

**THE BIBLE'S MISSING PAGE:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE VIEWS AND BELIEFS OF
BENJAMIN DISRAELI**

by

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PRESENTED AT:

THE LUSANNE CONSULTATION ON JEWISH EVANGELISM—NORTH AMERICA

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

MARCH 11 – 14 2001

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1. Introduction

London Rabbis denounced him as an apostate. Gladstone, before the House of Commons declared him to be a dreamer and a fanatic. In Hyde Park critics were calling him a Jew and an alien. And Victoria affectionately called him *Dizzy*. Benjamin Disraeli was either hailed as Great Britain's greatest prime minister, visionary, and whimsical orator, or he was denounced as a foolish babbling of peculiar *Oriental* ideas. Today, his monument stands in Westminster Abbey and he has been inscribed in the pages of history as the most powerful, and influential Jewish leader to have ever directed the affairs of a gentile nation since the days of Daniel and Joseph. When the sun never set on the British empire, she was led by a prime minister who was related to both Biblical figures. And yet it was necessary for the Queen to ask Disraeli "Are you a Jew or are you a Christian?" He is reported to have responded "Madam, I am the missing page between the Old and the New Testament!" What ever did he mean?

1.1. Purpose

Did Benjamin Disraeli see himself as a Jew? If so, in what way was he Jewish? Did he profess himself to be a Christian? And if so, then what kind of Christianity did he profess? And how did he reconcile what seems to some an apparent contradiction? In this paper, I will seek to answer these questions and then examine how these beliefs propelled Disraeli's aspiration both as a Christian and as a Jew to see the restoration of the Jews to their land during his powerful administration over the British Empire .

1.2. Scope and Methodology

In this paper, I plan to survey the life of Benjamin Disraeli, the Earl of Beaconsfield. Huge volumes have been written about his personal life examining his politics, his personal life, and documenting his correspondence. But there are five significant periods of his life whose study I believe will exegete for us his beliefs as they became foundational to his political career and personal views. I believe these five periods are: a. his childhood (1804-1824); b. his nervous breakdown and subsequent grand tour of the Middle East (1829-1831); c. his publication of the Trilogy and specifically *Tancred* (1847); d. his championing the Russell Bill which called for the removal of Jewish disabilities from public office (1847) and e. his actions during the political crisis known as *The Eastern Question* (1875-1878). Finally I will seek to analyze the information in order to answer these questions: How did Disraeli reconcile his identity as both a Jew and a Christian at the same time? How did Disraeli's identity as a Jew and his Christian belief inform his life, his public policy, and his views of the Church, the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel?.

1.3. Thesis

It is my intention to show that Benjamin Disraeli, considered himself to be both a Jew and a Christian at the same time. His identity as a Jew and his Christian beliefs were not the product of parental manipulation or political opportunism, nor did he practice some form of *Crypto-Judaism*. Rather his beliefs were well developed, internally consistent, and within the pale of evangelicalism. As a Jew he desired to see the Jewish people restored to their land. As a Christian he believed that in understanding the Jewish people, the Church of England would comprehend her context. As a politician he believed the emancipation of the Jews would benefit British society. And as the prime minister he believed that the restoration of the Jews to their land would be a key to the advancement of the British Empire.

2. The Life of Benjamin Disraeli

2.1. An Overview of the Life of Benjamin Disraeli

Benjamin Disraeli was born in London on December 21, 1804, the son of Isaac Disraeli and Maria Basevi Disraeli. Following a quarrel with the elders of Bevis Marks synagogue, Disraeli's father withdrew his membership, and had his children baptized as Christians in 1817. Benjamin was educated in private schools, and later joined a firm of solicitors at 17. The young Disraeli suffered several failures early in life. He lost a great deal of money through bad investments in a South African mining company (1824), lost more money in a failed newspaper venture, and then failed in an attempt at publishing his first novel in 1826. Disraeli suffered a nervous breakdown that following year. He recovered in 1830 and embarked upon a 16 month tour of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Returning to England in 1832 he attempted to gain a seat in the House of Commons. He failed twice, but then in 1837 after aligning himself with the Tory party he was elected to the seat of Buckinghamshire. His maiden speech was disastrous and he was shouted off the stand. In 1839 he finally began to establish a social position for himself by marrying Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a widow with a huge estate and immense social influence.

In 1852, the Earl of Derby appointed Disraeli to the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer in his new Conservative led government. Lord Derby stepped down in 1868 and Disraeli was appointed Prime Minister. Over the next twelve year period, the Tory and Whig parties consolidated their positions and the House became polarized between Disraeli and his arch rival, William Gladstone. In 1872, Disraeli's wife died and much of her estate passed into the hands of her cousins. Disraeli struggled financially, but continued his career in politics and during his second administration, he saw several accomplishments including the acquisition of controlling shares of the Suez Canal project in 1875 and the subsequent declaration in 1876 of Queen Victoria as the "Empress of India". As Disraeli's health waned, he resigned from the House of Commons, and accepted the title Earl of Beaconsfield taking a position in the House of Lords. Following British defeats overseas and an economic slump, the Tories were defeated in the election of 1880 and Disraeli stepped out of politics. His health quickly deteriorated afterwards and he died on April 19, 1881. Queen Victoria personally laid a wreath upon his grave.

2.2. Pericopes On the Life of Disraeli

Many studies have been written on the life of Disraeli, his political life, and his personal life. However I have found that few studies treated his personal beliefs with much credence. In Monypenny's exhaustive work, one of the earliest studies done, he examined Disraeli's beliefs but treated it as his personal eccentricity. Stanley Weintraub took Disraeli's Jewishness more seriously, but in the end dismissed his Jewish identity as impossible in light of his Christian convictions and dismissed important conclusions. The inner life of a politician is difficult to get at. What were the factors in Disraeli's upbringing that influenced his worldview, his beliefs, and his values? Why did he suddenly vacate his home and travel extensively throughout the Mediterranean? How did he articulate his beliefs through his novels? And how were his principles exemplified during his public life and in his political policies? This next section is an attempt to make some of these determinations.

2.2.1. Childhood and Religious Background (1804-1824)

Jewish Ancestry

It has been debated whether Disraeli's ancestry was Sefardic or Levant (Arabic). He wrote: "My grandfather who became an English denizen in 1748, was an Italian descendant of one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish Peninsula [Sefardic]." ¹ However Cecil Roth and Lucien Wolf after extensive research in Venetian family records before the war have cast doubt

upon his Sefardic origins. They argued that Isaac the elder (Benjamin Disraeli's great grandfather) most likely was from the Levant and he immigrated to Venice. *Israeli*, Isaac's original surname is common Arabic-Jewish name and his family probably had been in Italy prior to the expulsion.² The Israeli family flourished in Venice as merchants and married into Portuguese families who had indeed immigrated from Spain. Isaac's son, Benjamin the elder, was born in 1730 and emigrated to England in 1748.³ There he joined Bevis Marks, a Sefardic Synagogue in London where he remained a member until his death. He changed his name from Israeli to D'Israeli or Disraeli.⁴ Benjamin's the Elder's wife Sarah Shiprut was so rebellious with regard to her Jewish ancestry that she renounced her Jewish beliefs and was summarily disinherited by her mother Esther.⁵

Jewish Upbringing

Isaac the younger was born May 11, 1766 in London. In February of 1802 he married Maria Basevi, a member of a distinguished Sefardic Jewish family from Verona.⁶ Isaac read philosophy, especially Voltaire, and became prolific writer. He authored *Despotism*, *Curiosities*, and *Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles I*. He followed Tory politics constantly, and participated in British society as a nineteenth century Enlightened Jew.⁷ In spite of his liberal beliefs, he raised his family in the Jewish faith. "By temperament and training Isaac D'Israeli was ultra-liberal. . . in his attitude toward the traditional faith. . . nevertheless his children were until their grandfather's death brought up in the Jewish faith."⁸ Benjamin, his two brothers Ralph and James, and his sister Sarah, were compelled to participate in synagogue life at Bevis Marks, though Isaac rarely attended.⁹ Benjamin was sent to a boarding school for a time in Blackheath whose headmaster was a Unitarian minister named Potticany. He studied there until he was thirteen and was allowed to stand in the hallway during Christian prayers. Additionally, he was given instruction once a week in Hebrew by a visiting teacher, and received Jewish education as well.¹⁰ In 1813, Isaac was involuntarily elected to the position of warden at Bevis Marks. The penalty for declining the office was a £40 fine. He declined, however, complaining in his letter to the *Mahamad* of the synagogue that he had never been an active part of the synagogue affairs, and that the synagogue imposed laws and regulations upon their members that are irrelevant, unnecessary, and constrictive. He wrote "It is of these obsolete laws so many complain. They were adapted by fugitives to their peculiar situation quite distinct from our own. . . You have laws to regulate what has ceased to exist!"¹¹ Isaac observed that the membership had been slowly declining as the elders remained ambivalent to the members' complaints. Finally, he declared that for him to accept any such post would be contrary to his principles, his beliefs, and therefore hypocritical:

A person who has always lived out of the sphere of your observation. . . who has only tolerated your ritual. . . never can accept the solemn function of an Elder. . . and distract his pursuits in permanent duties [at the synagogue which would be] repulsive to his feelings.¹²

The elders never responded to Isaac's letter. But three years later they renewed their demands that Isaac either pay his £40 fine or accept the position. A year earlier, Benjamin the elder had died, and Isaac felt free now to withdraw his membership altogether. He wrote:

I have patiently sought for protection against this absurd choice. . . but I find that you as a body sanction what your own laws will not allow. I am not a fit member of your society, and . . . I must now close all future correspondence, and I am under the painful necessity of insisting that my name be erased from the list of your members as *Yehidim*.¹³

A Jewish contemporary of Disraeli, James Piccottio, observed in 1875:

At this period ended the connection between the D'Israeli family and the synagogue; a connection that might never have been severed had the authorities of the Sefardic Congregation displayed more judgment and tact in their dealings with Isaac D'Israeli.

However, he adds that had this momentous event never happened, Benjamin Disraeli "In all human probabilities would not whilst we write, be guiding the destinies of England."¹⁴

Christian Baptism

Sharon Turner, a close friend, persuaded Isaac that he had to raise his children with some religious influence. Benjamin consented to let her take them to be baptized. On July 11, 1817, Sharon took Ralph and James to be baptized at St. Andrew's Holborn. She took Benjamin to be baptized on July 31st by the Rev. J. Thimbleby, and Sarah on August 28. This small footnote in Disraeli's life may be the most significant one of all for the following reasons: 1. In the nineteenth century, one could not hold an office in parliament unless they were a baptized, confessing Christian. Isaac had no idea that this move would one day enable Benjamin to guide the course of the empire. 2. It must be noted that Disraeli and his sister were not hasty to proceed with this action. Their father, of liberal and *enlightened* disposition did not compel them against their discretion. Historian Cecil Roth observed that Benjamin and Sarah were evidently old enough that their decisions to be baptized were made with forethought as to the implications.¹⁵ Disraeli owned his decision to be baptized, and his decision to withdraw from school evidenced that he was aware of the consequences involved. In September of 1817, Benjamin withdrew from Blackheath and enrolled in Higham Hall in Epping Forest. Blake notes that to return to Blackheath as a Christian would have been embarrassing for a young thirteen-year old. He continued his studies until 1819 when he withdrew from his studies and began to work at home.

Observations

The early picture emerging of Benjamin Disraeli is one who had established his Jewish identity very early. He was the product of the Jewish Enlightenment, but one whose identity and education as a Jew was indisputable. His father gave him great leverage in searching for his own identity, without the strictures of Christian or Jewish society. Further, the circumstances surrounding Benjamin's baptism and subsequent withdrawal from Blackheath suggest that he made his own decision in this matter and was not merely manipulated by his father in the affair. Benjamin was apparently raised in a free-thinking family. Isaac, an independent thinker himself, emphasized the same principle to his children, raising a family of the Enlightenment, free from the authority of tradition. He taught his children, as he himself believed, that decisions should be made by principle and not compulsion.

2.2.2. Travels to the Middle East (1829-1831)

Nervous Breakdown

In the fall of 1824, Disraeli joined John Murray by speculating in South African mining shares. In December, the Anglo-Mexican Mining Association saw a steep upturn in share price from £82 on December 11, to £158 on January 11th. It was at this peak that Disraeli invested a substantial amount of capital. Disraeli had invested as much as £7,000 by the end of June, 1825.¹⁶ Disraeli had invested most of it on margin and when the market tumbled he went into serious debt. But instead of paying off his debt, on August 3, Disraeli purchased 25% of a partnership with Murray and A. Powels in an entrepreneurial venture. They founded the *Quarterly Review*, a financial analyst newspaper (such advice they should offer!) However, this too failed, and the three lost a great deal of money. Disraeli expressed his frustration in a novel published anonymously titled *Vivian Grey*. In it he criticized Murray and the poor financial advice Murray had provided. His novel was a financial failure and the writer was found out. He then attempted a sequel, *Vivian Grey Part II* which was another failure. After completing the sequel he collapsed. Between 1826-1829 Disraeli remained very ill. Blake wrote "One of the doctors who treated him called it 'chronic inflammation of the brain' whatever that may mean. Today it would be described as a nervous breakdown."¹⁷ Disraeli lamented: "Why miserable? I was devoured by ambition I did not see any means of gratifying."¹⁸

Tour of the Mediterranean

Disraeli recovered in 1829 and set his sights on travel, wanting to get out of England. On March 28th, he set out on a steamship with William Meredith, fiancée to his sister Sarah. Together, they sailed to Spain, Malta, Albania, Athens, and Smyrna. They arrived in Jaffa, and traveled across land to Jerusalem.

There, they spent a week in Jerusalem, which Disraeli described as "the most delightful of all our travels." Disraeli wrote:

Athens and the Holy City in their glory must have been the finest representations of the beautiful and the sublime; the Holy City for the elevation on which I stood was the Mount of Olives, and the city on which I gazed was Jerusalem.¹⁹

On March 12th, they arrived in Alexandria, Egypt. However, it was in Egypt that Meredith was taken ill and died of smallpox on July 19th. Disraeli returned to England to console Sarah.

The Wondrous Tale of Alroy (1833)

Upon his return, he published *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* and *Contarini Fleming* both something along the lines of "psychological auto biographies." *Alroy* appeared in March, 1833 and was dedicated to Sarah. It was the story of David Alroy, *exilarch* in Babylon in the twelfth century. The exilarchs ruled the Jewish people during the early centuries of Islam. The Pact of Omar provided a degree of autonomy and protection for unbelieving subjects. Exilarchs also claimed membership to the Davidic line. Therefore, the faint hope lingered that one exilarch might suddenly declare himself to be the messiah. David Alroy was one historic leader who followed this course. In *Alroy* the exilarch revolted against the Seljuk chief and recaptured Jerusalem. He established his capital in Baghdad. However, Alroy was betrayed, and defeated by the Sultan of Karasmé. Offered a choice between conversion or death, he chose martyrdom.²⁰ *Alroy* was clearly inspired by the sights, sounds, and impressions of Disraeli's travels and demonstrates to what degree he was moved by what he saw. Disraeli wrote:

Being in Jerusalem in the year 1831, and visiting the traditional tombs of the Kings of Israel, my thoughts recurred to a personage whose marvelous career had even in boyhood attracted my attention.²¹

In the *Tale of Alroy*, the Exilarch visited Hamadan, the location of the tomb of Esther. Esther rose to great power in the Persian kingdom just in time to save the Jewish people. And it is in Hamadan that Alroy realizes in a vision that he too has been raised up and vested with power for this very purpose: to restore the Jews to their land. At this point, the critical reader will begin to ask "How closely is the future prime minister identifying himself with this historic messianic figure in terms of authority and opportunity?"

And as Alroy gazed upon the silent loneliness of earth a tear stole down his haughty cheek. . . We have no Esther. . . no Mordecai. . . no Daniel. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! I do believe one sight of thee would nerve me to the sticking point. And yet to gaze upon thy fallen state. . . that of the Temple not a stone remains. Tis horrible. Is there no hope?²²

Alroy triumphantly declares "yet again I will rebuild thee, and thou shalt be built O virgin of Israel!"²³ Alroy declares his purpose to Jabaster, a Levite with Mosaic authority to confer the Messianic anointing upon him. Are we hearing the words of a Persian Jew, or the aspirations of a British politician?

[Jabaster says] The Spirit of the Lord hath fallen upon him. Son of David, I adjure thee tell me all that hath passed. . . "[Alroy says] Take thy trumpet then, summon the people, bid them swiftly raise again our temple. The bricks have fallen but we will rebuild with marble."²⁴

Alroy realizes now that he has been anointed by God to perform this messianic mission and declares: "I kneel and vow Lord! I will do Thy bidding." The young exilarch leads an army into Frankish held Jerusalem. There he learns from the great rabbis residing there the duties of the Messiah and his mission. However, like the Cabalistic before him, Shabbatai Zvi, Alroy is also captured by the Sultan who gives him the choice of conversion to Islam or death. But unlike Zvi, he chooses martyrdom. On the last page of the book, he declares to the king in the spirit of Hannah's youngest son from the book of II Maccabees his faith in the God of Israel and the resurrection of the dead.

"Thou dog, dost see what is preparing for thee? Dost know what awaits thee in the halls of thy master Eblis? . . . Is not life sweet? Is it not better to be my slipper-bearer than to be impaled?" . . . "I do defy

thee. My master . . . has not deserted me. I laugh at thy punishments. Thy tortures I despise. I shall both sink into the earth and mount into the air. Art thou answered?" . . . and the king of Karasmé . . . drew his blade like lightning from its sheath and took off the head of Alroy at a stroke.²⁵

Observations

The events of 1829-1832 were a turning point in Disraeli's life. Following his breakdown he permanently abandoned the reckless pursuit of financial gain, and materialistic aspirations, setting his sights on more idealistic goals--politics. And it was upon returning from his travels to the Holy Land that he committed his life to the noble task of the public office. Images of Palestine would crop up hereafter in many of his novels. And the experience of visiting his ancestral homeland began to shape his beliefs, outlook, and political philosophy. In *Alroy* Disraeli revealed a deep connection with his Jewish ancestry, the people of the Bible. And his Mediterranean travels awakened within him a mystical fixation with the East, so that he would hereafter be charged with having "peculiar *Oriental* ideas.". A Christian friend asked him just prior to the publishing of *Alroy* if he was still reading his Bible regularly. He boasted that his novel would show to what degree he read his Bible and how it had invaded his imaginations.²⁶ However, it is difficult to read *Alroy* and not see Disraeli standing before the tomb of Esther and realizing his own calling in life. Disraeli looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem under Mohammedan rule and responded through the mouth of Alroy. In the same way that Alroy realized the divine opportunity his political position placed him in, did Disraeli believe at this point in his life that the pursuit of a political career would place him in some kind of Messianic role for the Jews as well? Upon returning from his tour of the Near East, it seems a new Disraeli was born, eager to embark on a political career. And is it possible that *Alroy* reflected the vision and aspirations that drove him? Blake observed that the grand tour would forever impact Disraeli's beliefs and inform his political career. He wrote:

Disraeli's tour of the Near East was one of the most formative experiences of his youth. Its importance does not just lie merely in the effect that it had upon his novels. . . Nor does it lie in the impetus given to the . . . Oriental philosophy which he professed. . . but lies in the way that it affected his attitude on critical issues of foreign and imperial policy which . . . would . . . dominate public affairs during his premiership forty-four years later.²⁷

If in fact his grand tour raised such aspirations, how closely can we equate the messianic aspirations of *Alroy* with the young Disraeli at the beginning of his political career? Monypenny asked:

Did the young Disraeli himself ever dream that the legacy of Alroy had descended to him? It is probably enough. As he stood . . . at Jerusalem. . . the thought may have passed through his mind that the true aim of the political ambition which was beginning to shape itself within him should be to win back the Holy Land for the chosen people, and restore the scepter to Judah. To any young Hebrew of genius such thought would naturally occur.²⁸

It is in fact difficult not to picture the young Disraeli standing on the Temple mount in Jerusalem with solemn awareness of his appointed duty declaring "I am young O God! and weak; but thou O lord, art all powerful!"²⁹

2.2.3. Tancred (1847)

Disraeli's novels were not successful examples of Victorian literature. But they were intended as media through which he articulated his political views, religious beliefs, and by which he sought to establish his legacy within Victorian society. Often "Disraeli's share of the profits . . . were equally divided between author and publisher being about one thousand pounds". Political historian Robert Blake explains "Fiction with a propagandist purpose was a feature of the eighteen-forties. The decade was one of social, religious, political anxiety and doubt."³⁰

Disraeli did not hide his propagandist intent. In his preface to the fifth edition of *Coningsby* in 1849 he wrote:

It was not originally the intention of the writer to adopt the form of fiction as the instrument to scatter his suggestions, but after reflection, he resolved to avail himself of a method which, in the temper of the times, offered the best chance of influencing opinion.³¹

Between 1844-1847 Disraeli published his trilogy *Coningsby* (1845), *Sybil* (1844), and *Tancred* (1847). These books coincided with Disraeli's entry into public life and were not published anonymously but quite candidly as social commentary. As fiction alone, they didn't sell as well as Dickens, Thackeray, or Trollop. *Coningsby* and *Sybil* sold 3,000 copies and *Tancred* about 2,250 copies.³² However, it is in these books that Disraeli set forth both his religious and political views. He set forth that the time had come for England, as a Christian nation, to recognize the race upon which Western Civilization is indebted. He wrote in the 1870 preface to the collection of the trilogy:

In recognizing the Church as a powerful agent in the previous development of England. . . it seemed to me that the time had arrived when it became my duty to. . . consider the position of the descendants of that race who had been the founders of Christianity.³³

Synopsis of *Tancred*

In *Tancred* Disraeli examined the relationship between race and religion. He also acquitted the Jewish people of the historical allegation of *deocide* arguing that it was necessary for Jesus to die as a vicarious atonement for the world, therefore the Jewish people should not be held responsible for accomplishing God's purposes. In *Tancred* the Marquis of Montacute comes of age. He declines his opportunity to enter Parliament and instead declares his desire to visit the Holy Land. He tells his father:

I wish to make an expedition; a progress to . . . the Holy Land that occupies my thought, and I propose to make a pilgrimage to the sepulcher of my Saviour. . . I too surrounded by the holy hills . . . of Jerusalem would . . . lift up my voice to heaven and ask "What is Duty, and what is Faith? What ought I to do, and what ought I to believe?"³⁴

This question "What is Duty, and what is Faith" becomes Tancred's question from which the title is drawn "The Final Crusade". Tancred's crusade for truth brings him to Palestine where he meets Eva, who embodies the spirit of Judaism. It is in Jerusalem he discovers the meaning of race and religion, of duty and of faith.

Themes

The Jewish race is superior: In *Tancred* Disraeli seems to finally reconcile himself with his identity as a Jew and his Christian faith. It is in this story he locates himself and the Jewish *race* (as he calls them) in history. In fact, Disraeli argues that the Jewish *race* is a superior race to all others. In the book, Tancred is told by Sidonia "The Hebrews have never blended with their conquerors." Not only is the Jewish race the superior race but Sidonia adds "All is race; there is no other truth."³⁵ In the analysis below, it will be pointed out that Disraeli's use of the term *race* was not the scientific sense—that of a gene pool—but in the ethnographic sense (see below)

Christianity is indebted to the Jews: Further, Disraeli sees Judaism as proto-Christianity. Christianity is completed Judaism. He elevated the significance of the Jewishness of Christ. In a dialogue with Eva, central to the development of the story, Disraeli elucidates his theology. In a scene in Bethany, Tancred converses with Eva:

And you do not worship him [Jesus]? said Tancred. . . It sometimes seems to me that I ought, said the lady, "for I am of his race and you should sympathize with your race." "You are then a Hebrew?" "I am of the same blood as Mary."³⁶

As the conversation continues, Tancred declares "you are already half a Christian!" But she asks "which Christianity do you mean?" pointing to the many branches of Christendom. Tancred tries to persuade her of his beliefs but she asks: "Now let me ask you. . . which do you think should be the superior race, the worshipped or the worshippers?" But before Tancred can answer, she disappears.³⁷

The Jewish people should be acquitted of deicide: Disraeli's most controversial theological thesis was that the Jews should be acquitted of the crime of killing Christ. Some alleged that in this acquittal he had minimized the atoning work of Jesus. William Gladstone in response denounced Disraeli as a practitioner of "Crypto-Judaism." (secretly practicing Judaism and therefore being a Christian in name only.) But Disraeli defended this position in book III, chapter 2 of *Tancred*. In this chapter, the protagonist is explaining that the Jewish people have been scattered throughout the world because they crucified Christ. Their miraculous survival has been for to prolong the punishment for this crime. But Eva explains to Tancred the inconsistencies of this premise.

Eva: Let me ask you. Do you think that the present state of my race is penal and miraculous? Tancred nodded. *Eva:* Why do you? *Tancred:* It is the punishment ordained for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. *Eva:* Where is it ordained? *Tancred:* upon our heads and upon our children be his blood. *Eva:* The criminals said that, not the judge. Is it a principle of your jurisprudence to permit the guilty to assign their own punishment? They might deserve a severer one. Why should they transfer any of the infliction to their posterity? What evidence have you that Omnipotence accepted the offer? It is not so announced in your histories. Your evidence is the reverse. He whom you acknowledge as omnipotent prayed that Jehovah to forgive them on account of their ignorance. . . Now tell me: suppose the Jews had not prevailed upon the Romans to crucify Jesus, what would have become of the Atonement? *Tancred:* I cannot permit myself to contemplate such contingencies. . . it has been pre-ordained by the Creator. . . *Eva:* Ah! 'pre-ordained by the Creator'. . . Where then was the inexpiable crime of those who fulfilled the beneficent intention?³⁸

Disraeli explained to the reader that according to the Christian plan of salvation it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Christianity is indebted to the Jewish people not only for the Bible or the religion, but the very atoning work of Jesus. And he consequently discredits the historical belief that the Jews are still suffering for this "crime."

Observations

Perhaps in *Tancred*, Disraeli articulated both his beliefs and personal reconciliation between his religious beliefs and his identity as a Jew. They are summarized in his conclusion "What is Faith and what is Duty?" Further, he sees the implications as they extend into the realm of values and principles. He also articulated his beliefs regarding race and religion, the importance of the Jewish people, and their implications for Christianity. The Jewish people are the foundation of Christian religion and Western civilization. The crusade of Tancred was Disraeli's own crusade for truth reflecting on a time when he, recovering from his nervous breakdown, left his materialist ambition behind to search for his identity and mission. In *Tancred* he returned to his own pilgrimage to Jerusalem when he sought out both Duty and Faith. There he found his duty to the Jewish people, and as a Jew therefore his duty to the British empire. He rediscovered his faith as a Christian and its relationship to his identity as a Jew. Further he now began to develop the principles and political philosophies that would emerge from this seed bed of belief. This duty and faith would be reflected in his ambition and principles that guided him during the greatest era of the British empire. Perhaps he even believed that God had ordained that he come to such a place of influence as this to become that instrument for change both in England, and in the church.

2.2.4. The Russell Bill of 1847

Background

On January 19, 1847 Parliament reassembled under the leadership of the Whig party member Lord John Russell as Prime Minister. In a general election that year Baron Lionel de Rothschild, banker and personal friend of Disraeli, had been elected for the City of London to the House on the Liberal party ticket by over 7,000 votes. However, it was impossible for him to take a seat in the House because of the clause in the oath of office "on the true faith of a Christian." On December 16th, Russell moved that the House should remove the civil disabilities for Jewish subjects in order to enable them to serve in public offices.³⁹ By now, *Tancred* had been in print for some time and all Parliament knew Disraeli's views on the Jewish people.

The Issues Involved

In an historic move early in his political career, Disraeli, not only voted out of party lines for the Whig sponsored Russell Bill, he not only championed it, but he did so based upon theological grounds, and not political. Historically, the House had administration over the Church of England. Further, the Prime Minister had immense ecclesiastical authority in that he proposed canons for parishes and for positions in church offices. Further, there was a growing effort on the part of the Irish church to secede from the Anglican church, and battles would be heating up over this question. Therefore, it had been inconceivable that a member of parliament might not be a member of the very church that Parliament exercised administration over. The opposition was led by Sir Robert Inglis, senior member of the University of Oxford who argued that the oath should stand in order to preserve the Christian character of every person holding any share in the government of the country. Gladstone himself spoke out against his own Whig party in opposition to the bill. But then Lord Ashley, the evangelical philanthropist, added a sharply cutting edge to the attack upon the bill: "There should be no plea of justice for the Jews; they are voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens but by conforming to our moral law, which is the Gospel."⁴⁰

Disraeli's Infamous Speech

At that point Disraeli stood up and delivered a speech that would infuriate passions and raise a tremendous uproar. In his speech he reacted from theological rather than political position, that the Jewish religion was the very foundation upon which Christianity stood. And the Jewish religion is the most trustworthy moral basis upon which legislation could rest next to Christianity, for everything in Judaism is contained within Christianity, the latter being the completion of the former.

If religion is a security for righteous conduct, you have that security in the instance of the Jews, who profess a true religion. It may not be in your more comprehensive form. I do not say it is *the* true religion; but all that they do profess is true. . . you have in it the religion of the Jews the best sanction in the world except that in of our own Christianity. . . The very reason for admitting the Jews is because they can show so near an affinity to you. Where is your Christianity if you do not believe in their Judaism? . . . all the early Christians were Jews. The Christian religion was first preached by . . . Jews. . . every man in early ages of the church. . . was a Jew. . . Yes it is as a Christian that I will not take upon me the awful responsibility of excluding from the legislature those who are of the religion in the bosom of which my Lord and Saviour was born.⁴¹

Throughout he was constantly interrupted with shouts of "Oh! Oh!" and during a brief break there were shouts of "Divide! Divide!" At one point Disraeli was nearly shouted off the speaker stand. Members of Parliament both Whig and Tory could not accept his perceived unorthodox views as in anyway valid. Many more were sure that he had crossed the line into heterodoxy, maybe even heresy!

Epilogue

For almost ten years, Baron Lionel Rothschild remained in the House, repeatedly re-elected to the Whig party seat for the City of London. And at each session Disraeli championed the bill. But Rothschild was never allowed to take his seat on account of the oath of office. The bill continued to resurface, and often passed only to be struck down by the Tories in the House of Lords. Finally, in 1858 a reworking of the bill passed in which each house was permitted to write its own oath removing civil disabilities. Not long after that all disabilities were removed. Baron Rothschild, devoted friend of Disraeli, took his seat in the House of Commons.⁴²

Observations

It took tremendous courage for Disraeli to champion the Russell bill. He crossed party lines in order to do so, and placed his own political ambitions in jeopardy. It demonstrated a motivation by belief and principles over against political ambition and opportunism. The bill already had obtained a majority in the House with the support of the Liberal party. It was not necessary for Disraeli to take this risk. Yet he chose to use this platform to argue from an ideological defense of the Jewish people alienating him from both parties. But by doing so, he also earned the silent respect of his peers, for he demonstrated 1. His loyalty to the Jewish people by defending their rights; 2. His willingness to defend those rights in spite of personal alienation because of differing religious beliefs; and 3. His courage to define his political policies on the basis of principles rather than political ambition or pragmatism. During one of Disraeli's speeches Lord Russell is said to have turned to Gladstone and quietly whisper his admiration for ". . . a leader who could so intrepidly stand forward and enunciate doctrines which he knew the men behind him abhorred."⁴³

2.2.5. Acquisition of the Suez Canal Company (1875)

On Top of the Greasy Pole

When Lord Derby stepped down, Disraeli became Prime Minister on February 27, 1868, after serving for over twenty years in the Tory party. Isaac would not have known fifty-one years earlier that Disraeli's baptism would one day enable him to become the Prime Minister of England. Queen Victoria, who had come to have a special affection for Disraeli, announced:

Mr. Disraeli is Prime Minister! A proud thing for a Man "risen from the people" to have obtained! And I must say--really most loyally; it is his real talent, his good temper . . . which have brought this about.⁴⁴

Disraeli answered friends who congratulated him "Yes, I have climbed to the top of the greasy pole."⁴⁵ Disraeli consolidated the Tory party forming a new government. Awaiting Disraeli's new administration would be unrest in Ireland and rising Roman Catholic nationalism, rising unrest in the Balkans, and a divided parliament, polarized between Disraeli and Gladstone.

The Question of the Suez Canal (1875)

The Suez Canal had opened in 1869 and cut the distance from Britain to India by several weeks, and some thousands of miles. Britain had initially opposed the canal project, whose digging was overseen by French engineers, and was financed by France and the Ottoman Empire. The canal would threaten British holdings in the Far East, and threaten British influence in the Near East. However in 1875 four fifths of the canal traffic was British. From the start, Disraeli had been interested in owning controlling shares in the Canal Company, of which France currently owned 56%. He had sent Baron Lionel Rothschild's son Nathan to Paris on a secret mission seeking to purchase France's share. However de Lesseppe was not at all willing to sell and threatened to purchase the remainder of the shares.⁴⁶ In October of 1875, the Sultan of Turkey declared bankruptcy. Financier, Henry Oppenheim communicated this news to the editor of *the Pall Mall Gazette* who secretly passed it on to Disraeli on November 15th. Now, Disraeli had to act quickly and secretly in order to secure the canal before France, Russia or any other power moved to offer the Sultan financial aid. Disraeli knew that Czar Alexander II had been eyeing

the passage way to India. Unfortunately, Disraeli was not on good terms with the Bank of England, and Robert Lowe had not forgiven Disraeli since the budget schism in 1852. Furthermore, Parliament was now in recess, and the head of the Bank of England absolutely refused to entertain Disraeli's plea.⁴⁷

On November 23rd, discussions between the Khediv and France for a French purchase of the shares broke down and Nathan worked out a secret agreement with the Khedive on behalf of Disraeli. The only problem was that Parliament would not be able to vote on the allocation of £4 million until it had reassembled. Disraeli turned to his friend Baron Lionel Rothschild who lent him the money at a low rate of 2.5%. Monty Corry recorded that Disraeli's collateral was none other than the British government! On November 24th, Disraeli announced to the Queen that the canal was now in British hands, and shortly thereafter declared Victoria the Empress of India. His facts were not entirely correct-- Britain didn't even own controlling shares quite yet. The greater implications of this swift and strategic move wouldn't be realized until W.W. I when Britain took renewed interest in the Middle East, specifically Palestine, setting the course of events for the Partition of Palestine, the birth of Israel, and the Arab/Israeli conflict that has followed since.⁴⁸ Disraeli had indeed blocked French and Czarist intervention in the Middle East, and Britain would continue to own a controlling share of the Canal Company until 1956. After weeks of campaigning, when Parliament returned from recess they voted to pay back the loan to Rothschild with the prescribed interest. This time Disraeli's great gamble had been a success.

2.2.6. The Eastern Question (1875-1878)

The series of events and consequent conflict over British policy in Parliament out of which the Suez purchase arose, was better known as the *Eastern Question*. The *Eastern Question* was an emotionally charged controversy that divided the government not only along party lines, but even within parties. The question simply put was: whose side should England take in the conflict for power in the Eastern Mediterranean--Russia or the Ottoman Empire? In retrospect it seems like one is asking "Should we share our bed with the cobra or the diamond back?" Both powers were ominous, threatening, and seeking to expand their influence. The Ottoman Empire sought to assert authority from North Africa, up through the Balkans past the Danube. The Czar sought control of all the Black Sea, and ultimately Persia, and India. England was concerned with free access to the Indian Ocean and access to her Eastern colonies from India, through Burma, to her holdings in the Pacific. The interests of these three powers converged in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Choice Between Russia and The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, known as the "sick man of Europe" had been struggling through an economic decline, over extended and still not an industrial power. However, most of Europe had overlooked events brewing between The Ottoman Empire and Russia because of volatile government changes in Central Europe in the German States and France. Derby had maintained a predominantly isolationist policy during his administration.

Derby had been described as 'the most isolationist foreign secretary that Great Britain has ever known'. He was isolationist largely because he found Britain isolated and had a deep positive aversion from positive action of any sort.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Derby's and those before him had focused on great struggles within, from the Irish blight and rising discontent within, to volatile government changes in Germany:

Thus, when Disraeli took his seat, he had in fact little knowledge of foreign countries. . . he had only been abroad four times. . . and on three visits to Paris. He could scarcely speak French at all, and of other foreign languages he was almost wholly ignorant. . . thus when Disraeli took office in 1874, it is doubtful whether he had any clear ideas on foreign policy other than doing something--it did not matter what-- to reassert Britain's power in Europe.⁵⁰

In the summer of 1875, the British foreign policy in the Mediterranean, dormant since the Crimean War, burst into life again. Nationalists in Herzegovina, in the Balkans, led a July rebellion against

Ottoman rule. It spread to Bosnia and then throughout the Balkans. The Ottoman rulers had become notorious for corruption and human rights abuses against Christians within their empire. "The Orthodox Christians, mostly Slav, groaned under Turkish misrule, naturally toward Russia."⁵¹ Meanwhile, Czar Alexander II, still surviving the humiliation of the Treaty of Paris which ended the Crimean War, harboring bitterness toward Turkey, and seeking the reconquest of Bessarabia and lands south, believed this to be an opportunity to assert her power in the Balkans. The British policy up to now had held "it had become a well established article of British diplomatic faith that Turkey must be upheld for as long as possible. This belief stemmed. . . from mistrust of Russian intentions towards India."⁵²

Between 1876-1878 Gladstone and Disraeli's positions polarized the House. Gladstone believed England to be a Christian nation, and therefore was under obligation to support the Russian Orthodox Czarist empire over the *infidel*. "Gladstone's understanding of Great Britain as a Christian nation. . . underlay his outrage at British support of the corrupt and immoral Turks"⁵³ On the other hand, Disraeli "could hardly fail to come away with an appreciation of the Ottoman attitude towards the Jews; indeed he saw . . . the Ottoman Empire as one of the most tolerant states in the world."⁵⁴ Disraeli had come to identify with the world of the Middle East. As for Russia, Moses Montefiore labored tirelessly and without reward for the cause of Russian Jews, where millions of them were forced to live in squalid conditions in the dreaded Pale of Settlement. Thus Disraeli felt ". . . that Ottoman rule was good for the Jewish community, certainly better than that of successor Christian states."⁵⁵ Then in the Spring and Summer of 1876, a revolt in Bulgaria against Ottoman rule led to the massacres of thousands of both Christians and Jews by Turkish forces. Englishmen were horrified, and many were ready to abandon traditional support of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶ Yet in spite of rising popular sentiment against Turkey, Disraeli held his ground. Gladstone published a scathing pamphlet distributed throughout London advocating the entire Turkish population evicted from the continent of Europe: "Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible way, namely carrying off themselves!"⁵⁷

Die Alta Jude

In 1877, as the Czar moved forces into the Balkans toward the Dardanelles. Disraeli ordered the mobilization of reserves in England and the movement of 7,000 troops from India to Malta with plans to seize Cyprus, and possibly Gallipoli. Furthermore, he ordered Admiral Hornby's fleet to anchor off the coast from Gallipoli. An Anglo-Russian war seemed imminent. However, Disraeli's decisive move succeeded in intimidating the Czar. "The Tsar vacillated hopelessly. All initiatives ceased."⁵⁸ With the assistance of Bismarck, the nations met in Berlin for the Berlin Congress of 1877, pounding out diplomatic solutions. Of the Treaty signed Blake wrote 'Disraeli was now at the height of his fame and fortune. the Treaty of Berlin was regarded throughout the country as a major victory for British diplomacy.'⁵⁹ Throughout the congress, Disraeli was called the "Lion of the Congress" and at its conclusion, Bismarck remarked "Die Alte Jude, das is er mann." [The old Jew, he is the man]⁶⁰

Observations

Disraeli's strategic move brought Britain out of years of isolationism extending her influence to the far East, and establishing the empire as a global formidable power. Disraeli was a visionary who took risks. His support of the Ottoman Empire and the Suez Canal Company acquisition underscored his visionary interest in the Middle East for the sake of the Empire. The venture bore out the trust Rothschild had extended to Disraeli because the loan bore great risk—Disraeli gambled that the Parliament would not call for a vote of no confidence and had put up for collateral the Bank of England! It is no wonder the English wondered whose empire Disraeli was aspiring to build. Which nation was Disraeli looking out for at England's cost? Was Disraeli a Jew or an Englishman? Sir John Skelton answered resonantly: "England is the Israel of his imagination, and he will be the Imperial Minister before he dies."⁶¹

3. Analysis

The following section will analyze the five pericopes above and seek to answer certain questions about Disraeli, the integration of his identity, his beliefs, and how they informed his political policies. How did Disraeli reconcile his alleged contradicting identities? How did Disraeli's identity and belief inform his life, his public policy, and his views of the Church, the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel?

3.1. How did Disraeli reconcile his identities as both Jew and Christian?

With regard to Disraeli's Jewish identity and religious faith this study wants to ask: "Did Disraeli see himself as both a Jew and a Christian? If so, then how did he reconcile what seems to so many historians as an apparent contradiction?"

3.1.1. Did Disraeli consider himself a Jew?

What are some of the possibilities?

There are several views put forth by biographers of Disraeli regarding the authenticity of his Jewish identity. This study will focus on three possibilities. 1. *He never considered himself Jewish at all:* Benjamin Disraeli never explicitly said that he still considered himself a Jew following his conversion to Christianity at thirteen. Though he identified himself as a member of the Jewish race, he merely meant that this connection was with regard to his ancestry, but not personal identity or membership with the Jewish people. 2. *Benjamin Disraeli did declare himself to be a Jew, but he was not sincere:* Was his purpose in identifying himself as a Jew to further his political career? He used this ethnic novelty to "call attention to himself" for political gain. It may be asked "How can being a Jew in nineteenth century Europe help one's political career by calling attention to his/her Jewishness?" It has been argued that in an era when heritage, aristocracy, and family lineage were of tremendous value, Victorian society looked with respect upon one who could claim an ancient, undefiled pedigree, even of Jewish decent. 3. *Benjamin Disraeli declared himself to a Jew, and his espoused Jewishness was indicative of a sincere sense of connectedness to the Jewish people.* He not only considered himself to be Jewish, but this identity was deeply rooted in his self-perception. Disraeli's philosophies, beliefs, his world view and political policies were the products of an authentic Jewish identity.

How have historians traditionally perceived him?

1. *Disraeli never declared himself to be a Jew:* There are few historians who actually argue from this view. However, in all fairness, this view is advocated by a respectable minority. Biographer John Vincent in his essay "Disraeli: Christian or Jew" holds that Disraeli never declared himself to be Jewish after his conversion to Christianity. He contends "Disraeli was surprisingly ignorant of Jewish observances, and seems to have had vague notions about the content of Judaism. . . he saw . . . Jews as 'fools' in public. . . Disraeli was a *Christian* of a peculiar perspective."⁶² Stanley Weintraub, Evan Hugh professor of Arts and Humanities at Penn State University, and author of the ambitious 1993 biography *Disraeli: a Biography*, takes a cynical view of Disraeli's Jewish self-perception. While admitting that Disraeli was perceived in British society as a Jew he says "Whether or not Disraeli identified himself as a Jew he was always perceived as one."⁶³ Weintraub doubts Disraeli's Jewish identity ever had any depth. "Since Disraeli could not escape his origins, he made the most of them with an authentic pride."⁶⁴ Weintraub's thesis is that Disraeli was proud of his ancestry but that this pride was merely the product of Victorian society's weighty emphases laid upon tradition, aristocracy, and heritage. Therefore, though he did not identify himself as a Jew, he felt his ancestry was a novelty. Vincent's and Weintraub's both disagree on Disraeli's intent. But both believe that he didn't see himself as a Jew.

In the first place, the Earl of Beaconsfield's public name, Benjamin Disraeli, made a public statement. In an era when it was still customary for Jews to take on less Hebraic names, Disraeli carried until his last days a name that would subject him to criticism. And Disraeli didn't avoid being identified with the Jewish people. He wrote extensively on questions concerning Jewish race, Jewish political concerns, and the Jewish people's place theologically in the Christian faith, as well as politically in British society. In doing so he endured charges of "Shylock," "old clothes," and "alien." Why would he not have protested such accusations for the salvation of his political career rather than blatantly defend the merits of the Jewish race to western civilization at such political cost? Why is no explicit renunciation of his ancestry found throughout his novels, letters, or speeches?

2. *Disraeli declared himself to be Jewish but did so for political gain:* In a recent re-examination of Disraeli's Jewish identity, Todd Endelman, writer for periodical *Modern Judaism* affirmed with most historians that Disraeli did espouse himself to be Jewish. However, he argued that Disraeli's motives were not sincere. Disraeli's Jewish facade was a calculated political maneuver intended to propel his public career forward in a society that favored rich ancestry. He wanted to be a novelty. Endelman argued that Disraeli never had a Jewish self-image for the first half of his life. However, once securely in a political track, and once the initial disability of his Jewish background had been overcome, he then sought to artificially bolster a Jewish public image for political gain. How could Jewish identity in nineteenth century *Christian* England serve to help rather than impede a political career? Endelman explains:

Obscuring his background would have been useless, so, . . . he magnified it. Disraeli felt it necessary to express a definite attitude to his own Jewish ancestry and to prevent his foes from defining it for him. . . . The 'Jewish' Disraeli that emerged in the 1840's was the 'product of a carefully calculated strategy'. . . rather than . . . the outcome of a personal search for identity.⁶⁵

Endelman supported his thesis as follows: 1. Disraeli, before his public support of the "Jew Bill" actually opposed it, casting his vote against it initially in the early phase of his political career; 2. Disraeli distanced himself socially from the Jewish community prior to his public life; 3. Disraeli in his novels indicated he was a friend and not an enemy of Jewish cultural assimilation within British society. After all, Disraeli did say that "Judaism, in order to complete itself, had to assimilate Christianity";⁶⁶ 4. During the first 36 years of his life, he remained entirely silent about his Jewish identity avoiding any reference to it until he began writing his novels, during the establishment of his political career. It seems his identification as a Jew coincided with his public career. Therefore Endelman concludes, his Jewish identity was an façade intended to serve a political purpose. How cynical this argument seems, for it acknowledges Disraeli's public declarations and then seeks to argue from an unproven motive and cryptic intention. An argument based on motive alone is difficult to support and if the argument is depends upon silence, it becomes more precarious. Endelman himself admits that "[Disraeli] knew that his Jewish ancestry was a liability. . . his ancestry was an object of ridicule. Not surprising he tried to play down his Jewish origins in the 1830's"⁶⁷ So then why does Endelman think Disraeli believed his ancestry to suddenly become an asset once he entered public life?. The argument is just not well thought out, Disraeli may have had few social connections with the Jewish community in the early part of his career. But then how welcome are Jewish Christians in the Jewish community today? Disraeli's lack of connectidness to the London Jewish community speaks more of the community than it does of his self-perception. And yet when Disraeli did begin espousing his Jewish identity in his public career, he circulated among Jewish notables. He enjoyed a close relationship with the Rothschild family, Sir Moses Montefiore and Montefiore's wife. Historian John Howard documented his extensive friendly correspondence with the Jewish woman Brydges Williams.

Endelman also ignored Disraeli's hesitation to be baptized at thirteen and his Jewish upbringing. It is not minor point that Isaac Disraeli gave his son a free choice in the matter, and Benjamin took months to decide. This is more than a minor footnote in his adolescent diary. It was months later following great reflection, W. E. Monypenny, the ambitious nineteenth century biographer of Disraeli recorded, before Disraeli followed his sister's example in the waters of baptism. These events should not be merely

glossed over for they reflect great internal deliberation and conviction in the youngster's mind at such a momentous moment in the rite of passage. Finally, it seems rather nitpicky to argue that a mistaken vote cast for a measure that Disraeli was historically known to have championed (the *Jew Bill*) could reveal a disingenuous public facade. Many times in the political career of a public officer, it is their mistakenly cast vote that becomes the nexus of their political conversion. Tip O'Neil, former Democratic Speaker of the house, admitted in his biography that the vote he most regretted in his congressional career was his vote for the approval of U.S. President Johnson's *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* in September, 1964. That resolution gave the president of the United States virtually unchecked authority to take whatever military action the president felt necessary in Southeast Asia during the mounting Vietnam-U.S. conflict. O'Neil later explained in his autobiography that he risked his career, not unlike Disraeli, by publicly declaring his opposition to U.S. involvement. He did so against his own political party and against perceived public opinion. The newspapers later called the Boston war protesters "O'Neil's kids".⁶⁸ Disraeli too championed the very bill he voted against, crossing party lines to do so, and did so at great political cost. Disraeli seemed to have stood his ground by conviction and not political expediency. But Disraeli did so not only for *Jews' Bill* but many other issues such that Lord Russell would later remark: "[Disraeli is]. . . one who, on the peculiar ground of the merit of the Jews, always advocates their cause, and always votes in their favor."⁶⁹

3. *Disraeli genuinely considered himself to be a Jew:* Cecil Roth, who wrote one of the first thorough biographies treating Disraeli's *Jewishness*, explained Disraeli's Jewish identity was formed in his early years and took root. Roth pointed out no less than five events involved in the formation of Disraeli's identity: (a) *Disraeli was raised as a Jew for the first twelve years of his life.* These years were formative for the youth, and certainly would have been significant in the formation of Disraeli's fundamental worldview, ethnic identity, and cultural moorings.⁷⁰ (b) *Roth points out that Disraeli's family was firmly integrated into the Jewish community of London,* this prior to Isaac's later renunciation of membership at Bevis Marks. One of his grandfathers was the president of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Isaac Disraeli had gained great notoriety for his academic scholarship in the area of Jewish history and contribution to Western Civilization especially in Isaac's 1791 work *Curiosities of Literature*. Benjamin Disraeli therefore did not grow up on the fringe of Jewish society, waiting to bail out at thirteen and change identities as one changes their clothes. He was a Jew of the Enlightenment and emerged from within the Enlightened Jewish community of London. (c) *Disraeli grew up in an atmosphere of Jewish learning.* It was mentioned that Isaac was a prolific writer on the subject of Jewish literary contributions. Both Disraeli's maintained a library containing vast works on Judaica and Jewish history. Disraeli's books, while perhaps not indicating a Talmudic competency on Jewish theology, or a scientific competency on Judaica, did demonstrate a broad knowledge of Jewish holidays, tradition, Jewish history, and knowledge of the Jewish people. It is difficult to finish *The Wonderful Tale of Alroy* and believe that Disraeli was not enamored with Jewish history and the messianic hope.

(d) *Disraeli received personal tutelage in Judaism during his childhood.* Disraeli received at least an hour of Rabbinical instruction every Saturday probably in Hebrew and *siddur* (the Jewish prayerbook). Finally, (e) *Disraeli's conversion to Christianity followed much deliberation and reservation, indicating a sense of soul searching and contemplation of the weight this decision would carry.* There is much conjecture surrounding the reservations that delayed Disraeli's baptism, long after his other siblings. Roth postulated "It certainly seems that by the time he was baptized in the middle of his thirteenth year his Jewish consciousness was so far developed that henceforth it was impossible to eradicate the traces."⁷¹ Disraeli did not convert to the Christian faith out of compulsion from his father and he did not enter the waters of baptism casually. His sense of Jewishness, his understanding of the implications this decision would carry with regard to his relationship to Jewish community all weighed heavily upon him those intervening months between his father's decision to leave Bevis Marks and the day he agreed to be baptized. Roth concluded "There does not seem to be a doubt that to the end of his days he remained Jewish in *sentiment* but he was a *Christian* by religion."⁷² It is unfortunate that Roth could thoroughly defend Disraeli's Jewish self-perception and public identity, and yet fall short of calling

Disraeli a Jew.. “A Jew converted to another faith ceases to be considered a member of the Jewish people.”⁷³.

This study has thus far surveyed Jewish biographers' views of Disraeli's Jewishness. Ann Pottinger Saab, historian of the Victorian Era at the University of North Carolina, is a non Jewish historian who approached Disraeli's Jewishness from a more objective angle. She severely criticizes Roth who she says presents Disraeli as almost a Jewish hero and then at the last moment “. . . fails. . . owing to Roth's narrowly religious definition of what it means to be a Jew.”⁷⁴ Saab argues that “Disraeli did not wash off Jewishness with the baptismal water, and his heritage as a Jew remained both a puzzle and burden to him.”⁷⁵ Saab believes that Disraeli's worldview was influenced by his Jewish upbringing and would affect his foreign policy especially with regard to the *Eastern Question* (see below). Buckle and Monypenny's six volume expansive biography of Disraeli is the earliest, most comprehensive study on Disraeli. It is the ambitious work of two British historians both of whom lived during close of the Victorian era and neither of whom were Jewish. For these writers, that Disraeli was a Jew was a non issue. Buckle and Monypenny were more interested in Disraeli's views of Jewish race and his understanding of the Christian religion. Both writers understood that Disraeli counted himself a member of both. Monypenny wrote “The ruling sentiment [in Disraeli's writings] is intense pride of race; its underlying philosophy is Disraeli's philosophy of race. Race even lies a the root of all his conceptions of religion.”⁷⁶

It seems that Benjamin Disraeli did declare himself to be a Jew and that this declaration was the product of sincere belief and conviction, rather than public facade. But it is clear that Disraeli saw his Jewishness as membership of a race, and Judaism as a religion his father had rejected. Like Isaac, who renounced the tenets of traditional Judaism in his letter to the Bevis Marks synagogue, Benjamin could not in good conscience adhere to the doctrines of Judaism. And he did not believe that rejection of Judaism removed him from the Jewish race.

Did Disraeli's contemporaries consider him Jewish?

How did those who lived during Disraeli era, participants of the political chatter consider Disraeli? Weintraub emphatically argued in the preface of his biography that Disraeli was almost universally recognized as a Jew, for political good or bad. He wrote:

Whether of not Disraeli identified himself as a Jew, he was always perceived as one--not only by his friends and colleagues, but especially by his enemies, of whom there were many. His archival, W. E. Gladstone, saw Disraeli as motivated by "Jew feelings". . . Edward Freeman used the label "loathsome Jew" and Bishop Wilberforce "Eastern Jew". . . Disraeli was "der alte Jude" to the admiring Bismarck, . . . the "Hebrew Conjuror" to Carlisle. . . "the absurd Jew-boy" to Lytton Strachey, "the tawdry old Jew" to Henry James.⁷⁷

It seems that the expression "Old Jew" finally stuck after a famous encounter with Germany's leader, Bismarck. The Chancellor commented once after his historic meeting with the diplomat: “Der alte Jude, das ist er Mann.” (the old Jew, he is the Man" (1878)⁷⁸. One dearest to him both politically and personally was Lord Edward Stanley, with whom Disraeli conversed over many religious topics. Stanley described Disraeli as "Hebrew" and in a journal entry of 1851 goes so far as to say "Disraeli's mind is frequently occupied with subjects relative to the Hebrews."⁷⁹ Disraeli's great political opponent W. E. Gladstone, called Lord Beaconsfield an "alien," a "Jew", insinuated in his diary that Disraeli practiced *Crypto-Judaism*. When arguing against the *Jew Bill*, Gladstone declared that Disraeli was “. . . much more than rational--he was *fanatical!*”⁸⁰ It would be interesting to study the writings of Moses Montefiore, the letters of Lionel Rothschild, or other Jewish contemporaries who held such close contact with Disraeli as they articulated their beliefs about his Jewishness. Unfortunately, that kind of research is far more difficult and involved as Montefiore, Rothschilds and other contemporaries were not as articulate on the subject. It didn't matter to these *Enlightenment Jews* that Disraeli held to what must have appeared to them as peculiar beliefs. He was a valuable friend and worthy politician.

The Jews of Disraeli's day were not very vocal in denouncing to Disraeli's Jewishness. London's Jews were in many ways reminded that they were *guests* in a *Christian* society. Perhaps there was fear that public attack on the prime minister might lead to repercussions. It is also possible that it just didn't matter to *Enlightenment Jews* many of whom, like Isaac Disraeli had abandoned the strictures of orthodox Judaism on the continent. And perhaps many even felt Disraeli could only have been "good for the Jews." Disraeli's outspoken Jewish identity and Christian belief didn't prevent him from having contact with Jewish notables. As discussed above Disraeli successfully circulated among high levels of Jewish society including the Rothschild family:

At age fifty-five, Disraeli felt more spent than his years. Almost his only real happiness out of the office was his increasing closeness with the Rothschilds who . . . admired his tenacity and courage. Lionel de Rothschild and his family not only visited, but spent two days at Hughenden.⁸¹

At the publication of *Coningsby* he celebrated by holding a dinner that included Moses Montefiore, his wife, Baron and Baroness Lionel de Rothschild, Sir Josiah, and two hundred others, many of whom were members of the Jewish community.⁸² Disraeli's contact among Jews extended across the Atlantic. Following the defeat of the Confederate States of America in 1865, secretary of war Judah Benjamin fled to England to seek political asylum from one he felt was a fellow Landsman. England had established ties with the CSA during the Civil War, and had remained one of few countries where Jews enjoyed political and religious freedom. Judah Benjamin wrote his Nephew back in New Orleans that Disraeli "wrote. . . expressing the desire of [my] being useful to . . . when [I] should arrive in town."⁸³ Following Benjamin's arrival in England, Disraeli helped arrange a government position for the southerner so that he could carry on his law practice in England, which he did after passing the bar.

What did Disraeli say about himself?

In records of Disraeli's correspondence, from his speeches, books, and actions, he clearly identified himself as a member of what he called *the Jewish race*. In a draft letter addressed to Christian clergymen in 1860, he wrote "For myself, I look upon the Church as the only Jewish institution that remains. . . being the depository of divine truth. . . which embalms the memory of *my race*."⁸⁴ In a letter addressed to the daughters of his Jewish friend, Sir Anthony de Rothschild, Baron Lionel's brother, Disraeli responded to an article they published titled *History and Literature of the Israelites*, in 1870. Disraeli wrote "You describe in style. . . the great story of *our* ancestors, and have treated with force and feeling their immortal annals."⁸⁵ Roth added that "This tendency to identify himself with the Jewish people. . . was reinforced. . . by the circumstances of his political fortune."⁸⁶ Clearly more examples could be brought out but it suffice to show that Disraeli both publicly and in personal interaction explicitly believed himself to be a member of the *Jewish race*.

Conclusion: Disraeli explicitly declared himself to be a Jew.

The Lord of Beaconsfield clearly perceived himself to be a Jew, he publicly and privately identified himself in this way. It does not seem that he did so out of political expediency but this self-perception was deeply rooted in his person. It is significant that he 1. consistently chose first person plural pronouns in referring to the Jewish race. 2. In his novels he wrote frequently about and spoke through Jewish characters who articulated his message to the reader. 3. He received great criticism from both political adversaries, newspaper editors, and the public over his Jewish background, without protest of that label. 4. Disraeli raised Jewish political concerns in Parliament crossing party lines to do so, and at great political cost, but did so in the expressed interest of and identification with the Jewish community.

3.1.2. Did Disraeli profess himself to be a Christian?

Before a candidate, elected by his district to Parliament, may take his seat in the House of Commons, English law required that he take an oath "on the true faith of a Christian."⁸⁷ For this reason, Baron Lionel Rothschild, elected MP for the City of London was unable for several terms to take his seat in the House, resulting in a controversy that culminated in the proposed bill for *The Removal of Jewish Disabilities*. Blake explains

The great majority of the Tory party, particular the county member would feel bound, as defenders of the established church, to resist the admission of MP's who, though denying the divinity of Christ would none the less be able to legislate on the organization, worse still the doctrine of the Church of England.⁸⁸

To champion the *Jews' Bill* as it became known, Disraeli faced great criticism from the public, the newspapers, and his own colleagues concerning the authenticity of his professed Christian faith. It was unthinkable that a Member of Parliament could actually support the admission of a non-Christian into the House who in turn might introduce legislation affecting the Church of England in a way that might be contrary to the creeds of the Church. That MP would essentially be aiding and abetting the Church's apostasy—or so it was understood. Allegations immediately were raised, spearheaded by Gladstone that Disraeli was a secret apostate: did he hold to orthodoxy? How sincere was his faith?

What were some of the criticisms?

1. *Disraeli was a Crypto-Jew*: In spite of taking a Christian oath, Disraeli was charged with heterodoxy, Unitarianism, and *Crypto-Judaism* --an unmerited accusation in which critics believed his Christian faith was either aberrant or absent altogether. The charge of *Crypto-Judaism* gained support from the known fact that Disraeli claimed Sefardic ancestry. These Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492. Among those who remained the *Nuevo Christianos* or *Marranos* were "converts" who practiced a facade of Catholicism to avoid persecution in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some continued the orthopraxy of Catholicism into the seventeenth-century in Holland, England, Portugal, and even North America, while secretly practicing Jewish traditions in the home. This secret practice became known as *Crypto-Judaism*. Once free from the clutches of the Roman Church, some began to publicly identify as Jews and after renouncing Christianity were re-admitted to the Synagogue. And it was this legacy egged on by Gladstone that fueled suspicion and prejudice against Disraeli. A penny pamphlet libelously titled *Lord Beaconsfield Interviewed* printed by John Heywood in London allegedly quotes an interview with Disraeli. In it Heywood claimed to have quoted Disraeli as saying "Now tell me: in Europe an English or French Prince who wants a throne never hesitates to change his religion. Why should I be more nice? I am of that religion which gives me a scepter." Heywood went on to quote Disraeli as explaining his Sefardic ancestry who 'secretly adhered to the ancient faith and ceremonies of their fathers--a belief in God of Sinai, & the rites and observances of the laws of Moses."⁸⁹ Heywood therefore argued that Disraeli too had taken on the orthopraxy of Christianity while covertly adhering to *Crypto-Judaism* just like his ancestors. Gladstone's diary contained a collection of similarly scandalous articles, supposed interviews, and even anti-Semitic poems targeting Disraeli, all alleging that Disraeli was covertly practicing *Crypto-Judaism* and holding to no sincere Christian faith. In truth, most historians agree that Disraeli hardly had enough familiarity with Judaism that he could in anyway maintain such covert practices. Cecil Roth wrote:

His Christian religious training was far more serious. . . than his superficial and temporary Jewish instruction had been. He knew about Christianity in fact in his shallow way a very great deal; about Judaism he knew next to nothing. (In his writings he showed a very little practical knowledge of Jewish rites.) If he ever had any knowledge of Hebrew, he certainly forgot it.⁹⁰

Disraeli's letters provide insight into Disraeli's ignorance of Judaism. Though Endelman's criticism of Disraeli's Jewish background is at times unmerited, he rightly appraises Disraeli's ignorance of the Jewish religion, as well as his general alienation from the religious community prior to his public career.

Endelman cites Disraeli's letter to Sara Brydges Willyams "I, like you, was not bred among my race, and was nurtured in great prejudice against them."⁹¹ In a letter to his Sister Sarah, 1 August, 1951 Disraeli recounts an amusing mishap in which he, with all good intention, sent Madam Rothschild a gift. Afterward he became quite embarrassed remembering that venison was *treif* (unkosher)!

The Duke's present of venison was ducal--in the form of a half buck. Not knowing what to do with it. . . I thought I had made a happy hit and sent it to Madam Rothschild. . . it never striking me for an instant that it was unclean meat, wh: I fear it is [laugh].⁹²

Finally, Blake, pointed out that most of these kinds of charges were politically motivated at best and malicious at the least.

The accusation of Crypto-Judaism made by Gladstone and others does not stand investigation; Disraeli was surprisingly ignorant of Jewish observances, and seems to have had a very vague notions about the content of Judaism. Otherwise he would scarcely have argued that 'Christianity is completed Judaism' and deplored the fact that 'millions of Jews should persist in believing only part of their religion'.⁹³

2. *Disraeli was a Unitarian*: The Unitarian religion denies the deity of Christ, and is reductionist in its interpretation of Christianity. Unitarianism also denies the supernatural dimension of all religions. Disraeli's early pedagogy was allegedly from a Unitarian minister shortly after his baptism. The rumor of his pedagogy raised suspicions that Disraeli may have called himself a Christian but held secretly held unorthodox beliefs. Vincent contended

First he rejected conventional supernatural Christianity. Secondly he believed that modern thought might give Christianity a deeper meaning, so he rejected conventional materialism. Thirdly he believed in the Jewishness of Christianity. fourthly, he believed in the social necessity of religion.⁹⁴

Even if Vincent is correct on all four accounts, he cannot understand how Disraeli might have remained within the pale of Christianity. But Disraeli did seem to believe in supernatural Christianity.. Blake counters: "[Disraeli] no doubt believed in the Virgin Birth, the Divinity of Christ and the Resurrection," Blake conjectured, ". . . but not with strong conviction."⁹⁵

3. *Disraeli was just not a believing Christian*: Perhaps Disraeli publicly adhered to Christian beliefs, but the sincerity of that belief was shallow. Roth felt that Disraeli was not a *believing* Christian, "but was compelled by opportunism to perform his religious duties as a Christian"⁹⁶ According to this view, Disraeli might have professed himself a Christian, held to the confessions, but would not have been considered by most mainstream conservative Christians as a "believing" Christian. Saab also felt that Disraeli's adherence to the Anglican church as merely an orthopraxy. He was too overwhelmed by the onslaught of modernism to truly believe the Church's teachings. She wrote:

Overall, Disraeli considered that the Church, like the other professions, was experiencing a general decline, as a result of the wider accessibility of knowledge: Christianity was approaching its 'last struggle'. Given the impossibility of proving the existence of God, the only sensible position was agnosticism. Clearly science would win, and Christianity was doomed: 'I daresay the thing may last our time--I do what I can to keep it up.'⁹⁷

How can we qualitatively examine Disraeli's Christian faith?

1. *Was Disraeli's faith orthodox?* This study seeks to determine if Disraeli at least publicly professed to those creeds that would qualify a person as a candidate for the Church of England. As it was shown, to serve in a public office, a member of parliament was required prior to 1858 to take the oath of office that explicitly identified the candidate as a Christian. Further, a member of Parliament had to be a baptized Christian. Disraeli on numerous occasions both in and out of office professed himself to be a Christian and member of the Church. Disraeli, certainly more than other members of the House, fell under greater scrutiny. In early 1852, following the publication of his political biography *Lord George Bentinck*, was criticized for his aggressive argument in chapter 24, for the importance of Jews to Western

Civilization. The *Morning Chronicle*, *The Daily News*, and *The Times*, called him a “blasphemer”, and an “infidel”.⁹⁸ The *Morning Chronicle* ran a mock heroic series on the exploits of “Benjamin De-Juda” The sum total of these treatises was a raised concern over his fidelity to the Church of England.”⁹⁹ Disraeli adamantly protested these empty criticisms. In a letter to Lord Londonberry, on September 26, 1853, Disraeli wrote “I am not only a faithful, but, I trust, devoted child [of the Church of England]. . . .”¹⁰⁰ Disraeli’s contest for the removal of Jewish disabilities also was met with criticism of the orthodoxy of his faith. Yet he declared “. . . Yes, it is as a Christian that I will not take upon myself the awful responsibility of excluding from the Legislature those how are of the religion from the bosom of which my Lord and Saviour was born.”¹⁰¹ Following that great debate Monypenny recorded that “Disraeli renewed his profession of faith both in 1854 and 1856” to publicly put to rest suspicion of heterodoxy.¹⁰² Disraeli attested in his own words the orthodoxy of his faith in a dialogue in *Tancred*. In the book he attested to the Messiahship of Jesus, the deity of Christ, the nature of his atoning death on the cross, his resurrection, and Disraeli’s understanding of the nature of the Church. These confessions were hardly sidelines within the book but the fruits of a long spiritual search by the hero young Tancred who asked “What is faith and what is duty?” It seems therefore, that inspite of great criticism Disraeli at least in word adhered to the orthodoxy of the Christian faith..

2. *Was Disraeli’s faith genuine?* In spite of public confessions of Christian faith, did Disraeli secretly reject a supernatural and personal understanding of Christianity? This kind of a question is even more difficult to answer.

a) Was Disraeli’s religious profession sincere? Did Disraeli, professing an outward orthodox Christian faith, sincerely hold to these beliefs, or were they an *orthopraxy* for him? In spite of Vincent’s and other historian’s modern arguments for a cynical Disraeli, whose religion amounted to little more than a nineteenth century *humanism*, Monypenny a nineteenth century observer believed that Disraeli held deep spiritual beliefs. Monypenny felt Disraeli believed in a supernatural Christianity. Furthermore the biographer deduced this from Disraeli’s own words in *Tancred*.

Certain large ideas about God and man and the world pervade the book--that the world was made and is governed by God, and not by blind natural forces. . . that faith is essential, and the spiritual order, into that material, the thing that counts, Disraeli’s teaching is in fact, a protest against materials; he preached that the soul and the mind are more than the body; faith and ideas above material progress.¹⁰³

Franz Oppenheimer, Victorian historian, author, and professed Jewish member of the Church of England protested the charge of Disraeli’s insincerity: “ Roth, in the company of many others, also concluded that Disraeli was not a believing Christian. . . So far as I have been able to discover that conventional wisdom is based on nothing more than idle gossip.”¹⁰⁴ Oppenheimer observed that most arguments for Disraeli’s disbelief were either based upon 1. perceived peculiar views of Jewish race, 2. allegations of *Crypto-Judaism*, or 3. a vague and repeatedly cited reference in found in Lord Stanley’s diary entry of 1851 which will be discussed below

b) Were there indicative personal comments by Disraeli defending the sincerity of his faith? Few politicians are able to successfully rebut each criticism mounted by their opponents. . Disraeli did make the effort to rebut charges of heresy following his publication of *Lord Bentinck*. Charges were made that in his novel, Disraeli had acquitted the Jewish people of *deocide*, the crime of killing God. To reject this belief was perceived as heresy for it contradicted the historic belief of the church: the Jews were under God’s wrath for murdering Christ. To the Reverend William Partridge, in a personal letter marked “confidential”: and dated February 25, 1852 Disraeli protested that this historic belief was in error. An orthodox understanding of the atoning work of Christ need not, indeed should not include this ignorant doctrine:

I am told that there is a sort of movement among a certain section of the clergy of the country against me on the grounds of objection to certain passages in my late work [LGB] My belief is that there is not a statement or sentiment in that book at variance with the creeds and articles of the Church of which I am not

only faithful but I trust devoted child. But it is said that there are some expressions which though not coming under the head of matters contained creeds and articles are still unsound. With great deference I would observe that there is not an opinion put forth in the chapter in question on the subjects of Crucifixion and Atonement ¹⁰⁵

In a conversation with Lord Stanley, recorded in his 1851 political diary, Disraeli seemed to make comments that betray some doubt in the Christian religion. The entry is oft cited by many biographers as evidence that Disraeli held some degree of skepticism with regard to supernatural Christianity. Stanley observed: "[Disraeli] seemed to think that the sentiment of instinct, of religion, would by degrees, though slowly vanish, as knowledge became more widely spread: an anticipation which I believe, as I most sincerely hope, is unfounded." ¹⁰⁶ Indeed, this isolated statement may reveal true doubts expressed to a personal friend on a certain occasion. And the possibility exists that this was representative of the depth of Disraeli's faith. However it is also possible that this was an isolated occasion and is in no way a general representation of the depth of his faith. Were there outstanding circumstances at that time in Disraeli's life? Do we have the rest of the conversation in which these statements were made? Were Stanley's observations accurate or interpolation of Disraeli's faith based upon some comments he made? Is it possible to make more out of this oft cited reference than perhaps the critical historian should? Stanley's comments appear a bit vague and were certainly not intended as a summary of Disraeli's personal beliefs.

c) Did Disraeli also hold peculiar *Oriental* beliefs? Disraeli was somewhat of an iconoclast. He was unafraid to make bold statements that stood in contradiction to popular sentiment, especially with regard to the Jews and the Near East. Therefore most biographers have been quick to dismiss comments by the Lord of Beaconsfield as being eccentric and forgivable -- merely *peculiar Oriental* ideas. They were *peculiar* because, as Blake explained "His Christianity did not fit into any ordinary category." ¹⁰⁷ They were *Oriental* because he constantly returned to the supremacy of the Jewish race and the romance of the Middle East. It is true that Disraeli advocated ideas that ran counter-culture in sterile Christian England for example: 1. Disraeli advocated that the church acquit the Jews of deicide. 2. Disraeli advocated that Christianity was completed Judaism. And perhaps for his era, this was revolutionary thinking. It would be almost one hundred years before Vatican Two would acquit the Jewish people of deicide. And it is a matter of theological opinion that Christianity is not completed Judaism. Oppenheimer complained "A book proving this point [i.e. Disraeli's orthodoxy] remains to be written, but [his]. . . letters [should] contribute to such proof." ¹⁰⁸

d) How consistent was Disraeli's political views with conservative Christianity? During Disraeli's administration Christian belief was perceived to be under attack from German rationalism, from new discoveries in science, and secular skepticism. As administrator over the Church of England he was required to make recommendations to the Queen with regard to the appointment of Bishops. How did the prime minister respond to modernism?

The Darwinian controversy: During his career, Darwin's *Origin of the Species* had raised much controversy as this book was circulated throughout England. The book raised the question: is there a conflict between religion and science? At the heart of the question in nineteenth century England lay the suspicion that the Scriptures only provide moral answers for today but not an objective history of mankind. It widened the split within the Church of England between conservatives who held the Bible to be reliable with regard to science and history and the modernists who held a reductionist view of the Scriptures and the Christian religion. At a Diocesan Society conference, chaired by the Bishop of Oxford, Disraeli was asked to respond to these concerns raised by modern science with regard to the Church's teaching. In his response, he was at least publicly unwilling to accept the conclusions of the scientific world upon the Scriptures:

The discoveries of science are not, we are told consistent with the teachings of the Church. . . Now I am sure there is not one in this theater who is not prepared to do full justice to the merits of scientific men, and who does not appreciate the discoveries of science which have added so much to the convenience of life and the comfort of man. . . The question is 'is Man an Ape or an Angel?' [laugh] Now I am on the side of the Angels [cheers] ¹⁰⁹

Disraeli's administration over the church: A second test of Disraeli's faith in action is his appointment to high church offices. Since the Reformation, the appointment of bishops and senior clergy had been a royal prerogative. Apart from the period of the Protectorate and of the Ecclesiastical Commission, the crown and ministers appointed senior clergy.¹¹⁰ This duty befell Disraeli upon his acceptance of the office of Prime Minister. And his choice of bishops and ecclesiastical decisions should also be somewhat telling. The Church of England in the nineteenth century was sharply divided among three wings. 1. the High Church, 2. the Low Church, and 3. the Broad Church. The High church represented the *Catholic* Anglican wing. Those in this wing held beliefs very close to the Roman Catholic church both theologically, in practice, and worship. This segment continues to seek an interpretation of Scripture according to historic Catholic tradition. To this day, there is a segment of High Anglican Church that seeks to re-unite with Rome.

The Broad Church, on the other hand, was a segment of the Anglican church interpreting the Christian faith more progressively. This wing holds to a naturalistic and humanistic interpretation of Christianity rejecting literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and seeking more freedom with regard to the historic creeds. The Low Church wing is far more theologically conservative, Reform in faith rejecting Roman beliefs. It is what might be called today Evangelical, or Fundamental. It held to a more literal interpretation of Scripture and believed it to be the sole authority for faith and practice. "The [broad churchmen] were anathema to Disraeli, for they were usually [politically] Liberals."¹¹¹ Blake admitted that Disraeli opposed the Low Church. However Blake, a political biographer, felt that Disraeli's opposition was politically motivated in that Disraeli opposed the Broad Churchmen's liberal politics. Monypenny is less cynical and argued that Disraeli had been motivated by his political and theological conservatism:

Disraeli was a rigid maintainer of orthodoxy in belief, partly no doubt, from a realization of the utility of religion to the civil magistrate, but alas it appears from intellectual conviction, and from a jealousy on behalf of his own sacred race, the original recipients of religious truth. he therefore held the speculations of Broad Churchmen in little favour.¹¹²

Monypenny also explained that Disraeli opposed German rationalism especially as it made a science of Biblical criticism. In a letter to Mrs. Brydges Willyams in 1861 Disraeli indicated that he felt Biblical criticism was tantamount to heresy and dissension:

Most private: Hughenden Manor, Nov. 13, 1861--The state of the church is critical from dissension's and heresy among its own children. if it were to fall, philosophy would not profit: we should be handed over to narrow-minded and ignorant fanaticism. I have been in frequent correspondence of late with the Bishop of Oxford, . . . and I have promised to attend a great diocesan meeting tomorrow at Aylesbury and try to give a lead to public discussion in the right direction. . . Think of me tomorrow, a very critical day I can assure you.¹¹³

Disraeli held great suspicion of the high church. he was ". . . no less hostile to the High Church men, not because they had any particular political affiliation but because he believed that their . . . ritualistic wing had thoroughly alarmed public opinion on account of its alleged 'romanizing' objectives."¹¹⁴ Fears among the English of the Roman Catholic church were deeply rooted in the English soil which had been well nourished by the blood of Reform martyrs. The island had fought repeated wars over Papal control from the assassination of Thomas Beckett in 1170 to the blood bath of Queen Mary Tudor (Bloody Mary). And it was no comfort that Irish nationalism had been led under the Papal banner. Disraeli came to office following great crisis under Peel's administration--the Irish Potato Famine of 1847. This horror spread unrest among the remnants of the Irish both in England and Erin. The question of an autonomous Irish church was the question of Papal control in the British isles. It did not lend for popular support of the High Church by Disraeli or the conservative party.

Yet Disraeli maintained an association with the conservative Low Church. William Gibson, lecturer at Basingstoke College in England examined Disraeli's church patronage and concluded that he did not use the power of his office for political gain, as some have alleged. However, his appointments demonstrated faith and conviction. "The temptation to benefit from the power of the pulpit and from the

votes of the bishops was one which minister found difficult to resist"¹¹⁵ But Gibson says many might accuse Disraeli of political maneuvering " There is no evidence that Disraeli was . . . concerned with using church patronage to promote partisan concerns."¹¹⁶ In fact he argues that Disraeli was "one of the best bishop makers of the century"¹¹⁷ He clearly balance in bishops who were often theologically conservative. In a letter to Derby August 16th, 1868 Disraeli wrote "what we want at this moment is a strong Protestant appointment in the church. . . but there is hardly a good Protestant strong enough to make a bishop."¹¹⁸ Some even argued that "Disraeli would nominate Liberal to church offices." Although Gibson rebuts this tempers this view. He believes that Disraeli "tried to balance his nominations to the bench of bishops between the various church factions. . . aimed to unite the church 'on the common ground of church polity'"¹¹⁹

Disraeli's association with the Low Church became controversial in August 14, 1868 when as Prime Minister, he proposed Canon McNeile of Liverpool for the Deaconery of Ripon. This Canon was 73 years old, a famous evangelical preacher, and had been involved in numerous controversies not the least of which was his opposition to the Roman Catholic church.¹²⁰ It was not a popular appointment and Disraeli endured criticism from the Liberals. He responded to Bishop Wilberforce of his own parish in a letter saying that he did not want to see "The great church of England subside into an Episcopalian sect. I will struggle against this with all my utmost energy"¹²¹ In summary, his appointments seemed to reflect a theological conservatism that also sought balance to unite the church.

e) What were some of Disraeli's theological perspectives? Disraeli was often criticized for his lack of formal theological education over against those M P s from Oxford. In spite of such criticism, Disraeli held an avid interest in theological matters which he discussed at length with friends, in his novels, and publicly. Toward the end of his life he admitted his interest in writing a Life of Christ, underscoring the Jewishness of Jesus. Disraeli on one occasion confided to Lord Stanley that when he retired from politics he would resume literature and write the *Life of Christ* from a Jewish "nationalist" point of view.¹²²

f) Was Disraeli an Evangelical? In spite of Disraeli's church patronage, his associations with the Low Church, and professed beliefs, would he be considered today an evangelical? A theological conservative . . . a fundamentalist? Beyond his personal comments, his associations, and church administration it is this writer's opinion that this question may not be answerable with the data currently available. In the first place, we don't have in his personal correspondence enough identifying statements to correlate his beliefs with today's categories. How can today's categories be superimposed over a nineteenth century iconoclast? On one hand, Disraeli aligned himself with political and theological conservatives during his administration. On the other hand we have no extensive record of his contact or sympathies with the kind of conservatives that would answer this kind of question. We know of no sympathy or support lent to the British missionary societies such as the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews. Would not an evangelical Christian of Jewish descent be most interested in seeing his own people reached? His silence is especially ominous as he served as an administrator the church from which this society was funded. During his travels to the Near East, recorded no contact with the bishop in Jerusalem, a Jewish-Christian. The silence leaves us with many more questions. What we are left with is Disraeli and his beliefs on their own terms. Disraeli professed the Anglican confessions. He seems to have sincerely held an authentic and supernatural Christian belief, to have associated with the conservative wing of the Anglican church, and to have taken his faith seriously. Beyond that, certain questions are far more difficult to answer.

3.1.3. How did Disraeli integrate his Jewish identity with his Christian belief?

How could Disraeli identify himself as a Jew and a Christian at the same time? How did he integrate what seems to some a contradiction in terms? Did Disraeli then renounce Judaism, the religion of the Jewish people? Disraeli articulated three fundamental theses: 1. He was a Jew by race; 2. He was a Christian by religion; 3. He believed Christianity to be completed Judaism.

What were Disraeli's Theses:

1. *Disraeli was a Jew by race:* If Disraeli is to be called a *racist*, then he was one who believed that it was the Jewish race that was superior to all others. Disraeli proudly attested to being a member of that race. But his understanding of *race* cannot be equated with our modern scientific concept of the term as it describes a gene pool, or collection of like physical traits. Nor can Disraeli's *racism* be equated with the scientific ideology that pervaded Germany in the twenties and thirties under the Nazis. Disraeli saw himself as a member of a lineage, a people, an *ethnos*. Or, as Monypenny explained, in Victorian England it meant to be a member of an *aristocracy*. "This doctrine of race is akin to the belief in aristocracy. It is 'entirely opposed' he tells us 'to the equality of man and similar abstract dogmas, which have destroyed ancient society without creating a satisfactory substitute.'"123 Victorian England was a class society. Disraeli emerged from out of the conservative party, whose political philosophies were representative of England's upper class. Saab argues, therefore that "Disraeli romanticized the aristocracy. In part this was surely the parvenu's envy of a caste that was both powerful and self assured."124 And Disraeli's aristocratic claim to fame was the Jewish race, which he argued was superior to the English. "The Semites now exercise vast influence over affairs by their smallest though most peculiar family, the Jews. There is no race gifted with so much tenacity and such skill."125 Robert Blake explained that the thesis by which Disraeli could integrate his Jewish identity and his Christian faith was that Disraeli was a Jew by race and a Christian by religion. "To him the Jew is a proto-Christian and Christianity is completed Judaism. How else could a person intensely proud of the Jewish ancestry . . . justify both that pride and that conversion."126

Disraeli related duty to his membership in the Jewish race. He explained in *Tancred*. "I would lift up my voice to heaven and ask What is Duty, and what is Faith? What ought I to do, and what ought I to believe?"127 As a member of the church he felt he had a duty to restore the Jewish roots to the church, remind the church of their debt to the Jews, and challenge historic anti-Jewish doctrines that he believed undermined the Gospel. He felt, as a Jew within the church his duty to uphold the Jewish people and to uphold the integrity of that Hebrew fabric by which the gospel was woven. And he saw ultimately his duty as extending into the greater good for the British empire both internally and overseas. In his mind, the foreign policy of Britain and the Middle East were somehow coupled through this Jewish link. He never fully articulated what this link was, or how the Middle East would be significant for Britain, nor did he probably know. However, he believed that the interest of the Jews was the interest of England somehow.

2. *Disraeli was a Christian by religion:* Disraeli professed orthodox Christianity. In his own words "Yes, it is as a Christian that I will not take upon me the awful responsibility of excluding from the legislature those who are of the religion born of which my Lord and Saviour was born"128. But he did not see membership in the Jewish race as disqualifying him from accepting the tenets of the Christian religion, nor did he perceive a belief system as altering his racial membership. Disraeli clearly saw his Christianity as a system of beliefs available to those of his own race: "Christians may continue to persecute Jews, and Jews may persist in disbelieving Christians, but who can deny that Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of the Most High God is the eternal glory of the Jewish race?"129

3. *Christianity is completed Judaism:* Disraeli held that the Christian faith is the fulfillment of the religion, that traditional system of beliefs held by the Jewish people. "Christianity is the completion of Judaism, and that Judaism --at any rate the Judaism of the Old Testament--is undeveloped Christianity."130 In *Tancred*, Disraeli expounded that "Christianity is completed Judaism"131 . . . that as a Jew he had the more comprehensive faith, he was in fact a "completed Jew."132 In fact, Christianity is a subcategory of Judaism. He went as far as to postulate that all of Europe, "converted to the cross as adopting a type of Judaism"; "All countries that refuse the cross wither, while the whole new world is devoted to the *Semitic* principle and its most glorious offspring, the Jewish faith [Christianity]"133 Disraeli asked of the parliament in his speech for the removal of Jewish disabilities "Where is your Christianity if you do not believe in their Judaism?"134

What was Disraeli's understanding of "Race"?

Webster's New World Dictionary, has eight definitions of *race* . The first two are:

1. any major biological divisions of mankind, distinguished by color and texture of hair, color of skin and eyes, stature , bodily proportions. . . 2. a population that differs from others in the relative frequency of some gene or genes. . . ¹³⁵

Disraeli was not a scientist and publicly opposed Darwinian theories on the human origins. Though Joseph de Gobineau had published *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines* year earlier, it would be the end of the nineteenth century before the scientific understanding of human *race* became linked with European nationalism as articulated by Nietzsche in his image of the blond Teutonic warrior. For example, while Disraeli recognized the physical differences between Jews of Sefardic and Ashkenazi backgrounds, he was yet able to identify them both members of one race. Rather it seems that his understanding of *race* was more closely related to the Greek word *ethnos*. Webster's definition continues:

3. any geographical , national, or tribal ethnic stock, grouping. 4. a) the state of belonging to a certain ethnic stock group, etc. b) the qualities, traits, etc. belonging or supposedly belonging to such a division. 5. any group of people having the same ancestry; family; clan; lineage. ¹³⁶

3.2. How did Disraeli's identity and beliefs inform his life, his public policy, and his views of the Church, the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel?

His beliefs and his identity was in fact foundational to his political career, his public and foreign policies, and strategy for the empire.

3.2.1. Disraeli and Public Policy

Disraeli and Internal Policy

His beliefs were foundational to his public policies as he demonstrated in his move to champion legislation admitting Jews into public office. In his speech to parliament, it is clear his move was not motivated by opportunism, or pragmatic notions. He crossed party lines and risked his political career on the basis of his beliefs that the Jews were the key to the success of British society.

Disraeli and Foreign Policy

Disraeli once again took great political as well as financial risk when he placed great emphasis upon British expansionism in the Near East in ownership of the Suez canal. How important was his political interest in the Near East? Perhaps not since his failed South African venture did he take such a risky loan of £4 million for he staked the very government of England as collateral. Disraeli believed the future of the British Empire to be in the East, including Palestine, his ancestral homeland. He saw in this venture a convergence of interest in future of the glorious empire and the security of interests in the Middle East.

3.2.2. Disraeli and the Church

As discussed above, Disraeli publicly held fast to the confessions of the Church of England. His duties as prime minister involved ecclesiastical leadership in the appointment of bishops to high positions in the church and defending the political interests of a state church. But seeing himself as a member of the Jewish nation, how did he theologically view the church and his membership within it? Among his papers, historian Monypenny published a letter written to an unnamed clergyman dated somewhere between 1860-1865. In it Disraeli wrote:

For myself, I look upon the church as the only Jewish institution that remains, and irrespective of its being the depository of divine truth, must ever cling to it as the visible means which embalms the memory of my race, their deeds and thoughts, and connects their blood with the origin of things.¹³⁷

Disraeli saw the church as a Jewish institution. He saw it as the visible testimony to the Semitic origin of Western Civilization. He believed it to be the link between Jerusalem, Rome, and Canterbury. "the Anglican Church . . . resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee."¹³⁸ Disraeli also saw the Church as the dam holding back the flood of secularism at the drawbridge of British society. In the age of rationalism at the height of the Enlightenment, he believed the Church remained a living witness on behalf of the spiritual order against the invading materialism of his day. The Church was the depository of God's Special revelation in an age of reason. It was the community of the true faith in an era of rising skepticism. "There are a few great things left, and the Church is one. No doubt its position at this moment is critical, and indeed the whole religious sentiment of the country is in a convulsive state."¹³⁹ And his membership in the Jewish *race* did not negate his membership in the community of faith. He saw his duty as administrator within the church to hold back the tide of secularism in British society. He saw his duty as a member of the Jewish race to call the Church to back to her Semitic origins. And in his mind he equated these as one duty. He believed that modernism had its origin in pagan roots of Europe while faith had hers in Jerusalem. "I believe the state of affairs is only one of the periodic revolts of the Northern races against Semitic truth."¹⁴⁰

3.2.3. Disraeli, the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel

Disraeli and the Eastern Question

Disraeli once again took a political gamble by pursuing diplomacy with the Islamic Ottoman empire instead of *Christian* Russia. He argued in the face of bipartisan criticism that this move would benefit both Jews and the Empire. How much of this decision was opportunistic and how much was idealistic? Saab, in two articles for *International History Review*, took a closer look at how Disraeli's Jewishness informed his foreign policy. And Saab asked "To what extent can we relate Disraeli's . . . perspective to his background as a Jew?" She argued that "there was one issue that potentially involved Disraeli's Jewish sympathies and that was the Eastern Question. . . 1876-1878."¹⁴¹ So why did Disraeli maintain political support of the Ottoman Empire in spite of human rights abuses executed against Jewish inhabitants of the Balkans? Saab's thesis is that Disraeli bore through this crisis in order to push steadily for British expansion into the Middle East. He recognized the greater trend in the East: the degeneration of the Ottoman Empire, and the rising threat of the Russian bear. "For there is considerable evidence that Disraeli yearned throughout the crisis for a . . . policy leading to the acquisition of some attractive piece of Middle Eastern real estate."¹⁴² Disraeli understood that the survival of Turkish influence meant the survival of British influence even in Palestine. Indeed, his forbearance resulted in the controlling acquisition of the Suez Canal, insuring a foothold for the Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean and access to India. And did he overlook human rights abuses against Balkan Jews in the interest of a greater Jewish future? Did Disraeli seek this acquisition for the sake of Eastern Jewry? "It would . . . be a serious misrepresentation to suggest that he worked for the expansion of British influence in the Eastern Mediterranean [strictly] through motives of Jewish patriotism. . . [but] what may be suggested is the contention that Disraeli, through long fascination with Jewish ideas of a home in Palestine was more ready than most of his colleagues to contemplate at least the partial breakup of the Ottoman Empire."¹⁴³ Therefore it seems Disraeli perceived a convergence of British and Jewish interest in the Near East. Therefore his siding with the Ottoman empire in spite of Jewish suffrage he believed would lead ultimately to the rescue of those Jews trapped in Eastern Europe, the securing of British interests in Palestine, and one day perhaps the restoration of Jews to that land under a British protectorate.

Disraeli and "Zionism"

"Was Disraeli a Zionist?" The problem with this question is that modern Zionism which was a secular political movement wouldn't be born for another ten years. It was more closely connected with nineteenth century nationalism than it was with religious eschatology. Certainly there was a traditional and religious hope of the Jewish people that they would one day be restored to their land. Simultaneously, there was a version of premillennialism circulating among many British and American Christians known as *Christian Zionism*. Those that held this belief proposed that the Jews will be restored to their ancient homeland as part of the literal fulfillment of prophetic promises to the Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures. But secular Zionism was neither a religious Jewish movement in Disraeli's day nor was Christian Zionism an issue within Conservative or Liberal political parties. Therefore, Cecil Roth asked the theoretical question "How [would] Disraeli have regarded the Zionist movement?" In other words, were his Jewish loyalties deep enough that he would have joined the movement in its day to return the Jews to a homeland? And if so, would his motivation have been merely a nostalgic hope for or a powerful driving force behind his foreign policy? Roth answered "It would have appealed tremendously to his sense of the romantic, and cannot have failed to stir his imagination to the depths."¹⁴⁴ Historian Roth believed that Disraeli's attraction to the restoration of the Jewish people was an intense romantic belief that seemed consistent with his notions of race and national destiny and must have had some influence on his foreign policies. If Disraeli's sympathies for a Jewish homeland predated secular Zionism and were not apparently associated with Christian Zionism, what then in Victorian society would they have been associated with? Saab believed that Disraeli's interests in the restoration of the Jews appealed to the Victorian sense of *aristocracy*. Aristocracy which designates an elite class of people with a superior ancestry normally relates that people to their ownership of a specific land. The notion of Aristocracy has its roots in European feudalism which designated a class of land owners, the Nobles, and those bound to the land, the serfs. Membership in the House of Lords was restricted to those of aristocratic decent. And it is ironic that Disraeli, with no such British ancestry or real estate claim in England was eventually appointed by Queen Victoria to the House of Lords after his retirement from the House of Commons. His only aristocratic claim would have been to Jewish ancestry consequently the Jewish homeland. Therefore it is Saab's contention that Disraeli's attraction to the restoration of the Jewish people emerged out of his sense aristocratic social wholeness: uniting an historic people with their historic land. "it is a community of purpose that constitutes a society and they [the Jews] dream of restoring the common people to social and moral wholeness by bringing them back to the land."¹⁴⁵ Thus Saab perceived Disraeli's Victorian worldview of aristocracy, and ancestry as being intimately bound with land and nation. Disraeli's notion of people and their land resonated in *Tancred* when he declared "all is race!"

This notion is not without detractors. Endelman argued that Disraeli could not have had genuine personal Zionist feelings. He asked "Was then Disraeli a proto-Zionist?" He answered "absolutely not" "How could he believe that one day the Jews would return to their land and there reestablish their own national life, independent of Christianity?" Endelman mistakenly argued that Christian Zionism maintained that the Jews all had to convert to Christianity first before this could be fulfilled. And even if Disraeli had any thought in the matter "He may have toyed with the idea . . . but it was not a central feature of his thinking about Jewish matters."¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately, Endelman was unable to conceive of Disraeli as anything but antagonistic to the Jews. He had a poor understanding of Christian Zionism, and cannot comprehend how Disraeli's Zionism could emerge as a product of personal identity as a Jew in spite of adherence to the Christian faith. Endelman furthermore ignored Disraeli's blatant declarations about the land of Israel in *Tancred* "Who can believe that a country once sanctified by the Divine presence can ever be as other lands?"¹⁴⁷ In Disraeli's novel *Alroy* he dealt almost exclusively with the theme of the restoration of the Jews to their land under Turkish rule. Disraeli speaks through his hero David Alroy. The exilarch finds himself in a position of power to save the Jews living at a time when "The Caliphate was in a state of rapid decay."¹⁴⁸ This young leader realizes God's call to lead the Jewish people back to their Holy Land and rebuild the Temple. Philip Guedalla, scholar of Victorian literature, in his preface to *Alroy* wrote "The author recognized in Alroy his 'ideal ambition.'¹⁴⁹ Anticipation had mounted in the light of the Eastern Question, that Disraeli was prepared to declare a Jewish state and he the emperor.

Apparently Disraeli's policy in the Balkans produced a flood of criticism in the press, charging Disraeli as working to secure Jewish interests in the Middle East, and specifically a Jewish homeland. One broadside circulated on the London streets was titled *Dizzy the Bold!*:

The chief of the clan still nurtures a plan
of a Palestine free as of yore
A Palestine free! and its Emperor HE!
the wonderful strategist Ben:
To all which we say, Good luck to the day!
we fervently wish it, Amen.¹⁵⁰

In Gladstone's diary, historians discovered a pamphlet, published by Charles Watts, of 84 Fleet Street that in similar mock prose described the prophetic calling of Disraeli by God to restore the Jews to their land. So many of these pamphlets and fliers demonstrate that regardless of what intentions Disraeli had in his intervention in the Balkans, the public suspected only one motive: "Disraeli could hardly call public attention to Jewish interests." is quite an understatement.¹⁵¹ In the personal and candid dialogue cited by Lord Stanley in his journal entry of 1851 Stanley described Disraeli's plan to bail out the Ottoman Empire, the "sick man of Europe" with funds borrowed from Rothschild's bank. Land would be purchased in Palestine enabling Jews to return to cultivate it under the British commonwealth:

Money would be forth coming: the Rothschilds and leading Hebrew capitalists would all help: the Turkish empire was falling into ruin. . . all that was necessary was to establish colonies with rights over the soil and security from ill treatment.¹⁵²

Most interesting was Weintraub's account of a personal action Disraeli took to solve the *Eastern Question*. In 1878 Disraeli sought to intervene one last time in the affairs of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Berlin Congress resolved political concessions of Turkey with regard to human rights in the Balkans, and concessions of the Czar with regard to expansion into the Balkans. At that time, Disraeli re-examined the economic status of Ottoman Empire. Disraeli was approached by the entrepreneur Lawrence Oliphant who proposed a fantastic scheme--to resettle the Jews of eastern Europe in Palestine and develop the land for Turkey. In January, 1879, Disraeli dispatched Oliphant to Beirut to represent the British government in making this offer to the Sultan. Oliphant argued that "a Jewish homeland under British protection would benefit their empire and further block Russian encroachment."¹⁵³ It seemed beneficial to England, Turkey, and the Jewish settlers. Settlers would build roads, railways, waterways, cultivate the land, help bring Turkey into the modern world. It would guarantee military assistance against Russian incursion, and British access to the East. The plan was 1. good for Britain because it secured her interests in the Near East and ultimately the Far East; 2. good for Turkey both for her national security and financial well being; and 3. good for both because it promised to check Russian ambition. Lawrence Oliphant was dispatched with letters from the ambassador

"to help solve . . . the Eastern Question. . . to capitalize a company under a grant of authority from the Sultan to build roads and railways in Palestine. He also wanted the Sultan to permit Jews of the troubled areas of Eastern Europe to settle there. . . In January, 1878 armed with letters of introduction from Disraeli. . . Oliphant left for Beirut hoping to convince the Ottoman authorities that a Jewish homeland under British protection would benefit their empire and further block Russian encroachment."¹⁵⁴

Unfortunately, Oliphant hopelessly botched up his mission. He carelessly told the Sultan "that he was seeking to *fulfill Scripture* that the end of the world was to come when the Jews were restored to their native land."¹⁵⁵ The Sultan was not at all interested in hurrying the end of the world and he was certainly not interested in any more nationalistic enterprises within the borders of his own empire! Weren't the Balkans enough? Oliphant was immediately dismissed and returned to England. The offer was never extended again. Disraeli clearly saw a convergence of values in his foreign policy with regard to the Eastern Question. To restore the Jews to their land. a. it was good for England; b. bad for Russia; c.

good for Turkey and most importantly, d. “good for the Jews.” And if it was “good for the Jews”, then according to Disraeli’s Tancredian doctrine, it had to be good for the Empire.

3.2.4. Some remaining Questions:

Disraeli still remains an enigma. If he held sympathies for the restoration of the Jews to their land, then why was there not an active program on his political agenda? Why was he publicly discreet about this aspiration? What was the extent of his cooperation with Moses Montefiore, the Jewish philanthropist who traveled throughout Europe attempting to stand up for suffering Jewish communities? Was Disraeli’s aloofness from Jewish political programs such as Montefiore’s politically expedient, or did Montefiore have little esteem for the convert? Did Disraeli believe that Jews needed Christ to be saved? If so, then why is this not explicitly stated in any of his speeches or correspondence? Did Disraeli, as administrator over the Church of England ever have contact with the Church’s very own Jewish mission society: the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jewish people? There is little indication of such contact. Was this a politically expedient measure or did Disraeli not agree with their purpose? And many will continue to ask: would Disraeli today have identified himself as an evangelical, a Bible believing Christian, or as some say “born-again?” Would these categories emerging out of the modernist-fundamentalist schism in the United States entirely alien to nineteenth century England, or was Disraeli a careful politician?

4. Conclusion

Of this it is clear: Lord of Beaconsfield clearly identified himself as a Christian, therefore he theologically placed himself within the church. Simultaneously he believed himself to be a member of the Jewish *race* as he so defined this term. So strong was this personal identification that it was foundational to his a. public life; b. internal political policies; c. foreign policy for the empire; and d. his personal national aspirations as they related to restoration of the Jews.

4.1. Disraeli sincerely professed a Christian faith

Disraeli opposed *nominalism*. He often sided with theological conservatives in the church controversies, though not always. As a public figure the orthodoxy of his Christian beliefs were often questioned. As the British prime minister he performed key duties within the church and acted as a high church statesman, proposing to the head of the church candidates for the Episcopal offices. All this might beg the question: “Would Disraeli have been considered an evangelical or theological conservative today?” or may we bluntly ask: “was he *born-again?*” history still must provide the answer.

4.2. Disraeli saw himself as fully Jewish.

Lord Beaconsfield explicitly identified himself as a Jew. He did not, nor did he ever claim to practice Judaism in the traditional sense, though he called Christianity “completed Judaism.” Disraeli saw himself as a member of the Jewish *race*. He did not understand this term to imply a scientific gene pool but more related to the term *ethnos* or *nation*. In this examination of Disraeli’s life and political career, his writings and espoused political philosophies, it is clear that his identity had become foundational to a. his worldview; b. his Christian theology and ecclesiology; c. his internal political policies especially with efforts to seek Jewish admission into British government; d. his foreign policy especially with regard to the importance of the Middle East to British empire; and e. personal nationalism as he looked forward to the restoration of the Jews to their land. It is apparent that his Jewish identity was not a facade, nor a novelty to achieve political gain late in his career. This identity had its roots in his adolescence prior to baptism. They re emerged during his Mediterranean escapade, and flowered during his political career undergirding his moral foundations and beliefs. His identity found expression in his novels, speeches to parliament, letters and discourses with personal friends like Lord Stanley, in his foreign policy. Whether biographers may refer to Disraeli as a Jew or a Christian he considered himself to be both.

4.3. Disraeli was able to confidently integrate his Jewish identity with his Christian beliefs and envision how belief and identity could serve the future of the Empire.

Somehow Disraeli was able to integrate membership of the Jewish nation with his membership in the church. He was able to integrate his political views for the future of England with the admission of Jews into British society and government. He somehow saw the empire's strategic key to lie in the Middle East and the expansion of the empire to be integrated with the restoration of the Jews to their land. And he was able to

4.4. Disraeli was recognized by British society as both a Jew and a Christian.

Disraeli may have been criticized for his political views, his theological beliefs, and alleged hidden agendas. But he was for the most part accepted at face value as both Jew and Christian. Perhaps what is most remarkable is that Jewish society in his day seemed to have accepted him at face value as well. Whether or not he was denounced as an apostate in the synagogues, if pamphlets were ever circulated declaring him to be a traitor, we do not know. British Jewry of his day, to our knowledge, never publicly denounced the Lord Beaconsfield. He circulated freely among Jewish notables having contact with Montefiore, Rothschild, and even Judah Benjamin, former war secretary of the Confederate States of America. This is remarkable considering that if Disraeli had lived in our era today, his *Jewishness* would have been the heated target of criticism both within the synagogue and the secular media. It is interesting that Jewishness and faith in Jesus here in the West has become in mainstream society mutually exclusive categories. Perhaps there was a subtle pride on part of many British Jews who said "One of our boys made it!"

4.5. What is Duty and What is Faith?

By a desert oasis, as the sun beat down on Tancred the crusader for truth, he demanded to know "What is duty and what is faith?" In his own political career Disraeli answered this question that he himself he had posed. Duty must be a product of one's faith and identity. Disraeli's Christian faith and his Jewish identity dictated his political and social duties to the Jewish people, the Church of England, British society, and the Victorian empire. He believed himself to be the man of the hour for he believed himself to be the missing link between Great Britain and her Eastern destiny, between Parliament and Jewish emancipation, between the Church and her ancestral roots, the missing page between the Old Testament and the New.

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- ⁷⁸Weintraub, p. 598
- ⁷⁹Stanley, p. 33
- ⁸⁰Roth, p. 81
- ⁸¹Weintraub, p. 380
- ⁸²Weintraub, p. 225.
- ⁸³Weintraub, p. 409.
- ⁸⁴Monypenny, vol.4, p. 350.
- ⁸⁵Roth, p. 59.
- ⁸⁶Roth, p. 60.
- ⁸⁷Blake, p. 258
- ⁸⁸Blake, p. 258
- ⁸⁹Weintraub, p. 607
- ⁹⁰Roth, p. 58
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⁹²Wiebe, V.5, p. 459
⁹³Blake, p. 503
⁹⁴Vincent, p. 38
⁹⁵ Blake, p. 504
⁹⁶Roth, p.
⁹⁷Saab, Crimean War, p. 298
⁹⁸Wiebe, vol. 6, p. xv
⁹⁹Wiebe, vol. 6, p. xv.
¹⁰⁰Wiebe, vol. 6, p. 1191.
¹⁰¹Roth, pp. 92
¹⁰²Monypenny, vol. 73.
¹⁰³Monypenny, V3, p. 59
¹⁰⁴Oppenheimer, p. 6
¹⁰⁵ Wiebe, v6, pp. 23-24.
¹⁰⁶Stanley, p. 31
¹⁰⁷Blake p. 503
¹⁰⁸Oppenheimer, p. 7
¹⁰⁹Weintraub, pp. 406-307.
¹¹⁰Gibson, p. 197
¹¹¹Blake, p. 506
¹¹²Monypenny, vol 4. p. 360.
¹¹³Monypenny, vol. 4, p. 360
¹¹⁴Blake, p . 506
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¹²² Stanley, p. 33
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¹²⁴Saab, Crimea, p. 310
¹²⁵Disraeli, General preface to the Novels, 1870
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¹²⁶ Blake, p. 204.
¹²⁷Disraeli, *Tancred*, p. 56.
¹²⁸Monypenny, v3 p. 70
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¹³⁴Monypenny, v3, p. 68
¹³⁵ Webster, p. 1197.
¹³⁶ *ibid*
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¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 351
¹³⁹ *ibid*
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¹⁴¹Saab, Eastern Perspective, p. 559

¹⁴²Saab Eastern Q, p. 573.
¹⁴³Saab, Eastern Q, p. 576.
¹⁴⁴ Roth, p. 74.
¹⁴⁵ Saab, Disraeli and Crimea, p. 297
¹⁴⁶ Endeleman, p. 116
¹⁴⁷ Disraeli, *Tancred*.
¹⁴⁸ Disraeli, *Alroy*. preface.
¹⁴⁹ Disraeli, *Alroy*. forward.
¹⁵⁰ Weintraub, p.605.
¹⁵¹ Weintraub, p. 605
¹⁵² Lord Stanley, p. 32
¹⁵³ Weintraub, p. 604.
¹⁵⁴ Weintraub, p. 604
¹⁵⁵ Weintraub, p. 605