Chapter Three

Parallels Between the Jewish Religious Union & the Tractarian Movement

Similarities between the two movements have already been referred to, and when these are seen in the context of very real dissimilarities, they are especially noteworthy. Although these were both Reform movements, one was moving towards Liberalism while the other was moving away from it. One operated within a large religious body and could enlist the special interest of a special group (see the tracts addressed Ad Clerum), many of whom had been students under the Tractarian leader, John Henry Newman, whereas the other was working with a minority group whose "clergy" lacked the professional and academic homogeneity of the Church of England ministers (except for "Anglicised" Jewish ministers before 1914) who were recognizably in "order," notwithstanding their various conflicting party loyalties.

Despite these dissimilarities, however, and although the philosophies and motivations of Tractarians and Liberal Jews were diametrically opposed, the dynamics of both situations seem to have prompted arguments which were in some ways strikingly similar. Each group had to win acceptance for ideas which were either strange, or associated with an "ancient foe," or both, so a very difficult reversal of values was involved in both cases. The Tractarians wanted to re-introduce certain ideas and attitudes which had been discarded in the 16th century Reformation. The mass, the adoration of saints and relics, the confessional and many other matters which were antithetical to the ethos of the Reformed Church of England had to be rehabilitated. In the case of the Jewish Religious Union, certain basic features of Jewish life, such as the Sabbath, the dietary laws and the rules for personal status and marriage were considered to be in need of modification. Also certain ideas and teachings from Hellenistic thought, with its pagan associations, and many concepts from Christianity, with its associations in the Jewish mind with persecution and error, were to be shown to be compatible with Jewish essentials. In both situations, a formal declaration of hostility towards the "ancient foe" was incorporated in the basic documents of the respective movements, to reassure those who were to be persuaded. This element can be traced in books, sermons, speeches, letters, etc., but especially in the two series of propaganda tracts already referred to – 'The Tracts for the Times,' issued by Newman's Oxford Movement, and the 'Papers...
for Jewish People,' issued by the Jewish Religious Union. The alliteration in both cases, T.F.T. and P.J.P. may be coincidental and the format, of 215mm x 140mm for the Papers for Jewish People and 222m x 136mm for the Tracts for the Times may be only coincidentally nearly identical in size. Also the use of Roman numerals agreeing with the Roman numerals used in some of the 'Tracts' give the 'Papers' a similarity which may be only superficial. But when we turn to specific passages in the literature of the two movements, we find parallels which are certainly of interest. We could begin by considering the similarities between the article with which Lily Montagu sounded her rallying call to Liberal Jews, and an early article by Newman. Miss Montagu says in 1899:

It is only by association that we can effectually enunciate the principle, that we are required to use in God's service all the gifts of mind and heart which he has granted to us, since it is a form of blasphemy to conceal or to pervert truth in order to render our service to God acceptable to Him. We who... are conscious of our great needs, must organize ourselves into an association to rediscover our Judaism, encouraging one another to reformulate our ideal. We shall be able to rally round us the discontented and the weary, and together we may hope to lift Judaism from its desolate position and absorb it into our lives. Together we must sift, with all reverence, the pure from the impure in the laws which our ancestors formulated in order to satisfy the needs of their age, and refuse to resort to hair-splitting arguments in order to re-establish a religion, which was originally founded on a basis of truth, dignity and beauty.¹

If the Jewish Religious Union had been already constituted, and had been looking for an alternative text to express their aims, would they have been tempted by the following?

We have good hope... that a system will be rising up, superior to the age, yet harmonizing with, and carrying out its higher points, which will attract to itself those who are willing to make a venture and to face difficulties, for the sake of something higher in prospect. On this, as on other subjects, the proverb will apply, 'Fortes fortuna adjuvat.'²

This was Newman's description of the 'Via Media' he advocated in 1839,

... by which was not to be understood a servile imitation of the past, but such a reproduction of it as is really new, while it is old.³

This very phrase 'Via Media,' in its English form 'Middle Way,' appears in the title of Montefiore's pamphlet, "Is there a Middle Way?", which he wrote in

³ibid, p.63.
1920.4 Like Newman, he had to dismiss this 'gradualist' option as a forlorn hope, although, unlike Newman, he did not try it out first, perhaps because the "Middle Way" of his mother's Reform synagogue had already served as a negative model. Montefiore affirmed that what he offered was the "Only Way" and Newman eventually said the same. Another interesting item is that early in the experience of the Jewish Religious Union, the support and advice of an acknowledged scholar was seen as being of great significance. Miss Montagu says, "In preparing our liturgy for the Sabbath afternoon services held in 1902, at Wharncliffe Rooms, we had the inestimable advantage of the advice of Dr. Israel Abrahams, reader in Talmudic (sic) in the University of Cambridge and then Teacher of Homiletics at Jews' College. It is impossible to exaggerate the value of Dr. Abrahams' assistance ...."6

This was in no way intended as a slight to Montefiore, for he himself says,

The history of the Liberal Jewish Movement in London may be divided into two parts ... the first part – the ten years from 1902 to 1912 – was the more difficult period, and it was in this period that Israel Abrahams gave us the most valuable help.7

Later in the same volume, Montefiore says that Israel Abrahams,

... was a convinced adherent of, and a doughty spearman for, Liberal Judaism. His Liberalism matured, deepened, sharpened with the years.8

Also he said of Abrahams,

... by far the greatest English-born Jewish scholar of his age was an enthusiastic Liberal Jew.9

But Herbert Loewe, a disciple of Abrahams, and his successor at Cambridge, thought differently. He wrote,

Abrahams was more a man of the Jewish Religious Union than of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue ... The Liberal Jewish Synagogue had his warm support but he played a much greater part in the Jewish Religious Union ... he was a super-Jew ... above party designations."10

5ibid, pp.14-15.
8ibid, p.343.
9ibid, p.LXII.
A comparable situation can be seen on the Tractarian side when we consider the role that Dr. E.B. Pusey (1800-1882) played in its development. Newman says that when Pusey became "fully associated with the Movement" (in 1835 and 1836) "... He at once gave to us a position and a name... Dr. Pusey was a Professor and Canon of Christ Church; he had a vast influence," he "was one who furnished the Movement with a front to the world... he was able to give a name, a form, and a personality, to what was without him a sort of mob..." The leaders of the Jewish Religious Union would not have needed to express themselves in quite this way, but they would have recognized the sentiments described. Also when Newman 'crossed over his Jordan' and 'entered the Promised Land' of the Roman Church in 1845 and Dr. Pusey stayed behind in the Anglican Church, a further parallel suggests itself when we remember Herbert Loewe's remark that, "Abrahams was more a man of the Jewish Religious Union than of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue." In both cases the "hiving-off" process left the influential scholar behind. In Pusey's case this was literally so, but in Abraham's case also, although he joined the Liberal Synagogue, his traditional Jewish lifestyle would tend to make him less comfortable with the new regime, as Loewe suggests.

Newman's role as a polemicist was much more difficult and complicated than that of Montefiore and his colleagues in the Jewish Religious Union, and Newman's complex personality tended to add to the complication, but another parallel can be seen in the polemical tactics both used. Newman and his associates had to establish their bona fides as English Churchmen, which at that period involved showing hostility to Roman Catholicism, even though they hoped to commend certain Roman Catholic doctrines and practices to their fellow Anglicans. So we find the author of Tract for the Times No. 59 speaking of the "capricious interference of the Bishop of Rome" and in Tract 51 we read "If the State religion became Roman Catholic, it could not be our duty to conform to that, because we should thereby compromise some of the fundamental articles of our faith..." In Tract 57 the writer classes "the spirit of Popery" with "all anti-Christian corruptions." Instances of this "anti-Roman" attitude could be multiplied from Tractarian sources but our concern is not with the language, of which Newman says in 1843 "the divines of my own church (C of E in

1843)... have ever used the strongest language against Rome,"\(^{15}\) but with
its significance and effect. In a letter to John Keble in 1840 he says, "... the
very circumstance that I have committed myself against Rome has the effect of
setting to sleep people suspicious about me, which is painful now that I begin
to have suspicions about myself."\(^{16}\) These misgivings are repeated when he
made a formal retraction of his criticisms of Roman Catholicism in February
1843 when he says,

> Yet I have reason to fear still, that such language is to be ascribed, in no
small measure, to be impetuous temper, a hope of approving myself to
persons I respect, and a wish to repel the charge of Romanism.\(^{17}\)

The psychological and ethical questions raised here are fascinating but
irrelevant to the issue, which is especially pertinent to the analogy between the
the two movements. Newman, in seeking to win sympathy for the Church of
Rome, of whose "... high gifts and strong claims ... and its dependencies
on our admiration, reverence, love, and gratitude"\(^{18}\) he could write, also saw the
need to maintain his credibility as an Anglican by going out of his way to
"... say against Rome as much as ever I could, in order to protect myself
against the charge of Popery."\(^{19}\)

Montefiore, like Newman, was also accused of being, at heart, in sympathy
with the object of his communion's hostility. In his pamphlet, 'Do Liberal Jews
teach Christianity?' he acknowledges that critics of Liberal Judaism accused them
of praising and imitating Christianity and generally behaving in such a way as to
promote Jewish conversions to Christianity.\(^{20}\) On this subject of conversion
Montefiore considered that although it was wasteful and absurd for Christians to
try to convert Jews,\(^{21}\) he also says, "Apart from the question of children, we
ought, perhaps to prefer that a Jew should become a Christian [than an] atheist
or an agnostic."\(^{22}\) Indeed, he says, "In the deepest and biggest things of all, you
are not severed from your Christian neighbour, but at one with him."\(^{23}\)

This sort of statement, which can be found throughout Montefiore's
writings, is bold and magnanimous but also very disturbing for anybody in the

\(^{15}\)J.H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, London, Longmans Green, 1904,
p.124.
\(^{16}\)ibid, p.83.
\(^{17}\)ibid, p.125.
\(^{18}\)ibid, p.34.
\(^{19}\)ibid, p.34.
\(^{20}\)C.G. Montefiore, *Do Liberal Jews Teach Christianity?*, London, Jewish
Religious Union (Papers for Jewish People, XXV), 1924.
\(^{21}\)C.G. Montefiore, *The Place of Judaism in the Religions of the World*, London,
Jewish Religious Union (Papers for Jewish People XII), 1916, p.16.
\(^{22}\)ibid, p.9.
\(^{23}\)ibid, p.18.
mainstream of Anglo-Jewry who was used to seeing Christianity as a rival faith and a threat, even in peaceful times, to Jewish identity. It is not surprising then to find a balancing negative note being struck in the Jewish Religious Union literature as Montefiore and others seek to show that they too can attack Christianity. Apart from such outbursts such as that of N.S. Joseph in Paper III, 'Why I am not a Christian,' in which he calls the Christian doctrine of the Atonement an "unworthy, irrational and hateful doctrine," the attacks are fairly restrained and therefore fall short of the vigour of Newman's attacks on Rome. It does seem, however, that they serve the same purpose. To take some examples, in 'The Old Testament and its Ethical Teaching,' Montefiore suggests that the cruelties of the Inquisitors could have been derived from the New Testament, and that John's gospel displays a hatred of the enemies of Christianity. In 'Liberal Judaism and the New Testament,' Montefiore can speak of Matthew 25 as containing "doctrine from which we turn in horror"..."odious...an awful aberration" and of "Jesus, on...his pity and love (which only stop short, with a truly human limitation, at his own critics and antagonists)." Of St. Paul's teaching he says, among many complimentary things, "...there is so much which is for us so crude, so remote, so false, so unworthy of God, so valueless for ourselves." It would no doubt be easy to match all these negative elements in Montefiore's New Testament criticism from other sources, but when they are compared with his own enthusiastic praises of Jesus and Paul, they do seem somewhat strident. Alerted by the Tractarian model, it is possible to posit an understandable motivation for these elements which goes beyond the desire for scientifically objective even-handedness. Thus we read in Montefiore's address, 'Old and New' of his interest in the "...great general mass of Jews with whom we desire to keep in touch," and in 'The Jewish Religious Union and its Future,' about his concern lest Liberal Jews should be cut off by themselves. He felt that he was achieving his aim of refuting the charge of pro-Christian bias when he wrote in 'Liberal Judaism and the New Testament' of himself as, "...the man...who has...this one great satisfaction,  

26 ibid, p.17.  
28 ibid, p.108.  
that he has been criticised by the Jews for praising too much and by the Christians for praising too little.\textsuperscript{32} He could also comfort himself with a statement made about him that "No one [was] further from Christianity" and that he was "bigoted and one-sided."\textsuperscript{33}

The Problem of Leakage

Both the Tractarians and the Jewish Religious Union faced the reformers' perennial pastoral problem of seeking to move their sheep from one pasture to another without losing any as strays or stragglers. To very the metaphor, they had to "Break the vessel but save the wine," and this has always been difficult. The Tractarians sought to promote a dissatisfaction in their readers with the then-current state of the Church of England, so that those they had disturbed would go on to what were judged to be better things, in the judgment of the Tractarians. The obvious danger was that, because movement was easier to start than control, some of their readers and hearers would leave their Church altogether and join one of the Dissenting sects, or even head precipitately for the Roman Church. We therefore find the Tractarian shepherds hedging in the path of their sheep by blocking off tempting alternative exits from the old pasture to ensure an unswerving progress toward the desired destination. In Tract 51, the clerical writer, addressing himself "Ad Populum," takes up remarks made to him, "when I have been visiting you in your cottages."\textsuperscript{34} His parishioners had asked "Why should not a man attend both the Church and Meeting . . . Why should not a man be a Dissenter . . . ?"\textsuperscript{35} The writer is quite firm with his flock. He writes, "Dissent is a sin"\textsuperscript{36} and concludes that his parishioners should affirm "I am more safe . . . if . . . I continue a member of the Established Church."\textsuperscript{37} In Tract 57, disparaging remarks are made about Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Independents and Baptists\textsuperscript{38} and "Popery" is also included as an "Anti-Christian corruption."\textsuperscript{39} Baptists, Non-Conformists and Papists are condemned in Tract 61,\textsuperscript{40} Tract XXIV, addressed 'Ad Scholas\textsuperscript{41} attacks

\textsuperscript{35}ibid, p.1.
\textsuperscript{36}ibid, p.2.
\textsuperscript{37}ibid, p.14.
\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Tracts for the Times} (By members of the University of Oxford) Vol.II, pt.1, 1834-5, London, Rivington, 1840, Tract 57, pp.8-12.
\textsuperscript{39}ibid, p.13.
\textsuperscript{40}\textit{Tracts for the Times} (By members of the University of Oxford) Vol.II, pt.1, 1834-5, London, Rivington, 1840, Tract 61, p.3.
\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Tracts for the Times} (By members of the University of Oxford) Vol.II, pt.1, 1834-5, London, Rivington, 1840, Tract XXIV.
Wesleyans and Dissenters, Baptist, Presbyterians, Zwiglians,\footnote{ibid., p.7.} Socinians, Independents and Quakers.\footnote{ibid., p.7.}

Montefiore and his associates were faced with the same basic problem, but there were far fewer gaps in the Anglo-Jewish hedge and their strictures could be more narrowly concentrated. Montefiore did not see the Reform Synagogue as a viable option for real progressives, because in its 60 year history it had acquired a measure of de-facto recognition from and even similarity to the Anglo-Jewish "establishment." Like the Tractarians, the Liberal Jewish reformers brushed aside any suggestion that they were a major cause of "straggling" and presented themselves as the only solution to an already existing problem, although they would perhaps admit to articulating and bringing into focus what many were already feeling in an inarticulate and unfocussed way.

Montefiore deals with the general problem of "dropping out" by saying that the "drifters" ought to "remain Jews,"\footnote{ibid., p.7.} and he uses the term "drifter" on pages 5 and 21 and elsewhere for those whose links with Judaism are dissolving. He is not very concerned about Christian conversionist work\footnote{ibid., p.7.} (although he deplores it) because, the Liberal Jew is seldom converted to Christianity...the orthodox Christian conversionists admit that the Liberal Jew is a harder nut to crack than the Orthodox Jew, and... it has been said... of the present writer that... he is hopelessly far removed from the borders of Christianity.\footnote{ibid., p.7.}

His strongest strictures, indeed, are directed, as one would expect, against "rival" groups who would most closely resemble Liberal Jews and would therefore prove most attractive to the "progressive" Jews he was seeking to attract to Liberal Judaism. He comments in 'Jewish Addresses' that some Jews "...find Unitarian or Theistic services more suited to their religious aspirations...",\footnote{ibid., p.7.} and in "Judaism, Unitarianism and Theism" he asks the question, "Are Unitarianism and Theism, purified forms of Judaism?"\footnote{ibid., p.7.} In
answer, he dismisses the Theistic churches as "creations of yesterday" and in writing to Unitarians he asks "... whether Unitarians may not be regarded as a modification of Judaism as fitly as of Christianity." To his own Jewish Religious Union constituency, however, when speaking of Unitarians and theists, he makes the very cutting comment, "It is not for me to explain or defend the separate identity and the justified separate consciousness of those who hold the essence of the Jewish faith, but not the Jewish name ... ." He is similarly scathing about his friends (but rivals), the Broad Church Anglicans. Speaking of a statement by Prof Cheyne, he says,

Reform Judaism is urged to at least complete 'its meagre, because predominantly negative' character by 'the recognition of the central importance of the person of Jesus and of the New Testament'.

His sarcastic comment is "... many Christianities lie open to our choice. Omitting the minor divisions, are we to become Catholic, Protestant or Unitarians?" or "a revival of the old Jewish-Christianity of the first century?" He goes on, "Broad Church Christians of different shades are now engaged in endeavouring with varying degrees of success to fashion their own Christianity; are we to join them in their efforts?"

Tract XC and the Thirteen Principles

A quite unmistakable parallel between the Tractarian and Liberal Jewish literature, is that seen in Newman's famous Tract No. 90, in which he compares the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England with the Roman Catholic doctrines defined by the Council of Trent, and Montefiore's address "Enlarge the Place of thy Tent" in which he deals with the 13 Principles of the Jewish Faith. Newman's situation called for such an exposition as he made in Tract 90 because he was advocating a position which most people considered to be specifically condemned by the 39 Articles which he had publicly sworn to uphold.

Newman said of Tract 90, "It is a duty which we owe both to the Catholic Church, and to our own, to take our reformed confessions in the most Catholic

49 ibid, p.11.
51 C.G. Montefiore, Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent, London, Jewish Religious Union, Address 13.1.06, p.15.
53 ibid, p.279.
54 ibid, p.279.
55 C.G. Montefiore, Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent, London, Jewish Religious Union, Address 13.1.06.
sense they will admit: we have no duties towards their framers."\textsuperscript{56} His reason for this was that he felt that "... the great stumbling-block lay in the 39 Articles ... the doctrine of the Old Church must live and speak in Anglican formularies, in the 39 Articles."\textsuperscript{57}

An answer to Tract 90 by "four Oxford tutors" summarizes the tract as "suggesting that certain very important errors of the Church of Rome are not condemned by the Articles of the Church of England" and they list the doctrines of Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration of Images and relics, Invocation of Saints and the Mass.\textsuperscript{58} The controversy about Tract 90 and Newman's eventual secession to Rome need not detain us as the apparent analogy between the 13 Principles and the 39 Articles serves only to throw the two situations into sharp contrast.

This is very clearly shown in Montefiore's address to the Jewish Religious Union of January 13th, 1906, entitled, 'Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent.' Montefiore is not concerned to show that he is fully committed to the 13 Principles of Faith, because they do not have the significance in English State Law that the 39 Articles had for the Church of England nor have they the credal authority of the Anglican formula. Neither did a career or a reputation hang on the issue for him as it did for Newman. So Montefiore, instead of wrestling with his creed, as Newman did, makes instead a straightforward analysis in which he takes Principles 1-5, 10, 11 and 13 as the basis for doctrines of God and Man and their inter-relationship,\textsuperscript{59} and Principles 6-9 and 12, which refer to Scripture and Law and the Messiah, he replaces by "That doctrine ... [which] is called the Mission of Israel."\textsuperscript{60} Montefiore is looking on to an improved, purified and updated statement of belief and does not look back to the medieval creed of Maimonides as the supreme authority for his faith. His frank inconclasm is in sharp contrast to Newman's style of argument.

In summary, it could be said that the events of the Tractarian Movement, which did much to shape the religious thought of the age into which Montefiore was born, and which left a continuing mark on the Oxford to which he came to study are, in a limited but interesting manner, reflected and recapitulated in his own Liberal Jewish Movement.

\textsuperscript{56} J.H. Newman, \textit{Apologia Pro Vita Sua}, London, Longmans Green, 1904, p.81.  
\textsuperscript{57} ibid, p.80.  
\textsuperscript{60} ibid, p.13.