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Presidential Address

Plurality in the Capital: The Christian Responses to London's Religious Minorities since 1800

John Wolffe

On a late spring day in 1856 Prince Albert carried out one of the less routine royal engagements of the Victorian era, by laying the foundation stone of what was to become 'The Strangers Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders', located at Limehouse in the London docklands. The deputation receiving the prince was headed by the Earl of Chichester, who was the First Church Estates Commissioner and president of the Church Missionary Society, and included Thomas Carr, formerly Bishop of Bombay, Maharajah Duleep Singh, a Sikh convert to Christianity and a favourite of Queen Victoria, and William Henry Sykes, MP, Chairman of the East India Company. According to *The Times*

... several other distinguished Orientals were in attendance in their magnificent costumes, including Ishore Singh Buhadur, Rajah of Benares; Nawab Meer Jaffier Alee Khan, Buhadur of Surat; the Syrian Archbishop and many others. The young Princess of Coorg was also present and witnessed the ceremony. On each side of the covered avenue leading to the marquee were arranged 50 Hindoos, an equal number of Chinese and Lascars, and several Arabs, Africans, islanders from the South Pacific, from the Malaccas, the Mozambique, and other countries, all in native costume.

In his speech Lord Chichester explained the purpose of the building, which was to provide a temporary home for visitors to London from Africa, India, the Far East and the Pacific, especially the so-called 'lascars' who manned ships arriving in the port, and who were often left stranded and destitute after they had spent or been robbed of

their wages. These men, he said, were told that ‘our laws and institutions were the admiration and envy of other nations’ and they knew that ‘the people of England were a people professing the Christian religion’. ‘It was therefore’, he went on, ‘a most painful thing, and one most degrading to the character of the country, to find that no better welcome was accorded to the poor and helpless natives of other countries who visited our shores.’¹

The Strangers Home and the lascars have hitherto attracted some attention from historians of Asian communities in Britain,² but very little from historians of Christianity, despite the fact that there was substantial Christian involvement in the early history of the institution. Hence the laying of its foundation stone seems an apt point of departure for this chapter, which explores the wider theme of the volume through a case study of Christian responses to religious minorities in London since the early nineteenth century.

Ecclesiastical historians, at least those of the modern era, have tended to see the study of Christian encounter with other faiths as somehow outside their own purview, as the domain of theologians and missiologists, or at least of historians of overseas mission. The implicit assumption that ‘world religions’ are distant from their own concerns, both geographically and conceptually, seems quite deeply engrained. This assumption may have seemed quite plausible in 1961, when the Ecclesiastical History Society was founded, but it was actually less plausible in 1861, when Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, then Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, published

¹ *The Times*, 2 June 1856, p. 10.

² For example, Rosina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London, 2002), 59-61; Humayun Ansari, *‘The Infidel Within’: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London, 2004), 67-8; Diane Robinson-Dunne, *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture: Anglo-Muslim Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 2006), 155-9.

his *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church*, which gave considerable attention to the impact of early Islam and of Muhammad whom, he said, ‘no Christian can regard without reverence’.³ Victorian and early twentieth century scholars were well aware that only a minority of the population of the British Empire were Christians, but after 1947 the loss of empire and the intellectual and cultural networks that went with it in India, the Middle East, and eventually Africa, contributed to a narrowing of vision. In the half century since 1961, however, the growth of non-Christian religious minorities in Britain itself has again transformed the context in which religious history is written. In the 2011 Census professed adherents of religions other than Christianity totalled 22.3% of the population of London, a proportion somewhat exceeding the 20.7% who declared themselves of ‘no religion’.⁴ That statistic implies that in London at least the dominant narrative in the religious history of the last fifty years has been not as much quite as much one of pluralization as of secularization.

This chapter falls into three somewhat unequal sections. First it sets the scene by briefly surveying the growth of religions other than Christianity in Britain and their current historiography. Second, in the central longest section, it explores two specific Christian responses to religious minorities in nineteenth century London, missions to the Jews, and then the Strangers Home and the associated work of the London City Mission. An extended conclusion then surveys some twentieth-century developments in the context of that earlier history. As will become apparent, through the personalities involved the subject presents diverse and significant linkages to other strands of political and religious history.

³ A.P. Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church with an Introduction on the Study of Ecclesiastical History* (London, 1861), 334.

⁴ 2011 Census, Table KS209EW, Religion: Local Authorities in England and Wales, www.ons.gov.uk, accessed 11 March 2014.

Non-Christian religions in Britain have in some respects been well studied by academics, especially since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005 excited sometimes obsessive research interest in Muslims and the factors leading to their radicalisation. However the perception that the presence of minority religions in Britain is primarily contemporary rather than historical has meant that this work has been undertaken predominantly by social scientists rather than historians. Judaism is of course a significant exception to this pattern, with a long tradition of scholarly historical study dating back at least to the formation of the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1893. Otherwise, however, the only systematic scholarly histories of minority religious traditions are Humayun Ansari's study of Muslims and John Hinnells' of Zoroastrians.⁵ There are also some significant monographs on British attitudes to Islam and relations with the Islamic world in earlier periods, notably Nabil Matar's *Islam in Britain 1558-1685*.⁶ Anne Kershen's study of Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields is a fascinating exploration of successive religious minorities in the East End from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first, their presence symbolised by the building in Brick Lane which began life as a French Protestant Church, and subsequently became a synagogue and then a mosque.⁷ A recent collection edited by Jane Garnett and Alana Harris includes substantial material relating to religious minorities in London.⁸

⁵ Ansari, op. cit.; John R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain* (Oxford, 1996).

⁶ Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 2008); also Shahin Kuli Kahn Khattak, *Islam and the Victorians: Nineteenth Century Perceptions of Muslim Practices and Beliefs* (London, 2008); Robinson-Dunne, op.cit., 154-96.

⁷ Anne J. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1660-2000* (London, 2005).

⁸ Jane Garnett and Alana Harris, eds, *Rescripting Religion in the City: Migration and Religious Identity in the Modern Metropolis* (Aldershot, 2013), especially chapters 8, 14 and 16.

Nevertheless, especially if one is concerned not so much with the internal history of religious minorities, but with their interactions with Christianity, there is still much to be explored. Even if one were concerned only with the history of minority religious communities since the mass migrations of the post-Second World War period, there is now a span of over fifty years to examine, the earlier parts of which are now moving to the fringes of living memory and hence are well worthy of the attention of historians as well as social scientists. However, these histories are in fact substantially longer ones, even if the scale of activity was relatively limited. In other fields of ecclesiastical history, however, marginality has not been a disincentive to study, especially when a long chronological perspective indicates that groups that may have seemed insignificant in their time were to acquire major importance in a later period. In this respect research on non-Christian religious groups in pre-twentieth century Britain might, for example, be seen in a similar light to work on medieval heresies by scholars seeking to understand the long-term roots of the Reformation. Moreover, to pursue the analogy for a moment, much of the interest of such enquiry surely lies in exploring the reactions of the dominant religious tradition of the day in the endeavour to understand the origins of subsequent patterns of behaviour.

Research on the early modern era has yielded intriguing hints of the long-standing religious diversity of London. The capital's importance as a political and trading centre always attracted short-term visitors and longer-term settlers to the extent that its population was probably never exclusively Christian. Even in the sixteenth century, when Jews were still in theory excluded from the country, there were a small number of *conversos* living in the city, outwardly conforming to the Church of England, but probably maintaining Jewish worship in secret. Such activity

may not have attracted the attention of the authorities, but it can hardly have been wholly invisible to neighbours and fellow parishioners, so is symptomatic of a degree of grass roots toleration.⁹ Following Cromwell's readmission of the Jews to England in 1655, a community several hundred strong had established itself by the end of the seventeenth century and the first Great Synagogue in Duke's Place was built around 1690. By the mid-nineteenth century the Jewish population of England had grown to around 50,000, the majority of whom lived in London. There was already considerable internal ethnic and social diversity, with Sephardim originating from the Iberian peninsula constituting a wealthy and influential elite, but finding themselves increasingly outnumbered by poorer Ashkenazim immigrants from central Europe.¹⁰ Levels of religious practice were low: the 1851 Census of Religious Worship recorded only 2,824 Sabbath attendances for the London registration division, probably no more than 10% of the Jews living in the capital at that time, a much lower proportion of worshippers than for the nominally Christian population.¹¹

Other minority religious groups initially lacked any organizational or physical focus of their own, although these emerged at an earlier date than is sometimes appreciated. The London Zoroastrian Association was formed in 1861, and the Woking Mosque built in 1889.¹² Regular Islamic worship was conducted in central London from the early twentieth century, initially in a variety of rented premises, until property was acquired in Commercial Road, Whitechapel, where the East London

⁹ Beverley Nenk, 'Public Worship, Private Devotion: The Crypto-Jews of Reformation England', in David Gainster and Roberta Gilchrist, eds, *The Archaeology of Reformation* (Leeds, 2003), 204-20.

¹⁰ For the development of Anglo-Jewry see Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, 1979) and David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England 1485-1850* (Oxford, 1994).

¹¹ *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables* (House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1852-3, vol. 89), p. clxxxiv.

¹² Hinnells, *op.cit.*, 85; Ansari, *op. cit.*, 15.

Mosque opened in 1941.¹³ The first Sikh gurdwara opened in Putney in 1911 before moving to Shepherds Bush in 1913,¹⁴ and the London Buddhist Vihara was established in 1926.¹⁵ Hence by the time of the Second World War only Hindus among the major world faiths lacked a place of worship in London: the first *mandir*, in Islington, eventually opened in 1970.¹⁶

Adherents of these religions were, however, present in London long before they developed organized structures. A few Muslim travellers visited London in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and a few conversions to Christianity, such as that of Chinano, ‘a Turk, born at Negropontus’ in 1586 and of his compatriot Isuf in 1659 were prominently trumpeted.¹⁷ During this period too the authorities were also much exercised by cases of returned English seaman and other travellers who had converted to Islam, sometimes but not necessarily under duress. By the early eighteenth century Londoners had become ‘pretty well accustomed’ to seeing Muslim visitors in the streets.¹⁸ The growth of trading and political links with India in the eighteenth century increased the flow of visitors to London, both impoverished lascars recruited in the subcontinent to man the East India Company’s ships, and higher status individuals with commercial, financial or scholarly interests. In 1810 Shaykh Din Muhammad opened the capital’s first Indian restaurant, and although the venture was ahead of the tastes of its time and did not succeed, it was a sign of things to come.¹⁹ By 1865 the

¹³ Humayun Ansari, ed., *The Making of the East London Mosque, 1910-1951*, Royal Historical Society, Camden 5th series, vol. 38 (Cambridge, 2011), 4-29.

¹⁴ www.centralgurdwara.org.uk/history.htm, accessed 11 March 2014; Visram, op. cit., 104.

¹⁵ www.londonbuddhistvihara.org/aboutus.htm, accessed 11 March 2014.

¹⁶ www.mandir.org/baps_uk/history.htm, accessed 11 March 2014.

¹⁷ Matar, op.cit., 126-8, 146-9.

¹⁸ Quoted *ibid.* 151.

¹⁹ Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2010), 25.

religious diversity of London was such that the leading Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, observed in a sermon

You may go on a mission to the heathen without going out of this huge town of ours. You might almost preach to every sort of literal heathen within the bounds of London – to Parthians, Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia. There are men of every colour, speaking every language under heaven, in London; and if you want to convert Mahommedans, Turks, Chinese, men from Bengal, Java, or Borneo, you may find them all here. There are always representatives of every nation close at our door.²⁰

When in the 1870s the religious journalist Charles Maurice Davies visited the Unitarian South Place Chapel in Finsbury to hear a sermon by a representative of the Brama Samaj, he noticed how ‘the well-filled chapel was dotted over here and over there with bright-eyed Asiatics, who had come to witness the once-rare phenomenon of a countryman delivering himself in an English pulpit.’²¹ As South Asians were primarily only transient residents in London, it is impossible to establish a firm figure for their numbers at any one time, but there were probably several thousand temporary visitors in the later Victorian period as well as a few hundred more permanent settlers. Like Jews they were socially highly diverse. At one extreme were princely visitors, residing in the West End and moving in aristocratic and court circles; at the other the homeless and starving lascars of the docklands and former servants brought back from India by East India Company officials, who found themselves destitute when their employers died or dismissed them. In between were members of princely retinues, and also traders and a growing number of students,

²⁰ Charles Spurgeon, ‘The Great Itinerant’ (Sermon 655 delivered 22 Oct. 1865), p. 6, www.spurgeongems.org, accessed 11 March 2014.

²¹ C. Maurice Davies, *Unorthodox London, or Phases of Religious Life in the Metropolis, Series II* (London, 1875), 194-5.

including such subsequently famous names as Mohandas Ghandi, Mohammed Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru.²²

Against this backdrop we turn, secondly, to more specific case studies of nineteenth-century London. The earliest and most sustained Christian response to a specific non-Christian minority was the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews [LSPCJ], founded in 1808.²³ It followed a few years of small scale work under the auspices of the London Missionary Society by a German convert from Judaism, Joseph Frey.²⁴ In May 1806, David Bogue, a leading Independent minister, who had trained Frey for the work, preached for the LMS on *The Duty of Christians to Seek the Salvation of the Jews*.²⁵ His sermon was, however, more a critique of the behaviour of professed Christians and of their attitudes towards the Jews than the launching of an aggressive missionary campaign. Bogue argued that Christians had profound obligations to the Jews, but were themselves placing stumbling blocks in the way of their conversion. Roman Catholic worship was he believed ‘disgustful and revolting ... in the extreme’ to those who were taught to eschew idolatry. It was true that Jews did not have to witness such things in England, but

²² Visram, op. cit., 44-104

²³ The LSPCJ (now The Church’s Ministry among Jewish People) has yet to receive systematic scholarly attention, although its rich archives are deposited in the Bodleian Library, but see R.H. Martin, ‘United Conversionist Activities among the Jews in Great Britain 1795-1815: Pan-Evangelicalism and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews,’ *Church History* 46 (1977), 437-52 and Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain up to the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 1978). In the absence of a subsequent full narrative history, the Edwardian centenary volume, W.T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews From 1808 to 1908* (London, 1908) remains an essential point of departure, supplemented for more recent developments by Walter Barker, *A Fountain Opened: A Short History of the Church’s Ministry Among the Jews* (London, 1983).

²⁴ On Frey, see Donald M. Lewis, ed., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford, 1995), 410-11, and his own autobiographical pamphlet, *Narrative of the Rev. J.S.C.F. Frey, A Converted Jew* (Newcastle, 1810), which was subsequently expanded, notably in *The Converted Jew* (Boston, MA, 1815).

²⁵ In *Four Sermons Preached in London at the Twelfth Anniversary of the Missionary Society* (London, 1806).

... do they not see what is as bad, or worse? Do they not hear blasphemies, and oaths, and imprecations, every hour ascend to heaven? Do they not behold intemperance, lewdness, injustice, nay, every crime committed that can offend God, or render man guilty? ²⁶

The primary means to the conversion of the Jews was thus ‘the display of a truly Christian temper and conduct before their eyes’.²⁷ This was the necessary context for prayer and efforts ‘to communicate the knowledge of the Gospel to the Jews’.²⁸ On the other hand, persecution would be entirely counterproductive: ‘For oppressors to engage in the work of converting the oppressed, is the very height of absurdity’.²⁹ The freedom of settlement and worship enjoyed by Jews in England gave ‘reason to hope that they will listen to what we say, because it can be done without force or constraint’.³⁰

Bogue’s sermon highlights an emphasis that recurred in subsequent responses to religious minorities in London: a caution towards provocative or oppressive evangelism, coupled with a concern to exhibit ‘true’ Christianity to non-Christian neighbours. Unfortunately, however, the development of the Jewish mission over the next decade showed scant regard for his advice. Already in 1808 his relations with his *protégé* Frey were becoming seriously strained, and he was uneasy about some of the latter’s schemes. He wrote to him:

Your plan of setting up a boarding School for Jewish children, and supporting everyone who professed to have a regard to Christianity, I could not approve - it is bribing people to become Christians. I do not believe the apostle Paul ever

²⁶ Bogue, *Duty of Christians*, 84-5.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 91.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 95.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 99.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 100.

gave all Jews unconverted forty shillings to make them Christians; and it would have filled your society with hypocrites.³¹

When the LSPCJ, initially dominated by Frey, began active operations the following year it provoked a hostile pamphlet from a Jewish preacher and teacher, Tobias Goodman, who similarly took particular exception to plans to establish a school for Jewish children, as ‘ill-applied benevolence’ which he feared would divide families. He challenged the Society to

Shew us on what authority you dare attempt to change our religion; give us a better form, a form more beneficial to man; and more to the glory of God: do not delude your proselytes; state your reasons, but lay aside temptations, for the unprincipled will always catch the bait; be at unity with yourselves first.³²

If a subsequent pamphlet denouncing the Society by its former printer, B.R. Goakman, is to be believed, fears that its methods would lead to insincere conversions proved entirely justified. In Goakman’s view the supposed converts given employment in his printing works showed little sign of genuine Christianity and had only embraced it ‘to flee from distress and poverty’.³³ Moreover Frey himself was accused by Goakman and others of high-handed behaviour, mismanagement and misappropriation of the Society’s funds and even of an adulterous relationship with a female convert. When the committee enquired into the allegations they decided to dismiss him, but gave him financial assistance to emigrate to the United States in July

³¹ Quoted B.R. Goakman, *The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews; and the Pretension of the Converted Jew, Investigated* (London, 1816), 14. The LSPCJ employed Goakman from July 1810 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Dep. CMJ. c. 5, p. 194 until he resigned in October 1814 (Dep. CMJ, c. 6, p. 406).

³² Tobias Goodman, *An Address to the Committee of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews* (London, 1809), 26.

³³ Goakman, *op. cit.*, 45.

1816, where in 1820 he helped to found the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews.³⁴

The LSPCJ had initially been set up on an interdenominational basis, but by 1815 it was apparent that it was ahead of the times in its endeavour to manifest Christian unity in mission to Jews, and its Dissenting supporters, recognizing that their presence deterred Anglican donors, withdrew ‘for the sake of the cause’.³⁵ There was a frank acknowledgement of past failings, notably by Charles Simeon, the leading Cambridge evangelical, a prominent supporter, who recommended that ‘as little as possible be said of our early converts’. He drily observed ‘Pharaoah was not more cruel to infant Hebrews that we are to adults. He drowned his victims, and we hug them to death.’³⁶ The Society had clearly learnt the hard way that its initial well-intentioned policy of giving material support to Jews as well as seeking to convert them to Christianity was open to abuse and misrepresentation, and in 1819 changed its rules to define its purpose as being purely spiritual.³⁷ Obviously, however, the new policy had its own difficulties, as it made it easy for critics, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to allege that the LSPCJ was only interested in securing converts and not in their subsequent well-being. Hence the policy was again modified in 1829 with the formation of the Operative Jewish Converts Institution, which housed converts for a maximum of three years and trained them in printing and bookbinding, and in 1844 with the creation of a separate ‘Temporal Relief Fund For Baptized and Enquiring

³⁴ Dep. CMJ. c. 7, minute 507, 28 May 1816; minute 532, 25 June 1816. Cf Scult, op. cit., 90-123; Michael R. Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 45-57; Endelman, op.cit., 71-6.

³⁵ Dep. CMJ c.7, pp. 501-4, 27 Dec. 1814; 508-10, 6 Feb. 1815.

³⁶ Quoted Gidney, op.cit., 78.

³⁷ Ibid. 218.

Jews'.³⁸ At the end of the century, in response to the large-scale migration of East European Jews to the East End, the Society opened a surgery and dispensary for them at its mission hall in Whitechapel and between 1892 and 1899 recorded nearly 90,000 attendances. Those waiting to be seen by the medical staff were a captive audience for the Scripture readings, prayers and weekly addresses in Yiddish provided by one of the Society's missionaries.³⁹ There was clearly a precarious tightrope to walk and, as the Society's centenary historian acknowledged in 1908, 'The whole subject of Temporal Relief is beset with difficulties.'⁴⁰

The LSPCJ was a substantial institution with impressive premises at Palestine Place in Bethnal Green which housed a chapel, training college, schools and the Operative Jewish Converts Institution. Much of its activity was among Jewish communities in continental Europe, North Africa and Middle East, and it was also active in English provincial cities. By the time of its centenary in 1908 it claimed to have carried out 2,110 baptisms in the London mission alone.⁴¹ Many of these were meticulously recorded in the extant manuscript records. A typical page of the register records eleven baptisms between January and October 1881, of which all but one (of an infant) were of young adult males, with birth dates ranging from 1855 to 1866. A few of their parents had local addresses, but most of them resided in eastern Europe, including Galicia, Poland, Pomerania and Silesia. It would appear therefore that the typical convert was a recent single male migrant, isolated from immediate family ties

³⁸ Ibid. 76-7, 218.

³⁹ Ibid. 533; Dep.CMJ.d.38/2, report from missionary, 2 June 1896, 18 Darnley Rd, Hackney (signature illegible).

⁴⁰ Gidney, op.cit., 218.

⁴¹ Ibid. 592.

and influences and very probably lacking links to any synagogue or worshipping Jewish community.⁴²

The LSPCJ's income of £11,000 in 1820 and of £46,000 in 1900 bears comparison with that of the London City Mission and the major overseas missionary societies.⁴³ Its key lay supporters such as William Wilberforce and the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury were predominantly evangelical, but the patronage of most of the diocesan bishops suggests broad-based Anglican sympathy for its work. The most expansive Christian critic of the LSPCJ in its early years, the Hackney Phalanx High Churchman Henry Handley Norris questioned their methods and the prioritizing of substantial expenditure on mission to Jews over remedying the 'deplorably defective' 'means of public worship and of religious instruction' for the nominally Christian population. However Norris was at pains to emphasize that he agreed with their overarching objective, and considered

that the conversion of the Jews remains... an object of most intense interest, left in charge to the Christian Church, as one of its most imperative obligations, and to be promoted by its ministry, whenever the scripturally appointed means shall be pursued.⁴⁴

When at the turn of the twentieth century the LSPCJ circularized the bishops, most of them were encouraging, albeit sometimes rather guarded in their responses. George

⁴² Dep.CMJ.c.249/1.

⁴³ Gidney, *op. cit.*, Appendix II; for some comparative see figures see Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion 1700-1914* (Manchester, 2004), 55, 91; Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828-1860* (Westport CT, 1986), Appendix C.

⁴⁴ H.H. Norris, *The Origin, Progress, and Existing Circumstances of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: An Historical Enquiry* (London: J. Mawman and W. Wetton, 1825), pp. 1-4.

Browne of Bristol (who had formerly been suffragan Bishop of Stepney) was the most specific:

I heartily approve of a moderate forward movement towards the instruction of poor Jews in London. I intentionally use the word “instruction” instead of “conversion,” believing that that puts the emphasis in the proper place. And I say “moderate,” because I believe that action of a large type might stir animosities of a racial character. ⁴⁵

Bishop Mandell Creighton of London was a warm supporter, although he noted that ‘some people’ say, ‘Why don’t you leave the Jews alone?’ His answer was that there was an imperative to give them knowledge of Christ, but that then to ‘leave God to do the rest’. He thought that ‘we have to use all our wisdom and our caution to see that we do it well, so that there may be no reproach.’ However, from conversations with LSPCJ workers he was reassured that ‘their methods are right’. ⁴⁶

A similar moderation was apparent in the approach of the London City Mission, which began specific work among Jews in 1841 by distributing a circular letter to them, which acknowledged their understandable prejudices against Christianity, founded in ‘the bitter persecution your forefathers endured from ungodly people who called themselves Christians’ and the ungodliness of many professed Christians. Such actions, however, were ‘quite contrary to the example and precepts of Jesus of Nazareth’. ⁴⁷ Subsequent reports from their agents suggest that although they encountered considerable initial suspicion and even hostility from Jews, this was largely overcome on closer acquaintance, even if actual conversions were not

⁴⁵ Quoted Gidney, op.cit., 526.

⁴⁶ Quoted *ibid.* 502.

⁴⁷ Quoted Irene Howat and John Nicholls, *Streets Paved with Gold: The Story of the London City Mission* (Fearn, 2003), 171-2.

numerous. One example illustrates something of the grassroots dynamics of such encounters. On an autumn afternoon in 1855 the LCM missionary was sheltering from the rain under a gateway when he began a conversation with a young Jew, who had been involved in the revolutionary movement in Germany in 1848 and ‘lost the little religion he had, and became ... a careless infidel.’ Subsequently he fled to England, but his inadequate English had prevented him from obtaining employment and he was now on the verge of starvation. Visiting him at his lodgings a couple of days later, the missionary found him sick in bed, but being nursed by his landlady ‘a pious old Scotchwoman’. He laughed at the missionary’s attempts to convert him, but the latter nevertheless helped him to obtain a job with a fellow German. When his circumstances improved he moved to better accommodation, but kept in contact both with his former landlady and with the missionary. When the old lady became dangerously ill the missionary visited her, and met the German Jew by her bedside. His subsequent observation of the comfort brought to her by her Christian faith proved to be a trigger for his conversion which he professed to the missionary while they were both attending her funeral. The salient features of this case would seem to be the convert’s previous rootlessness and lack of active practice of Judaism, and the development of genuine and supportive friendships with both the LCM missionary and his Christian landlady.⁴⁸

The Philo-Judaeian Society, formed in 1826 as an offshoot of the LSPCJ, articulated a different Christian response to London’s Jews. Rather than seeking individual conversions they were motivated by their understanding of biblical prophecy to promote the wider welfare of the Jews in the belief that ‘upon their

⁴⁸ *London City Mission Magazine*, 39 (1874), 39-41.

restoration to his [God's] favour, and to their own land, a great measure of blessedness will come upon all the nations of the earth'. This organization thus combined a liberal vision for the promotion of Jewish emancipation with radical premillennialist evangelicalism, represented by Henry Drummond, the subsequent founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and by Hugh McNeile, commissioned to preach a series of sermons at St Clement Danes on the biblical prophecies relating to the Jews. In this context philo-Semitism was closely bound up with anti-Catholicism, and the Society, whose President Viscount Mandeville was also President of the British Society for Promoting the Religious Principles of the Reformation, vigorously denounced the 'grand apostasy of Rome' for renewing its 'persecutions and insults towards the favoured nation of Jehovah'. The Philo-Judaeen Society was instrumental in securing the ending of a ban on Jews being admitted to the freedom of the City of London, a restriction that had severely hampered their prospects in business.⁴⁹ It was still in operation in 1842 albeit with only a modest income of £365 in the preceding year. The majority of this was spent on apparently unconditional financial support to 'distressed' Jews and converts from Judaism.⁵⁰

The legacy of nineteenth-century Christian engagement with London's Jews was a complex one. The LSPCJ's early mistakes left an abiding sour taste, with the perception of unscrupulous missionary methods and hypocritical converts. However the ongoing reality was rather one of a slow trickle of sincere conversions, albeit usually of ethnic Jews who were not actively practising their religion, and of significant practical Christian support for Jewish people and their aspirations. Some

⁴⁹ *The First Report of the Philo-Judaeen Society Read at the General Meeting at Freemasons' Hall May 18 1827* (London, 1827), 10, 13; Endelman, *op.cit.*, 78-83; Darby, *op.cit.*, 77-81.

⁵⁰ *An Appeal in Behalf of the Philo-Judaeen Society including the Fifteenth Annual Report* (London, 1842).

converts were given substantial long-term support as is apparent from a meticulous record kept by an LSPCJ worker in the early 1850. His patience was put to the test particularly by one Lewis Nathan, who despite ‘annoying, threatening and demanding’ behaviour and imprisonment for assault in 1851 received ongoing financial assistance and other support, and was eventually assisted in emigrating to the United States in 1853.⁵¹ There was also specific concern for Jewish women, articulated for example in an 1810 appeal on behalf of the LSPCJ⁵² and in the formation of female branches of the Philo-Judaeae Society. Arguably too, awareness of competition and critique from Christians had a positive impact on Jewish religious life, in helping to stimulate the movement that led to Reform Judaism and in encouraging the Orthodox to be more purposeful in ministering to their own people. It also seems that a sense of the positive potentialities of Jews mitigated and limited the anti-Semitic tendencies evident in some of the arguments used against Jewish Emancipation by conservative Christians. In general anti-Catholicism was a more prominent feature of religious life in Victorian London than anti-Semitism.

What then of other religious minorities, especially Muslims and Hindus, much less numerous than the Jews in London in the nineteenth century, but greatly exceeding their numbers by the beginning of the twenty-first? Shortly after the formation of the LSPCJ the London Missionary Society also became concerned about the lascars, and in 1812 set up a committee of supporters resident in east London to consider what measures might be taken. It recommended that missionaries be sought

⁵¹ Dep.CMJ.d.12, pp. 30, 39, 222-3 and passim.

⁵² *An Address to Females on Behalf of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Jews* (London, 1810).

who either already spoke Asian languages or were willing to learn them.⁵³ In 1814 an appeal to that effect addressed to ‘young men’ was published. It was estimated that around 2500 lascars visited the country annually.⁵⁴ The anonymous author was unequivocal in his dismissal of Hinduism and Islam as ‘the senseless worshippers of dumb idols, or the deluded followers of the licentious doctrines of a false prophet’ and hence saw it as ‘the incumbent duty of all who have time and opportunity to seek the eternal salvation of their immortal souls’.⁵⁵ As they had been exposed to oppression and wickedness at the hands of nominal Christians it was imperative that they should be taught to ‘distinguish between false and true professors’ of Christianity.⁵⁶ Some Christian worship had already been held for them in Bengali and Hindustani, and had attracted up to seventy lascars.⁵⁷

This initiative does not appear to have been sustained, and in 1842, James Peggs, formerly a Baptist missionary in Orissa, reawakened concern with a letter to the *Evangelical Magazine*, arguing that ‘on every principle of policy, philanthropy and Christian zeal, we should not overlook that which is near, in our ardent prosecution of that which is distant.’⁵⁸ Peggs’s intervention was supported by George Smith, minister of Trinity Independent Chapel in Poplar, who emphasized that ‘In any endeavour to benefit the Lascars prominent regard should be had to the alleviation of their physical sufferings’, through the provision of accommodation, and medical and legal assistance. If this were done first, Smith thought, ‘the way would be plain to

⁵³ *Lascars and Chinese: A Short Address to Young Men of the Several Orthodox Denominations of Christians* (London, 1814), 18-19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 4-5

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 3, 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 11

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 14

⁵⁸ James Peggs, *The Lascars’ Cry to Britain: An Appeal to British Christians in Behalf of the Asiatic Sailors, who Resort to the Ports of London, Liverpool &c.* (London, 1844), 5.

endeavour to lead these degraded outcasts to the Friend of Sinners'.⁵⁹ Peggs republished the correspondence in a pamphlet in 1844, in which he highlighted his sense that Christian ministry to the lascars in London was of considerable strategic importance for the wider overseas missionary effort, because of the impressions they would carry with them when they returned home:

The favourable or unfavourable report which they bring of our country, laws and religion is evidently of the utmost importance to the success of Christian missionaries and the propagation of the gospel of Christ.⁶⁰

Again, however, no action was taken.

In 1854, however, there was at last a decisive step forward when Henry Venn, secretary of the Church Missionary Society, encouraged by a pledge of £500 from Maharajah Duleep Singh, took a personal interest and brought together an interdenominational board of management on which the other major missionary societies were also represented.⁶¹ The resulting plan for a 'Strangers Home of Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders' was a product of a *prima facie* improbable collaboration between the missionary societies, the East India Company, returned Indian civil servants and soldiers, and the Indian princes. All of them, however, shared a concern for the physical well-being of the lascars. As described above, the foundation stone was laid in 1856, and the home, located close to Limehouse church, opened a year later on 3 June 1857. The trust deed summarized the objects as

to provide, at a moderate charge, a temporary home, or lodging and board, under adequate superintendence, for strangers in any part of the United

⁵⁹ Ibid. 10-11.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 29.

⁶¹ R. Marsh Hughes and Joseph Salter, *The Asiatic in England: Sketches of Sixteen Years' Work Among Orientals* (London, 1873), 6-10.

Kingdom, being natives of any part of the continent or islands of Africa (including Madagascar), or any part of the continents or islands of Asia, or New Zealand, or any of the islands of the China Sea, or Indian, or North Pacific Ocean; and in other ways to offer protection and aid, with Christian instruction, to such natives occasionally resident in this country.⁶²

The home protected residents from robbers and swindlers by looking after their money and valuables. It provided general advice and information, and served in effect as an employment agency, both for obtaining work on shore and for seamen seeking a ship on which to return to Africa or Asia. Those able to pay were charged for their board and lodging, but the destitute were accommodated free of charge.⁶³ As the very name of the Strangers' Home implied, the underlying assumption was that its residents were temporary visitors to London, who would in due course return to their homelands.

The muted reference to 'Christian instruction' was presumably a compromise between the diverse individuals and agencies who funded the Home. It was, however, too much for the Parsi firm of Cama and Company who in 1863 offered to discharge an outstanding debt of £4000 if it were removed.⁶⁴ The Cama brothers were leading members of the small Zoroastrian community: both had travelled to London on business, but Karshedji Rustomji had returned to Bombay in 1855, where he played a central role in articulating a Zoroastrian response to the Christian missionary critique. His brother Muncherji Hormusji remained in England and in 1861 was the founding chairman of the London Zoroastrian Association.⁶⁵ They were therefore particularly

⁶² Quoted *ibid.* 296.

⁶³ *Strangers Homes: Annual Report for the Year 1887* (London, 1888), back cover.

⁶⁴ Hughes and Salter, *op.cit.*, 296.

⁶⁵ Hinnells, *op.cit.*, 69, 85.

sensitive to any hint of Christian proselytism. In response, Colonel Marsh Hughes, the Secretary of the Home, pointed out that the trust deed did ‘not enforce upon foreigners Christian instruction, but *offer[ed]* it to those *willing* to receive it’. There was no wish ‘to interfere with the prejudices of the natives of the East’ but those who could read and so desired were given a copy of the Bible in their own language and were given instruction ‘in the truths of the Gospel’. This response was deemed ‘very unsatisfactory’ by the Camas, who withdrew their conditional donation, but interestingly, it did not deter other wealthy non-Christian Indians from providing substantial financial support.⁶⁶

The ‘Christian instruction’ in question was provided by Joseph Salter, employed by the London City Mission, working closely with the Strangers’ Home and also visiting other lodging houses and ships in port. Over the next forty years extensive reports of Salter’s work appeared in the LCM magazine, and he also published two books, *The Asiatic in England* in 1873 and *The East in the West* in 1896. These provide valuable sources for scholars interested in the early history of British Asian communities. Salter was a zealous evangelical, with what must have been an irritating facility for seeing opportunities to preach the gospel in the most unlikely contexts. For example he joined a group of Muslims celebrating Eid, listened to a song about a rajah whose son had been carried away to fairyland, and then sought to gain their attention with his own account of the heavenly rajah who sent his son into the world of men.⁶⁷ Nevertheless he displayed a significant degree of cultural sensitivity, and, by his own accounts at least, he was often given a respectful hearing. Many were willing to receive, or even to help distribute his tracts, even if they did not

⁶⁶ Hughes and Salter, *op.cit.*, 297-301.

⁶⁷ Joseph Salter, *The East in the West or Work among the Asiatics and Africans in London* (London, 1896), 21-2.

profess conversion to Christianity.⁶⁸ Although he could dismiss Muslims as collectively ‘bigoted’ he was nevertheless aware of their internal diversity, and capable of engaging in reasoned theological debate with the better informed among them.⁶⁹ The extent of his activity was impressive; for example in the single year 1887 he reported that he had made 104 visits to 68 different vessels, spoken to a total of 2805 people, on board ship, in the Strangers Home, and in other lodging houses, and distributed well over 2000 tracts and gospels, including publications in Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Chinese, Gujerati, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Malayalam, Marathi, Persian, Singhalese, Tamil and Turkish, as well as in English and several other European languages.⁷⁰

The generally positive reception Salter received was no doubt founded on an awareness of his substantial practical support and compassion for lascars, for example in ensuring that their medical needs were attended to, or intervening with the police and magistrates to assist those who, sometimes unjustly, found themselves on the wrong side of the law.⁷¹ He was sometimes in physical danger,⁷¹ not from the lascars themselves, but from local criminals and unscrupulous landlords who found their livelihoods threatened by his endeavours to protect less streetwise visitors from theft and exploitation. He claimed credit for the closure of local opium dens, and raising the moral tone of the neighbourhood.⁷² In later years he supplemented the work of the Strangers Home and provided a substitute for less reputable places of recreation by setting up his own Asiatic Rest near the East India Dockyard gates to provide ‘drop

⁶⁸ Ibid. 77.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 67, 72-4.

⁷⁰ *Strangers Home ... Annual Report for the Year 1887* (London, 1888), 13-14 (accessed through www.movinghere.org.uk).

⁷¹ Salter, *East in the West*, 111-6

⁷² Marsh and Salter, *Asiatic in England*, 272-94.

in' facilities, refreshments and a library, in which the Qu'ran as well as the Bible was available.⁷³

Assessment of Salter's achievement depends on the criteria applied. He made few, if any, converts and acknowledged that the response to his public preaching, especially on board ship, was limited, because men were reluctant to show interest in Christianity in front of their peers. However, he reported that many subsequently sought him out at the Asiatic Rest for further instruction.⁷⁴ A few encounters suggested genuine spiritual searching: for example a young Hindu seaman asked him for a Gospel in Hindustani, and was very disappointed when he only had one available in English. He said 'he had long wished to become a Christian' and had attended places of worship at every port hoping to get "the influence", but did not feel any more a Christian. 'What he required' Salter wrote, 'was not an "influence" to feel but an object to trust – to know Whom to believe; and on pointing him to the Saviour his hunger seemed satisfied.'⁷⁵ More commonly, it seems, Salter merely awakened the diffuse spiritual interest of transient visitors remote from any organized provision for teaching or worship in their own faith. They may have felt edified and comforted by his ministry and some of their misunderstandings about Christianity were mitigated, but they were not yet persuaded to change their religion. Salter wrote 'It is one of the saddest things about our work among these birds of passage that, however hopeful we may be, we are so often unable to speak of the results.'⁷⁶ Nevertheless, it is arguable that Salter's energetic ministry over four decades and his readiness to offer practical help as well as spiritual exhortation had a significant impact in mitigating prejudice

⁷³ Salter, *East in the West*, 150-67.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 150-1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 79-80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 79.

on both sides. He presented Christianity with a human face to numerous non-Christian visitors to London and through his reports and writings helped his Christian readers gain a sympathetic understanding of religious and cultural worlds in their own city that would otherwise have been entirely closed to them.

Salter's world was primarily a male one, but not exclusively so. He wrote of Englishwomen, such as 'Chinese Emma' and 'Lascar Sally', who formed long-term relationships with non-European men who had become semi-permanent settlers and set up lodging-houses and opium dens to provide for more transient visitors.⁷⁷ Salter was especially concerned for Chinese Emma's welfare and was delighted to be able eventually to report that she married her partner Appoo, and that they shut down their disreputable establishment, and signed on as stewardess and cook respectively on a transatlantic passenger vessel. Salter sent them off with Testaments in English and Chinese 'directing their attention once more to the sacrifice for sin'.⁷⁸

India Office files illustrate the practical problems the Strangers Home sought to address in responding to the human casualties of empire. In 1897 they housed Mahomed Khan, who had come to London from Karachi after having been dismissed from an Indian army regiment. After refusing two offers of employment he was asked to leave the Home, and was now threatening to squat at Windsor railway station and petition the Queen. He was deemed 'excitable' and 'likely to give trouble' and his threats taken sufficiently seriously for warnings to be passed on to the Metropolitan Police and the Queen's private secretary.⁷⁹ In 1908 the Home looked after six Punjabis who had attempted to emigrate from India to the United States, but had been

⁷⁷ Marsh and Salter, *Asiatic in England*, 27

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 284-5.

⁷⁹ [British Library,] I[ndia] O[ffice] R[ecords], L/PJ/440/File 346, 22 Feb., 6 March 1897.

refused admission by the American authorities and returned destitute to Southampton.⁸⁰

The Strangers' Home, intended primarily for visiting seamen, was complemented by the Ayahs' Home, initially in Aldgate and subsequently in Hackney. This establishment provided for Indian women employed as nannies on board ship by families returning to England, but then paid off and requiring accommodation until re-employed by other families going out to India. It was also run by the London City Mission, and Salter was closely involved with its work.⁸¹ A further initiative was the St Luke's Lascar Mission, which from 1887 to 1905 employed a Bengali Christian, the Rev. E.B. Bhowse as its chaplain. Like Salter, Bhowse organized social and leisure facilities as well as engaging in evangelistic work.⁸²

The twentieth century – and more particularly its later decades - saw the transformation of London from a city in which only small minorities of the population adhered to faiths other than Christianity to one in which, by 2011, less than half of the population professed to be Christians and more than a fifth professed other religions.⁸³ The implications of this profoundly significant change merit much more extensive attention from researchers than it has yet received, but in concluding this chapter some exploratory observations can be made against the background of the nineteenth-century developments described above.

⁸⁰ Ibid., L/PJ/6/861/File 1297.

⁸¹ Visram, op. cit. 51-4; Salter, *East in the West*, 165.

⁸² Ibid. 61-2.

⁸³ Peter Brierley, *Capital Growth: What the 2012 London Church Census Reveals* (Tonbridge, 2013), 41.

Initially there were naturally significant continuities with the Victorian era. A printed report in 1902 listed numerous agencies involved in missions to Jews in London, with the longstanding labours of the LSPCJ and the LCM complemented by local and personal initiatives such as the East London Fund for the Jews and Mr Henry Barnett's Mission.⁸⁴ Although Salter's successors lacked the public profile he achieved through his two books, the London City Mission maintained what it called its 'mission to Orientals'. During the inter-war period its missionary, Mr Bugby, was based at the Lascar Institute in Tilbury, which like Salter's Asiatic Rest in earlier years, provided social and recreational facilities for visiting seamen. Bugby also engaged in assiduous visitation, both on board ship and in lodging houses around east London. He usually met with a favourable reception from Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who welcomed his personal interest in them and were willing to discuss religion, but much more reluctant to convert to Christianity.⁸⁵ The Strangers Home, now known as the Asiatic and Overseas Home, continued to provide accommodation that was recognised by official inspections in the 1920s to be of a superior standard to that available in other lodging houses.⁸⁶ Similarly the Ayahs home, under the charge of LCM missionaries Mr and Mrs William Fletcher, continued to provide essential support for vulnerable Asian women stranded in London with little or no knowledge of English and no immediate means of returning home.⁸⁷

By this period the increasing visibility of London's religious minorities with the beginnings of permanent settlement, was prompting a different kind of broadly

⁸⁴ Dep CMJ.d.38/5.

⁸⁵ *London City Mission Magazine* 99 (1934), 11-12, 123; 101 (1936), 142; J.E. Bugby, 'Moslems in London', *The Muslim World* 28 (1938), 76-9.

⁸⁶ IOR, L/E/7/1152, fols 554-8, London County Council Public Health Department, 15 June 1922; L/E/7/1360, File 3847, Report by E.W.Hudleston, 7 Jan. 1926.

⁸⁷ William Chambers, 'A Haven for Oriental Women', *London City Mission Magazine*, 101 (1936), 143-4.

Christian response, which was to offer limited public recognition and seek to provide facilities for non-Christian worship. Thus in 1920 at the instigation of Lord Curzon considerable efforts were made to obtain Muslim and Sikh representation at the dedication of the cenotaph and the funeral of the Unknown Soldier.⁸⁸ In the meantime a number of prominent non-Muslims, such as Sir William Bull, Conservative MP, and Lord Ampthill, a former governor of Madras, were active members of the London Mosque Fund, which raised funds to support provision for Muslim worship and the eventual opening of the East London Mosque in 1941. They found common ground with Anglophile Indian Muslims, led by Saiyid Ameer Ali, who perceived the project for a London mosque as a means of affirming the loyalty of their co-religionists to the British Empire. This movement reached its culmination in the early years of the Second World War, when the government provided funds for the purchase of the land on the edge of Regents Park that was subsequently to become the site of the London Central Mosque.⁸⁹

There was, however, no clear-cut polarity between Christian mission and acceptance of religious plurality. In the 1920s, the Christian ethos of the Asiatic and Overseas Home was no barrier to it providing appropriate facilities for Muslim prayers, in contrast to private lodging houses. Muslim residents were also allowed to kill their own halal meat at a local slaughter house.⁹⁰ Although the social and material support provided by the LCM through the Lascar Institute and the Ayahs Home was part of an underlying evangelistic strategy, it was given without preconditions. Meanwhile, missions to Jews were associated more with philo-Semitism than with

⁸⁸ National Archives, CAB 27/99, p. 52.

⁸⁹ Humayun Ansari, ed., *The Making of the East London Mosque, 1910-1951* (Royal Historical Society, Camden Fifth Series, 38, 2011).

⁹⁰ IOR, L/E/7/1152, fols 554-8; L/E/7/1360, File 3847, Report by E.W.Hudleston, 7 Jan. 1926.

anti-Semitism. Donald Lewis has argued that the Balfour Declaration of 1917 was in part attributable to the legacy of Victorian religious interest in the Jews.⁹¹ Certainly in the 1930s the LSPCJ and the LCM readily articulated concern for the plight of German Jews: for example in 1934 the LSPCJ urged its members to take every opportunity to show kindness to Jews ‘for even in this country rudimentary forms of anti-Semitism are becoming common’.⁹² An LCM missionary wrote in 1939 that

our endeavour is always to show the Jews Christian kindness in order that they may see and know that whatever treatment they may receive in other countries, the great heart of Christian England goes out in loving sympathy to the Jewish race.⁹³

Hence, although organizations with an ethos of inter-faith dialogue rather than of mission, notably the London Society for Jews and Christians formed in 1927 and Council of Christians and Jews in 1942, marked a new departure in Christian-Jewish relations, there was more continuity in spirit with earlier activity than is sometimes appreciated.⁹⁴

Victorian institutions finally faltered in the late 1930s and 1940s, due to large part to disruption consequent on the Depression, unrest in India, and the Second World War. By the early 1930s the Asiatic and Overseas Home was suffering heavy annual losses and in 1935 it was decided to close it, despite an expression of ‘grave concern’ from the Muslim Association of East London, testimony to its success in

⁹¹ Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (New York, 2010).

⁹² *Jewish Missionary Intelligence*, Aug. 1934, 95.

⁹³ Quoted Howat and Nicholls, *op.cit.*, 169.

⁹⁴ Marcus Braybrooke, *Children of One God: A History of the Council of Christians and Jews* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1991), pp. 3, 12.

overcoming earlier religious suspicions.⁹⁵ The Ayahs Home survived a few more years but closed during the Second World War.⁹⁶ References in the *London City Mission Magazine* to encounters with other faiths became more infrequent. Then after the war the legacy of the Holocaust transformed the dynamic of Christian-Jewish relations, and the LSPCJ scaled back its activities. It followed the migration of London's Jews themselves, and now concentrated its work in Hampstead and Finchley.⁹⁷ It is thus a significant irony that when, in the late 1950s, London began to receive substantial numbers of Asian migrants, there was probably less active Christian engagement with people of other faiths in the metropolis than at any time in the previous century. Initially the issue was seen, even by the churches, to be essentially one of race rather than religion, a perception that was understandable in light of the low levels of religious practice among early migrants, but still a noticeable concession to secular thinking that is a neglected aspect of what Hugh McLeod has called 'the religious crisis of the 1960s'.⁹⁸ The 1970s saw a growing recognition at a national level, notably by the British Council of Churches, of the need to respond constructively to the growth of non-Christian minority religions, but in this decade there was little sign of active engagement of any kind by the churches in London.⁹⁹ One revealing case is that of David Sheppard, who, despite working for twenty years

⁹⁵ India Office Records L/E/9/967, Letters from F. J. Adams (Indian High Commissioner's Office), 28 Feb. 1935 and Syed Fazal Shah, 26 April 1935.

⁹⁶ www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/indian-london, accessed 19 May 2014.

⁹⁷ Barker, op.cit., 17.

⁹⁸ Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007).

⁹⁹ John Wolffe, 'How Many Ways to God? Christians and Religious Pluralism', in Gerald Parsons, ed., *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945* (London, 1994), 25-53; Matthew Grimley, 'The Church of England, Race and Multi-Culturalism', 1962-2012', in Garnett and Harris, *Rescripting Religion in the City*, 207-21. This provisional conclusion is, however, very much open to testing by further research, drawing particularly on oral history and on records relating to the sale of former Christian buildings to other religious groups. For case studies from other parts of the country of the actual or proposed use of Christian buildings by other faiths see in this volume John Maiden, 'Church Redundancy and Minority Religion in Bedford, 1977-8'; Gillian Carver, *A Place to Meet: The Use of Church Property and the New Religious Minorities in Britain* (London, 1978), 29-35 and Andrew Chandler, *The Church of England in the Twentieth Century: The Church Commissioners and the Politics of Reform* (Woodbridge, 2006), 229-39, 290-4.

between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s on the cutting edge of inner-city ministry in east and south-east London, does not appear to have become alert to the religious implications of the Asian presence in Britain until the early 1980s when, already Bishop of Liverpool and a member of the Archbishops Commission on Urban Priority Areas, he sought some ‘education’ through a visit to Southall.¹⁰⁰ Even in the 1980s, it was unusual and controversial for a London church - such as that of Sheppard’s host at St George’s Southall, Mano Ramulshah - actively to engage with other religious groups.¹⁰¹

Although by the early 2000s there was much more extensive institutionalised activity, in London at least it was still of only recent development. The London Inter-Faith Centre in Brondesbury was established in 1998; St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace in the City of London and 2003, and the Contextual Theology Centre at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine in Limehouse, which hosts the London Presence and Engagement Network in 2005.¹⁰² A book published in 2008 presented numerous case studies of London churches and their members engaging with people of other faiths, but almost all the initiatives described had only emerged since the turn of the millennium. As the coordinator of a multi-faith chaplaincy at the O2 dome put it, ‘In 2000 we were Christian chaplains. In 2007 we were Muslim, Sikh and Christian. The world has changed.’¹⁰³ On the other hand Kenneth Leach, whose initial anti-racist concerns had increasingly led him into inter-faith activity in the East

¹⁰⁰ David Sheppard, *Steps Along Hope Street: My Life in Cricket, the Church and the Inner City* (London, 2002), 283.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁰² www.londoninterfaith.org.uk/about/purpose-and-history; www.stethelburgas.org/history; www.theology-centre.org.uk/about-us/, all accessed 19 May 2014.

¹⁰³ Malcolm Torry and Sarah Thorley, eds, *Together and Different: Christians Engaging with People of Other Faiths* (Norwich, 2008), 21. There are further such case studies on the London Presence and Engagement Network website, www.londonpen.org/?page_id=276, accessed 19 May 2014.

End, still thought in 2006 that ‘Christians are very divided and confused about how they relate to other faiths’.¹⁰⁴ Although there were signs that practical cooperation and good neighbourliness were developing into an effective middle way between confrontational mission on the one hand, and acceptance of a multi-faith lowest common denominator on the other, such initiatives were still fragmentary and controversial.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, while religious plurality remains controversial and sometimes difficult to negotiate at a local level, the London experience prompts the concluding reflection that Christianity may actually thrive most in a context of religious plurality rather than in one of monopoly. One of the prominent features of the rhetoric of those in nineteenth-century London promoting missions to Jews and Asiatics was the need to promote moral and spiritual renewal among the nominally Christian population as a witness to their non-Christian neighbours. Moreover recent trends in London are fascinating and significant: although the 2011 civil census indicates that only 48.4% of the population of the capital profess to be Christians, 10% or so less than the national average, the 2012 church census suggests that 8.8% of the total population of Greater London, or nearly 20% of the nominally Christian population, are churchgoers, a much higher proportion than in the country as a whole. That figure has risen substantially in recent years.¹⁰⁶ In London at least, pluralization may indeed be a more accurate way of thinking about the religious trends of the last two centuries than secularization.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Leech, *Doing Theology in Altab Ali Park* (London, 2006), 125.

¹⁰⁵ Cf Michael Keith, ‘Discovering Faith? The Hidden Contours of Political Participation and Devotional Practice in Contemporary East London’, in Garnett and Harris, *Rescripting Religion in the City*, 223-33.

¹⁰⁶ Brierley, *Capital Growth*, 67.