<sup>226</sup> As a West European liberal academic, Cohen's world-view was closer to Montefiore's than was that of many other Jewish thinkers, especially with regard with his anti-Zionism and interest in the *religious* consciousness of the Jew.<sup>227</sup> Cohen believed that Jewish religious community had to adapt to the challenges of modernity; the ensuing controversy was therefore to be expected and even welcomed as a sign of true religious development. He wrote,

Ultimately the controversies which are agitating our communal life today must be interpreted rather as significant symptoms of the inner life of our religion. A modern religion can never regard itself anywhere as firmly fixed and anchored. Rather must it create anew, by independent effort, the bases and the warranties of its faith. In this process error and deviations are inevitable, as are also fictions and attacks. It does no good at all to register complaints on this score or to make lamentations over it for such is the course of human affairs. There is no life without struggle and no religion without evolution.<sup>228</sup>

Significantly, Cohen returned to the past and to the ancient literature to find the answers to the problems of the early twentieth century; he insisted that Judaism had to speak from its own sources. For Cohen, it had become increasingly clear that the essence of Judaism, the direction in which it had been evolving, could be defined as “ethical monotheism”. And so he argued that the Sabbath was “the quintessence of the monotheistic ethic”, the laws of the Day of Atonement meant that “atonement with God becomes at the same time a summons to atonement with man”, and the prophets were described as “founders of social religion” who did not “concentrate upon God alone [mysticism]... but rather set him into relationship, connection and interaction with men”.<sup>229</sup> Such institutions represented clear examples of the essentially ethical concerns of Judaism. Although never referred to by Montefiore, Cohen's influence in these areas upon Jewish liberal thought is ever apparent in Montefiore's own writings, and a similar question mark hangs over both men. As Arnold J Wolf put it in ‘The Dilemma of Claude Montefiore’ (1959), both had compared other ethical and religious views with Judaism and had decided, generally speaking, that Judaism came out best. But

what if they had not? Such an open, apparently uncommitted approach appeared threatening to non-liberals and provoked accusations of superficial, intellectualised Judaism.<sup>230</sup>

For many, such a philosophical view of Judaism did not capture the essence of Judaism satisfactorily. One example was Leo Baeck (1873–1956) who, like Montefiore, had been strongly influenced by Hermann Cohen's interpretation of Judaism as "ethical monotheism" and was also 'liberal' in the sense of emphasising the ethical aspect of Jewish practice over the *halakhah*. Baeck, Montefiore's successor as world leader of Progressive Judaism, appears to have held his English counterpart in high esteem; and he dedicated the English translation of *The Essence of Judaism* (1936) to Montefiore "in sincere friendship and deep regard". Montefiore reciprocated his friendship warmly, writing privately that he had never met a more distinguished minister of religion of any sect and describing him admiringly as "altogether an oddity and a sweet oddity".<sup>231</sup> Baeck's "oddity" for Montefiore seems to have stemmed from their differing views of the essential nature of Judaism. This can probably be accounted for by the fact that Baeck had been influenced by mysticism to a far greater extent than had Montefiore.

According to Baeck, the essence of Judaism lay in the dialectical polarity between "mystery" and "commandment". "Mysticism" meant for Baeck a sense or awareness of God's reality. "Commandment" referred to more than the *halakhah*, which imposed a required and fixed way of life; it referred to the inward awareness of what was required for ethical living, instructions that seemed to emanate from the divine "mystery". According to Baeck, it was only when one aspect had been over-emphasised to the exclusion of the other that the religion had ceased to be Judaism, for "in Judaism, all ethics has its mysticism and all mysticism its ethics". This relationship had existed and defined the Jewish faith down through the centuries. He wrote,

The history of Judaism from ancient times to the present could be written as a history of mysticism; the history of Judaism from its origins until now could also be written as a history of 'the Law' – and it would be the same history. And for the most part it would be the history of the very same men.<sup>232</sup>

For Montefiore, history told a quite different story. The mystical element was, for him, merely one of many fascinating strands of thought that had woven themselves into the fabric of Judaism. Despite the fact that he translated an early essay on Hasidism by Solomon

Schechter,<sup>233</sup> assisted in the translation of similar writings by Martin Buber,<sup>234</sup> and even once offered a prize in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for the best study on mysticism,<sup>235</sup> he nevertheless confessed privately, “I am no good at mysticism, only respectful.”<sup>236</sup> In addition, he was repelled by the superstition which he felt was often associated with mystical teachings and dismissed its writings as unnecessarily “obscure”.<sup>237</sup> There were certainly occasions when he did speak positively of mysticism, generally in the context of Pauline or Johannine mysticism, and this has led Walter Jacobs to over-emphasise his interest in the matter<sup>238</sup> and Steven Bayme to suggest that “Montefiore’s originality lay *in his mysticism* and his approach to Christianity.”<sup>239</sup> By such references, however, Montefiore meant a sort of individual faith and spirituality, achievable in both Christianity and Judaism, which could only be labelled as ‘mysticism’ in a limited sense. Ultimately, he felt that Judaism “did not readily produce that mystic temper or soul which seems to find itself afresh by losing itself in God”.<sup>240</sup> Along with the *halakhah* and verbal inspiration, such mysticism merely detracted from what was of greater concern, that is, the continued development of ethical monotheism towards his liberal, theologically determined Judaism.

Even towards the end of his life, Montefiore remained certain that the essence of Judaism could be expressed theologically and that the future Jewish religion was essentially encapsulated within his own Liberal Judaism. Baeck was more uncertain, preferring to see Judaism as a whole only in its unfolding historical past, and not as some sort of philosophical development. The “essence of Judaism” was for Baeck concerned with man’s response to God expressed in his attitude towards the world. It had nothing to do with precision of understanding and could not be defined by doctrine. Although Montefiore agreed to a certain extent, he was firm in his insistence of a theological dimension, explaining,

In one aspect it is a religious system, a harmony of ideas; in another aspect it is a certain attitude or condition of mind and soul.<sup>241</sup>

In practice, however, he emphasised the theology. For Baeck, God functioned as the reality that sanctified and supported mankind’s involvement in the work of creation and redemption.<sup>242</sup> For Montefiore, God was more the goal of a theological search.

Another Jewish thinker who emphasised the mystical aspect of the essence of Judaism was Martin Buber (1878–1965). On and off through 1930 and 1931 and in spite of

his general lack of affinity with mysticism, Montefiore assisted his cousin Lucy Cohen in her translations of Buber's Hasidic writings. In several ways, the two men were quite similar since each was attempting to communicate the essence of Judaism to a European (Protestant) public, and each similarly utilised the norms of that thought. Both emphasised certain aspects of the Jewish tradition while neglecting others; Buber stressed the vital religiosity of Hasidism and, like Montefiore, ignored the *Halakhic* tradition of Rabbinic Judaism. Again like Montefiore, Buber concentrated most of his efforts upon the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Psalms, primarily interested in their moral-ethical teachings. And, again, each man's particular understanding of Judaism left him sympathetic towards Protestant Christianity, since both were anti-legalistic and emphasised faith and belief combined with ethical living. Buber's neglect of *halakhah* was, however, for quite different reasons than Montefiore's. Montefiore saw the Law as something from which Judaism should be "freed", not because it was necessarily bad but simply because it was a tradition and therefore an impediment to free development. To understand Buber's reasons, a brief overview of his philosophy regarding the essence of Judaism would be useful.

Whereas Baeck had started with man's attitude to the world, Buber began with man's dialogue with the world. In *Ich und Du* (1923)<sup>243</sup> he outlined the two types of relation man can have with the world around him: I-It (monologue) in which the two participants are not equals but in which one is attempting to use the other; and the I-Thou (true dialogue), which is characterised by mutuality, openness, directness and presentness.<sup>244</sup> Individually, one's relationship with God could thus be understood as a dialogue with the Eternal Thou. Collectively, the dialogue with God and Israel had been expressed in his Covenant with them, the basis of their faith. For Buber, no group had invested so much in this concept of God and man as had the Jews. The essence of Judaism was not then, as Christians (and Montefiore) tended towards, affirmation of religious beliefs, but dialogue with the Eternal Thou through the hallowing of everyday life. His attitude to *halakhah* was derived from this view.

Buber distinguished between the two terms *halakhah* and *mitzvah*, or law (*Gesetz*) and commandment (*Gebot*), as mutually exclusive. Commandment/*mitzvah* belonged in the realm of the I-Thou relationship while law/*halakhah* worked only in the context of I-It relationships. Both could exist, but not at the same time. A commandment/*mitzvah* was defined as revelation from the divine Thou to the human I; it could not become

law/*halakhah*, defined as a (generalised) prescription to a collective entity or people whose duration was determined by tradition.<sup>245</sup> Almost exclusively concerned as he was with dialogue between the individual and God (I-Thou relationship), Buber thus turned his back on *halakhah*, the human response to revelation. In this sense of approaching religion essentially in terms of the individual rather than the collective, both Buber and Montefiore parted company with the mainstream Jewish tradition. Neither used *halakhah* to bond the religious community; Montefiore replaced it with a (liberal) theology, and Buber with a Covenant that had to be realised individually.

A close friend and associate of Buber's, Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), also agreed that the Law could no longer be used to define the essence of Judaism. Worse than that, it threatened to destroy what bonds remained among Jewry. As he observed, "Today the Law brings out more conspicuously the difference between Jew and Jew than between Jew and Gentile."<sup>246</sup> But while Orthodoxy had failed, Liberalism had fared no better – "the nimble air squadron of ideas" had achieved nothing "except dilute the spirit of Judaism (or what passed for it)".<sup>247</sup> For Rosenzweig, then, the search for the essence of Judaism, the religion, had become a search for the essence of Jewishness, the state of being. It could not be reduced to "what the century of Emancipation with its cultural mania wanted to reduce it to", namely, a religion. Rather,

The point is simply that it is no entity,... no one sphere of life among other spheres of life. It is something inside the individual that makes him a Jew... The Jewishness I mean is no "literature". It can be grasped neither through the writing nor reading of books... It is only lived – and perhaps not even that. One is it.<sup>248</sup>

It is tempting to see a parallel here between Rosenzweig's essence of Jewishness as a state of being, and Montefiore's understanding of the essence of (Liberal) Judaism as an attitude. They seemed to amount to very nearly the same thing at times. Both men, for example, sought with their Judaism to embrace the surrounding non-Jewish world rather than retreat from it; both wanted to adopt the best of non-Jewish culture and hoped, ultimately, to make it their own. As Rosenzweig put it,

All of us to whom Judaism, to whom being a Jew, has again become the pivot of our lives... we all know that in being Jews we must not give up anything, not renounce anything, but lead everything back to Judaism. From the periphery back to the centre.<sup>249</sup>

There are thus similarities between Montefiore's essentially eclectic approach and the duty, as Rosenzweig saw it, to enrich the Jewish experience. But Rosenzweig's existentialism gave his concept of Jewishness a degree of subjectivity and individuality that distinguished it from even Montefiore's somewhat amorphous Liberal Judaism. The result was a redefinition of the essence of Judaism in terms of personal life-experience, rather than from the point of view of religious experience. Suddenly, the two men seem worlds apart. As Rosenzweig put it,

It is not a matter of pointing out relations between what is Jewish and what is non-Jewish. There has been enough of that. It is not a matter of apologetics, but rather of finding the way back into the heart of our life. And of being confident that this heart is a Jewish heart. For we are Jews.<sup>250</sup>

While Rosenzweig might have viewed "Jewishness" in this way, as little more than recognition (without explanation) of the phenomenon of Jews in the world, he regarded Judaism as an Idea, to be contrasted with the Idea of Christianity in *The Star of Redemption* (1921). This philosophical-theological approach was vague and indistinct with regard to details, however, amounting to a "doctrine of two covenants". It did not offer a definition of Judaism so much as an explanation of its rôle as the means by which Jews had already entered God's eternal kingdom, and so existed outside the stream of history, in contrast to Christianity which was the vehicle for non-Jews to reach God at the end of time, when God would be "all in all".<sup>251</sup> In any case, the essence of Judaism was as natural and obvious for Rosenzweig as it was difficult to define.

Although several Jewish thinkers, including Buber and Rosenzweig, have been criticised for stressing what some have regarded as un-Jewish elements, or for expressing in un-Jewish ways their understanding of Judaism, Montefiore appears to have been singled out especially for criticism, both by his contemporaries and by later critics. This cannot be fully explained without reference to his particular concept of Judaism and his controversial attitudes towards Zionism and Christianity, which stemmed from it.

In the period before 1909, when the Jewish Religious Union still represented a loose collective of liberally minded Jews, Montefiore had been regarded as something of a meddler, even a reformer, by the Orthodox leadership. After 1909 and his launch of a

movement for the cause of Liberal Judaism, however, he came to be seen as a much greater threat and soon brought down upon himself the wrath of the Chief Rabbi, most famously in the 1917 letter to *The Times* in which Hertz denied Montefiore's views as representative of "the views held by Anglo-Jewry as a whole or by the Jewries of the overseas dominions".<sup>252</sup> That Montefiore's version of Judaism came to be recognised as a sect by British Jewry was something which distinguished his Judaism from that of other less 'political' Jewish thinkers. It also put him into the line of fire. His claim that Liberal Judaism could rejuvenate, or even replace Orthodox and Reform Judaism, angered his opponents whilst at the same time, ironically, it often failed to satisfy his supporters. In a sense, the practical expression of his Judaism was too negative. While he claimed that Liberal Judaism was not essentially an "externality" but rather a certain attitude or condition of the mind and soul, some have suggested that its form was too ephemeral. As Bentwich puts it,

It was surely that to him, to Lily Montagu, and to a few faithful pioneers; but it was hardly that to the bulk of his followers. They gave up most of the Jewish tradition and the idea of religious law affecting daily life and put little in its place.<sup>253</sup>

Opposition to the traditional Jewish institutions combined with the failure to provide something people could recognise as a replacement, goes a long way in explaining why the Jewishness of Montefiore's movement was so often called into question.

Montefiore's vehement, active anti-Zionism, on the other hand, cannot be interpreted as un-Jewish behaviour since it remains a matter of contention among world Jewry even today. Yet his vehemence certainly set him at odds with the prevailing current of popular Jewish thought early this century; his idea of Judaism as exclusively religious has been sidelined to a degree. But it would be wrong to agree with those like Ahad Ha-Am who saw Montefiore's stance as a misunderstanding of the essence of Judaism; Montefiore's (anti-Zionist) ideals *were* Jewish, although Jewish in a way more akin to those of the Emancipationists of the previous century.

Similarly, his religious individualism was not 'un-Jewish'. Writing to Lucy Cohen in 1924 he admitted "I don't think I like or approve of *that* religion or philosophy *at all* which 'tries to inculcate not too much of the individual'. What religion is that? I don't believe in Humanity at all. It does not, in the last resort, exist. There are only Tom's and Clara's."<sup>254</sup>

But this stress upon individual religious consciousness over and above a religious, or worse, a nationalist, brotherhood was not something particular to his movement. Many other Jewish thinkers, both past and present, shared his concern that the essence of Judaism be described in terms of individual faith. However, Montefiore's timing seemed unfortunate and led him into dispute with those, like Schechter, who emphasised the collectivity and peoplehood of Judaism. While Buber and Rosenzweig, for example, might have tended towards Montefiore's individualist position, theirs was a more philosophical argument, and they did not threaten the Orthodox in the radical way Montefiore did, who claimed to offer a denominational alternative. Also, Montefiore's religious world-view appeared to many as overly influenced by Protestant thought and as leaning too far towards Christianity (certainly further than Buber or Rosenzweig had ever done). In any case, Montefiore's position was, for his Orthodox and Reform critics, not "Jewish" enough.

Schechter's charge that Montefiore's movement was not so much liberal Judaism as liberal Christianity<sup>255</sup> can be understood as a rebuke for Montefiore's unusually sympathetic attitude towards the Christian religion. Ahad Ha-Am, too, felt that Montefiore had imbibed too much Christian thought and that his *Synoptic Gospels*, for example, reflected a Jewish mind tarnished by Christian influence rather than a genuinely Jewish treatment of the subject.<sup>256</sup> Montefiore's paper 'Do Liberal Jews Teach Christianity?' (1924), was addressed to all those who accused him of threatening the continuity of Judaism by teaching in such a way as to promote Jewish conversions to Christianity. These accusations will be examined more fully in the next chapter. For now it is enough to see that for Montefiore to speak favourably about the traditional enemy was disconcerting and threatening for many of his co-religionists.

Another related factor that might explain the charges of un-Jewishness brought against Montefiore is how he was perceived to relate to Jewish tradition. As has been demonstrated, Montefiore cut himself adrift from traditional beliefs and scriptures to a greater degree than most other Jewish thinkers. But these were differences of degree rather than of kind; other Jews elsewhere were attempting similar things. Where the difference was more telling was in his vision of a future Judaism. For however far others seemed to stray from Orthodoxy, no one ever suggested that Judaism could abandon its traditions so far as to synthesise itself with Christianity, as Montefiore did. Whatever the practicality of his vision, it was vastly more ambitious than was theirs. This put him in a unique position, above what

he regarded as the pettiness and confusion of dogma; significantly, it gave him a sense of distance from Judaism. Bowler has pointed out that, despite his defence of the Rabbis, Pharisees, and the Law, it would be difficult to describe Montefiore as their heir.<sup>257</sup> And in a letter to Schechter, Montefiore wrote revealingly, “I have often defended *your* Rabbis...” (italics mine)<sup>258</sup> as if to distinguish between Schechter’s forebears and his own. Consequently, a sense of alienation from his fellow Jews permeates Montefiore’s works and letters, a feeling of ‘us and them’. Others were quick to sense the difference in quality, and to put it down to foreign (that is, Christian) influence. Rightly or wrongly, Montefiore’s ideas regarding the essence of Judaism were criticised as un-Jewish, at least partly, because he failed to take up a clearly defined position on the side of Jewish tradition against Jesus and Christianity.

One final factor was Montefiore’s determination to achieve a greater systematisation of Judaism than had been achieved before. Throughout the years of their friendship, he badgered Schechter to produce a systematic Jewish theology. And towards the end of his life, he was still criticising the rabbinic writings for being so “inconvenient” because “it will not readily fit into a nice system; you cannot classify it comfortably”.<sup>259</sup> As has been argued, his Liberal Judaism was itself essentially a theological approach to Judaism. While he was by no means alone in this endeavour, many of the brightest and best Jewish minds of the period could not quite accept such a presentment of Judaism (Schechter, for example, never satisfied Montefiore’s demand for a rigorously theological alternative to Weber’s work).<sup>260</sup> Later Jewish thinking, too, would challenge Montefiore’s hope; the present reader of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Cambridge, Nicholas de Lange, prefers to speak of “a collection of stories” than of a rabbinic theology.<sup>261</sup> Thus, with regard to his tangential emphasis on theology, Montefiore could today be criticised for having mistaken the medium by which the essence of Judaism could be treated – although it should be borne in mind that such an anti-theological understanding was rarely, if ever, articulated during his lifetime. A closer look at this idea of a theologically expressed Judaism now follows.

## VII – Jewish “Theology”

### i – Theological Expression

It has become unfashionable in modern times to speak in terms of Jewish “doctrine”. Even in Montefiore’s day no knowledgeable Jew would have attempted to *define* his Judaism in terms of an authoritative creed in the Christian manner (Mendelssohn, of course, had gloried in the idea that Judaism was not dependent upon dogma). But the disputes regarding various Jewish “beliefs” among Western Jewry at that time often seem to reflect a doctrinal approach to religion, an approach which might be described as Christian. As is evident in Michael Hilton’s *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life*, certain subjects (which he calls “special themes”) such as Messianism and Missionism came to take on an almost doctrinal sense in Jewish thought.<sup>262</sup> For example, the importance of the messiah and details concerning him and the Messianic Age came to occupy a significant, if not central, position in Jewish thought as a ‘bounce-back’ response to the traditional messiah-centric focus of Christianity. This was not a natural Jewish development but, instead, illustrates Hilton’s main thesis that Christianity has, on numerous occasions down through the centuries, significantly shaped Jewish thought.<sup>263</sup> The process seemed to have found its personification in Montefiore, who stressed the need for a doctrinally informed Judaism that could be compared favourably with a doctrinally informed Christianity (or any other faith, for that matter).

Many of Montefiore’s contemporaries disagreed with his theological or doctrinal agenda, of course. Solomon Schechter described traditional Jewish theology as tending “against the certain” and thus avoided systematic or dogmatic approaches,<sup>264</sup> and Leo Baeck, Montefiore’s friend and fellow Liberal Jew, argued vehemently against the idea of a theologically defined Judaism.<sup>265</sup> One of the earliest assessments of Montefiore to concentrate upon this particular characteristic was by the American VE Reichert. Reichert complained at Montefiore’s “extravagant emphasis upon utopian precepts” and that his approach “is literary and theological. He moves in a world of ideals. He is content to be a dreamer of prophetic Judaism that shall be wholly spiritual and universal”.<sup>266</sup> But unlike those for whom a theological approach seemed too similar to Christian practice for comfort, Montefiore was unabashed. It appeared a straightforward matter to him and he grew

increasingly frustrated at the failure of the Orthodox to express their religious world-view in clear-cut doctrinal terms.

In an article for the *Jewish Quarterly Review* in 1891, Montefiore argued that he had heard enough of the “duties” of Orthodoxy and now wanted to hear about its “creed”.<sup>267</sup> Dr M Friedländer, head of Jews’ College, had written *The Jewish Religion*, and in a review of the book Montefiore had treated it as a window into the hearts and minds of “modern Jewish Orthodoxy... [and] the Judaism of the Jews’ College”.<sup>268</sup> What he read had disconcerted him, for, while he was assured that Judaism was destined to become “in its simplest principles the universal religion”, he had been unable to determine what these principles were. Similarly, he had failed to discover the Orthodox position with regard to other creeds (especially Unitarianism and Theism), could make out little of what was meant by “the Mission of Israel”, and remained in the dark concerning the Orthodox Jewish doctrine on “Sin, Reconciliation, Atonement and Divine Grace”.<sup>269</sup> He was impressed by the emphasis Friedländer gave to faith but concluded that the doctrinal weakness of Orthodoxy, which was the result of its narrow-minded, sheltered existence and which had prevented it from adopting a (Hellenistic) logical, structured approach, boded ill for the future of Judaism within what he called “the wide stream of general civilisation”.<sup>270</sup>

Almost thirty years on, and Montefiore was still complaining that doctrine was, for a variety of reasons, “driven into the shade”.<sup>271</sup> One of these reasons was the unnecessary Jewish reaction to Christian emphasis upon belief. He felt that, since the time of Mendelssohn, Judaism had lost its sense of balance and had emphasised action while neglecting doctrine. For Montefiore, it was entirely unsatisfactory to define Judaism in terms of its particular practices – in that case, he argued, food laws could be viewed as more distinctly Jewish than the belief in the Unity of God.<sup>272</sup> The result of this observance-orientated self-definition, he complained, was that it was unclear exactly what the traditionalists did believe in.<sup>273</sup> Surely, he reasoned, ever conscious of Christian observers, a theological dimension was essential for a healthy Judaism. He wrote,

We [Liberal Jews], too, believe that life is more than a creed, that conduct is more important than dogma, and the love of God more urgent than elaborate beliefs about his nature. But neither Christians nor Jews need, therefore, hold... that either individuals or communities can get on *without* beliefs, even though those beliefs need not be very intricate or exceedingly numerous.<sup>274</sup>

What the traditionalists had failed to achieve, according to Montefiore, was a combination of belief and practice. They had not understood that “the Practice was ever sustained and nourished by the Belief”.<sup>275</sup>

## ***ii – Theological Issues***

As a Liberal Jew, Montefiore not only differed from other Jewish thinkers in his insistence that Judaism should emphasise its essential doctrines but also, of course, with regard to the content of such beliefs. Again and again, these differences and, in particular, the doctrinal form in which he expressed them, can be traced back to the influence of his prolonged exposure to Western European Christian ethical and theological thought.

Montefiore had looked with interest in Friedländer’s book for an Orthodox theology of God. As far as he was concerned, however, it had failed to provide any clear indication regarding the immanence or the transcendence of God; although “painfully silent upon this momentous question”, the overall impression tended towards one of a highly transcendental deity. “Let us therefore for the present hope”, he concluded, “that Dr Friedländer’s conception is by no means Orthodoxy’s last word.”<sup>276</sup> Montefiore himself believed that it was possible to defend a doctrinally held position that God could be both things at once, depending upon one’s point of view; elsewhere he referred to the Jewish scriptural images of the *Ruach ha’ Kodesh* (i.e. God in nature) and God the Creator (i.e. God the source of nature) which supported this dual model, and argued “There is no reason why Judaism should not teach both aspects of the Divine Unity.”<sup>277</sup> This was not very different from Leo Baeck’s view. For Baeck it was the bi-polar nature of Judaism, the co-existence of both mystery and commandment, which allowed the apparently mutually exclusive concepts to be reconciled. As he put it,

Judaism lacks any foundation for the conflict between transcendence and immanence. Jewish piety lives in the paradox, in the polarity with all its tension and compactness.<sup>278</sup>

What is interesting here is that Montefiore differed from Baeck, Friedländer and other Jewish thinkers on this subject in his emphasis upon clear doctrinal expression, a form of expression which could easily be viewed as characteristically Christian or Hellenistic (or, at

least, not typically Jewish). In other words, his heavily Christianised background and the corresponding influence of rationalist, Aristotelian thinking coloured the way in which he understood and the way in which he described his faith.

Montefiore was also disappointed to discover that Friedländer's book had ignored what he described as "the virtue of self-sacrifice... of suffering voluntarily for the sake of others".<sup>279</sup> He complained that although the Orthodox spoke a great deal about "duty", there was little about "love", a doctrine central to Montefiore's understanding of Judaism. He was careful to differentiate between "vicarious suffering" which was voluntary, moral and, moreover, an ideal Judaism shared with Christianity, and "vicarious punishment" which was a judicial act, immoral, and, as expressed in Christ's atoning death, a teaching Judaism could never accept.<sup>280</sup> Yet, while Christianity had moved too far in this direction in his opinion, Montefiore argued that "the doctrine of sacrifice, of suffering voluntarily undergone for the sake of others" was taught in Isaiah 53 and could be found in the rabbinic literature and was thus essentially a Jewish doctrine. This was by no means a point of view shared by other Jewish thinkers. His arch-critic, Ahad Ha-Am, had attacked Montefiore for this very claim in a review of his *Synoptic Gospels*.<sup>281</sup> Arguing that absolute justice rather than self-sacrificing love characterised Judaism, Ahad Ha-Am had likewise quoted from the rabbinic sources at length, managing to produce an entirely opposite effect to Montefiore's positive assessment of the doctrine of Love. Ahad Ha-Am was adamant that love or altruism, which were for him interchangeable terms, almost always detracted from justice. As he put it,

Judaism cannot accept the altruistic principle; it cannot put the "other" in the centre of the circle, because that place belongs to justice, which knows no distinction between "self" and "other".<sup>282</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am also pointed out that an altruistic standpoint could not be maintained at an international level – "a nation can never believe that its moral duty lies in self-abasement or in the renunciation of its rights for the benefits of other nations",<sup>283</sup> – and this proved for him the ultimately illogical nature of Christian belief in the supremacy of love. It is clear, however, that an essential factor in Ahad Ha-Am's opposition to Montefiore in this matter lay in the latter's perceived adoption of Christian value-judgements and ideas. Ahad Ha-Am's attack on love as a non-Jewish doctrine seems to have stemmed from his concern to cleanse Judaism from what he saw as unwelcome Christian influences. Interestingly, Ahad Ha-Am, even as a cultural Zionist, tacitly accepted the idea that Judaism could be described

in doctrinal, theological terms (that is, Ahad Ha-Am defined Judaism doctrinally in terms of “justice” rather than in terms of “love” in opposition to Montefiore) even though it was just this Christian- or Hellenistic-influenced form of expression which differentiated Liberal Jewish teaching from Orthodox Jewish teaching in general and the writings of others like Baeck in particular.

The (Reform) doctrine of the Mission of Israel was an important one for Montefiore. When others attacked him for holding theological views which better suited Theism or Unitarianism rather than Judaism, Montefiore was able to defend his position as a Jew primarily through his identification with the Religion whose duty it had been from time immemorial to propagate morality and ethical belief throughout the rest of the world. As he put it in a letter in 1934,

The Jews, please God, will never be absorbed. God has chosen them for a religious purpose in the History of the World, and till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the One God – the God of Israel – the Jews will be his witnesses. I should collapse morally and *spiritually* if I did not believe that.<sup>284</sup>

Thus it was Montefiore’s duty, as he saw it, to further the Mission of Israel from within the camp of Israel, that is, as a Jew. Although the phrase was current in Orthodox circles, Montefiore complained that Friedländer’s vagueness in defining the “Mission of Israel” was typical.<sup>285</sup> Not all Jewish thinkers were as vague, however. Ahad Ha-Am uncompromisingly decried the idea of a Mission of Israel (in any sense other than a fulfilment of duties) as “entirely without foundation in fact”.<sup>286</sup> In response to Reform claims that the Prophets had envisaged the positive influence of Judaism upon the morality of the surrounding world, Ahad Ha-Am argued that this result would have followed automatically from the existence of the superior morality Judaism offered. The furthest he was prepared to go was to accept the idea of the Chosenness of Israel, in the sense of its moral development. But this, he felt, had nothing to do with the idea of Judaism converting the rest of humanity. As he put it, “There was no thought of... the rest of mankind; the sole object was the existence of the superior type.”<sup>287</sup> This was a position entirely at odds with Liberal Judaism for two reasons. Firstly, in *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism* (1918) Montefiore had called for a world-wide mission if the “new and purified Judaism” was to fulfil its destiny as a universal religion. “The object of Israel’s election”, he wrote, “is to disseminate throughout the world the knowledge of God.”<sup>288</sup> The fact that Montefiore was

content to have this universal victory of “Liberal Jewish doctrine” occur under another name (perhaps even Christianity) if necessary<sup>289</sup> would not have endeared him to Ahad Ha-Am. It was another example of the excessive lengths Montefiore was, in theory, prepared to go to further his doctrinal form of Judaism. Secondly, Montefiore was quite against the idea of a Chosen people in the sense of “privilege” and was adamant in defining the doctrine in terms of “service”.<sup>290</sup> His position on this matter was not atypical for a Jew – the doctrine of Chosenness in the sense of service had been foreshadowed in Continental and American Reform theology – but his emphasis of this rôle was regarded suspiciously by his opponents. After all, Christianity had traditionally made much of the “Suffering Servant” with regard to the messiah. It was, perhaps, too much of a Christian emphasis and seemed to reinforce the image of Montefiore as a crypto-Christian.

The concept of universalism greatly appealed to Montefiore. It was one of the few aspects of St Paul’s theology upon which he was prepared to comment positively; he admired Paul for having preached a universalist message and for having solved the “puzzle of the universal God and the national cult”,<sup>291</sup> although needless to say he disagreed about the exact form it took. Montefiore was by no means alone, however; there were many others who believed that, eventually, Judaism would take its rightful place as the world religion. Of course, almost all of them were talking about their own version of Judaism. As we have already seen, Montefiore condemned Friedländer for the vagueness of his claim that Judaism “in its simplest principles” would triumph.<sup>292</sup> Solomon Schechter recognised no geographical limit for Judaism nor was he against the idea of proselytising but he disagreed with Montefiore regarding the form of Judaism which would ultimately prove to be universally acceptable. Concerned to preserve the traditions of both Western and Eastern Jewish communities, Schechter was doubtful that Montefiore’s Anglicised Liberal Judaism could ever meet the needs of world Jewry. Indeed, as we saw earlier, he argued vehemently that Liberal Judaism would only bring about further disunity.

This claim is somewhat unfair in that it was extremely important for Montefiore that Liberal Judaism should be understood in universalist terms; as far as he was concerned, an East-West split was by no means necessary. In spite of his abhorrence for particularism in religion, Montefiore rejected many pro-universalist options in the interests of continuity and to avoid offending the wider Jewish community.<sup>293</sup> Yet long before the JRU or the Liberal Jewish movement were established, Montefiore had suggested that any tensions would

disappear as a result of the Eastern Jews being correctly educated. In his essay ‘A Justification of Judaism’ (1885), referring to Western Christian literature, he wrote,

To all these influences the Jews are necessarily subjected. Indeed, they are needful influences to the required transformation of Judaism from an Eastern into a Western faith.<sup>294</sup>

What he appears to have meant by “Western faith” in contrast to “Eastern [faith]” was a systematic form of Jewish truth of the Hellenistic or Christian kind. We have already discussed what Montefiore’s idea of the essence or fundamental truth of Judaism was. What Montefiore wanted to see adopted by this Judaism was, therefore, a doctrinally worked out, clear-cut, belief-based expression of itself. This would provide a common ground for Jews from the East and the West and, more importantly, would appeal to and include the Gentile world. At best, Montefiore’s hope that a given set of doctrinal beliefs would, in historical fact, unify peoples of different cultures and religious thought patterns can be described as naïvely optimistic. As Israel Zangwill pointed out in 1919, Montefiore’s doctrinally universalist movement actually made very little difference. “No more than the old Synagogue has it [Liberal Judaism] been of any universalist value in the spiritual eclipse whose shadow still roots heavily upon Europe.”<sup>295</sup> Nevertheless, Montefiore remained firmly convinced throughout his life that eventually, some day, the essential (Liberal) Jewish doctrines would triumph universally.

## **VIII – Judaism and Christianity**

In 1895, as honorary president of the Theological Society of the University of Glasgow,<sup>296</sup> Montefiore read a paper entitled ‘Some Misconceptions of Judaism and Christianity by Each Other’. The paper is interesting for the concern it showed in preparing the ground for what today might be described as dialogue. Non-polemical in character, it suggested that important benefits could be gained from genuine attempts to understand the other faith. As Montefiore put it,

The way by which one pilgrim travels seems strange and rugged to another, and yet, perhaps it is well for him to learn something of his fellow pilgrim’s road. At least let him realise that the many pathways

may all lead Godward, and that the world is richer for that the paths are not a few.<sup>297</sup>

The respect with which Montefiore treats the traditional foe was remarkable but more remarkable still was his apparent acceptance of the other's self-definition. It was this which most of all set him apart from the vast majority of other Jewish thinkers and gives credence to the claim made here that, with the exception of Franz Rosenzweig, Montefiore was closer to true dialogue than any other pre-Holocaust Jew.

In 'Some Misconceptions of Judaism and Christianity by Each Other', Montefiore drew up two short lists of contributions which he believed each of the faiths had made to religion. On the Jewish side, he included the concepts of:

- a Deity who was just and loving and was a Unity;
- morality as central to religion;
- social justice;
- social unity and love;
- dogmatic simplicity and comprehensive unity of belief;
- an ideal of religion as the stuff of everyday life.

On the Christian side, the contributions included:

- a high and spiritual estimate of suffering;
- sacrifice and self-sacrifice as ideal;
- a loving attitude towards ones enemies;
- universalism, i.e. God's acceptance of all men;
- non-racial religion;
- subordinated ritual; a lack of confusion of outward and inward piety.

That there was a great common ground between Judaism and Christianity was illustrated for Montefiore by the fact that in modern times each camp had adopted "as its own children and property" all twelve concepts (and others). Significantly, Montefiore was prepared to acknowledge, as a Jew, that Christianity had produced truths that Judaism had done well to absorb (and vice versa). The high regard in which he viewed Christianity, and his public expression of it, set him apart from his contemporary co-religionists. He was prepared to

give credit where he believed credit was due, even if this meant giving it to the traditional foe. It goes without saying that such a sympathetic, non-antagonistic attitude is one prerequisite for inter-faith dialogue.

Another prerequisite is the mutual recognition of each faith as valid expressions of the knowledge of God. Montefiore, like Rosenzweig, went even further in this with his belief that Christianity and Judaism actually complemented each other. For Rosenzweig, as was discussed earlier, Judaism was the star and Christianity the rays radiating from its centre; the two were intertwined. In *The Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig wrote that each group was dependent upon the other within the context of world history. For both, this responsibility brought suffering – for the Jew, due to his “negation of the world” and for the Christian, due to his “affirmation of the world”.<sup>298</sup> What Rosenzweig meant by “negation” was the idea of an election, or a setting apart, of a people who would witness to the rest of the world; their suffering had resulted from their separation. By “affirmation”, he referred to the position of the Church in attempting to missionize the pagan world; likewise, different temptations and sufferings had come about from its “being in the world”. From Rosenzweig’s point of view, both religions played essential and complementary roles within world history; both were necessary and related. For this reason, Rosenzweig’s thinking has been described as dialogical rather than dialectical.<sup>299</sup>

Montefiore, too, supported the idea that Judaism needed Christianity. But while Rosenzweig’s “doctrine of the two covenants” viewed Christianity and Judaism as partial truths which would be superseded by the absolute truth in “the end of days”,<sup>300</sup> Montefiore hoped and believed that the synthesis would occur before the end of time. This difference can be partly explained by the differing images of Christianity each held. The paramount factor, and the most obvious one, in determining a Jewish thinker’s place within Jewish-Christian relations, is that of his personal comprehension of Christianity. Determining his actual position is, however, a more complex issue than is generally reckoned with. This is because of two obvious yet often overlooked complications. Firstly, just as there is no consensus on what exactly defines Judaism, so there is no consensus regarding the precise nature of Christianity. The fact that different people experience different expressions of “Christianity” means one person’s views on its “essence” may in fact be referring to quite a different thing than another’s. It thus becomes essential to determine what experience of “Christianity” each Jewish thinker has undergone before attempting to compare and contrast

his or her apparently differing views. Secondly, it is quite possible, and even likely, that a Jewish thinker's position might well change over his lifetime as his personal comprehension and appreciation of "Christianity" develops. The importance of this last point becomes especially clear in the case of Leo Baeck, to whom we will return.

As has already been mentioned, Rosenzweig's view of Christianity was highly philosophical and shaped by his conversations with intellectual Christian relatives (such as Eugene Rosenstock) and friends (such as Hans Ehrenburg). Static and un-historical (emphasising, for example, the divinity of Christ) his image accurately mirrored the contemporary Protestant theology as influenced by German Idealism.<sup>301</sup> Montefiore, on the other hand, held a far more complicated view of Christianity. His humanitarian and philanthropic activities in London and elsewhere had placed him in constant contact with Evangelical Christian charities, while a close friend of his, Baron Von Hügel, was Catholic with mystical leanings. He had a special interest in the Unitarian theological training school, Manchester College, and regarded the Unitarian minister, Joseph Estlin Carpenter, as a friend. With regard to biblical studies, his own position was close to the German rationalistic writings. Overall, however, it was the British modernists and liberals to whom he had been most exposed and was most familiar. From his days at Oxford he had become intimately aware of what it meant to be an Anglican liberal. Generally speaking, this demystified, ethical, liberal Anglican theology came to represent for him Christianity *per se*. Unlike Rosenzweig, then, Montefiore's treatment of Christianity in this context was based less upon a philosophical idea of Christianity and more upon Christianity as it was practised and believed in actuality (especially by Jowett). He was very aware that liberal attacks on the verbal inspiration of scripture, for example, had brought about a shaking of the foundations of Western Christianity. The vacuum left by this weakened Christianity and by a stagnant Orthodox Judaism would best be filled, he argued, with "a developed and purified Judaism" composed of the best aspects of each religion.<sup>302</sup> While it might not reach its fullest form for some time, Montefiore was convinced that his own Liberal Judaism had already managed to articulate the universalist principles and rationalist attitude of this future faith. Towards the end of his life, Montefiore observed that the "moderns of today" would benefit from an understanding of the intimate relationship between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.

The one is often (in a good sense) the complement or supplement of the other... Of the two brothers

[Judaism and Christianity] one has remained more at home; the other has gone out into the world... The character of each is a fresh creation, and the excellences of each, though kindred, are yet distinct. As society is the richer for both brothers, so it is, I think, with the teachings of both Rabbinic Judaism and of Christianity.<sup>303</sup>

Leo Baeck, who played an important rôle in the history of Jewish-Christian relations, did not accept for a long time the partnership of Judaism and Christianity which both Rosenzweig and Montefiore recognised, each in his own way. Baeck's *The Essence of Judaism* (1905), a polemical response to Harnack's *The Essence of Christianity* (1900), was written in total disregard of Montefiore's sentiments articulated as early as 1896 against "the habit we all have of using another religion as a foil to our own".<sup>304</sup> Elsewhere, as we have already seen, Baeck contrasted the equal mix of "mystery" and "commandment" in Judaism, with the lopsided emphasis of "mystery" in Christianity. "Paul left Judaism", Baeck argued, "when he preached *sola fide* (by faith alone)... Mystery became everything for him".<sup>305</sup> In his famous essay *Romantic Religion* (1922) Baeck contrasted Christianity (that is, the contemporary German Protestantism) which was a "Romantic" religion, with Judaism, which was essentially "Classical". Baeck used Schleiermacher's definition of religion as "the feeling of absolute dependence"<sup>306</sup> as evidence for his claim that the Romantic aspect "fixes the direction" in Christianity.<sup>307</sup>

Interestingly, Baeck's polemicism became more subdued towards the end of his life. Spending time in America had shown him another face of Christianity, a more open Christianity, and one which was less threatening than the often hostile, overly intellectual Church of the Old World. Was this the same face which Montefiore and Rosenzweig had caught a glimpse of in turn-of-the-century Europe? Certainly, Baeck's later writing regarding Jewish-Christian relations sounds similar. Like Rosenzweig and Montefiore, the older Baeck was able to see complementary roles by which Judaism and Christianity could co-exist and prosper. In 1954 he wrote,

Inner voices will be heard. To each other Judaism and Christianity will be admonitions and warnings: Christianity becoming Judaism's conscience and Judaism Christianity's. That common ground, that common outlook, that common problem which they come to be aware of will call them to make a joint venture.<sup>308</sup>

Even then, however, Baeck was more comfortable with the idea of sharing "a common

ground” than he was with the idea that the two faiths actually needed each other if the future of their essential teachings were to be assured (Montefiore) or that the partial truth of each one would meet in one absolute truth at the end of time (Rosenzweig). Baeck’s position was more conservative and closer to that of Kaufmann Kohler who had spoken of “Jewish ethics” expressed “through Synagogue and Church alike”.<sup>309</sup> For Baeck, as for Kohler, the fact that the two faiths shared a common aim of holiness was, ultimately, simply a result of the influence of Judaism. As Kohler put it, “[striving for Holiness] is the ethical principle and the moral idea of the Jew, and through him also of the Christian”.<sup>310</sup> For Jewish thinkers like Kohler and the older Baeck, Christianity no longer represented the arch-enemy but neither was it in the same league as Judaism; for them there was no absolute need for Christianity as such, as there had been for both Montefiore and Rosenzweig. In contrast to most other Jews, their idea of Christianity was one with which they could identify and thus sympathise; although they were quite capable of defining the differences between the “essence of Judaism” and the “essence of Christianity”, they generally did so in a manner far less antagonistic than, for example, the younger Leo Baeck. This seems to boil down to a difference in value judgement rather than a difference of intellectual or spiritual ideals.

No doubt their differing value judgements were largely due to the fact that both Montefiore and Rosenzweig had grown up in environments which had instilled in them a high regard for Christian culture, and also the fact that both had enjoyed the companionship and friendship of Christians whom they deeply respected. But they were by no means the only Jews in this position. Likewise, while their interest in Christianity set them apart from the majority of Jews, there were others (again, Leo Baeck provides a good example), who were also actively engaged in attempting to come to terms with Christianity. What made Rosenzweig and Montefiore different from Baeck and others was the way in which they had *felt* about Christianity from their youth onwards. This appears to have been the decisive factor in determining the tone of their Jewish-Christian writings.

It has been well documented that the number of Jews who have been converted to Christianity throughout history has been few.<sup>311</sup> Around the turn of the twentieth century, however, relatively large numbers of European Jews did abandon the faith of their forefathers. In Germany they did so for mainly social and financial considerations.<sup>312</sup> In England, where the granting of emancipation had made baptism unnecessary for Jews to ‘get along’, the majority of the Anglo-Jewish élite remained within the Jewish fold or at least

indifferent to Christianity. In both cases, it was an extremely small minority who did apostasize for the sake of the spiritual truths or ethical values of Christianity. Nevertheless, there were a few for whom, from their often nominally Jewish point of view, Christianity appeared culturally and religiously light-years ahead of Judaism. It seems fair to place the young Rosenzweig within this tiny minority since, at one stage in his youth, he did decide to become Christian for these reasons.<sup>313</sup> Similarly, it also seems right to place Montefiore here, for although he apparently never contemplated conversion, he too regarded the best of the contemporary Christianity as superior to much of what Judaism generally stood for at the time. While both eventually became intensely concerned to forward the cause of Judaism, neither could quite leave behind the admiration and appreciation they had developed for Christianity. Thus they represent a minute fraction of the aforementioned minority of usually nominal Jews whose high regard for Christianity might have tempted them to convert but who, instead, were able to reconcile their regard for Christianity with their loyalty to their Jewish roots. The next logical step would be for them to construct a coherent (Jewish) world-view that could incorporate Christianity in a positive way. And this is exactly what both Montefiore and Rosenzweig did.

Throughout this section, reference has been made to the characteristics of “dialogue” and the conditions under which it can take place. For the purposes of this thesis, “dialogue” refers to the face-to-face interaction between equal partners who aim to develop themselves and learn from the encounter. While several of the necessary preconditions are to be found espoused in the writings of Baeck, Montefiore and especially Rosenzweig, true dialogue in its modern sense had to wait for Martin Buber. Montefiore and Rosenzweig were close to the spirit of dialogue in their high estimation of the value of Christianity – especially significant were Montefiore’s readiness to learn from Christianity and Rosenzweig’s recognition of its equally valid yet unique rôle as a pathway to God for pagans.<sup>314</sup> But before Buber, no one had fully accepted the self-definition of the Other, that is to say, Jews had failed to actually take on trust what Christians had to say about their own faith from the depth of their own private, inner knowledge. Both Montefiore and Rosenzweig had come to hold a very definite and particular view of Christianity. For Montefiore, even the very best Christian thinkers were, ultimately, mistaken if they held to traditional Christology.<sup>315</sup> For Rosenzweig, while Christianity had much to say to the surrounding (pagan) world, ultimately, it had little to say to the Jew. Their writings regarding Jewish-Christian relations, while eloquent and generous, failed to accept the paradox of dialogue (that the experience of

the Other is as real and true as it is for oneself) and would have been assessed by Buber as I-It monologues.

The acceptance of the Other's self-definition was something that Buber was prepared to attempt in spite of the inherent difficulties. Writing in 1936 he argued,

We can acknowledge as a mystery that which someone else confesses as the reality of his faith, though it opposes our own existence and is contrary to the knowledge of our own being. We are not capable of judging its meaning, because we do not know it from within.<sup>316</sup>

Buber was prepared to acknowledge that there was more to Christianity than he, as an outsider, could understand; Rosenzweig and Montefiore both believed that they understood what it meant to be Christian and could describe its essence – and thus failed to recognise the mystery and ‘unknowableness’ which is intrinsic to the partner in dialogue, an awareness of the Other as “absolutely not oneself”.<sup>317</sup> In a sense, defining the precise nature of a Jewish thinker’s idea of Christianity becomes a moot point in the context of dialogue. Whatever the depth of his understanding, it is essential for dialogue that there be recognition of the limitation of his actual knowledge, since the source of knowledge is external.

In what sense can Montefiore be said to have engaged in inter-faith dialogue? In addition to his lively personal correspondence with Christian thinkers, his non-polemical studies of the New Testament, and his belief in the eventual merging of the best of Christian and Jewish teaching, Montefiore was also intimately involved in one of the earliest institutional attempts to utilise dialogue as a vehicle for religious self-understanding. The London Society for the Study of Religion was set up in 1904 by the Roman Catholic Baron von Hügel and the Unitarian missionary Joseph Wicksteed (who were introduced to each other by Montefiore). A small group was formed, Montefiore being the only Jew, with the aim “to include devout men of every school, and to welcome all new thought that seeks to restore and re-state for our own time and in the language of today those revelations and apprehensions of the Eternal which have in different ages given greatness to the past”.<sup>318</sup> Papers which Montefiore himself delivered to the Society included ‘The Synoptic Gospels and the Jewish Consciousness’, ‘Apocalyptic and Rabbinic’, ‘Has Judaism any Future?’, ‘The Originality of Jesus’, ‘Some Reflections about the Jews’ and ‘A Die-Hard’s Confession’. One of the most important aspects of this forum for dialogue was that, for all

practical purposes, each participant spoke for himself first, and his denomination second; little or no emphasis was placed upon ‘the official’ position and no minutes were published, so as to protect the reputations of those involved. Such an arrangement suited all who those recognised the reality of another individual’s faith and experience even if they disagreed with the teachings of the tradition to which he belonged. It certainly suited Montefiore’s personal disposition, reflected in his comment to a Christian friend and fellow member of the Society, “Is there such a thing as Judaism and Christianity apart from the men who hold it?”<sup>319</sup> Thus, while the LSSR did not represent dialogue between the respective institutional traditions, it did encourage increased mutual understanding among individuals.<sup>320</sup>

Like other liberal thinkers involved in proto-dialogue, Montefiore was well aware of the Orthodox argument that without authority in some form or another, whether scriptural, traditional or individual, there would be nothing to hold Judaism together. Liberalism was vilified in his day as the work of man rather than of God, with the traditionalists fearing that somehow a dialogical approach (or any approach that calls upon man to take individual responsibility for his relationship with and understanding of God and the world) would lead men away from the revealed truth. As we have seen, Montefiore placed great emphasis upon Reason and its ability to reach ultimate religious truth. Liberal Judaism was, for him, the supreme example of a religion which utilised man’s conscience as the pivotal point about which to assess this truth. But, equally, he stressed the importance of an *instructed* conscience, that is, one which had learned from the mistakes and achievements of the past, one shaped by the very traditions from which it could later largely free itself.<sup>321</sup> The instruction was to be gained from what can only be described as a dialogical relationship with the traditional scriptures. While they were not to dictate to an individual, they were, apparently, useful in shaping and forming him. He wrote of the Old Testament, for example,

However great and significant the changes in Liberal Judaism from... the prevailing doctrines of the Old Testament may be, still more remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that Liberal Judaism still finds in the Old Testament both its spiritual ancestry and its nourishment.<sup>322</sup>

Montefiore’s own life illustrates his ideal: a life of study and instruction within the Jewish tradition (with reference to other wisdom literatures). But in articulating the essence of Liberal Judaism, Montefiore also made it clear that once the authentic Jewish “spirit” had been developed in the Jew through the “religious system”, he should realise that he “stands

above” it. It was of paramount importance to Montefiore that the tradition did not inhibit development: “We possess a large measure of freedom, and this freedom is of the essence of our religion.”<sup>323</sup> This is not far, perhaps, from Buber’s dialogical Judaism in the sense of a developing, individualised, and internalised Judaism, which is guided and inspired by tradition but not dictated to by it.

## IX – Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that although parallels to much of Montefiore’s teaching can be found in the various forms of Judaism in his day, there were also important differences that suggest independent development. Both Reform and Liberal Judaism in Britain had been shaped by indigenous circumstances and by the peculiar psychology of Anglo-Jewry, and therefore foreign influence, whether German or American Reform, need not be overstated. One striking difference, the lack of a theological and intellectual justification for Anglo-Reform, was a factor leading to its stagnation and religious apathy. Montefiore’s solution was to re-evaluate Reform Judaism and, by incorporating historical criticism, to re-package it with a more progressive theology. His liberal movement began with the negative self-definition of the Jewish Religious Union, which continued from where the paralysed Reform movement had left off in stripping away outdated Jewish traditions. It went on to develop the more positive hopes of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, which championed a universalist, non-nationalistic, ethical monotheism. Controversial aspects of his teaching included his anti-Zionist stance, his view of rabbinic tradition, and especially his sympathetic attitude towards Christianity.

In propounding the idea of an evolving ‘essence of Judaism’, Montefiore emphasised the individual’s freedom from authority, the need for an instructed conscience, and a continuous theological reappraisal of the tenets of Judaism. As we have seen, this formulation set him apart not only from the Orthodox, but also from other reform minded thinkers such as Rosenzweig, Buber and Baeck. The very attempt to express Judaism in doctrinal terms, so as to meet the intellectual and theological challenge of liberal Christianity, made other Jewish thinkers uncomfortable. And his belief that the teachings of Christianity and Judaism complemented one another, and that the future of religion lay in the

amalgamation of the best of each, won little support even among his followers. For these reasons and for others, many have doubted the authenticity of Montefiore's Jewishness and have tried to identify non-Jewish influences upon his thought. It is the extent of the influence of Christianity upon his Liberal Judaism, both in substance and form, which will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

## Chapter Two

### Christian Influences Upon Montefiore

#### I – Introduction

By the late nineteenth century, the antagonism that had characterised two millennia of Jewish-Christian relations had begun to be challenged by cultured thinkers from both faiths. Neither side could yet fully accept the self-definition of the other since the imprint of the traditional teachings was too deeply embedded. But they were now, at least, able to communicate civilly with each other. Generally speaking, however, the Jewish response to Christian teaching was limited to little more than dealing with the (traditional) negative portrayal of Pharisees and Rabbinic Judaism in the New Testament. Solomon Schechter, for example, concentrated upon showing that the Christians had got it wrong – that the Pharisees were not the villains that the Gospels had made them out to be, and that Paul's vision of the Rabbinic Religion was profoundly biased. He had little time to devote to increasing mutual understanding, and his interpretation of Jesus as an Incarnation of Israel, rather than of God, would not have done much to calm the waters.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, although Leo Baeck would later parallel Montefiore in arguing that other religions should not be spurned without study, he, too, was primarily concerned to show the superiority of Judaism over Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

Montefiore was different. It was not that he failed to understand what lay behind the traditional antagonistic stance. Considering what Judaism had suffered in the past at the hands of the Christians, he felt that it was “not astonishing” that Jewish writers had restricted themselves to looking for parallels or for defects in Christian scriptures. He went further than previous Jewish thinkers had by admitting the independent original development of early Christianity (along Jewish lines). As he put it,

There is much in the New Testament which is great and noble, much which is sublime and tender, much which is good and true. Of this ‘much’, the greater part consists in a fresh presentment of some of the best and highest teaching in the Old Testament, in a vivid reformulation of it, in an admirable picking and choosing, an excellent bringing together. Not a [small] part consists in a further development, or in a

clearer and more emphatic expression of certain truths which previously were only implicit or not fully drawn out.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst always maintaining his rejection of Christian *doctrine* Montefiore saw elements of beauty and truth within the Christian *religion* which he felt the Jewish tradition could and should profit from. Certain teachings of Christianity represented a development of Judaism in a significant way; a sympathetic approach would lead to an enrichment of their own religion. In his opinion the books of the New Testament, and especially the Synoptic Gospels, were part of the Liberal Jewish heritage. For most Jews, the New Testament added nothing of any value to the Old Testament. Montefiore disagreed and, at the risk of being misunderstood as a Christian apologist, attempted to present the best of that religion to his fellow Jews. In this task Montefiore strikes a rather lonely figure in nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewry. For while a number of his Jewish contemporaries, such as those belonging to the Jewish Religious Union, accepted his liberal biblical interpretations and teachings, few of them shared his intense interest in Christianity. As far as Orthodox Jewry was concerned, the JRU and the Liberal Jewish movement which evolved from it under Montefiore's guidance were to be regarded with the deepest suspicion, not least for its alleged incorporation of Christian practices.<sup>4</sup>

As the first (modern) Jew to view Christianity almost entirely sympathetically, however, he felt little or no need to defend Judaism, emphasise the defects of Christianity, or write apologetically. He hoped that, in contrast to those Jews who 'dialogued' with Christians only in order to defend Judaism, his work would be instrumental in bringing the two traditions closer together in mutual acceptance. He introduced into Jewish-Christian relations what Jacob Agus described as a new policy of "Mutual Supplementation and Acceptation".<sup>5</sup> He believed deeply that the traditional position held by his Jewish contemporaries was unnecessary and dangerous, an impediment to the removal of "the wall of distinction between Christian and Jew", and a barrier to increased Jewish-Christian understanding. He thus argued for further study and greater tolerance of the daughter faith.<sup>6</sup>

The degree of tolerance and even admiration with which Montefiore approached Christianity marked him out as a highly unusual Jew of his time, even on an international level. It is this uniquely positive understanding of, and relationship with, the Christianity of his day that makes him of such interest in the study of Jewish-Christian relations. It was also

the cause of the mistrust with which many of his Jewish contemporaries viewed him. The question, of course, is what made Montefiore take up his non-traditional and unpopular position regarding Christianity? What made him different in this way from other Jewish thinkers? What gave him his unique perspective? Montefiore himself commented,

I feel that by odd chance I am the only English Jew who can approach the Gospels fairly impartially, and who also has the time and the inclination to write about them.<sup>7</sup>

It is perhaps possible to explain the “odd chance” in terms of a combination of non-Jewish influences, influences that might loosely be described as Christian.

This chapter will begin by surveying the influence of the surrounding Christian culture upon Anglo-Jewry in general (entailing a certain amount of repetition of subject matter from chapter one) before turning to look at the contribution of Christian scholarship to Montefiore’s own biblical studies and writings. Having concentrated upon those Christian factors which contributed to making Montefiore the fascinating Jew he was, it will conclude that there is an element of truth to Schechter’s charge that Montefiore’s approach to religion was not so much Liberal Judaism as Liberal Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

## **II – The Surrounding Victorian Christian Culture**

### ***i – Assimilation***

Montefiore once commented with regard to English and American Jews that “five-sixths of their conception of life are Christian”.<sup>9</sup> He was not alone, of course, in recognising the effect of assimilation and the adoption of the values and practices of the dominant Christian culture. In fact, from the mid-century onwards this “Anglicisation” as Abraham Benisch, editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* called it, was viewed very negatively within Anglo-Jewry and often equated with ‘de-judaisation’.<sup>10</sup> Montefiore, on the other hand, saw it as a good thing. He believed that many English Jews felt spiritually akin to their Christian environment, remarking that he found “in middle-class Jews, when not corrupted by Zionism, curious resemblances and odd likenesses to middle-class Christians”.<sup>11</sup> He did not

find this surprising since they lived within a society that had been shaped by the forces of Christianity. It was only a matter of time, he felt, before a complete identification with the Gentile population in all matters except that of religious persuasion would be possible. It was even in their own interest for the Jews to come to terms with Christianity and to embrace and assimilate Christian culture since, he argued, this was the best way to deal with anti-Jewish feeling: ‘My slogan, ‘Englishmen of the Jewish faith’ is the solution of anti-Semitism and the answer to it.’<sup>12</sup> Whilst this view was not exceptional among the Anglo-Jewish élite who enjoyed the privileges of Victorian (Christian) culture it was, as Endelman has argued, exactly what the majority of British Jews did not want to do.<sup>13</sup> Certainly, he himself was prepared both to identify with such a cultural environment and label it as ‘Christian’. He wrote,

[For] the Jews of Europe and America who live in a Christian environment and amid a civilisation which has been partially created by the New Testament, our right relation towards it must surely be of grave and peculiar importance. For this civilisation is also ours. The literature, which is soaked through and through with New Testament influences, is also our literature. The thought, which has been partially produced by the New Testament, is the thought amid which we are reared, which we absorb, to which we react... The very air we breathe, the moral, literary, artistic influences which we suck up from our childhood, are to a large extent, the same as those which surround and affect our Christian fellow citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Occasionally, and privately, he specifically claimed to identify more closely with the non-Jewish community than with the Jewish,<sup>15</sup> and expressed his disgust for those who were less ‘English’.<sup>16</sup>

Montefiore believed that a characteristic trait of the Orthodox Jewish community was that it was always thinking about Christianity with a view to locating and excluding any trace of its influence.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, throughout the century, religious Jews in England seemed to be fixated on the Church and its effect upon them. And this was by no means limited to the Orthodox. In examining the Reform and the later Liberal movements, the influence of and reaction against the Church can be clearly seen.

The relatively high assimilation of Anglo-Jewry in contrast to European Jewry, and their readiness to adopt so much of the surrounding Victorian culture meant that, increasingly, British Jews absorbed much of the Christian world-view. This was certainly

true of Montefiore who could later recall that although his upbringing was very Jewish in teaching, observance, and atmosphere, very few Jews except their relations ever came to the house; the family friends were mainly Gentile: “Our [childhood] environment was entirely uncosmopolitan and purely English”.<sup>18</sup> Several of his tutors had been Christian clerics and he regarded their influence positively throughout his life; in a letter to Hastings Rashdall he explained,

I don’t feel so far apart. You see, I have lived with and loved, Christians all my life. My dearest friends have been and are passionate Roman Catholics, Anglicans (of all sorts) and so on... I can see with their eyes and feel with their feelings. It is a curious position which can only happen to those who belong to a wee minority and mix (thank God) very intimately with a big majority.<sup>19</sup>

Both consciously and subconsciously he adopted many of their presuppositions and attitudes as his own, as will be demonstrated later. Being influenced in this way naturally led to emulation and the reshaping of Anglo-Jewish religious culture.

Intertwined with this effect of emulation (caused by increased assimilation), however, was another, arguably more powerful force: the effect of Christian critique of Jewish religion. As Feldman has argued,<sup>20</sup> Jewish reaction to Christian criticism can be seen to have played an important part in the emergence of the Reform movement (and the reforming tendencies within Orthodox Judaism). Together with Jewish emulation of Church practices, it can also be seen to account for later developments including the JRU and Montefiore’s own Liberal Judaism.

Before looking more closely at how the powerful combination of Christian critique and Jewish emulation of Church practices significantly affected Anglo-Jewish Reform in general and Montefiore in particular, it may be useful to look at the ways in which the emergence of the Reform movement has been explained in the past without reference to Christian influence *per se*.

## ***ii – The Nature of the Jewish Reform Movement***

The Anglo-Jewish Reform movement initially distinguished itself by its external

reforms, which increased the solemnity and intelligibility of the public service, and by its discriminatory approach to the Oral Law, a kind of neo-Karaism.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to, say, the later migrations from Eastern Europe,<sup>22</sup> it had a well publicised but relatively minor effect upon communal Anglo-Jewry. It is nonetheless a phenomenon which must be explained, and in the past solutions have included the natural response to 'modernity' (mediated through the Jewish Enlightenment), the influence of the German Reform movement, and political manoeuvring by the Anglo-Jewish élite.

The theory that a reforming tendency came about as part of the Jewish response to 'modernity' has been popular in the past. The eighteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment, or *Haskalah*, emphasised universalist teachings and doctrines of Judaism and regulated the significance of particularistic rituals. It is tempting to find the inspiration for the reformers' more universalist tendencies here but in *The Englishness of Jewish Modernity* (1987), Endelman has clearly demonstrated that the *Haskalah* had, in fact, very little effect on England.

Another theory sees Anglo-Jewish Reform as an echo effect of the German Reform movement, itself a product of the Jewish Enlightenment. Although well reported in the Anglo-Jewish press, however, it seems as though the "scientific Judaism" of Germany had little or no tangible influence here. Orthodox and would-be reformers alike viewed the German model as a recipe for dissolution. In contrast to their more iconoclastic German counterparts, the English reformers' modifications basically amounted to abbreviations and omissions within the Prayer Book; ideas such as moving the Sabbath to Sunday were regarded as "inroads" of assimilation rather than reforms. On the other hand, the militant anti-rabbinism and decrying of rabbinic tradition which was characteristic of English Jewish Reform had no parallel in Germany or the United States. It appears as though the British movement emerged independently. Quoting Israel Zangwill who spoke of the reformers as "the Protestants of Judaism", Englander argues instead for Jewish emulation of Protestant bibliocentrism as the significant motive force.<sup>23</sup> In other words, it boils down to the aforementioned religious emulation effected by cultural assimilation.

But it is not as simple as Englander suggests – Reform cannot be accounted for solely or even mainly by the effects of (religious) assimilation. His conscious dismissal of the political factor sets aside the alternative view of the Reform movement as a vehicle for

the Anglo-Jewish élite to flex their political muscles.<sup>24</sup> The trend towards assimilation of British Jewry as a whole, especially around the mid-nineteenth century, has conventionally been explained in terms of the political scene. Cesarani in *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo Jewry* (1994) maintains that the Jews' sense of their acceptance (leading to emancipation) as to some extent conditional, contributed greatly to reshaping the nature of Jewishness and Judaism. They minimised that which – aside from their creed – set them apart.<sup>25</sup> Feldman in *Englishmen and Jews* (1994) goes further and joins with those historians who view even the Reform movement as, at least partially, socio-politically driven.

Feldman's argument is persuasive. From early in the century there had been demographic pressures upon the growing population of wealthy Jews living in the West End of London to provide for themselves a synagogue which the East Enders refused to provide (these, in turn, were fearful of financial loss and damage to their own membership and status). It is significant that when the West London Synagogue was finally established in 1842, the 24 founder members were dominated by the Mocattas (Sephardim) and the Goldsmids (Ashkenazim), that is, by members of the Anglo-Jewish élite. There can be little doubt that these families intended to use the new Reform synagogue as a base from which to challenge the temporal, as well as spiritual, authorities. Isaac L Goldsmid, the grandfather of Claude Montefiore, was a bullion broker and leading campaigner for political emancipation. Along with other dissidents within the Anglo-Jewish élite, he felt frustrated by the moderate stance of the Jewish Board of Deputies (JBD) and found the West London Synagogue a useful political tool in challenging the JBD's claim to represent the Jewish community to the government.<sup>26</sup> And so it seems as if political developments (the campaign for Jewish emancipation and the struggle for communal authority) were closely interwoven with the non-orthodox religious developments.

A socio-political interpretation goes some way in explaining the mechanism by which the Reform Synagogue came into being. It also allows for the conservative nature of its liturgical reforms since the Anglo-Jewish élite were not primarily interested in theological modification: if all they wanted was an alternative political structure to the JBD, they would not have wished to antagonise the Orthodox any more than was absolutely necessary – the Chief Rabbi's herem (in 1842) on the West London Synagogue already made their claims for religious toleration seem incongruous. But the socio-political argument is flawed. Programmes for Synagogue Reform had existed from the 1820s and thus preceded the

emergence of Jewish emancipation as a political consideration.<sup>27</sup> It also ultimately fails to account for the particular emphasis of the reforms introduced (anti-rabbinism, neo-Karaism, and universalist tendencies). Englander is right to recognise this and Feldman admits as much by devoting much more time to analysis of the effect of Christian critique.

Montefiore was very much a product of Reform Judaism. By taking a closer look at the various ways in which Christianity provoked the development of reforming tendencies within nineteenth-century Judaism, we can better appreciate the (indirect) influence of Christianity upon Montefiore himself.

### ***iii – Christian Critique and Reform Judaism***

An attempt will now be made to place Anglo-Jewish reforming tendencies in the context of the religious argument in English society (in general) and the Christian critique of Judaism (in particular). The fermentation provoked by the constitutional reforms of 1829 and 1832,<sup>28</sup> and the battling forces of Evangelicalism, tractarianism, liberal Anglicanism and non-conformity meant that, as with Jewish Reform, religion and politics intermeshed in early Victorian public life. The fact that it was now possible for Jews to become more fully involved in British society and politics made the situation very different to prior Christian critiques on Judaism; the criticism was now far more effective.

So what did Christians think of Judaism at this time? If Alexander McCaul, the best-selling author of *Old Paths* (1837) and *Sketches of Judaism and Jews* (1838), was to be believed, Judaism was a petrified, unbiblical ritualism.<sup>29</sup> McCaul was professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Literature at King's College, London, from 1841 and had considerable influence. He contrasted what he described as “the religion of Moses and the Prophets” with modern Judaism, which he condemned in Old Paths as “a new and totally different system, devised by designing men and unworthy of the Jewish people”.

Along with others, McCaul encouraged a Christian view of Judaism as a faith corrupted by the Rabbis and their Oral Law. In the sense that Rabbinic Judaism was viewed as an elaborate ritual sustained by a tradition which had no biblical support, the Christian

critique was a very bibliocentric, Protestant Evangelical one. It also drew upon traditional antagonisms. Comparison to Catholicism provided terms within which Judaism could be understood – Christians saw in “rabbinism” the same damning flaws as they found in “popery”. As McCaul put it,

If asked to give a concise yet adequate idea of this system [rabbinism], I should say it is Jewish Popery: just as Popery may be defined to [sic] by Gentile rabbinism. Its distinguishing feature is that it asserts the transmission of an oral or traditional law of equal authority with the written law of God, at the same time, that, like Popery, it resolves tradition into the present opinions of the existing Church.<sup>30</sup>

This is significant, for although anti-Semitism in Victorian Britain was well entrenched, it was not comparable in its intensity with anti-Catholicism. During the nineteenth century, traditional English hostility towards the Church of Rome pervaded all levels of society. To liken Judaism to Catholicism was to bring into the argument a whole range of negative emotions and connotations. It was a line of attack that many Jews felt called into question their Englishness, and which many felt duty-bound to refute.

Similarly, McCaul’s claim that “a Rabbinical Jew of the present day, as he exists in Poland or Palestine, conveys a tolerably accurate idea of what the Jews were centuries ago” maintained and reinforced the view of the Jew as existing in a kind of theological limbo.<sup>31</sup> While Roman Catholicism was regarded as a perversion of Christianity, Judaism was viewed as frozen in a primitive pre-Christian state. This charge of religious petrification would have been all the more odious in the context of Victorian England’s fixation on Progress. Almost a generation later, even the liberal Christian thinker (and Montefiore’s tutor), Benjamin Jowett, felt that much more could be done to “raise the manners and ways of their [Jews’] teachers and educators”<sup>32</sup> and he urged Montefiore to dedicate his life to “improving and elevating them”.<sup>33</sup>

But before looking at Jewish responses to Christian accusations of rabbinism and petrification, one more point should be made with regard to the Christian positive view of Judaism. What McCaul shared with many Christian ‘experts’ on Judaism, apart from the view of Judaism as the precursor of Christianity, was a great admiration for the way in which the Jews had maintained their covenant religion down through the centuries. This attachment was understood to explain the survival of the Hebrew religion during 1800 years

of exile. In addition, many Christians recognised the wholesome pro-educational influence of rabbinism. These positive achievements only highlighted the unfortunate position of the Jew in the sight of God, however, and McCaul wrote of “princes in degradation”, “sublime in misery”, “a people chastened but not wholly cast off”<sup>34</sup>.

The charge of rabbinism was answered in different ways by the Orthodox and by the reformers. The Orthodox Jewish response to Christian claims of rabbinism and petrification was itself varied. Some saw no reason to apologise for their position. As Solomon Schechter would later do, they defended the time hallowed tradition of allowing custom precedence over scripture.<sup>35</sup> More typically, others argued that Christians were misinformed and ignorant. According to Moses Angel, Orthodox headmaster of the Jews’ Free School and an important figure in nineteenth-century Jewish religious and secular education,

Judaism has come to be entirely misunderstood. It has been universally described as a thing of obsolete forms and customs – as incompatible with progress – as the associate of a low standard of morality – as the obstacle preventing the approach to heaven rather than the ladder reaching thither – that the world has grown to believe what few have taken the trouble to contradict.<sup>36</sup>

However, not all the Orthodox were so unmoved by the Christian criticism that they did not feel the need to internally reassess the situation. Angel himself revealed a reforming tendency in his admission that in times of peace many of the traditional Jewish institutions became “frequently unnecessary, sometimes objectionable”. And when the Jews’ College was finally established in 1855, Hebrew was taught only to elementary level while classics and general literature were also introduced; Chief Rabbi Adler’s plans for a more traditional Beth Hamidrash had been ignored. Such happenings were, at least partly, attempts to convince the surrounding Christian world of Jewish development and compatibility with Reason.

The reformers proper, on the other hand, accepted the charge of rabbinism and petrification as a valid attack upon Orthodoxy and even adopted it as a weapon themselves. For example, the first minister of the West London Synagogue, David Marks, denounced “a large class of our Jewish brethren, who receive unconditionally, the rabbinical system as a whole”. In his anti-rabbinic *The Law is Light* (1854) he attacked Nathan Adler’s defence of the necessity of rabbinical authority. Significantly, he did so by drawing upon (familiar)

## Evangelical anti-Catholic feeling.

A doctrine like this, which is so boldly asserted in the sermon of the Reverend Rabbi, may well startle us and induce us to question whether instead of listening to the voice of Judaism, we are not having rehearsed to us the substance, though in a different phraseology, of the theology of Rome.<sup>37</sup>

Marks, of course, was later personally responsible for the religious instruction of the young Montefiore.

However, the reformers refuted accusations of rabbinism when applied to Judaism in the abstract. Taking the lead from their Evangelical critics, they fell back upon the Bible and attempted to cleanse their new Synagogue of anything that could be used against them to suggest a lack of piety and proper devotion. Leonard Montefiore later wrote of the Reform Synagogue in which his father Claude grew up, “In 1842... it was of the utmost importance to make the synagogue service resemble, in externals at all events, the service of the Church.”<sup>38</sup> And according to a letter written by David Marks, the reformers’ concerns included the need to improve the devotional character of the service and “preserve proper decorum during the performance of Divine worship”. They wanted to strip the service of that which was “not strictly of a devotional character” and to foster “that solemn, devout attention without which prayer is unavailing”.<sup>39</sup>

Many Orthodox Jews favoured religious change along similar lines and, in fact, reforms which emulated Christian custom had begun to make their way into Jewish practice since the inauguration of the first Chief Rabbi, Solomon Hirschell, in 1802, including the clerical dress of rabbis. Much of the Victorian-Christian decorum desired by the reformers was explicitly advocated by Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler in his *Laws and Regulations* (1847) and ‘new’ practices were adopted during the 1850s.<sup>40</sup> All this had the effect of taking much of the ground away from under the reformers’ feet and partly explains why the Reform Synagogue venture never really caught the imagination of Anglo-Jewry as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

As has already been argued, it appears likely that these reforms came about as a result of Christian criticism, and especially Evangelical criticism, since the conversionists were very vocal in their critique. This does not, however, adequately explain why the actual pattern or style of service adopted by the Reform Synagogue was so obviously influenced by

the Church of England's majestic form of worship. Endelman has argued that this emphasis on decorum was a reflection of the desire of certain members of the Anglo-Jewish élite to conform to Anglican or Victorian norms of conduct. While this may seem simplistic and inadequate at a causal level (surely it was not simply a matter of manners?), it probably goes a long way in describing the determining factors upon the form in which the Reform movement shaped itself; after all, the Church of England was the church of the Establishment. In this sense, the Anglican Church supplied the major influence upon the minority religion, as Englander put it.<sup>42</sup>

Another way to view the reform of decorum is to view it as an external expression of the search for an inner religion. The reformers agreed with Christian critics that ritual and rabbinism did not encourage the (somewhat fashionable) development of a personal piety. The Orthodox service was regarded as antiquated and unsuited to inspire a devotional frame of mind. The new emphasis upon service style reflected the congregation's desire to conform to what in Victorian Christian circles would have been regarded as the decorum appropriate for a more spiritual worship. In summary, then, the increased decorum in both Reform and Orthodox Synagogue services was caused by the desire for a religion of the heart (mirroring the Evangelical emphasis), and was shaped by the Victorian-Christian service ethos (particularly that of the Church of England).

Many reforms made by the West London Synagogue, of course, represented a conscious breaking away from the Orthodox position. One was the rejection of the traditional celebration of a festival over two days. They argued that in modern times and with accurate calendars, it was no longer necessary to do so. More significantly, they felt that such a practice was not ordained in scripture. The Reform minister David Marks, for whom Montefiore retained a warm admiration throughout his life, protested that they could not "recognise as sacred, days which are evidently not ordained as such in scripture" and rejected prayers and references made to angels and demons that had no biblical basis.<sup>43</sup> He thus challenged the traditional rabbinic authority to determine religious practice. In *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life* (1994), Hilton implies that this "fundamentalist veneration of scripture" can be understood simply in terms of a Jewish emulation of the Evangelical rejection of Church authorities, effected as if by osmosis.<sup>44</sup> In fact, it was provoked by Evangelical criticism, as Marks himself made clear when he explicitly advised his congregation to "rest our hopes and form our observances upon the laws of God alone" in

answer to Christian attacks on rabbinism. This neo-Karaism is therefore evidence of the impact of Evangelical criticism, since it was the conversionists who kept up the attack and who alone were bibliocentric.

The differences between Reform and Orthodox were likewise clear-cut on the issue of universalism versus nationalism. And again, Christian attacks on what was viewed as a particularistic, primitive religion were largely responsible. Rabbinic, Orthodox Judaism emphasised election, exile, expiation and restoration within a nationalistic framework, while Reform Judaism rejected the notion of a Chosen People and saw its role as the bearer rather than the sole beneficiary of God's grace. The Orthodox messiah was transformed into the reformers' Messianic Age, which would be initiated by the priesthood of the whole people of Israel, not by an individual of the House of David. A universalist tendency meant that Judaism was reinterpreted in terms of a religious community and not in terms of a nation. It was hoped that, purged of its "irrational ritualism" and the divisive particularism, Reform Judaism would promote reconciliation of Jew and Gentile. McCaul and other Evangelicals certainly thought so. They praised the West London Synagogue for these reforms, which rejected so much of what Christians found "objectionable".<sup>45</sup>

#### **iv – Christian Critique and Liberal Judaism**

In *Response to Modernity* (1988), Michael Meyer observed that the Protestant environment had proved more conducive to Reform than had the Catholic. It had provided a greater impetus in terms of the theological model, the rejection of an old hierarchy, the vernacular liturgy, the central importance of the sermon in services and the lessening of the importance of ritual.<sup>46</sup> A more nuanced examination can identify the specific 'contributions' of those groups within the Protestant fold. So far, the effect of Christian (especially Evangelical) critique upon the Orthodox and the Reform movement has been examined. As time went on, however, many Jews felt that the West London Synagogue had not gone far enough in its reforms. More radical alternatives began springing up towards the end of the century in the shape of Saturday afternoon 'supplementary services' at West Hampstead Town Hall in 1890 and, later, with the Sunday Movement led by Oswald Simon. More significant for the purposes of this chapter, however, was the founding of Montefiore's

Jewish Religious Union (JRU) in 1902 which eventually evolved into the Liberal Judaism movement. This, too, was profoundly influenced by Christian critique, although now from a more liberal Anglican angle.

The JRU hoped to combat Jewish “indifferentism” more effectively than the Reform movement had done and to continue from where they had left off with regard to developing a religion of the heart. Many of those who joined the new movement had grown up in Reform Synagogues in West London, Manchester and Bradford (Montefiore himself was a warden of the West London synagogue) and were thus heavily influenced by a reforming ethos. Reform theology had not satisfied them, and scholars like Montefiore were increasingly called upon to answer their need. Development in this direction was possible due to their relative freedom from political interference; for the Anglo-Jewish élite, the JRU served no useful political purpose (as the Reform movement had done before) and the criteria for change no longer depended upon the non-theological concerns of its wealthiest supporters. This independence allowed the JRU greater scope and gave it its particular character.

Not surprisingly, their new concerns also reflected changes going on within Christianity at this time. If the majority of the reforms of the West London Synagogue are to be explained in terms of Evangelical bibliocentricity, then the critically-informed liberal Jewish movement should be understood in terms of Anglican liberalism and the biblical criticism which had been gaining ground from Evangelical literalism from as early as the 1850s.<sup>47</sup>

The decline in Evangelicalism was linked to a decline in the religious authority of the Old Testament brought about by the results of biblical criticism (which will be examined in greater detail later). It left the Anglican liberals in the forefront. In terms of the Christian critique of Judaism there was a corresponding shift of emphasis from Evangelical to Anglican liberal concerns: Jewish ritualism and rabbiniism were no longer attacked or emphasised as much. From this time on, the perceived deficiencies focussed upon inferior, out-of-date Old Testament principles and Jewish particularistic teachings.<sup>48</sup>

The Evangelical view of the Jews had been conditioned to a great degree by their veneration of the Old Testament. They had had sympathy for the Jews as the Chosen People and for the part they were destined to play in future times, in accordance to the Word of God.

The Jews had exemplified the fallen nature of mankind and the inevitability of divine punishment; rabbinism had been understood as the cause of Jewish stagnation. In contrast, the Anglican liberal view of the Bible as non-verbally inspired meant that Judaism was stripped of its special role. While they agreed with the Evangelicals that the development of Judaism had been arrested, the liberals did not see this to be the outcome of rabbinism but as a matter of essentials; Judaism had been intrinsically flawed from Old Testament times onwards. Implicit in the celebrated *Essays and Reviews* (1860), for example, was the idea that Israel's spiritual understanding had developed through time.<sup>49</sup> This idea, to which we will return later, meant that Judaism was regarded as an early stage in God's progressive revelation to mankind. Its failure to develop meant it was now something of an anachronism.

The contemporary Christian view of Judaism was of a highly particularistic, nationalistic religion. While the essays of the historian Goldwin Smith are, perhaps, more extreme than most, they are useful in giving us an idea of what was being written at the time. In the same year that Montefiore went to Oxford, Goldwin Smith wrote 'Can Jews be Patriots?' (1878) in which he vehemently attacked Jewish "tribal" characteristics including the refusal to proselytise, "the primeval rite" of circumcision and the common view of intermarriage as a form of apostasy.<sup>50</sup> While Judaism represented the best that tribal religion could offer it was pathetically inadequate in the light of Christianity and the "advent of humanity". Goldwin Smith interwove developmental interpretations of the Hebrew Bible with racial doctrine to conclude that a "genuine" Jew

is not an Englishman or Frenchman holding particular theological tenets: he is a Jew, with a special Deity for his own race. The rest of mankind are to him not merely people holding a different creed, but aliens in blood.<sup>51</sup>

The Jewish response to Christian condemnation for the nationalism of traditional Judaism was to stress the universalist tendencies of their religion. In order to appreciate the Liberal Jewish response to this typical Christian view, it will help to first compare the Orthodox response.

Chief Rabbi Herman Adler replied to Goldwin Smith's essay, which had been widely criticised in the Anglo-Jewish press, with two articles of his own.<sup>52</sup> In them he attempted to

express the claims of his religion in ways acceptable to an increasingly liberal, British culture. He defended circumcision as a divine command not to be questioned and argued that the practice of endogamy was primarily designed to preserve religion, not race. Jews were reluctant to convert Gentiles because they believed God would also accept righteous Gentiles; it was further evidence of the universalism of Judaism. He urged Christians to remember that

the sublime religious and moral principles which the book [Hebrew Bible] enunciates are applicable to the whole of mankind and have beyond a doubt become, by their having formed the foundation of Christianity and Islam, the great dynamic agent of modern civilisation.<sup>53</sup>

In 1882 Montefiore, still technically a Reform Jew, wrote an essay entitled, ‘Is Judaism a Tribal Religion?’ in which he argued along similar lines to Adler that “the great bond which unites Israel is not one of race but the common bond of religion”.<sup>54</sup> He, too, felt that Judaism could be understood as a “pure religious universalism” but he was prepared to take this further. Unlike Adler, Montefiore and other liberally minded Jews accepted the German Protestant inspired developmental and critically informed approach to the biblical teachings. Eventually, he found himself unwilling to defend that view of Judaism which the Christian critics regarded as a particularist religion of prohibition and punishment (in contrast to Christianity as a universalist religion of love and moral liberty) and his defence of Judaism became a defence of an abstract Judaism, a Judaism free from traditionalist trappings. The response of liberal Jews came to echo that of the earlier Reform Jews when confronted by Christian criticism: they accepted the Christian accusations of particularism as true with respect to Orthodoxy but denied it when applied to what they saw as true Judaism, that is, their own modernist Judaism. In this sense, then, they were able to conform to the changing emphases of Christian criticism and adopt it as their own.

Recoil from Evangelical doctrines in mid-Victorian England meant that there was a growing emphasis of the humanity of Christ at the expense of the doctrine of Atonement in much Christian teaching.<sup>55</sup> One result was that many Christians (initially Anglicans but later non-conformists) began to think of Jesus more as a noble exemplar than as a saviour, a trend which reflected Victorian society’s concern for ethics and high morality. 1860–1880 has been described as something of a hey-day for ‘Incarnational thought’ and saw Anglicanism come to the forefront.<sup>56</sup> Their exemplarist theology was at odds with the legalism implicit in

Talmudism. Predictably, while Jewish Orthodox and Reform apologists attempted to justify their loyalty to traditional authorities, the liberals sided with the Anglicans on this matter. In one of his later *Papers for Jewish People*, Montefiore was keen to contrast the position taken by the JRU with that of the traditionalists.

We recognise no binding outside authority between us and God, whether in man or in a book, whether in a church or in God, whether in a tradition or in a ritual. Most, if not all, of our differences from the traditionalists spring from this rejection of an authority which they unhesitatingly accept... To free ourselves from the heavy bondage of the Rabbinic law and of the Shulchan Aruch... is desirable and necessary.<sup>57</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that in spite of the increased influence of the Church of England in general, and in spite of his Broad Church contacts (through his Oxford mentors) and his friendships with leading Anglican intellectuals such as Hastings Rashdall, Montefiore's comments on Christianity often seem to presuppose Evangelical Christianity. That is, when Montefiore spoke about Christianity, he often seemed to have in mind the sort of Protestant who emphasised salvation by faith through the atoning death of Christ. This could be explained by a lifelong exposure to the London scene where the Evangelical conversionists tended to concentrate their efforts and where, through his own extensive philanthropic interests, he would have been very aware of their high profile social work. Heasman in *Evangelicals in Action* (1962) has suggested that "as many as three-quarters of the total number of voluntary charitable organisations in the second half of the nineteenth century can be regarded as Evangelical in character".<sup>58</sup> After all, according to Englander Jewish philanthropic organisations consciously "mirrored the theory, practice and discourse of the Evangelical movement".<sup>59</sup> Certainly, Evangelical models can be found for societies such as Montefiore's own 'Jewish Association for the Protection of Women and Children'. He was also closely associated with the social work of Basil Henrques, whom he described as "that engaging young saint", whose St George's and Bernhard Baron Settlement in the East End of London had been inspired by Canon Barnett's Christian version, the Toynbee Hall settlement.<sup>60</sup> So while Montefiore generally thought in terms of Liberal Christianity (especially when in an academic, theological context) he also understood Christianity in its Evangelical form. And while he might have deplored it's conversionist policy, this did not blind him to the good that it encouraged. The seeking out of the lost and fallen was, he felt, an element of Christ's teaching which was not emphasised enough in Judaism and which he felt his fellow Jews would do well to imitate.

Bowler has suggested that the Christian influence upon Montefiore was more cultural than specifically Christian and that “the norms which Montefiore set for his life were to a considerable extent influenced by non-Jewish and especially Christian values”.<sup>61</sup> Later in this chapter a distinction will be drawn between those cultural influences which can be identified as specifically Christian and those which originate in the Hellenistic thought which was so much part and parcel of the educated Victorian’s mind-set. For the time being, however, Bowler’s approximation of nineteenth-century English culture as “Christian” will suffice.

#### **v – Tractarianism**

The example of Victorian Christianity and the criticism of its Evangelical and liberal Anglican sects profoundly affected the development of reforming movements within nineteenth and early twentieth-century Judaism. Rather than understanding this as a complex, multilevel reaction to the changing currents of Christian thought and a progressive world-view, there is a temptation to define what is, after all, an essentially Jewish phenomenon in wholly Christian terms. Maurice Bowler’s *Claude Montefiore and Christianity* (1988) is just such an attempt. In it the author has identified a specific Christian model, the early nineteenth-century Oxford Movement, and has tentatively put forward the argument that the many interesting parallels between the two movements suggest the emulation of Tractarianism by the Jewish Religious Union. A brief examination of this theory follows.

Bowler sees the leaders of the two movements as reforming prophets, arguing that both Montefiore and John Henry Newman worked against the religious teachings of institutional monolithic communities.<sup>62</sup> He pointed out that both groups did so largely through the medium of pamphlets, Newman publishing *Tracts for the Times* and Montefiore *Papers for Jewish People*. In addition, both movements were precipitated by provocative outbursts: John Keble’s sermon ‘On National Apostasy’ (1833) and Lily Montagu’s *Jewish Quarterly Review* article, ‘The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today’ (1899). These similarities, however, offer very little in the way of arguing the development of the JRU

upon the Tractarian pattern other than highlighting characteristics common to many nineteenth-century reforming movements. More significant are the differences (which Bowler himself mentions). One example is the fact that their respective motivations and philosophies were diametrically opposed – Montefiore was moving towards liberalism and Newman away from it. Another is that while Newman's was essentially a clerical movement, supported by professional colleagues, Montefiore's JRU was driven by lay forces and enjoyed a mainly non-professional membership.

Bowler sees another similarity between Newman and Montefiore in their unorthodox attitude to their traditional enemies; Newman was viewed as too sympathetic to the Roman Catholics and Montefiore too tolerant of Christianity. Both were accused by their co-religionists as being, at heart, too close to the object of their respective community's hostility. And it is not difficult to understand why this might be. It was not uncommon for Montefiore to threaten Jewish identity with comments like, "In the biggest and deepest things of all, you are not severed from your Christian neighbour, but at one with him."<sup>63</sup> In this context, Bowler's comparison of Newman's celebrated tract XC, which reinterpreted the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles from a more Catholic angle, with Montefiore's address 'Enlarge the Place of my Tent' (1906), which treated Maimonides' 13 Principles of Faith, seems at first glance to be a more profitable use of the Tractarian model.<sup>64</sup> After all, both men were under pressure from their respective communities to prove their true colours, and in his treatment of foundational documents Montefiore might conceivably have been influenced by Newman's example. Unfortunately, once again, there is little to be gained from the comparison. While many Anglicans responded to Newman's tract XC suspiciously, interpreting his efforts as a covert re-introduction of Roman Catholic doctrine, Newman's actual aim had been to argue the legitimacy of the Tractarians' support of certain Catholic teachings within the Church of England. In contrast, Montefiore had at no point been concerned to show that he was committed to the 13 Principles of Faith. His analysis was, unlike Newman's subtle diplomacy, critical and unapologetic; he used the Principles as a foil to show the superiority of the JRU's non-traditionalist position.

Bowler also seems to imply that some insight can be gained by looking at Montefiore's occasional anti-Christian polemic in the light of Newman's fierce anti-Catholic writings. He argues that both men felt obliged to use polemic occasionally to defend themselves against the accusations of their co-religionist opponents.<sup>65</sup> For this he cites some



examples from Montefiore's writings. These include the suggestion that the cruelties of the Inquisitors could be derived from the New Testament,<sup>66</sup> the description of Matthew 23 as "doctrine from which we [Liberal Jews] turn in horror... odious... an awful aberration"<sup>67</sup> and an assessment of much of Paul's teaching as "so crude, so remote, so false, so unworthy of God, so valueless for ourselves".<sup>68</sup> Bowler feels that such language is very strong for the normally tactful Montefiore. In fact, these criticisms of Christian teaching are quite in keeping with his character. It did not matter what the subject under consideration was, whether first-century Christianity, medieval Jewish philosophy,<sup>69</sup> or nineteenth-century Zionism,<sup>70</sup> Montefiore's approach was always the same: he would attempt to adopt what he saw as good and true for the Liberal Jewish cause and reject the rest, giving his reasons clearly and uncompromisingly. While he was extremely generous in his praise of what he saw as the positive aspects of Christianity, he was equally forthright in his denunciation of much of its teaching. Thus his language in this context was no more extreme than elsewhere. While he was certainly aware of his vulnerability to accusations of being unduly influenced by liberal Christianity (such as Schechter charged), it is unlikely that this would have concerned him as much as similar accusations had concerned Newman.

Finally, Bowler presents two examples in which Montefiore appears to be consciously aware of following in the footsteps of Newman. The first is a letter to Lucy Cohen in 1904, two years after the establishment of the JRU, in which, describing his state of mind, he comments "I do not see the distant shore". This, Bowler suggests, is certainly an allusion to Newman's hymn "I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step enough for me."<sup>71</sup> But with all the goodwill in the world, it is difficult to see how this literary (mis)quotation illustrates anything more than Montefiore's acquaintance with Victorian Church hymns. Considering that from his childhood onwards Montefiore had felt as much at home in a Christian environment as in a Jewish one, there is surely nothing remarkable in this. And in fact, this is not the only possible source for the quotation.<sup>72</sup>

The second instance is more interesting. Newman has long been remembered for his strategy of the *via media*; in 1839 he looked forward to "a system [which] will be rising up, superior to the age, yet harmonising with, and carrying out its higher points".<sup>73</sup> Bowler finds it highly significant that in 1920 Montefiore published a pamphlet actually entitled, 'Is There a Middle Way?',<sup>74</sup> in which he discusses the alternatives facing the Liberal Jewish movement. And, indeed, one might have expected Montefiore to have propounded a view

which reflected his lifelong experience of the Anglo-Jewish *via media* of the Reform Synagogue. But unlike Newman who initially argued for a gradualist approach, Montefiore rejected the middle path, and regarded a separate movement as “the Only Way”.<sup>75</sup> Thus, if indeed Montefiore was aware of an echo of Newman’s *via media*, it was very much in the background of his thought. The essay was a direct appeal to those liberally minded Jews who, in Montefiore’s eyes, were too inclined to compromise their spirituality.

In any case, it is too simplistic to see Newman as pro-Roman Catholic from the beginning and to see his anti-Catholic tracts as defensive half-truths, as Bowler suggests. At the time, he had hoped that his *via media* would allow him to remain Anglican and that his diatribes would convince his opponents of his loyalty. In contrast, Montefiore never changed from his original attitude towards Christianity, and was comfortable from the start with his relationship with ‘the enemy’; his negative comments did not originate as defences of his controversial pro-Christian stance. The driving force behind the Oxford Movement was a desire to encourage greater respect for the Church Fathers and the traditional authorities in the face of growing liberalism within the Anglican Church. While Montefiore held ancient sources of knowledge in the highest respect, it would have been impossible for him to have expressed his concerns in anything other than liberal, non-traditionalist terms. Essentially, then, while Newman wanted to re-emphasise the place of tradition within the Church gradually (the *via media*), Montefiore sought to radically purify the existing tradition (the “only Way”) and transform it into something quite different. Bowler’s similarities between the two movements are superficial and even mistaken; they are therefore of little relevance. If any Christian model is to be used to account for the Liberal Jewish movement in Christian terms, it must be the liberal Anglican movement, as was suggested earlier.

## **vi – Assimilated Hellenism**

Condemnation by Montefiore’s contemporary Jewish critics for what they saw as his excessive Christian sympathies has led many to identify the primary non-Jewish influence upon his theology as Christian. But it is not as simple as that. Victorian society was characterised by religiosity, Hellenistic thought and the idea of Progress, and all three contributed to Montefiore’s theology. Progress will be dealt with later. In this section,

Montefiore's adoption of aspects of Greek thought will be examined. Consideration will then be made as to whether what in the past has been attributed to the influence of Christianity can, perhaps, be more accurately described as Christianised or assimilated Hellenism.

The classics thoroughly permeated nineteenth-century contemporary Christian thought. From early on, Greek philosophy proved highly influential upon the thought of Anglican bishops such as Butler. By the 1830s the patristic revival, championed by the Tractarians, had stimulated interest in the relationship between Greek and Christian thought and had fostered new approaches to the study of Plato. In the 1860s the Idealist works of Benjamin Jowett had encouraged a greater appreciation of Platonic thought and had increased the sense of its relevance. Thus throughout the nineteenth century, Anglican clerics and an essentially Anglican Oxford caused classical literature, in the forms of philosophy, mythology and history, to become fully integrated in the fundamental areas of Victorian thought, theology, education and political theory.

A great many of those who shaped the tone of the Victorian age were schooled from their youth in Hellenistic thought. Montefiore's childhood tutors, for example, were educated Churchmen, familiar with the classics. His tutor in religious instruction, "the admirable Jewish minister whose excellent pulpit addresses I used to listen to Saturday after Saturday all my boyhood and youth", Rabbi David Marks, also spoke highly of ancient Greece.<sup>76</sup> But far more significant in this context was the role of Oxford in developing in Montefiore a profound appreciation for Hellenistic culture and philosophy.

The Oxford School of *Literae Humaniores* or Greats, which Montefiore read for his degree, reinforced the use of Greece (and Rome) as points of cultural and intellectual self-reference. It involved detailed translation and criticism of a set list of texts: Five terms were spent on Greek and Latin literature, examined as 'Moderations', followed by seven terms of history, ethics, metaphysics and political philosophy, examined as 'Schools'.<sup>77</sup> The degree was structured so as to make the classics relevant to modern thought and concerns.<sup>78</sup> John Stuart Mill, commenting upon the benefits of studying classical history, wrote that

we are taught... to appreciate... intrinsic greatness amidst opinions, habits and institutions most remote from ours; and are thus trained to that large and catholic toleration, which is founded on understanding.

not on indifference.<sup>79</sup>

This certainly seemed to be true of Montefiore whose attitude towards Christianity exemplified the idea of toleration founded upon understanding. In an appreciation of Montefiore in *Speculum Religionis* (1929), FC Burkitt commented upon the debt which Montefiore owed to Oxford, and singled out “the Oxford point of view” as a major determining influence and that which sent him in a liberal direction.<sup>80</sup> Burkitt also recognised the effect of Oxford classicism upon Montefiore. His work showed

the influence of... “Baylioll Colledge”. It is the voice of Shem who has dwelt in the tents of Japhet, [who] has indeed more or less been brought up there. There is an ease, a discarding of what is unnecessary, an inclusion and recognition of essential features, an accurate idealisation of the type, which is by ultimate derivation neither Jewish nor English but Greek, the product of the study of the humane literature and philosophy which Montefiore learned from Benjamin Jowett.<sup>81</sup>

The ancient Greeks were regarded as having played an important role in preparing the world for Christianity, their (collective) thought representing several stages in the development towards divine revelation. As one of Montefiore’s own tutors, TK Cheyne, would later put it, “A persuasive presentation of true religion only became possible in the Hellenistic age.”<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, many considered the Greeks to have displayed the highest moral character that human nature could assume without the light of the Gospel. The Bishop of Durham, BF Westcott, had been able to write, “the work of Greece... lives for the simplest Christian in the New Testament”.<sup>83</sup> And as late as 1916, William Temples’ lectures on ‘Plato and Christianity’ reflected the firm belief of an eminent Churchman in the enduring beauty and moral force of Greek thought.<sup>84</sup> The result was that it had become common to view Hellenistic thought as complementary rather than antagonistic to the dominant Christian religion of the day. Montefiore, very much a product of his age, adopted these value-judgements and held the ancient Greeks in equally high esteem.

For those in nineteenth-century England who held to a Hegelian concept of history, Greek thought and culture was of special relevance since Christianity, the dominant religion, was understood to be a synthesis of Hebraic and Hellenistic thought. One proponent of this theory was the celebrated Victorian Hellenist, Matthew Arnold, who had attempted to define the two forces in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In this work, Hellenism was represented by intellectual freedom and spontaneity, and Hebraism by conduct and obedience. Arnold

argued that Western history had oscillated between the two and that the New Testament had eventually perfected what each had been lacking by combining them. Interest in Hellenism was further encouraged by the popular belief, especially among Anglican liberals, that certain ages of Greek history (usually the fifth century BC) were seen to be analogous to certain periods of modern history, and that it was therefore possible to draw parallels from their own time to the Classical period. Jowett, for example, wrote,

Although we cannot maintain that ancient and modern philosophy are one and continuous... for they are separated by an interval thousand years, yet they seem to recur in a sort of cycle, and we are surprised to find that the new is ever old and that the teaching of the past has still a meaning for us.<sup>85</sup>

For Montefiore, this “meaning” was very real. Like Arnold, it was important for him to show that Hellenistic thought was compatible with that of his own theology. He, too, argued that an amalgamation of the best of both Greece and Israel was possible (although in Liberal Judaism rather than in Christianity). But while Arnold concentrated upon civilisation, Montefiore was concerned with religious truth. As he explained in *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism* (1918),

I am not thinking primarily of any reconciliation of Hellenism with Judaism in the sense that Judaism is to stand for religion and morality, and Hellenism for art and culture. Nor am I even primarily thinking of Judaism and Hellenism in the sense that Matthew Arnold was wont to contrast Hellenism and Hebraism with each other, and to discuss the right amalgamation of the two. I am thinking primarily of religion on both sides: of Hellenistic religion – religion produced... by men nurtured on Greek philosophy.<sup>86</sup>

In other words, Montefiore saw the value of Hellenism in essentially religious terms; as he put it, “Hellenism is less a matter of birth than of mind. It is a spiritual, not a physical, quality.”<sup>87</sup> It is not surprising, then, that Montefiore also differed from Arnold on his appreciation of what was best in Greek thought.

When I say “best”, I mean only “best” from our particular [Liberal Jewish] point of view, for while, for instance, Aristotle is a greater genius and a greater philosopher than Epictetus, it may well be that religiously we can learn more from Epictetus than from Aristotle.<sup>88</sup>

Montefiore felt that Judaism and this spiritual Hellenism shared a great deal in common. Many aspects of Greek thought contained complementary teaching to the best

doctrine of the Bible. That is why it was useful for the Jew to learn the teachings of the Greeks: he could always find connections for it in his own writings.<sup>89</sup> There was much to be gained by fortifying Hebraic thought with Hellenistic thought: the two stirred the imagination in different ways and deepened the impression wrought by the other. Montefiore disagreed with those who argued that philosophy was antagonistic to Judaism and to the Jewish spirit. He felt that there was a kinship between “Hellas” and “Judaea” and that it was possible to fuse the two together. He argued that liberal Jews would feel this kinship more acutely than their Orthodox brethren would because they had come to see that, “like the Greeks, we were a mere petty race, a petty nation, and we became something better, larger, higher. We were a petty nation; we became a spirit”.<sup>90</sup>

Montefiore felt that he could point to modern day instances where Judaism had already merged with Hellenism. For example, he felt that the influence of Hellenism could be traced to the decorum of the Synagogue, where the congregation had sought to imbue their worship with order, proportion, limit and to make their services “reverent and beautiful, in other words to unite Hellenism and Hebraism”.<sup>91</sup> Like Arnold, he was not always consistent in distinguishing between the cultural, aesthetic concepts and the philosophical teachings of Hellenism.

Montefiore also attributed the religious universalism that his liberal Judaism espoused to Hellenistic influences.<sup>92</sup> He later identified these as the teaching of St Paul (whose background he identified as Hellenistic Judaism) and Stoicism, although he qualified this by adding that neither Paul nor the Stoics could have achieved what they had for Europe without the monotheism of the Jews.<sup>93</sup>

Montefiore justified his attempt to amalgamate Hellenistic teachings with Jewish thought by drawing attention to several important precedents. Twice before in its history had Judaism sought to come to terms with, and to “assimilate”, Greek thought and philosophy. The first occasion had been the advent of Christianity, which, he suggested, had made use of the Jewish pioneers’ work for its own purposes. Contemporary writings such as the Wisdom of Solomon and the works of Philo remained as striking, if transitional, monuments of what was then accomplished in the attempt to bring together into a higher unity the products of Hellas and of Judaea. The second occasion was in the time of Maimonides, and Montefiore felt that the influence of this attempt at “amalgamation” had been enormous and had lasted

until his own day.<sup>94</sup> If Liberal Judaism now wished to take its place as a genuine religion of the Western world, he reasoned, then the time had come once again to think out and determine its relation to Hellenism.<sup>95</sup>

It is important to remember that Montefiore was not seeking to produce a consistent system. He felt that it was neither necessary nor possible to have an absolutely harmonious system of thought. He was not interested in an intellectual exercise, but in any teaching which would encourage personal religious growth. Consistency was not as important as devotional effect. As he put it,

We may be rightly stirred to different bits of well-doing now by Epictetus and now by Hosea, even though Epictetus's view of the world could not have harmonised altogether with the view of Hosea.<sup>96</sup>

In common with many other nineteenth-century thinkers, it was the collective effect of the best of Greek (religious) thought and teachings that interested Montefiore the most. This was consistent with his approach to religions in general; he often argued that a few out-of-context verses were not enough to justify a particular point of view, whether it be from the rabbinic literature, the Hebrew Bible, or the New Testament. He firmly believed in judging a work in its entirety. This did not, however, mean that he was unaware of distinctive strains within Greek thought. He understood and appreciated the individual contributions. But while he used the epic poetry of Homer occasionally,<sup>97</sup> more often than not he kept to Stoic and Platonic thought.

Throughout *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism* (1918), Montefiore made constant reference to the first-century Greek Stoic, Epictetus, who had taught a gospel of inner freedom through self-abnegation, submission to Providence and the love of one's enemies. Stoicism obviously had great appeal for the very Victorian Montefiore who felt that, while their teachings had been unable to conquer the world, he could see no reason why Liberal Jews could not "add to our quiver an arrow from the Stoic armoury [since] it is a fine and fair arrow, even if not the finest and fairest".<sup>98</sup> He admired the way in which Stoics expected no outward reward from God whether in this life or the next and he quoted Jowett who had written, "to feel habitually that he is part of the order of the universe is one of the highest ethical motives of which man is capable".<sup>99</sup> Likewise, the Stoics' attitude to suffering taught him the "unimportance in relation to the whole of the individual's outward fortunes or

sufferings", and also the idea that "the only true good is inward: virtue and the mind. The only true evil is sin and the mind's corruption".<sup>100</sup> With regard to Jewish eudaemonism, which he defined as "the coarse doctrine of reward and punishment", there was, he felt, a need to supplement and correct Old Testament teaching in these respects with the idealism of Platonic philosophy and the Stoics.<sup>101</sup>

Montefiore's appreciation of Plato had been formed by his studies at Oxford under his tutor, Benjamin Jowett. In this, Montefiore was by no means unique. Due to Jowett's reputation as a Greek scholar and his position as Master of Balliol, his interpretation of Plato (primarily as a religious thinker and political reformer) became *the* Plato for several generations of Oxford educated men. He was to be understood as a philosopher whose thought could sustain traditional moral values and inculcate a new sense of secular duty in a time when this was dying in society. Jowett's great crusade was to propagate a moral stance borne of liberal Christianity and supported by the wisdom of Plato. He did not go so far as to make Plato a Christian, but his translations brought out what he saw as undogmatic Christian ethical values and spiritual truths. The influence of Jowett and of his treatment of Plato can clearly be seen reflected in the writings of Montefiore. Both men regarded ethical idealism as ennobling to human endeavour and essential to the preservation of the essence of religion, which was composed of "self-sacrifice, self-denial, a death unto life, having for its own rule an absolute morality, a law of God and nature".<sup>102</sup>

Richard Nettleship was another Balliol classical scholar who left his mark upon Montefiore. He had characterised Plato as a philosopher who had been "intensely anxious to reform and revolutionise" human life.<sup>103</sup> His lectures on Plato's Republic had been influenced by the Idealist TH Green who had argued that the educated classes bore special responsibility for moral reform and the improvement of society. In the light of his future philanthropic and educational achievements, the influence of this interpretation of Platonic thought on the young Montefiore appears considerable.

As should be clear by now, Montefiore valued 'Hellenism' very highly. He believed Stoic and Platonic thought complemented and completed traditional Jewish teachings (and vice versa). He wrote, "God our refuge, God the object of our love – that is mainly Jewish. The dignity of man and of the human mind – that is mainly Greek."<sup>104</sup> In this Montefiore went further than many of his fellow Jews. Certainly, few of them viewed the ancient Greek

philosophy as a kind of devotional aid, as he did. Care should be taken, however, in taking the term ‘Hellenism’ too literally. Since Montefiore gained his (religious) appreciation of Hellenism from his exposure to Anglican liberal teaching, both prior to and at Oxford, it seems sensible to take into account some Christian influence. His idea of Hellenism is therefore probably better thought of as assimilated, Christianised Hellenism.

For many in the nineteenth century, the best of Greek thought had been perfected in Christianity. In Montefiore’s mind also, the two over-lapped considerably. It made good sense to him that “Christianity conquered the world partly because it underwent a considerable infiltration from Hellenism.”<sup>105</sup> To a great extent Montefiore grew up with a culturally formed, positive image of Christianity; it was this intellectual, classically augmented religion of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* which he found at Oxford, not New Testament or credal Christianity. Having learned to appreciate Hellenistic thought through Christian channels, Montefiore recognised its influence in the liberal Anglicanism that surrounded him and which came to represent for him Christianity *per se*. It is therefore not surprising that he could find in Christianity so much to identify with, in contrast to the majority of his fellow Jews.

The liberal Anglicans had been infusing their system with Greek thought throughout the century, and in claiming aspects of Hellenistic thought for use by liberal Jews, Montefiore was, in fact, following in their footsteps. Most of the non-Jewish additions to synagogue worship and theology could be understood as following Christianity in a similar manner since they were effected by the influence of assimilated or Christianised Hellenism. It could, for example, be argued that increased service decorum was the result of Jewish emulation of Christian assimilation of Hellenistic culture. In other cases, however, the influence was more directly Hellenistic in origin, such as Montefiore’s sympathy with the Stoic position which denied all evil “except moral evil, for which man himself is responsible, and from which of his own efforts and discipline he can set himself free”<sup>106</sup>. This certainly differed from the traditional Christian doctrine of Original Sin.

Of course, liberals of both faiths regarded much Greek thought as unsatisfactory. Amongst other weaknesses, Montefiore cited the “faint and inadequate... Greek teaching regarding immortality” and “the sad resignation in much of their literature”.<sup>107</sup> He also saw it as significant that they had never imagined “the doctrine of the progress of Mankind and of

the messianic age" (which he merged together). This idea of Progress is an important element in his thinking and is the subject of the next section.

### **vii – Religious Progress**

The European fixation upon Progress in the nineteenth century had a very great effect upon the approach to the study of religion. Amongst Jews and Christians, one of the more controversial developments was a new interpretation of the inspiration of the scriptures. While earlier in the century English biblical scholars had been content to accept the general reliability of the Hebrew scriptures, the Germans had not. Their philosophical approach to religion and source-critical techniques had produced many radical reconstructions of the Israelite history, and had thus eroded confidence in scriptural reliability. By the mid-century, German liberalism was influencing the British intelligentsia, and liberal Anglican scholars such as Jowett effectively rejected the doctrine of verbal inspiration of scripture. Inspiration came to take on a whole new meaning. To appreciate Montefiore's view on the subject, it is worth quoting his tutor Jowett at some length since Montefiore saw Jowett's views as representative of those of liberal theists of all religious denominations (and therefore also of his own). Jowett wrote,

In the higher part [of inspiration] we include the truer and more spiritual conceptions of God, the more perfect morality, the holy life. In the lower part we may place the historical facts, whether true or invented, the passions of a war-like and semi-barbarous race, imprecations against enemies and the like. I think it worthy of remark that in precept, though not always in practice, the Old and the New Testament everywhere rise above the animal passions and also above the deceits and falsehoods of mankind. These remarks seem to me to apply more or less to all the religions of the world; they are all more or less inspired, more or less human and also divine.<sup>108</sup>

In rejecting the doctrine of verbal or literal inspiration, the liberals substituted a doctrine that allowed for human error and inadequacy. Divine inspiration came to be thought of more as an editorial seal of approval upon a collection of ancient man-made documents. Jowett and other liberals felt that these could, and should, be critically examined, arguing in *Essays and Reviews* (1860) that it was quite possible to interpret the scripture like any other book. Elsewhere he had written that the documented facts of a

religious history, while “amongst the most important of all facts... are frequently uncertain”. The proper approach to all such documents was therefore to “place ourselves above them”.<sup>109</sup> Montefiore took this advice very much to heart; the passage is reproduced at the front of his *Hibbert Lectures* (1893). By removing any suggestion of intrinsic divine authority for the New Testament, the liberals also made it easier for non-Christians such as Montefiore to approach the New Testament without incurring a charge of compromise.

With the new concept of inspiration came the trauma of the effects of biblical criticism. Inevitably, liberal scholars began to question the reliability of scripture. The effect was like switching off the current in a live electrical system, leaving them free to disconnect and remove religious components as they wished.<sup>110</sup> One of the first casualties was the idea of revelation as a once-and-for-all phenomenon.

The nineteenth-century fascination with the ancient Greek world had provided a source of information on the secular history of mankind. It confirmed, supplemented and offered alternatives to the traditional Judaeo-Christian historical account. In doing so it had prepared the ground for a non-biblical view of spiritual development. The liberal re-interpretation of biblical inspiration and the consequent rejection of the doctrine of literal or verbal revelation reinforced this independence from scripture and made it possible for European progressive ideas of religion to take root. German ideas regarding the developmental nature of religious thought had been filtering into England for a long time. They finally surfaced with Frederick Temple’s contribution to *Essays and Reviews* (1860), ‘The Education of the Human Race’. This viewed the Hebrew Bible as analogous to the childhood of mankind, when the Mosaic religion had taught law rather than freedom of conscience. Liberal claims and progressive models were soon supported by the discoveries of geologists and biologists which seemed to refute the literal understanding of the Genesis account(s) of creation, and even the idea of a purposeful creation (fossils revealed the existence of extinct species). Gerald Parsons has argued that the bitter controversies surrounding biblical criticism from this time were not so much due to the novelty of liberalism as to its gaining ground.<sup>111</sup>

Jewish responses to Christian biblical criticism through the 1860s and 1870s were mixed. The majority rejected anything that undermined the authority and authenticity of the Hebrew Bible. Some felt able to accept the developmental and historically informed

interpretation of biblical teachings. Emanuel Deutsch, for example, argued that the Talmud and the rabbinical religion could be viewed as a step forward from the Old Testament religion in the moral education of mankind.<sup>112</sup> None, however, could accept the relegation of Judaism below Christianity in the scheme of progressive revelation. As Abraham Benisch, editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* at the time saw it,

It is morally certain that the gross heathen mind is incapable of at once grasping the sublime Jewish verities. A state of transition is absolutely necessary for it. The abyss yawning between spiritual Judaism and material pragmatism has to be bridged over. Christianity is that bridge... It is for this purpose that providence allowed Christianity to come into existence, inserting it between paganism and Mosaism.<sup>113</sup>

His confident tone was partly due to a belief shared by many Jews (including Montefiore) that, reeling from the blow of biblical criticism, Christianity was on the defensive. He felt that scientific criticism would surely result in the abandonment of the “irrational foundations” of Christianity, and took it for granted that Judaism was completely compatible with Reason. While Montefiore would have agreed with Benisch’s assessment that Christianity was moving, theologically, in the direction of Judaism, he did not overlook the consequences of biblical criticism with regard to Judaism. In this, he was ahead of his time since, as he explained in an article in 1891, most Jewish divines were reluctant to rely too heavily upon the findings of biblical criticism, since these could be applied just as destructively to Judaism. In contrast, he was one of the first Jews prepared to take this challenge on and Burkitt has commented on Montefiore’s critical work that “in 1892, it must have seemed alarmingly up-to-date”.<sup>114</sup>

Montefiore believed that Judaism could no longer afford to ignore the results of biblical criticism, the most important of which he identified as “the disintegration of the Pentateuch”.<sup>115</sup> The general tendency of biblical criticism had been to emphasise the originality and importance of the Prophets and to place the Law in a new relation to them. The traditional, biblical account of Sinai and the priority of the Law had to give way to a progressive vision of the ethical monotheism of the Prophets leading to an eventual codification. Montefiore argued that a historically-critically informed Jew could no longer hold to Maimonides’ eighth Principle of Faith (“I believe with perfect faith that the whole law, now in our possession, is the same that was given to Moses, our teacher”). All this begged the question: was it possible to reconcile modern scholarship with a faith in

Orthodox Judaism? After considering the traditional position, he concluded that it was not. According to Montefiore's analysis, this was because in recent times Jews had defined their Jewishness in terms of what set them apart. Overly influenced by Mendelssohn,<sup>116</sup> they had laid too great an emphasis upon rites that distinguished them from other theists. The ancient doctrines regarding God's nature and unity, his moral order, immortality, and so on, were reckoned to be too similar – “and thus the essence of Judaism [was] altogether removed from the sphere of religious belief”.<sup>117</sup> Orthodox Jews clung to particularistic rites which were based upon several of Maimonides' Principles, including belief in: the words of the prophets (6), that Moses was the greatest of the prophets (7), in the revelation at Sinai (8), in the immutability of the Revealed Law (9), in the coming messiah (12). For such Jews, biblical criticism rang the death-knell.

But this did not need to be the case, continued Montefiore. For Jews who understood themselves in terms of their religious doctrines (even if those doctrines were paralleled in other faiths), biblical criticism could do little harm – theology alone dealt with matters as lofty as the nature of God. Following the familiar Reform argument, he also suggested that modern interpretations of traditionally particularistic teachings could be given for teachings on the Mission of Israel (responsibility rather than privilege) and the messiah (a messianic age rather than a man). Montefiore was convinced that a flexible, critically informed Judaism was quite possible and represented the only tenable position for an educated Jew. What was more, it was essential for the survival of Judaism.

There can exist a phase of Judaism... capable of accepting and assimilating the results of criticism... For the teaching of no one age and the teaching of no one man constitute the Jewish religion. Because Judaism changes, it abides.<sup>118</sup>

In this sense, then, Liberal Judaism can be understood to have come about as a result of the failure of Orthodox Judaism to accommodate the findings of biblical criticism. It is, however, important to remember that while proficient in critical techniques and familiar with the latest research, Montefiore did not see his most important work to be in this area. He was primarily concerned with the practical religious thought of liberal Judaism, and not with the ethereal intricacies of biblical scholarship. Jowett once wrote,

I hope that the age of biblical criticism is passing away... I do not see that we have gained from it except negatively, and there of course we have gained a great deal by clearing away so much, but positively we

have gained little or nothing. Even if we knew the manner of composition of the Old and New Testaments... we should be no nearer the true form of religion.<sup>119</sup>

While Montefiore would certainly have sympathised with Jowett's greater concern for the condition of the human soul, he knew only too well that the "age of biblical criticism" was here to stay.

Increasingly, the traditional history of Israel came under fire. It became more acceptable to talk in terms of Israel itself receiving a progressive education. This was a central thesis in Montefiore's own Hibbert Lectures, 'On the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Hebrews', given in 1892. It allowed Montefiore to explain away any unpalatable aspects of Old Testament teaching in a way which Orthodox literalists simply could not. After clearing away these more primitive beliefs, a "purified Judaism" was revealed which looked suspiciously like contemporary Christianity as it had evolved in the hands of liberals like Jowett.

One important benefit that Montefiore gained from his time spent with the Master of Balliol was the ability to recognise the validity of another's faith. This was an essential requirement for true dialogue between the faiths to take place, and was characteristic of Jowett's attitude as recalled by Montefiore in an article for the *Jewish Quarterly Review* entitled 'The Religious Teachings of Jowett' (1899). Montefiore greatly admired his tutor's religious broadness and toleration. This he put down to Jowett's insistence on the simplicity of religion as well as "his penetrating capacity to recognise agreement in essentials under the widest apparent differences of form and of belief".<sup>120</sup> While Jowett's Christian theism was "simple", Montefiore went on,

It was simplicity with a difference. It was simplicity which, so to speak, lies on the other side of complexity. It was the result of thought... It was the unessential which (to his mind) had been eliminated; the essential remained. This essential was large and living.<sup>121</sup>

The same could have been said of Montefiore himself who was increasingly persuaded that true Religion, in its essentials, was a relatively simple affair. They approached their religion in a similar manner and both would (ultimately) have held to a non-creedal concept of religious faith. At times, this emphasis upon an 'inner faith' allowed them to appear as Christian and Jewish sides of the same coin. Montefiore wrote,

The main tenor of [Jowett's] teaching was in harmony and agreement with a progressive and enlightened Judaism. It can be translated, and it needs to be translated, into Jewish. Very imperfectly and stumblingly I have sought to do this from time to time.<sup>122</sup>

He felt very much at home with Jowett's liberalism and described his tutor's thinking as belonging "to a sphere where the purer Judaism and the purer Christianity fade into each other" and where "differences merge into a higher and more Catholic unity". In fact, Montefiore found himself in closer theological agreement to Jowett regarding the essentials of religion, than he did to many of his contemporary co-religionists. In a confidential letter to Lily Montagu in 1899, Montefiore wrote,

... I admit that my 'new Judaism' is Jowett pur et simple. Idea for idea I seem to accept his teachings... Perhaps I am more a disciple of Jowett (to whom I owe more religiously than to any other man or book, except the Bible, in the world) than I am a Jew.<sup>123</sup>

The important thing for both tutor and student was the idea of an over-arching ethical system of values. Its label was insignificant, and 'Christian' or 'Jewish' were terms that could easily include those outside the traditional fold. In this wider and more generous view of religion, Montefiore was directly influenced by Jowett. As a liberal Anglican, Jowett had written, "As there are nominal Christians in the world who say that they are [Christian] and are not, so there are unconscious Christians in the world who say they are not and yet are."<sup>124</sup> Similarly, as a liberal Jew who could include in his Judaism all that was "best and most permanent in the teaching of Jesus", Montefiore wrote about the "unconscious Jew".<sup>125</sup> Both men tended towards universalism, and rejected the exclusive dogma of their traditional faiths. As Burkitt put it,

It is not that [Montefiore] wants all men to dress alike, but that he recognises under the Christian garment and the Jewish gabardine very much the same sort of human being, and as he has learned to see the meaning and the profundity that often underlies the Jewish gesture, he is quite ready to believe that there may be a worthy meaning in some of our Christian prejudices and peculiarities.<sup>126</sup>

Both men were convinced that any future religion would have to be fundamentally universal. In this and in other ways, Montefiore's grand vision of where Progress and biblical criticism were taking religion was very much influenced by his tutor.

Jowett also believed that revelation was an on-going phenomenon, writing that “There is no real resting place... all true knowledge is a revelation of the will of God... It is a duty of religious men to submit to the progress of knowledge”.<sup>127</sup> Montefiore, too, recognised the inevitability and significance of scientific development. He was well aware of the confusion and distress that developments such as biblical criticism had brought, and accepted that religion would be profoundly affected by biblical criticism. He cautioned,

That gulf must be bridged over so that men may pass gradually and not be lost in the blackness of the abyss beneath. Each step of the bridge will seem the final resting place to him who makes it, and yet each step will but lead to another.<sup>128</sup>

Like Jowett, however, Montefiore had no doubt that progress was a necessary and even a good thing for religion. He thought that the religion of the future would be a purified Judaism, although not the actual Judaism of his own day or of his own Liberal Judaism, and not even the Judaism that his son would practice. Characteristically, he also thought that it would contain Christian elements, for it would be

Absurd and ridiculous to suppose that the great drama of Christianity would pass away, if it ever does pass away, without leaving traces and influences upon the religion of the distant future.<sup>129</sup>

Christianity had certainly become a more plastic, flexible entity in the hands of liberals like Jowett who had himself regarded a future “Christianity, whether under that or some other name” as essentially concerned with “the simple love of truth and of God, and the desire to do good to man”.<sup>130</sup> Viewing progress in distinctly Hegelian terms<sup>131</sup> and recognising that “Christianity was once the great antithesis... [but] is not so today”,<sup>132</sup> Montefiore envisaged a future universal system which would incorporate the best of both faiths while replacing them, as their traditional forms withered away.

### **III – Montefiore and Christian Biblical Scholarship**

We have seen how, in general terms, Montefiore’s religious world-view was

profoundly influenced by the surrounding Victorian Christian environment. It is now possible to consider the direct influence of Christian scholarship. As a biblical critic, Montefiore contributed both to Old Testament and New Testament studies. We will survey his use of Christian research in both these areas before considering his views regarding the misportrayal of Judaism in contemporary nineteenth-century biblical studies. As will become obvious, Montefiore's theological perspective determined the use he made of Christian scholarship. It is therefore especially important when focussing upon his biblical critical work to avoid the mistake of separating Montefiore the biblical critic from Montefiore the Liberal Jewish theologian. We will begin by looking at the intellectual trends current at the turn of the century.

### *i – Biblical Criticism and Nineteenth-Century Theological Trends*

Errors in nineteenth-century theological thought have often been attributed to the over-influence of prevailing philosophical trends. It is certainly true that discredited systems of thought formed the background to the opinions maintained by many leading scholars of the day. For example, two influential biblical critics whose work was used extensively by Montefiore included the *Idealist* Julius Wellhausen and the *Rationalist* Abraham Kuenen. There is, however, no evidence that the rise of biblical criticism itself came about as a result of such contemporary philosophical presuppositions. The methods of criticism and its major conclusions were agreed upon by scholars of widely differing philosophical, religious and cultural backgrounds. Their underlying conviction was that an objective truth in biblical matters was attainable through scientific endeavour.<sup>133</sup>

It is not a coincidence that biblical criticism developed at a time of great interest in historical studies and techniques. Methods that were applied to the history of Greece and Rome with resounding success were now used upon the history of Israel. The common assumption was that a foundation of historical fact could be attained by the use of the appropriate methods of study, and light thus shed upon the true nature of biblical beliefs. Initially, at least, the primary aim of Old Testament scholars was the historical reconstruction of the religion of Israel. From the 1870s onwards, there was a growing diversification of disciplines that investigated Israel's political, social and cultural history and, to some extent,

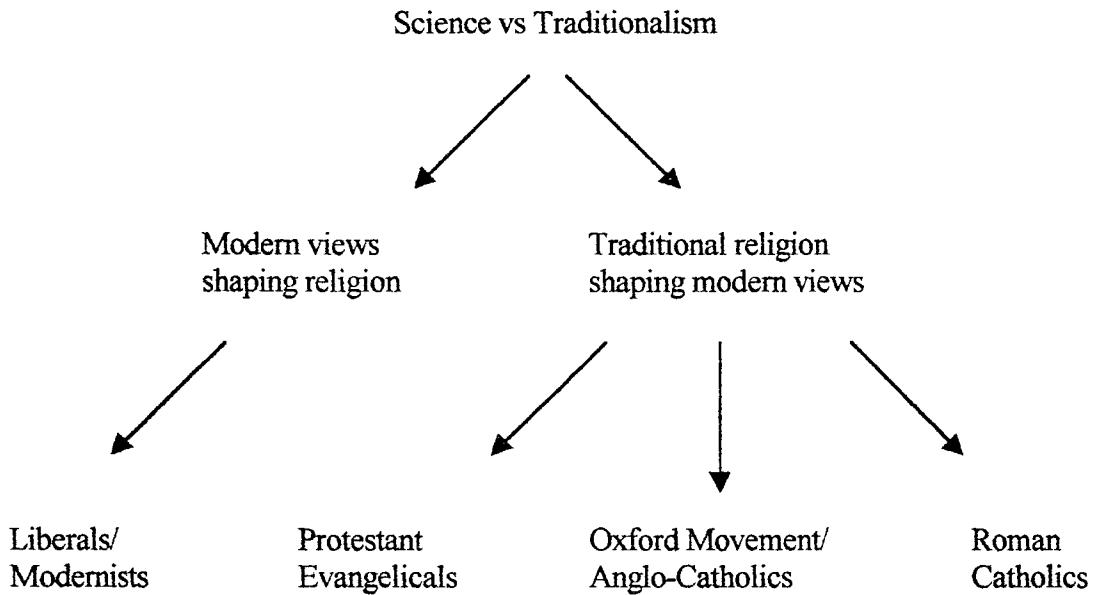
nineteenth-century scholarship lost sight of its original goal. A deep concern with the origins of mankind's spiritual history had produced historical-critical methodology, but as time went on, this had become an end in itself. It became enough to know when the literature had been written and what its sources were; little interest was shown in using the information to better understand the life and religion of the people of Israel. Scholars like Wellhausen believed that historical truth was of a purer and nobler kind than theological truth.

It is not surprising, then, that the historical conclusions reached by historical enquiry did not solve many important theological questions. Of course, the theological perspective was not altogether absent; many biblical scholars had become interested in critical research out of a deep religious attachment. But many of them, especially the liberals, accepted that it was simply not possible to extract a body of timeless Old Testament doctrines from their historical context. It became possible, and even the norm, to study the Bible without theological interest.

Montefiore felt that he had arrived on the scene when the assault on the Old Testament had been under way for some time and the consequences for the New Testament were just beginning to filter through. For him, criticism was a means to an end: it provided a historical foundation upon which it was possible to build a theological system of thought. He was certainly concerned to promote historical truth and was firmly committed to the historical approach, but his central concern was always the development of a Liberal Jewish theology that could evaluate the historically conditioned biblical beliefs in an everyday religious context.

Another way to look at this is to see Montefiore as one of those for whom the modern "scientific" world-view was shaping religion, rather than as one of those for whom traditional religion was shaping modern views. It should be clear by now that Montefiore belonged well and truly within the liberal/modernist camp but a simple model (see below) might make this position clearer in relation to contemporary currents of Christian thought. Most of the Christian scholars who influenced Montefiore belonged to a liberal grouping of one form or another. The new critical scholarship had a definite view of Judaism. Wellhausen, for example, understood it to have devolved from the high spiritual achievements of the Jewish pre-exilic religion to one of the law, increasingly dominated by the legalistic Pharisees. The Pharisees' and Rabbis' attempts to codify earlier moral and

ethical insights were deemed to contradict the Prophets' teaching regarding man's freedom and responsibility. This was a central premise in Wellhausen's influential *Prolegomena* (1883), and this contributed substantially to a common negative attitude regarding the development of Judaism amongst biblical (especially Protestant) scholars.



Understandably, some scholars have wondered whether the new methods of study were motivated by anti-Jewish presuppositions. There certainly seem to be cases for which this was true.<sup>134</sup> What is more, biblical criticism on the Old Testament was generally accepted far more readily than on the New Testament, as Montefiore observed.

The so-called higher criticism of the Old Testament is becoming more and more acknowledged and accepted by Christian theologians of every school... We do not find among Christian theologians of England an equal readiness to assimilate and accept the higher criticism of the New Testament.<sup>135</sup>

While many Christians were prepared to accept what Montefiore described elsewhere as the "disintegration" of the Hebrew Bible, very few were happy to treat the New Testament critically, for a variety of reasons. This pro-Christian bias, the fact that they could more cheerfully accept criticism about the early Jewish religion than about the early Christian religion, could, arguably, be viewed as a form of anti-Judaism which reinforced the image of Judaism as a religion "superseded" by Christianity. Montefiore and a growing number of

other Jewish scholars involved in critical research were greatly frustrated by what they saw as the ignorance and even dishonesty of Christian scholars on this subject, and we shall return to this later. For the time being, however, it is enough to say that while biblical criticism was instrumental in reinforcing negative views of Judaism, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, it was not actually motivated by anti-Semitism.

## *ii – Old Testament Research*

The *Hibbert Lectures* (1893) was one of the more academic works Montefiore produced; it was written for scholars rather than for laymen. It represented, in the words of the renowned biblical scholar FC Burkitt, an “excellent survey of Old Testament history and its literature from Moses to Nehemiah. It is very nearly up-to-date now [1929] after the lapse of a whole generation, and in 1892 it must have seemed almost alarmingly up-to-date.”<sup>136</sup> Montefiore was, of course, fluent in German and having only recently returned from studies there, was quite familiar with contemporary German research. In the preface, he mentions scholars “on the results of whose labours my own small work is chiefly based and to whom I owe the most for direct information and for suggestive stimulation”. Apart from Schechter (see chapter one) they were all Protestant Christians and included the Germans Bernhard Stade (1848–1906) and Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), the Dutchman Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891), and the Englishman Thomas K Cheyne (1841–1915). Cheyne is best remembered for his furtherance of the more advanced conclusions of continental biblical criticism. Stade had produced the highly historical-critical *History of the People of Israel* (1887–8) while Kuenen had written the rationalist *The Religion of Israel* (1874–5). Montefiore’s series of lectures, ‘On the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Hebrews’, given in 1892, can be seen to continue in this tradition.

In terms of Montefiore’s liberal Jewish theology, the influence of the German Bernhard Duhm (1847–1928) was especially important. In *Die Theologie der Propheten* (1875) Duhm had held that the foremost achievement of the Prophets lay in their theological ideas – especially their rejection or criticism of the cultic practices with which Israel had grown up and which they replaced with moral or “ethical idealism”. This idea (which was Wellhausen’s, too) viewed the historic context as the insignificant clothing for the lasting

message. All this had obvious appeal to Montefiore whose Liberal Judaism, he believed, was the true spiritual successor to the Prophets.

In his cosmopolitan learning Montefiore was somewhat exceptional, for it was a time of academic parochialism and continental biblical research was not easily available in England. Ahead of many of his generation, Montefiore had fully accepted the Graf-Wellhausen position; the premise that the Prophets were written before the Law is central to his historical account of the development of the Israelites' religion.<sup>137</sup> As Burkitt commented, to his contemporaries Montefiore would have appeared "as one of the new band of Modernists, taught by the new light from Germany to put the Old Testament into its proper perspective".<sup>138</sup>

At first, the historical approach left Montefiore with little room for theological speculations. Increasingly, however, and in contrast to many biblical scholars, Montefiore did not allow his confidence in criticism to draw him away from theology. Even in the *Hibbert Lectures*, he showed a sensitive awareness of the limitations of criticism. With regard to the origin of the Israelite religion, for example, he could write that

criticism speaks with no certain voice. In the main, its verdict is chiefly negative: it has shown the inadequacy of the traditional views, but replaced them with no unquestionable construction of its own.<sup>139</sup>

The influence of Jowett, who had been deeply disappointed with the non-religious results of criticism, is obvious. While deeply committed to academic integrity, something more than that which the biblical critics offered was needed. A taste for religious truths beyond the reach of historical research increasingly characterised Montefiore's thought, as it had Jowett's.

### ***iii – New Testament Research***

It was in the field of New Testament studies that Montefiore made his most important contributions. He was greatly indebted to the Relgio-Historical school of biblical study<sup>140</sup> and often referred to one of its founder members, the German Wilhelm Bousset

(1865–1920). Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* (1913), together with his earlier *The Religion of the Jews in the New Testament (Later Hellenistic) Era* (1903) had put forward the thesis that there had been a fatal influx of Hellenistic thought-forms into the pure, early Christian religion. Jesus had become Lord (*kyrios*) only when Christianity left Palestine and entered the Hellenistic environment. Bousset believed that the new Christians had little interest in the historical details of the life of Jesus, but absorbed the drama of his death and resurrection into their mystery rituals and ecstatic hopes. For Montefiore, as for many others, Christianity was thus assigned a place in the natural evolution of man's beliefs, a view that settled comfortably in nineteenth-century evolutionary thought.

WG Kümmel, however, places Montefiore in the context of a new line of enquiry within New Testament scholarship, that is, an approach by which the background to the New Testament could be understood in terms outside those of Hellenistic-Jewish and Hellenistic-pagan religiosity. The Strack-Billerbeck Commentary and the writings of Gerhard Kittel are examples of (Christian) scholars seeking to show by comparison of early Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity both the close similarities and the essential differences. Kümmel sees Montefiore belonging to the same movement.

The use of rabbinical matter contributes both to the understanding of the New Testament text and to its differentiation from contemporary Judaism. Consequently it is a matter of no surprise, and even signifies a new and beneficial line of investigation, that modern historically orientated Jewish theology turned to the question of how we are to judge the distinctiveness of the New Testament and of Jesus in particular and their relation to Rabbinic Judaism.<sup>141</sup>

For this reason, Kümmel concentrates upon Montefiore's *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (1930) which considers whether and in what ways Jesus' teachings are to be judged unique. Since most of Montefiore's work was produced at a time when religion both for Judaism and for Protestant Christianity, in the shadow of Harnack's *What is Christianity?* (ET 1901), had been largely reduced to ethics, Montefiore concerned himself with Jesus' practical moral and ethical teachings. For a rarefied minority of Christians, mostly members of the Broad Church who inhabited the somewhat exclusive world of Oxford Anglicanism, religion *per se* was essentially ethical. It was with these Christians that Montefiore felt most at home. Their religion was cultured, refined, sophisticated and, significantly, tolerant of religions other than their own.

Jowett is the obvious example of an Oxford Anglican who was primarily concerned with ethical religion and whose liberalism allowed him to accept the validity of another's faith. His influence can be clearly seen with regard to Montefiore's views on Jesus. To the Master of Balliol, Christ was the ideal exemplar, a human embodiment of perfect morality and perfect religion. Montefiore observed

It was this half-historic, half-ideal way of regarding Christ which made the Master's teaching more sympathetic to Jews. He seemed to indicate that it was rather a question of circumstance or education whether you regarded the ideal in this personal way or not... It was an ideal of morality and religion which everybody, Jew and Christian, would be in practical agreement.<sup>142</sup>

With such a view, it was possible for Jew and Christian to share a common attitude towards Christ. It is not at all surprising that such sympathy was possible when one considers Jowett's liberal (and platonic) musings. He once wrote,

Is it possible to feel a personal attachment to Christ such as prescribed by Thomas à Kempis? I think that it is impossible and contrary to human nature that we should be able to concentrate our thoughts on a person scarcely known to us, who lived 1800 years ago. But there might be such a passionate longing and yearning for goodness and truth. The personal Christ might become the idea of goodness.<sup>143</sup>

Montefiore revealed just how much in tune with this kind of liberal Christian thinking he was in a letter to the Anglican moral philosopher and theologian, Hastings Rashdall (1858–1924). As he put it,

I am in fuller sympathy with your religious and moral views, with your way of looking at things, with your view of the universe, than with those of any other living Christian theologian that I have read.<sup>144</sup>

While one was a leading Jew and the other a leading Christian, yet neither one's theological views would have much offended the other. Rashdall's Bampton lectures in 1915 had been on 'The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology' in which he upheld the Abelardian (or Exemplarist) theory of Atonement. This suited Montefiore's point of view, as he had learned it from Jowett. Another similarity was Rashdall's supreme confidence in the capacity of human reason, when rightly employed, to arrive at final truths of religion. This was central to Montefiore's approach to Liberal Jewish theology; the conscience (which was to be an instructed conscience) was the tool by which he collated religious truth. Such

rationalism, which viewed the human mind as the supreme judge of Truth, was very much a view of the time. More particularly, what they shared in common was an ethical doctrine; in a treatise on moral philosophy, *The Theory of Good and Evil* (1907), Rashdall called it Ideal Unitarianism. As an advanced liberal, Rashdall, in turn, appreciated many of Montefiore's works and refers to him repeatedly in his famous *Conscience and Christ* (1916).<sup>145</sup> He once wrote to Montefiore, "Your book [*The Synoptic Gospels*], if I may say so, shows much more real appreciation of Jesus than the work of a good many professedly Christian – some of them fairly Orthodox – theologians."<sup>146</sup>

Of course, there were non-Anglicans with whom Montefiore shared a liberal outlook with regard to scripture. Alfred Loisy (1857–1940), a French priest, is generally credited as the founder of Modernism, a movement within the Roman Catholic Church which aimed at revising its dogmas to reflect the advances in science and philosophy. Loisy proposed a greater freedom of biblical interpretation in the development of religious doctrine. He came to regard Christianity as a system of humanist ethics rather than as a historical verification of divine revelation. The close affinity of aspects of Modernism to Montefiore's own thought explains his favoured status in Montefiore's writings.

The same could be said of Montefiore's friend Joseph Estlin Carpenter (1844–1927), who proof-read several of his manuscripts<sup>147</sup> and whose *The First Three Gospels* (1890) was well regarded by Montefiore. An eminent figure in modern Unitarianism, Carpenter was respected for his extensive knowledge in comparative religion and Semitic literature. Montefiore obviously shared similar interests; he also felt a great affinity with the position of the Unitarians. In an article in 1891, he described the liberal Jew as "the man who stands to orthodox Judaism in something of the same relation as the modern Christian Unitarian stands to orthodox Christianity".<sup>148</sup>

What exactly explains Montefiore's closeness to such Christian thinkers? The answer has to do with the three presuppositions that lie behind all his writings on the New Testament, presuppositions which he inherited from Jowett and which he shared in common with many contemporary Christian thinkers. These were: nineteenth-century rationalism, nineteenth-century idealism, and an over-arching concern for religious truth and the freedom to express it.

Being a rationalist, Montefiore did not consider the possibility of there being a historical foundation for the miraculous events described in the New Testament. Since orthodox Christianity has at the basis of its existence the belief in a historical incarnation and resurrection, this explains to some degree what WR Matthews has identified as Montefiore's lack of interest in and "imperfect comprehension of the central doctrine of Christianity [the Incarnation]."<sup>149</sup> Similarly, Montefiore would have viewed miraculous healing suspiciously, explaining it psychologically, and granting it little or no religious significance. Ever concerned with facts and historical truth, Montefiore greatly appreciated Bultmann's later attempts to demythologise the Gospels and was one of the first to praise his *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (1921).<sup>150</sup>

As regards idealism, Jowett's huge influence was obvious. It gave Montefiore his great sympathy with the world-view of men like Rashdall and thoroughly permeated his writings. One of the earlier Idealist Protestant theologians, the German Heinrich J Holtzmann (1832–1910), featured repeatedly in Montefiore's work. Greatly influenced by nineteenth-century German Idealism, Holtzmann saw the Kingdom of God as an inner/spiritual change within the hearts of men, a kingdom of reason, intelligence, goodwill. The gospel had been reduced to what such scholars believed possible: Jesus was spiritualised, the Kingdom of God had been reduced to an inward personal state. Montefiore was quite comfortable with such a view; the concern for an inner, rationalist religion characterised his own Liberal Jewish theology.

Montefiore's over-arching concern, however, was for religious truth as it could be applied in everyday life, just as it had been for his mentor Jowett. For him, the primary value in all religious teaching was Righteousness. He believed deeply in the supremacy of the moral law and in his treatment of the Gospels the first priority was always to discover and estimate Jesus' ethics. It was this "preoccupation with righteousness and ethical teaching" that has since led to criticisms of his understanding of the Gospels since, from the Christian point of view, they were very much more than simply treatises on ethics.<sup>151</sup>

By the 1920s and 1930s there was considerable approximation to one another of Jewish and Christian biblical scholars in a way that, perhaps, there had not been before, and this was in the field of academic engagement with the subject. Montefiore was one of a number of Jewish scholars who worked in or around the New Testament field.<sup>152</sup> He was,

however, especially highly regarded and often a source of great curiosity to Christian scholars. One reason for this was that whereas in the past Jews had tended to say that what was true in the Gospels was not new and what was new was not true, Montefiore was prepared to write that much of the Gospel material was both new and true. Another reason was that, even when explaining very real differences in Christian and Jewish interpretations of New Testament teaching, he was able to do so using Christian theological language that could be readily understood. In treating contentious subjects he championed a Jewish understanding but used a Christian vocabulary. (For example, he generally spoke of ‘Law’ and ‘sin’ rather than ‘Torah’ and ‘the evil impulse’). This made it easier for many to differentiate between the relative positions of the two faiths, in both their Traditionalist and Modernist forms. A third reason why he was so acceptable to liberal scholars was that, as far as his academic presuppositions and world-view was concerned, he could be regarded as one of their own. He came in on their level and was quite at home with the intricacies of New Testament debate.

Bowler remarks that Montefiore “mastered contemporary radical scholarship pertaining to these [New Testament] sources” and that initially his views of Christianity were shaped by the work of Benjamin Jowett and later by Harnack, Renan, Loisy and others in the forefront of liberal Christian scholarship.<sup>153</sup> This familiarity with and use of contemporary Christian research has been debated, however. While observing in passing that Montefiore reviewed German books in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Jacob criticises him generally for his “insular” studies which almost never mentioned the work of other Jews (referring to earlier giants such as Maimonides or Mendelssohn) either to agree or disagree with them; and “most of the contemporary Christian scholarship was also ignored”.<sup>154</sup> The failure to refer to Schweitzer’s works on Jesus or Paul is cited as particularly negligent.<sup>155</sup> With regard to Jewish writings, there is some truth in the accusation (see chapter one). With regard to Christian scholarship, however, Jacob is quite wrong to draw such a conclusion from Montefiore’s omissions. Even a brief reading of his works confirms Bowler’s view and shows Montefiore to have been quite familiar with contemporary scholarship, and even ahead of his contemporaries in terms of German scholarship. For example, as far as the older Montefiore was concerned one of the most important works of recent times had been *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (1924), a summary of the recent results of New Testament studies, by Burnett Hillman Streeter (1874–1937).<sup>156</sup> In this Streeter had reviewed the work of the previous sixty years of intensive research since the days of

Holtzmann. Interestingly, Streeter never mentioned Form-criticism; Dibelius, Schmidt and Bultmann were absent. This was in stark contrast to Montefiore who valued highly their contributions and who made constant reference to them in his own writings. This is just one of very many instances where Montefiore showed himself to be better acquainted with modern critical works than the “professionals” were. Over all, then, he showed an excellent grasp of the real issues of New Testament studies and, with very few exceptions, he followed and expanded upon the best scholarship of his day.

As regards his work on the Gospels, Montefiore should be placed alongside those scholars who were caught up in ‘the Quest for the Historical Jesus’.<sup>157</sup> This was an important movement in spite of its long term failures. One example of this failure is the fact that these scholars accepted the two (or three) document hypothesis for the Synoptics but ignored John’s Gospel as a theological, non-historical, Hellenistic treatise; Montefiore himself agreed with the Unitarian minister Joseph Carpenter who described John as “an interpretation of the person and work of Jesus rather than a record of his deeds”.<sup>158</sup> Later studies on John, of course, have argued that the Gospel can significantly contribute to a historical reconstruction of Jesus’ ministry but Montefiore was not to know this. His *Synoptic Gospels* reflected contemporary historical concerns and his own anti-mystical tendency. His view was in keeping with the predominating critical views of the time and it would be unfair to judge him anachronistically.

In his earlier Gospel writings, Montefiore quoted most often from Loisy, Wellhausen and Johannes Weiss. As time went on, Weiss and Wellhausen fell from favour in Montefiore’s eyes. They had featured prominently in the first edition of the *Synoptic Gospels*, but Montefiore increasingly came to see them as championing “an older, less critical and more orthodox point of view”.<sup>159</sup> The German theologian Weiss (1863–1914) is remembered for his eschatological interpretations of the Gospel (articulated as early as 1892) and for setting forth the principles of ‘Form-criticism’ in 1912.<sup>160</sup> While Montefiore greatly appreciated the form-critical approach, he was not in the least interested in Christological questions. By the time of the second edition of the *Synoptic Gospels* (1927), he was constantly referring to the works of Streeter, Burkitt and Lake. As has already been noted, he was also impressed with the newcomer, Bultmann.

Montefiore was certainly familiar with the results of Form-criticism through the

writings of Bultmann, Schmidt, and Martin Dibelius (1883–1947). These men pioneered the scientific study of the history of the literary forms in which the various traditions about Jesus have come down to us. Dibelius' major work, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1919),<sup>161</sup> was not translated until 1934 but this did not affect Montefiore, of course, whose 1927 edition of the *Synoptic Gospels* made frequent reference to it. Dibelius presented an analysis of the Gospels in terms of oral traditions; working on the foundations of Weiss, he laid great emphasis on preaching as the medium for the transmission of Jesus' words. Also, throughout his writings Dibelius pursued the origins of ethical statements found in the New Testament and other early Christian writings. All this had great appeal for Montefiore whose own interest, we have seen, was primarily in the ethical teachings of Jesus.

This interest in ethics helps to explain why Montefiore tended to steer clear of certain Christian scholars, including Schweitzer (as Walter Jacob has claimed). Montefiore avoided the christological questions that had come to dominate European New Testament studies through the writings of Harnack and Loisy.<sup>162</sup> From this point of view, a substantial proportion of the contemporary scholarship would have been irrelevant to him. An example of this would be the work of Francis Crawford Burkitt (1864–1935). Montefiore used his *Gospel History and its Transmission* (1906), in which the problems of Mark and its composition were discussed, in his introduction to the *Synoptic Gospels*. He was easily persuaded by Burkitt's suggestion that the important thing was not whether a parable or saying actually originated with Jesus, or when and where it was first uttered, but that "one must realise that this is the kind of teaching which the Evangelist thought worthy to put in his Lord's mouth, and which the Church accepted as worthy". Such a stance well suited Montefiore's general approach of treating the 'overall spirit' of the Gospels, rather than worrying about precisely where teachings originated. On the other hand, the fact that Burkitt followed Weiss in rejecting the views of Liberal Protestantism and making an eschatological interpretation for Jesus' teachings meant little to Montefiore. He simply did not concern himself with such christological questions.

Schweitzer's (1875–1965) *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906)<sup>163</sup> was a summary of a survey of all the critical research on the life of Christ carried out in Germany (and a few places elsewhere). It is difficult to believe that Montefiore had not seen the book, certainly by the time of the 1927 edition of the *Synoptic Gospels*, yet he makes no mention of it. In an article in 1931, Montefiore hinted at how it had been possible for him to have

overlooked Schweitzer's contribution. He admitted that the liberal view of Jesus had been "somewhat shaken" by the emergence of the 'Apocalyptic' school of critics. Nevertheless, he reasoned, if Jesus had expected some sort of catastrophe, he would have attributed it to God, acting in the interests of humanity at large and not exclusively for the Jews. Thus "the older, more peaceable [Liberal] view of Jesus has been able, with more or less success, to absorb the apocalyptic view, and still to continue its assertion of the non-national and non-political character of the teaching and the life of the Gospel hero".<sup>164</sup> The fact that Schweitzer also took up Weiss' view that Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom had followed the general lines of contemporary apocalyptic meant that he was arguing along lines which Montefiore was simply not interested in; such an understanding of Jesus as Schweitzer proposed stood in complete contradiction to Montefiore's vision of Jesus as a prophetic moralist, a sort of proto-liberal. Another reason stems from the fact that, whilst simultaneously viewing the historical Jesus as a product of the remote and obscure first-century apocalyptic, Schweitzer had argued that the personality of Jesus was something from which modern man could learn of God – the implication being that it was no longer possible to separate the teaching of Jesus from Jesus himself, or view him as a "modern" ethical teacher. Montefiore would not have been able to agree with any of this. Nor would he have agreed with Schweitzer's eventual conclusion that no 'Life of Jesus' was possible since the material needed to produce something approaching a modern biography was unavailable.<sup>165</sup> As we shall see in chapter three, Montefiore by no means rejected out-of-hand the possibility that there had been an eschatological strand to Jesus' teaching. In practice, however, he tended to overlook it in favour of what he regarded as the essentially ethical dimension.<sup>166</sup>

Of far greater interest to Montefiore was the direction other liberal Christian scholars, such as Kirsopp Lake (1872–1946) were headed. Lake was regarded as somewhat unorthodox by his contemporaries for *The Historical Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1907) in which he argues that the resurrection could not have occurred in the way recorded in the New Testament. The story of the empty tomb was not, he felt, convincing evidence and so the resurrection must have happened in another way or in another sense. While Montefiore tended away from this highly controversial area himself, he would have sympathised with and been greatly encouraged by such Christian rationalism; he certainly felt comfortable enough to contribute a section to *The Beginnings of Christianity* (5 vols, 1920–33) which had been co-edited by Lake and Foakes Jackson.

While many Christian readers found Montefiore's work on the New Testament likewise outside the pale, Jews were suspicious of his apparent role as an apologist for Christianity. *The Synoptic Gospels*, for example, was vigorously criticised from both camps.<sup>167</sup> In the company of like-minded liberals, however, he was better received. James Parkes later remarked upon "the spirit of serene objectivity, humility and courtesy... [of] his commentary on the synoptic gospels".<sup>168</sup> And in his highly complimentary appraisal of Montefiore in *Speculum Religionis* (1929), FC Burkitt viewed their theological differences not so much as a barrier but as an opportunity; he emphasised the special contribution that Montefiore, as a non-Christian, had made to the field of New Testament studies. As he put it,

Well, then, we Christians will not make the mistake of trying to praise Dr Montefiore's works on the Gospels and their hero for the wrong thing, for their being very nearly Christian. Their interest lies exactly in this, that they are not Christian.<sup>169</sup>

And there are numerous other examples of favourable reviews by liberal Christians.<sup>170</sup> By illuminating the Gospels with reference to Jewish sources Montefiore continued the work of Jewish scholars such as Schechter in placing the roots of Christianity well and truly in the soil of first-century Judaism. He presented a fairer view of the Pharisees and of the higher ethical teachings of the Rabbis (which included the Fatherhood of God and the need for repentance and forgiveness) for Christian theologians to digest. Such aspects of his work are of lasting value even if the particular theories and methods of the day have by now lost favour and been superseded.

Furthermore, the many recognitions which Montefiore received for his contributions to biblical and theological studies suggest that his 'amateur' scholarship had been of the highest professional standard. As mentioned in the introduction, his awards included Doctor of Divinity (DD) from the University of Manchester (1921); an honorary degree from the Jewish Institute of Religion, New York (1921); Doctor of Hebrew Law from Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati (1924); a doctorate of letters (D.Litt.) from the University of Oxford (1927); and the British Academy Medal for Biblical Studies (1930).

#### iv – Biblical Criticism and Jewish Learning

One important characteristic of Montefiore's writings on biblical criticism was his opposition to the contemporary misportrayals of both Old Testament and Rabbinic Judaism. As was discussed earlier, the German Protestant view which coloured the results of biblical criticism seemed to equate a religion of ordinances with a religion of slavery. In fact, it has been argued that Wellhausen's theories on the Hebrew Bible, and the associated view of the Gospels not as a product of Pharisaic Judaism but as a successful protest against it, stimulated many Reform Jews to explore the first-century period in order to combat Christian claims of supersessionism.<sup>171</sup> As Montefiore himself once put it, "my German masters... led me to defend the Rabbis".<sup>172</sup> He cited examples of such views in the writings of Schultz and Schürer in his *Hibbert Lectures* (1893),<sup>173</sup> views which were later taken up by Bousset and Harnack. Bousset's *The Religion of Judaism at the Time of the New Testament* (1903) had presented Judaism as a religion of external observance lacking sincerity; and while Harnack's *The Essence of Christianity* (1900) had acknowledged that Jesus had taught nothing new to Judaism, he argued that it had been taught in a new way: whereas Judaism had smothered its religious spirituality, Jesus' teaching were concentrated and untarnished by Pharisaism.

Codified ordinances have been central to Judaism from the time of Nehemiah onwards, and many scholars including Schultz felt that since the main bulk of the Law was ceremonial, then it could only have been observed out of fear of punishment or hope of reward. Montefiore denied that this was necessarily so. He argued that Jewish legalism "is not precisely the legalism which the non-Jewish community supposes it to be". While admitting that it had "some of the characteristics of the conventional legalism", he insisted that the Old Testament was also responsible for producing "the excellencies of Jewish legalism... which made it, as it were, include the corrections to its own weaknesses".<sup>174</sup> Likewise, in reminding his Christian readers that "Torah is not quite rightly translated by Law",<sup>175</sup> he highlighted the misconceptions that gave rise to the negative attitude towards the Law.

Montefiore reacted against the fact that "frequently, in Christian books, is Old Testament contrasted with New Testament: the one crude, elementary, imperfect; the other complete, perfect, incomparable".<sup>176</sup> He found this to be especially true with regard to

ethics, and in 1917 he wrote an article, 'The Old Testament and Its Ethical Teaching', which attempted to redress the balance. He was concerned to refute the idea that Old Testament concepts of morality had been transcended, that the modern world had got beyond these altogether and that the highest moral conceptions always originated from sources other than the Old Testament.<sup>177</sup> He felt that Old Testament teachings were devalued in two ways. Firstly, too much emphasis was laid upon its most primitive, least ethical elements, which were regarded as characteristic of the whole; what he described as the "best things in it" were either attributed to outside influences or simply ignored. Such "excellencies of the Old Testament" should, he explained, be regarded as essential characteristics of the whole. They were not casual, disconnected or occasional. Rather, they were

organically connected with the entire development, bone of its bone, spirit of its spirit. The ethical monotheism of the Prophets is reproduced in the Law and the Psalter and the Wisdom Literature. The virtues of justice and compassion are the keynotes of the growing morality.<sup>178</sup>

He felt that the three Old Testament virtues of justice, compassion and loving-kindness were the moving forces of the best of the Old Testament morality and made up the very essence of the whole. Secondly, on the other hand, the "cruelties and the imprecations" which, he felt, were focused upon by Christian critics could be thought of as the primitive residue which the Israelite religion was working to overcome. He recognised the defects in many Old Testament "doctrines" and, as a liberal, denounced the "narrowness and particularism" which "disfigured" it. But he denied that doctrines of retribution and "tit-for-tat", for example, were evil as such, arguing that they were the results of an exaggerated and perverted desire for justice.<sup>179</sup> Likewise, the idea of loving one's neighbour and hating one's enemy was not, in Montefiore's opinion, a characteristic teaching of the Old Testament, as Christian critics claimed. These "painfully anxious" attempts to show up the limitations of the Old Testament were, he suspected, motivated by their need to leave more space for the originality of Jesus.<sup>180</sup>

Montefiore was well placed to see the limitations of Christian scholarship. As Burkitt observed, "It needed someone who was independent of the masterful thought of St Paul to do justice to the religion of the Law."<sup>181</sup> But it was not just their concept of Old Testament Judaism that needed re-thinking. Montefiore made an even more important contribution by arguing with Christian scholars that the rabbinic religion was, contrary to

their beliefs, in many respects higher than the teachings of the Old Testament. An example of this (one that, perhaps, only Montefiore could have suggested), was the Rabbis' non-literal approach to the Hebrew Bible. As he put it,

It is rather anachronistic to regard the Rabbis as a sort of early example of Progressive and Liberal Jews, but, nevertheless, they did a great work for Judaism. They saved us from becoming a book religion in the sense that every word of the book must be accepted in its most literal sense, as perfect and unimprovable. Their "readings in", their developments, their additions, maintained a certain flow, a certain unrigidity. They prevented the slaughter of the spirit by the letter... In a pre-critical age the Rabbinic interpretations and developments were, in a sense, the pre-cursor... of Modernist freedom. The old Rabbinic development paved the way for the new liberal developments.<sup>182</sup>

In these and other ways, Montefiore sought to convince the Christian scholars of their misconceptions. It needed someone who was sympathetic to the literature and thought of the Rabbis to put forward such a case. And in this he was not alone, for other Jews including Solomon Schechter and Israel Abrahams were doing the same thing.<sup>183</sup> There were even Christians like the American biblical scholar George Foot Moore (1851–1931) who argued along similar lines; in 1897 Montefiore referred to "a great book on Judaism... by that amazing creature GF Moore".<sup>184</sup> Later, in his *Judaism and the Christian Era* (3 vols, 1927–30), and in a long article 'Christian Writers on Judaism',<sup>185</sup> Moore attempted to show that the Jewish belief that it was necessary to keep the Torah was not intended to earn membership within the people of God, but was an expression of it.<sup>186</sup> He also pointed out that the Jews did not despair when they failed; they could repent and had the sacrificial system to deal with sins committed under the Law. In addition, Moore did not accept that apocalyptic interests lay within the main current of Jewish thought and was therefore prepared to accept the rabbinic sources as the best representation of mainstream Judaism.

Yet it seemed to Montefiore (who was, if anything, almost looking upon the world with Gentile eyes), as if he and his fellow champions of Jewish learning were hitting their heads against a solid wall of Christian resistance. In an article entitled 'Jewish Scholarship and Christian Silence' (1903), he expressed his frustration at "the absolute neglect of everything which is said upon the other side", something which in other fields of scholarship, he protested, was unusual or unknown. Targeting especially the German Protestant scholars with whom he was so familiar, he charged the biblical critical Christian fraternity with almost entirely ignoring what the Jewish scholars had to say. The German Protestant

scholars occupied a “peculiar position”, he observed dryly.

To them by no means every statement contained in the New Testament is accurate, but at least every statement against the “Pharisees” and the Rabbinic religion is accurate.<sup>187</sup>

Protesting against this one sided, traditionally biased approach, he asked of men as well-known as Holtzmann, Harnack and Schürer,

Is it possible that what the Jewish scholars have to say is so silly, so contemptibly prejudiced, so utterly erroneous, that it is really too much to expect that any Christian scholar can notice it?<sup>188</sup>

The situation was in Montefiore’s eyes ridiculous since, with a very few exceptions such as Dalman and Delitzsch,<sup>189</sup> no Christian was familiar with the subject on a first-hand basis. “Who writes a page on the subject without reference to the inevitable Weber?” he complained, referring to a German Protestant attempt to outline a systematic Talmudic theology.<sup>190</sup> Characteristically self-demeaning, he suggested that Jewish scholars carried part of the blame in failing to provide better alternatives and for failing to provide their own translations of the Midrash. Jewish scholars, he felt, had done little to make their historic theology available for non-Jewish scholars. This could be explained in terms of their isolationism and ghetto-ised intellectualism.

They have not lived enough in Christian society, been sufficiently in touch with Christian life, or adequately versed in Christian literature, to know what was the sort of thing which wanted saying, or the kind of defence which was required.<sup>191</sup>

Such a background was, of course, precisely the kind that Montefiore himself had enjoyed, and it enabled him to contribute as much as he did. *A Rabbinic Anthology* (1938), written in association with Herbert Loewe, is perhaps the best example of how he himself went about answering the need as he had seen it in 1903; this classic work is still regarded as a succinct but comprehensive presentation of the notoriously complex subject matter of rabbinic literature. At the time of ‘Jewish Scholarship and Christian Silence’, however, Montefiore drew attention to the work of his friend and tutor Solomon Schechter, who had recently published a series of articles on rabbinic theology in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*. As he pointedly observed, “If Schechter is right, [then] the ordinary commonplaces of Christian theologians about Rabbinic Judaism are wrong.” To his bewilderment, the articles of “one

of the greatest Rabbinical scholars of the world" had gone unnoticed. How should he interpret this? he wondered.

Perhaps, he suggested, the answer to the overwhelming Christian silence lay in their reluctance to face the consequences of accepting Jewish scholarship. After all, rabbinic theology had some relation to the history of Christianity, especially with regard to Paul, and it certainly made a difference whether the rabbinic religion was to be regarded as good or bad. If, as the Jews insisted, it had been good, there would follow a re-assessment of much of the New Testament teaching. "Is that the real reason why the Christian scholars refuse to listen?" he asked.

In recent times, EP Sanders and others have exposed the way in which German scholars (particularly Weber, Schürer, Bousset, Billerbeck and Bultmann) had expounded Judaism in terms borrowed (anachronistically) from Reformation polemic.<sup>192</sup> Sanders saw no parallel between Paul's argument with the Judaism of his day and Luther's condemnations of the legalism of the Church of Rome, and he denied that Paul could be thought of as a sort of proto-Protestant. He was very critical of the way in which these men had created through their massive scholarly output an aura of apparent objectivity around a false position. Susannah Heschel has shown that Wellhausen, Schürer, Bousset and the others do not say anything original, that their anti-Judaism is not new but simply repeats older motifs.<sup>193</sup> This is all the more damning since it cannot be excused by ignorance. By the 1860s, Christian scholars were clearly no longer writing in an environment closed off from Jewish thought, but rather in an intellectual atmosphere in which Jewish writers like Montefiore were championing their own case.<sup>194</sup> It seems as though facts, historical research, and clear organisation of ideas count for little if no one wants to listen; for whatever the reason, scholars were better prepared to listen to Sanders after the Second World War than they had been to acknowledge Montefiore, Moore and the others before.

#### **IV – Conclusion**

This chapter began by asking the question 'What were the specifically Christian factors which made for Montefiore's special relationship with Christianity?' In answering it we have examined the nature of the Jewish reforming movements and assessed the extent of

the effect of the Christian critique upon them. We have considered the influences of various Christian models including Tractarianism, Evangelical conversionism, and Anglican liberalism, together with the influences of the ancient Greek thought and the social fixation upon Progress which combined so powerfully in England towards the end of the century. If it now appears that the factors that gave Montefiore his peculiar view can be largely explained in terms of various *Christian* influences, then we have been successful. Of course there was much more to it than that, as the previous chapter on Jewish influences has shown. But the point has been made. It should now be possible to appreciate the unique way in which certain Victorian and Edwardian Christian strands of thought combined with Judaism in the person of Montefiore.

This chapter has also attempted to assess the profound impact of Christian scholarship, especially Liberal Protestant scholarship, upon Montefiore's own biblical studies. Yet he had his own way of going about it, determined by his intense desire to teach religious truth, as he saw it. He approached both Old and New Testament material in very similar fashion to the way in which he had approached the rabbinic and Hellenistic literatures. For much of the time he seemed to work with the New Testament as a collection of documents to be analysed with reference to other scholars. The rest of the time he worked with its overall spirit and seemed little interested in the conclusions of critical scholarship. Even while taking into account the widespread influences of nineteenth-century rationalism and idealism, it will have to be admitted that there is a grain of truth to Schechter's claim that "What the whole thing means, is not Liberal Judaism, but Liberal Christianity."<sup>195</sup> Montefiore himself violently disputed this, but his over-arching concern for Righteousness and religious truth, from wherever it might be found, and the resulting eclectic nature of Liberal Jewish theology has left him vulnerable to the charge.

## Chapter Three

### Montefiore in the Context of Jewish Approaches to Jesus

#### I – Introduction

Down through the centuries of Jewish-Christian relations, the figure of Jesus has loomed large. Born a Jew, his was the anathematised name under which the Jewish people came to be oppressed and persecuted for almost two thousand years. While, generally speaking, each faith tended to define the other in terms of whether or not Jesus was to be regarded as the Son of God, for the last century or so the interaction between Christianity and Judaism has been characterised by the interpretation of his teaching and the assessment of its religious significance. Today, the Jewish rejection of the Christ of Christian faith is more sophisticated, and numerous Jewish scholars regard Jesus himself as coming out of the Jewish tradition. For Montefiore, a pioneer in Jewish Gospel research, the study of Jesus and his teachings took up a very considerable amount of his time and energy. Jesus was extremely important to him, both psychologically and theologically, and the degree of his fascination with “the teacher of Nazareth” sets him apart from the majority of Jewish thinkers. As we shall see, an understanding of Montefiore’s peculiar appreciation of Jesus throws much light upon his own distinctive thought and upon his hopes for absorbing many aspects of Christian teaching into Liberal Judaism.

This chapter will attempt to place Montefiore in the context of various Jewish approaches to Jesus; in so doing, it will concentrate mainly upon those Jewish writers who were his contemporaries and those who followed just after him, and will not treat the very recent scholarship in great detail. Section I will consider the validity of the idea of a ‘Jewish Reclamation’ of Jesus, a reclamation in which Montefiore is usually regarded as having played a significant rôle. It will also outline the way in which Jewish and Christian scholars have interacted historically in the New Testament studies debate regarding the ‘historical Jesus’, an issue of obvious relevance in terms of Montefiore’s own critical scholarship.

Section II will examine the assumptions that lie behind Jewish studies of the Gospel evidence and the limits beyond which not even Montefiore was prepared to go. Section III will consider more thematically the differing views of Jesus' originality among Jewish scholars, before arguing that Montefiore's close identification with Jesus as a prophetic reformer resulted in him using his Gospel studies to further the cause of his own religious views.

### *i – Jewish Reclamations of Jesus*

Since the 'Parting of the Ways', when Christianity first emerged from under the wing of Judaism, until relatively recent times, Judaism has avoided mention of Jesus. In *A Marginal Jew* (1991), John Meier made a survey of those examples of ancient Jewish literature that might conceivably have referred to Jesus. He concluded that, apart from Josephus, there was nothing from the early Christian period that offered an independent Jewish source of information on Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Those few texts which are believed by some writers to refer to Jesus do not add to the Gospel evidence and do not go beyond ascribing to Jesus a Pharisaic- or rabbinic-like exposition of scripture, the power to heal in his name, the fact that he left disciples, and an unhistorical tradition of the circumstances of his trial and death.<sup>2</sup> Jacob Lauterbach, in his essay 'Jesus in the Talmud',<sup>3</sup> put forward several suggestions to account for this apparent lack of interest within the Talmud. Perhaps the silence had been accidental, in that historical circumstances might never have offered an opportunity for reports about Jesus to be included within the writings. Or perhaps the editors had not deemed Jesus important enough to discuss, or were simply ignorant of his existence. The most likely explanation, however, according to Lauterbach, was that Jewish contemporaries *had* discussed Jesus but that their references to him had been suppressed by later editors (who feared inculcating heretical ideas) and were thus eventually forgotten.<sup>4</sup> There was also, of course, the danger of provoking violent Christian responses.

Similarly, Medieval Jewry had little to say about Jesus because of their own concern about encouraging heresy and their fear of reprisals.<sup>5</sup> What little was written was typically highly defensive and apologetic in tone, for writings regarding Jesus were usually composed under persistent oppression. The notorious *Toledoth Yeshu* (History of Jesus), for example,

which presented Jesus as an illegitimate, apostate Jew, was provoked by anti-Semitic persecutions.<sup>6</sup> There were also religious disputations in which Jewish leaders were compelled to participate. These disputations were the main context of the Jewish treatment of Jesus during the Middle Ages but, as far as the evidence goes, they did not occur in any large number until the thirteenth century. At this time there was, as Morris Goldstein has put it, “an outbreak in public debates” which forced Jewish thinkers to “give heed to a subject which to them was not of primary interest”.<sup>7</sup> Well-known examples include the disputations at Paris (1240) and Barcelona (1263).<sup>8</sup> A recognisable pattern emerged: in response to Christian proof-texting of the Old Testament which sought to validate various doctrines (such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, Original Sin, and redemption through Christ), Jewish thinkers disputed the meaning of the texts. They were especially concerned to refute Christian claims of supersessionism and of God’s rejection of Israel for their failure to recognise Jesus as their messiah.<sup>9</sup> The disputations were, at best, unproductive, since such conditions (that is, discussions in which the opponents were also the judges) were by no means conducive to an unbiased reading or estimation of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> It was only sensible for Jews to avoid such confrontations whenever possible. In addition, there was no incentive to become interested in these matters, since the Jew found fulfilment in Torah. Until relatively modern times, then, Jesus and his teachings were subjects generally avoided by Jewish thinkers.<sup>11</sup>

The eighteenth and nineteenth-century Emancipation and the new freedom it brought for Jewish writers and thinkers changed all this and encouraged a less hostile treatment of Jesus. For many of those caught up in the rationalism of the *Haskalah*, the *Toledoth Yeshu* and all it represented became an embarrassment. Mendelssohn condemned it as “a monster from the time of legends” and Graetz, the father of Jewish historiography, called it “a wretched patchwork”.<sup>12</sup> The arrival of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* has been described as the single most important factor in making possible a new Jewish attitude towards Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Its modern historical-critical methodology and the greater confidence it inspired meant that Jewish thinkers became increasingly objective (because less polemical) in their approach to Christianity and its origins. At the same time, an emerging Reform Judaism emphasised the ethical tradition within Jewish teaching (as exemplified by the Prophets) at the expense of religious dogma, and sought to re-define Judaism in essentially ethical terms. Viewed as a Jewish ethical teacher, Jesus and his teachings started to look more interesting and relevant. It was the beginning of what has been described controversially as “the Jewish reclamation

of Jesus".

In *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (1984), the American Evangelical Protestant scholar Donald Hagner has argued that in modern times Jesus has been reclaimed by many Jews – even some Orthodox Jews – as “one of their own rabbis whose parables and sermons have a rightful place in Jewish literature alongside those of other ancient sages”.<sup>14</sup> This boldly made assertion is, however, by no means universally accepted. In an article in response to Hagner, G David Schwartz points out that Judaism has consistently rejected Christian claims about Jesus, and reasons that it is nonsensical to speak of reclaiming him since “rejection and reclamation are mutually exclusive”.<sup>15</sup> And Samuel Sandmel, who surveyed the attempts of Western Jews to “reclaim Jesus for Judaism” in *We Jews and Jesus* (1965), himself regarded the “distant dream” of a reclaimed Jesus as untenable.<sup>16</sup> The very possibility of a Jewish reclamation is thus in question.

The confusion on this issue is due to the vagueness of the use of the term ‘reclamation’. If it were understood to refer purely to the historical reconstruction of a Jewish Jesus, many Jewish writers would find little to quarrel with. The problems begin when, in addition to the idea of reconstruction, “reclamation” is understood to equate to identification with, and acceptance of, Jesus’ teachings. The most damaging interpretation is when it is understood to equate to identification with, and acceptance of, Jesus and his teachings *as interpreted by Christians*. Needless to say, such a religious evaluation finds very little support among Jews, the vast majority having consistently argued that the Christ of Christian tradition (that is, Jesus as something more than a man) is inconsistent with Judaism and uncongenial to Jews.<sup>17</sup> In the case of Hagner, the mistake lies in blurring the lines between these different understandings. By writing of the Jewish “zeal to keep Jesus within Judaism, either as the one who presented the culmination of its religious teachings or simply as a misled Israelite” he left himself open to the charge of misrepresentation. Very few Jewish writers would ever have agreed with the Christian teaching that Jesus’ thought was the “culmination” of Jewish religion.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Hagner’s emphasis on the tendency of men such as Montefiore and Klausner to recognise – and praise – the originality and uniqueness of Jesus’ teaching has been misunderstood by some Jews to equate to claiming a religious evaluation far beyond the simple remit of reconstructing a historical Jesus. As Schwartz puts it, “If Jews do not find uniqueness in Jesus, I suggest it is... precisely because such a claim may denote a reclamation in which Jews do not wish to

engage.”<sup>19</sup>

Before continuing, it would be sensible to redefine in what sense a Jewish reclamation of Jesus has occurred. Limiting it to the idea of a historical reconstruction is not necessarily helpful. While the reconstruction of the Jewish background of Jesus has without doubt been a common aim amongst many Jewish scholars interested in Jesus, very different models of this background have been proposed. What is more, in spite of Schwartz’s contention that Jewish authors have, almost exclusively, limited themselves to historical questions,<sup>20</sup> this chapter will show that there have certainly been Jewish writers who have attempted a religious re-evaluation of Jesus and who have identified to a degree with his teachings and thought. Commenting on a renewed Jewish interest in Jesus’ religious teachings in his own day, Sandmel recognised that “in some Jewish circles not only is there no questioning of the propriety of reclamation, but it is even an axiom in the form that Jesus was a Jew and therefore ‘ours’”<sup>21</sup>. It is therefore a mistake to over-simplify things by describing the Jewish scholarly treatment of Jesus over the last two centuries as merely concerned with “reconstruction”.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, one must be extremely cautious about suggesting that it entails the idea of a Jewish re-evaluation of Jesus and his teachings, because of the underlying fear of many Jews that such a reclamation implies an acceptance of the Christian interpretation of Jesus. This fear is especially apparent when claims regarding Jesus’ originality or uniqueness are made, even though, as Schwartz himself pointed out, perception of originality does not necessarily equate to exaltation or even commendation.<sup>23</sup> Of course, if such an acceptance of Christian teaching *is* what is meant, then such a reclamation must be denied; even Hagner acknowledged the Jewish conviction that “the Kingdom has not come in any real sense, and this forces Jews to reject the teachings of Christianity about Jesus”.<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, what is left is a rather grey area in which “reclamation” can be understood to mean (i) various attempts at historical reconstruction, taken together with (ii) varying degrees of identification with, and acceptance of, aspects of Jesus and his teachings. Although the phenomenon could be called a “reclamation” in the sense that it describes an attitude that contrasts sharply with the previous centuries of hostility and rejection, it would be more accurate to speak of “reclamations”. And there are difficulties in speaking of a *Jewish* religious evaluation of Jesus since different Jews have come to very different conclusions regarding the Jewishness of Jesus. For example, it is not possible to hold with

Sandmel's concept of a reclamation in the sense that Jewish writers have been unified in their desire to identify the virtues ascribed to Jesus as "characteristically Jewish virtues, expressed in Judaism and integrally part of it".<sup>25</sup> The simple fact is that there has been *no* consensus among Jewish writers as to what exactly Jesus' virtues were or whether or not they constitute good Judaism. To speak as though one particular view can be regarded as 'the Jewish position', as many do, is to grossly over-simplify the matter. Finally, special note should be given to the fact that these Jewish reclamations of Jesus have been limited by the consequences, both real and imagined, of identifying too closely with the traditional founder of Christianity. As Sandmel put it, "The 'problem' of Jesus for modern Jews is not only religious and psychological, but it is also cultural and sociological."<sup>26</sup> This has had the effect that very few Jewish thinkers have claimed Jesus as 'one of us' in the same way as they have, for example, for Jews as unlike as Philo of Alexandria, Rabbi Akiba, or Honi the Circle-Drawer. Montefiore was, as we shall see, an exception; for him, Jesus *did* belong to the realm of discourse within the Jewish tradition.<sup>27</sup> He was convinced that once Christendom had ridded itself of anti-Semitism, Jews would be willing to think more positively about the founders and the sacred books of Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

## ***ii – Quests for the Historical Jesus***

One interesting aspect of the development of Jewish reclamations of Jesus is the interaction (or lack of interaction) between Jewish writers and Christian Gospel scholarship during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>29</sup> While there have certainly been times during which the contributions of Jewish authors have seemed at home amongst mainstream New Testament studies, such as in the present day, it is fair to say that Jewish treatments of Jesus have, with very few exceptions, taken little or no account of contemporary Christian research. The twists and turns of New Testament scholarship over the last century and a half, and its corresponding shifts in research emphases, brought Christian writers now nearer, now further away, from their Jewish contemporaries for whom the subject was, at best, of secondary interest and whose approach and assumptions were simpler and more consistent. Thus until very recently the apparent closeness of the works of various Jewish writers to contemporary mainstream Christian research was, more often than not, quite coincidental.<sup>30</sup>

With the rationalistic tendencies of the Enlightenment came the challenging of both

Christian and Jewish dogma and a common search for the ethical heart of true religion. Nineteenth-century New Testament scholarship had produced a multitude of ‘lives of Jesus’, epitomised by Renan’s *Vie de Jesus* (1863), which tended to present Jesus as a modern, liberally minded, ethically driven teacher. Such rational, if anachronistic, attempts to reconstruct his life and times were very much part of a movement which came to be known as the ‘Quest for the Historical Jesus’. At around the same time, as a result of the *Haskalah* and the Science of Judaism, it had become possible for Jewish thinkers to move away from the defensive posture, reaction and self-protection of the traditional Jewish position regarding Jesus. Historical reconstructions of the founder (or, at least, the foundation stone) of Christianity were attempted, several of which did not look out of place among those of the mainstream Christian Quest. For example, the pioneer of German and American Reform, Samuel Hirsch, presented Jesus as a religious reformer in *Das System der Religiösen Anschauungen der Juden* (1842), and the Orthodox Englishman, Joseph Jacobs, wrote a fictional history, *As Others saw Him* (1895),<sup>31</sup> which portrayed him as a non-nationalistic Pharisee of the school of Hillel. Other early Jewish treatments were, as we shall see, ahead of their time in emphasising the more apocalyptic aspects of Jesus. Such authors include Salvador, Graetz and Geiger. The reform minded Frenchman Joseph Salvador was the first Jewish historian to write a comprehensive life of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> His *Jesus Christ et sa Doctrine* (Paris, 1838) viewed Jesus as a messianic pretender, whose teachings could best be explained from a messianic-eschatological perspective and the fast approaching Kingdom of God. Heinrich Graetz, a German Orthodox Jew, wrote a renowned *History of the Jews* (1848) in which he presented Jesus as an Essene and a “renouncer of life”. And one of the leading figures of the German Reform movement, Abraham Geiger, wrote *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte* (1864) in which he followed Salvador in identifying Jesus as a Pharisaic messianic claimant, and Graetz in focussing Jesus’ attention upon the end of the world. What all these new Jewish approaches had in common was what Shalom Ben-Chorin has described as “a conscious or unconscious continuation of the ‘Ebionite line.’”<sup>33</sup> While Jesus was no longer completely denounced, he was regarded in very human terms and Christian claims of his birth, death, resurrection, and divine nature were vehemently attacked, as they had been traditionally. Similarly, the integrity of the Law was rigorously defended against Christian critiques of rabbinism and legalism. Since the nineteenth century, then, one can almost speak of “Neo-Ebionitism” amongst Jewish writers, even though views concerning the categorisation of Jesus differed considerably.<sup>34</sup> At this early stage, Jewish reclamations of Jesus were apologetic, defensive treatments which tended to

emphasise the Roman role in his death and to point out apparent discrepancies in the Gospel accounts of his trial, thus challenging the traditional charges of guilt levelled at the Jews as a whole. As time went on, other more positive, less defensive attempts were made but these never eclipsed the polemical treatments completely. Later writers who continued the apologetic tradition include: the Orthodox Paul Goodman whose *The Synagogue and the Church* (1908) supported the view that “The most rational attitude of the Jews towards Jesus is a purely negative one”;<sup>35</sup> the Viennese scholar Robert Eisler whose *Jesus a King who did not become King* (1931) denied the usual Christian interpretation of the life and teaching of Jesus;<sup>36</sup> and the popular writer Hyam Maccoby whose *Revolution in Judaea* (1973) similarly portrayed Jesus as an apocalyptic, nationalistic Pharisee, who was more a man of action than a teacher, and who was put to death by Pilate and the Romans as a political trouble-maker.

In 1906 Schweitzer published his *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*<sup>37</sup> which reintroduced ‘apocalypticism’ into mainstream New Testament scholarship as the context of the Gospel message and made the view of Jesus as a modern style ethical teacher increasingly untenable.<sup>38</sup> Subsequent treatments of the Gospels had to reconcile Jesus’ life with his teachings in a way in which they had not had to do before. As a result of the difficulty of achieving this, together with Schweitzer’s conviction that a historically sound account of Jesus was impossible given the unreliability of the existing evidence, the Quest began to peter out (or was, at least, increasingly regarded unfavourably by a number of prominent New Testament scholars). Generally speaking, however, Jewish writers were unaffected by this development.<sup>39</sup> If anything, it was just about this time – when Christian scholarship was starting to see apocalypticism as the key – that Jewish understandings of Jesus moved away from the ‘apocalyptic’ views of earlier Jews such as Salvador, Graetz and Geiger. Instead, they began shifting towards the ‘ethical-teacher’ views of pre-Schweitzer mainstream Christian scholarship. As Kümmel observed, a “new and beneficial line of investigation” was becoming apparent in which “modern, historically oriented Jewish theology turned to the question of how we are to judge the distinctiveness of the New Testament and of Jesus in particular and their relation to rabbinic Judaism”.<sup>40</sup> As they continued to attempt historical reconstructions of Jesus, Jews were increasingly studying Gospel material to demonstrate that Jesus’ teachings, parables and prayers, and life-story were comprehensible only in a Jewish context. Hence the German Liberal Leo Baeck observed, “[As presented in the Gospels] Jesus is a genuine Jewish personality, all his struggles and works, his bearing and feeling, his speech and silence, bear the stamp of a

Jewish style, the mark of Jewish idealism”,<sup>41</sup> and the Orthodox Michael Friedländer, writing in 1905, emphasised the influence of (Hellenistic) Judaism upon Jesus’ ethical teachings.<sup>42</sup> Other works that, in their own ways, drew heavily upon Jewish thought and understanding included Israel Abrahams’ *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (1916)<sup>43</sup> and the US Reform Rabbi Hyman Enelow’s *A Jewish View of Jesus* (1920).<sup>44</sup> Of special note was Montefiore’s *The Synoptic Gospels* (1909), which was exceptional among Jewish studies both in terms of its familiarity with Quest scholarship and in terms of the relatively greater attention it received from Christian scholars.<sup>45</sup> While it was an introduction, translation and commentary on the first three Gospels rather than a Jewish Strack-Billerbeck, it certainly brought rabbinical materials and the modern discussion and interpretation of them to bear upon the text.<sup>46</sup>

The net result, as Sandmel noted, was that while “one might have thought in the 1900s and 1910s that Jewish and Christian scholars were on the threshold of some incipient common understanding of Jesus”, in the post-Schweitzer era, the gap between Jewish and mainstream, Christian Gospel research had begun to widen.<sup>47</sup> With the arrival of Bultmann and Form-criticism soon after the First World War, mainstream Gospel scholarship shifted even further away from the Quest for the historical Jesus. Under the influence of men such as Bultmann, Schmidt and Dibelius, Protestant Christian research began to move away from a primarily historical emphasis on Jesus the man, to a primarily theological emphasis on Jesus the Christ. In contrast to the older Gospel scholarship, which had been relatively easy for Jews to read and even partake in, the new theological shift made it almost incomprehensible and quite irrelevant for them. The “common understanding of Jesus” between Christians and Jews became increasingly remote (with the possible exception of Buber).<sup>48</sup> Thus, despite the fact that it attracted the interest of Christians for its detailed treatment of the Jewish sources as evidence for Jesus, the Orthodox Joseph Klausner’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (1922)<sup>49</sup> revealed a glaring lack of familiarity with the changing Gospel research.<sup>50</sup> Quite understandably, much Jewish interest in Jesus was also quashed by the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust, which came to be viewed as the fruit of Christian and, by implication, New Testament, anti-Semitism. Looking back in 1965, Sandmel wrote,

It is my opinion that Jews and Christians are further apart today on the question of Jesus than they have been in the past hundred years, this despite other ways in which Judaism and Christianity have drawn

closer to each other than ever before.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, Sandmel's assessment was overly pessimistic. In the post-war years, Christian New Testament scholars had began re-examining the possibility of recovering the historical Jesus. The majority of those engaged in this so-called 'New Quest' argued cautiously about presuppositions and sophisticated methodology that would take into account the concerns addressed by form-critical and other types of analysis.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, seemingly spontaneously, a distinct movement emerged which likewise believed that it was both possible to uncover a historical Jesus and that it was worth while doing so despite Bultmann's anti-historical arguments. This purely historical movement utilised the now more readily available Jewish learning. Dubbed the 'Third Quest',<sup>53</sup> it had no unified theological background or programme and was at least partly affected by the contributions of Jewish scholars from the late 1950s onwards, such as Zeitlin, Sandmel, Flusser, Lapide and Vermes. Solomon Zeitlin had written a treatment of 'Jesus of Nazareth' in the context of a general Jewish history, *The Rise and fall of the Second Judaean State* (1962). A historian lecturing at the Reform rabbinical training college, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Zeitlin was more influential among Jews than among Christians. Another lecturer at HUC was Samuel Sandmel. His writings on Jesus included a chapter in *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (1956) and *We Jews and Jesus* (1965). The leading American Jewish authority of his day on the New Testament, Sandmel was generally critical of earlier Jewish scholars' ignorance of mainstream New Testament research. As a liberal Jew his work shared a common approach to that of Montefiore, whom he held in high regard. David Flusser, a lecturer in comparative religion at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, wrote *Jesus* (1968) and 'Jesus, His Ancestry, and the Commandment of Love'.<sup>54</sup> A specialist in early Christianity and Judaism in the New Testament period, Flusser believes that once the Jewish background is fully taken into account, the Gospel evidence for understanding Jesus is more historically reliable than has been argued in the past. The Orthodox Jew Pinchas Lapide, also based in Israel, wrote *The Resurrection of Jesus* (ET 1983) and *Jesus in Two Perspectives* (ET 1985).<sup>55</sup> Primarily concerned with bringing Christians and Jews together, Lapide's historical approach to explaining the dynamism of the early Christian movement left him in the rather unique position of accepting the possibility of a physical resurrection of Jesus. The Oxford historian Geza Vermes is, so to speak, a re-converted Jew (from Catholicism). Among his writings on Jesus were *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (1973) and 'Jesus the Jew' (1991).<sup>56</sup> Vermes and Flusser are examples of those

Jewish scholars who rarely refer to their own Jewishness, regarding it as irrelevant for their work; both have emphasised that their approach towards Jesus is not in any partisan sense Jewish but rather, they believe, purely historical. This by no means contradicts the fact that a writer's Jewishness can often be the key to his interest in 'Jesus scholarship'. Jewish reclamations of Jesus have been made possible, or have at least been encouraged, by the creation of the State of Israel and the flourishing development of centres of Jewish learning (especially in America), which replaced those destroyed in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, following a period during which mainstream New Testament scholarship and Jewish scholarship had kept each other at a distance, and during which there had been a relative lull in Jewish interest concerning Jesus,<sup>58</sup> (that is, from the time of Bultmann until the 'Third Quest'), a new coming together occurred. In fact, it could be argued that over the last thirty years, Jewish understanding and scholarship have in many respects led the way for the first time. It is perhaps with this in mind that Schwartz suggests that the real explosion of Jewish interest in Jesus is only a few decades old.<sup>59</sup>

Several surveys of Jewish approaches to Jesus have been written in the recent past.<sup>60</sup> In the space of this chapter no effort will be made to attempt such a giant task – even the most comprehensive treatment of the subject to date, which runs to 341 pages, has been criticised for "the rather narrow selection of Jewish scholars treated".<sup>61</sup> Nor does the fact that there are different types of writing to consider make the task any easier. For example, it is possible to differentiate, as Klausner did, between works on Jesus, works on Christianity, and works that, while not devoted to Jesus, give special attention to him.<sup>62</sup> There is also the complication of the wide variety of purpose among Jewish writers on Jesus. Schwartz has identified at least five distinct types of motivation.<sup>63</sup>

- to produce a vehicle for a goodly presentation of Judaism (e.g. Reform Judaism).
- to sell books by selecting a controversial topic.
- to study a subject out of pure scholarly interest.
- to issue a warning, or to draw up lines of demarcation between Jewish culture and Western culture.
- to study for the sake of amenable understanding in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

(It should become clear in the course of this chapter that the first, third and fifth reasons are the ones most applicable to Montefiore). Brought up to date, the numbers of writers covered by all these sorts of criteria would be very large indeed. In placing Montefiore in the context of the Jewish study of Jesus, it seems sensible to concentrate on those who have written most extensively on the Gospels, including Abrahams, Klausner, Sandmel, Flusser, Lapide and Vermes. These are the writers to be taken most seriously in terms of influence and scholarship. Montefiore is notable, even among these Jewish authors, for his uncommon fascination with Jesus, his voluminous writings on the subject, and his contribution to mainstream New Testament studies. In particular, he is remarkable for the way in which he anticipated later Jewish approaches. His studies of Jesus, for example, abandoned the concerns of previous Jewish writers (who had focussed on issues such as Jewish guilt regarding Jesus' death) and emphasised instead Jesus' ethical teachings. He led the way in actually combining the critical techniques of mainstream New Testament studies with the insights gained from a knowledge of the rabbinic literature.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, many of the assumptions he made concerning the Gospel evidence in his reclamation of Jesus as a Jew characterise those of subsequent Jewish scholarship. And, to a lesser extent, he was followed by later Jewish writers in the way in which he approached Jesus with a view to enriching his own understanding of Judaism, and in his avoidance of any unnecessary antagonism of Christian sensitivities. As Hagner put it in 1984, "When one is familiar with [Montefiore's] writings, one finds little that is really new in the burgeoning Jewish literature of our day."<sup>65</sup>

## **II – Jewish Engagement with Critical Scholarship**

It is noteworthy that, generally speaking, modern Jews have not denied the existence of Jesus. One might have imagined that such a stance would have been tempting for anti-Christian polemicists; after all, there have certainly been nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christian scholars who have argued so. A possible reason for this surprising omission could have been fear for the general well-being of the Jewish community. Jewish writers such as Geiger or Graetz might not have wanted to unnecessarily attract a Christian backlash, or to be seen to side with radical Christian scholars such as the nineteenth-century German Bruno Bauer (who believed that Jesus was an invention of the Gospel evangelists) because of

Bauer's open anti-Jewishness.<sup>66</sup> Or perhaps there was a certain pride, even then, in the fact that Jesus had been a Jew, and therefore a reluctance to distance themselves entirely from one of the world's greatest religious thinkers, especially one so highly esteemed by their Christian neighbours. A more insightful explanation was offered by Sandmel, who observed that

A Jew versed in Scripture and in Talmud who enters into the pages of the Synoptic Gospels finds himself in familiar territory. He can be irked, annoyed, or aghast at the ferocity of the anti-Jewish sentiments, but he is nonetheless in a geography which does not seem strange to him... Such a Jewish person, for all that he would agree with Strauss that the Gospels are replete with legends and contradictions, would nevertheless hold to the opinion that Gospels and Talmud are similar weavings of similar threads, and such a person would say to a Bauer that no imagination could out of thin air create so authentically the religious scene and the flavour of Palestinian Judaism.<sup>67</sup>

Sandmel's sense of *déjà vu* was undoubtedly shared by other Jewish writers familiar with rabbinic writings; the Gospel evidence for the life and teaching of Jesus, however flawed, presented too Jewish a picture to be wholly rejected.

In fact, the significance of rabbinic literature for New Testament studies had long been recognised by Jewish scholars. Geiger had viewed it as more relevant than the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha or Hellenistic writings,<sup>68</sup> and Abrahams had explained that by its use "The real Jesus emerges to the clearer light of day".<sup>69</sup> Montefiore, like Abrahams, was concerned to demonstrate the proximity of rabbinic thought to Jesus' own. His *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (1930)<sup>70</sup> was a supplement to the *Synoptic Gospels* (second edition 1927) and aimed to correct some of the distortion contained in the extensive and influential *Kommentar* by Strack and Billerbeck.<sup>71</sup> While he recognised the achievement of their "magnificent collection", he was concerned to challenge their over-emphasis of Jesus' originality with respect to the Rabbis. Assisted by the rabbinic scholarship of Herbert Loewe, he went on to demonstrate that despite Jesus' apparent criticism of rabbinic legalism, Jesus actually stood closer to the Pharisees/Rabbis than Christian scholars were generally prepared to admit. Regarding their conceptions of salvation, for example, while Montefiore did not think that Jesus would have agreed with "the legalism of the Rabbis", yet "so far as God's grace and human effort and freedom of will and human weakness and human repentance and God's forgiveness are concerned, the Rabbis and Jesus were by no means poles apart".<sup>72</sup> Similarly, concerning their respective

views of non-Israelites, the differences had been over-emphasised in the past since the Rabbis were not *wholly* particularistic and Jesus was not *entirely* universal.<sup>73</sup> Montefiore also reiterated that in the light of the development of their respective theologies, Jesus' teaching could make no claim to religious superiority over the Rabbis'. Thus Jesus' attack on the Pharisees as presented in Matthew 23 was, in large measure, unwarranted and unfair.<sup>74</sup> As always with Montefiore, who "looked at both the Gospel and the Rabbinic material through the spectacles of Liberal Judaism",<sup>75</sup> there was a tension between approaching the material from a purely historically critical perspective, and allocating a value-judgement to it. Scholarship was only a tool and, even in this, one of his most technical and specialist works, it was of secondary importance; he was more concerned with the implications of the texts for later Jewish and Christian thought and the relevance of the material (as it stood now) for his own day. As he explained, "I take the Rabbinic literature as a whole, and I ask: What was its ethical and religious product?"<sup>76</sup>

Rabbinic knowledge was therefore undoubtedly useful in gaining understanding of the Gospels. The danger, of course, was that the sense of familiarity which it encouraged could lead to over-confidence in the notoriously complex world of New Testament studies. Many Jewish scholars well-versed in Judaica apparently believed that they could automatically assess the Gospels without reference to mainstream scholarship, with the result that their research, as Montefiore complained, was fractional and atomistic,<sup>77</sup> and that they often naïvely attributed to the Gospels a historical reliability that Christian scholars did not. One might have expected, for example, Geiger and Graetz to have taken on-board Strauss' *Life of Jesus* (1835), which had questioned the historical reliability of the Gospel texts, or Klausner to have taken seriously the scepticism of contemporary Christian researchers, especially Bultmann's Form-criticism.<sup>78</sup> But this was not the case, due to over-confidence in their own specialised knowledge and a suspicion of Christian bias in mainstream research.<sup>79</sup> Before the arrival of the 'Third Quest' scholars, Montefiore was the clearest exception to this general rule, consciously taking a position somewhere between German radicalism and British conservatism, and regarding the Gospel texts as reliable enough to make the reconstruction of the life of Jesus feasible.<sup>80</sup> In response to Jewish criticism, he admitted a certain reliance upon Christian scholarship but he always reserved the right to disagree with them and to correct them when he felt it necessary.<sup>81</sup>

In the various surveys, two criticisms in particular have been levelled at the Jewish

approach to the Gospel evidence. The first is that, in recent times, Jewish writers have swung too far in the opposite direction to the one just described, and have become over-critical in their assessment of the Gospel texts. Their *a priori* assumption that anything apparently non-Jewish in the Gospels must be a later (Christian) interpolation was, according to Hagner, to be blamed upon the overly ambitious reclamation of Jesus among modern Jewish scholars, especially those involved in the ‘Third Quest’. This was in contrast to the earlier way in which Jesus’ allegedly alien, non-Jewish teachings and actions had been routinely highlighted and, more often than not, taken severely to task by Jewish thinkers who generally accepted the historicity of the texts. As time went on, complained Hagner, more and more of Jesus’ teaching was designated as purely ‘Jewish’ (that is, unoriginal) and a portrait produced that increasingly contradicted the traditional Christian view. Such a reclamation had been possible only by being unfair to the Gospels.<sup>82</sup> “It is worth asking again”, he wrote, “how the evangelists can have been so reliable whenever they speak about Jesus as a Jew and yet so unreliable at every point when they describe him as something more.”<sup>83</sup> Accusations of this sort were not levelled at Montefiore, however, because his criticism of the texts did not prevent him from recognising Jesus’ ‘un-Jewish’ idiosyncrasies as genuine and, more significantly, as original, too.<sup>84</sup>

The second criticism, also expressed by Hagner, applies more comprehensively, and has been described by Jocz as “the preoccupation with the teaching of Jesus to the neglect of a closer study of his personality, its innermost motives and self-consciousness”.<sup>85</sup> The significance of this criticism becomes apparent after consideration of EP Sanders’ suggestion that Jesus will only be truly understood when a line of (causal) connection can be drawn between his teaching and activity, his death, and the rise of Christianity.<sup>86</sup> This is possible, he goes on, if (i) Jesus opposed the validity of the Mosaic code, was executed for this offence, and thus this teaching led to the break away of the Christian sect; or (ii) if Jesus believed himself to be the messiah, was executed for his revolutionary claim to be ‘King of the Jews’ by the Romans, and if his disciples, believing that they were now living in the days of the messiah, felt that the imperative to include ‘all the nations’ took priority over the Mosaic code, and therefore broke away as the Christian sect. As we shall see, Jewish scholars have almost unanimously rejected the first scenario. But if the second hypothesis is along the right lines, then Jocz and Hagner’s criticism of the Jewish Reclamation, that Jesus’ self-understanding had been overlooked in favour of his teachings, is more serious than at first appears, the implication being that Jewish writers had neglected to consider the very

crux of the matter.

In actual fact, while it would be fair to say that there has certainly been a bias towards Jesus' teachings as opposed to his self-identity, it would be inaccurate to claim that Jewish writers have ignored the issue completely. For example, Friedländer, Klausner, Zeitlin, Sandmel, Maccoby and Lapide are among those Jewish writers who were quite content to accept that Jesus had believed himself to be the messiah. The point is, however, that *they* did not regard him as the messiah, and it is this fact, perhaps, which really lies behind Hagner and Jocz's criticism.<sup>87</sup> In the case of Montefiore, it is surprising that he thought about the question of Jesus' self-perception to the extent he did, considering that he was primarily interested in Jesus for his ethical teachings. Jesus' emphasis on the Kingdom had led him to his conclusion that "The relation in which Jesus believed that he stood, or would stand, to the Kingdom was that of its Chief or head. The Chief of a kingdom is its king. And the king of the Kingdom of God was the Messiah."<sup>88</sup> Yet there was, in Montefiore's opinion, nothing so very unworthy of Jesus even if he did believe that he was destined to be the theocratic ruler and lord of the Jews in that messianic kingdom which was so soon to be ushered in by God, especially since he had played down the political aspects of what it meant to be the messiah, and had emphasised the servitude of the office.<sup>89</sup> He wrote that, like the Prophets before him, Jesus' teaching and bearing had suggested that to disbelieve his message was to disbelieve in God, but that Jesus had gone beyond even the Prophets' self-assurance when he had asked for renunciation or sacrifice "for my sake".<sup>90</sup> This was, for Montefiore, a new motive for action and sacrifice that has been of tremendous power and effect in the religious history of the world.<sup>91</sup> It was this "touch of personal authority" in Jesus' teachings, a sense in which there seemed to be "nothing between him and God", which set him apart.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, despite his consideration of the self-identity of Jesus and despite his readiness to recognise its uncommon qualities, Montefiore did not go as far as Hagner and Jocz would have wanted; in keeping with his fellow Jewish scholars, he consistently rejected Christian claims of Jesus' unique nature. Regarding Mark's Gospel, which he viewed as the most historically reliable, he wrote,

With the best will in the world, trying hard to peer through the mist and see the facts as they were, trying hard not to be prejudiced and prepossessed, I cannot see in the life of Jesus as recorded in Mark i-xiii anything about which to be lost in marvelling admiration or adoration. The character revealed, as far as *it is* revealed, appears undoubtedly strong and sweet, firm and tender, ardent and compassionate; but the evidence in Mark i-xiii for regarding Jesus as the most wonderful and perfect character which ever

existed seems to me to be lacking.<sup>93</sup>

Generally speaking, Jewish reclamations of Jesus have swung from a general acceptance of the historicity of the Gospels to an increasingly sceptical view of what can be known about Jesus' original teaching. To a degree, they have also allowed their preconceptions to determine their use of the written evidence by failing to consider more fully Jesus' self-identity. Montefiore was largely swayed by different forces, the forces of Christian scholarship, with the result that he was critical of the texts at a time when most of his fellow Jewish writers were not, and yet, in contrast to those who came after him, he attributed originality to Jesus' teachings and uniqueness to his self-perception. The reasons behind his unusual treatment of Jesus can also be explained, at least in part, by his utilisation of Jesus for his own purposes.

### **III – The Jewish Utilisation of Jesus**

#### *i – Jewish Views on the Originality of Jesus' Teaching*

The vast majority of Jews drawn to the study of Jesus have been Reform or Liberal, and there are doubtless many reasons for this. As we saw in chapter one, the tendency among reform minded Jews to move away from the idea of Judaism as a nation, and to view it rather as a religious fellowship, was very much related to the new emphasis on ethics as central to their religious message. In this context, Jesus and his ethical teaching appeared interesting and relevant. Also, for those who were critical of Orthodox Jewish ritual, Jesus represented the struggle of free spirituality against ceremonialism in an earlier era. Yet Jewish reclamations of Jesus were driven by more than simply the intellectual concern to recover an earlier Jewish ethical tradition, or the satisfaction of discovering an ancient champion of an ethically centred Judaism. Since Salvador, Graetz, and Geiger, a stock argument among Jewish writers had been that Jesus' ethical teaching had been wholly Jewish, of one sort or another, and had included nothing new or original. Even when approached polemically, as in Gerald Friedlander's *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (1911), there was a reluctance to deny the Jewishness of much of Jesus' teaching. Despite the fact that it was "of little practical value for everyday life," Friedlander was quick

to point out that “all the teaching in the Sermon [on the Mount]… is in harmony with the spirit of Judaism”.<sup>94</sup> And in his anti-Christian apology, *Wesen des Judentums* (1905), Baeck claimed that a full appreciation of the greatness of Jesus was only possible for a Jew, since “a man like him could have grown only in the soil of Judaism, only there and nowhere else”.<sup>95</sup> This way of confronting Christian claims (regarding Jesus and Judaism) by describing him as essentially Jewish, rather than essentially alien and heretical, was new. It can be explained, or at least partially explained, by the reaction to Christian critique and the underlying psychological need to justify Judaism in the eyes of the Western (Christian) world, a phenomenon discussed more fully in chapter two. If, as the Orthodox Paul Goodman put it, Jesus had “added no important original element to the religious and moral assets which had been accumulated by the Jewish prophets and sages”,<sup>96</sup> then what justification had Christians for condemning Jewish teaching as inferior to Jesus’ teaching? Maintaining Jesus’ Jewishness had become a way of justifying Judaism to Christians. This is supported by Schwartz’s observation that no non-western Jew has written extensively on Jesus,<sup>97</sup> since the concern to justify Judaism was of no importance, relatively speaking, to Jews outside the West.

Nevertheless, for Jews interested in studying Jesus – even for those who wanted to use Jesus in this particular way – it was difficult to ignore those aspects of his teaching and behaviour which had traditionally been regarded as ‘un-Jewish’. There was therefore something of a tension between the desire to hold up Jesus to justify Judaism to a surrounding Christian world, and the often acutely felt obligation to distance Judaism from certain elements of his thought.<sup>98</sup> For example, almost in spite of himself, Goodman had picked up on the idea of non-resistance as something that had no obvious parallel to “the teaching of the Jewish schools”.<sup>99</sup> Israel Abrahams had been keen to draw attention to the similarities between Jesus’ style of teaching and that of the Pharisees, including the use of parables and style of prayer,<sup>100</sup> yet he was also sensitive to certain nuanced differences, such as the greater inclination of Jesus to seek out sinners and the idea of forgiveness as presented in the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>101</sup> And, even today, the differences noted by Vermes, while also differences of emphasis rather than of content, included Jesus’ tendency to overemphasise the ethical as compared to the ritual and to underestimate those needs of society that are met by organised religion.<sup>102</sup> The tension was exacerbated by the very real risk of being perceived as overly sympathetic towards “that man” and thereby provoking a backlash from traditionalists who regarded anyone who was even faintly interested in Jesus as traitors to

Judaism, be they Liberal or Orthodox. It comes as no surprise to discover that Montefiore's positive assessment of Jesus was denounced for demonstrating "an anti-Jewish tendency"<sup>103</sup> and led to accusations of his being a crypto-Christian.<sup>104</sup> But even Klausner, the Zionist Orthodox Jew and disciple of Ahad Ha-Am, saw his *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".<sup>105</sup>

In distancing themselves from Jesus' distinctive thought, Jewish writers rarely, if ever, contemplated the idea that Jesus' distinctive or allegedly non-Jewish teachings might be beneficial (religious) contributions. Rather, they were viewed as mistakes which could be used as foils to demonstrate the superiority of the writer's own view of Judaism. In this sense, it is true to say, as Agus does, that for many Jewish scholars, Jesus was made to stand for whatever it was that the particular scholar repudiated and excoriated.<sup>106</sup> Very few Jews have focussed upon those elements of Jesus and his teachings which distinguished him from his contemporaries unless, for polemical reasons, they intended to criticise him and thus, by association, Christianity. Klausner, whose *Jesus of Nazareth* (1929) illustrates the background dynamics well, provides an interesting example. He certainly wrote admiringly of Jesus and, from a cursory reading, appeared to hold Jesus' originality in high regard, in sharp contrast with the majority of Jewish writers.

In [Jesus'] ethical code there is a sublimity, a distinctiveness and originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code; neither is there any parallel to the remarkable art of his parables. The shrewdness and sharpness of his proverbs and his forceful epigrams serve, in an exceptional degree, to make ethical ideas a popular possession. If ever the day should come and this ethical code be stripped of its wrappings of miracles and mysticism, the Book of the Ethics of Jesus will be one of the choicest treasures in the literature of Israel for all time.<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, Klausner's response to Jesus' originality was more complex than this vague eulogy indicates, and must be weighed against his belief that although Jesus had obviously not been a Christian during his life time, he had become one (or should be regarded as one), for his history and his teaching had severed him from Judaism.<sup>108</sup> When it came to concrete examples of Jesus' distinctive teaching, Klausner could not help viewing them as, ultimately, impractical. Thus Jesus' instruction to "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's" effectively undermined the authority of the civil authorities; his commands to "resist not evil", to "swear not at all" and to share all one's possessions with

the poor, were simply not practical in society; by forbidding divorce he did not solve family difficulties; and in his recommendation to be like “the lilies of the field which toil not” he revealed his lack of interest in economic and political achievements.<sup>109</sup> Klausner went on to explain Jesus’ failure in the eyes of Judaism in terms of his being *too* Jewish. But more to the point, he criticised the teachings as ‘un-Jewish’ in the light of his own Zionist, nationalistic view of Judaism.

In all this Jesus is the most Jewish of Jews, more Jewish than Simeon ben Shetah, more Jewish even than Hillel. Yet nothing is more dangerous to national Judaism than this *exaggerated* Judaism; it is the ruin of national culture, the national state, and national life... This teaching Jesus had imbibed from the breast of Prophetic and, to a certain extent, Pharisaic Judaism; yet it became, on one hand, the negation of everything that had vitalised Judaism; and, on the other hand, it brought Judaism to such an extreme that it became, in a sense, *non-Judaism*.<sup>110</sup>

In other words, Klausner’s criticism of Jesus’ distinctive teachings was rooted in his own deeply felt, essentially nationalistic view of Judaism. While for other writers, especially reform minded Jews, the nationalistic element was not as important, their criticisms, too, were shaped by their own particular views of Judaism.

To summarise: since the time of Salvador, it had not been uncommon for Jews (mainly among Reform and Liberal circles) to point to Jesus as exemplifying many of the best aspects of an ideal Judaism, so as to demonstrate that so-called Christian virtues were not foreign to modern Judaism. At the same time, while Jesus’ alleged differences with Judaism ceased to be as fiercely condemned as they had been in more ancient treatments, such differences continued to be used as foils by which to demonstrate the superiority of the writer’s own view of Judaism, as we saw with Klausner. One result of the enormous pressure upon Jewish writers to find the teachings of Jesus inferior to those of Judaism was that all too often, even when they agreed with Jesus’ teaching, the discussion degenerated into an apologetic argument of mere chronological priority (the implication being that whoever said it first was superior). Sandmel warned that the question of originality was all too often a “misguided one” for this very reason.<sup>111</sup>

Montefiore, too, pointed to those teachings that Jesus shared with Judaism as illustrative of its high development and sophistication. But when it came to questions of Jesus’ priority, he readily admitted that in many instances Jesus’ teachings had chronological

priority over those of the Rabbis. The issue was of little interest to him, though, as he explained in 'The Originality of Jesus' (1929),

For if the later rabbinic parallels are native developments... then the originality of Jesus, though not to be neglected, is yet, to my mind, a secondary, and comparatively unimportant, originality. A good deal, moreover, depends upon the question whether a doctrine is central and essential for Jesus, but unusual or exceptional for the Rabbis or in the Old Testament. If the latter, then a high degree of originality belongs to Jesus, even though one or two good parallels can be adduced.<sup>112</sup>

It was this higher kind of difference between Jesus' teaching and that of Jewish tradition which interested him most. In contrast to most of his fellow Jewish scholars, who used Jesus' perceived differences as foils for their own ideas of Judaism, Montefiore approached these very same differences in an extremely innovative way. He was not only prepared to accept the originality of some of Jesus' thought but also believed that Judaism could learn from it. In this context, it is important to understand that "originality" meant more to him than merely "fresh expression of universal truths" (that is, *Jewish* universal truths) as some have suggested.<sup>113</sup> In 'The Originality of Jesus' (1929), Montefiore defined his use of the term 'original' as *relative*, that is, original in comparison with the ideals and the teaching of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries. He readily admitted that he did not mean absolute originality,<sup>114</sup> and he also denied that by 'originality' he automatically implied excellence.<sup>115</sup> Even so, Jesus' teachings were often, for Montefiore, "off the main Jewish line of development". Pursuing, as he was, a radical reform of Judaism, he could not help but hold Jesus in high regard when he saw many of his own anti-Orthodox concerns mirrored in the Gospel narratives. Almost unconsciously, he used Jesus – and Jesus' 'un-Jewish' idiosyncrasies – as a vehicle for expressing his own vision of Judaism. This was possible for Montefiore in a way that it did not seem to be for other Jewish thinkers, even other reformers, primarily because of his particular background which had freed him of the traditional anti-Christian bias and the related fear of betraying Judaism by studying Jesus.<sup>116</sup> Montefiore's peculiar, highly personalised utilisation of Jesus, not only to defend Judaism against Christianity but also as a means by which to set out and distance his own vision of Judaism from either Reform or Orthodoxy, will now be examined in more detail.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Liberal Judaism had sought to address the question of how modern Judaism related to Christianity (or, at least, to various aspects of Christianity). Montefiore used his studies of Jesus as opportunities to explore this relationship. In particular, he was concerned to have Christians take Jewish thought seriously. To encourage this, he made a special effort to project an aura of objectivity around his own work, including the way he approached Jesus’ teachings. In ‘The Synoptic Gospels and the Jewish Consciousness’ (1905), for example, he outlined some common Jewish criticisms of Gospel teaching. Much of the teaching, he explained to his Christian readers, was regarded by Jews as “impractical and overstrained” and the ideals espoused as too high and incapable of realisation. The Gospels tended to make a man “take a too selfish interest in the saving of his own soul” and to emphasise too ascetic a morality. The general Jewish view of Jesus’ teaching, he observed, was that it was “not fully suited to a society which expects to continue”.<sup>117</sup> However, in sharp contrast to “ordinary and average Judaism”, Montefiore was careful to make it clear that *he* started with the hypothesis that the Synoptic Gospels contained teaching that was original, new and true.<sup>118</sup> This very deliberate distancing of himself from negative Jewish opinion came to characterise the preambles of many of his Gospel studies and reflected his concern to avoid needlessly antagonising his Christian readers. He was also quick to point out that none of the “original excellencies of the Synoptics”, meaning those teachings of lasting religious value, were inconsistent with “prophetic and liberal Judaism”.<sup>119</sup>

At the same time as demonstrating his detachment from Jewish bias, Montefiore wanted to challenge the mind-set of those who sought to prove the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Studies on Jesus were, it seemed, especially appropriate opportunities. In a lecture he gave to an audience in Manchester composed of the Students’ Christian Union and the Jewish Students Union, entitled ‘The Religious Teaching of the Synoptic Gospels in its Relation to Judaism’ (1922), he described the negative idea of Judaism in the mind of the “average Christian” as “a rather disagreeable sort of religion, chiefly made up of antitheses and contradictions to the religious teachings of Jesus”.<sup>120</sup> Having indicated how simplistic a view this was, he went on to contrast Christian claims of a higher teaching in the Gospels with the pragmatism of the rabbinical literature, observing,

The ethical teaching of the Synoptic Gospels is eager, paradoxical, high-strung; the ethical teaching of the Rabbis is pure and good, but, on the whole, more pedestrian, and, in some respects, more suited to ordinary folk and every day.<sup>121</sup>

Such arguments, by which he hoped to redress the damage done by Christian ignorance, are common in his articles about Jesus, and by no means reflect an unusual point of view for a Reform or Liberal Jew. What is more interesting is that such articles were counter-balanced by much more substantial writings which approached the Gospels for a quite different reason, that is, for what the teachings of Jesus had to offer Judaism.

*The Synoptic Gospels* (1909) set the tone for Montefiore's approach to Jesus. While seeking to reconcile the views of Jewish and Christian scholars (the former tended to regard all New Testament material as tainted by a sectarian agenda while the latter felt exactly the same about the rabbinic literature), it was aimed primarily at a Jewish audience. Montefiore's guiding principle was to focus attention upon those Gospel passages that he believed had religious value or interest for modern Jews.<sup>122</sup> In practice, he explained, this interest lay in the teachings ascribed to Jesus, rather than in the personality or the life, despite the fact that the Gospels had been produced for entirely the reverse reasons.<sup>123</sup> He therefore ignored Christian theological issues, such as the meaning of the resurrection or the divinity of Jesus, in favour of his own Liberal Jewish concerns, such as Jesus' view of the Law or of Jewish nationalist hopes.<sup>124</sup> This had certain consequences for his methodology.

Whether estimating the religious value of 'Hellenistic thought', or defending 'Rabbinic thought' against Christian criticism, Montefiore had always tended to treat a tradition in its entirety, preferring to speak of its underlying spirit than to focus upon distracting details. He followed a similar approach with regard to Jesus' teachings. While his analysis of Gospel text was by no means uncritical or unsophisticated, his *use* of it was pastoral. The very reason he had approached it in the first place was because he saw it as a repository of ethical teachings. One consequence of this approach was that he tended to treat the texts as wholes. In *The Religious Teaching of Jesus* (1910), he explained,

The greatness of the teachings do not depend so much upon the details of the particular things said as upon the manner in which they are said, and still more upon their effects as a whole... The beauty, the distinction, in a word, the genius of the form, must surely be taken into account as well as the excellence of the matter.<sup>125</sup>

With regard to the nature of God and his relations to mankind, Jesus' original contribution was "not only to be found in its separate sentences and teachings, but in its general character, its spirit, its atmosphere".<sup>126</sup> For the rabbis, for example, the idea of "fatherhood" had been largely applied to God's relationship to Israel, but for Jesus, God was his father and the father of all those around him, in virtue of a common humanity in which "the element of race and nationality seemed to fade away". Montefiore felt that the intensity of the feeling in Jesus' everyday usage was of a different order. While it was not an entirely new doctrine, its apparent freshness stemmed from the high degree of purity, warmth and concentration with which it was presented.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, while he suspected that there was nothing novel or original about Jesus' philosophical understanding of God, Montefiore accepted that Jesus seemed to have felt God's nearness "with a vivid intensity unsurpassed by any man".<sup>128</sup> Central to understanding his interest in Jesus was Montefiore's admiration of the tone and quality of the "spirit" of Jesus' thought. It was precisely this atmosphere of intense, all embracing, individualised religion that Montefiore believed lay at the heart of Judaism and which he wished to inculcate among his followers. Jesus' teaching was one more 'devotional aid' which could be used to inspire the Liberal Jewish movement, and which, he hoped, would eventually work its way through to revitalise Judaism as a whole.

In emphasising Jesus' uniqueness, Montefiore felt that part of "the distinction and the original greatness of the teacher of Nazareth" had been his active desire to redeem and convert marginalised groups in society, including women and 'sinners'.<sup>129</sup> Jesus had been not only "a collective prophet" but also "the individualist prophet – the seeker of souls". This seeking out of the sinner with Jesus' methods and intensity was, in Montefiore's opinion, something new in the religious history of Israel, especially when it was connected to the idea of redemption.<sup>130</sup> One of the reasons why he was attracted to this aspect of Jesus' ministry was that it echoed his own strong desire to reach out and rescue the Jewish masses disenchanted by traditional Judaism – one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Liberal Jewish movement. It also paralleled his own social concerns, as reflected in the types of charitable work with which he was associated, including the Jewish Association for the Protection of Women and Children and Basil Henrques' social-educational programme for Jewish boys in the East End of London.

In line with the Liberal trend to 'spiritualise' Judaism, Montefiore had worked hard

to distance Judaism from the ritualised, legalistic religion of Christian critique. Unconcerned about questions of priority, he identified with those aspects of Jesus' teaching which helped to accomplish this. With regard to God's grace and the concept of His rewards as gifts, he was inclined to view Jesus' attitude that man has no claim upon God as "comparatively new and original", in spite of the parallels that existed in the rabbinic literature.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, although teachings on self-denial had not been unknown before Jesus' time, Montefiore felt that the vivid expression of the ideal in the Gospels, together with its teaching regarding the renunciation and abandonment of the earthly for the heavenly, of this world for the next, were "surely new and original contributions to the history of religion and morality".<sup>132</sup> Regarding what he described as "the heroic element in the paradoxes of the sermon on the mount", Montefiore freely admitted that they could never be the laws of a state. Nevertheless, they remained "the principles of the hero, which heroes every now and then can put in practice, and which, as ideals and as spirit, are still fresh and valid and true".<sup>133</sup> It was exactly this sort of romantic, idealist comment that provoked men like Ahad Ha-Am to question the authenticity of Montefiore's Jewishness. And in truth, as we saw in chapter one, Montefiore's championing of such stoic ideals as renouncement and self-denial had been more due to the influence of nineteenth-century hellenised or anglicanised Christianity than they had been due to the influence of Jewish thought or even that of the first-century Gospel texts.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, it was his adoption of apparently non-Jewish value-judgements and attitudes that explains his readiness (in contrast to many of his co-religionists) to attribute such teachings to Jesus as "new and original" and to regard them as worthy of emulation rather than of disparagement.

Overall, it is not difficult to see what drew Montefiore to Jesus. Walter Jacob was not too far off the mark when he suggested that the Jesus portrayed in *The Synoptic Gospels* and in *The Religious Teaching of Jesus* was "an idealised Montefiore in miniature".<sup>135</sup> For Montefiore, as for many of the other Jewish writers, most of Jesus' teaching appeared to be rooted well within the confines of first-century Jewish thought.<sup>136</sup> But when Jesus' teachings appeared to stray outside these perimeters, Montefiore was often sympathetic, openly expressing his support, because he felt a sort of kinship and like-mindedness. It was easy for him to eulogise the "heroic element," the "largeness of views," and the "grand simplicity" which he felt characterised Jesus' ministry,<sup>137</sup> because, not to put too fine a point upon it, he saw these very same attributes as characteristic of his own Liberal Jewish struggle. Somewhat paradoxically, praising Jesus' allegedly 'un-Jewish' teachings thus gave him the

opportunity to justify similar actions and beliefs of his own to his Jewish critics. Understanding this use of Jesus also helps explain Montefiore's differences with regard to his particular categorisation of Jesus, his view of Jesus' nationalism, and his understanding of Jesus' relationship to the Law, as we shall now see.

### ***iii – Jewish Categorisations of Jesus***

For Montefiore, Jesus was primarily a Prophet. In *The Religious Teaching of Jesus* (1910), he argued that Jesus' preaching had been prophetic in its denouncing of sin and oppression, and also in its self-assurance of his own divine inspiration.<sup>138</sup> His speeches had echoed the prophets in the clarity of his vision and the intensity of his feeling, and were also notable for their power and hyperbolic exaggeration. Moreover, “The inwardness of Jesus, the intense spirituality of his teaching show his connection and kinship with the Prophets.”<sup>139</sup> Most of all, however, it was Jesus' emphasis upon ethics which demonstrated to Montefiore his prophetic credentials. This is not to say that he regarded Jesus as *merely* a prophet. In ‘The Originality of Jesus’ (1929), Montefiore suggested that one of the most interesting things about Jesus had to do with the *sort* of prophet he had been. He regarded it as a remarkable and unique achievement for Jesus to have been “a prophet of the eighth-century BC type” in the first-century AD, that is, at a time when the Law and the sacred canon of scripture were well established.<sup>140</sup> After all, Montefiore himself appreciated the difficulties of emphasising spirit over law in a tradition-bound context, and he marvelled that “the conception of the Law and of scripture, to which the attitude of Jesus points forward, was not theoretically reached until modern times”.<sup>141</sup>

In the second chapter of *The Old Testament and After* (1923), Montefiore focussed upon ‘advances’ and ‘un-Jewish’ developments in Jesus thought. He skimmed over questions about Jesus’ faith and his trust in God (which he considered essentially Jewish),<sup>142</sup> and concentrated instead upon what he described as “the most contentious portion of the teaching”, his ethics. There were four characteristics of the teaching which, he felt, distinguished it from that of the contemporary religious authorities. Firstly, it was heroic and idealistic in what it demanded of a man. Secondly, it was pro-active, in that a man was not merely to wait on circumstances. Thirdly, it was paradoxically both altruistic (because one was to put the other first) and self-regarding (because of the reward of everlasting life). And

fourthly, it contained the germ of a double ethic, in that there seemed to be a lower demand for some and a higher demand for others. Montefiore argued that while the fourth characteristic was admittedly “somewhat off the line of Jewish development”, the first three, or at least their beginnings, could be traced back to the Prophets.<sup>143</sup> He also felt that Jesus’ belief in “the approaching end” had produced the ascetic element in his teaching, his bias against wealth, and the sharp distinction between the service of God and the service of mammon. These, too, were reminiscent of the prophetic teaching, and he wondered if this aspect of Jesus’ thought explained some of the differences between the New Testament and the rabbinic literature.<sup>144</sup>

Almost without exception, Jewish writers have recognised a prophetic side to Jesus, and some have also regarded it as the key to understanding Jesus. Michael Friedländer believed like Montefiore that Jesus had perfected the Prophet’s universalist teachings by spiritualising the people’s “national limitations and political hopes”, under the influence of Hellenistic thought.<sup>145</sup> And Hyam Maccoby argued that as Jesus “became a Prophet”, his teachings developed a “much more political, activist aspect” which ultimately led to his death as a rebel against Rome.<sup>146</sup> Even so, in their attempts to categorise Jesus in terms of the Judaism of his day, Jewish writers have tended to emphasise other, non-prophetic aspects of his life and teaching.

The idea of Jesus as a kind of Pharisaic Rabbi has been the most popular view. While Joseph Jacobs compared Jesus favourably to the Prophets,<sup>147</sup> he focussed more upon the similarity of Jesus’ teachings to Hillel’s, and consequentially regarded him as a rabbi.<sup>148</sup> Geiger described Jesus simply as a Pharisee “with Galilean colouring,”<sup>149</sup> and Buber took Jesus’ Pharisaism quite for granted.<sup>150</sup> Ben-Chorin suggested that only the *Am Ha-Aretz* or common-folk had thought of “rabbi” Jesus as a prophet,<sup>151</sup> and Flusser also viewed Jesus as a sort of proto-rabbi, commenting, “Although not really a Pharisee himself, [Jesus] was closest to the Pharisees of the school of Hillel.”<sup>152</sup> Maccoby argued forcibly that Jesus’ teachings showed an unmistakable affinity to Pharisaism, and especially to the teachings of Hillel,<sup>153</sup> as did Paul Winter who insisted that “in historical reality, Jesus was a Pharisee”.<sup>154</sup> Lapide’s article ‘Two Famous Rabbis’ (1976) is one of the most recent assessments of Jesus as, essentially, a rabbinic teacher.<sup>155</sup>

There have been alternatives to ‘Jesus the Prophet’ and ‘Jesus the Pharisee-Rabbi’.

Salvador argued that Jesus should not be regarded as a Pharisee in spite of the fact that many of his teachings could be found in the contemporary literature, since he had over-emphasised the future life and had rejected the hedge around the Law, in contrast to the Pharisees who had concentrated upon the regulation of all aspects of this earthly life (moral, social and ceremonial) in order to preserve Israel. For Salvador, the key to understanding Jesus lay in his self-belief that he was the messiah and in his eschatological preaching.<sup>156</sup> Graetz considered Jesus' teaching reminiscent of Rabbi Hillel's, but saw far greater parallels with the Essenes' renunciation of this world and had categorised Jesus accordingly.<sup>157</sup> Klausner did not consider Jesus a prophet since he had not shared the "wide political perspective of the Prophets, nor their gift of divine consolation to the nation".<sup>158</sup> And although Jesus' teachings had been entirely rabbinic in tone, he had set himself apart from the Pharisees by emphasising *haggada* to the exclusion of *halakhah* and by investing himself with an authority that they would dare not have claimed for themselves.<sup>159</sup> Thus, for Klausner, Jesus was one of the "many varieties of the mystic, visionary type – 'quietistic Pharisees', Essenes and the like".<sup>160</sup> Similarly, while noting the closeness of Jesus' teaching to that of the Pharisees, Vermes maintained that "It would be a gross over-statement to portray him as a Pharisee himself."<sup>161</sup> Nor was he satisfied with Montefiore's idea of prophethood, even though he found Jesus' preaching of *teshuva* or repentance reminiscent of "holy men" or prophets of earlier times. Vermes' conclusion was that the best description of Jesus was as a Galilean *hasid* or holy man.<sup>162</sup> For others, the problem of categorising Jesus was impossible. Buber's high regard for the originality of Jesus convinced him that "a large place in the faith history of Israel belongs to him, [but] that this place can be described by none of the customary categories".<sup>163</sup> And Sandmel agreed, although for a different reason. "I simply do not know enough about him to have an opinion," he explained, "and I simply do not have enough to set him, as it were, in some one single category."<sup>164</sup>

So what was it about Montefiore that caused him to focus almost exclusively upon the prophetic side of Jesus? As we saw in chapter one, one of the ways by which Montefiore had distinguished his own Liberal Judaism from Orthodox Judaism had been to contrast the former's prophecy-orientated position with the latter's Law-orientated one. To his mind, the writings of the Hebrew prophets lay at the root of true Judaism as the revealers of ethical-monothelism, and he was keen to foster the impression that Liberal Jews were simply following in their footsteps. Since Liberal Judaism derived so much from the prophets, he argued, it should come as no surprise that it could find much to admire and use in Jesus, the

ethical teacher.<sup>165</sup> Studying the Gospels thus gave him a useful opportunity for propounding the Liberal Jewish cause, albeit indirectly.

#### ***iv – Jewish Views of Jesus and Nationalism***

Another example of what might be described as a manipulative use of Jesus can be seen in the way Montefiore promoted his anti-nationalist view of Judaism. Generally speaking, Jewish writers did not attach universalist sentiments to Jesus to anywhere near the same extent as they did for, say, the apostle Paul. And when they did consider the issue, there was no consensus of opinion. Joseph Jacobs wrote that Jesus had indicated his lack of care for Jewish nationalist hopes by treating his listeners “not as Jews but as men”.<sup>166</sup> Klausner had also recognised a lack of political-national interest in Jesus, although he did not share the positive value-judgement of it. Despite the fact that Klausner regarded Jesus as “undoubtedly a ‘nationalist’ Jew by instinct”,<sup>167</sup> as we have seen he differentiated Jesus from the Prophets for his lack of political perception, and from the Pharisees for undermining their efforts to strengthen the national existence.<sup>168</sup> As a fervent Zionist himself, Klausner went on to criticise Jesus for the way in which he “came and thrust aside all the requirements of the national life... [and] ignored them completely”.<sup>169</sup> Yet there were Jewish scholars who took a quite opposite view. Schoeps, for example, regarded Jesus in essentially nationalistic terms.<sup>170</sup> He argued that, among other things, Jesus had preached almost exclusively to Jews, that even when he had dealt with individual Gentiles he had emphasised his mission to the House of Israel, and that he had always remained within the borders of Palestine.<sup>171</sup> Vermes, too, was sensitive to Jesus’ “share of the notorious Galilean chauvinism” evident in various “xenophobic” statements attributed to him.<sup>172</sup> But Vermes, like the majority of Jewish writers, did not tend to define Jesus in such terms.

Montefiore, on the other hand, *did* define Jesus in terms of nationalism (or rather, anti-nationalism). As we saw in chapter one, vehement anti-nationalism was one of the most important characteristics of Montefiore’s thought in general, and it can be regarded as an important factor in understanding his attraction to Jesus (and, even more, to the apostle Paul). In *The Religious Teaching of Jesus* (1910) he reacted strongly to those who claimed for Jesus a nationalistic understanding of Judaism, describing the idea of Jesus as a purely political messiah as nothing less than “a caricature”. He argued that such a view over-

emphasised the Jewish hopes for outward prosperity, the World Empire, the warrior-king, and the vassalage of the nations, at the expense of the equally Jewish hopes for the righteous ruler, the righteous judge, peace, goodness, the knowledge of God, and the conversion of the heathen to the true religion. “It is an unattractive picture”, he wrote, “and can be shown to have been alien to the character and convictions of Jesus.”<sup>173</sup> As a successor of the Prophets, Jesus had never considered race as a protection against sin but had been “against this false and irreligious confidence, which could so easily lead to careless living and odious sins, far more than against any theoretic particularism”.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, there was good evidence to suggest that, like the prophets before him, Jesus had imagined that Gentile believers in the Kingdom would take up the places of sinful Jews.<sup>175</sup> Montefiore was even prepared to suggest that Jesus’ universalism had been his most important legacy to the world. In ‘The Significance of Jesus for his own Age’ (1912), he addressed himself to the question of what factors lay behind the “gigantic results” of Christianity. These included the manner and occasion of Jesus’ death, the widespread belief in his resurrection, the life and teaching of Paul, and the influence of non-Jewish doctrines and cravings.<sup>176</sup> Yet these four causes did not adequately explain the world-wide phenomenon of Christianity for Montefiore. Something else was required, and this something else was best understood as the success of Jesus in bringing about the diffusion and universalism of some of the fundamental tenets of Judaism.<sup>177</sup> (Once again Montefiore was concerned to demonstrate his objectivity by describing this as an “unusual” statement for a Jew to make, since it was commonly understood that Jesus’ teachings had been anti-Jewish).<sup>178</sup> This “diffusion of Judaism” into the Gentile world was, self-evidently, of far greater significance for those outside Judaism than for those within, but this did not make it any less Jewish a phenomenon. As Montefiore saw it, a Judaism which had re-appropriated this fundamentally Jewish teaching could only prosper. This, as we saw in previous chapters, was an important element of the Liberal Jewish agenda. Reinforced by the Liberal Anglican universalist view of Jesus with which he had become so familiar, Montefiore thus used Jesus to forward his own universalist message.

#### **v – Jewish Views of Jesus and the Law**

A final example of Montefiore’s utilisation of Jesus can be found in his treatment of Jesus’ attitude towards the Law. Despite the complexity and ambiguity of the Gospel evidence on this issue, one of the most constant features of Jewish studies of Jesus has been

the assertion of his faithfulness to Torah. This was, of course, one way of using Jesus to nullify Christian critique against Judaism. Geiger's argument that Jesus had basically affirmed the eternal validity of the Law although he had not always been entirely consistent, was specifically aimed at demonstrating that Jesus had had nothing to do with the rise of Christianity (which was understood at the time to have emerged as a result of the abrogation of the Law).<sup>179</sup> Klausner was emphatic that Jesus had never dreamed of annulling the Law or of setting up a new Law of his own.<sup>180</sup> Sandmel had viewed Jesus' controversies as differences with his fellow Jews rather than with his inherited Judaism,<sup>181</sup> and Vermes had similarly argued that Jesus had never set himself in opposition to the Torah in principle, nor even in any important particular.<sup>182</sup> (Both Sandmel and Vermes admitted a possible exception with regard to the food laws). Even when it was recognised that Jesus' interests had veered towards *haggada* rather than *halakhah* and that he had emphasised the ethical rather than the legal aspects of life, modern Jewish thinkers like Flusser have steadfastly maintained his fundamental orthopraxy. Some writers went even further, suggesting that Jesus had been *too* rigorous in his support of the Law. Solomon Zeitlin complained that "Jesus, an ethical teacher, was so concerned to reach a Utopian society that, disregarding man's frailty, he could not tolerate a person's ever transgressing God's laws."<sup>183</sup> And Sandmel commented that, in the context of divorce, Jesus had been more rigorous than Moses.<sup>184</sup>

To a certain extent, Montefiore toed the Jewish line with respect to Jesus and his attitude to the Law. For example, he voiced his doubts whether, except in cases of stress and conflict, Jesus had ever intended to put his own teaching in direct contrast with, or substitution for, either "the teachings of those around him, or the teaching of the Law".<sup>185</sup> And, in common with other Jewish writers, Montefiore used his study of Jesus' view of the Law to discredit Christian criticisms of Jewish legalism. "All that I beg of you to remember", Montefiore wrote in a chapter dedicated to the subject, "is that you can have (and still do have in many Jewish circles) a combination of the purest and most saintly piety with the most careful and minute observance of every detail of the ceremonial law".<sup>186</sup> While he was quite prepared to admit that the traditional Jewish emphasis upon legalism had, on occasion, led to abuses of the system, he was also quick to decry the picture of the Pharisees in the Gospels as "a *ludicrous* caricature of the average Pharisee, a *monstrous* caricature of the Pharisaic ideal".<sup>187</sup>

Where Montefiore was prepared to go further than other Jewish writers was to accept that Jesus' disgust with certain individuals and with those results of the system which struck him as wrong and improper, had led him to a half-unconscious attack, or implied attack, upon the system itself.<sup>188</sup> This view has been criticised. In his 'Prolegomenon' to the 1968 reprint of *The Synoptic Gospels*, Lou Silberman attacked Montefiore for not being able to make up his mind regarding Jesus' approach to the Law. He had difficulty in reconciling Montefiore's statement concerning the dietary laws: "It may indeed be argued that... Jesus virtually abrogates Pentateuchal Law", with what he had written a little later: "It cannot be assumed offhand that Jesus himself transgressed the laws."<sup>189</sup> Montefiore's idea that "[Jesus'] practice may not have squared with his theory" was, in Silberman's opinion, "a way of having it both ways at once".<sup>190</sup> So Montefiore is criticised, oddly enough, for suggesting that Jesus' view of the Law was inconsistent. But the idea that Jesus had abrogated the Law in principle without intending to do so was later championed by Klausner who argued that while Jesus had not actually set aside the ceremonial laws, he had nevertheless so devalued them that it was later possible for Paul, the originator of Christianity, to break away from Judaism. Sensitive to nuance, he wrote,

*Ex nihilo nihil fit*: had not Jesus' teaching contained a kernel of opposition to Judaism, Paul could never in the name of Jesus have set aside the ceremonial laws, and broken through the barriers of national Judaism. There can be no doubt that in Jesus Paul found justifying support.<sup>191</sup>

Where Montefiore differed from Klausner was that he could not help projecting onto Jesus some of his own liberal musings and thus a sense of principle and intention. As Montefiore went on to elucidate in *The Religious Teaching of Jesus* (1910), while Jesus had never disputed theoretically the belief that the Law was "divine", there had been for the teacher of Nazareth "something still more divine – the inspiration of his thoughts and words as, in the stress and strain of the moment, the Divine Spirit seemed to suggest them to his mind".<sup>192</sup> He found evidence for this in several of Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees. For example, on the question of rabbinical regulations regarding the washing of hands Montefiore understood Jesus to have argued that 'things' could not defile 'persons' and that one's spiritual personality could only be spiritually defiled. "Logically and consistently, the right was on the side of the Rabbis", he admitted, "[but] universally, ultimately, and religiously, the right was on the side of Jesus."<sup>193</sup> It goes without saying that such an assessment was not common among Jewish writers. Montefiore took a similarly idealist

approach to Jesus' teaching on divorce.

From one point of view the Rabbis were right and Jesus was wrong, but... *from another and higher point of view Jesus was more right...* the Mosaic law of divorce was really a limitation, if not a concession... the Law was in considerable portions of it, a sort of compromise with old, popular customs of heathen origin.<sup>194</sup> (Italics mine).

With regard to the Sabbath controversies, Jesus appeared to Montefiore to be fighting for a principle which he could not quite formulate – a principle which Montefiore, the Liberal Jew, found no difficulty in expressing: Jesus had meant either that ritual enactments should never be performed at the cost of putting aside deeds of love, or, perhaps, that the Sabbath rest must be interpreted by its spirit and by the higher law of righteousness and compassion.<sup>195</sup> In language strikingly similar to that with which he himself attacked the literalism of Orthodox Judaism, Montefiore maintained,

Jesus would have upheld, or rather would not have touched, the validity of the *written* Pentateuchal law; what he would have attacked was the interpretation put upon the Law of God by human commentators and casuists.<sup>196</sup>

Significantly, Montefiore justified Jesus' somewhat strained relationship with the Law by claiming that it was a result of his having preached the Prophets' message under conditions which had not existed in earlier times. "In the face of the Law which makes no clear distinction between morality and ceremonialism, but demands them both with equal insistence and equal authority," he asked, "how could a new teacher enunciate afresh the doctrines of the Prophets, in direct application to the conditions and life of his time, without coming at least near to a conflict with the letter of the Law?"<sup>197</sup> This was revealing because it echoed the argument which he had used to justify the need for a Liberal Jewish movement: that the changing circumstances of the modern, progressive world necessitated new expressions of the old ethical, monotheistic teachings. Once again, Montefiore's presentation of his own Liberal Jewish views was facilitated by his analysis of what he regarded as Jesus' improvements upon the Judaic system. Inevitably, by appearing to side with Jesus against the Rabbis in this way, Montefiore left himself open to charges of betraying Judaism.

## IV – Conclusion

Commenting on the *Synoptic Gospels*, Klausner accused Montefiore of having attempted to demonstrate “that the Gospels are generally superior to the Talmud and are Hebrew works which should be acceptable to Jews”.<sup>198</sup> While this was, as Sandmel put it, a twisted summary of Montefiore,<sup>199</sup> it has very often been the common view among Jewish critics. There was certainly something in the attitude of Montefiore’s writing that led men like Michael Friedlander to attack him for his “anti-Jewish tendency”, and Ahad Ha-Am to condemn him for being crypto-Christian. There was also puzzlement among Christians as to why he had not converted. ‘What Jews think about Jesus’ (1935), written three years before his death, was Montefiore’s last formal attempt to re-clarify and defend his own Liberal Jewish position regarding Jesus and to distance it from the opinions of Christian orthodoxy and Unitarianism. He began by demonstrating the divergence of opinion among those who held “high views” of Jesus. Traditional Christianity, he argued, had not drawn much of a contrast between the Old and New Testaments with the result that less stress had been placed upon the human perfections of Christ. The main emphases had been on Jesus’ atoning death, his miraculous resurrection and his work of abiding redemption.<sup>200</sup> In contrast, as he understood them, modern Unitarians and Liberals claimed that while all men were created in the image of God, yet in Jesus God was so perfectly and fully revealed that he was to be regarded as unique; as Montefiore put it, “In him a difference in quality or degree becomes a difference in kind, and so in him we may see God incarnate.”<sup>201</sup> He concluded that,

The less strictly orthodox Christians seem to be, the less the sheer divinity of Jesus seems to be stressed, the more the emphasis seems to be laid upon the perfection of the life, the character and the teaching.<sup>202</sup>

Montefiore then went on to explain why he, as a Jew, rejected such “high views” of Jesus. Firstly, Judaism was not obsolete but a legitimate and fully functioning religion which did not, by implication, need or require a morally perfect Jesus. Secondly, from the Gospel evidence it was quite possible to question the superlative greatness and originality of Jesus’ teaching. Thirdly, it was also possible to question the unique perfection and beauty of his character and life.<sup>203</sup> With these three rebuttals, Montefiore firmly reiterated his position once again. Years of delicately phrased, well honed analysis had coalesced into two distinct lines of argument. From a historical perspective, he insisted,

I infer a fine, a very fine, character, unlike the teachers of his own age, a sort of eighth-century prophet born out of season, a combination of Amos and Hosea. Jesus is for me *one* of the greatest and most original of our Jewish prophets and teachers, but I should hesitate to say that he was *more* original than any of them.<sup>204</sup>

From a philosophical perspective, and even more to the point, Montefiore maintained that he could not follow those liberal Christians for whom “the real life and ideal life [of Jesus] had become fused into one”. This idealisation which included within it all perfection was no more possible for Jesus, he wrote, than it was for Moses or Jeremiah or Rabbi Akiba.<sup>205</sup>

Somewhat naïvely and in spite of the criticism he had received over the years for harvesting the ethical teachings of Jesus for the benefit of Judaism, Montefiore had always hoped and argued that his high regard for Jesus should not be misinterpreted as making him any less a Jew (or any more a Christian). But his articles, which were generally aimed at a Christian audience and which were concerned to justify (Liberal) Jewish thought, by no means counter-balanced the unsettling effect of his books, which tended to be written primarily for a Jewish audience and in which he had consistently argued the reasonableness of utilising aspects of New Testament teaching. This interest in and dependence upon Jesus was out of all proportion in Jewish eyes. Even if, looking back with hindsight, one agrees with Sandmel who wrote, “I see clearly that, where he admired a Christian matter more than a Jewish, this is in no way a conflict with his unflagging Jewish loyalty”,<sup>206</sup> the question remains: Why did the leader of British Liberal Judaism choose to use his studies of *Jesus*, of all people, to express his own religious views? What was it about his understanding of Judaism that allowed him to see the central figure of the Gospel narratives as an exemplar?

For those Jewish writers such as Klausner who can be regarded as part of the modern trend to collect and treasure the spiritual creations of Jewry (such as Hasidism), the study of Jesus was a rescue attempt from the hands of Christendom of a figure whom Jews can claim to be, historically and humanly, their own.<sup>207</sup> For reform minded Jews, Jesus’ teachings could be used as support against Christian critique. For those (in more recent times) interested in Jewish-Christian dialogue, the study of Jesus encouraged amenable understanding. These motives are undoubtedly applicable to Montefiore. But, as we have seen, Jesus was more immediately relevant to Montefiore in that he offered an opportunity to

represent and express the teachings of Liberal Judaism; it is only a slight exaggeration to claim that he regarded Jesus as a member of the Liberal wing of the Jewish tradition.<sup>208</sup> In contrast to those who had simply stressed Jesus' Jewishness whilst decrying the traditional Christian view of Christ, Montefiore had been drawn to Jesus for his *differences* with the Judaism of his day and because he had seen so much of himself in the hero of the Gospels: a Prophet in the Age of Law and a reformer who had striven to free Judaism from the constraints of orthodoxy.<sup>209</sup>

Schechter's claim that Montefiore's teaching, in general, was not so much Liberal Judaism as Liberal Christianity<sup>210</sup> is applicable to his treatment of Jesus, in particular. As we saw in chapter two, his brand of Liberal Judaism can, from a certain point of view, be regarded as the Jewish counterpart of Liberal Christianity, having appropriated many of its value-judgements and interests. What was still missing was a paragon of all that was good – or, rather, all that was good *in Liberal Judaism*. A case can be made, then, that Montefiore's treatment of Jesus is best explained in terms of this perceived lack, and that his use of Jesus should be understood as an unconscious appropriation of a Liberal Christian ideal. In his grand view of religion, Montefiore's interpretation of Jesus as an exemplar of true Judaism and Jewish ethics made him a legitimate source of inspiration for the Jewish people.

## Chapter Four

### Montefiore in the Context of Jewish Approaches to the Apostle Paul

#### **I – Introduction. Jewish Approaches to the Apostle Paul**

The Apostle Paul represents an enigma for Judaism. A man who emphasised his Jewishness and his Pharisaic education, nevertheless many of his far-reaching insights have been viewed by Jews down through the centuries as, at best, 'un-Jewish' and, at worst, as the antithesis of Judaism itself. Generally, Paul has been looked upon as the founder of Christianity, that is, of Gentile Christianity. He is the one held responsible for transforming Jesus' religion into the religion about Jesus. Obviously, some understanding of Paul is essential for a greater understanding between the two faiths and he must feature heavily within Jewish-Christian dialogue. The question of what enabled Paul, as a Jew, to reach the conclusions he did is, in large part, a search for the root cause of the difference between Christianity and Judaism.

This chapter will attempt to place Montefiore in the context of the various Jewish approaches to the Apostle to the Gentiles. Section I will survey how Paul has been perceived in Jewish thought in the past. It will examine the phenomenon of an apparent silence of Jewish writers concerning Paul, before considering their difficulty in identifying the Jewishness or non-Jewishness of his teaching, especially with regard to his views on the Law. Section II will examine in greater detail Montefiore's own particular approach and attempt to explain it in terms of his Liberal Jewish mission.

#### *i – The Silence of Jews with regard to Paul*

Until relatively recent times Jews have very rarely written about Paul. There are

a few possible exceptions in the rabbinic literature. The Christian scholar Kittel suggested that it was Paul who was described in Abot 3:12 as one who

profanes the Hallowed Things and despises the set feasts and puts his fellow to shame publicly and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father, and discloses meanings in the Law which are not according to the Halakhah.<sup>1</sup>

Later Klausner argued that it was Paul who was referred to in Shabbath 30b, which speaks of a pupil of Gamaliel who “went wrong” and who “interpreted the Torah in a perverse manner”.<sup>2</sup> And Baeck accepted the alleged reference to Paul in Ruth Rabba, Petikha 3, “This man... made himself strange to the circumcision and the commandments.”<sup>3</sup> But even allowing for these few tenuous possibilities, the silence of ancient Jewish writers on this subject is striking. In an essay entitled ‘Paul in Modern Jewish Thought’,<sup>4</sup> Donald Hagner has argued that there were two main reasons for this. Firstly, Paul’s missionary success made him a dangerous opponent for the Rabbis; while his theology was patently wrong, they felt that the best way to deal with his threat was to ignore him and give him as little publicity as possible. Secondly, and more importantly, Jews had lived within Christendom from the fourth century until the nineteenth-century Emancipation, under oppression; their silence was simply a reflection of their awareness of the political danger of engaging with Jesus, Paul or Christianity. For Hagner, “the new climate of freedom produced by the gradual acceptance of Jews into European society” brought to an end the centuries of silence.<sup>5</sup>

Of course Hagner is right in his observation that more Jews have written about Paul and engaged his teaching since Emancipation than before, and that a very important factor in this was the diminished threat of recrimination. Likewise, the tendency to move away from polemical writing explains, to some degree, why the perception of the threat of heresy was less pronounced for modern Jewish writers than it had been for the Rabbis. It seems logical to conclude with Hagner, then, that with the dissolution of the two main fears or causes for the Jewish silence came an end to the silence. In fact, it is quite possible to argue that the silence has continued. The list of Jewish writers about Paul which Hagner offers<sup>6</sup> appears impressive – until compared to the much longer list of those who have written on Jesus or on other specific aspects of Christianity. When the fact that several of the authors produced only essays or articles rather than full-length

works is taken into account, the implication that the tide has turned and the claim that in modern times Jewish scholars have “no small fascination for Saul of Tarsus” seems less convincing.<sup>7</sup> It seems that for the vast majority of them, the Apostle to the Gentiles was of little or no interest.

Why was, and is, this the case? It is not a satisfactory answer to say that Jewish writers simply regarded Paul as less relevant than Jesus or the Church for Judaism and that their relatively small written output reflected their lack of interest. Pauline thought and Christian interpretations of it have significantly shaped the Church, especially the Protestant Church, with which Judaism has struggled. An understanding of Paul is thus essential in understanding Christianity and one would expect a good deal more Jewish study of Paul, especially from those concerned with Jewish-Christian relations. One possible reason for the Jewish silence was that, as far as the vast majority were concerned, the Jewish position regarding the apostate Paul was quite clear – what need was there for a re-examination? For centuries the Jewish understanding of Paul had been hindered by the same clumsy reading of the apostle of which Christians were similarly guilty, which over-emphasised his apparent anti-Jewishness and his contrast of faith versus works. To a certain extent this traditional presupposition lies behind the works of several of the Jewish writers, especially Buber and Kohler. Another reason for the continued silence was the Christo-centricism of the apostle’s writings. Unlike Jesus whose teachings could, in the main, be easily reconciled with Judaism, Paul’s fixation upon a supernatural messiah could not easily be overlooked in favour of his more ‘Jewish’ teachings.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, there was very little reason to try to reclaim Paul in the way that modern Jews had attempted to reclaim Jesus. As we shall see in section II, even Montefiore could not find much he wished to salvage from Paul’s writings. Overall, there was no incentive for Jews to study Paul, other than to refute Christian views of Judaism derived from Paul’s misrepresentation of the Jewish Law.

In the survey of modern Jewish approaches to Paul that follows, a greater number of Jewish writers will be considered than Hagner had space to deal with; this by no means detracts from the fact that it is a relatively small number. It should be kept in mind that, in contrast to Hagner’s view that the Jewish silence had been broken in modern times due to changes in socio-political circumstances, the position adopted here is one of a continued Jewish silence – or, at least, of a relative whisper. Any conclusions

regarding trends within the group do not alter this overall picture.

## *ii – Survey of the Modern Jewish Study of Paul*

### **a – Factors to Consider**

For this survey, only those writers who produced a dedicated piece on Paul will be treated at any length. It seemed undesirable to treat them according to nationality due to the small number of Jewish scholars who have written a substantial Pauline study (therefore any trends discovered would be of doubtful significance). Likewise, as will become obvious, a chronological presentation reveals very little and so, instead, a thematic presentation has been adopted. The limits of the range of inclusion are from Graetz writing in 1853 to Segal writing in 1992.<sup>9</sup>

Each of the Jewish writers had his own agenda when he turned to consider the Apostle to the Gentiles. For many of them, especially the earlier ones (and for this a chronological presentation does prove useful), their concern was to compare and contrast Pauline with Jewish thought for polemical purposes. Examples of those whose treatment was coloured by a negative appraisal of Paul include Kaufmann Kohler,<sup>10</sup> Martin Buber,<sup>11</sup> Leo Baeck<sup>12</sup> and Hyam Maccoby.<sup>13</sup> Later, others were determined to present a non-partisan historical study that sought simply to comprehend Paul and not to comment on his merit one way or the other. Examples include Joseph Klausner,<sup>14</sup> Samuel Sandmel,<sup>15</sup> Hans Joachim Schoeps,<sup>16</sup> and Alan Segal.<sup>17</sup> Of the remainder, Heinrich Graetz's treatment of Paul in his *History*<sup>18</sup> was not overtly polemical, although the anti-Christian undercurrent of the work should not be forgotten. The same could be said of Isaac Meyer Wise,<sup>19</sup> who seemed to admire Paul for the mark he left upon the world in spite of viewing him ultimately as a mystical, heretical Jew. Claude Montefiore<sup>20</sup> found himself torn in two directions and genuinely attempted both a fair-handed New Testament analysis of Paul and a (generally negative) evaluation of his religious teachings. The fact that there are differing aims within this collection of Jewish writers, and that each treated his subject with differing formats, makes finding trends or developments in their various approaches to Paul more complicated. There are limitations as to what conclusions can be drawn from a comparison, for example, of a

polemical work such as Baeck's article 'The Faith of Paul' (1952) with a purely historical work such as Schoeps' full-length, non-sectarian *Paulus* (1959).

One final factor to mention in assessing a writer's approach to Paul, whether it is a Jewish or a non-Jewish writer, concerns the evidence used. What evidence there exists for reconstructing Paul's thought and world-view includes the Pauline epistles, Acts of the Apostles, and a few scattered references within rabbinic literature. Scholars differ radically, even today, regarding the authenticity and/or trustworthiness of these records. Putting a complex, circular relationship simply, those who depend most heavily upon the epistles will reconstruct a Hellenistic Paul, while those who tend towards Acts will emphasise his contacts with Palestinian Judaism. This effect is most clearly seen in the context of Paul's attitude towards the Law, in which those who treat Romans and Galatians at face value see him clearly as an abrogator, while those who grant equal weight to his other letters and/or Acts often view him in a less antagonistic light. Of course each individual has his own particular interpretation of the historical evidence. Nevertheless, as the survey will show, this rule of thumb is a useful indicator.

It has been shown in previous chapters that, following the Enlightenment and Emancipation, Jewish writers had become engaged in dispute with Christian writers over a variety of issues. Generally speaking they were concerned to set right Christian misunderstandings of rabbinic religion, especially with regard to the Law, and within Reform circles many were interested to reclaim Jesus as one of their own. However, alongside the matters of Christian scholarship with which they disagreed, Jewish writers found much material with which they could concur – for example, Pauline studies as developed from the Tübingen and later the *Religionsgeschichte* schools of thought.<sup>21</sup> Essentially, German Protestant scholars had come to regard Paul as very much the proactive radical, having combined elements of Jewish and Hellenistic ideas to produce the new religion of Christianity. This academic world of syncretistic religions, Gnostic myths and Hellenistic mystery cults provoked a resonance in the minds of the few Jewish scholars who became interested in Pauline studies, men such as Kohler, Montefiore, Buber and Klausner. After all, the Jews had traditionally viewed Paul as the man who had injected non-Jewish elements into Judaism. For both Christian and Jewish scholars it had become possible to categorise Jesus as a reformer within the Jewish fold and Paul as an innovator outside the Jewish pale. In this sense, the traditional Jewish view of Paul

had been confirmed and verified by contemporary Christian scholarship. Where scholars differed was on the exact composition of Paul's background, an understanding of which would, they believed, explain the 'un-Jewish' elements of his teaching.

### **b – Paul's Background**

When it comes to explaining the cultural and religious milieu from which Paul emerged, there is a surprising lack of uniformity of opinion amongst Jewish writers. Very roughly, there are three views: those who describe him in essentially Jewish terms, those who see him in essentially Hellenistic or Greek (that is, non-Jewish) terms, and those who understand him in essentially Diaspora- or Hellenistic-Jewish terms. While few of the writers fit precisely into this arrangement, it is possible to categorise them according to the overall emphasis of each.

Those whose views emphasise the Jewishness of Paul's background include Graetz, Wise, Schoeps, and Segal. Heinrich Graetz seemed to have used the Acts of the Apostles almost exclusively in accepting that the background of "Saul" had been Pharisaic Judaism<sup>22</sup> and that he been born into the tribe of Benjamin.<sup>23</sup> There was no explicit mention of the Pauline epistles, and although he did comment that Saul had had limited knowledge of Judaean (that is, Palestinian) writings and was only familiar with the Greek translation of the scriptures,<sup>24</sup> he did not at any time explicitly suggest that non-Jewish influences had affected Paul. Similarly, Isaac Meyer Wise also viewed Paul's background in essentially Jewish terms, but in a quite unusual way. "Paul", he informed his listeners, "is an open book in history" due to the abundant evidence which had survived. Citing the "genuine epistles" (which he left unspecified) and the 'we passages' in Acts,<sup>25</sup> it was the Talmud, however, which he used as his primary source of evidence. Identifying Paul with a heretic often referred to in the Talmud, Wise explained,

the rabbis called him Acher, "another," i.e. one who passes under another or assumed name. They [the rabbis] maintain that his name was Elisha ben Abujah. But this name must be fictitious, because it is a direct and express reference to Paul's theology. It signifies "the saving deity, son of the father god," and Paul was the author of the "son of God" doctrine. The fact is, he was known to the world under his assumed name only.<sup>26</sup>

Wise's hypothesis and almost exclusive dependence upon the Talmud<sup>27</sup> is unique among the Jewish writers on Paul. Using such evidence, it would not have been surprising if he had described Paul's background in mainly rabbinic terms. But he went even further than the Talmudic evidence suggested and argued anachronistically for a Cabalistic background for Paul. For Wise, Paul's vision of Paradise in II Cor. 12 correlated with Acher's experience of Heaven as described in the Talmud, and his conception of Christ corresponded precisely with Cabalistic teachings regarding a mysterious semi-divine figure, the Saar Haolam.<sup>28</sup> Maintaining that at the time of Paul-Acher there had been a "growth of superstition among the Hebrews, among whom a class of mystics had sprung up", it seemed only sensible to conclude that Paul's background had been one of Jewish mysticism.<sup>29</sup>

This early emphasis of Jewishness in Paul's background reappears in the work of Hans Joachim Schoeps. After careful consideration as "an impartial historian of religion and as one who wishes to do justice to the Judaism from which Paul sprang",<sup>30</sup> Schoeps was prepared to accept the historical validity of much of Acts. Like Graetz, he regarded Paul as a disciple of Rabbi Gamaliel I.<sup>31</sup> He also gleaned such information as Paul's ability to speak Aramaic from the account given in Acts.<sup>32</sup> And while Schoeps recognised that the apostle's speeches extant in Acts presented certain difficulties, they were nevertheless "indispensable" for the reconstruction of Paul's life.<sup>33</sup> Describing Saul as "the youthful Diaspora Pharisee",<sup>34</sup> Schoeps nonetheless placed a greater emphasis upon the Jewish, rather than the non-Jewish, aspects of Paul's background. The rabbinic style of argumentation and general character of Paul's thought had convinced Schoeps that only a Pharisaic Jewish background could adequately explain Paul's later religion of "radicalised Pharisaism".<sup>35</sup> While he accepted that non-Jewish elements in Paul's background might well have influenced certain aspects of Paul's later thinking, he argued that

every explanation [of Paul's theology] proceeding from rabbinism deserves *a lime* preference over all other explanations, in so far as it can be demonstrated sufficiently clearly and with an adequate basis of proof.<sup>36</sup>

For Schoeps, Pharisaic Judaism explained the starting point for much of Paul's teaching

and indicated a rabbinic or Jewish background rather than an overtly Hellenistic one. In this, as Sanders has commented, Schoeps reinforced the work of the Christian scholar WD Davies which had caught the tide at its turning within mainstream Pauline studies.<sup>37</sup>

Recently, in Alan Segal's *Paul the Convert* (1992), the views of Schoeps and Wise were combined so that Paul's essentially Jewish background was expressed in terms of both Pharisaism *and* mysticism.<sup>38</sup> Segal's unorthodox study of Paul integrated a comparative study of Jewish religious literature with recent sociological and psychological studies on the phenomenon of conversion.<sup>39</sup> While maintaining that "one must recognise that Paul was a Pharisaic Jew who converted to a new apocalyptic Jewish sect and then lived in a Hellenistic, gentile Christian community as a Jew among gentiles",<sup>40</sup> Segal argued that Paul must also have been profoundly influenced by Jewish apocalyptic and mystical thought.<sup>41</sup> Specifically, he was concerned with the stress Paul placed upon 'conversion' and 'transformation' in the non-pastoral epistles (and the dramatic effect of his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, as recorded in Acts).<sup>42</sup> This aspect of Pauline theology, he felt, had its roots in what was later described as *Merkabah* mysticism (after the Mishnaic term for the 'chariot' that Ezekiel saw in his vision of Ezek. 1:26), which spoke of "angelic transformation" attained by having gazed upon the Glory of God in human form.<sup>43</sup> Paul's subsequent Christian interpretation of his 'conversion' and its religious significance – for example, his identification of Christ as the human figure of God enthroned in heaven (envisioned by Ezekiel)<sup>44</sup> – could then be viewed as a re-expression of *Merkabah* terminology; it in no way detracted from the original influence of Jewish apocalyptic mysticism. Recent research into conversion experiences, according to Segal, demonstrated that converts naturally found the meaning of their conversion and their visions in the community that valued them, and so "Any convert and especially a converted Pharisee who knew of mystical and apocalyptic traditions would give these experiences Christian interpretations if that person had chosen to join a Christian community."<sup>45</sup> For Segal, Paul's Jewish (mystical) background provided the framework for a self-understanding of his conversion experience, which he later re-expressed in specifically Christian terms.

The second category, that of Jewish writers who understood Paul's background in essentially non-Jewish or Hellenistic terms, includes Kohler, Klausner, Buber and Maccoby. While each identified Paul's background as that of Hellenistic Judaism, it was

the 'Hellenistic' rather than the 'Jewish' influences that they emphasised. It seems fair to say that for all four, Paul's theology could best be explained in terms of the direct influence of an alien, non-Jewish, religious culture.

In his influential article 'Saul of Tarsus' in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (1905), Kaufmann Kohler maintained that Paul's influences had been almost entirely Hellenistic, arguing that "he was, if any of the Epistles that bear his name are really his, entirely a Hellenist in thought and sentiment".<sup>46</sup> Kohler's Paul appears to have been based mainly upon I and II Thessalonians and I and II Corinthians; the other letters were regarded as "partly spurious... and partly interpolated".<sup>47</sup> This had an effect on his understanding of, and the emphasis he placed upon, the Pauline view of the Law and of Paul's apparent anti-Judaism. In line with the *Religionsgeschichte* school of thought, Kohler found the source of Paul's Christology and his view of Law in Gnostic teachings<sup>48</sup> and that of his mysticism and sacramentalism in Hellenistic Mystery religions.<sup>49</sup> Generally speaking, Acts was not to be considered historically reliable but reflected the concerns of those in the second century who were "anxious to suppress or smooth over the controversies of the preceding period". Thus he disputed such details as the claim that Paul was descended from the tribe of Benjamin<sup>50</sup> and the Actian account of Paul's rabbinical training under Gamaliel. Instead, he argued that those letters whose contents he regarded as hostile to Jews indicated that "while born a Jew, he [Paul] was never in sympathy or in touch with the doctrines of the rabbinical schools".<sup>51</sup> Even what was recognisably Jewish in Paul's thought was not purely Jewish but had come to him through Hellenistic channels; for example, he was not even familiar with the original Hebrew text of the scriptures.<sup>52</sup> As Hagner puts it, Kohler was "one of the earliest and most forceful proponents of Paul's Hellenism".<sup>53</sup>

Writing thirty-four years later in 1939, the Jewish historian Joseph Klausner was prepared to analyse his sources for Paul in considerably greater detail. While caution was needed in treating Acts due to its "distinctly religious purpose", it also contained "very important material" without which scholars would be "groping in the dark" with regard to Paul's lifework.<sup>54</sup> Unlike Kohler, Klausner was prepared to consider the possibility that Paul had studied under Gamaliel, implying that he had had some knowledge of Palestinian Judaism. Yet, for Klausner, this had not been enough to neutralise the effect of an essentially non-Jewish background. He wrote,

In spite of all his zeal and extremeness, he [Paul] was not at home either in his first religion or in his second, after his conversion. His soul was torn between Palestinian Pharisaism, the teachings of which he learned particularly in Jerusalem... and Jewish Hellenism – and in certain measure also *pagan Hellenism, in the midst of which he was born and educated in his childhood in pagan and half-Hellenistic Tarsus.*<sup>55</sup> (Italics mine).

When Klausner turned to consider Paul's letters, he found Romans, Galatians, and I and II Corinthians useful in that they corroborated much of what Acts had had to say about Paul.<sup>56</sup> He also referred extensively to II Thessalonians and Ephesians.<sup>57</sup> As a result of concentrating upon Paul's teachings, the Hellenistic tone of the epistles came to dominate Klausner's reconstruction of Paul's background over the Palestinian-Judaic tone of Acts. He argued that the non-Jewish element in Pauline doctrine had not come about from "Greek learning" or "a conscious interest in the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, of Mithras or of Attis and the like" – those theories which suggested that Paul had drawn his opinions directly from the Greek philosophical literature or mystery religions were "without foundation".<sup>58</sup> Instead, the chief factor had been his background, that is,

the general atmosphere which then surrounded every cultured man who moved about in the lands of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, breathing the very air of the time as it could be felt in the whole reach of the Roman empire.<sup>59</sup>

As Kohler had done, Klausner argued that even the Jewish element in Paul's teachings had received unconsciously at his hands a non-Jewish colouring from the influence of the "Hellenistic-Jewish and pagan atmosphere" which had surrounded the apostle, a citizen of Tarsus, throughout his lifetime.<sup>60</sup> Paradoxically, and with regard to the Torah, Klausner could also write that Paul was "firmly rooted in Pharisaic Judaism in spite of himself".<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere he assured his readers that after "intensive research over many years" he had concluded "there is nothing in the teaching of Paul... that did not come to him from authentic Judaism".<sup>62</sup> As Hagner comments, this is a tension frequently found in Jewish writings on Paul.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the overall emphasis of Klausner's view was of non-Jewish, Hellenistic (even pagan) background.

Like Kohler, Martin Buber set aside the accounts of Paul in Acts in favour of the evidence of the Epistles (and especially Romans). His *Two Faiths* (1951) did not directly

address the question of the reliability of the historical sources. However, since he assumed throughout a good familiarity of Romans, and since there was almost no reference made to Acts, it comes as no surprise that Buber's Paul was presented as highly Hellenistic in character. Contrasting the Hellenistic or Greek *pistis* (faith in the truth of a proposition) embodied in Paul with the Jewish *emunah* (faith as trust) embodied in Jesus, Buber felt that Paul's bias towards *pistis* suggested that his background was one of "a peripheral Judaism, which was actually 'Hellenistic'".<sup>64</sup> He did not attempt to specifically define Paul's background, or attempt an assessment of the degree of non-Jewish influences upon Paul. But his emphasis upon the Gnostic features of Paul's theology (for example, powers that rule the world, the enslavement of the cosmos, the setting free of men),<sup>65</sup> and of the mystery religions (for example the doctrine of a dying and rising god),<sup>66</sup> leave one in no doubt as to his belief that Paul originated in an essentially non-Jewish environment.

The anti-Pauline position has been most recently championed by the popular writer Hyam Maccoby in *The Mythmaker; Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (1986). Maccoby set himself the task of refuting the claim that Paul had been a Pharisee so that Pauline Christianity could be properly recognised as "a brilliant concoction of Hellenism, superficially connecting itself with Jewish scriptures and tradition, by which it seeks to give itself an air of authority".<sup>67</sup> Paul was held ultimately responsible for this new religion that developed away from both normal Judaism and the early Nazarene variety of Judaism, and which abrogated the Torah. Like the others, Maccoby argued that Paul's background had been largely pagan and that he had derived this religion from Hellenistic sources, "chiefly by a fusion of concepts taken from Gnosticism and concepts taken from the mystery religions, particularly from that of Attis".<sup>68</sup> Brought up in Tarsus, where there were few if any Pharisee teachers, Paul's Pharisaic knowledge would have been limited.<sup>69</sup> Maccoby sought to reconstruct Paul's background with limited reference to Acts and, more extensively, from the epistles, which he suggested would have been shocking to Jews but "familiar to non-Jewish members of the Hellenistic culture".<sup>70</sup> The single most important source for his understanding of Paul, however, was derived from Epiphanius' *Heresies*, which recorded the complaints of the Ebionites (early Christians in Jerusalem).<sup>71</sup> He explained,

The Ebionites testified that Paul had *no* Pharisaic background or training; he was the son of

Gentiles, converted to Judaism, in Tarsus, came to Jerusalem when an adult, and attached himself to the High Priest as a henchman. Disappointed in his hopes of advancement, he broke with the High Priest and sought fame by founding a new religion. This account, while not reliable in all its details, is substantially correct. It makes far more sense of all the puzzling and contradictory features of the story of Paul than the account of the official documents of the Church.<sup>72</sup>

Maccoby's dependence upon such an unusual source, and his inconsistent use of Acts and Paul's letters (using them when they supported his non-Pharisaic theory, and dismissing them as unhistorical when they did not), result from his polemical agenda. This can clearly be seen in his use of Paul as a parable for the inadequacies of Christianity; as he explained at the start,

To be Jewish and yet not to be Jewish, that is the essential dilemma of Christianity, and the figure of Paul, abjuring his alleged Pharisaism as a hindrance to salvation and yet somehow clinging to it as a guarantee of authority, is symbolic.<sup>73</sup>

So far, the two extreme views have been considered. In a sense, Solomon Schechter reinforced the polarisation of the two positions when, in 1909, he very briefly articulated the Jewish dilemma regarding Paul's background as Jewish or non-Jewish.

Either the theology of the Rabbis must be wrong, its conception of God debasing, its leading motives materialistic and coarse, and its teachings lacking in enthusiasm and spirituality, or the Apostle to the Gentiles is quite unintelligible.<sup>74</sup>

As far as Schechter was concerned, one could not have it both ways. Either Paul had been familiar with the Judaism of his day and his criticisms had been justified; or, as Jews had protested down through the centuries, Paul had not been familiar with Judaism, his views had quite misrepresented the Jewish position and he had, in fact, attacked a Judaism which had never existed (Schechter himself was at a loss to explain such a view). The positions adopted by the two categories of Jewish writers examined previously represent the respective logical justifications of Schechter's two alternatives: either an essentially Jewish, or an essentially non-Jewish, background.

The third category, which identified and emphasised Hellenistic or Diaspora Judaism as Paul's background, includes Montefiore, Baeck and Sandmel. For these

writers, the early influences upon Paul had been recognisably Jewish, although subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, tinted by its exposure to the Hellenistic world. Obviously, in several aspects this third view (that is, a background of Judaism expressed through a Hellenistic medium) overlaps considerably with the second view (that is, a background of Hellenistic thought only tenuously connected to Judaism).

Claude Montefiore was the first Jewish writer to suggest a solution that avoided the two extremes of either a Jewish or a non-Jewish socio-religious backdrop for the apostle. The answer to why “there is much in Paul which, while dealing with Judaism, is inexplicable by Judaism”,<sup>75</sup> was that Paul had never known authentic Rabbinic Judaism and was not, therefore, attacking it.<sup>76</sup> Instead, he had grown up with, and had come to criticise, Hellenistic or Diaspora Judaism, a quite distinct phenomenon from its Palestinian relation. This Hellenistic Judaism Montefiore described as “more sombre and gloomy than Rabbinic Judaism”.<sup>77</sup> Unlike other scholars, Montefiore attempted to define this religious background by piecing together what he could from Paul’s writings. From the time of his earliest treatment of Paul, he had accepted only six of the epistles as genuine: I Thessalonians, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Romans, and Philippians.<sup>78</sup> He was prepared to regard these writings as, in the main, sincere and historically useful, but rejected much of Acts. For example, on the subject of Paul’s alleged rabbinical training, he regarded the historicity of the claim recorded in Acts “with much suspicion”.<sup>79</sup> Montefiore, then, was similar to Kohler and Buber whose Paul (a Faith-versus-Works Paul from a non-Jewish, Hellenistic background) had been reconstructed from the evidence of the Epistles rather than that of Acts. Yet Montefiore did not emphasise Paul’s Hellenism nor de-emphasise his Jewishness to the same degree as did Kohler or Buber, and neither did several of the other Jewish writers in this third category who similarly preferred to rely upon the letters rather than upon Acts.<sup>80</sup> Why was this?

Traditionally, Jews had regarded Paul’s attacks upon the Law as entirely unjustified and not a little puzzling. Traditionally, Christians had defended their champion resolutely and regarded Judaism in terms of legalistic religion.<sup>81</sup> It was largely as an attempt to correct this perceived injustice that some Jews entered into New Testament studies. In modern times, however, Christian scholars had begun to recognise that Paul’s idea of Judaism was often suspect. However, too much was invested in the Apostle to the Gentiles to reject him *in toto*, and so there developed better researched,

less simplistic views about Paul's background to account for the discrepancies (for example, the *Religionsgeschichte* school of thought). By the time of Montefiore, the Jewish response could be said to be softening, too. Certainly, it seemed incumbent upon Montefiore to discover a less antagonistic way of explaining Paul's misrepresentation of Judaism. After all, if it had not been Rabbinic Judaism that Paul had attacked, then there was no reason for a modern Jew to feel defensive. As we have seen, his solution was to distinguish sharply between Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism, and to regard Paul's criticisms as being against a poor relation of authentic, Rabbinic Judaism, and not Rabbinic Judaism itself. Montefiore and those Jewish writers who tended to reject the Actian accounts of Paul's background did not automatically agree with Kohler and Buber and reject the idea of a Jewish background (of some sort) as a consequence. As a result of Emancipation and the changing social conditions, such Jewish writers had ceased to feel threatened by the idea of the Jewish (or semi-Jewish) background of Paul. Rather, they concentrated upon the possibilities which the evidence of the epistles provided for an opportunity to historically reconstruct the poorer, inferior kind of Judaism.

Leo Baeck's attitude towards the evidence was similar to Montefiore's. *Acts* was a "source that is in every regard secondary", although he admitted that it was of some use in confirming information given in the letters.<sup>82</sup> The letters which he considered genuine and trustworthy were fewer in number than those deemed so by Montefiore, however. Accepting only Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians as evidence for Paul<sup>83</sup> had the result of producing a Paul defined in terms of Faith-versus-Works and anti-Judaization, and one would have expected Baeck to have tended towards a non-Jewish background for Paul. Yet Baeck was keen to stress the Jewishness of Paul and the great extent to which Hellenistic or Greek ideas were accepted and adopted within the Jewish Diaspora. For example, he argued that very many aspects of Hellenistic thought were reminiscent of the teachings of the "schools of Jewish 'wisdom'". Likewise, the utilisation of Stoic philosophic terminology remained "within the Jewish compass".<sup>84</sup> Thus the Hellenistic elements of Paul's thought as expressed in his letters did not, in Baeck's opinion, make the apostle a "Hellenist" as was commonly claimed. Indeed, Paul's approach to the Hellenistic world was the same as that of some Palestinian teachers.<sup>85</sup> Tarsus, in which Paul had grown up, was a place of "Hellenism, with all its philosophies, beliefs, annunciations, and cults" and yet

Paul was a Jew of Tarsus, not a Syrian or Persian or Egyptian of Tarsus... His background was that of the Jewish people.<sup>86</sup>

Unlike Montefiore, Baeck did not distinguish so sharply between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism. Hellenistic thought was often too similar to Jewish thought to make much of a difference; it was more a matter of cultural expression. Baeck could certainly not have described Paul's background in the emphatically Palestinian-Jewish terms used by those writers in the first category (who were heavily dependent upon Acts with its emphasis of Palestinian-Jewish contacts). Indeed, his article is saturated with references to Hellenistic thought and parallels. But the fact that Paul's background was one of Judaism expressed through a Hellenistic medium did not, for Baeck, make it any less Jewish.

Samuel Sandmel, too, saw Paul as having grown up in an environment of Hellenistic Judaism. Yet he was not, in the main, terribly concerned about Paul's background, important as it was for the apostle's frame of reference. As he pointed out in *The Genius of Paul* (1958),

The background alone cannot account for the great metamorphosis which came to Christianity through Paul. Environment never totally explains a man; it only explains about him. True, Paul was a Hellenistic Jew, but above all, Paul was Paul.<sup>87</sup>

Despite this lack of interest in Paul's background, Sandmel devoted considerable space to analysis of the sources. "Reliable history" about Paul, he argued, could only be found in the New Testament literature, and "incontestable authenticity" was available only in the letters.<sup>88</sup> The historicity of Acts was suspect with regard to many details including Paul's Jewish name Saul, his rabbinic training under Gamaliel, his presence in Palestine before his conversion, and his ability to speak Hebrew.<sup>89</sup> Sandmel therefore felt it was necessary to choose between the often contradictory evidence of Acts and the epistles. His reliance upon the letters reinforced his view that the author of Acts had tended to exaggerate Paul's contacts with Palestinian Judaism, and suggested to him that Paul had not identified with Palestinian Judaism before his conversion<sup>90</sup> but was rather "a Jew steeped in the Greek dispersion", that is, a "Hellenistic Jew".<sup>91</sup> Sandmel expressed this more fully when he wrote,

His [Paul's] statement that he had learned the traditions of his fathers is to be accepted – but the content of those Graeco-Jewish “traditions” is not to be confused with that which later centuries recorded as the product of the Jewish schools in Palestine and Babylonia.<sup>92</sup>

Sandmel defined ‘Hellenistic Judaism’ more precisely than had the other Jewish critics. A “blending of antitheses” had occurred as Jews had adapted to a Greek world.<sup>93</sup> The result, Hellenistic Judaism, differed from Palestinian Judaism not so much with regard to content as with regard to orientation. Palestinian Judaism, which had been oppressed under the Romans, had conceived of liberation in terms of the salvation of a collective people from a national predicament; consequently, messianic activity had been understood to be centred on Israel.<sup>94</sup> Hellenistic Judaism, “for Paul as for Philo”, had not concerned itself with national issues but with individual misery; its grievances had been about universal difficulties. Consequently, messianic activity had been regarded at a “cosmic” level.<sup>95</sup> While he admitted that the religion of the Greek Jews had undergone “a subtle, but radical shift”, Sandmel agreed with Baeck that Paul’s Hellenistic Jewish background was still recognisably Jewish.<sup>96</sup>

It should be clear that the most significant factor in most of these Jewish writers’ treatment of Paul’s socio-religious backdrop was their use of the sources – not in every case, but certainly for the majority. Those who regarded Acts suspiciously tended to espouse a non-Jewish or a Hellenistic-Jewish background for Paul, while those who used the evidence of Acts more extensively tended to favour an essentially Jewish background. Similarly, those who preferred to depend solely upon the epistles, or upon a selection of the epistles, such as Kohler and Buber, seemed to have viewed Paul’s early influences as quite alien to Judaism. It should be equally clear that it is not strictly possible to follow a chronological trail in which the explanation of Paul on the basis of Hellenism, or even Hellenistic Judaism, is giving way to the assertion of Palestinian Judaism as Paul’s background, as Hagner claimed.<sup>97</sup> Such a position can actually only be applied to those of the third category, namely Montefiore, Baeck and Sandmel.

### **c – Ideas of what is “Jewish” or “non-Jewish” about Paul**

The issue of identifying Paul’s background is quite different from the issue of identifying what in Paul’s thought, expressed in his letters, could be described as Jewish

or non-Jewish (although the issues are obviously connected). As we will see in this section, the identification of some elements of Paul's thought as 'non-Jewish' does not necessarily imply that these were imbibed from his Hellenist or Hellenistic Jewish background. As Sandmel and others pointed out, Paul was very much his own man. He was quite capable of adding to or subtracting from the religious beliefs into which he had been born and, of course, his 'conversion' and the convictions he gained from the experience must be considered in any attempt to explain his later teachings. Once again, there are a surprising variety of views among the Jewish writers; as we saw in chapter three, identifying what is 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish' is a somewhat subjective matter, and is often complicated by the polemical aims of the contributors.

As Sanders has pointed out, even as Montefiore had attempted to deflect the criticism of Judaism implicit in the antithesis of Paul and Judaism, he had accepted Paul's negative comments as accurately representing the Judaism which Paul had known.<sup>98</sup> By rejecting the traditional stance of regarding Paul as either a liar or as simply ignorant, Montefiore had set the agenda for the future study of Paul's background; later scholars had to explain the discrepancy and were no longer able to dismiss it as Paul's perversity. Likewise, Montefiore's methodology in treating Paul's thinking has been largely adhered to. That is, many scholars have followed the way in which he did not dwell on detailed motifs shared in common by both Rabbinic Judaism and Paul, but rather concentrated upon the larger topics on which Paul's description of Judaism could not be supported from rabbinic sources.<sup>99</sup> In *Judaism and St Paul* (1914) Montefiore outlined several areas of Paul's thought in which, arguably, he did not treat Rabbinic Judaism accurately. Some of these included Paul's concept of the messiah, his commitment to the Gentiles, his pessimism, his mysticism, and his view of the Law.<sup>100</sup> Using these topics as a frame of reference, we will now explore the ways in which Jewish writers have viewed Paul's thinking as either Jewish or as non-Jewish. Once again, categorisation will be determined by the writer's overall emphasis.

1. Paul's View of the Messiah. Graetz epitomised the traditional position when he wrote of the "mythical strain" of Paul's preaching in which the Jewish "Son of Man" was transformed into "the Messianic Redeemer" so that "the Heathen nations" could better comprehend the Christian message.<sup>101</sup> Kohler took it for granted that Paul had "entertained long before his vision" those notions of "the Son of God" which he

afterwards expressed, implying a Hellenistic source.<sup>102</sup> Klausner, on the other hand, reckoned that it was only after his ‘conversion’ and return to Tarsus to study the mystery religions of Asia Minor that Paul adapted the idea of “a dying and rising god” (noting that in such religions the god is usually the saviour) to produce the idea of a “Saviour-Messiah”.<sup>103</sup> In *Two Types of Faith*, Buber was more concerned to show the non-Jewish nature of Paul’s faith in the messiah than he was to show the non-Jewish nature of Paul’s concept of the messiah, and thus he did not directly address the question. Even so, he frequently alluded to Gnosticism and the Gnostic world-view in his treatment of Paul’s thought and regarded Paul’s Christ as more acceptable to the Hellenistic world than to the Jewish one.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Maccoby felt that Paul’s use of the term ‘Christ’ as a divine title had “no precedent in Judaism, and would be felt by any Jew to be a complete departure from Jewish thinking about the Messiah”.<sup>105</sup>

The traditional Jewish view of Paul’s Christ as an essentially Hellenistic construct was by no means shared by all the Jewish writers, however. While Montefiore maintained that the idea of a divine messiah would have been unacceptable to Rabbinic Judaism of 500 AD (as it was still for modern Jews), he was prepared to admit that within first-century Apocalyptic strains of Judaism there would have been “no such difficulty or impossibility” in accepting a messiah who was “a regular divine being”.<sup>106</sup> Wise, as we saw earlier, believed that Paul’s Christ could be almost entirely explained in terms of Jewish mysticism and that, in a state of trance, Paul had discovered “that central figure of Cabalistic speculation, the Metathron, the co-regent of the Almighty”.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Segal explained Paul’s understanding of Christ in terms of *Merkabah* mysticism.<sup>108</sup> Baeck, like Montefiore, identified Paul’s view of the messiah with the Jewish Apocalyptic view, describing it as “Jewish Messianism such as it was determined by the Book of Daniel”.<sup>109</sup> But he also emphasised the power of Paul’s vision of Christ upon his theology. Thus the apostle’s starting point was “the vision allotted to him which gave him the assuredness that Jesus was the Christ” and his background “of the Jewish people”. Both Montefiore and Baeck saw a Hellenistic resonance in Paul’s teaching since his background was, for both of them, one of Hellenistic Judaism. As a result, the Hellenistic “mystery cults and creeds” amplified and re-configured Paul’s understanding.<sup>110</sup> For Schoeps, Hellenism was less important; it was a secondary influence, which nuanced rather than redefined a concept which had its origin in Jewish thought. He argued that Paul’s eschatological views made up the “greatest block of

Jewish material in the thought-world of Paul”<sup>111</sup> and the ideas of the personal messiah, the coming Day of Judgement, and the doctrine of the two aeons remained “unknown and unappreciated in the Hellenistic Mediterranean world of the time”.<sup>112</sup> For Sandmel, a Hellenistic-Jewish view of the messiah did not equate to a non-Jewish view. He pointed out the similarity of Philo’s concept of the immanent aspect of God, that is, God within the world, with Paul’s view of Christ. Philo’s *logos* was, Sandmel admitted, more abstract than Paul’s, but he attacked the view that the apostle’s view was any less Jewish. Paul’s teachings were not simply an un-Jewish deification of a man. “Paul does not deify Jesus; rather he humanises the divine Christ”<sup>113</sup> he argued. Using ‘Philo the Jew’ as his benchmark, Sandmel compared Philo’s similar treatment of Abraham’s three visitors (who represented God) in Genesis 18. “The incarnation of divine beings, then, was not limited [within Judaism] to Paul”, he concluded.<sup>114</sup>

2. Paul’s Commitment to the Gentiles. Montefiore did not say anything new when he commented that first-century Palestinian Judaism had had a “strong interest in proselytes and proselytism” and that “in the Diaspora the interest was still greater”.<sup>115</sup> Many other Jewish writers agreed with him, regarding universalism as a traditional Jewish aim, harking back from before the time of the Prophets.<sup>116</sup> Graetz argued that Saul’s conversion had come about as a result of his recognition that “the time foreseen by the prophets [had] now arrived, when every nation should recognise the God of Israel”<sup>117</sup> and Kohler credited Paul with “having brought the teachings of the monotheistic truth and ethics of Judaism... home to a pagan world”.<sup>118</sup> Several of the writers explicitly credited Paul’s success in the Mediterranean to the legacy of previous Jewish missionary efforts in the area.<sup>119</sup> But Baeck put it most eloquently when he wrote,

Nor did Paul, by stressing his apostolate to the Gentiles, deviate from the genuine Jewish creed. It is not only history that tells us of the Jewish mission... Jewish philosophy, or theology, of history, includes always the Gentiles. The terms “Jewish people” and “Gentiles” are interrelated in their meaning... The “coming” of the Messiah and the “coming” of the Gentiles are interconnected. This is Jewish faith, and such was Paul’s faith.<sup>120</sup>

Klausner argued that Paul had taken from the Jewish messianic idea its “universalist side” and ignored for reasons of political expediency its “politico-national side”.<sup>121</sup> Like Baeck and the others, he felt that Paul’s idea of universalism was not so much a case of

inviting Jew and Gentile together into a new religion but rather a case of bringing the Gentiles into what Paul regarded as the true Judaism.<sup>122</sup> Montefiore, however, distinguished between Jewish proselytism and Paul's hopes for breaking down the wall of distinction between Gentile and Jew. He argued that Paul's "great doctrine of the absolute religious equality of Gentile and Jew" was probably the result of a non-Jewish influence – the cosmic connotations of Hellenistic thought,<sup>123</sup> as did Maccoby.<sup>124</sup> Segal was the only other to come to a similar conclusion, but he suggested that it had been the intensity of Paul's mystical conversion experience (rather than external influences) that had forged in the apostle's mind a "new unity based on faith in the promises of God and not in the distinction between Jew and gentile".<sup>125</sup>

3. Paul's Pessimistic World-View. Montefiore argued that in comparison with the Rabbis' optimistic world-view, Paul's was a dark, gloomy vision of the world inhabited by fallen men and an unforgiving God. The apostle seemed always to have suffered from "the horrid feeling of the unconquered evil inclination gnawing within his soul"<sup>126</sup> and the epistles were not balanced with the "current [Jewish] dogma of Paul's time", that of the working of the Holy Spirit and of the good impulse.<sup>127</sup> For Montefiore, the way in which Paul's pessimistic world-view differed from the more optimistic one of the Rabbis was reflected in the fact that the story of the Fall had for Paul, in contrast to his fellow Jews, a dogmatic value in which the tendency to sin had become "a sort of inherited curse".<sup>128</sup> Kohler, too, felt that for a Jew, Paul had over-emphasised sin and its far-reaching power. He had "robbed human life of its healthy impulses, the human soul of its faith in its own regenerating powers... and in its inherent tendencies to do good".<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Klausner regarded Paul's preoccupation with human weakness and imperfection as un-Jewish. Referring to the Talmudic categorisation of seven types of Pharisee (which condemned both "the Pharisee 'out of fear'" and the one who asked "What is my duty that I may perform it?"), Klausner suggested that on the evidence of Romans 7 alone, the pre-conversion Paul would have been counted among the condemned.<sup>130</sup> Buber actually described such a pessimistic world-view as 'Paulinism'. He wrote,

Those periods [of history] are Pauline in which the contradictions of human life, especially of man's social life, so mount up that they increasingly assume in man's consciousness of existence the character of a fate. The light of God appears to be darkened, and the redeemed Christian soul

becomes aware, as the unredeemed soul of the Jew has continually done, of the still unredeemed concreteness of the world of men in all its horror.<sup>131</sup>

Thus ‘Paulinism’ could characterise both Christian and Jewish thought, although for Buber, of course, the tendency was less pronounced in Judaism with its emphasis upon, and hope inherent in, *emunah* faith, in contrast to Pauline Christian *pistis* faith.<sup>132</sup> In this he was followed by Maccoby who also felt that such a world-view was central to the apostle’s psychology, insisting “The importance of the conception of an evil power or the Devil in Paul’s thought, or rather mythology, cannot be overestimated.”<sup>133</sup>

Interestingly, other Jewish writers did not treat the subject of Paul’s pessimism. For example, those who were prepared to explain Paul in Jewish terms when possible, such as Wise, Baeck, Schoeps, and Segal made little or no mention of the apostle’s pessimism, whether it be Jewish or not. It is by no means clear what conclusion can be drawn from their silence.<sup>134</sup> However, with regard to Paul’s teachings about the demonic powers and rulers which were the expressions of his gloomy world-view, the Jewish writers spoke with one voice in terms of Gnostic or Hellenistic influences. As Buber put it, “I no longer recognise the God of Jesus [a Jew], nor his world in this world of Paul’s.”<sup>135</sup>

4. Paul’s Mysticism. ‘Mysticism’, of course, means different things to different people, and each of the Jewish writers had his own view of its meaning, of its applicability to Paul, and of its Jewish or non-Jewish character. Montefiore, while admitting that “it would be inaccurate to say that within Rabbinic Judaism, mysticism had no place at all”, nonetheless argued that Judaism “did not readily produce that mystic temper or soul which seems to find itself afresh by losing itself in God”.<sup>136</sup> From a Jewish point of view, according to Montefiore, Paul’s “noble and peculiar mysticism” looked quite out of character.<sup>137</sup> Kohler was less respectful of Pauline mysticism and even keener to distance it from Judaism. Paul’s condemnation of “human wisdom, reason and common sense” and his appeal to “faith and vision” had opened wide the door for “all kinds of mysticism and superstition”, he wrote.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, Maccoby denounced Paul’s idea of ‘being in Christ’ (which he, Maccoby, understood as “a kind of unity with, or sinking of the individual into the divine personality of Jesus”), as having no parallel in Jewish literature, and as a teaching that “involves a relationship to the

Divine that is alien to Judaism".<sup>139</sup>

As one might have expected, Sandmel explained what he saw as a mystical strain in Paul's thought in terms of both Hellenism and Judaism. Paul had shared a common background with Philo and the Stoics and had become similarly concerned with the necessity of escape from the body. For Paul, the goal of religious living had been to escape into communion with ultimate reality and avoid death.<sup>140</sup> Yet the apostle, "a mystic who had encountered God in the form of Christ", remained Jewish. This was possible because mysticism and prophecy were interwoven in Sandmel's thought. Paul's mystical experience had resulted in "new and heightened insights within his inherited and precious Judaism" reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets, and thus Paul the "mystic" was better understood, Sandmel argued, as Paul the Jewish "prophet".<sup>141</sup>

Klausner, as we saw earlier, regarded the root of Paul's thought to lie within Judaism, and this included his mystical bent. As he put it, "There is nothing in the teaching of Paul – not even the mystical elements in it – that did not come to him from authentic Judaism."<sup>142</sup> This did not mean, however, that he regarded Paul's particular brand of mysticism favourably. Like Kohler, Montefiore, and those other Jewish writers who viewed authentic Judaism as a form of ethico-prophetic monotheism, Klausner seemed to regard a mystical tendency as deviant and, in his concluding remarks in *From Jesus to Paul*, looked forward to the day when the "mystical and un-Jewish quality" of important parts of Paul's teaching should be "done away with".<sup>143</sup>

For Wise, of course, Jewish mysticism was the key to understanding Paul (or Acher). Paul's vision of Paradise described in the New Testament was too similar to the story of Acher's visit to heaven, as recorded in the Talmud, to be a coincidence. Wise went on,

That passage [II Cor. 12] gave rise to the story of Jesus appearing in person to Paul, just as the rabbinical mystics claimed to have had frequent intercourse with the prophet Elijah, who had been transported alive to heaven.<sup>144</sup>

Mysticism also explained Paul-Acher's "mystical conception" of the 'Son of God' as a blending of Cabalistic teaching, messianic speculations of the age, and the doctrines of

the early Church.<sup>145</sup> Segal went even further in suggesting that Paul was the only early Jewish mystic whose personal, confessional writing had come down to us; central to the formation of his theology, *Merkabah* mysticism accounted for the great emphasis the apostle placed upon the transformation of the believer “in Christ”.<sup>146</sup>

Schoeps, very sensibly, tended to steer away from the troubled waters of the treatment of Paul’s mysticism within New Testament scholarship, and suggested a very limited use of the term with respect to the apostle.<sup>147</sup> This is essentially the stance within recent mainstream Pauline studies.

Having examined the Jewish views of Paul’s understanding of the messiah, his attitude towards the Gentiles, his pessimism, and his mysticism, no clear conclusion emerges. The Jewish writers seem split down the middle regarding the Jewishness of Paul’s idea of Christ and likewise of his mysticism. His pessimism, when it was noticed, was regarded as non-Jewish, while his concern for the Gentiles was generally viewed as Jewish (although Montefiore, Klausner and Maccoby believed that Paul had been prepared to sacrifice Judaism to achieve the uniting of Jew and Gentile). All in all, Hagner is probably simplistic when he concludes,

From the Jewish perspective Paul’s teaching is eccentric but nevertheless it is attributed ultimately to his Jewishness in that it is the result of his great burden for the Gentiles and his desire to make Judaism a truly universal religion. He may thus be said to have created a Judaism for Gentiles.<sup>148</sup>

What one writer thought of as normative for Judaism was regarded as deviant by another; Paul’s teachings contained Jewish truth to greatly varying degrees for each of them. While the majority of the writers might have agreed with Hagner that Paul had created a kind of Judaism best suited for Gentiles, they would not have easily agreed on precisely what was Jewish about it. In contrast, a consensus of sorts emerged with regard to the Apostle’s approach to the Torah.

#### **d – Paul and the Torah**

Paul’s teachings regarding the Law have been regarded by Jews down through the centuries in terms of abrogation. Since Paul has been, and is perceived to have been,

such an influential thinker for Christian theology, the Jewish understanding of Paul's view of the Law has been, and continues to be, of very great relevance for Jewish-Christian dialogue. The traditional stance was reflected at an open address given at Jews' College in 1927, in which Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz likened the anti-*halakhic* view of liberal Jews to the heresy of one of Judaisms most ancient enemies. Their position was, he maintained,

merely an echo of Paul, as of every Jewish apostate since Paul's day, and it is at absolute variance with the truth. Israel became Israel only through the Torah, which remains the life of Judaism, and the abrogation of the Torah would mean the total disappearance of Israel.<sup>149</sup>

Those like Paul who were regarded as having abrogated the Law could only be viewed by Orthodox Jews such as Hertz as a threat to the continued existence of Judaism. This helps explain some of the psychology behind traditional Jewish reactions to the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Thus Hagner is making an important claim for a break from the past when he concludes in his essay 'Paul in Modern Jewish Thought' that modern Jewish scholars "stress as far as they can Paul's Jewishness in his view of the Law". He suggests that there was a consensus among them that Paul remained "an observer of the Law and encouraged other Jewish Christians to do so" and that "even when Paul spoke about freedom from the Law, he did not mean the moral Law".<sup>150</sup> Hagner makes it sound as if the image of Paul as an abrogator of the Law had dimmed in the minds of modern Jewish thinkers. In fact, this is by no means the case. The position of Chief Rabbi Hertz on this issue is not dissimilar from the position of the majority of the Jewish thinkers so far considered (and continues to find support among both Jews and Christians today).

Before considering the majority position, that of those Jewish writers who regarded Paul as an abrogator of the Law, brief mention should be made of what might be described as the transcendent view. A small minority argued that Paul did not believe that his gospel abrogated the Law but rather transcended it. Coming from a Jewish quarter, this is quite a significant distinction.

Baeck, for example, maintained that there was nothing un-Jewish about the

apostle's position, and thus it was more accurate to say that, for Paul, the Law had been transcended rather than abrogated. Referring to the rabbinic literature for support, he argued that the Jews of that time had believed that history was divided into three epochs: 2000 years of chaos (*tohu wabohu*); 2000 years of Law or Torah beginning with the revelation on Mt Sinai; and 2000 years of "the Messianic age" which would be finally followed by "that world which is wholly Sabbath, the rest in the life of eternity".<sup>151</sup> He argued that Paul's vision of Christ had convinced him that the age of the messiah had arrived. In Baeck's opinion, then, it was by no means outside the pale of Jewish thought for Paul to have assumed that the Law had now been transcended. Nor was it un-Jewish for him to have exclaimed, "All things are lawful unto me" (I Cor 6:14) since this closely paralleled the rabbinic teaching that in the "Days of the Messiah... there will be no merit or guilt".<sup>152</sup> Baeck concluded,

We are, therefore, not entitled to say Paul rejected or condemned the Law – if he had done so he would have broken asunder the structure of his belief... That a new epoch was to begin one day was not contended by anybody; it was the common belief of the Jewish people... What separated Paul from the Jewish people was the question of fact – the problem of whether the Messiah had, finally, been manifested, whether his kingdom had come in truth.<sup>153</sup>

Baeck's view was supported by Schoeps who regarded it as a question of "pure aeon-theology". The Messianists, he suggested, had not been against the Law in principle but had simply rejected the further validity of the Law with the coming of the new epoch. It was, he agreed, "a purely Jewish problem of saving history, not a Hellenistic one".<sup>154</sup>

Different views have co-existed, however, and the traditional view of Paul as an opportunist abrogator has survived well into modern times. As Baeck and Schoeps were to do, Graetz suggested that Saul had considered his vision of Jesus to have confirmed that the messiah had come and that "the time foreseen by the prophets [had] now arrived, when every nation should recognise the God of Israel".<sup>155</sup> But Graetz suggested that the real motivation behind Paul's abrogation of the Law, and why he "relieved [his converts] of all duties to the Law by means of a belief in Jesus", was his determination to do away with "a hindrance to the reception of heathen proselytes".<sup>156</sup> Similarly, Hertz described Paul's attitude in terms of "opportunism", offering Timothy's circumcision as a case in point.<sup>157</sup> For Graetz and Hertz, Paul's reaction to the Law was primarily driven by his opportunistic hopes for converting the Gentiles.

Montefiore refused to accept as Jewish Paul's idea that "the giving of the Law was to make things worse, to increase the quality and accentuate the sharpness of sin".<sup>158</sup>

While he treated the problem of Paul and the Law within the context of a Hellenistic Jewish background (and we shall return to this in section II), this particular point of view could, Montefiore believed, only be put down to "the daring genius of its author".<sup>159</sup>

Unlike Montefiore, who was inclined to attribute Paul's view to his religious genius, or Graetz and Hertz, who saw him as a deliberate manipulator, some writers were prepared to regard Paul's position in terms of a misunderstanding of Judaism. For Herbert Loewe, Paul's attitude towards the Law came from an understandable but unfortunate misreading of the Prophets (and thus he challenged Baeck's and Schoeps' "transcendent" argument). Although he could see certain similarities between Paul's conception of the Torah as a temporary *paidagogos*, and the rabbinic teaching that some prescriptions would become obsolete in messianic times, nevertheless, Loewe did not regard Paul's view as authentically Jewish. As an Antinomian, he explained, Paul had favoured "a violent or abrupt abolition" of the Law, in contrast to the more gentle Jewish hope for "the spontaneous evolution as a result of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, which shall regenerate mankind".<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Klausner also accepted that Paul had not felt that by negating the Torah he had cut himself off from the people of Israel.<sup>161</sup> But, again like Loewe, he argued that this did not mean that Paul's position, as expressed in the verse, "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor 3:6), was authentically Jewish. Judaism honoured not the dead letter but the living letter, he protested, and Paul had not understood that "the letter is the clothing of the spirit".<sup>162</sup>

Other Jewish writers had found the origins of Paul's teaching on the Law neither in Judaism or in general Hellenism, but specifically in Gnosticism. Kohler, for example, admitted that Paul had not initially been hostile to the Law, nor had he been against it on principle.<sup>163</sup> Eventually, however, the apostle had denounced all law, "moral as well as ceremonial", as an intrinsic evil. This was the result, Kohler wrote, of Gnostic influences<sup>164</sup> and of conflict with the Jews and with the other disciples on the matter of tearing down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile.<sup>165</sup> According to Buber, Paul's troubles with the Law stemmed directly from his Gnostic world-view, for while Paul believed that the Law had been intended for the redemption of man and the world, his

exposure to Gnostic thought had brought about the conviction that mankind still needed to be set free from evil “powers and forces”, that the Law called forth sin “in order that it might abound”, and that the Jews themselves were “kept in captivity under the Law”.<sup>166</sup>

Sandmel’s solutions were of a quite different kind. Paul had not, as Graetz, Hertz and the traditionalists maintained, failed with the Jews and therefore abrogated the Law so as to convert the Gentiles; on the contrary, “it was Paul’s attitude towards the Law which cost him success with the Jews”.<sup>167</sup> Nor, as Kohler and Buber argued, had the Gnostic emphasis upon salvation caused the apostle difficulties in considering the role of the Law; rather, “it is his problem with the Law which brings him ultimately to his Christian convictions”.<sup>168</sup> In contrast to the other Jewish writers, Sandmel suggested that Paul’s problem with the Law had not originated from intellectual or theoretical difficulties, but from his own experience of attempting – and failing – to observe it. “Had Paul not found this personal difficulty,” he posited, “he would not have been led to a virtual abrogation of the Law”.<sup>169</sup>

Maccoby’s explanation of Paul’s view of the Law was a strange amalgamation of the Gnostic-influence theory and of Sandmel’s internal-struggle theory. He argued that, as a Gentile convert to Judaism who had tried and failed to become a Jew, Paul had entered a state of despair from which he had emerged convinced that the distinction between Gentile and Jew no longer existed, and that there was no longer any obligation, even on Jews, to observe the Torah.<sup>170</sup> Paul had justified this abrogation of the Law, Maccoby went on, in Galatians 3:19–20 where it was asserted that the Law had not been given by God but by the angels – “Paul is saying quite definitely that the angels were the authors of the Torah, not God.” The ultimate source of such an un-Jewish belief, he concluded, could only be found in the Gnostic literature.<sup>171</sup>

From the various approaches detailed above it should be apparent that, as Hagner suggested, there had been a change in modern times in the way in which Jewish writers thought about Paul and the Law. The change, however, was not so much one of ceasing to believe in his abrogation of the Law, so much as a change of attitude and of approach. The result was that attempts were made to understand *in what sense* Paul had abrogated the Law. In the past, the Jewish position on this question had been one of deep resentment towards the apostle for having maliciously attacked the Torah for being

something it was not.<sup>172</sup> But as a more complex and increasingly accurate view of Paul emerged, those Jewish thinkers who were not weighed down by the baggage of religious polemics nor restrained by the traditional views, became increasingly prepared to regard Paul as other than the great apostate. Some, like Montefiore, even became prepared to accept Paul at his own word, to view him as a sincere religious thinker, and to attempt to explain his views regarding the Law in more sophisticated, less antagonistic, ways. In other words, while they still thought that Paul was wrong about the Law, some Jewish writers ceased to believe that he was intentionally fallacious and tried instead to understand what were the reasons behind his allegedly mistaken views.

### ***iii – Conclusion***

Having completed the survey of Jewish writers, a few conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, Hagner's contention that "Jewish scholars have increasingly stressed Paul's authentic Jewishness"<sup>173</sup> is difficult to substantiate. It would be more accurate to say – if one is prepared to regard Hellenistic Judaism as essentially Jewish – that the majority of the writers (including those of category one, Graetz, Wise, Schoeps, and Segal together with those of category three, Montefiore, Baeck and Sandmel) tended towards a belief in an essentially Jewish background for Paul (although with the qualification that the two groups meant something subtly different by the term "Jewish"). Furthermore, when Hagner suggests that there had been a trend away from a Hellenistic and alien understanding of Paul towards a rabbinic one,<sup>174</sup> he is confusing "rabbinic" with "Jewish". Both Baeck and Sandmel, for example, differentiated between those aspects of Paul which could be derived from Rabbinic or Palestinian Judaism and those which could be derived from Hellenistic Judaism – while it is true that there was an increased acceptance of his Jewishness, it was not, as Hagner suggests, necessarily expressed in terms of rabbinism.

Secondly, the single most important trend apparent in the survey of Jewish writers was the relationship between the historical sources used and the relative Jewishness of Paul's thought, especially with regard to the Torah. Since the author of Acts presented Paul as the Apostle to the Jews of the Diaspora<sup>175</sup> and therefore emphasised his Jewishness, those writers who depended heavily upon it were most

predisposed to view Paul in Jewish terms. The evidence of the epistles, on the other hand, was more ambiguous and those who relied more heavily upon them could, depending upon which letters they concentrated on, go either way. More often than not, however, the Hellenistic tone of the epistles and Paul's own description of himself as the Apostle to the Gentiles encouraged a non-Jewish bias.

Contrary to what Hagner suggests, there was no real chronological trend towards a consensus in the Jewish understanding of Paul: for example, those who regarded the apostle as least Jewish (including Kohler, Klausner, Buber and Maccoby) were not clustered together at the beginning, middle or end of the period. Nor was Montefiore's (early) theory of Paul's background of Diaspora Judaism, together with his methodology of treating Paul's thought, completely disregarded by those who followed in his footsteps; while inevitably viewed by later writers as over-simplified, his ideas provided the framework for even the latest Pauline studies.

Thirdly, as Hagner pointed out, "Insofar as Paul is regarded as authentically Jewish, he is praised."<sup>176</sup> This is borne out strikingly in the case of Montefiore, as we shall see in section II. However, a reoccurring theme of these chapters is that "Jewishness", like "Christianity", is a subjective and highly emotive issue for definition amongst scholars. Even those who claimed the neutrality of academic scholarship and disavowed any polemical purpose, such as Klausner, Sandmel and Schoeps, failed to recognise the same degree of Jewishness in Paul's thought; he was, respectively, essentially Hellenistic, Hellenistic-Jewish, and Palestinian-Jewish. As we have seen, the Jewish writers even disagreed about the Jewishness of central themes of the apostle's thought. In the absence of an alternative theory, one might suggest that when it came to identifying what was (or was not) "Jewish" about Paul, the major complicating factor was the writer's psychological reluctance to overcome the traditionally hostile value-judgement. Exactly what made one writer able to do this while another could not, is by no means clear. However, it is fair to say that the broader the writer's definition of "Jewish" was, the more likely he was to regard Paul positively. As an understanding of the diversity within early Judaism emerged, the act of attributing "Jewishness" to aspects of Paul's teaching came to be regarded as less controversial, less threatening. Liberals were the most likely to accept the findings of modern scholarship, and the more able those liberals were in psychologically overcoming the ancient enmity towards Paul, the

more positively Jewish they were able to characterise him. Montefiore, as a Jewish liberal who had sensationaly detached himself from traditional Judaism and had explicitly rejected the traditional antagonistic position towards Christianity, certainly supports this hypothesis.

## II – A Closer Look at Montefiore's Views About Paul

### *i – A Liberal Jewish Approach to Pauline Scholarship*

At the turn of the century, the scholarly debate concerning the Apostle Paul, that is, how he was perceived to have related to Judaism, was very much dominated by Christian tradition. The general consensus among both Christian and Jewish theologians was that, even though many particulars of his thought were rooted in Judaism, Paul was basically antithetical to it; a good example of this was H St John Thackeray's *The Relation of St Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought* (1900). As we have seen in earlier chapters, another widely held opinion was that Judaism could be identified with works-righteousness. Pauline scholars did not reach this position by simply reading the epistles at face value, but believed that studies made of rabbinic texts confirmed it. Thus Thackeray, who admitted that his knowledge of Rabbinic Judaism was entirely derivative, made constant use of Weber's systematic theology of Rabbinic Judaism which presented Judaism as a form of righteousness by works.<sup>177</sup>

Increasingly, however, questions began to be raised by those Jewish and Christian thinkers who were more knowledgeable about Rabbinic Judaism, and who had difficulties in relating Paul's criticisms to Judaism as they knew it. Montefiore was one of the first Jews to take this issue into the realm of mainstream Pauline scholarship. He believed that Liberal Judaism allowed him greater objectivity and understanding than that possessed by either the typical Christian or Jewish scholar. (The argument that liberalism or eclecticism does just the opposite and increases subjectivity does not seem to have greatly concerned him). He thought that by abandoning the well trodden paths of religious polemicism, he had found for himself a better place from which to judge the Apostle to the Gentiles: both the short-comings, which had been the traditional diet of

Jewish apologists down through the ages, and the achievements, which he preferred to dwell upon. As he once wrote, “I hate seeming to belittle or cavil at any of the world’s heroes (e.g. Paul). It seems so irrelevant”.<sup>178</sup> As a Jew with an unusually positive regard for Christianity and Christian scholarship, he was able to criticise Paul in a non-confrontational, non-polemical manner.

Since the time of Schweitzer, Pauline studies have focused upon four areas of investigation: the history-of-religions approach, theology, exegesis, and hermeneutics.<sup>179</sup> Montefiore’s contributions were most original with regard to the first and last of these categories. Greatly influenced by the *Religionsgeschichte* school of thought, he was the first to attempt to define Hellenistic Judaism as part of his approach to Paul. While his suggestion that the apostle’s criticisms of Judaism were actually targeted at Diaspora Judaism has attracted limited support, the questions he raised have had a considerable impact upon New Testament scholarship. This is reflected in the fact that two of the most important post-war works on Pauline thought, by WD Davies and EP Sanders, have considered Montefiore’s contributions at length.<sup>180</sup> Regarding Pauline theology and exegesis, Montefiore had little to offer which was original or radical; he generally followed the traditional reading of Paul. When it came to hermeneutics, however, and considering in what ways Paul could be appropriated for the modern world (and specially the modern Liberal Jewish world), Montefiore’s positive approach was unique among Jewish thinkers. The importance of religious truth for him, wherever it was found, was paramount. If Paul’s letters contained universal truths, then as far as the founder of Liberal Judaism was concerned, these fragments were worth incorporating into its teachings, albeit in a modified form.<sup>181</sup> Montefiore’s main concern with Paul was to present these truths in such a way as to be intelligible and even desirable to Jews. He felt this was quite possible, especially if, as he wrote elsewhere, “so far as we can learn from Jesus and even from Paul, we learn from Jews, and not from aliens”.<sup>182</sup>

Montefiore was well aware of the importance of Paul’s theology for Christianity and therefore for Jewish-Christian understanding, and it made up much of the background to his voluminous writings. His greater interest, however, lay in the Gospel teachings and their rich ethical content, which he hoped to harness for the benefit of Liberal Judaism. The doctrines and dogma of Paul’s epistles appeared less profitable in this respect and thus appealed less to him, and so fewer works were devoted to the

subject. Even so, Montefiore did approach Paul positively and so distinguished himself from the majority of Jewish Pauline scholars whose goal was either to legitimise the traditionally hostile stance taken against Paul, or to simply reconstruct Paul historically without making value-judgements.

Having sketched out Montefiore's history-of-religions approach to Diaspora Judaism in section I, it is now possible to criticise his arguments in greater detail. This will be followed by an examination of his attempt to reclaim what he could of Paul for Liberal Judaism.

## ***ii – Montefiore's Understanding of Paul***

As previously mentioned, Montefiore produced two extended articles, both published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*. 'First Impressions of Paul' (1894) concentrated upon what he regarded as distinctly Pauline, such as his Christology and his conception of sin and the Law; it also discussed the merits of his ethics. 'Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of St Paul' (1901) returned to the difficulties in Paul's doctrines regarding the Law and sin, and also contrasted how Paul, the Rabbis and Jesus respectively treated common motifs in their thinking. *Judaism and St Paul* (1914), the only book, was written in essay format; references to sources were almost non-existent, and although he took into account the works of contemporary and authoritative Christian writers such as Loisy and Harnack, he seldom referred to Jewish writers.<sup>183</sup> The first part was Montefiore's contribution to Pauline scholarship; it covered most of his earlier treatment before systematically attacking the idea that Paul was a rabbinic Jew and offering an alternative theory concerning the nature of Paul's pre-Christian religion. In the process, Montefiore addressed certain topics which he had not fully developed elsewhere, such as Paul's mysticism and his new universalism. The second part characteristically picked up on those aspects of the epistles which might be salvaged for the benefit of Liberal Judaism, such as Paul's rejection of religious particularism, his attitude towards suffering and against giving needless offence, and even elements of his mysticism. His attitude can be gauged from the comment, "What is positive [in Paul's theology] is so much more pleasant and useful than what is negative".<sup>184</sup>

### **a – The Question of Identifying Paul as a Rabbinic Jew**

Montefiore had a sophisticated grasp of the dynamics of Paul's background and thought. In 'Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of St Paul', he identified four possible "strands" or factors which had contributed towards Pauline theology.<sup>185</sup> Firstly, the apostle's own religious genius. Secondly, Christianity, which he defined as "whatever came to Paul by revelation, tradition, or any means, concerning the life, death and resurrection of Christ". Thirdly, Hellenism, both "the direct contact of St Paul's mind with the Hellenism of his day" (the extent of which he admitted was difficult to ascertain), and "the influence of Hellenism refracted through a Jewish medium".<sup>186</sup> And, fourthly, Rabbinic or Palestinian Judaism, which he differentiated from Apocalyptic and Hellenistic Judaisms.<sup>187</sup>

Montefiore began the essay with a warning about directly comparing Paul's writings with those of the Rabbis. He was keen to avoid the practices of traditional Jewish and Christian apologists who had highlighted the best of their respective systems whilst denigrating those of their opponents. But his rationale for viewing such a contrast as "unfair" was, for a Jew, unusual to say the least:

St Paul was a religious genius of the first order, who writes in the flush of fresh enthusiasm. The Midrash is a confused jumble of sermons, parables, sayings, and anecdotes without system or plan. There are indeed occasional flashes of genius, but most of it is of very second and third-rate order of literary merit.<sup>188</sup>

While recognising the "contradictions and antinomies" in Paul's theology, he felt that there was still an overall coherence which made Paul far more systematic than the Rabbis, making it unfair to compare the two.<sup>189</sup> Classically educated and concerned to present religious truth as effectively as possible, Montefiore admired this quality of Paul's teaching. If, however, Paul was more systematic in his theology, he could also be "transitory, unmystic, hard, irreligious, immoral".<sup>190</sup> One of the consequences of this, Montefiore argued, was Paul's dogmatic attitude towards the Law, which was far more "juridic" than that of the Rabbis'. Today, a student of Paul is warned against the dangers of treating Paul as a systematic theologian, or of approaching the epistles as anything

other than specific responses to actual situations and dilemmas facing various churches in Asia Minor.<sup>191</sup> Montefiore would not have disputed this. His point was simply that Paul's epistles, written by a Hellenistically influenced individual, were more systematic in nature and presentation than was the un-systematic collection of writings contained within the vast rabbinic literature.

In the early articles, Montefiore was not prepared to address directly the question of "how far Paul's Judaism was rather modelled upon the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo than on the Rabbinic Judaism of Hillel, Gamaliel or Akiba".<sup>192</sup> And he was content to leave it to other scholars to determine whether the Judaism of 50 was the same as that of 500. He suggested it was enough that,

the main elements of the Rabbinic religion underwent little change from 50 to 500 AD. Above all, the central position of the Law was not shaken or altered.<sup>193</sup>

This was an important assumption, for the sources of his understanding of the "Rabbinic Judaism of the time" were of uncertain relevance: Apocalyptic literature, which he observed could only be used with great care and caution (and which in practice he ignored), and the rabbinic literature itself, that is, the Talmudim and Midrashim, which had been written several centuries after the apostle's death. He was well aware that he was on shaky ground in describing the Judaism of 50 AD as "Rabbinic Judaism" and, in fact, subsequent scholarship has shown it to have been an over-simplification.<sup>194</sup> Today, research relies to a far greater extent upon the works of Josephus and Philo, the Dead Sea scrolls together with other early Jewish writings, and archaeological discoveries for its understanding of first-century Judaism(s). It is certainly not reliant upon the rabbinic texts in these matters. It would, of course, be unfair to condemn Montefiore for the limited resources available to him – the Dead Sea scrolls, for example, were only discovered in 1947 – but his failure to give due weight to the writings of Philo or Josephus, with which he was quite familiar, is regrettable and cannot simply be put down to the contemporary lack of interest amongst scholars.<sup>195</sup> In any case, the central pin to his argument that the centrality of the Law was common to both first- and fifth-century Judaism remains an acceptable hypothesis today.<sup>196</sup>

By the time of *Judaism and St Paul*, Montefiore was prepared to posit more

definitely that there was no great difference between the Judaism practised in the first century and that practised in the fourth, fifth or sixth centuries. In his opinion, Judaism in 500 was certainly not legalistic works-righteousness.<sup>197</sup> As far as he was concerned, there was no reason to think that the Judaism of 50 was grossly inferior. As far as he could tell – and he admitted that he was by no means an authority on first-century Judaism – it seemed that there was only one major difference, a “weakness” of first-century Judaism in despising the “sinners” and outcasts; but this was the background to Jesus’ teachings, he argued, and had nothing to do with Paul’s.<sup>198</sup>

At first, Montefiore had been at a loss how to explain the apostle’s apparent misrepresentation of Judaism. Paul’s description of Judaism was quite unrecognisable to him. As he put it,

St Paul beats the air with words, which, magnificent as they are, seem out of relation to the actual Jewish religion... [Paul’s arguments] leave the impression: either this man was never a Rabbinic Jew at all, or he has quite forgotten what Rabbinic Judaism was and is.<sup>199</sup>

Later, however, and in contrast to the traditional Jewish view that regarded Paul as intentionally misrepresenting Judaism due to a Christian bias, Montefiore accepted Paul’s criticisms as actually representing the Judaism with which he had been familiar. *Judaism and St Paul* was his attempt to demonstrate that the Judaism with which Paul had been familiar had not been Rabbinic Judaism but another kind. Significantly, then, Montefiore did not attempt a defence of Judaism against Pauline criticism but rather sought to move Rabbinic Judaism out of the line of fire.

As we saw in the first half of this chapter, Montefiore went about this by examining various aspects or characteristics of Pauline thought and contrasting them with contemporary Rabbinic Judaism. He dealt first with the traditional Jewish complaints: if Paul had been a Pharisaic Jew, could he have evolved a concept of the messiah that was so alien to rabbinic Jews? And could he have become so interested in non-Jews? Montefiore answered these questions for himself, discovering in the process that they did not, in fact, indicate that Paul’s thinking was outside the pale of the Judaism of his time. Although the Christology of, say, Romans and Corinthians was unacceptable to a modern rabbinic Jew, he suggested that during the first half of the first century, there

was no such difficulty or impossibility in accepting a messiah who was “a regular divine being”.<sup>200</sup> Later scholarship, in the work of WD Davies and others, has supported this observation.<sup>201</sup> An important theme in Davies’ work was that the idea of the messiahship of Jesus was actually a vital element of Paul’s thought (that is, not a peripheral element) and that the Apostle to the Gentiles retained a distinctly Jewish idea at the centre of his thought.<sup>202</sup> However, in common with the vast majority of Protestant scholars at that time who generally explained Paul’s concept of Christ in Hellenistic terms, Montefiore would not have agreed to such an emphasis in Paul’s thought with the result that this important indicator of Paul’s Jewishness was not given due weight.<sup>203</sup> With regard to Jewish interest in Gentile proselytes, Montefiore argued that it had not been uncommon in the first century; there had even been cases of rabbis advising proselytes that only baptism was required for conversion and that circumcision was not essential.<sup>204</sup> Montefiore did conclude, however, that any ideas Paul had had about breaking down the wall of distinction between Gentile and Jew had probably been suggested from a non-Jewish environment.<sup>205</sup>

There were other questions which Montefiore felt were more pertinent in demonstrating that Paul had never experienced Rabbinic Judaism. For instance, how could his theological pessimism ever have evolved from there? In comparison with the Rabbis’ optimistic world-view, Paul was strikingly pessimistic.

[Paul] was obsessed by a sense of human frailty and sinfulness: he had discovered no remedy strong enough to cope with the Yetzer ha-Ra, the evil inclination, the wicked promptings of the heart. God was not near and loving enough for him as he was to the Rabbinic Jew; repentance and the Day of Atonement did not enter so deeply into the very make and texture of his being; the good impulse (the Yetzer ha-Tob), the right promptings of the heart were less real to him... He had always the horrid feeling of the unconquered evil inclination gnawing within his soul.<sup>206</sup>

He felt that Paul was too pessimistic about the power of the sin, the Yetzer ha-Ra or the evil impulse, and about the need for a supernatural deliverer. As he put it elsewhere, “The cry, ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ is, on the whole, an un-Rabbinic cry”.<sup>207</sup> A saying from the Tanchuma, “Whatever the Righteous do, they do through the Holy Spirit”, better illustrated for Montefiore the beliefs of the Rabbis of the period. The absence of this “current dogma of Paul’s time” in the Epistles, that is, the absence of the pre-Christian working of the Holy Spirit and of the good impulse, was one

of the many puzzles which his writings posed for Montefiore.<sup>208</sup> His conclusion was that it would never have been possible for someone from a background of Rabbinic Judaism to have developed such a pessimistic world-view.

Likewise, Paul's apparent attraction towards Hellenistic mysticism was difficult to explain if his background had been Rabbinic Judaism. Montefiore did not emphasise Paul's Christ-mysticism (that is, being "in Christ") to anywhere near the same degree as, for example, Schweitzer would do.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, he pointed to the parallels between Paul's theology and Hellenistic ideas such as re-birth through rites of initiation, dying to live again, endowment of supernatural vigour, conquest over sin, and the belief in the indwelling god as the source of the cult followers' new and higher life. Montefiore's powers of empathy led him to suggest that deep down, Paul ached for

that new heart and new spirit which the Prophets had declared was to be the gift of God to Israel in the Messianic Age. And that new spirit was to be God's spirit. The new personality would, in a sense, be divine. No longer need one sin, no longer need one be told in many enactments what to do and from what to refrain; the divine spirit, the new heart, would assuredly impel towards the right.<sup>210</sup>

Although accepting the existence of mysticism (that is, the desire to achieve union with the Divine) within historical Judaism, Montefiore felt that it was not characteristic of the religion. Rabbinic Judaism did not, he maintained, readily produce "a mystic temper or soul", and "its saint does not naturally speak of being in God, or of God being in him".<sup>211</sup>

Thus he saw Paul's mystic leanings as further evidence of his independence from Rabbinic Judaism.

As we saw in the first half of this chapter, however, the subject of Paul's pessimism did not feature in every Jewish writer's treatment of the apostle, indicating that Montefiore's conclusion is not uniformly substantiated. Later scholarship has demonstrated, in fact, that it is unnecessary to go outside Rabbinic Judaism to account for such pessimism.<sup>212</sup> Similarly, scholars have shown that mystic experience has been a common occurrence within Judaism down through the centuries,<sup>213</sup> suggesting that Montefiore's definition of Judaism was too narrow and exclusive and that his *Religionsgeschichte* approach, in which the mystical element in Paul's thought was explained in terms of Hellenistic syncretism, was of limited use. What is more,

Schweitzer had written *Paul and his Interpreters* (ET 1912) after Montefiore's two essays on Paul (1894, 1901) but before this book (1914). The fact that Montefiore failed to address Schweitzer's claim that Paul was an eschatologically minded apocalyptic Jew (that is, that Paul's thought was essentially Jewish) does not reflect well on his scholarship.<sup>214</sup> Montefiore's description of Pauline pessimism and mysticism as "un-Rabbinic" can, then, be shown in the light of later scholarship to have been inaccurate.

It was Paul's concept of the Law, however, which most puzzled Montefiore and which was treated at length in 'First Impressions of Paul'. This was not simply the common Jewish complaint that Paul's "violent antithesis between works and faith" would have been incomprehensible to the Rabbis who had harmonised the two quite unconsciously. It was more to do with Paul's idea regarding the purpose of the Law. The idea that "Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20) led Montefiore to agree with his old tutor Benjamin Jowett that, for Paul, sin was "regarded as the consciousness of sin" and was therefore inextricably linked to the Law, a position he could at least understand. But Paul's idea that "the giving of the Law was to make things worse, to increase the quality and accentuate the sharpness of sin" was another matter.<sup>215</sup> This position was, to Montefiore, in total opposition to the Jewish conception of the Law and could not be explained by reference to Hellenism – it could only be put down to the radical originality of its author.<sup>216</sup> Montefiore went on to examine various aspects of Paul's teaching on the Law, one by one. He concluded his survey by contrasting Paul's beliefs with the traditional ones.

We have seen that while [the Law was] given apparently for eternity, its real purpose [according to Paul] was only temporary. Its seeming object was to make men better, and to qualify them for the kingdom of God; its true object was to create the knowledge and lust of sin. At its best, its intended result was to stimulate a desire for redemption through the medium of a spiritual despair; at its worst it led almost inevitably to self-delusion, hypocrisy and pride. It claims fulfilment, but no man can fulfil it; it demands obedience, but none can obey. It threatens the transgressor with a curse, but was only given that transgression might abound; it promises the doer of it reward, but the reward is beyond man's power to attain. It assumes that its commands may be obeyed, but the assumption of obedience is more fatal than the consciousness of transgression. Its only end is death: death for him who tries and knows that he has failed, death to him who tries and thinks that he has accomplished... Truly an awful gift of God; a marvellous issue of evil from that which in itself was "holy and righteous and good". Surely the disproportion of effect to cause is itself enough to prove the error of the argument.<sup>217</sup>

Taken as a whole, he felt that Paul's attitude towards the Law was lamentable and complained that the apostle made no distinction between moral and ceremonial ordinances and that his opinion alternated between "good and divine" one minute, and "the cause of sin and a curse" the next.<sup>218</sup> Montefiore did not want to paint too black a picture, adding, "One must not... suppose that Paul was really full of passionate hatred of the Law as such. He only got irritated when people tried to introduce the Law among Gentile converts".<sup>219</sup> But he came down firmly that the apostle's view of the Law was nonetheless alien to Rabbinic Judaism.

On the related subject of Repentance, Montefiore was emphatic in his condemnation of Paul. The apostle had believed that since the Law could not save men from the power of sin, Christ had come to end the Law and, among other things, grant them forgiveness. Montefiore simply could not reconcile this need for forgiveness with the concept of repentance, which he considered to be an integral element of Rabbinic Judaism. God might be angry, he reasoned, but he was also compassionate and "delights in the exercise of forgiveness far more than the exercise of punishment".<sup>220</sup> There was thus no need for Paul's despair.

In no other respect do the Epistles of St Paul more clearly show their curious lack of relation to the actual religion of his contemporaries. And yet it is just here where the very hinge of his whole theology is fixed. I am at a loss to explain the puzzle.<sup>221</sup>

While he was aware that the idea of vicarious atonement was not unknown to the Rabbis, Montefiore argued that such passages as referred to 'the merits of the Fathers' or 'the merits of the Righteous' were but a drop in the ocean compared to the overwhelming mass of passages about repentance and forgiveness. If anything, he protested, the Rabbis erred on the side of compassion and were perhaps a little too inclined to think that God would inevitably pardon their transgressions.<sup>222</sup>

Once again, these matters do not seem to have been quite as straightforward as Montefiore had supposed. Subsequent scholarship has indicated the strong possibility that Paul's view of the Law was not as unique amongst first-century Jews as Montefiore and his contemporaries had believed. In the Apocalypse of Ezra, for example, the Law is

regarded as a special divine gift to Israel, which nevertheless cannot redeem the sinner. WD Davies has stressed that “in their attitude to the Law, despite their recognition of its impotence, both Paul and the author of 4 Ezra are typically rabbinic”.<sup>223</sup> Thus Montefiore’s neglect of certain Jewish writings has left him vulnerable to the charge of superficiality. More significantly still, many Pauline scholars (following EP Sanders) understand Paul’s attitude towards the Law as a consequence of his discovery that Jesus was the messiah who had inaugurated the Messianic Age. That is, Paul is understood to have begun with the solution that God had saved his people through Christ, before finding fault with the Law; to Paul’s mind, Christ had come to save, and hence the Law could never have been intended to do so.<sup>224</sup> In this context, repentance for breaking the commandments was neither here nor there – the important thing for Paul was that salvation could only have come through Christ. In line with the Protestant scholarship of his day, and concentrating almost exclusively on Romans and Galatians, Montefiore viewed Paul’s theological journey as beginning with doubts about the Law and ending with his discovery of the solution in Christ. Reinforcing this view was Montefiore’s own anti-halakhic convictions which, as we have seen in previous chapters, lay behind the founding of Liberal Judaism. Since a liberation-from-tradition stance had been the justification for his own reformation and an integral element of his own self-identity, Montefiore could hardly have helped perceiving Paul’s criticisms of the Law as anything other than central to the apostle’s message.<sup>225</sup> In the light of these developments, Montefiore’s confidence in describing Paul’s treatment of the Law as “un-Rabbinic” now appears less certain, as does the idea that Paul’s criticism of Torah was central to his thought (this, in turn, helps explain Paul’s alleged neglect of repentance).

In summary, Montefiore felt that it was quite possible to imagine a rabbinic Jew who had become a Christian and believed that Jesus was the messiah; who attacked the various abuses within the system; whose mysticism freed him from the shackles of sin; and who even taught that the Law was not binding on Gentiles (since the Messianic Era was at hand). What he had difficulty in accepting was that such a rabbinic Jew could have produced the theory of the Law found in Romans, have emphasised mysticism and pessimism to such a degree, or have ignored the rabbinic teachings on repentance and God’s forgiveness. As he put it,

From the Rabbinic Judaism of 500 as basis, many of the salient doctrines of the great Epistles could

never have evolved. They would have been so very unnecessary, and, because unnecessary, they could not have been thought out.<sup>226</sup>

His argument was two-fold. Firstly, Paul's criticisms of Judaism rang hollow in the light of the evidence of rabbinic texts. Secondly, Paul could not have ignored key elements of Rabbinic Judaism if he had known them. The implication was that the apostle had not been familiar with Rabbinic Judaism. Thus he found himself "disposed to look with suspicion" upon the idea that Paul was a disciple of Gamaliel, and maintained that "Paul was no Rabbinic Jew".<sup>227</sup> As regards the first charge, we have seen that subsequent scholarship has shown Montefiore's conception of first-century Judaism to have been too limited in scope, that many of those aspects of Paul's thought which he identified as "un-Rabbinic" could indeed be found in the rabbinic literature, and that his understanding of the apostle had been warped by the contemporary over-emphasis upon the critique of Judaism and of the teaching on justification by faith found in a restricted selection of the epistles. Nevertheless, Montefiore's second point, the question of why Paul seemingly ignored essential aspects of Judaism, has proved to have been of lasting influence. It has led scholars (following Sanders) to re-prioritise justification by faith in Paul's thought as a subsidiary, though not unimportant, element introduced for polemical purposes.<sup>228</sup>

### **b – Paul's "Pre-Christian Religion"**

It was not until 1914 and *Judaism and St Paul* that Montefiore was prepared to address the question of the nature of Paul's "pre-Christian religion" directly.<sup>229</sup> In contrast to those Jews who had written before him (including Graetz, Wise, Kohler and Schechter) but in common with the majority of Protestant New Testament scholars, Montefiore had accepted Paul's criticisms as accurately representing the Judaism the apostle was familiar with. (The idea that Paul might have exaggerated or misrepresented Judaism as a result of the heated polemicism had apparently not occurred to them). He had therefore come to believe that the only fair and reasonable explanation of Paul's apparent ignorance of Rabbinic Judaism was that (i) Paul had come from a Judaism other than Rabbinic, and (ii) that he had been influenced by religious conceptions and practices which were non-Jewish. As he put it, "The religion of Paul antecedent to his conversion must have been different from the typical and average Rabbinic Judaism of 300 or 500".<sup>230</sup> By piecing together what Paul had to say about his pre-Christian

religion, Montefiore concluded that the apostle's experience had been of a poorer, inferior kind of Judaism. In his opinion, it had been

more systematic, and perhaps a little more philosophic and less child-like, but possibly for those very reasons it was less intimate, warm, joyous and comforting. Its God was more distant and less loving... The early religion of Paul was more sombre and gloomy than Rabbinic Judaism; the world was a more miserable and God-forsaken place; there were fewer simple joys and happinesses... The outlook was darker: man could be, and was, less good... God was not constantly helping and forgiving.<sup>231</sup>

Another feature of this “poorer religion” which helped to explain Paul’s later theology was its more developed, less ‘human’ conception of the messiah.<sup>232</sup> Rather than accepting Paul’s writings to be either essentially accurate in their analysis of Judaism, or totally misrepresentative and incomprehensible, Montefiore argued that the pseudo-Judaism described by Paul might be best understood as a transcendental, philosophic form of Judaism brought about from exposure to Hellenism.

Montefiore was by no means alone in viewing Hellenistic Judaism as “transcendental”. Moore had written, “How innocent were the Palestinian masters of an abstract or transcendent or any other sort of philosophical idea of God”<sup>233</sup> and Abelson had considered the Hellenistic conception of God, as presented by Philo, as “too impersonal. He is too much of a metaphysical entity”.<sup>234</sup> But others, including Abrahams and Bentwich, had argued contrary,<sup>235</sup> and Davies has pointed out that Jewish Apocalypticism could have easily supplied the element of transcendentalism in place of Hellenistic philosophy.<sup>236</sup> We have already seen that Montefiore’s neglect of certain Jewish eschatological writings had led him to describe Paul’s attitude towards the Law as “un-Rabbinic”, and this is a similar case of where his general avoidance of the eschatological aspects of Paul’s thought had flawed his understanding of the apostle. Schweitzer had been the first to criticise those writers who regarded eschatology as an aspect of Paul’s thought which could be isolated, when in fact it had conditioned his theology throughout.<sup>237</sup> Similarly, Davies later argued that any treatment of Paul was, in a wider sense, a treatment of Jewish eschatology.<sup>238</sup> As far as Montefiore was concerned, however, Paul’s expectation of the end of the world had been an unfortunate mistake, and one on which he would not dwell. Thus, as Bultmann would later do,<sup>239</sup> he marginalised the apostle’s apocalyptic roots, and contextualised him instead in the world

of Hellenistic-Jewish syncretism.<sup>240</sup>

Montefiore had redefined Paul's pre-conversion religion in terms of a first-century Judaism whilst simultaneously placing much of his thinking outside that of the rabbinic stream of thought. In this he was followed by James Parkes who interpreted Paul's criticisms to be against Diaspora Judaism<sup>241</sup> and by GF Moore who also agreed that the apostle's polemic was incomprehensible if directed against rabbinic Jews.<sup>242</sup> Even so, the idea that Paul should be understood primarily on the basis of Hellenistic Judaism rather than Rabbinic (or Palestinian) Judaism has not substantially influenced subsequent Pauline scholarship.<sup>243</sup> As we have seen, much of what Montefiore suggested was inadequate, not least his neat compartmentalisation of Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism, and the fact that several of the motifs which he regarded as derived from Hellenistic Judaism (such as Paul's pessimism, mysticism, and transcendentalism) could, in fact, be found within the rabbinic literature. As Schoeps observed, it was almost inevitable that Montefiore's attempt to replace one unknown quantity, the theology of Saul, by another unknown quantity, the theology of the Pharisaic Diaspora, would have failed.<sup>244</sup> Even so, the eminent New Testament scholar EP Sanders, recognising the value of Montefiore's contribution in exploring the identity of Paul's pre-Christian religion, has criticised early twentieth-century scholars for failing to have taken up Montefiore's point that there must have been some reasonable explanation for why essential aspects of Rabbinic Judaism were missing from Paul.<sup>245</sup>

### *iii – Montefiore's Appropriation of Paul*

In seeking to introduce Paul to a Jewish audience, Montefiore had been well aware of the obstacles in his path, not least the challenge of impartiality. He wondered whether

It may be that the Jew is both too near Paul and too far from him to do him justice or even adequately to understand him. The ashes of old controversies still glow within the Jew's mind and heart. Just as it is very hard for the modern Christian... to understand and appreciate the Rabbinic religion, so it may also be very hard for the modern... Jew to appreciate and understand Paul.<sup>246</sup>

Nevertheless, his characteristic optimism led him to argue that if there were spiritual benefits to be gained from reading Paul – and he was convinced there were – then it would be in the interests of modern Jews to approach the epistles with a more open mind. This attitude did not, however, prevent him from condemning those aspects of the apostle's thought which he felt were erroneous, as we shall see in his treatment of Paul's view of Christ, and of his ethical and universalist teachings.

### **a – Paul and Christ**

As mentioned earlier, Montefiore based his assessment of Paul upon a limited number of letters.<sup>247</sup> One effect of this was to reject as Pauline the more developed Christology of other epistles. He fully recognised the central importance of Christ in Paul's message; for the apostle, “Christianity is not the Law plus Christ. It is Jesus Christ alone.”<sup>248</sup> But he imagined Paul's authentic view to have been that Christ, although pre-existent before his human birth, had originally been created by God, and suggested that the apostle had not sought to “imply the co- eternity or co-equality of Christ with God”.<sup>249</sup> Obviously, since he was seeking to introduce the apostle to a Jewish audience in as positive a light as possible, it was in Montefiore's interest to play down Paul's conception of the divinity of Christ where he could. Nevertheless, this was a remarkable statement and set Montefiore apart from his Jewish contemporaries. Rightly or wrongly he had attempted to rescue Paul, to re-interpret the traditional reading of him, when all other Jews had been content to reject him *in toto*. Both as a Jew and as a liberal, Montefiore had opposed any claim of divinity for Jesus. The superimposition of this belief onto the author of the epistles was an example of something we see happening with innumerable interpretations of Jesus suggested by Jews and Christians alike in support of their own particular beliefs. What was remarkable was that Montefiore, as a Jew, should have chosen to have used the Great Apostate in such a way.

Of course, there were many aspects of Paul's teachings that Montefiore could not salvage or reinterpret. When this occurred, he made his unconditional rejection of Paul's teaching clear. An obvious example can be seen in their differing appreciations of Christ's significance. Montefiore pointed out that the epistles rarely alluded to Jesus' recorded teachings, and suggested that Paul's relationship to Christ was that of disciple

to master only as far as the messiahship, crucifixion and resurrection were concerned.<sup>250</sup> He could not sympathise with Paul's conception of the nature of Christ's work for man:

First and foremost, it is not the work which Christ himself essayed to do in the narratives of the Synoptics. It is not the work of a great teacher. For Paul the significance of Christ's work lies almost exclusively in his crucifixion and resurrection. His work is essentially miraculous and supernatural. It is conditioned by his nature.<sup>251</sup>

To Montefiore, whose rationalistic worldview excluded the miraculous, and who so admired the ethical sermons of Jesus, this was a very unfortunate misrepresentation of the Jewish teacher. That the apostle seemingly placed Christ's ethical work in a secondary position – “ethical not only in the creation of human faith with all its issues, but also because it was, in itself, an exhibition of goodness and love”<sup>252</sup> – was to be regretted.

Another example was a difference in the reasoning behind Jesus' and Paul's disagreements with Judaism. In 'Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of St Paul', he argued that the apostle did not attack Judaism for the “real evils and defects which Jesus found and censored in the religion of his time” but for theological and theoretical differences with Christianity.<sup>253</sup> While Jesus attacked the replacement of morality with legal ritual, Montefiore could find no similar charge made in the epistles; he argued that for Paul the Law was sin, “not in virtue of its containing a number of purely ritual enactments, but because it is law and all that law implies”.<sup>254</sup> Again, Montefiore pointed out that while Paul censored “boastings”, these were not “the practical and everyday evils which are so nobly castigated by Jesus”, that is, the self-righteousness and spiritual pride of the super-religious. And finally, while Montefiore could understand Jesus' attacks on the weaknesses of the “ill-directed intellectualism” which he felt had hampered first-century Judaism, he found no parallel in Paul's rejection of wisdom and knowledge which “springs from different roots and has different implications”.<sup>255</sup> He argued,

It is the theological opposition between human merit and divine grace which is the dominating subject before the writer's [Paul's] mind, not an actual society of men.<sup>256</sup>

In contrasting Jesus' internal criticism with Paul's external, metaphysical concerns,

Montefiore had found a way by which he hoped to validate, and then incorporate, Jesus' Jewish teachings (as we saw in chapter three) whilst remaining free to reject what he regarded as Paul's non-Jewish doctrines. To Jews, the two had been linked together for a long time and Montefiore wanted the differences to be clear: Paul came from outside the fold and was influenced by Hellenistic concepts, while Jesus was a reformer, concerned with correcting certain specific abuses within Judaism. Paul's christology had emphasised the saving work of Christ at the expense of the teachings of Christ, and therefore could not easily be appropriated.

### **b – Paul's Ethics and Universalism**

Due to his somewhat warped perception of Paul, Montefiore regarded the apostle's ethical teaching as peripheral, making up only a small part of his teachings as a whole. His fixation upon Paul's critique of Judaism and championship of justification of faith over works (as emphasised in Romans and Galatians) had, as we have seen, blinded him to the centrality of the theme of being "in Christ" – and thus to the closely related issue of social behaviour. What is now regarded as an essential area of study within Pauline scholarship<sup>257</sup> was, for Montefiore, essentially only a passing reference to the debt Paul owed Judaism. Nonetheless, he felt that Paul's ethical teachings were comprehensive and wrote admiringly of the wealth of ethical language.<sup>258</sup> The apostle's exhortations did not exceed the best moral teachings of the Old Testament and rabbinic literature since, as he reminded his Jewish readers, it had originated from these sources (a view generally confirmed by recent Pauline scholarship).<sup>259</sup> Yet he could not help but admire their "spirit and sureness of touch, a vigour and connectedness essentially their own".<sup>260</sup> There was a unity in Paul's ethics; his beliefs, in contrast to the Rabbis' writings were,

deducible from certain principles, so that they become something more than isolated and heterogeneous maxims. They may fairly be said to flow from the one central principle of Love.<sup>261</sup>

Ever concerned with what practical use he could make of religious teachings, Montefiore pointed out several other advantages which he felt Paul's ethical writings possessed over the Rabbis': they were easily available, were conveniently contained within a single volume, and were "nobly expressed and redolent of enthusiasm and genius".<sup>262</sup>

More than this, Montefiore found Paul's ethical writings deeply inspirational. He suggested that the apostle's religious and moral enthusiasm was the secret to his "perennial power over the hearts of men" and he found in his hatred of sin a continual challenge.<sup>263</sup> Also, he recognised and admired Paul's attempt to base his religion upon the love of God, that is, on the love of God to man and on the love of man towards God, and was keen to commend this to his Jewish audience.<sup>264</sup> It was this inspirational aspect of Paul's ethical teachings that he most wanted to appropriate for the modern day.

A more significant departure from Rabbinic Judaism, Montefiore noted, had been Paul's universalist teachings. As a Liberal Jew, Montefiore considered the particularism of Rabbinic Judaism to have been its "great outstanding fault".<sup>265</sup> He regretted the fact that, historically, the Jew of 500 (just like the Christian of 500) expected his "enemy" to receive damnation. At the same time, he wanted to emphasise that

this indifference, dislike, contempt, particularism, – this ready and not unwilling consignment of the non-believer and the non-Jew to perdition and gloom, – was quite consistent with the most passionate religious faith and with the most exquisite and delicate charity.<sup>266</sup>

It was not that he failed to understand how the situation had arisen, but that he felt that the conditions that had determined the exclusion of Gentiles within Judaism no longer applied in the modern day. This was an integral part of the teaching of Montefiore's own Liberal Judaism. It does not come as a surprise, then, to find him praising those aspects of Paul's teaching which were concerned with "breaking down the wall of distinction between Jew and Gentile".<sup>267</sup> He himself had come to the same conclusion as Paul, namely that "Judaism could not become a universal religion together with its inviolate Law".<sup>268</sup> He believed that Paul's knowledge of the Hellenistic mystery cults had influenced his pre-Christian thinking and made him ready and eager to discover a universal method of salvation, suited and predestined for all mankind. But while he commended Paul for preaching universalism and solving the "puzzle of the universal God and the national cult",<sup>269</sup> he could not accept the new form of religious particularism which Paul had forged. Neither could he credit Paul for originating the idea. He felt that, keeping in mind Old Testament universalist passages such as those found in Jonah, Isaiah 51 and several Psalms, "one has to acknowledge that Paul has only smoothed more

completely, more definitely, what these others had begun to smooth before him".<sup>270</sup>

In this, of course, Montefiore was reiterating what we have seen in previous chapters to have been the contemporary Jewish claim that God had always intended Judaism to have been a universal religion, transcending national and racial boundaries. As Montefiore was well aware, however, Paul had taught that only those "in Christ" could be "saved", something quite different from the liberal aspirations for a non-racial, non-religious Judaism. Thus Montefiore's appropriation of the apostle's universalist teachings was necessarily limited.

### **c – Liberal Judaism and Paul**

Looking back over Paul's theology as a whole, Montefiore could not avoid regarding it as fatally flawed. The vast mass of Paul's theology had to be rejected, he explained, because

If all men are 'saved' whether they believe in Christ or reject him, whether they are idolaters or monotheists, [then] the basis of Pauline theology collapses. The whole scheme and fabric tumble like a pack of cards to the ground.<sup>271</sup>

Significantly, Paul failed not so much because Montefiore was a Jew but because he was a liberal. In the light of his liberal beliefs, and in spite of his original plan (to preserve as much religious truth in Paul's teachings as possible), Montefiore could not help but regard the majority of Paul's teaching as redundant. "Is, then, anything left over?" he wondered.

What a mass we have rejected! Paul's pessimism, his Christology, much in his conception of sin, his conception of the Law, his conception of God's wrath, his demonology, his view of human past and human future, have all gone by the board.<sup>272</sup>

Nor could Paul be of much use with regard to the Holy Spirit, or the character of God. This was because Paul's doctrine concerning these had to be pruned and curtailed before any use could be made of it, and even what remained did not significantly go beyond what had been taught in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha and in the rabbinical

literature.<sup>273</sup>

Even so, there were fragments of the apostle which it suited Montefiore's purposes to concentrate upon, and which he felt might well be profitable for Liberal Judaism to appropriate. At the top of this list was, of course, Paul's introduction of a practical (although imperfect) universalism. Again, he admired the apostle's teaching in not giving needless offence for the benefit of those who were "weaker" in faith. This was a policy which he attempted to practice in the context of the Anglo-Jewish response to his own Liberal teachings, especially with regard to the lax liberal observation of the dietary laws.<sup>274</sup> Similarly, Montefiore felt that the controversial use of the vernacular in synagogue services could be justified along the lines of argument that Paul had offered so many centuries before.<sup>275</sup> There was even one element of moral worth in Paul's objection to justification by works that was worth salvaging. According to Montefiore, the apostle had taught that one failed to win righteousness by fulfilling the Law because one could never fulfil it; worse still, one failed to win righteousness even if one did fulfil the Law. In spite of his recognition that "no Jew ever looked at the Law from this point of view", Montefiore admitted that he felt there was, indeed, a danger that "works righteousness" could lead to self-righteousness and self-delusion.<sup>276</sup> Interestingly, he also admired Paul's mysticism, "its solemnity, its power and its beauty" even as a "double outsider... that is, a Jew who is not a mystic".<sup>277</sup> He especially appreciated Paul's teaching regarding the reproduction of the death and the risen life of the messiah in the experience of each individual believer, seeing in it a parallel to the rabbinic teaching that a proselyte, brought to the knowledge of the One God, was made new and recreated.<sup>278</sup> Paul's attitude towards suffering could also be learned from. He observed,

Paul not only rises superior to his sufferings, but he rejoices in them. And perhaps in this exultation and rejoicing lies the most peculiar and instructive feature of his career, the feature, moreover, in which he was, though perhaps unconsciously, in fullest accordance with the teaching of his Master and Lord.<sup>279</sup>

Far more than any of his Jewish contemporaries, Montefiore had approached Paul as a source of inspiration and religious insight, someone whom modern Jews would do well to study. With his hope for a future religion that would encompass the best of both Judaism and Christianity, he was able to credit Paul for his contributions to religious

evolution. Essentially, however, his appropriation of Paul was limited to what he regarded as fresh expressions of Jewish teaching. Montefiore has been criticised for having over-emphasised “the purely ethical side of the Apostle’s teaching” and for having “destroyed much of the ‘real’ Paul and substituted a new individual”.<sup>280</sup> Certainly, his understanding of Paul’s thought had been warped by the traditional Protestant and Jewish view of an intensely anti-nomian and anti-Jewish Apostle to the Gentiles. But in terms of the Pauline scholarship of his day, Montefiore’s views were understandable. The criticism is true, however, in the context of his hermeneutical treatment of Paul; if one was to re-create Paul according to what Montefiore regarded as the “positive” aspects of his teaching, he would be unrecognisable. In this sense, Montefiore’s Paul, even more so than Montefiore’s Jesus, is incompatible with Christian tradition. But it is so precisely because his primary concern was to interpret Paul to the Jews for whom the traditional image was repulsive; thus he openly praised what he felt the epistles had to offer Judaism and quietly rejected all that he believed was unserviceable.

## Conclusion

*As has happened to me before I shall probably be attacked by both Jews and Christians.*

*To the second I shall not go nearly far enough; to the first, a great deal too far. I can, however, only set down what seems to me the facts and the truth. (Claude Montefiore).<sup>1</sup>*

As a British intellectual Jew living in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the challenges facing Claude Montefiore and his conception of ‘the Englishman of the Jewish persuasion’ included, firstly, the general threat of modernity and the consequent challenge of religious apathy. Secondly, the related conflict between nationalist and non-nationalist conceptions of Jewishness. Thirdly, the question of how to reconcile loyalty to Judaism with admiration of the cultural, intellectual and even theological achievements of the surrounding Christian environment. Fourthly, and lastly, the need to correct anti-Jewish biblical scholarship. It has been argued that the formation of Anglo-Liberal Judaism and the development of its distinctive theological views came about essentially as the result of one man’s highly individualised response to these historically conditioned dilemmas.

This thesis began in chapter one with an analysis of Montefiore’s immediate religious background, Anglo-Reform Judaism (chap 1-II). It went on to trace the development of his controversial Liberal Judaism as an alternative to both Reform and Orthodoxy in Britain, and demonstrated its independence from similar movements in Germany and America (chap 1-III). Montefiore’s position regarding various issues hotly debated among western Jewish intelligentsia in his day was then explored, including the relevance of Rabbinic Judaism (chap 1-IV) and nationality (chap 1-V), and also the unfamiliar ways in which he expressed his Jewishness in terms of its essence (chap 1-VI) and theology (chap 1-VII). The result was the distinct impression that a non-Jewish influence had profoundly shaped his thought, the identity of which was hinted at in his conviction that Jewish and Christian teaching ideally complemented one another (chap 1-VIII).

In chapter two, the precise ways in which the surrounding Christian culture had affected Anglo-Jewry in general and Montefiore in particular were outlined (chap 2-II). This involved re-examining some of the material treated in the first chapter from a different angle, including the nature of both Reform and Liberal Judaism and the impact of Christian critique upon each, which was substantial. Among the most significant factors influencing Montefiore's conception of Judaism were the nineteenth-century belief in religious progress and the phenomenon of 'assimilated Hellenism'. These also profoundly coloured his religious studies, as we saw in considering his contribution to, and ultimate dependence upon, Christian biblical scholarship (chap 2-III).

Chapter three offered the opportunity to consider general trends within the so-called Jewish reclamation of Jesus (chap 3-I) and to appreciate Montefiore's comprehensive engagement with mainstream critical scholarship in contrast to other Jewish writers interested in the Gospels (chap 3-II). Regarding his Liberal Jewish agenda, Montefiore's utilisation of Jesus was treated in terms of his originality, his prophetic office, and his views on the Law and nationalism (chap 3-III). Similarly, in chapter four, Montefiore's writings on Paul were placed in the context of Jewish approaches (chap 4-I), and his important and lasting contributions to Pauline studies were considered in the light of his stated intention to convince his fellow Jews that the Epistles could be approached as a source of inspiration and religious insight (chap 4-II).

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that Montefiore's own personal conception of Liberal Judaism should be regarded as more than simply a progressive Jewish denomination, and rather as an attempt to re-mould Reform Judaism in terms of, or with special reference to, contemporary liberal Christianity; he himself explicitly wrote of translating liberal Christian thought into a Jewish context.<sup>2</sup> For Montefiore, Christian and Jewish teachings were complementary, at least in their liberal formulations, and while he steadfastly rejected much of its theology, nevertheless he was convinced that Liberal Jews could benefit from a number of specific Christian ideas and forms of expression. Even his vision of the future of religion was one of an amalgamation of the best teachings of each; religious truth, wherever it came from, was the important thing for Montefiore. Negatively, his closeness to Christian thought and sympathies meant that he was sensitive to Christian criticism of Judaism. He therefore condemned what he perceived among religious Jews to be an over-dependence upon authority and an absence

of both internalised faith and clear-cut theology. The profound impact of Christian influences (personal, educational, institutional, intellectual) is all the more striking when his writings are analysed in the context of nineteenth and twentieth-century Jewish thought. Most remarkable was his use of New Testament study as an opportunity to set out and propound his Liberal Jewish agenda. Certainly, the extent to which he was interested in and incorporated the teachings of Jesus and Paul into his own ethical and theological musings makes him unique among Jewish reformers.

With his writings on the Gospels and Epistles, Montefiore aimed to give his Jewish readers what he perceived to be a relatively objective presentation of Jesus and Paul, an alternative to the accounts offered by overly sympathetic Christians and antagonistic Jews. Familiar with the complex scholarship, he believed he could produce an analysis free from traditional bias. At the same time, from his vantage point as a Liberal Jew, Montefiore was interested in what these ancient Jews had to say about God for the modern world. He was drawn to Jesus as someone who had struggled with the orthodoxy of his own day and as a Prophet in the age of Law. The spirit of Jesus' teachings seemed to represent for Montefiore the essence of true Jewish religion. Similarly, he argued that the writings of the Apostle to the Gentiles could serve as a kind of devotional aid for modern Jews, especially with regard to his Universalist teachings. Thus, in contrast to other Jewish commentators, Montefiore engaged the teachings of Jesus and Paul (as recorded in the New Testament) in a sympathetic, constructive manner, rather than as an opportunity for voicing anti-Christian grievances. Furthermore, he argued passionately that modern Jews should reclaim rather than disown two of Israel's most influential sons, despite their failings. In so doing, he brought down upon himself the wrath of those who believed that he had betrayed Judaism.

Montefiore's solutions to the dilemmas he faced have not found widespread support among world Jewry. Even in his own day, many of his writings represented less the consensual views of his fellow Liberal Jews and more the hopes and opinion of a much beloved spiritual leader whose eccentricities regarding Christianity and a theologised Judaism were, in the main, tolerated. He himself inhabited a world of ideas in which a spiritualised conception of Liberal Judaism was entirely satisfactory, but for others his liberalism was too abstract and removed too much in terms of tradition and ceremony. With the events of the Second World War encouraging internalisation and a

determination to preserve the particularist elements of Judaism, Montefiore's efforts to liberalise and to unite eastern and western Jews in a theologically expressed, rationalistic religion soon fell out of favour. Likewise, his Universalist hopes for Judaism were swept away by the development and eventual triumph of Zionism and the birth of the State of Israel. Nor can there be any doubt that, in the light of post-modern religious thought, his Enlightenment-like confidence in human progress meant that he placed too much emphasis upon Reason. Certainly, later reform orientated Jews have not accepted his diametrical opposition of authority and (intellectual) freedom, nor have they sought to systematically theologise Jewish religious teachings, as he did.

In terms of his scholarship, Montefiore is best remembered as a pioneer. He was one of the first British Jews to whole-heartedly accept and apply the findings of historical- and literary-critical analysis to the Hebrew Bible. His early contribution to Gospel research in correcting misconceptions and offering an alternative, highly distinctive point of view makes him one of the best known of the Jewish commentators. His attempt to systemise rabbinic thought and to utilise it in the study of the New Testament was one of the factors that led to his anthology of rabbinic literature, still regarded by many as the finest selection in a modern language. Criticism can be made, however, of the way in which he was inclined to compare rabbinic and Gospel thought as wholes. Similarly, his contribution to Pauline studies is significant not only as an exceptionally sympathetic Jewish treatment but, in terms of his critique of Christian research, for the seriousness with which it has been taken by later mainstream Pauline scholars. Once again, the main criticism must be his tendency to over-compartmentalise, in this case, Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaisms. In no way, however, do the limitations of his scholarship detract from his achievement of approaching the religious writings of both Christianity and traditional Judaism with remarkable sympathy. As he once wrote, "For their beloved Law occupies to Orthodox Jews something of the same position as Jesus Christ occupies to Christians, and though I myself stand in different ways outside both sanctuaries, I have lived so much among those who are within both that I can appreciate their feelings."<sup>3</sup>

Montefiore belongs to that important group of learned laymen who have sought to revolutionise Judaism. Despite the limitations of his nineteenth-century world-view and scholarship, Montefiore remains worthy of study as an important figure in Anglo-Jewish

history whose complex identity reflects the difficulty and confusion inherent in attempting to make Judaism genuinely relevant to the modern world. In his dealings with Christians and Christian thought, he can also be regarded as a forerunner to those who would later fully partake in Jewish-Christian dialogue, even though his conception of Christianity was idealised and he expressed his understanding of, and hopes for, Judaism in unfamiliar ways.

## Appendix – Chronology

- 1802 Solomon Hirschell becomes Chief Rabbi.
- 1815 Establishment of Reform Judaism in Berlin.
- 1818 Establishment of Reform Judaism in Hamburg.
- 1836 Petition for reform made to the governing board of the Orthodox Synagogue, Bevis Marks, London.
- 1840 Establishment of West London Reform Synagogue with David Marks as first minister.
- 1842 *Herem* (or ban) pronounced upon West London Reform Synagogue by Chief Rabbi.
- 1845 Nathan Adler becomes Chief Rabbi.
- 1849 *Herem* on West London Reform Synagogue lifted by Chief Rabbi.
- 1854 Oxford University opens its doors to Jewish students.
- 1855 Establishment of Jews' College, London.
- 1856 License to register marriages granted to West London Reform Synagogue. Establishment of Manchester Reform Synagogue.
- 1858 Montefiore born. Full civil equality granted to British Jews.
- 1866 Philip Magnus becomes a minister at West London Reform Synagogue.
- 1870 Act of Parliament constituting the United Synagogue.
- 1871 Oxford University abolishes religious tests for entry.
- 1873 Establishment of Bradford Reform Synagogue.
- 1878 Montefiore studies 'Greats' at Oxford.
- 1879 Montefiore's brother, Leonard, dies in America.
- 1882 Montefiore studies at the *Hochschule* in Berlin. He joins the board of the Fröbel Institute upon his return to England.
- 1883 Montefiore's father, Nathaniel, dies. He assumes the additional surname Goldsmid by letters patent.
- 1884 Montefiore's sister, Charlotte, marries a Gentile.
- 1885 Montefiore's great-uncle, Moses Montefiore, dies.
- 1886 Montefiore marries Thérèse Schorstein.
- 1888 Montefiore and Abrahams establish the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.
- 1889 Montefiore's only child, Leonard, is born. His wife, Thérèse, dies.

- 1890 Schechter becomes lecturer in rabbinics at Cambridge.
- 1891 Herman Adler becomes Chief Rabbi.
- 1892 Montefiore delivers the Hibbert Lectures.
- 1893 Morris Joseph becomes minister of West London Reform Synagogue.
- 1896 Montefiore becomes President of the Anglo-Jewish Association.
- 1899 Montefiore becomes President of the Jewish Historical Society of England.
- 1902 Montefiore's mother, Emma, dies. He marries Florence Ward. Together with Montagu he establishes the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism. Schechter leaves for America to found Conservative Judaism. Abrahams becomes lecturer in rabbinics at Cambridge.
- 1904 Establishment of the London Society for the Study of Religion.
- 1908 Montefiore becomes vice-president of University College, Southampton.
- 1910 Establishment of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. Montefiore becomes the first president of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. He delivers the Benjamin Jowett Lectures. He meets Basil Henrques.
- 1912 Israel Mattuck becomes minister of Liberal Jewish Synagogue.
- 1913 Joseph Hertz becomes Chief Rabbi. Schechter establishes the United Synagogue of America.
- 1915 Montefiore becomes president of University College, Southampton.
- 1917 Montefiore publicly supports *The Times'* anti-Zionist manifesto. He helps advise government regarding Balfour Declaration.
- 1918 Women allowed to preach in Liberal Jewish Synagogue.
- 1919 Loewe becomes lecturer in rabbinic Hebrew at Oxford
- 1920 Women allowed to read prayers from the pulpit of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue.
- 1921 Montefiore awarded honorary degrees from University of Manchester and the Jewish Institute of Religion, New York.
- 1924 Establishment of the London Society of Christians and Jews. Montefiore awarded an honorary degree from Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.
- 1926 Montefiore becomes the first president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.
- 1927 Montefiore awarded an honorary degree from Oxford University.
- 1930 Montefiore awarded the British Academy medal for biblical studies.
- 1931 Loewe becomes lecturer in rabbinics at Cambridge.
- 1938 Montefiore dies. Montefiore's wife, Florence, dies.

## End Notes and References

### *Introduction*

<sup>1</sup> He assumed the additional surname of Goldsmid by letters patent in 1883, although he is conventionally referred to as Montefiore.

<sup>2</sup> *Leonard G Montefiore*, ed. by L Stein, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Claude was 27 when Moses died, 100 years old, in 1885. He did not know his great-uncle very well but admired him greatly even though their views often differed significantly (for example, regarding scripture, the rabbinic traditions, and Zionism). H Montefiore, 'Sir Moses Montefiore and his Great Nephew', 15, 17.

<sup>4</sup> 'Montefiore' in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 624.

<sup>5</sup> Chaim Berman has written a history of the wealthy Jewish minority he called 'the Cousinhood', which he described as "a compact union of exclusive brethren with blood and money flowing in a small circle". Their influence lasted from the late eighteenth-century until the rise of Zionism in the early twentieth. C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 1, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Emma Montefiore (1819–1902) was "hedged round with conventions concerning conduct and the proprieties, and what was what". Montefiore once wrote that he must have cared for his mother very much to have put up with all that he went through on her account. "But", he added, "I used to look up at my mother, when she sat in the gallery above me in Synagogue sometimes, and think, 'Well, if you have prejudices, they must be forgiven, for you are a noble and grand lady.'" Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (undated). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 50.

<sup>7</sup> Three years before his death he wrote, "I would like to be bisected, and half buried by the Head Berkeley St. [Reform Synagogue] man and half by the Head LJS [Liberal Jewish Synagogue] man, but this would not be legal, I suppose!" Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (6 Feb 1936). *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>8</sup> A minister of the West London Synagogue in the 1860s, Philip Magnus went on to become a well-known educationalist. Chaim Berman suggests that Magnus' anti-Zionism might have been in part responsible for Montefiore's similar view: Magnus was among the ten 'representative Jews' approached by the government in 1917 for their opinion on the proposed Balfour Declaration, and was a founder of the League of British Jews formed after the Declaration. C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 279.

<sup>9</sup> Marks was minister of the West London Synagogue from 1840–1900 and Professor of Hebrew at UCL from 1848–1898. 'David Marks' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Highly sensitive to external attack (that is, Christian criticism) he would have certainly influenced Montefiore with his extensive preaching against 'rabbinism' and Jewish particularism.

<sup>10</sup> No doubt Montefiore was influenced by these liberally minded Anglicans. Page wrote of his former student "He and I found nothing inconsistent in worshipping God together, whether in synagogue or in Church, and our religions drew nearer, though they did not coalesce in spirit and

in hope." Cited in L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>12</sup> The religious tests for entry had been abolished in 1871.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Cecil Bradley (1851–1935) was a literary critic and pre-eminent Shakespearean scholar of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Montefiore was very fond of poetry and especially Shakespeare's sonnets. *Ibid.*, 39–40.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Lewis Nettleship (1846–1892) has been described as a disciple of TH Green; his thought was Idealist and Hegelian. Montefiore was certainly influenced by the prevailing philosophy of the time, exemplified in the thought of Green, that the nature of ultimate reality was spiritual. Montefiore's friend, Friedrich Von Hügel, was a Catholic theologian with a similar world-view. J Barr, 'Judaism – Its Continuity with the Bible', 5. (E Kessler incorrectly identifies "A Nettleship" in *An English Jew*, 12).

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Benjamin Jowett to CG Montefiore (1883) in L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 47. The classical scholar Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893) was considered to be one of the greatest teachers of the nineteenth century. Master of Balliol College, Oxford, he was renowned for his translations of Plato and for his historical-critical contribution to *Essays and Reviews* (1860) in which he redefined the interpretation of scripture.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in VG Simmons, 'Claude Goldsmid Montefiore', 255.

<sup>17</sup> Bentwich gives the move in 1882: "just graduated from Oxford, [he] came there [to the Hochschule] in 1882"; N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 4. Cohen records that "After leaving Oxford Claude went to study in Germany" for six months and that "From 1883 to 1886 he lived at home [in London]"; L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 44–46. (Kessler incorrectly cites 1889 as the date for this move to Berlin; E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 13).

<sup>18</sup> Solomon Schechter (1847–1915) was an outstanding authority on the Talmud and a researcher who rediscovered important ancient documents. In 1890 he became lecturer in Talmudic studies at Cambridge. From 1902 he was a leader in Conservative Judaism in the US, founding the United Synagogue of America in 1913.

<sup>19</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 44.

<sup>20</sup> Bernhard Stade (1848–1906) was a German Protestant theologian. He became widely known for his critical history of Israel, *Geschichte des Volks Israel* (1887–8).

<sup>21</sup> Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) was a German biblical scholar best known for his analysis of the structure and dating of the Pentateuch; he argued that they were not written by Moses but were the result of oral traditions that evolved over time.

<sup>22</sup> Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891) was a Dutch Protestant theologian whose works included a historical-critical introduction to the Old Testament, and studies on the religion of Israel and Hebrew prophecy. He gave a course of Hibbert lectures on *National Religions and Universal Religion* (1882).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Kelly Cheyne (1841–1915) was an Anglican theologian and biblical critic who argued for a broad and comprehensive study of the scriptures in the light of literary, historical and scientific considerations. He produced commentaries on the Prophets and the Hagiographa.

<sup>24</sup> J Rayner, 'CG Montefiore', 256. A close friend of Montefiore suggested that his love of Jewish learning had been greatly encouraged by his friendship with one Rabbi FP Frankl of Berlin, a friend of Schechter. VG Simmons, 'Claude Goldsmid Montefiore', 255.

<sup>25</sup> C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 319.

<sup>26</sup> N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 4.

<sup>27</sup> Cited by Judge Jacob J Kaplan, 'Claude Montefiore: The Man and his Works', address delivered during Jewish Book Week (14 May 1939). MS 16/12/4, World Union for Progressive Judaism Records, AJAC.

<sup>28</sup> It was largely due to his support that the Institute obtained a permanent centre at Grove House, Roehampton, at which there is a Montefiore wing. L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Montefiore was benefactor of the Westminster Jewish Free, the Butler Street and the Jewish Infant School. Phyllis Abrahams (daughter of Israel Abrahams), 'Claude Goldsmid Montefiore', 135; L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 147. Montefiore's cousin, Lady Battersea, once asked him to meet with two Jewish girls in the London Docklands "who were leading immoral lives", so as to "divert them from their mode of living". The effort apparently failed with the result that Montefiore decided to leave the more practical aspects of his charity work to others. *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> Basil Henrques, 'CG Montefiore; Some Personal Recollections', 262.

<sup>32</sup> C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 320.

<sup>33</sup> 'Montefiore' in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 625.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> WR Matthews, 'Claude Montefiore: The Man and his Thought', 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 268. The Anglo-Jewish Association has a Montefiore House.

<sup>37</sup> Montefiore resigned after 25 years in 1921. L Montagu, 'Notes on the Life and Work of Claude G Montefiore', 4. Sermon preached on the occasion of Montefiore's eightieth birthday in 1938. MS 16/12/2, WUPJ Records, AJAC.

<sup>38</sup> The LSSR was formed in 1904 mainly through the efforts of Joseph H Wicksteed and Baron Von Hügel, who had been introduced to each other by Montefiore. The venture, which met at his home at 42 Portman Square from 1922 until 1932 and irreverently referred to as "CM's Night Club" was a source of great pleasure to Montefiore. L Barmann, 'Confronting Secularisation: Origins of the London Society for the Study of Religion', 22; L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 83.

<sup>39</sup> E Kessler, 'Claude Montefiore', 7.

<sup>40</sup> His older sister, Alice, wrote a poem to celebrate Claude's success, which also emphasises his humility and generosity of spirit. (L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 58).

*Respected reader, you behold/ Within this book, my Hibbert lectures./ How many copies have been sold/ At present baffles all conjectures./ But this I certainly can say,/ In fact, I think you ought to know it,/ I've given eighty-eight away/ And one, of course, to dear B Jowett.*

*The Lectures claim your best attention/ But ere you study them tonight,/ There's just one thing I'd like to mention/ In spite of helps and hints no end,/ The very list of which would bore you,/ I venture to remind my friend,/ 'Twas I who wrote the book before you.*

<sup>41</sup> John Rayner, 'CG Montefiore', 256.

<sup>42</sup> *A Rabbinic Anthology*, published posthumously, was written in collaboration with Herbert Lowe.

<sup>43</sup> C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 324.

<sup>44</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 72–73. Interestingly, when his sister Charlotte married a Gentile in 1884, Montefiore had supported her against their mother's wishes. Jowett had written a letter of encouragement that agreed with Claude's policy of intermarriage as a way to break down "the wall of distinction between Jew and Christian". Letter from Benjamin Jowett to CG Montefiore (14 September 1884). *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 12.

<sup>46</sup> E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> For example, Montefiore was asked to contribute to *The Jewish Encyclopædia* by Rabbi Prof. Gotthard Deutsch of Hebrew Union College in 1897. He turned down the opportunity to contribute articles concerning the state of liberal Judaism in England, however, due to other commitments. MS 123/3/2, Gotthard Deutsch Papers, AJAC.

<sup>48</sup> There is a portrait of Montefiore by Oswald Birley (1925) in the New Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St John's Wood, London. There is another portrait by William Rothenstein (1928) and a bust by Benno Elkan (1934) in the Hartley Library, University of Southampton.

<sup>49</sup> HAL Fisher's Foreword to L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 11.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>51</sup> Montefiore's hair was not to be trifled with. In 1934, the German sculptor Benno Elkan produced the bust of Montefiore that now sits in the Hartley Library of the University of Southampton. Montefiore wrote to Lucy Cohen, "I implored him [Elkan] to come on Monday and get on, so that I can have my hair cut, but I daresay he won't. He presumes on my sacrifice." (1 Feb). "The wretched bust man has gone to Cambridge and left me here very uncomfortable. It is horrid." (4 Feb). "That odious bust man I suppose he laughs – I have warned him that I can't be played with like this, and that he will find the hair off unless he hurries up." (5 Feb). *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>52</sup> One example of his own class-consciousness can be seen in his lack of appreciation of Israel Zangwill. "As to Z[angwill], you know I can't bear him. He is a bete noir to me and I regard him as a most dangerous man, not only because of his opinions, which I detest, but because of his gross vulgarity and lack of taste and breeding and good manners..." Letter from CG Montefiore to Stephen Wise (17 December 1923). MS 19/27/7, Jewish Institute of Religion Papers, AJAC. Theodore Herzl dismissed Montefiore as a "stupid ass who affects English correctness" and Lewis Namier called him a "learned old humbug". Cited in S Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews*, 166n.

<sup>53</sup> In a highly-strung letter to his chief lieutenant at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, the progressive American Rabbi Israel Mattuck, he wrote of his fear that "Any identification of you

or *Liberal Judaism* with Socialism would wreck the movement *utterly...* The matter is very dangerous and the loose use of the word 'socialism' is highly to be deprecated." (Dated 10 Nov, no year). ACC/3529/4/2, LMA.

<sup>54</sup> It would be unfair and anachronistic to judge his occasional super-patriotic utterances too harshly; he was certainly less so than were a great many other men of his class and position in the pre-World War I period. Nevertheless, a pamphlet he wrote with Capt. Basil Henriques, 'The English Jew and his Religion' (1918), has an almost xenophobic feel to it, and in a strangely disconcerting letter to Israel Mattuck (undated), he was capable of writing, "Again, for instance, there is a rumour tonight that a German battleship has been sunk. I rejoice... Even if all have gone down, I rejoice that there is one German battleship less." ACC/3529/4/2, LMA. Lucy Cohen also comments that Montefiore was by no means a pacifist and that "his eyes would glow over a tale of heroism". L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 217.

<sup>55</sup> The many brief, hurriedly scrawled notes of his daily correspondence were characteristically sprawled across the page at an angle of 30°.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in WR Matthews, 'Claude Montefiore: the Man and his Thought', 24. Likewise, Montefiore was very taken with Baeck. "I have never met a more distinguished minister of religion in any sect, indeed, a more distinguished and charming man. No wonder that he told me that the fidelity with which many of his Christian friends had stuck to him since 1933 had amazed and deeply gratified him. He is altogether an oddity and a sweet oddity." Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (26 Jan 1937). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 245.

<sup>57</sup> A related document is Joshua Stein's *Lieber Freund; the Letters of Claude Goldsmid Montefiore to Solomon Schechter 1885–1902* (1988). This small collection covers the period of their friendship before Schechter left England to play a leading rôle in Conservative Judaism in America, and before Montefiore established Liberal Judaism. It is best regarded as primary source evidence since Stein does not attempt to analyse the material, other than to comment that the letters contain "germs of ideas which consistently show up in later life". The collection is useful in demonstrating Montefiore's intellectual debt to Schechter (on rabbinic matters) and Schechter's discomfort in receiving Montefiore's financial assistance.

<sup>58</sup> Cohen wrote, "If only I had known him as intimately before he was sixty as after, in those days when his ideas of religious reform were evolving, and when his hopes were high, the picture would be more vivid." L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Examples include Steven Bayme and Walter Jacob, who misunderstood what Montefiore meant when he (very occasionally) referred positively to mysticism.

<sup>60</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 22–23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Basil Henriques to Lily Montagu (9 May 1939). MS 16/12/4, World Union for Progressive Judaism Records, AJAC.

<sup>63</sup> According to the bibliography collated by Rev VG Simmons in L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 267–272.

<sup>64</sup> Cited on the cover of E Kessler, *An English Jew*.

<sup>65</sup> E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 164.

<sup>66</sup> E Kessler, 'Claude Montefiore', 9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>68</sup> Kessler identifies the tensions in Montefiore's thought: on one hand there was Montefiore's own distaste for *halakhah* and the lack of rabbinic emphasis at the West London Synagogue, while on the other there was the influence of Solomon Schechter and his own desire to correct the erroneous understanding of Christian scholars. But he concludes, "As a result of this tension Montefiore struggled throughout his life to offer a comprehensive and consistent view of Torah and Rabbinic Judaism." E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 87.

<sup>69</sup> The MPhil was completed for the University of London in 1987. Chapter one incorporated 'CG Montefiore and his Quest' (1981), which was published in *Judaism*, together with 'Zion – Neither Here nor There?' (1984). Chapter six was based upon 'Montefiore's Three Mentors' (1982), which first appeared in *The Jewish Chronicle*.

<sup>70</sup> M Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 84, 85.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>74</sup> In a review of Bowler, Joshua Stein remains unclear as to the relation of Liberal Judaism to the life and teaching of the historic Jesus, as well as to the books of the New Testament. He suggests that "this is one of the most important matters which has yet to be taken in hand". J Stein, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, LXXXII (1992), 569–570.

<sup>75</sup> In a review of Bowler, Richard Libowitz wonders how the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel would have affected Montefiore's ideas. Libowitz's question reflects poorly on Bowler's presentation of Montefiore's Liberal Judaism and the profoundly anti-nationalist sentiments which lay at the heart of his theology (Montefiore blamed anti-Semitism at least partially on the Zionists). R Libowitz, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, XXVII (1990), 788–789.

<sup>76</sup> The Tractarian model and its alternatives will be treated in chapter one of the thesis.

<sup>77</sup> The first edition was in 1907. Philipson described Montefiore as "this most distinguished figure in the ranks of liberal Judaism in England, who has fought the fight for religious enlightenment for decades". D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 428.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>79</sup> A Doctor of Hebrew Literature dissertation, held at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, US.

<sup>80</sup> F Schwartz, 'Anglo-Jewish Theology', 44f. In the unpublished thesis, Schwartz also examines the thought of other Anglo-Jewish religious leaders, including Morris Joseph, but has nothing to say about them in the context of Montefiore's thought.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>82</sup> C Bermant, *The Cousinhood*, 319, 323–324. The matter of intermarriage was not straightforward, even for Montefiore. Bermant points out that Montefiore actually organised his sister's marriage to a professing Christian, but does not draw any conclusions regarding

principles. Rather, he suggests that Montefiore "must have found the whole episode unseemly and painful".

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>85</sup> Published in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XXVII (1982). The paper was first delivered to the Society on 4 July 1979.

<sup>86</sup> S Bayme, 'Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and the Origins of the Jewish Religious Union', 64.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>88</sup> The application of the label 'mysticism' to Montefiore's Liberal Judaism is examined in detail in chapter two. Suffice it to say for now that Bayme's description of Montefiore's faith in terms of "genuine mysticism", without further qualification, is misleading. Ibid., 67.

<sup>89</sup> One possible reason for this may be an over-dependence upon material from *The Jewish Chronicle* in which, for obvious reasons, Montefiore tended to tone down his more radical ideas. Another mistake which reflects a superficial familiarity with Montefiore's writings is Bayme's assertion that Israel Abrahams followed and further developed Montefiore's ideas. In fact, Abrahams was never as radical as his friend Montefiore, who readily admitted his intellectual indebtedness to Abrahams with regard to matters rabbinic. Ibid., 65.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Meyer bases his treatment upon a selection of Montefiore's own writings together with Cohen's *Some Recollections*, Bermant's *The Cousinhood*, Bayme's 'Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and the Origins of the Jewish Religious Union', Reichert's 'The Contribution of Claude G Montefiore to the Advancement of Judaism' and Montagu's 'Notes on the Life and Work of Claude G Montefiore'. M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 443-444, n94.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 214. Meyer almost certainly over-exaggerates Montefiore's exposure to German Reform whilst at Oxford, as we shall see in chapter one.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> "[Montefiore's] Liberal Judaism emerged less out of a rejection of tradition than an attraction to broader horizons. Within a regular circle of Christian clergymen, he could frankly discuss the religious issues of the day, feeling fully at home in their midst." Ibid., 217.

<sup>96</sup> "He neither smoked nor drank, was usually serious if not solemn, paid little attention to external appearance, and sought few worldly pleasures." Ibid. The introductory section of this thesis presented an alternative view.

<sup>97</sup> D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I.

<sup>98</sup> Englander also suggests that Liberal Jews incorporated "trinitarian hymns and other alien practices" into its services, a matter to which we shall return in chapter two.

<sup>99</sup> T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 76.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>101</sup> G Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 245, 254.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>103</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Is Judaism a Tribal Religion?', 364, cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 123.

<sup>104</sup> D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 137.

<sup>105</sup> This is how he described his point of view in relation to Rabbinic Judaism, but it applied equally to whatever topic he was discussing. CG Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, xix.

<sup>106</sup> It was written on the occasion of Montefiore's seventieth birthday and published in the *American Rabbis Yearbook* of 1928. Reichert relies heavily on Philipson for details of Anglo-Liberal Judaism.

<sup>107</sup> VE Reichert, 'The Contribution of Claude G Montefiore', 511.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 499.

<sup>109</sup> A Wolf, 'The Dilemma of Claude Montefiore', 25.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>112</sup> W Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 96.

<sup>113</sup> Cohn-Sherbok's study relies too heavily upon Walter Jacob. D Cohn-Sherbok, *Fifty Key Jewish Thinkers*, 95.

<sup>114</sup> AT Hanson, 'A Modern Philo', 110.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>117</sup> J Agus, 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism', 1.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> VE Reichert, 'The Contribution of Claude G Montefiore', 512–513.

<sup>120</sup> L Jacobs, *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*, 353.

<sup>121</sup> J Agus, 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism', 15.

<sup>122</sup> LH Silberman, 'Prolegomenon' in the 1968 edition of CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 4.

<sup>123</sup> W Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 94.

<sup>124</sup> FC Schwartz, 'Claude Montefiore on Law and Tradition', 26. Schwartz works most closely with Montefiore's *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* and, of course, his *Rabbinic Anthology*.

<sup>125</sup> FC Schwartz, 'Claude Montefiore on Law and Tradition', 42.

<sup>126</sup> As Schwartz put it, "In the final analysis, Montefiore wants nothing binding between the Jew and God." *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>127</sup> H Danby, *The Jew and Christianity*, 79.

<sup>128</sup> LH Silberman, 'Prolegomenon' in the 1968 edition of CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 15.

<sup>129</sup> H Montefiore, 'Sir Moses Montefiore and his Great Nephew', 14.

<sup>130</sup> J Magonet, 'The Liberal and the Lady', 167.

<sup>131</sup> VG Simmons, 'Claude Goldsmid Montefiore', 254.

<sup>132</sup> VE Reichert, 'The Contribution of Claude G Montefiore', 510.

<sup>133</sup> A Wolf, 'The Dilemma of Claude Montefiore', 23.

<sup>134</sup> W Jacob, 'Claude G Montefiore's Reappraisal of Christianity', 73.

<sup>135</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 4, 5.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 8.

<sup>137</sup> Namely, Montefiore's mistaken assumption that Judaism from 300–500 AD was much the same as the Judaism from 30–50 AD. *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>138</sup> "[Montefiore's book *Judaism and St Paul*] consists of two essays, of which the second discusses the use that may be made by the Liberal Jew of the Pauline Epistles even today. This does not directly concern us now, but the other essay does." *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>139</sup> S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 94.

<sup>140</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 88–91.

<sup>141</sup> W Jacob, 'Claude G Montefiore's Reappraisal of Christianity', 72. The related criticism, that Montefiore ignored Jewish New Testament scholarship, is more complicated and will be dealt with in the chapters one and two of this thesis.

<sup>142</sup> WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 1.

<sup>143</sup> EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 10.

## Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> For example, Kessler writes, “It is important to note that Montefiore must not only have been aware of the European Reform position but could even have been influenced by it while living and studying at the *Hochschule* in Berlin.” E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 87. In passing, it is worth pointing out that Montefiore himself regarded his position as ‘Liberal’ *before* he studied in Germany. “I have been an ardent ‘Liberal’ in regard to Judaism ever since I left College.” Letter from CG Montefiore to Isadore Singer (2 February 1910). MS 42/1/4, Isadore Singer Papers, AJAC.

<sup>2</sup> As Englander puts it, “Too often Reform Judaism has been presented as an echo effect of the German Reform Movement rather than an indigenous development that addressed the condition of Anglo-Jewry.” D Englander, ‘Anglicised but not Anglican’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 257. This view of the West London Reform Synagogue is assumed in histories of Reform Judaism, in varying degrees, from the time of Philipson’s *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (1907) until Michael Meyer’s *Response to Modernity* (1988). Interestingly, Meyer’s position has softened recently; the comparison of German Reform with British Reform and Liberal Judaism which follows has benefited from a reading of his paper, ‘Jewish Religious Reform in Germany and Great Britain’ (1997), from which I was asked not to directly cite.

<sup>3</sup> Three years before his death he wrote, “I would like to be bisected, and half buried by the Head Berkeley St. [Reform Synagogue] man and half by the Head LJS [Liberal Jewish Synagogue] man, but this would not be legal, I suppose!” Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (6 Feb 1936). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 237.

<sup>4</sup> M Leigh, ‘Reform Judaism in Great Britain’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 12, 15, 31.

<sup>5</sup> M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 53–61.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–53.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 58.

<sup>8</sup> Englander explores the degree of centralised power in Britain, observing, “The traditional rabbinate, which was neither centralised nor hierarchical, was replaced during the Adler years by an ecclesiastical establishment under the supervision of a primate in whose hands all powers were concentrated.” Nathan Adler’s *Laws and Regulations for all the Synagogues of the British Empire* (1847) was just one example of how the complete control of “religious and cognate matters” was claimed for the Chief Rabbinate, a position held by Nathan and Herman Adler for a combined total of 66 years. D Englander, ‘Anglicised but not Anglican’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 247.

<sup>9</sup> M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 48 (sermons), 61 (dress and decorum), 56, 88 (music).

<sup>10</sup> Geiger’s writings are characterised by a ‘comparative religion’ approach (e.g. his doctoral dissertation demonstrated the influence of Jewish tradition upon the Koran) and a sharply historical-critical approach to the development of Judaism (e.g. *Judaism and its History*, originally published in 1865). *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 359.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Jewish Science’ or *Wissenschaft des Judentums* heavily influenced the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary (1854) and the Berlin Liberal College for Jewish Studies (1870) in Germany, and Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati (1871) and the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York (1886) in

America.

<sup>12</sup> In *The Law is Light* (1854) Marks attacked the Chief Rabbi, Nathan Adler, for his defence of the Rabbis. Elsewhere he advised his congregation to “rest our hopes and form our observances upon the Laws of God alone”. Cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 50, 58–59.

<sup>13</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion’ in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, IV (1891–92). Montefiore was more radical than other British reform minded thinkers in that he believed the critical principles should be applied to *both* the rabbinical literature and the Bible, and not just the rabbinical traditions as some wished.

<sup>14</sup> M Leigh, ‘Reform Judaism in Great Britain’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 21. Philipson also held to this explanation, suggesting that “the doctrine of conformity to an established church which represents the prevailing religious attitude in England reacted and reacts without a doubt upon the Jews, and for that reason it proved so difficult for reform to gain a foothold in Anglo-Judaism”. D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 94.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 92.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> *Seder Ha-Tefilot – Forms of Prayer*, written by David Marks, was published from 1841–43 in five volumes. M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 175. Englander comments, “Prayer Book reform amounted to little more than abbreviation and omission.” D Englander, ‘Anglicised but not Anglican’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 256.

<sup>20</sup> David Cesarani records that following the assembly of rabbis at Frankfurt (1845), the *Jewish Chronicle* ran a series of articles depreciating the German reformers’ hopes for the vernacular replacing Hebrew, for Sunday services replacing the Sabbath, and so on. The line taken by the *Chronicle* was that moderate reform was necessary to pre-empt such radical schisms. “The example of German Reform was always held up to illustrate where the line must be drawn.” D Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 17–18.

<sup>21</sup> M Leigh, ‘Reform Judaism in Great Britain’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Williams contextualises Reform developments in Manchester as part of the general Anglo-Jewish experience of “the development of an anglicised middle-class community, the struggle for social acceptance and political freedom”. The Manchester Reform movement was primarily a result of assimilationist hopes of “the most anglicised section of the community”, and came about due to “the evolution by one group of a sense of collective identity as a cultural élite”. While he accepts that some of the German immigrant leaders of Reform were undoubtedly influenced by their experiences on the Continent, Williams prefers to emphasise the particularly British components of Manchester Reform. B Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, 327, 331, 333.

<sup>23</sup> M Leigh ‘Reform Judaism in Great Britain’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 21, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>25</sup> M Goulston, 'The Theology of Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 55.

<sup>26</sup> M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 155.

<sup>27</sup> Occasionally, Marks described rabbinic literature more positively, as "a valuable aid for the elucidation of passages in Scripture... we feel proud of them as a monument of the zeal and mental activity of our ancestors". Crucially, however, only the Torah was divine in Marks' eyes. Cited in M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 177.

<sup>28</sup> M Goulston, 'The Theology of Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 55, 61.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> We shall return to Marks' response to Christian criticism in the section entitled 'Christian Critique' in chapter two.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in M Goulston, 'The Theology of Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 62.

<sup>33</sup> M Joseph, *Judaism as Creed and Life*, 39–40.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–42.

<sup>35</sup> Article in *The Listener* (4 May 1967), cited in M Goulston, 'The Theology of Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 66.

<sup>36</sup> Most German Jews, however, were keener supporters of Liberalism than they were of *Liberales Judentum*. M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 210.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Blocking Marks' applications to register marriages in the Reform Synagogue was one of the many ways Moses Montefiore used his influence as head of the Board of Deputies to make life difficult for the movement.

<sup>39</sup> Although there were also Reform services held in Hull in the 1850s and in Clapham from 1875–77.

<sup>40</sup> These even included the wearing of phylacteries and prayer shawls. D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 259.

<sup>41</sup> D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 106. Israel Zangwill wrote towards the end of the century that it was "a body which had stood still for fifty years admiring its past self". Cited in M Leigh, 'Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 34.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>43</sup> Adler set out his 'reforms' in *Laws and Regulations* (1847). D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 52–53.

<sup>44</sup> The United Synagogue was constituted in 1870 by an Act of Parliament, and recognised the headship of the Chief Rabbi.

<sup>45</sup> Chaim Berman, *The Cousinhood; the Anglo-Jewish Gentry* (1971).

<sup>46</sup> T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>48</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 43.

<sup>49</sup> T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Henriques was a community and youth worker and fellow member of the London Society for the Study of Religion. BLQ Henriques, *The Indiscretions of a Warden*, 11–14.

<sup>51</sup> “Anglo-Jewry nevertheless bore the stamp of its environment. Among the acculturated upper classes the imprint was most apparent. Judaism as practised by the notables was an invertebrate religion – deficient in doctrine, without rigour in ritual and lacking spiritual warmth – that was much influenced by the prevalent pattern of religiosity within the best circles in which they moved.” D Englander, ‘Anglicised but not Anglican’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 269.

<sup>52</sup> T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 85–6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>54</sup> Englander suggests that anglicisation and acceptance rather than separatism and self-sufficiency constituted the dominant concerns of the Anglo-Jewish élite. D Englander, ‘Anglicised but not Anglican’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 239.

<sup>55</sup> Under the editorship of Abraham Benisch, the *Jewish Chronicle* closely followed the storm of controversy in the Anglican world regarding the publication of *Essays and Reviews* (1860). This was the first major occasion when Anglo-Jewry (and the wider British public) became interested in the question of biblical criticism. D Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 45–46.

<sup>56</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion’, 297–298.

<sup>57</sup> M Goulston, ‘The Theology of Reform Judaism in Great Britain’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 69.

<sup>58</sup> Goulston suggests that had Morris Joseph been able to close the gap between his theology and practice and followed through the logic of his position more consistently, he would have been almost indistinguishable from Montefiore. Ibid., 71.

<sup>59</sup> CG Montefiore, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism*, 255. Elsewhere he wrote, “They are a practice in self-denial. I would not seek to minimise their importance from this point of view.” CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism*, 130–131.

<sup>60</sup> CG Montefiore, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism*, 263.

<sup>61</sup> With the caveat that “The mind must be used in these matters, not a mere rule of thumb.” CG

Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism*, 135–137.

<sup>62</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 567.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lily Montagu (12 April 1899). Microfilm No 2718, Correspondence of Lily H Montagu, AJAC.

<sup>64</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism*, 111.

<sup>65</sup> M Goulston, ‘The Theology of Reform Judaism in Great Britain’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 71.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Israel Zangwill to CG Montefiore (13 December 1907). MS A36/133, CZA.

<sup>67</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Liberal Judaism in England’, 626, 631.

<sup>68</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘The Jewish Religious Union and Its Cause’, an address delivered at the service of the Union on 20 June 1908.

<sup>69</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Liberal Judaism in England’, 618, 621.

<sup>70</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Unitarianism and Judaism in their Relations to Each Other’, 245. Originally an address to Manchester College, Oxford, 20 October 1896.

<sup>71</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Liberal Judaism in England’, 622.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 648.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 618.

<sup>75</sup> Lily Montagu, ‘The Jewish Religious Union and Its Beginning’, 1–2.

<sup>76</sup> There is some evidence that Montagu’s life-long admiration for Montefiore had once been love. Ellen Umansky speculates, “The semi-autobiographical references in her [Montagu’s] novels as well as references in other published works and letters indicate that Lily Montagu at one time may have been in love with Claude Montefiore... As her secretary Jessie Levy confided, once the man that she loved (presumably Montefiore) married, she directed her love towards God and humanity in general.” E Umansky, *Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism*, 238.

<sup>77</sup> Writing privately in 1926 of her organisation of a world conference for Progressive Judaism, Montefiore enthused, “It is a *wonderful* achievement; the unaided work of one woman: a remarkable result of faith, enthusiasm, patience, courage and systemised attention to detail.” Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (20 June 1926). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 155.

<sup>78</sup> “Indeed, he gave the other man’s point of view so fully, so fairly, and so attractively, that his own teaching sometimes became a little confused just because he could not be dogmatic.” L Montagu, ‘Claude Montefiore – His Life and Work’, address to the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (Sun 30 January 1944). “We sometimes thought that his own beliefs were not given the emphasis they deserved, because of the explanation he gave of the opinions of those who thought differently from him.” L Montagu, ‘Claude Montefiore as Man and Prophet’, sermon at Liberal Jewish Synagogue (7 June 1958). MS 282/3/7 Lily H Montagu Papers, Sermons and Addresses, AJAC.

<sup>79</sup> Lily Montagu, 'The Jewish Religious Union and Its Beginning', 20.

<sup>80</sup> The Chief Rabbi complained that the hymns at the JRU service were not Jewish, and that "one of these has been composed from so essentially a Trinitarian standpoint that two lines had to be modified". Sermon reported in *The Jewish Chronicle* (12 Dec 1902).

<sup>81</sup> A Kershen, *Tradition and Change*, 105. JRU services were held at the "Wharncliffe Rooms" (in a hotel) from 1902–11, and in "the Hill Street building" in Marylebone from 1911. In 1925, the Liberal Jewish Synagogue was opened in St John's Wood Road. *Ibid.*, 100, 106; also D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 416, 417.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore (unaddressed, undated). MSS 169 'Claude JG Montefiore', HUNL. Montefiore once wrote, "Mere negation is not necessarily of value. A noble life which observes the dietary laws is not necessarily nobler for giving them up." Letter from CG Montefiore to Lily Montagu (12 April 1899). Microfilm No 2718, Correspondence of Lily H Montagu, AJAC.

<sup>83</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Jewish Religious Union and Its Cause', 10.

<sup>84</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Is There a Middle Way?', 12.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>86</sup> The enmity which some of the Orthodox felt towards the Liberal Jewish Synagogue is hinted at in an intriguing letter Montefiore once wrote to Lily Montagu. (Nothing more is known of this particular incident). "What a scandalous shame! I have never heard such a thing in my life. The enemies of the Liberal Movement sent out a forged circular from the Gov. Body of the Liberal [Synagogue?] inviting people to a Xmas evening function and Xmas tree in the Synagogue. I must relate the whole affair to you on Saturday." Letter from CG Montefiore to Lily Montagu (15 December, no year). Microfilm No 2718, Correspondence of Lily H Montagu, AJAC.

<sup>87</sup> JH Hertz, 'The Five Books of the Torah' in *Affirmations of Judaism*, 41n. Montefiore complained of the Chief Rabbi, "I see that our C[hief] R[abbi] has been kicking about again. I don't mind when he vituperates, for vituperation is in a sense neither true nor false, but when he speaks about criticism, and says that Wellhausen is all crumpled up, it makes me sad – that any one should venture to say such awful busters I feel ashamed – for him." Letter from CG Montefiore to Stephen Wise (28 May 1927). MS 19/27/7, Jewish Institute of Religion Papers, AJAC.

<sup>88</sup> JH Hertz, 'Marriage, Divorce and the Position of Women in Judaism' in *Sermons, Addresses and Studies*, II, 64–65.

<sup>89</sup> The argument had concerned *shechitah* which Hertz had described in *The Times* as "the Jewish method of slaughter". Montefiore's request was regarded as divisive and antagonistic. JH Hertz, 'The New Paths II' in *Affirmations of Judaism*, 187.

<sup>90</sup> 'Revolution in Judaism' in *The Express* (1909). ACC/3529/4/9, LMA.

<sup>91</sup> Address at Conference of Anglo-Jewish Preachers (July 1927) in JH Hertz, *Sermons, Addresses and Studies*, II, 156–157.

<sup>92</sup> Hertz quoted Simon Dubnow in 'The New Paths II' in *Affirmations of Judaism*, 170.

<sup>93</sup> Hertz suggested that "Liberals would be prepared to subscribe to the doctrine of the Trinity, if they were permitted to put their own interpretation on it, or that of advanced Christian theologians." JH

Hertz, ‘The Unity of God’ in *Affirmations of Judaism*, 19, 20. Montefiore was infuriated with what he described in the press as “deftly chosen” quotations from his *The Old Testament and After* (1923), but Hertz responded coolly that “if he *does* say these things, he must not object if he is told by Jews that the doctrine of Unity is still ‘an open question’ to him”. *Ibid.*, 20n.

<sup>94</sup> T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 97.

<sup>95</sup> For attacks against Christian conversionists in particular, see D Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 11, 21, 27–28, 39, 58–59.

<sup>96</sup> Montefiore reported that fellow Jews often told him, “You know, Montefiore, I would join your movement if you would only give up your pre-occupation with Jesus and the Gospels.” L Edgar, ‘Claude Montefiore’s Thought and the Present Religious Situation’, 21.

<sup>97</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘The Jewish Religious Union; Its Principles and Future’, 11.

<sup>98</sup> In the same letter Montefiore wrote, “‘New Judaism’ should keep Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, New Year and Atonement. You can’t create new festivals. Our present ones are a bond of union; they can be spiritualised and universalised.” Letter from CG Montefiore to Lily Montagu (12 April 1899), marked “strictly private and confidential”. Microfilm No 2718, Correspondence of Lily H Montagu, AJAC.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lily Montagu (14 July 1935), formally a letter to apologise for missing the meeting of the Governing Body of the World Union in Holland. Microfilm No 2718, Lily H Montagu Correspondence, AJAC.

<sup>100</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘IA: 1858–1925’, 245–246.

<sup>101</sup> *A Rabbinic Anthology*, ed. by CG Montefiore and H Loewe, lxxv.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxi.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, lix.

<sup>104</sup> A Kershen, *Tradition and Change*, 108. Lewis, a Zionist Cambridge graduate, left for the States to become chaplain and principal of the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York.

<sup>105</sup> D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 415.

<sup>106</sup> M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 214. Meyer recognises that Montefiore derided the Breslau Reform Seminary, which he found inconsistent. He also points out that Montefiore associated himself rather with Geiger in developing a Judaism which emphasised historical continuity in ‘Is Judaism a Tribal Religion?’ (1882), and that he referred to Solomon Formstecher in ‘A Justification of Judaism’ (1885). *Ibid.*, 444n97.

<sup>107</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Dr Ritter’s Text-Book of Reformed Judaism’, *Jewish Quarterly Review* I (1889), 278.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 74. The Oxford University Reform Act (1854) and the Cambridge University Reform Act (1856) had abolished the religious test for graduation, and in 1871 Jews were granted the right to take degrees and hold fellowships at Oxbridge colleges. *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>110</sup> Circumstantial evidence includes Lucy Cohen's claim that Montefiore avoided clubs and societies (of all sorts). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 40.

<sup>111</sup> For example, Walter Jacobs has taken exception to what he describes as Montefiore's "insular" studies, which rarely refer to other Jewish writers. W Jacob, 'Claude G Montefiore's Reappraisal of Christianity', 342.

<sup>112</sup> Letters to Morgenstern included advice against asking Dr Abelson, an Anglo-Jewish rabbi, to teach Jewish philosophy at HUC (advice which corresponded with that of I Abraham and which was followed), and fears that 'your younger Rabbis are getting very radical!' with regard to Zionism and 'ethical culture'. Letters from CG Montefiore to J Morgenstern (23 March 1925, 14 January 1935). MS 5 A-19/12, Hebrew Union College Papers, AJAC.

<sup>113</sup> Despite Wise's Zionism, Montefiore greatly admired him, and his letters included such sensitive material as attacks on Israel Zangwill and the Chief Rabbi. Letters from CG Montefiore to Stephen Wise (17 December 1923, 28 May 1928). MS 19/27/7, Jewish Institute of Religion Papers, AJAC.

<sup>114</sup> In one letter to an American Rabbi, Montefiore bemoaned the lack of sales. "This is going to be THE MOST CONCEITED letter you ever read. I often wonder why it is that practically no copies of my books sell in America. I venture to think that you have no book... Of course nobody pushes them. Macmillan has no interest in doing so, practically. Do you think that there is anything which can be done?" Letter from CG Montefiore to Louis Wolsey (27 September c1924). MS 15/3/5, Wolsey Papers, AJAC.

<sup>115</sup> Highly effusive reports of Montefiore are given in the Conservative Reform journal, *The American Hebrew* (10 June and 8 July 1910).

<sup>116</sup> As reported in *The American Hebrew* (24 February 1911).

<sup>117</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Dr Isadore Singer (2 Feb 1910). MS 42/1/4, Isadore Singer Papers, AJAC.

<sup>118</sup> Montefiore had considered many possibilities for a suitable rabbi. In a letter dated 22 May 1910, Israel Zangwill wrote, "I am posting you an American paper with a portrait of Rabbi Charles Fleischer because I have read somewhere that he is one of those in your mind for your movement. He certainly impressed me favourably when I met him in Boston." MS A36/133, CZA. Montefiore settled on Mattuck after he had spent over a month in America. He attended the Conference of American Reform Rabbis, and visited Reform Temples in New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Cincinnati. C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 318.

<sup>119</sup> Israel Mattuck, 'Our Debt to Claude G Montefiore' (1938).

<sup>120</sup> "Very large congregation today. They *do* like M[attuck]" Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (30 March 1928). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 173. "I fear that I am not a sensitive person enough in some directions. E.g. Mattuck says he can always feel if his audience is bored or interested, sympathetic or antagonistic. I feel nothing, one way or the other." Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (9 Sept 1931). *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>121</sup> M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 221.

<sup>122</sup> Lily Montagu was also influential in forwarding the rôle of women within the synagogue and was indignant at the "thirteen year delay" before they were able to partake in leading the service. L

Montagu, 'The Jewish Religious Union and Its Beginning', 27.

<sup>123</sup> D Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 417.

<sup>124</sup> Later, the Liberal congregation in Liverpool also enjoyed an American influence in the shape of Rabbi Morris Goldstein. *Ibid.*, 418. Goldstein had graduated from Hebrew Union College in 1927 and had a deep interest in Christianity. His *Jesus Within the Jewish Tradition*, to which we shall return in chapter three, was published in 1950.

<sup>125</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Israel Mattuck (date unknown). MS 165/1/12, Sheldon and Amy Blank Papers, AJAC.

<sup>126</sup> Most of their correspondence had to do with Mattuck's sermons, which Montefiore often wanted clarifying due to his deafness. He once ended a five page critique by asking, "Do you like getting these long letters? If not, beware of sermons which provoke them! Or: pray for a deaf day for *me* when I happen to be present." Letter from CG Montefiore to Israel Mattuck (6 January 1935). ACC/3529/4/2, LMA.

<sup>127</sup> Montefiore once wrote, "I am inclined to think that you do *hanker* after a collective, definite Jewish attitude, – a categorical pronouncement – towards social, political and international questions. Here I find great difficulties." Letter from CG Montefiore to Israel Mattuck (5 January 1935). ACC/3529/4/2, LMA.

<sup>128</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Israel Mattuck (undated). MS 165/1/12, Sheldon and Amy Blank Papers, AJAC.

<sup>129</sup> Montefiore warned, "For us Liberals to say, 'If you think thus and thus, you are not a Christian' or 'such an opinion in you is not Christian' is a very dangerous argument. Surely we have suffered from, and indignantly reject, such an argument *ourselves*." Letter from CG Montefiore to Israel Mattuck (undated). MS 165/1/12, Sheldon and Amy Blank Papers, AJAC.

<sup>130</sup> MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 15.

<sup>131</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 31.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>133</sup> Marks was minister of the West London Synagogue from 1840–1900. He was Professor of Hebrew at UCL from 1848–1898.

<sup>134</sup> David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 58. McCaul taught Hebrew at King's College, London, from 1841 and was an influential pamphletist.

<sup>135</sup> At least, he often referred to Marks' influence in letters to Lucy Cohen. L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 37.

<sup>136</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (6 Jan 1932). *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>137</sup> Solomon Schechter (1847–1915) was an outstanding authority on the Talmud and lecturer in Talmudic studies at Cambridge from 1890 until 1902. His *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (1909) led to a sympathetic reappraisal of the teachings of the Pharisees. After having discovered many important documents in the Cairo Synagogue *genizah* in 1896–7, he published *Documents of Jewish Sectaries* (1910). In 1902 Schechter left for the US to serve as President of the Jewish

Theological Seminary in New York, which he developed as a major centre for the training of rabbis in Conservative Judaism. In 1913 he founded the United Synagogues of America which grew from 23 to 800 conservative congregations. He considered this organisation to be his greatest legacy, believing deeply in a strong congregational base for Conservative Judaism.

<sup>138</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Jewish Scholarship and Christian Silence', 338.

<sup>139</sup> From the preface to his *Hibbert Lectures* (1893).

<sup>140</sup> See J Stein, *Lieber Freund; the Letters of Claude Goldsmid Montefiore to Solomon Schechter 1885–1902* (1988).

<sup>141</sup> It appears that for years after he arrived in England, Schechter struggled to keep afloat financially. His dependence upon Montefiore's continual financial assistance is apparent from their correspondence (J Stein, *Lieber Freund*, 1–2, 13, 23, 36) and more than likely contributed to resentment on Schechter's part.

<sup>142</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Solomon Schechter (undated). *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>143</sup> Norman Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 11.

<sup>144</sup> "You seem to me to have a sort of anti-anti-Semitic fever. I don't see these horrors in England but we shall probably neither convince the other!" Letter from CG Montefiore to Solomon Schechter (9 Dec 1898). J Stein, *Lieber Freund*, 42.

<sup>145</sup> Schechter wrote to Norman Bentwich in 1902 that he had made his name in England without needing either Montefiore or Chief Rabbi Adler "and largely against them". Cited in S Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews*, 164n.

<sup>146</sup> CG Montefiore, *Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams*, lxiv.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, lxii.

<sup>148</sup> H Loewe, *Israel Abrahams*, 68–69.

<sup>149</sup> I Abrahams, *Some Permanent Values in Judaism*, 77.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 78, 81.

<sup>151</sup> Abrahams was among the literary mainstays of the anti-Zionist *Jewish Guardian* from its founding in 1919. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 164.

<sup>152</sup> One of Abrahams' main complaints was that Schürer had failed to take into account the criticisms of Montefiore (regarding, for example, ritual uncleanness) in the new edition of his book. He asked rhetorically, "Why is it that a man like Mr Montefiore has been moved to such unwonted heat when dealing with Schürer's charges against the Law?" I Abrahams, 'Prof. Schürer on Life Under the Jewish Law', 641.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 626.

<sup>154</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 447.

<sup>155</sup> Prologue to *A Rabbinic Anthology*, ed. by CG Montefiore and H Loewe, civ.

<sup>156</sup> While there were obvious differences of opinion between Montefiore and Abrahams, the latter certainly did not take the pains to articulate them to the degree Loewe did. For example, Abrahams had originally intended to contribute a third volume to Montefiore's *Synoptic Gospels*, but it was never written, probably for the very reason that he did not feel comfortable contributing to a work whose value-judgement of first-century Judaism was so foreign to his own. Specifically, Abrahams differed too greatly from Montefiore with regard to the Rabbis and he eventually decided it was best to publish his material separately in *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (2 vols, 1917–24).

<sup>157</sup> W Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 94.

<sup>158</sup> L Jacobs, 'Montefiore and Loewe on the Rabbis', 4, 9.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–24.

<sup>160</sup> LH Silberman, 'Prolegomenon' in the 1968 edition of CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 4.

<sup>161</sup> FC Schwartz, 'Claude Montefiore on Law and Tradition', 26. Schwartz works most closely with Montefiore's *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* and, of course, his *Rabbinic Anthology*.

<sup>162</sup> FC Schwartz, 'Claude Montefiore on Law and Tradition', 42.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>164</sup> Englander makes the point that "the progressives, drawn from the most acculturated elements of the élite, moved in the best circles and were not unmindful of the antagonism provoked by Rabbinic Judaism [among Christians]". Montefiore was not entirely above such peer pressure. D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 260.

<sup>165</sup> A Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, 28–29.

<sup>166</sup> Mendelssohn's view that *halakhah* was the sectarian expression which differentiated the Jew from the non-Jew infuriated Montefiore. *Halakhah* was precisely that aspect of Orthodoxy with which he had least interest.

<sup>167</sup> Philip Magnus became the second minister at the West London Synagogue in 1866. M Leigh, 'Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 33. Chaim Berman suggests that Magnus' anti-Zionism might have been responsible for Montefiore's similar view. C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 279.

<sup>168</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 265.

<sup>169</sup> CG Montefiore, 'A Die-Hard's Confession' (1935).

<sup>170</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (undated). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 138.

<sup>171</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Dangers of Zionism', 5–6.

<sup>172</sup> CG Montefiore, cited in N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 8.

<sup>173</sup> CG Montefiore 'A Die-Hard's Confession' cited in L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 225–227.

<sup>174</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (13 July 1937). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 253. Montefiore also wrote, "Weizmann made a stately, eloquent speech of masterly ability, and most

unfair, party, and sophistical. He stands head and shoulders above everybody in consummate ability.” Letter from CG Montefiore to Israel Mattuck (24 May, no year). ACC/3529/4/2, LMA. Herzl, on the other hand, dismissed Montefiore as a “stupid ass who affects English correctness”. Cited in S Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews*, 166n.

<sup>175</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (date uncertain). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 138.

<sup>176</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Liberal Judaism in England’, 642, 643.

<sup>177</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (16 June 1934). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 212.

<sup>178</sup> Herbert Samuel was the first Jew to sit in the Cabinet. He became a friend of Weizmann and is regarded by Berman as largely responsible for the Balfour Declaration. He was also the first High Commissioner of Palestine. C Berman, *The Cousinhood*, 342, 344.

<sup>179</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Herbert Samuel (3 March 1915). MS A77/3/13, CZA.

<sup>180</sup> *The Jewish Chronicle* (15 August 1876) cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 126.

<sup>181</sup> Goldwin Smith, ‘Can Jews be Patriots?’, *Nineteenth Century*, (May 1878), 876, cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 90.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>183</sup> An example of political anti-Semitism was the proto-fascist British Brothers League which marched the streets of the East End of London at the turn of the century. D Englander, ‘Anglicised but not Anglican’ in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 266.

<sup>184</sup> Writing in 1915, Montefiore admitted that “... at the present anxious time, it would not be well for me as President of the Anglo-Jewish Association and Joint Chairman of the Conjoint Foreign Committee, to say anything that might cause irritation to any party in Judaism, however opposed to that party I may be. Where I can easily hold my tongue, I will.” Letter from CG Montefiore to Henry Hurwitz of *The Menorah Journal* (20 January 1915). MS 2/36/1, Henry Hurwitz / Menorah Association Memorial Collection, AJAC.

<sup>185</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucien Wolf (3 March 1915) including a copy of a Letter from CG Montefiore to Herbert Samuel (same date). MS A77/3/13, CZA.

<sup>186</sup> C Berman, *Troubled Eden*, 101.

<sup>187</sup> S Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews*, 305.

<sup>188</sup> E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 178.

<sup>189</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Herbert Samuel (3 March 1915). MS A77/3/13, CZA.

<sup>190</sup> Some even attributed a more ominous motivation to Montefiore. His argument regarding the divided loyalties that would face Jews in many lands once a national homeland had been founded was described as “a calumny in genuine anti-Semitic style”. Bernard Drachman, ‘An Answer to Mr Claude Montefiore’ in *American Hebrew Journal*, LXII (8 April 1898), 679.

<sup>191</sup> *Ahad Ha-Am: Selected Essays*, ed. by L Simon, 182–183.

<sup>192</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, *Transvaluation of Values* (1898) cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 19.

<sup>193</sup> Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) argued that Ahad Ha-Am's formulation made the Diaspora communities nothing but automated appendages. A Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, 64.

<sup>194</sup> S Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, cited in Norman Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 11.

<sup>195</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Solomon Schechter (12 Dec 1900). J Stein, *Lieber Freund*, 45–46.

<sup>196</sup> S Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, cited in N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 12.

<sup>197</sup> Letter from Israel Zangwill to CG Montefiore (3 Feb 1909). MS A120/454, CZA.

<sup>198</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (27 Sept 1930). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 201–202.

<sup>199</sup> Letters to Lucy Cohen (19 March 1934). Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> "I cannot tell you the anxiety the Zionists cause me. Sometimes I get so sick of their intrigues and mischief, that I feel tempted to chuck all Jewish work... How the disease is growing in USA of all places grieves me *most*. Its triumph means the ruin of Judaism and (as I believe *too*) of the Jews. I mind the latter much less for they will have brought it upon themselves. I feel often sick at heart about it." Letter from CG Montefiore to Dr [Morris] J[oseph]? (15 April, year uncertain). MS 165/1/12, Sheldon and Amy Blank Papers, AJAC.

<sup>201</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Solomon Schechter (9 Dec 1898) in J Stein, *Lieber Freund*, 42.

<sup>202</sup> Morris Joseph had given a talk to the annual meeting of the Anglo-Jewish Association on the theme 'Anti-Semitic Tendencies in Britain'. In support, Montefiore pointed out that it was more difficult for a Jew to join certain clubs than it had been 6 or 7 years previously. T Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 102.

<sup>203</sup> For example, see Richard Libowitz's review of M Bowler's *Claude Montefiore and Christianity* in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, XXVII (1990), 788–789.

<sup>204</sup> In a sense, Montefiore would not have needed to witness the Shoah. He was not so naïve to believe that the pogroms and anti-Semitism had ended, in any case. In 1929 he lamented the fate "of the [Jewish] race whose secular martyrdom is even yet by no means over". CG Montefiore, 'The Originality of Jesus', 100.

<sup>205</sup> YH Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 92.

<sup>206</sup> This is true at least with regard to the first century. Jacob Neusner has attacked the view, held by EP Sanders among others, that there is a normative or general Judaism that provides the background theology to the various Judaisms of the different first-century Jewish communities. B Chilton and J Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament*, 22–24.

<sup>207</sup> L Baeck, *Wesen des Judentums* (1905, ET 1936).

<sup>208</sup> WR Matthews, 'Claude Montefiore: the Man and his Thought', 19–20.

<sup>209</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Justification of Liberal Judaism', 19–20, cited in E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 125.

<sup>210</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism*, 125.

<sup>211</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (21 July 1923). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 109.

<sup>212</sup> One of his favourite verses, Cohen recalls, was "See I have put before you life and good and death and evil, choose life". *Ibid.*, 264–5.

<sup>213</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 550.

<sup>214</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Authority' (c1932), 12, paper presented to the Commission on Present Thought and Practice in Progressive Judaism (Authority Committee). MS 16/2/13, World Union for Progressive Judaism Papers, AJAC.

<sup>215</sup> CG Montefiore cited in N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 15.

<sup>216</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Authority' (c1932), 9, paper presented to the Commission on Present Thought and Practice in Progressive Judaism (Authority Committee). MS 16/2/13, World Union for Progressive Judaism Papers, AJAC.

<sup>217</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 762.

<sup>218</sup> A Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, 25–26.

<sup>219</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion' (1891–92).

<sup>220</sup> The German-Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) had maintained that "Judaism is not revealed religion, but revealed legislation". Only their ceremonial laws were peculiar to the people of Israel and were unchangeable; doctrines and historical truths were not the product of Divine revelation and were therefore available to the rest of mankind. What was important, he believed, was that which was designed to preserve the Jewish ethnic group. I Epstein, *Judaism*, 288; also HJ Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument*, 104.

<sup>221</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion', 297–298.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>223</sup> E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 179–181.

<sup>224</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (18 May 1926). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 145.

<sup>225</sup> K Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered* (Cincinnati, 1918) cited in David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, 76.

<sup>226</sup> Cohen has been described as "the most important Jewish philosopher since Maimonides... the philosophical spokesman for liberal Judaism". *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 129.

<sup>227</sup> Herman Cohen wrote on Jewish unity but only in terms of a religious community. He was not a nationalist. *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 144, 151, 154.

<sup>230</sup> AJ Wolf, 'The Dilemma of Claude Montefiore', 25.

<sup>231</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (26 Jan 1937). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 245.

<sup>232</sup> Leo Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity*, 171–184.

<sup>233</sup> Reprinted in S Schechter, *Studies in Judaism* (New York: 1965), 150–189.

<sup>234</sup> Montefiore assisted Lucy Cohen's work. L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 186.

<sup>235</sup> An advertisement in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* XVIII reflects Montefiore's interest in the matter: "A prize of £200 is offered by Mr CG Montefiore for the best book on 'Jewish Mysticism'".

<sup>236</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (18 Dec 1923). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 113.

<sup>237</sup> Regarding one of Buber's Hasidic stories, he commented, "I found that story all too hard. It is like vaulting ambition, etc. Be *too* mystical and you become obscure." *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>238</sup> W Jacobs, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 98.

<sup>239</sup> S Bayme, 'Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and the Origins of the Jewish Religious Union', 64.

<sup>240</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 50–51.

<sup>241</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 551.

<sup>242</sup> A Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, 109.

<sup>243</sup> The English translation *I and Thou* was published in 1937.

<sup>244</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1432.

<sup>245</sup> D Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, 89.

<sup>246</sup> Cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 219. In *The Star of Redemption* (1921), however, he did accept that *halakhah* was a potential authentic means by which to relate to God. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 302.

<sup>247</sup> Cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 223.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>251</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 302.

<sup>252</sup> *The Times*, 28 May 1917, cited in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 302.

<sup>253</sup> N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 19.

<sup>254</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (1923). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 132.

<sup>255</sup> "What the whole thing means, is not Liberal Judaism, but Liberal Christianity." Cited in R Apple, *The Hampstead Synagogue*, 38.

<sup>256</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, 'Judaism and the Gospels' reprinted in *American Review Journal* LXXXVII (23 September 1910), 513. The American Rabbi Joseph Jacobs was also highly critical of what he saw as Montefiore's determination to contrast "Jewish views of life" with those of Jesus in an unfavourable light so as to recommend Jesus' teachings to Liberal Jews. J Jacobs, 'The Gospel According to Claude Montefiore', *American Hebrew* LXXXVII (17 June 1910), 157.

<sup>257</sup> MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 73.

<sup>258</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Solomon Schechter (12 Dec 1900). J Stein, *Lieber Freund*, 45.

<sup>259</sup> *A Rabbinic Anthology*, ed. by CG Montefiore and H Loewe, liii.

<sup>260</sup> Ferdinand Weber, 'System of Palestinian Theology in the Early Synagogues' (1880). Second edition entitled 'Jewish Theology exhibited on the basis of the Talmud and allied writings' (1897).

<sup>261</sup> According to a talk Nicholas de Lange gave at a CCJ conference on 'Covenant' (24 June 1996).

<sup>262</sup> M Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life*, 63–85, 87–89.

<sup>263</sup> Hilton writes, "I am fully aware that this is a highly controversial area. It is indeed painful to discover that someone you have always thought of as your parent is in fact not parent but brother or sister." *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>264</sup> N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 11.

<sup>265</sup> Rather, as we have seen, Judaism was to be defined in terms of "man's attitude towards the world" for Baeck. A Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, 108.

<sup>266</sup> VE Reichert, 'The Contribution of Claude G Montefiore', 510–511.

<sup>267</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Dr Friedländer on the Jewish Religion', 234.

<sup>268</sup> Jews' College was, after all, the rabbinical training school "in which nearly every Jewish minister for the last 25 years has been taught". *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 231–232.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>271</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Is There a Middle Way?', 2.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>276</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Dr Friedländer on the Jewish Religion', 212–215.

<sup>277</sup> CG Montefiore, 'A Justification of Judaism', 8–9.

<sup>278</sup> Cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 197.

<sup>279</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Dr Friedländer on the Jewish Religion', 223.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, 'Judaism and the Gospels' in *The Jewish Review* I (3 Sept 1910).

<sup>282</sup> *Ahad Ha-Am: Essays, Letters, Memoirs*, ed. by L Simon, 135.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>284</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (5 Jan 1934). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 217–218.

<sup>285</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Dr Friedländer on the Jewish Religion', 231.

<sup>286</sup> *Ahad Ha-Am: Essays, Letters, Memoirs*, ed. by L Simon, 81.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>288</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 45.

<sup>289</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 568.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

<sup>291</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 119.

<sup>292</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Dr Friedländer on the Jewish Religion', 231.

<sup>293</sup> Such options included substituting Sunday services for Saturday ones, offering open support of intermarriage with non-Jews, renouncing circumcision or traditional festivals, and using NT texts in worship.

<sup>294</sup> CG Montefiore, 'A Justification of Judaism', 23.

<sup>295</sup> Letter from Israel Zangwill to CG Montefiore (21 Feb 1919). MS A120/454, CZA.

<sup>296</sup> Montefiore was the first Jew to hold this position.

<sup>297</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Misconceptions of Judaism and Christianity by Each Other', 216.

<sup>298</sup> Cited in *Jewish Perspectives on Christianity*, ed. by FA Rothschild, 161.

<sup>299</sup> By Bernhard Casper in *Jewish Perspectives on Christianity*, ed. by FA Rothschild, 167.

<sup>300</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 301,

<sup>301</sup> Bernhard Casper in *Jewish Perspectives on Christianity*, ed. by FA Rothschild, 164.

<sup>302</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, II, 163.

<sup>303</sup> *A Rabbinic Anthology*, ed. by CG Montefiore and H Loewe, xxi.

<sup>304</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Misconceptions of Judaism and Christianity by Each Other', 196. Although his negative intent is clear, Baeck's work was very much an oblique attack, however. Apart from the title and the polemical tone, he rarely mentions Christianity.

<sup>305</sup> From an essay on *Mystery and Commandment* originally published in 1922, cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 199.

<sup>306</sup> Schleiermacher (1768–1834) is usually regarded as the founder of modern Protestant theology; he had been much involved in German Romanticism.

<sup>307</sup> From an essay on *Romantic Religion* originally published in 1922, cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 206, 209.

<sup>308</sup> Leo Baeck, 'Some Questions to the Christian Church from the Jewish Point of View', cited in *Towards a Theological Encounter*, ed. by L Klenicki, 71.

<sup>309</sup> K Kohler in *The Reform Advocate* (6 May 1911). Cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 312.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> See, for example, *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. by T Endelman (1987).

<sup>312</sup> *Jewish Apostasy*, ed. by T Endelman, 83–84.

<sup>313</sup> *Jewish Perspectives*, ed. by FA Rothschild, 160.

<sup>314</sup> Treating Christianity from a historical point of view, both Buber and Montefiore attempted to reclaim Jesus and his teachings as a Jewish phenomenon even if this was not possible for Paul and later Christianity. But Buber was also able to see it from a philosophical angle; like Rosenzweig, he recognised the reality of Christianity as a pathway to God.

<sup>315</sup> On the other hand, there is some evidence that Montefiore approached the position championed by Buber. In a letter to a Christian friend, he once mused, "... perhaps it was Roman Catholicism (though I personally hate Rome with an ancestral hate) which made v. Hügel the saint and wonderful creature that he was? Perhaps different natures need different religions, and different stages of society need different religions." Letter from CG Montefiore to WR Matthews (November 1930). ACC/3529/4/7, LMA.

<sup>316</sup> M Buber, *Die Stunde und die Erkenntnis* (Berlin: 1936), 152. Cited in *Towards a Theological Encounter*, ed. by L Klenicki, 75.

<sup>317</sup> M Buber, *I-Thou*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (1958), 11, cited in *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, ed. by S Noveck, 251.

<sup>318</sup> From the Founder's Statement, DWL; see also L Barmann, 'Confronting Secularisation: Origins

of the London Society for the Study of Religion' (1993).

<sup>319</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to WR Matthews (November 1930). ACC/3529/4/7, LMA.

<sup>320</sup> Buber himself rejected the idea of a dialogical relationship between groups. He argued, for example, that a Christian could not have a dialogical relationship with a triune God (that is, three persons related to each other) since it was not possible to relate to a whole "class" at a one-to-one level. D Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, 87.

<sup>321</sup> J Rayner, 'CG Montefiore', 258.

<sup>322</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 587.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 552.

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> N Bentwich, 'Claude Montefiore and his Tutor in Rabbinics', 11.

<sup>2</sup> His *Romantische Religion*, written in 1922, was a powerful polemic that contrasted the weak elements of the "Romantic" eastern beliefs found in Christianity with those of "Classic" Judaism.

<sup>3</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Bible for Home Reading*, II, 779.

<sup>4</sup> Englander suggests that "trinitarian hymns and other alien practices incorporated into its liturgy made liberal Judaism abhorrent" to British Jews. D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 262. The *perception* that such practices occurred certainly explained the Jewish Orthodox suspicion of the "denationalised spiritualism" of Montefiore and the "liberal separatists". In reality, the Jewish Religious Union did not even incorporate into the service readings from the New Testament (which Montefiore regarded as Jewish and useful), let alone (un-modified) Christian devotional hymns. Despite a philosophical interest in trinitarianism, which he distinguished from tritheism, Montefiore was undoubtedly unitarian (see his sympathetic treatment of God as Trinity in *The Old Testament and After*, 561).

<sup>5</sup> Agus contrasted previous stages in Jewish-Christian relations (those of *Mutual Negation* and *Mutual Derogation*) with Montefiore's new approach, of which he commented, "At times, [Montefiore] speaks only of... the two faiths learning from each other, but on occasion he pleads that the leaders of Judaism supplement rabbinic teaching by passages, parables and principles of the New Testament, accepting these teachings as part of the sacred tradition of Judaism." J Agus, 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism', 7.

<sup>6</sup> Jacob suggests that only by his "incredible" brushing aside of the history of suffering could Montefiore so approach Christianity. He argues that Montefiore neglected to deal with the crucifixion story and thus avoided the basis of 2000 years of Jewish-Christian misunderstandings and anti-Semitism. W Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 103. But deicide is by no means the root cause of anti-Semitism and Jacob's treatment of Montefiore's positive approach to Christianity is unfair. Montefiore studied Christianity for what he believed it could give his religion; in addition, he believed that without an accommodating attitude (and increased assimilation) the threat of anti-Semitism would always loom over the Jewish people. The crucifixion story was glossed over partly because of Montefiore's rationalism (he could not have accepted it as a historical event) and partly because, as far as he was concerned, the crucifixion did not represent the essentials of Christianity (which were its ethics) and was therefore unimportant. He ignored the "mystical" Gospel of John for similar reasons.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (August 1906). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 77.

<sup>8</sup> "What the whole thing means, is not Liberal Judaism, but Liberal Christianity." Cited in R Apple, *The Hampstead Synagogue*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Judaism and Democracy', *PFJP*, XVI (1917), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Abraham Benisch was editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* from 1855–68. David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 47–48.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (uncertain date). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 105.

<sup>12</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Anti-Semitism in England', 16. In a letter from CG Montefiore to Schechter (12 Dec 1900) Montefiore wrote, "... you know that the doctrine 'Englishmen of the Jewish Persuasion' is my heart's blood doctrine, for which I labour and give my life". *Lieber Freund*, ed. by Joshua B Stein, 45.

<sup>13</sup> TM Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History* (1990).

<sup>14</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 78–79.

<sup>15</sup> He sometimes described the Jewish community as 'Rutlandshire'. L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 46. He once wrote, "... I feel tempted to chuck all Jewish work and retire to Coldeast and live exclusively as an ordinary Englishman among my English neighbours – my own people, as I call them, unlike the J[ewish] C[ommunity]: I feel inclined to live and work and die there among them." Letter from CG Montefiore to Dr [Morris] J[oseph]? (15 April, year uncertain). MS 165/1/12, Sheldon and Amy Blank Papers, AJAC.

<sup>16</sup> Israel Zangwill was a good example. "As to Z[angwill], you know I can't bear him. He is a bete noir to me and I regard him as a most dangerous man, not only because of his opinions, which I detest, but because of his gross vulgarity and lack of taste and breeding and good manners..." Letter from CG Montefiore to Stephen Wise (17 December 1923). MS 19/27/7 Jewish Institute of Religion Papers, AJAC.

<sup>17</sup> L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 171–2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Hastings Rashdall (Nov 7, year uncertain). MS Eng. Lett. 351, fol. 97, Bodleian.

<sup>20</sup> Feldman deals with the mechanics of the influence of the Protestant churches upon the movement in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews* (1994).

<sup>21</sup> The Karaites were a heretical Jewish sect, located chiefly in the Crimea and founded in the eighth century. They rejected the rabbinic traditions and based their tenets upon a literal interpretation of the Bible.

<sup>22</sup> Between 1881 and 1914, over 100 000 poor and mostly unskilled Russian, Polish, Galician and Romanian Jews arrived in Britain. A Kershen, *Tradition and Change*, 92; also D Ceserani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 70.

<sup>23</sup> D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 259.

<sup>24</sup> Englander focuses primarily upon the *differences* of Anglo-Reform with reforming movements elsewhere. "Political considerations, though doubtlessly important, do not, however, supply an adequate explanation for the curious combination of liturgical conservatism and militant anti-rabbiniism that was without parallel in either Germany or the United States. It is the singularity of Anglo-Jewry that invites attention." Ibid., 257–258.

<sup>25</sup> D Ceserani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 50–51.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> The Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) allowed Catholics to sit in Parliament; the Reform Act (1832) reorganised the British political and institutional scene.

<sup>29</sup> A series of pamphlets published in one volume, *Old Paths* (1837) sold more than 10 000 copies in its first year and was translated into Hebrew, French and German; a second edition was published in 1846. D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> A McCaul, *Sketches of Judaism and Jews* (London: 1838), cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 55.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Benjamin Jowett to CG Montefiore (1883). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Benjamin Jowett to CG Montefiore (1893). *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 56.

<sup>35</sup> Schechter's (later) "Catholic Judaism" was an eloquent defence of the superiority of custom over scripture or "primitive Judaism" in forming rules of practice. He wrote in *Studies in Judaism* (1896), "The norm as well as the sanction of Judaism is the practice actually in vogue. Its consecration is the consecration of general use – or, in other words, of Catholic Israel." Cited in D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 261–262.

<sup>36</sup> M Angel, *The Law of Sinai and Its Appointed Times* (London: 1858), cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 60. Born in the same year as Angel wrote these words, Montefiore was later to write in a similar vein. In the context of biblical scholarship, Montefiore's article "Jewish Scholarship and Christian Silence" (1903) asked how it was that Christian New Testament scholars could continue to ignore the Jewish evidence that contradicted their presuppositions of Judaism.

<sup>37</sup> David Marks, *The Law is Light: A Course of Four Lectures on the Sufficiency of the Law of Moses as the Guide of Israel* (London: 1854), cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 58–59.

<sup>38</sup> *Leonard G Montefiore*, ed. by L Stein, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from David Marks to the elders at the Orthodox Bevis Marks Synagogue (August 1841) cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 50.

<sup>40</sup> Many of these are detailed in M Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life*, 141–160.

<sup>41</sup> Although the creation of two branch synagogues in the West End of London under the jurisdiction of the Great Synagogue and Bevis Marks in 1853 and 1855 also helped. D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 66.

<sup>42</sup> D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 237.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from David Marks to the elders at the Orthodox Bevis Marks Synagogue (August 1841)

cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 50.

<sup>44</sup> M Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life*, 130, 145–146.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>46</sup> M Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 143.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>49</sup> F Temple, *Essays and Reviews* was a collection of essays by seven authors which represented the most sensational theological development in nineteenth-century England after Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859). The works were shocking not so much because they considered the "historical question" and therefore questioned biblical authority and inspiration – Strauss' *Life of Jesus* (1835–6) had already done this – but because they were derived almost entirely from Oxford educators and thus represented an attack from within, not a threat from without, such as German rationalism had. Popularly, it introduced theological issues to the educated public and made for a more liberal attitude towards religious differences.

<sup>50</sup> Goldwin Smith, 'Can Jews be Patriots?' in *Nineteenth Century* (May 1878), 875–887.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 876.

<sup>52</sup> The two articles were 'Jews and Judaism: A Rejoinder' in *Nineteenth Century* (July 1878); and 'Recent Phases of Judaeophobia' in *Nineteenth Century* (December 1881).

<sup>53</sup> H Adler, 'Jews and Judaism: A Rejoinder' in *Nineteenth Century* (July 1878), 139–140.

<sup>54</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Is Judaism a Tribal Religion?' in *Contemporary Review* (Sept 1882).

<sup>55</sup> There were at least two distinct reactions against the Evangelical doctrine of the Atonement: Incarnationists such as Westcott, Gore and Temple emphasised Christ's role as bringing about the revitalisation of mankind, the perfecting of humanity. Exemplorists such as Jowett and Rashdall emphasised Christ's ethical example. For both, the humanity of Christ was central.

<sup>56</sup> D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 84.

<sup>57</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Jewish Religious Union; Its Principles and Future', *PFJP* (1918).

<sup>58</sup> Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, 13–14.

<sup>59</sup> D Englander, 'Anglicised but not Anglican' in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, I, 244.

<sup>60</sup> Henriques had come under Montefiore's influence in 1910, although he preferred to call himself Reform rather than Liberal. (L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 137). Toynbee Hall and Oxford House were university settlements established in the East End so that graduates from Oxford and Cambridge might live among, educate and encourage the poor of East London. St George's Settlement Synagogue was co-founded in 1925 by the Liberal Jewish and the West London synagogues. Its services were composed of a combination of Reform and Liberal liturgies together with a strong

admixture of the thoughts and prayers of Henriques himself. A Kershen, *Tradition and Change*, 96; also M Leigh, 'Reform Judaism in Great Britain' in *Reform Judaism*, ed. by D Marmur, 36.

<sup>61</sup> Maurice G Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 14, 17.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>63</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Place of Judaism in the Religions of the World', *PFJP* XII (1916), 16.

<sup>64</sup> MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 45–46.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>66</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Old Testament and Its Ethical Teachings', *PFJP* XV, 6.

<sup>67</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 106.

<sup>68</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 138.

<sup>69</sup> "It is pathetic to find Jewish students... still toiling at Maimonides and at medieval philosophy as if what was good and adequate for the needs of the 12th and 13th centuries was also good and adequate for the 19th and 20th!" CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 190.

<sup>70</sup> Montefiore deplored what he saw as Jewish prostration to "the fashionable Zionist Baal". CG Montefiore, 'A Die-Hard's Confession', paper read at the LSSR (1935).

<sup>71</sup> MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> "Their hands outstretched in yearning for the other shore" (Virgil, *Aeneid* VI 314) or "Now the labourer's task is o'er; / Now the battle-day is past; / Now upon the further shore/ Lands the voyager at last." (Hymn by John Ellerton, 1826–93). My thanks to Rev. John Davies for suggesting these other possible solutions.

<sup>73</sup> JH Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (London: Longmans, 1904), 63, cited in MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 38.

<sup>74</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Is There a Middle Way?', *PFJP* XXIII (1920).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

<sup>76</sup> Montefiore came to view Marks' understanding of the contribution of Greece as "naïve", however. CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 184.

<sup>77</sup> Ancient history had been added to the syllabus in 1830, well before Montefiore started in 1878. Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 63.

<sup>78</sup> Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 5–6.

<sup>79</sup> Cited in R Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 65.

<sup>80</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 4–5.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>82</sup> TK Cheyne, *Psalter*, 295, cited in CG Montefiore, *The Hibbert Lectures*, 378.

<sup>83</sup> Cited in R Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 71.

<sup>84</sup> R Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 65.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in F Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 418.

<sup>86</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 183.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>92</sup> “The Hellenistic environment suggested or stimulated the impulse to expansion and universalism”. CG Montefiore, *The Hibbert Lectures*, 378.

<sup>93</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘The Old Testament and Its Ethical Teaching’, 243.

<sup>94</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 190.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 219–220.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>101</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘The Old Testament and Its Ethical Teaching’, 248.

<sup>102</sup> F Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 420.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>104</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 236.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>108</sup> B Jowett, *Essays and Reviews* (1860) cited in CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 314.

<sup>109</sup> B Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, III, xxxvii, cited in CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 3.

<sup>110</sup> MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 6.

<sup>111</sup> G Parsons, 'Biblical Criticism in Victorian Britain', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G Parsons, II, 244, 249.

<sup>112</sup> Emanuel Deutsch was a Sicilian Jewish Semitic scholar and Hebraist at the British Museum. He published a lengthy article in *The Quarterly Review* that argued that rabbinic religion was a "faith of the heart" in contrast to the Old Testament "law". E Deutsch, 'The Talmud', *The Quarterly Review* (October 1867), 417–464, 438, cited in D Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 125.

<sup>113</sup> Abraham Benisch, *The Jewish Chronicle* (16 September 1864) cited in D Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 47.

<sup>114</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 2.

<sup>115</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion', 294.

<sup>116</sup> The German-Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) had maintained that "Judaism is not revealed religion, but revealed legislation". Only their ceremonial laws were peculiar to the people of Israel and were unchangeable; doctrines and historical truths were not the product of Divine revelation and were therefore available to the rest of mankind. What was important, he believed, was that which was designed to preserve the Jewish ethnic group. Isadore Epstein, *Judaism* (London: Penguin, 1959), 288; also Hans Joachim Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument*, 104.

<sup>117</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion', 297–298.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Humphrey Ward (1892), cited in CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 313.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 301.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 374.

<sup>123</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lily Montagu (12 April 1899) marked "strictly private and confidential" and "This letter for your eyes only". Microfilm No 2718, Correspondence of Lily H Montagu, AJAC.

<sup>124</sup> B Jowett, *College Sermons*, cited in CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 332.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>126</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 14.

<sup>127</sup> B Jowett, *St Paul* (1859) cited in CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 304.

<sup>128</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion', 296.

<sup>129</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Place of Judaism in the Religions of the World', 33–34.

<sup>130</sup> Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Sir R Mosier, cited in CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 333.

<sup>131</sup> Montefiore's hegelianism can be traced to TH Green's Idealism and, perhaps, back to Jowett himself. For although Jowett always maintained that he was not Hegelian, he was firmly committed to the concepts of the evolution of the human mind and of particular Ideas over time. F Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 418.

<sup>132</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Place of Judaism in the Religions of the World', 8.

<sup>133</sup> Ronald Clements, *100 Years of Old Testament Interpretation*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> A notorious example, Gerhard Kittel (1888–1948), the German editor of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (begun in 1931, finished in 1976) has been condemned for his "solid and impenitent Nazi sympathies" (S Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 374, n1).

<sup>135</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion', 293.

<sup>136</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 2.

<sup>137</sup> Montefiore diverged significantly from Wellhausen only with respect to his (negative) estimation of the Jewish Law, to which we shall return later.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Hibbert Lectures*, 4.

<sup>140</sup> Pfleiderer (1836–1900) has been called the father of religio-historical study in Germany. In any case, the *Religionsgeschichteliche* sought to interpret Jesus and early Christianity by reference to the beliefs and practices of late Hellenism; it saw the New Testament as part of the religious processes at work in the Levant in the period before and after Christianity. For the Religio-Historical school as for the Ritschlians, Christianity was not to be understood to be either historically or phenomenologically unique. Instead, it was a complex "syncretistic religion", a product of Late Judaism (whose apocalypticism, according to Bousset, involved a strain of Persian influence), Oriental eschatology, Greek mysteries, Gnosticism, and Stoicism. Christianity was thus a synthesis of Western and Oriental ideas at a time when they were converging.

<sup>141</sup> WG Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 346–349.

<sup>142</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Religious Teaching of Jowett', 314.

<sup>143</sup> B Jowett, *Life* (1879), II, 85, cited in CG Montefiore, ‘The Religious Teaching of Jowett’, 312.

<sup>144</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Hastings Rashdall (June 1916). MS Eng. Lett. c348, fol. 100–11, Bodleian.

<sup>145</sup> In a letter to Rashdall (26 Dec 1919), Montefiore thanked him for his consistently favourable reviews. “I am very obliged for your kind references to my little books, and am proud that you found them any good.” MS Eng. Lett. c349, fol. 202–5, Bodleian.

<sup>146</sup> Letter from Hastings Rashdall to CG Montefiore (31 Dec 1913), cited in H Handley, ‘Claude Montefiore’ in *The Modern Churchman*, 415, ACC/3529/4/9, LMA.

<sup>147</sup> Including CG Montefiore’s Jewish approach to *The Synoptic Gospels* (1909) manuscript.

<sup>148</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Some Notes on the Effects of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion’, 297.

<sup>149</sup> WR Matthews, ‘Claude Montefiore: the Man and his Thought’, 13.

<sup>150</sup> Writing in the mid 1920s, he observed, “The detailed and elaborate work of Bultmann in this connection seems little known or appreciated so far in England... Though his conclusions, as regards the authenticity and ‘historicity’ of many stories and sayings, is much overdone, it is (as it seems to me) very improbable that his work will leave things as they were and remain without influence or effect.” CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* I, lvi–lvii.

<sup>151</sup> Matthews calls this a “hard saying” since Montefiore’s “zeal for righteousness was one of his most salient and most loveable characteristics”. WR Matthews, ‘Claude Montefiore: the Man and his Thought’, 14.

<sup>152</sup> For example, Joseph Klausner, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who wrote *Jesus of Nazareth* (1929), and Israel Abrahams who wrote *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (1917–24). These and many others will be treated in detail in chapters three and four.

<sup>153</sup> MG Bowler, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*, 1; also, MG Bowler, ‘CG Montefiore and his Quest’, 455.

<sup>154</sup> W Jacob, ‘Claude G Montefiore’s Reappraisal of Christianity’, 342.

<sup>155</sup> W Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 109.

<sup>156</sup> In the introduction of the *Synoptic Gospels* Montefiore viewed favourably Streeter’s famous “four document hypothesis” and expressed his admiration for Streeter’s originality and comprehension of the “Synoptic Problem”.

<sup>157</sup> The first edition of *The Synoptic Gospels* (1909) was written before Schweitzer’s *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (the German original *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* was published in 1906). The second edition (1927) also makes no mention of Schweitzer’s works, for reasons soon to be explained.

<sup>158</sup> Joseph Carpenter, *First Three Gospels* (1890), 9, cited in CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* I, xxi. An eminent figure in modern Unitarianism, Carpenter was respected for his extensive knowledge in comparative religion and Semitic literature. He wrote *The First Three Gospels* (1890) and *The Johannine Writings* (1927). He was a good friend of Montefiore and proof-read many of his works.

<sup>159</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* I, x.

<sup>160</sup> That is the analysis of biblical passages through examination of their structured form, (*formgeschichte*).

<sup>161</sup> That is, ‘Form-criticism of the Gospels’; Eng. trans. *From Tradition to Gospel* (1934).

<sup>162</sup> In *What is Christianity?* (ET 1901), Harnack had suggested that the authentic teachings of Jesus (a sort of individualist piety) had been lost amongst a historical build-up of dogma. Loisy, in *The Gospel and the Church* (ET 1903), had argued that Jesus had preached a supernatural kingdom that, far from being lost in historic developments, had found its ultimate expression in the Church. Montefiore was not the least bit interested in such matters.

<sup>163</sup> The German original *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* was published in 1906; the first English translation appeared in 1910.

<sup>164</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Dr Robert Eisler on the Beginnings of Christianity’, 304–305.

<sup>165</sup> Of course, Schweitzer nevertheless offered his own sketch of the “historical Jesus” (as did Bultmann).

<sup>166</sup> For instance, discussing the end-of-times passage in Mark 13, Montefiore explained that although it was by no means inconceivable that Jesus had thought in such terms, nevertheless such material “has very slight interest for us today and little or no religious value”. CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* I, 296.

<sup>167</sup> The Jewish scholar, A Büchler, who himself praised *The Synoptic Gospels*, warned in a letter to Montefiore (1927), “It is a fine piece of work and of literary presentation, which, in spite of its usual objectivity and moderation, will only be accepted after a prolonged struggle and with heart-burning.” ACC/3529/4/4, LMA. Leonard Montefiore, Claude’s son, collected together some of the letters which his father had received regarding *The Synoptic Gospels* for the Liberal Jewish Archives. In a covering letter (27 August 1956) he makes the point that despite its positive reception by Christian scholars, Claude’s position was by no means mistaken at the time as a Christian one. “Conceivably the future historian of the LJS [Liberal Jewish Synagogue] might use some of them to refute any suggestions that the Wharncliffe Rooms, Hill St, St John’s Wood Rd [that is, some of the JRU and Liberal Jewish places of worship] were stations on the way to conversion – or apostasy.” ACC/3529/4/4, LMA.

<sup>168</sup> James Parkes, ‘Theology of Toleration’, 1966.

<sup>169</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 7.

<sup>170</sup> Several of the letters Montefiore received in response to the second edition of *The Synoptic Gospels* (1927) have survived. Thus TK Cheyne regarded it “as an important contribution to the reconciliation of two great kindred religions”. AC Clark wrote that the work “appears to me both novel and fascinating... I have been talking about the book to a colleague of mine, BH Streeter, who is wrapt up in The Synoptic Problem, and I am going to lend it to him”. H Handley commented, “I believe your book to be a classic. Our noble friend Rashdall, so competent, I have heard speak of it [the 1909 edition] in the highest terms and say that he frequently used it.” And AS Peake observed, “I have always thought that the fullness with which you reported and often quoted at length the views of foreign scholars made the first edition very valuable to students... It is gratifying to see that the more recent literature has been rendered accessible in the same way.” ACC/3259/4/4, LMA.

<sup>171</sup> M Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life*, 130.

<sup>172</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Liberal Judaism and the Law', cited in E Kessler, 'Claude Montefiore', 10.

<sup>173</sup> This is significant because Emil Schürer's later *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus* (3 vols, 1886–90; ET 5 vols, 1890–91), although dated, remains a standard work on the subject. Montefiore regards Schürer's attitude to be too negative towards the spirit of Judaism.

<sup>174</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Old Testament and Judaism' in *Record and Revelation*, ed. by W Robinson, 436.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 435.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>177</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Old Testament and Its Ethical Teaching', 234.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 237, 239, 243.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>181</sup> FC Burkitt, *Speculum Religionis*, 6.

<sup>182</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Old Testament and Judaism' in *Record and Revelation*, ed. by W Robinson, 428–429.

<sup>183</sup> For example, in an article in 1899, Abrahams condemned Schürer for failing to have taken Montefiore's criticisms into account in the third edition of his *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*. He wrote, "Is this to go on? Is the Law to be searched for no other purpose than to find justifications for Paul? Are the Rabbinical sayings to be examined simply as foils to the Gospels?... Why is it that a man like Mr Montefiore has been moved to such unwonted heat when dealing with Schürer's charges against the Law?" I Abrahams, 'Prof. Schürer on Life Under Jewish Law', *Jewish Quarterly Review* XI (1899), 640–641.

<sup>184</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (9 April 1897). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 171.

<sup>185</sup> GF Moore, 'Christian Writers on Judaism' in *Harvard Theological Review* XIV (1921), 197–254.

<sup>186</sup> 'Covenantal Nomism', as EP Sanders later called it.

<sup>187</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Jewish Scholarship and Christian Silence', 335–346, 339.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>189</sup> Montefiore cited Gustaf Dalman (1855–1941), who was a biblical scholar with an intense interest in the archaeology of the Holy Land. He produced important studies on the language, ideas and customs of the first-century Palestine. As Montefiore pointed out, he was one of the highly exceptional Christian scholars who were at home in the rabbinical literature. Another was Franz Delitzsch, a Lutheran Old Testament scholar of Jewish descent, who wrote extensively on rabbinic subjects.

<sup>190</sup> Ferdinand Weber, *System of Palestinian Theology in the Early Synagogues* (1880). The second edition was entitled *Jewish Theology exhibited on the basis of the Talmud and allied writings* (1897). Montefiore certainly was not impressed with Weber.

<sup>191</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Jewish Scholarship and Christian Silence', 335–346, 337.

<sup>192</sup> For example, EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977).

<sup>193</sup> S Heschel, 'The Image of Judaism in Nineteenth-Century New Testament Scholarship in Germany' in *Jewish-Christian Encounters over the Centuries*, ed. by M Perry and FM Schweitzer, 231–232.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>195</sup> Cited in R Apple, *The Hampstead Synagogue*, 38.

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> J Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 93–98. Morris Goldstein's extensive treatment in *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition* also concluded by emphasising this point. He suggests that "there is far more that does not truly allude to Jesus than that does". Furthermore, he argues that indirect references to Jesus, if they are indeed references to Jesus, are more significant than the supposedly direct ones. "The teachings regarding the unity and incorporeality of God, the belief that the Messiah was yet to come, the emphasis on Moses and the Mosaic Law, the decline in the status of miracles, are more important in revealing the Jewish attitude than are those passages where Jesus is actually mentioned." M Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition*, 232–233.

<sup>2</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 46.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Z Lauterbach, 'Jesus in the Talmud' (first draft 1938) in JZ Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays*, ed. by LH Silberman (KTAV Publishing House, New York, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> JZ Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays*, ed. by LH Silberman, 476–477.

<sup>5</sup> Shalom Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism' in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 11 (Summer 1974), 401.

<sup>6</sup> The *Toledoth Yeshu* was described by Klausner as "a creation of folk fantasy" and by Sandmel as "quite an unedifying work". The *Toledoth*, in its present form, cannot be dated with any certainty earlier than the ninth century; earlier forms of the work, however, may be as old as the sixth century. S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 12; J Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 110–111. In the overall perspective of Jewish history, the *Toledoth* did not have a great deal of influence, demonstrated by the fact that the leaders of Jewish thought rarely, if ever, referred to it. M Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition*, 225.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 168. It should be kept in mind that the lack of evidence for public debates from the time of the completion of the Talmud around the fifth century until the thirteenth-century disputations could be due to loss of documentation.

<sup>8</sup> The Paris disputation was held under the pontificate of Gregory IX. Thirty-five accusations were levelled at the Jews by the apostate Nicholas, mostly targeted against passages in the Talmud that slandered Jesus and advocated amoral behaviour towards Christians. The results convinced Louis IX to burn 24 wagon-loads of Talmuds in Paris. The Barcelona disputation featured the apostate Pablo Christiani against Nahamides the Jew, who argued against the claim that Jesus had been the messiah, that the messiah was expected to be divine, and that Christianity was the true faith according to the Scriptures. HJ Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument*, 55–56.

<sup>9</sup> M Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition*, 235.

<sup>10</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> An exception was the sixteenth-century Karaite, Isaak Troki, who was a kind of bridge between the traditional and modern positions. His *Faith Strengthened* (Hebrew original 1593, ET 1851) displayed the Medieval approach in its fierce determination to refute Christian claims regarding the Gospels (rather than to understand them) and the Enlightenment approach in its concentration upon many of the historical-critical problems destined to preoccupy late eighteenth-century scientific scholarship. S

Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 11–12.

<sup>12</sup> S Ben-Chorin, ‘The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism’, 403.

<sup>13</sup> G Lindeskog, cited in D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 13. The three main examples he gives of Orthodoxy include Joseph Klausner, Paul Goodman and Gerald Friedlander. Ibid., 64.

<sup>15</sup> GD Schwartz, ‘Explorations and Responses’, 105.

<sup>16</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 103, 111.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>18</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 67. As regards the claim that Jews have regarded Jesus as “misled”, what else can any Jew conclude, if he accepts the historicity of Jesus’ messianic claim (a subject to which we shall return)? Schwartz, however, criticises Hagner, “To the best of my knowledge, no modern Jewish author has claimed that Jesus was misguided.” (GD Schwartz, ‘Explorations and Responses’, 105). Perhaps Schwartz understands “misguided” as a euphemism for “mentally unstable”, or perhaps he is suggesting that Jesus never regarded himself as the messiah, and that the confusion is solely due to Christian interpolation. In either case, he is mistaken since, as we will see later in this chapter, there have been Jewish writers who have supported one opinion or the other.

<sup>19</sup> GD Schwartz, ‘Explorations and Responses’, 107.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>21</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> GD Schwartz, ‘Explorations and Responses’, 108.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 107. Uniqueness can be regarded positively, negatively or neutrally. Hagner is not, then, compromising the positions of Montefiore or Klausner when he draws attention to their recognition of Jesus’ uniqueness.

<sup>24</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 135.

<sup>25</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, vii. Sandmel also believed that Jewish writers felt that “Such a Jewish Jesus may well have been a good and great man – a prophet, a rabbi, or a patriotic leader – but he was not better or greater, say these writings, than other great Jews.” Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 5–6.

<sup>27</sup> Montefiore’s motive, as always, was to enhance the religious value of Liberal Judaism. He asked, “Why should we not make our religion as rich as we can? – Jesus and Paul can help us as well as Hillel and Akiba. Let them do so. What is good in them came also from God.” CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 291.

<sup>28</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Liberal Judaism in England’, 628.

<sup>29</sup> For much of the relevant period, Christian scholarship can be understood as Protestant (often dominated by German) scholarship.

<sup>30</sup> In what follows, Jewish contributions to 'Jesus scholarship' (of the period from the mid nineteenth century until present day) have been set alongside, and understood in terms of, the contemporary mainstream Christian New Testament studies.

<sup>31</sup> While Jacobs was technically an Orthodox Jew, in practise he tended towards conservative Reform. He published *As Others Saw Him* anonymously.

<sup>32</sup> Reminiscent of Montefiore, Salvador (1796–1873) had believed in a universal creed founded upon a kind of reformed Judaism, which fused Christianity and Judaism together in one single doctrine of Progress. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 716.

<sup>33</sup> S Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism', 405. The Ebionites were an early Christian community in Jerusalem who recognised only the human nature of Jesus and who continued to observe the Law.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> P Goodman, *The Synagogue and the Church*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Translated from the German original, R Eisler, *Iesous Basileus Ou Basileusas*, 2 vols (1929–1930). Eisler argued that Jesus had allowed himself to become the figurehead of an armed revolt against the Romans and had thus brought about his own destruction. In his review of the work, Montefiore pointed out that Eisler had maintained, and even emphasised, the originality and distinctiveness of much of Jesus' teaching. Nevertheless, the main emphasis had inevitably been upon the nationalist and political character of Jesus' actions rather than of his teachings. According to Eisler, Jesus had been executed by Pilate not merely to please Jewish leaders and Rabbis (who resented his attacks on them and the Law) but because he was the initiator and head of a rebellious movement. CG Montefiore, 'Dr Robert Eisler on the Beginnings of Christianity', 306.

<sup>37</sup> The German original *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* was published in 1906; the first English translation appeared in 1910.

<sup>38</sup> "Apocalypticism" is, of course, a term that is much debated today. What we are actually talking about here is Jesus' teaching about the 'end-of-times' and the coming Judgement. Schweitzer was by no means the first to stress the apocalyptic, or as he called it, the eschatological, aspect of Jesus' life and teachings. As mentioned earlier, Jewish proponents of this sort of view included Salvador, Graetz and Geiger. In his survey of previous Quest scholarship, Schweitzer misrepresented "Salvator" as one who "expected the spiritual and mystical Mosaic system to overcome Christianity", even though, as an Enlightenment Jew, Salvador would have regarded the Mosaic Law as the antithesis of mysticism. J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 106.

<sup>39</sup> One prominent exception to this rule was Gerald Friedlander, an Orthodox Jew who had been taught at Jews' College by Michael Friedländer. In *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* he described Jesus as "an apocalyptic dreamer and teacher who in the course of time believed himself to be the Messiah" and argued that "practically all the genuine teaching of Jesus was apocalyptic". G Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> WG Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 346.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in S Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism', 408. Like Montefiore, he tended to ignore the issue of apocalypticism. He was so convinced of the relevance of the Jewish background that he also attempted a reconstruction of the Hebrew-Aramaic primitive gospel, which he believed lay behind the Greek Synoptics. *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>42</sup> Friedländer wrote about Jesus and the Pharisees in *Die religiösen Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums in Zeitalter Jesu* (Berlin, 1905). In Friedländer's reading of the Gospels, Jesus had emphasised ethics over the literalism of the Pharisees, who were described as narrow-minded, superficial and atrophied (as compared with 'Alexandrian Judaism', which was broad, universal and free from ceremonial law). Jesus' ethics, which were a major concern of Friedländer's, were put down to the influence of Hellenistic Judaism. J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 116–117.

<sup>43</sup> Abraham's *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (2 vols, 1916–1923) was primarily concerned with correcting the contemporary erroneous impressions of the Pharisees. Even so, in line with much Christian criticism he approved of Jesus' attacks on individual abuses of the Law and "externalism". I Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 87, 84.

<sup>44</sup> Jesus was given an almost Unitarian presentation in Enelow's *A Jewish View of Jesus* (1920). Klausner re-titled it "Jesus the Liberal". J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 114.

<sup>45</sup> The first edition was in 1909, the second in 1927. Montefiore's familiarity with Quest scholarship did not result in his following Schweitzer down the 'apocalyptic' path, however, for reasons discussed in chapter two.

<sup>46</sup> Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, volume 1 Matthais (1922) and volume 2 Markus, Lucas, etc (1924). The commentary, which has never been fully translated into English, was an attempt to sort out the date and provenance of those (innumerable) quotations from the rabbinic literature that could be regarded as relevant for the study of the New Testament.

<sup>47</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 103.

<sup>48</sup> It can be argued that the sole exception to this trend was Martin Buber's *Two Types of Faith* (1951), translated from *Zwei Glaubensweisen* (1950). It remains exceptional among Jewish writings for its high estimation of the religious value of Jesus and its purely theological tone. Nevertheless, while it paralleled Protestant scholarship of the time by being theological in content and unconcerned with the historical details of Jesus' life, it should be noted that Buber was interested in Jesus' faith, not in faith in Christ.

<sup>49</sup> English translation (1925) of the Hebrew original (1922). While Klausner was Orthodox, his views were, as Hagner observes, more in keeping with liberal Jews who ignored Schweitzer's emphasis upon the apocalyptic side of Jesus. D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 64.

<sup>50</sup> Sandmel criticised Klausner sharply for his failure to engage with the findings of Form-criticism, in comparison with Montefiore's better scholarship. S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 116n. Elsewhere, later on, Klausner rejected form-critical research as "almost complete scepticism". J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (Hebrew original 1939, ET 1943), 259.

<sup>51</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 104.

<sup>52</sup> S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 379.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Featured in *Jesus' Jewishness* (1991), ed. by J Charlesworth.

<sup>55</sup> The first from the German original of 1977 and the second from the German original of 1979. Lapide was born in Canada.

<sup>56</sup> In *Jesus' Jewishness* ed. by J Charlesworth.

<sup>57</sup> LH Silberman, 'Prolegomenon' in the 1968 edition of CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Hans Joachim Schoeps, a student of Baeck, produced *Gottheit und Menschheit. Die grossen Religionsstifter und ihre Lehren* in 1950, but this had little impact and was not translated into English. In spite of the fact that he was a conscious anti-Zionist, Schoeps categorised Jesus as a nationalist as Klausner, the Zionist, had done.

<sup>59</sup> Citing Vermes, Flusser, Sandmel and Lapide, Schwartz draws attention to the literal doubling of Jewish authorities in his own day since the time of Klausner and Montefiore. GD Schwartz, 'Explorations and Responses', 107.

<sup>60</sup> Amongst the most useful are J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Hebrew original 1922); T Walker, *Jewish Views of Jesus*, (1931); J Agus, 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism' (1959); S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus* (1965); S Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism' (1974); D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (1984).

<sup>61</sup> Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, President of the United Judeo-Christian Holy Land Institute, cited on the cover of D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*. Eckstein also comments, "Hagner brings together a well documented variety of twentieth-century Jewish views of Jesus in a fine manner... Hagner's work is a most useful resource for gleaning insight into this subject."

<sup>62</sup> Amongst others, Klausner included Salvador, Graetz, Jacobs and Eneelow in the first category, Montefiore and G Friedlander in the second, and Geiger and M Friedländer in the third. J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 106–115.

<sup>63</sup> GD Schwartz, 'Explorations and Responses', 108–109.

<sup>64</sup> In his well regarded survey of New Testament research, Kümmel singled out Montefiore as the one scholar who more than any other "raised the decisive question" of how to assess the similarities and differences between Jesus and Rabbinic Judaism. His "extremely objective investigation" also addressed the essential question of the "actual meaning of the text and one's personal attitude towards its message". WG Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 346, 347.

<sup>65</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 38. Hagner is, of course, referring to Klausner, Sandmel, Flusser, Lapide and Vermes in particular.

<sup>66</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 65.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 68.

<sup>69</sup> I Abrahams, 'Rabbinic Aids to Exegesis' in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, ed. by H Swete, 192.

<sup>70</sup> Reprinted in 1970 by KTAV, NY.

<sup>71</sup> While in the *Synoptic Gospels* Montefiore had concentrated upon Mark primarily, followed by Matthew and Luke, in *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* the longest treatment was reserved for Matthew. Montefiore held Mark to be more historical than Matthew and Luke, and Matthew to be more akin to the Talmudic literature.

<sup>72</sup> CG Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, 195.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 322–323.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi–xvii.

<sup>77</sup> Cited in S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> According to Sandmel, Klausner's approach to the Gospels exhibited "a unique capacity to have reviewed much of the Gospel scholarship and to have remained immune from reflecting it". He dismissed Klausner as an "amateur Talmudist" who applied "dilettantism rather whimsically to the Gospel passages". *Ibid.*, 92, 93.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, G Friedlander accused Montefiore of an inordinate reliance on Christian scholars. G Friedlander, *Jewish Sources for the Sermon on the Mount*, 52. Ahad Ha-Am was also suspicious. He wrote, "What is needed is not the 'scientific accuracy' of the Christian commentators... who set out with the preconceived idea that the teaching of the Gospels is superior to that of Judaism and use their 'science' merely to find details in support of their general belief." Ahad Ha-Am, 'Judaism and the Gospels' in *The Jewish Review* I (3 Sept 1910).

<sup>80</sup> Sandmel suggests that "a student wishing to get a good summary of Gospel scholarship in the early 1900's can quite possibly get this better from Montefiore than from anywhere else". S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 89.

<sup>81</sup> CG Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, I, xxii.

<sup>82</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 38, 14. He felt that they had been "forced to select from the Gospels what seems to agree with their views and to reject everything that does not".

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>84</sup> Hagner remarked, "More recent Jewish writers seem to lack the sensitivity and relative objectivity of such earlier masters in this field as Montefiore and Klausner... Admissions of any uniqueness or originality in Jesus have all but disappeared in recent Jewish writing on the subject." *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>85</sup> J Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, 145.

<sup>86</sup> EP Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 55.

<sup>87</sup> Hagner has been criticised for "his premise that the Jewish reclamation of Jesus remains

unsuccessful because Jews still do not accept Jesus as the Messiah". Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, President of the United Judeo-Christian Holy Land Institute, cited on the cover of D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*.

<sup>88</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 125.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 122, 131.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>91</sup> As Montefiore points out, however, the immense power of "for my sake" has been historically due to Jesus' death, rather than his life. CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 132–133.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 113–115, 119.

<sup>93</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, I, 306.

<sup>94</sup> G Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount*, 262–263. Friedlander believed that practically all the genuine teaching of Jesus had been apocalyptic in character. Despite the fact that it must have been Jewish apocalypticism, he maintained that it was opposed to the best of Jewish thought and sentiment. Ibid., 3.

<sup>95</sup> L Baeck, *Wesen des Judentums* (1905, ET *The Essence of Judaism*, 1936) cited in A Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, 200; also S Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism', 408.

<sup>96</sup> P Goodman, *The Synagogue and the Church*, 233.

<sup>97</sup> GD Schwartz, 'Explorations and Responses', 107. Of course, anti-Semitism in the East was an important factor and also helps explain the relative silence.

<sup>98</sup> Jacob Agus has observed, "Jewish historians are generally torn between the desire to prove the Jewishness of Jesus and the opposing wish to 'justify' the rejection of his person and message." J Agus, 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism', 21.

<sup>99</sup> P Goodman, *The Synagogue and the Church*, 271–272.

<sup>100</sup> I Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 91, 90, 97.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 58–59, 97–98.

<sup>102</sup> G Vermes, 'Jesus the Jew' in *Jesus' Jewishness*, ed. by JH Charlesworth, 118.

<sup>103</sup> M Friedlander, 'Notes in Reply to my Critic' in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* III (1892), 437.

<sup>104</sup> In his critique of Montefiore's *Synoptic Gospels* (1909), Ahad Ha-Am had detected "a subservience of the Jewish thinker [Montefiore] to the Christian doctrine". Ahad Ha-Am, 'Judaism and the Gospels' in *The Jewish Review* I (1910–11), 203.

<sup>105</sup> Aaron Kaminka in *Ha-Toren* (New York) May 1922, cited in H Danby, *The Jew and Christianity*, 102–103. The fact that Klausner was a fervent Zionist and a disciple of Ahad Ha-Am made no

difference to those who condemned him.

<sup>106</sup> J Agus, 'Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism', 7. Agus is too simplistic in his analysis of the Jewish treatment of Jesus, however, when he writes, "As it was the tendency of Christian historians and philosophers to see in Jesus an ideal representation of their own ideals, so it became the practice among Jewish scholars to represent Jesus as the protagonist of the forces that they opposed." He neglects to take into account the Jewish desire to justify Judaism in the face of Christian criticism and the utilisation of Jesus for that purpose.

<sup>107</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 414.

<sup>108</sup> Cited in S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 91. Such a view, of course, helps explain Klausner's popularity with Christian scholars, for his criticism effectively acknowledged the usual Christian interpretation of Jesus' life and teachings. As Montefiore pointed out, this was in contrast to scholars such as Eisler, whose view of Jesus as a political rebel directly disputed the facts as Christians saw them. CG Montefiore, 'Dr Robert Eisler on the Beginnings of Christianity', 300.

<sup>109</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 373–374.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 374, 376.

<sup>111</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 109.

<sup>112</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Originality of Jesus', 99.

<sup>113</sup> E Kessler, *An English Jew*, 167.

<sup>114</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Originality of Jesus', 98–99.

<sup>115</sup> Once again distancing himself from "current Jewish criticism", he nevertheless recognised "a degree of originality... [and] of excellence" in the paradoxes of the Sermon on the Mount. Ibid., 107.

<sup>116</sup> Buber's *Two Types of Faith* (ET 1951) presented Jesus' faith as the highest and most classic expression of Jewish *emunah*. Thus, Buber, too, used Jesus as a vehicle to express his own vision of Judaism. The essential difference was that Montefiore utilised various elements in Jesus' teaching that he readily admitted were original or non-Jewish.

<sup>117</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Synoptic Gospels and the Jewish Consciousness', 656.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 657.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 667. Even in the context of distancing himself from non-liberal Jews, he was prepared to defend Rabbinic Judaism (to a degree). He suggested that it was unreasonable to connect formalism and hypocrisy with a legal religion, since "it is possible to follow the letter of the Law in the spirit of the Gospel". Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> CG Montefiore 'The Religious Teachings of the Synoptic Gospels in its Relation to Judaism', 435.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 441.

<sup>122</sup> CG Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, I, 1–2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., xxiv. As he put it, the Gospels had been produced not on the basis of teachings, but “of a great historic figure and genius”.

<sup>124</sup> Sandmel saw no contradiction in Montefiore’s approach. “While Montefiore always made it clear that he wrote from the bias of liberal Judaism, his works are as near an approach to objective scholarship as can be envisioned.” S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 89.

<sup>125</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 110, 111.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 92–93; also CG Montefiore, ‘The Originality of Jesus’, 104.

<sup>128</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 88–90.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 38, 44.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 55, 57–58. This had also been one of Abrahams’ observations.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 97–98.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 105, 107.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>134</sup> Jesus’ declaration that true rule is true service was, in Montefiore’s mind, the most original feature of his conception of the messiah, and yet this idea of kingship echoed Platonic rather than Jewish thought. Ibid., 131, 136. “His [Jesus’] idea of kingship was that of Plato; he only is the king whose life is given for his people. Kingship is service.” Ibid., 106–107.

<sup>135</sup> W Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes*, 103.

<sup>136</sup> For example, Montefiore agreed with many other Jewish writers that the concept of the Kingdom and the coming Judgement, while central to Jesus’ world-view and emphasised in his teachings, was essentially a Jewish doctrine. He held that it was not created by Jesus or even considerably changed by him. CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 60.

<sup>137</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 103.

<sup>138</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 21.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 19, 20.

<sup>140</sup> A view he felt was supported by Christian scholarship generally. He quoted the ex-Catholic scholar, Loisy: “In his age Jesus incarnated and renewed the spirit of the Prophets, the best of Judaism.” CG Montefiore, ‘The Originality of Jesus’, 102.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 103. He added, “One could hardly expect the rabbis to be 1900 years before their time, and if the suggestion were right, the high originality of Jesus and of his glorious inconsistency would, perhaps, even be diminished.”

<sup>142</sup> Jesus’ faith “runs along more Jewish lines... Through faith man puts himself into the right attitude

for receiving that which God can give him.” CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 225.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 241, 265.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>145</sup> M Friedländer, *Die religiösen Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums in Zeitalter Jesu*, cited in J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 117.

<sup>146</sup> Maccoby understood the rôle of prophet as one of political leadership, and likened Jesus to John the Baptist as a “figure of strong political significance”. H Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea*, 143, 147.

<sup>147</sup> While Jesus was one of those who “spoke the oracles of God as if they were using the very words of the Lord,” he also lacked patriotic feelings. J Jacobs, *As Others Saw Him*, 85.

<sup>148</sup> Jesus did, however, differ from the “other rabbis, who kept themselves apart from all other transgressors against the Law till they had repented and done penance”. Ibid., 11.

<sup>149</sup> Cited in S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 64.

<sup>150</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 137, 159–60.

<sup>151</sup> S Ben-Chorin, *Bruder Jesus* (1967) cited in D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 232.

<sup>152</sup> D Flusser, ‘Jesus, His Ancestry, and the Commandment of Love’ in *Jesus’ Jewishness*, ed. by JH Charlesworth, 173. Flusser believed that although Jesus had probably not been “an approved scribe”, the term “Rabbi” was applicable since it was in common use in the first century to describe scholars and teachers of Torah. Ibid., 161.

<sup>153</sup> H Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea*, 140.

<sup>154</sup> P Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (1974) cited in D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 231–232.

<sup>155</sup> Cited in D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 232.

<sup>156</sup> Cited in J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 106–108. According to Salvador, Jesus’ differences with the Pharisees and his apparent lack of interest in the protection of Israel, lay behind the ultimate rejection of his teachings by the Jews.

<sup>157</sup> In addition, Essene influence on Jesus’ teachings was apparent in his “love of poverty, community of goods; dislike of oaths, power to heal those possessed with demons...” H Graetz, *The History of the Jews*, 305.

<sup>158</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 410.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 91. Also, Jesus had not apprehended the positive side of their work nor exerted himself as they had to strengthen the national existence. Ibid., 414.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 173. Klausner also pointed out that there would not have been Pharisees or Sadducees in Galilee, only Zealots and what he described as “the meek of the earth” who had abandoned interest in temporal things to dream of a future life based on the messianic idea. Ibid., 173.

<sup>161</sup> G Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 35. Like Klausner, Vermes picked up on Jesus' geographical background, suggesting that Jesus, along with Galileans in general would not have shown much interest or expertise in matters *halakhic*.

<sup>162</sup> Vermes suggests the choice need not be between prophet or holy man, since the terms "to heal", "to expel demons", and to "forgive sins" were interchangeable synonyms. G Vermes, 'Jesus the Jew' in *Jesus' Jewishness*, ed. by JH Charlesworth, 117, 118.

<sup>163</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, cited in S Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism', 413.

<sup>164</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 108.

<sup>165</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 229.

<sup>166</sup> J Jacobs, *As Others Saw Him*, 210.

<sup>167</sup> Klausner cites Jesus' treatment of the Canaanite woman and his use of derogatory language such as "the heathen and the publican". J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 413. Klausner felt that Jesus revealed "the same national pride and aloofness (Thou hast chosen us) for which many Christians now and in the Middle Ages have blamed the Jews". Ibid., 363.

<sup>168</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 92.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>170</sup> Schoeps, a student of Leo Baeck and a conscious anti-Zionist, had rejected the national renaissance of the Jewish people as a historical sidetrack. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 991.

<sup>171</sup> Cited in S Ben-Chorin, 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism', 410–411.

<sup>172</sup> G Vermes, 'Jesus the Jew' in *Jesus' Jewishness*, ed. by JH Charlesworth, 118.

<sup>173</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 129, 130.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 70–71.

<sup>176</sup> CG Montefiore, 'The Significance of Jesus for his own Age', 766.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 767.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 768.

<sup>179</sup> D Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 63.

<sup>180</sup> Klausner quoted Luke 11:42, "Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over judgement and the love of God: but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." This verse, he believed, proved "in the strongest possible fashion" that Jesus never rejected Torah, or even the ceremonial laws. J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 367.

<sup>181</sup> He even questioned the historical authenticity of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' controversies with his contemporaries. S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 137.

<sup>182</sup> Thus Vermes argues that there was not any evidence for a Pharisaic conspiracy for Jesus' death. G Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 36.

<sup>183</sup> S Zeitlin, 'Jesus and the Pharisees', in *Jewish Expressions on Jesus*, ed. by T Weiss-Rosmarin, 150.

<sup>184</sup> Although Jesus had not contravened Moses. S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 137.

<sup>185</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 80.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>189</sup> CG Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, I, 146, 147.

<sup>190</sup> LH Silberman, 'Prolegomenon' in the 1968 edition of CG Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 13.

<sup>191</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 369. EP Sanders points out that this theory did not explain why James and Peter had failed to reach the same conclusions when looking at Jesus' words and deeds. EP Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 53.

<sup>192</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 46–47.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 49–50.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 45–46.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 42–43.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>198</sup> J Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 114.

<sup>199</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 93.

<sup>200</sup> CG Montefiore, 'What a Jew Thinks About Jesus', 513.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 514.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>206</sup> S Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, 90.

<sup>207</sup> H Danby, *The Jew and Christianity*, 101.

<sup>208</sup> As Walter Jacobs does in ‘Dialogue in the Twentieth Century; the Jewish Response’ in *Towards a Theological Encounter*, ed. by Leon Klenicki, 72.

<sup>209</sup> For example, while it was difficult to establish precisely what Jesus had meant by “No man pours new wine into old wineskins” (Mark 2:22), it comes as no surprise to see that Montefiore accepted the obvious, anti-legal and revolutionary interpretation. CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 157.

<sup>210</sup> “What the whole thing means, is not Liberal Judaism, but Liberal Christianity.” Cited in R Apple, *The Hampstead Synagogue*, 38.

## Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> G Kittel, "Paulus im Talmud" in *Rabbinica, Arbeiten zur Religionsgeschichte des Urchristentums* 1, 3 (Leipzig, 1920), cited in D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 160.

<sup>2</sup> Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 310–311.

<sup>3</sup> A commentary on Proverbs 21:8, which refers to the "man" whose "way is forward and strange". L Baeck, 'The Faith of Paul', 109.

<sup>4</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies; Essays Presented to FF Bruce*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 144.

<sup>6</sup> Hagner's list includes Heinrich Graetz, CG Montefiore, Kaufmann Kohler, Joseph Klausner, Martin Buber, Leo Baeck, Samuel Sandmel, Hans Joachim Schoeps, Shalom Ben-Chorin and Richard L Rubinstein. *Ibid.*, 144, 145.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>8</sup> Leo Baeck expresses this well. "The first thing we see is that there is a centre about which everything turns. The point on which everything depends, round which everything revolved in Paul's life, and the point at which his faith became his life was the vision which overpowered him when one day he saw the Messiah and heard his voice. This vision immediately became, and remained, the central fact of Paul's life... One must start from it in order to understand Paul, his personality and his confession." L Baeck, 'The Faith of Paul', 94.

<sup>9</sup> I have left out from Hagner's list both Shalom Ben-Chorin (whose *Paulus* (1970) has not been translated into English) and Richard L Rubinstein (whose *My Brother Paul* (1972) approaches Paul primarily from the perspective of Freudian psychology in attempting to demonstrate that Pauline insights had anticipated Freud). On the other hand, I have referred to Isaac M Wise, Solomon Schechter, Joseph H Hertz, Herbert Loewe, Hyam Maccoby and Alan Segal who were not included in Hagner's article.

<sup>10</sup> K Kohler, 'Saul of Tarsus' in *Jewish Encyclopaedia* XI (1905), 79–87.

<sup>11</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. from German original of 1950 by NP Goldhawk (London: Routledge, 1951).

<sup>12</sup> L Baeck, 'The Faith of Paul' in *Journal for Jewish Studies* III (1952), 93–110.

<sup>13</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker; Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, trans. from Hebrew original of 1939 by WF Stinespring (London: Macmillan, 1943).

<sup>15</sup> S Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul; a Study in History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy,

1958).

<sup>16</sup> HJ Schoeps, *Paul; the Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. from German original of 1959 by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

<sup>17</sup> Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert; the Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> H Graetz, *History of the Jews; From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. and trans. from German original of 1853–1870 by Bella Lowy, II (London; Jewish Chronicle, 1901).

<sup>19</sup> I Wise, ‘Paul and the Mystics’ in I Wise, *Three Lectures on the Origin of Christianity* (Cincinnati: Bloch, 1883).

<sup>20</sup> CG Montefiore wrote two articles and one book: ‘First Impressions of Paul’, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, VI (1894), 428–74; ‘Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of St Paul’, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XIII (1901), 161–217; and *Judaism and St Paul* (London: Max Goschen Ltd., 1914).

<sup>21</sup> See chapter two for further details of these Protestant academic movements.

<sup>22</sup> Paul had been “a zealous follower of the Pharisaic school, who held with that body that no edict of either the oral or the written law might be tampered with”. H Graetz, *History*, 223.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> I Wise, ‘Paul and the Mystics’ in I Wise, *Three Lectures*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 55–56.

<sup>27</sup> For all intents and purposes, Wise rejected the New Testament evidence regarding Paul in favour of the stories of Acher found in the Talmud. For example, he declared that Paul’s “principle activity”, commencing after the dubious record of Acts ended, was “in opposition to Rabbi Akiba and his colleagues”. And again, “We know from the Talmud that he married and left a daughter. We know also numerous stories of Acher or Paul and his disciple, Rabbi Meir.” None of this is even hinted at in either the Epistles or Acts. Ibid., 72–73.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 57–59.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 54–55. According to Wise, Paul’s age had been plagued by mystical yearnings – “There sprung up the visionary Gnostics among the Gentiles, and the Cabalistic Mystics among the Jews.” Ibid., 57.

<sup>30</sup> HJ Schoeps, *Paul*, xi.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 37–40.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>37</sup> WD Davies' *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* was written in 1948. From that time on, mystery religions and Hellenistic influences do not feature greatly in Pauline studies. EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 7. Incidentally, Davies was anticipated by Israel Abrahams who wrote in 1909, "The supposition that Hellenistic and Pharisaic Judaism were opposed forces will, I am convinced, not survive fuller research." I Abrahams, 'Rabbinic Aids to Exegesis' in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, ed. by H Swete, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Although Segal himself makes no reference to either.

<sup>39</sup> A Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 42–48.

<sup>42</sup> For Segal, Acts was most useful for what it confirmed in Paul's letters. At the same time, while he admitted that many of the details of Paul's "dramatic conversion" (an event central to his thesis) were missing from Paul's letters, he disapproved of the fact that "many readers of Paul deny that he was a convert, because the reports of his conversion come only from Luke". Ibid., 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 47, 48. An important consequence of this theory for the study of first-century Judaism(s) is the realisation that Paul was the only Jewish mystic of this period to relate his experience confessionally.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 37, 38.

<sup>46</sup> K Kohler, 'Saul of Tarsus', 79.

<sup>47</sup> Kohler cites Galatians, Ephesians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Romans. Ibid., 79, 84.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 82, 84.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>53</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 148.

<sup>54</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 232.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 242. Klausner rejected the Pastoral Epistles (I and II Timothy and Titus) as too late to be authentic. Ibid., 247.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 465–466.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 464.

<sup>60</sup> “Except for the few years which he spent in Jerusalem.” Ibid., 466.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 606.

<sup>62</sup> Klausner wrote that he had been influenced in this view by the Christian scholar GF Moore. Ibid., 466.

<sup>63</sup> D Hagner, ‘Paul in Modern Thought’ in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 149.

<sup>64</sup> Buber quotes Schweitzer, that Paul “has his roots in the Jewish world of thought, not in the Greek”, as a foil for his argument. M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 14.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>67</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 18. In particular, Maccoby argued, “All his training as a Pharisee, he wishes to say – all his study of the scripture and tradition – really leads to the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament... His insistence on his Pharisaic upbringing was part of his insistence on continuity [between Christianity and Judaism]”. Ibid., 11, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 6, 15. In this, Maccoby preferred the evidence of Acts over the epistles (in which Tarsus was not mentioned). On the other hand, he preferred the evidence of the epistles over Acts in arguing that Paul never claimed to have studied under Rabbi Gamaliel. Ibid., 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 63. For example, regarding Paul’s constant reference in his letters to the opposition of Spirit and Flesh, Maccoby commented, “In style, terminology and content, Paul’s declaration can be paralleled in the writings of the Gnostics. This is the doctrine most characteristic of Gnosticism. Thus Paul’s espousal of this philosophy shows him to be not only unPharisaic, but unJewish, for not only Pharisaism but every variety of Judaism opposed it.” Ibid., 93.

<sup>71</sup> Epiphanius (315–403 AD) was a native of Palestine who became bishop of Salamis. A staunch defender of orthodoxy, his *Panarion* (also known as *Refutation of all the Heresies*) was a collection and denunciation of all the heresies he had heard of since the beginning of the Church. Badly constructed and far too receptive of myths and legends, it nevertheless preserves invaluable historical material. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 464.

<sup>72</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>74</sup> S Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 18.

<sup>75</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Rabbinic Judaism', 167, 207.

<sup>76</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 12, 17.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 81–82.

<sup>78</sup> He accepts these on the authority of Pfleiderer and Weizacker. CG Montefiore, 'First Impressions of Paul', 428. These epistles make up the core of what are today regarded as the genuine ones.

<sup>79</sup> For this position he cites the work of Loisy. CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 90. In dealing with Paul's own account of his Pharisaic background in Philippians 3:5–6, however, he could not dismiss the claim so easily. Viewing the letter as authentic, he argued instead that it could just as easily have been the work of a Hellenistic Jew and need not have been written by a Palestinian Jew. Ibid., 94.

<sup>80</sup> These include Baeck and Sandmel. Klausner is a special case.

<sup>81</sup> Although, of course, a Faith-versus-Works Paul was more the creation of Luther's than an actual reality.

<sup>82</sup> L Baeck, 'The Faith of Paul', 94.

<sup>83</sup> Here, as elsewhere, the influence of German Lutheran scholarship (Tübingen) upon modern Jews is apparent. Baeck rejected II Cor. 6:14 – 7:1. Ibid., 93.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 102–103.

<sup>87</sup> S Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul*, 8–9.

<sup>88</sup> Sandmel rejected the Pastoral Epistles (I and II Timothy and Titus) and Hebrews as non-Pauline. He also doubted the authenticity of II Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians. That left Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians, and Philemon as the core for his body of evidence. Ibid., 4.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 13, 156.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>97</sup> Hagner does admit that “This Jewish reclamation of Paul, however, is still hindered at important points by the appeal to Hellenism to explain what is regarded as non-Jewish.” D Hagner, ‘Paul in Modern Thought’ in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 157–158.

<sup>98</sup> EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 4.

<sup>99</sup> In Montefiore’s view, though not in the view of scholars such as Weber, Bousset and Billerbeck. Ibid., 5.

<sup>100</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 58–60.

<sup>101</sup> H Graetz, *History*, 230.

<sup>102</sup> K Kohler, ‘Saul of Tarsus’, 82.

<sup>103</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 344.

<sup>104</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 100–101.

<sup>105</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 62–63. Maccoby also argued that “Because of his pagan background, Saul would have read into the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus meanings which were in fact absent from the minds of the Nazarenes themselves... [namely] the dying and resurrected deity... Attis, Adonis, Osiris or Baal-Taraz.” Ibid., 101.

<sup>106</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 61–62. Here Montefiore took two distinct first-century concepts – a messiah and a supernatural apocalyptic figure – and rolled them into one. Recent scholarship tends to keep the two figures separate.

<sup>107</sup> “The office which Paul ascribes to Jesus is precisely of the same nature with that which the Cabalists ascribed to the angel who was the *Saar Haolam*, the prince or ruler of this world, who stands before God, or also sits before him, as Paul’s Jesus stands before God, or sits at His right hand.” I Wise, ‘Paul and the Mystics’ in I Wise, *Three Lectures*, 59.

<sup>108</sup> “Leaving aside the special Christian polemic that the man on the throne is the messiah Jesus and is also greater than an angel, Paul’s statements are important evidence for the existence of first-century Jewish mysticism.” A Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 58.

<sup>109</sup> Baeck distinguished between the Prophetic view and the Apocalyptic view of the messiah, yet both streams of thought remained within the Jewish tradition as far as he was concerned. L Baeck, ‘The Faith of Paul’, 98, 103.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 102–103.

<sup>111</sup> J Leipoldt, *Jesus und Paulus – Jesus oder Paulus* (Leipzig: 1936), 70, cited in HJ Schoeps, *Paul*, 43.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>113</sup> S Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul*, 69–70.

<sup>114</sup> “Paul believed that Philo’s logos had had an interval on earth in the form of Jesus. To the divine offshoot of God which Philo calls the logos, Paul gives in this new sense the traditional title Christ.” Ibid., 70.

<sup>115</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 62.

<sup>116</sup> Wise seems to suggest that it was the Jewishness of the early Christian Church which meant that Peter and James and the others “could not forgive Paul’s innovation in going to the Gentiles”, although Wise, too, viewed proselytisation as an idea which “all the prophets, [and] all pious Israelites of all ages hoped and expected”. I Wise, ‘Paul and the Mystics’ in I Wise, *Three Lectures*, 66, 53.

<sup>117</sup> H Graetz, *History*, 226.

<sup>118</sup> K Kohler, ‘Saul of Tarsus’, 86.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Kohler and Klausner. Ibid., 80; J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 353.

<sup>120</sup> L Baeck, ‘The Faith of Paul’, 108.

<sup>121</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 446.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 453.

<sup>123</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 64.

<sup>124</sup> What Maccoby describes as “the full Pauline position” was the teaching that “the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles no longer exists, and that there is no longer any obligation even on Jews to observe the Torah”. H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 131.

<sup>125</sup> A Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 146.

<sup>126</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 114–115.

<sup>127</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 187–188.

<sup>128</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 339.

<sup>129</sup> K Kohler, ‘Saul of Tarsus’, 87.

<sup>130</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 499.

<sup>131</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 166–167.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>133</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 186.

<sup>134</sup> Did they tacitly admit that Paul's kind of pessimism had existed within Rabbinic Judaism? The influential Christian scholar WD Davies has argued exactly this. WD Davies *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 5, 13.

<sup>135</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 89.

<sup>136</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 50–51.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>138</sup> K Kohler, 'Saul of Tarsus', 87.

<sup>139</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 63.

<sup>140</sup> S Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul*, 92, 89.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>142</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 466.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 610.

<sup>144</sup> I Wise, 'Paul and the Mystics' in I Wise, *Three Lectures*, 58–59.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>146</sup> A Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 34.

<sup>147</sup> Schoeps refers to the confusion introduced by Schweitzer's personal understanding of 'mysticism' in his influential *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (German original 1930, ET 1931). HJ Schoeps, *Paul*, 46n.

<sup>148</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 158. This is a position very close to Rosenzweig's parallel covenant theory.

<sup>149</sup> Opening Address at the Conference of Anglo-Jewish Preachers (1927) in JH Hertz, *Sermons*, 156–157.

<sup>150</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 156.

<sup>151</sup> Baeck refers to TB Sanhedrin 97a, Pesiq Rabbati 4a and Tamid vii 4. L Baeck, 'The Faith of Paul', 106.

<sup>152</sup> Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar interpreted Ecclesiastes 12:1, "The years that draw nigh, in which I say, I need no will, no choice" as referring to the messianic age. Ibid., 106.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>154</sup> HJ Schoeps, *Paul*, 173. As Hagner has pointed out, however, Schoeps also wrote that Paul's

view had been distorted by “the spiritual outlook of Judaic Hellenism” (*Ibid.*, 213) with the result that “the Christian church has received a completely distorted view of the Jewish law at the hands of a Diaspora Jew” (*Ibid.*, 261–262). D Hagner, ‘Paul in Modern Thought’ in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 164n.

<sup>155</sup> H Graetz, *History*, 226.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 228, 231.

<sup>157</sup> “Paul’s ministry and propaganda would otherwise have suffered.” JH Hertz, *Affirmations of Judaism*, 154n.

<sup>158</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 437.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>160</sup> *A Rabbinic Anthology*, ed. by CG Montefiore and H Loewe, 669.

<sup>161</sup> J Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 415.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 603.

<sup>163</sup> K Kohler, ‘Saul of Tarsus’, 84. The apostle’s “original attitude” towards the Law had not been one of “opposition as presented in Romans and especially in Galatians” (epistles described respectively as “interpolated” and “spurious”) but that of a “claimed transcendency”. *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> According to Kohler, Gnosticism affected Paul’s view of the food laws (*Ibid.*) and the Law’s place for Gentile converts (*Ibid.*, 85).

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 85. Universalism, according to Kohler and to so many Jewish thinkers, meant conversion of the Gentiles to Judaism (of some sort or another), and Paul’s alleged aim of ceasing to distinguish between the two groups was regarded as un-Jewish.

<sup>166</sup> M Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 80, 82–83.

<sup>167</sup> S Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul*, 28–29.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>170</sup> H Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 95, 131.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 188–189.

<sup>172</sup> When Christian scholars such as GF Moore started to become aware of this discrepancy, they were obliged to admit to what was regarded as the apostle’s misunderstanding of Torah within Judaism in spite of their investment in Paul and their belief in his worthiness as a Christian authority. Christian scholars channeled much effort and ingenuity into finding an explanation that combined Paul’s religious sincerity, in-house polemic, and misrepresentation. Jewish thinkers, of course, shared no such scruples and felt no need to reassess the evidence in order to justify Paul in some way.

<sup>173</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 155.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> EP Sanders, *Paul*, 19.

<sup>176</sup> D Hagner, 'Paul in Modern Thought' in *Pauline Studies*, ed. by DA Hagner and MJ Harris, 158.

<sup>177</sup> EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 2–3. However, while Thackeray might not have been familiar with the rabbinic writings, he did translate Josephus and was thus more familiar with first-century Judaism(s) than perhaps he realised; more recent scholarship certainly places greater emphasis upon Josephus' writings than upon the Rabbis' in reconstructing first-century Judaism(s).

<sup>178</sup> Letter from CG Montefiore to Lucy Cohen (date uncertain). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 85.

<sup>179</sup> S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 408–409. The meaning of 'hermeneutics' adopted here is 'the reinterpretation of past tradition to make sense of present realities' given in A Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 296.

<sup>180</sup> In particular, Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) has dominated Pauline studies over the last two decades. His understanding of Judaism in terms of 'covenantal nominalism' came about largely as a response to the critique of Montefiore (and others) of the Lutheran-Protestant view of Judaism, as he explains in his introduction. It is worth noting that Sanders' new perspective, namely, that the rabbinic discussions *presupposed* the covenant and were largely directed toward the question of how to fulfil the covenantal obligations rather than how to ensure salvation, is not disputed by even his fiercest critic, Jacob Neusner (who takes exception only at his methodology). JDG Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', 100n.

<sup>181</sup> As he put it, "There may be a good deal [of Paul's teaching] to adapt, although comparably little to adopt." CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 142.

<sup>182</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 590.

<sup>183</sup> It is no coincidence that it is liberal theologians (Alfred Loisy, a French Catholic modernist, and Adolf Harnack, a German Protestant liberal) who were so greatly favoured by Montefiore and are referred to repeatedly. Other Christian theologians mentioned in Montefiore's writings on Paul include Dieterich, Reitzenstein, Pfleiderer and Weizsäcker, Kirsop Lake and van Manen, Bousset, Vernon Bartlet. Montefiore seems to refer to Jews (Isaac Abrahams, Büchler, Bacher, and Solomon Schechter) only with respect to the character of early Rabbinic Judaism.

<sup>184</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 142.

<sup>185</sup> CG Montefiore, 'Rabbinic Judaism', 165–167.

<sup>186</sup> In this context Montefiore quoted the Hellenistic Jew Philo, whom he described as "a contemporary of St Paul... a strictly observant Jew", whose advice he felt might well have applied to Paul: "There are some who, when they have discovered the spiritual meaning of the Law, think that they are free from the letter, and need no longer observe the ordinances." Ibid., 166.

<sup>187</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 4.

<sup>188</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 170.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>191</sup> Sanders has suggested that on certain subjects (including the Law and the salvation of Israel) Paul got himself into muddles from which scholars should not try to extricate him. While deeply concerned with theological problems, Paul was not systematic, that is, he did not attempt to reconcile his responses to varying Church difficulties. S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 424; EP Sanders, *Paul*, 128.

<sup>192</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 162.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>194</sup> Montefiore was not the only Pauline scholar to have treated the Rabbis too uniformly. WD Davies’ seminal work *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948) has been similarly criticised, as has EP Sanders. The fine-tuning of the rabbinic texts by scholars such as Jacob Neusner for chronological and other distinctions is a relatively recent phenomenon. S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 414.

<sup>195</sup> It is all the more surprising when one considers that Montefiore was quick to see the relevance of Philo for studies of other Christian writings. For example, he referred extensively to Philo in ‘Notes on the Religious Value of the Fourth Gospel’ (1895).

<sup>196</sup> Torah-centricity does not, of course, rule out different understandings of the Torah, as was certainly the case in the first century when many Jewish religious systems co-existed side by side.

<sup>197</sup> Elsewhere he wrote that the “Rabbinic Religion” knew nothing of any opposition between faith and works. CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 384.

<sup>198</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 89.

<sup>199</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 205–206.

<sup>200</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 61–62.

<sup>201</sup> For example, Davies argued that the figures of the (supernatural) Son of Man and that of the messiah had been merged in Jewish literature before the Christian era. WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 279, 280.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 352.

<sup>203</sup> It has been suggested that the full weight of Davies’ case has yet to be felt, even today. S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 412–413.

<sup>204</sup> No sources are given for this example. That there was “in the first century, strong interest in proselytes and proselytism” was taken as read: “The facts are well-known and reported in detail in the text-books”. CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 62–63.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 114–115.

<sup>207</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 385.

<sup>208</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 187.

<sup>209</sup> A Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters* (ET 1912) was translated from the German original *Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung* (1912), and *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (ET 1931) was translated from the German original *Die Mystik der Apostels Paulus* (1930).

<sup>210</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 116–117.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>212</sup> WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 13.

<sup>213</sup> For example, GG Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941).

<sup>214</sup> Schweitzer’s *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (German original 1930, ET 1931) developed several central themes of his earlier work, including the importance of Christ-mysticism (being “in Christ”) in the thought of the apostle over and above his teaching regarding justification by faith. This reversal of the traditional understanding had no effect on Montefiore.

<sup>215</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 437.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 447–448.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>220</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 42.

<sup>221</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 199.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 201, 203.

<sup>223</sup> WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 11.

<sup>224</sup> EP Sanders, *Paul*, 100.

<sup>225</sup> Montefiore was not the only one. Chief Rabbi Hertz also saw a connection and described the Liberal Jewish attitude towards the Law as “an echo of Paul”. JH Hertz, *Sermons*, 157.

<sup>226</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 82.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>228</sup> Before Sanders, this position was championed by Schweitzer and WD Davies. S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 414n.

<sup>229</sup> The phrase “Paul’s pre-Christian religion” and even the idea of ‘Paul the Christian’ are arguably simplistic. Such concerns were typical of late nineteenth-century New Testament scholarship.

<sup>230</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 81.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–82.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>233</sup> GF Moore, *Judaism*, II, 28f.

<sup>234</sup> J Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature*, 72.

<sup>235</sup> Abrahams protested, “Does not Philo again and again compare God to a Father? Philo is full of warmth.” (J Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature*, 72n). Bentwich agreed, observing, “Before his God he [Philo] retains the child-like simplicity of the most un-Hellenic rabbi, and the perfect humility of the Hasid.” (N Bentwich, *Philo-Judaeus of Alexandria*, 139). Cited in WD Davies, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 11.

<sup>236</sup> WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 12.

<sup>237</sup> A Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters*, 53.

<sup>238</sup> WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 285. Eschatology is the study of the End Times.

<sup>239</sup> Bultmann differed in that he reacted by translating Paul’s thought into other categories, specifically existentialist ones. S Neill and T Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 411.

<sup>240</sup> The world of the aforementioned *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, represented by men such as Bousset, Dieterich and Reitzenstein, which had been shunned by Schweitzer. CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 112–129.

<sup>241</sup> J Parkes, *Jesus, Paul and the Jews*, 124.

<sup>242</sup> It should be noted that while Moore agreed that Paul was wrong about matters that were essential to Rabbinic Judaism, he disagreed with Montefiore’s solution (that is, he disagreed that Paul was addressing Hellenistic Jews). He suggested that Paul’s attacks were comprehensible if, instead, he had been writing to Gentiles, trying to persuade them that only Christ saves, and not Judaism – whether by works or forgiveness. In this case, it would be of no consequence which elements of Judaism he had emphasized or neglected. GF Moore, *Judaism*, III, 151.

<sup>243</sup> Montefiore’s arguments are considered at length by both WD Davies and EP Sanders, although ultimately rejected. Within Jewish studies the theory has been described by Walter Jacob as “original and tempting”. W Jacob, ‘Claude Montefiore’s Reappraisal of Christianity’, *Judaism*, 19 (1970), 341.

<sup>244</sup> HJ Schoeps, *Paul*, 26.

<sup>245</sup> EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 10.

<sup>246</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 133–134.

<sup>247</sup> These were I Thessalonians, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Romans, and Philippians. CG Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 428.

<sup>248</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 129.

<sup>249</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 430.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 450.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘Rabbinic Judaism’, 168.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 168–169.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>257</sup> As Sanders puts it, the Pauline epistles represent early attempts to offer a code of behaviour which is founded upon the Jewish principle of ‘love thy neighbour’ together with the apostle’s new principle of ‘union with Christ’. EP Sanders, *Paul*, 116.

<sup>258</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 468.

<sup>259</sup> Sanders writes of Paul, “When forced to think, he was a creative theologian; but on ethical issues he was seldom forced to think, and simply sought to impose Jewish behaviour on his Gentile converts.” EP Sanders, *Paul*, 116.

<sup>260</sup> G Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 466.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 466–467. This view of Pauline theology as somehow fixed and complete would now be regarded as rather dated. Today, the majority of New Testament scholars tend towards a view of Paul as struggling to harmonise his thinking and certainly do not find him quite so systematic.

<sup>262</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 208–209.

<sup>263</sup> CG Montefiore, ‘First Impressions of Paul’, 472.

<sup>264</sup> “Nor can we forget that the great Apostle of Faith has yet placed Faith below Love”. Ibid., 473.

<sup>265</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 53.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>267</sup> Letter from Benjamin Jowett to CG Montefiore (14 September 1884). L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 35.

<sup>268</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 145.

<sup>269</sup> CG Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, 119.

<sup>270</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 287.

<sup>271</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 137.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>273</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 208.

<sup>274</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 183.

<sup>275</sup> He quoted Paul's comments, "If I know not the meaning of the language, the speaker is unintelligible to me" and "How shall the unlearned say Amen to your thanksgiving, if he does not understand what you say?" Ibid., 192–194.

<sup>276</sup> CG Montefiore, 'First Impressions of Paul', 443–444.

<sup>277</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 194. In a letter to Lucy Cohen, he remarked, "I am no good at mysticism, only respectful." L Cohen, *Some Recollections*, 113.

<sup>278</sup> CG Montefiore, *Judaism and St Paul*, 193–194, 200.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>280</sup> W Jacob, 'Claude G Montefiore's Reappraisal of Christianity', *Judaism*, 19 (1970), 339.

## ***Conclusion***

<sup>1</sup> CG Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, 201.

<sup>2</sup> “The main tenor of [Jowett’s] teaching was in harmony and agreement with a progressive and enlightened Judaism. It can be translated, and it needs to be translated, into Jewish. Very imperfectly and stumblingly I have sought to do this from time to time.” CG Montefiore, ‘The Religious Teaching of Jowett’, 374.

<sup>3</sup> CG Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 116.

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Correspondence with Claude Montefiore

### ***The Bodleian Library, Oxford***

- MSS Fisher 58, 59, 60, 61, 65, 70, 71, 72, 74  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore (21)
- MSS Milner dep 25, 27, 30, 54, 55, 186, 200, 206, 215, 216, 217, 218, 605, 676  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore
- MSS Gilbert Murray 537  
Correspondence between Lady Murray and Claude Montefiore
- MS Eng. Lett. c348, c349, d362, c351  
Correspondence between Hastings Rashdall and Claude Montefiore
- MS Eng. misc. d124  
Correspondence between William Sanday and Claude Montefiore
- MS Eng. Hist. c708  
Correspondence between Violet Milner and Claude Montefiore

***Balliol College, Oxford***

- MS 64 AL Smith Collection  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore
- MS 123 Papers of Benjamin Jowett  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore
- MS 395 Catalogue of Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford (19)  
Correspondence between Claude Montefiore (1877-93) and Mark Pattison, Arnold Toynbee, Matthew Arnold, Leonard Montefiore, Thomas Hill Green, Benjamin Jowett.

***The Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Israel***

- MS A36/133 Israel Zangwill  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore
- MS A77/3/13 Herbert Samuel  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore
- MS A120/454 Israel Zangwill  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore

***Hebrew University National Library, Jerusalem, Israel***

- MS 169 Claude JG Montefiore  
Correspondence with unknown receiver (1)

***The London Metropolitan Archives, London (holding The Liberal Jewish Synagogue Archives)***

- ACC/3529/4/1 Claude G Montefiore: Letters to Rabbi Mattuck  
ACC/3529/4/2 Claude G Montefiore: Letters  
ACC/3529/4/4 Claude G Montefiore: Reviews  
ACC/3529/4/7 Claude G Montefiore: Miscellaneous Papers  
ACC/3529/4/9 Claude G Montefiore: Newspaper clippings

***University of Southampton Special Collections, Southampton***

- MS 60 Papers of Revd James William Parkes  
Articles and Lectures
- MS 108 Papers of CJ Goldsmid-Montefiore  
Administrative papers
- MS 175 Papers of Chief Rabbi JH Hertz  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore

***The John Rylands Library, Manchester***

- (No MS ref.) Samuel Alexander Papers  
Correspondence with Claude Montefiore (21)