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**Conversion and conflict in Palestine : the missions of the
Church Missionary Society and the protestant bishop
Samuel Gobat**

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Bishop Alexander and the mission to the Jews

Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Jewish convert Michael Solomon Alexander was appointed the first bishop of the Protestant bishopric in Jerusalem, newly founded in 1841. This choice was in line with the expectations and hopes of the millenarian supporters of the bishopric. In accordance with the “Statement of Proceedings”, Alexander directed his energies solely towards the Jews. He closely cooperated with the LJS in Palestine, of which he became the head. After Alexander’s early death in 1845 he was succeeded by Samuel Gobat.

How did the mission develop during Alexander’s short episcopate? What were the relations with the other religious communities and denominations in Jerusalem? What was the position of the Protestant mission in Jerusalem during Alexander’s term of office? What was the position of the Protestant mission in Jerusalem when, in 1846, Gobat arrived? These and other questions will be the subject of this chapter, which will also pay attention to some conflicts between Alexander and Prussia. These conflicts shed light on Prussia’s choice of Alexander’s successor, Samuel Gobat, and the circumstances of the Protestant mission at the start of his episcopate in 1846.¹

¹ There are two biographies of Michael Solomon Alexander, written, respectively, by Johannes de le Roi and Muriel Corey. Alexander and the mission during his episcopate are also discussed by Tibawi, Perry, Gidney and Lückhoff, and in some smaller publications, for instance by P. Irwin. For more details about Alexander’s life and episcopate I refer the reader to these authors. Lückhoff is the only one who has discussed Alexander’s conflicts with Prussia. J.F.A. de le Roi, *Michael Solomon Alexander der erste evangelische Bischof in Jerusalem. Ein Beitrag zur orientalische Frage*, Schriften des Institutum Judaicum in Berlin 22, Leipzig, 1897; Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*; Gidney, *The History of the LJS*; Tibawi, *British Interests*; Irwin, “Bishop Alexander”; Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*; Perry, *British Mission*.

Michael Solomon Alexander: consecration and arrival in Jerusalem

Michael Solomon Alexander was born on 1 May 1799 in Schönlanke in the Duchy of Posen as the son of a rabbi. At the age of sixteen Alexander became a teacher of Talmud and German. In 1821 he was nominated as a rabbi in Norwich in England and some years later in Plymouth. There he met Deborah Levi (1804-1872); they were married on 24 November 1824. Meanwhile Alexander had started to question the Jewish faith. After a long internal struggle he converted to Christianity, despite opposition from Deborah's family and the Jewish community. On 22 June 1825 he was baptised and a few months later Deborah was baptised, too. Within a year and a half after his conversion Alexander was ordained Anglican deacon and soon afterwards ordained priest. From 1827 he worked as a missionary for the LJS in Danzig and West-Prussia. In 1832 he became Professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Literature at King's College in London.² When he was nominated for the Jerusalem bishopric the LJS was delighted:

A consummation such as this was far beyond our most sanguine hopes, and almost beyond the contemplation of our prayers.

We saw a Hebrew of the Hebrews, after centuries of contempt, degradation and suffering, elevated to the highest office in the Christian Church – destined, in God's mercy, to carry back the message of peace to the source from which it had originally flowed, and on the very scene of the life and Passion of Our Dearest Lord, to present the more conspicuously, by his eminent station, the first-fruits of an humbled, penitent and returning people.³

On 7 November 1841, Alexander was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Howley) and the Bishops of London (Blomfield), New Zealand (George Augustus Selwyn), and Rochester (George Murray) in Lambeth Palace Chapel. Alexander McCaul preached the sermon, in which he placed the whole event in a millenarian perspective.⁴ Many eminent men were present at the ceremony, among whom of course Bunsen (representing the King of Prussia), Lord Ashley, Gladstone and Sir Stratford Canning (1786-1880), the English Ambassador Extraordinary to the Porte.⁵ When Bishop Selwyn of New Zealand read Acts 20, 22 "And now I go bound in the

² Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 9-38; Irwin, "Bishop Alexander", 317-318; Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 120.

³ LJS report for 1842, in Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 52.

⁴ "Signs such as these proclaim that, if the set time to favour Zion has not yet fully arrived, it can hardly be far distant". Quoted in Irwin, "Bishop Alexander", 319.

⁵ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 209; Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 56.

spirit unto Jerusalem”, Blomfield was said to be in tears.⁶ Ashley was very enthusiastic about the ceremony, pointing to the significance of the whole event for all those who understood it in a millenarian way. The service was

most deeply impressive; solemn, and touching in itself, but made especially so by the style and manner of the Archbishop, who seemed to rise infinitely above himself; instead of the frail, half-timid being he generally is, he stood erect, and strong, with a powerful and stirring voice. Indeed, the Bishop of London told me that he had never known the Archbishop so animated as he had been on this subject during the last few weeks. The whole thing was wonderful, and to those who had long laboured and prayed in the Jewish cause, nearly overwhelming to see a native Hebrew appointed, under God, by the English Church to revive the Episcopate of St. James, and carry back to the Holy City the truths and blessings we Gentiles had received from it.⁷

On 7 December 1841, one month after his consecration, Alexander left England with his wife and six of their children.⁸ The government had offered a steam frigate called “Devastation” for them to travel on.⁹ The LJS missionaries Ferdinand Christian Ewald (1802-1874) and Edward Macgowan (1795-1860) came with the bishop and his family. They journeyed to Jaffa via Beirut, where they went to see Consul-General Hugh Henry Rose (1801-1885). Rose went on to accompany Alexander to Jerusalem. On 18 January 1842 they reached Jaffa, and arrived at Jerusalem three days later.¹⁰ Alexander himself has given us an account of his arrival, published in the *Jewish Intelligencer*. The bishop and his family entered the city together with Rose, Captain Gordon from the “Devastation”, the LJS missionaries John Nicolayson and Meville Peter Bergheim, who had met the bishop half-way, and some American missionaries who had come to meet the new bishop three miles out of Jerusalem.¹¹ Alexander was also accompanied

⁶ Stock, *The History of the CMS* 1, 421; Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 209.

⁷ Ashley in his diary, 12 November 1841, in Hodder, *The Life and Work*, 379.

⁸ His eldest son was left at school in Britain. Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 60.

⁹ The government first offered H.M. steam frigate “Infernal”, but Alexander objected to travelling in a frigate with such a name. See Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 60; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 50-51. The steamer was offered by the government after some pressure by Lord Ashley; Peel at first was afraid to provide it. Ashley tried to persuade him by stressing the fact that the new (conservative) government had done nothing for the bishopric, whereas the Prussian King had paid half of the bishopric’s endowment and the British public the other half, which showed its deep interest in the matter. Hodder, *Life and Work*, 378; Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, 156-157.

¹⁰ Alexander described his journey in letters to the LJS, dd. 17 and 25 January 1842, in Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 64-67.

¹¹ These American missionaries must have been from the ABCFM, which was still present in Jerusalem at the time. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Jerusalem mission of the American Board decided to discontinue its

by “the chief officers sent by the Pasha, who had himself come to meet us, but was obliged to return, as night came on, and it was damp [...] and a troop of soldiers, headed by Arab music, which is something like the beating of a tin kettle”.¹² They entered through Jaffa gate, under the firing of salutes which, however, were fired because of the celebration of a Muslim feast.¹³

When Alexander arrived in Jerusalem, he carried with him a Letter Commendatory written by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The “Statement of Proceedings” stated that this letter was meant for the “Rulers of the Greek Church”.¹⁴ For this reason Alexander carried not only a letter in English, but also brought a Greek translation. The letter was intended to prevent any misunderstanding with regard to the object of the Protestant bishopric. Alexander was charged “not to intermeddle in any way with the jurisdiction of the Prelates or other Ecclesiastical Dignitaries bearing rule in the Churches of the East”. He had to be ready “to promote a mutual interchange of respect, courtesy, and kindness”.¹⁵ Alexander, again accompanied by Consul-General Rose, went to the Greek convent carrying the letter, where they were well received.¹⁶ Alexander and Rose also visited the Armenian convent, where they were received in a friendly manner by the Armenian patriarch. The latter, however, did express his anxiety lest Alexander interfere with his flock.¹⁷

Alexander did not visit the Roman Catholic representative in Jerusalem, the Custodian of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. His decision was most probably

mission in March 1843. Tibawi, *American Interests*, 101, 105. Consul Young was on leave in England, so he could not accompany Alexander. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 58.

¹² *Jewish Intelligencer*, 1842, quoted in Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 234. Cf. Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 65-66.

¹³ *The Times*, 27 January 1841, quoted in Perry, *British Mission*, 58. According to Tibawi, this quotation demonstrates that Alexander was new to the ways of a Turkish Pasha, as it is unlikely that the Pasha went out to welcome a dignitary who was unrecognized by the Porte. The most the Pasha might have done was to send a polite excuse, similar to that in Alexander’s report to Consul-General Rose. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 58-59.

¹⁴ Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 112.

¹⁵ Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 97, 99. For both the Greek and English version of the Letter Commendatory, see Hechler, 96-99.

¹⁶ The letter was not handed to the Greek patriarch of Jerusalem in person. Although he was patriarch of Jerusalem, he resided in Constantinople at the time and only occasionally visited Jerusalem.

¹⁷ Tibawi, *British Interests*, 66, n. 1. An Arabic version of the Letter Commendatory has also been found, although this translation is not mentioned in the “Statement of Proceedings”. Tibawi states, based on the *Jewish Intelligencer*, that at the Armenian convent the Arabic version of the letter was presented (Tibawi, *British Interests*, 66). For more information about the Arabic translation of the Letter Commendatory, see Tibawi, “The Letter Commendatory relating to the Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem”, *The Muslim World* 69/1, 1979, 1-7.

based on the fact that the Letter Commendatory was not addressed to the Franciscans. Moreover, Alexander was probably supported in his decision by the “Statement of Proceedings”, which stated that the bishopric could strengthen the Eastern churches against the “encroachments of the See of Rome”.¹⁸ Hence it seems that Alexander did not feel obliged to pay a visit to the Roman Catholic representatives in Jerusalem.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Roman Catholic countries, especially France and Austria, had resisted the establishment of the bishopric. According to the British ambassador in Vienna, the anti-Roman Catholic language in the “Statement”, together with Alexander’s pompous reception at Jerusalem, had contributed to the suspicion and dissatisfaction in Austrian circles.²⁰ In retrospect the British Consul in Jerusalem, James Finn (1806-1872), was amused to read the “silly exaggerations of Roman Catholic journals” at the time.²¹ The resentment of these countries might also have encouraged Alexander not to visit the Roman Catholic convent.

In the negotiations about the bishopric it had been decided that the LJS, together with the Prussian King, would provide money for the bishopric and its bishop. The LJS had also declared itself ready to make Alexander head of its mission station in Jerusalem, and to place all its institutions in Palestine under the Protestant bishop. The Society was willing to build a church in Jerusalem and a residence for the bishop and to provide him with personnel, such as several missionaries and a medical attendant with two assistants. Both the mission of the LJS and Alexander’s mission were directed towards the Jews, and during the years of his short episcopate Alexander made the Protestant bishopric and the LJS Mission into a unified body.²² While Alexander was in office new institutions were established, and existing enterprises, such as the building of Christ Church and the Medical Mission, were further developed.

¹⁸ “Statement of Proceedings”, Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 106.

¹⁹ Cf. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 66. Tibawi mentions that Rose advised Alexander to make up for this omission, but the bishop did nothing.

²⁰ It was said that Austria had lodged a formal protest at the Porte against the establishment of the bishopric. Finn, *Stirring Times* 1, 138; Greaves, “The Jerusalem Bishopric”, 351; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 47.

²¹ Finn, *Stirring Times* 1, 138.

²² Smith, *The Protestant Bishopric*, 65-66; Perry, *British Mission*, 57, 61.

Christ Church: the first Protestant church in Palestine

When Alexander arrived in Jerusalem there was no Protestant church building in the city, although the LJS had been trying to build one for years. When the LJS missionary John Nicolayson settled in Jerusalem in 1833, he held Sunday services in his own house.²³ During the second half of the 1830s, the missionary began to direct his attention to the building of a Protestant church in Jerusalem. To this end, he travelled to London in November 1836 to discuss the idea of erecting a Protestant church in Jerusalem with the leaders of the LJS. Since Palestine was under Egyptian rule at the time, Nicolayson thought that the necessary *firman* to build the church would be granted.²⁴ The LJS asked Palmerston for help in order to acquire the permit. However, no *firman* was obtained.²⁵ Nevertheless, the LJS ordered Nicolayson to purchase land for a church, a mission house and a burial ground. He bought land via an intermediary in 1838.²⁶ On 17 December 1839 digging started and two months later, on 10 February 1840, Nicolayson was able to lay the foundation stone. The LJS appointed the architect William Curry Hillier to the project, who however died of typhus in August 1840. Shortly after Hillier's death the second war between Egypt and the Ottomans broke out.²⁷

After Egypt's defeat Nicolayson wanted to take advantage of the intervening period between the old administration in Jerusalem and a new one. He urged the LJS in London to immediately take steps to arrange a *firman* for the building of the church. In turn, the LJS asked Palmerston to make use of the political situation and to ask the Sultan for the necessary *firman*.²⁸ However, the ambassador in Constantinople, Ponsonby, raised many problems regarding the issue of the imperial order. Ponsonby confided to Palmerston that he did not believe a direct request to the Porte for a church would result in a permit. He considered it better to build a small chapel,

²³ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 29.

²⁴ As mentioned before, Egyptian rule introduced several reforms to Palestine, one of which was the removal of the ban on building new churches. See Chapter 1. Cf. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 136.

²⁵ Perry, *British Mission*, 31; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 38-39.

²⁶ At the time foreigners were not allowed to buy land and to register it in their own name, see Chapter 1. A year later the land was transferred to Nicolayson's name as a trustee of the LJS.

²⁷ Perry, *British Mission*, 33, 35; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 40-41.

²⁸ Perry, *British Mission*, 36-37.

without much fuss; maybe in the course of time a *firman* would be granted.²⁹ When in September 1841 the Prussian envoy in Constantinople intervened in the matter, an understanding was reached with the Ottoman Foreign Minister. According to Ponsonby, this understanding was nothing more than an “unavowed” permission to build the Protestant church; the Ottoman authorities in Jerusalem would be ordered not to oppose the building activities, under condition that the labour did not attract any attention.³⁰ Consequently, there still was no *official* permit to build a church.

In the meantime the negotiations about a Protestant bishopric in Jerusalem between Prussia and Britain had started and in December 1841 Alexander had left for Palestine. On 28 February 1842, a month after his arrival, he laid the first stone on the church’s foundation, of which Nicolayson had laid the first stone two years earlier. Again, work on the building was interrupted because of disputes with Hillier’s successor, the architect James Wood Johns, who withdrew from LJS service. The work was continued under Matthew Habershon (1789-1852) in January 1843.³¹ Building activities continued without an official *firman* until in January 1843 the Governor of Jerusalem suddenly ordered it to stop. Upon this, Alexander and Nicolayson decided to go to Constantinople. They travelled via Beirut in order to consult Rose on the matter. Rose advised Alexander not to go to Constantinople, as he feared that the bishop’s presence would cause consternation among the European representatives in Constantinople. According to Rose, stories about conversions in Jerusalem had already provoked feelings of jealousy. Without Alexander’s presence the British Ambassador would be in a better position to press for a permit from the Porte.³²

Negotiations with the Ottoman authorities did not produce any result and for almost two years the situation did not change. However, on 18 March 1845, Lord Ashley presented a memorandum on the subject of the church to the Foreign Secretary

²⁹ Perry, *British Mission*, 38-39. Bunsen wrote Ashley that Ponsonby would not ask for a *firman* as he was sure of a refusal. Ponsonby therefore suggested to build the church without the permit. When the Ottoman authorities then ordered building to stop, he would ask for a *firman* to repair it. This refers to the Ottoman law by which it was not permitted to build churches, but only to repair them. Bunsen to Ashley, 13 August 1841, in Hodder, *Life and Work*, 373-374.

³⁰ In a letter to the Foreign Office in London, Ponsonby expressed his hope to get a written version of this promise, as he feared the Porte would not grant any official *firman*. Ponsonby to Palmerston, 15 September 1841, quoted in Perry, *British Mission*, 39.

³¹ Until the end of 1843 the Sunday services were held in a temporary chapel. When this chapel became too small, another building, by the name of St. James Chapel, was used as a church. Perry, *British Mission*, 66-67.

³² Tibawi, *British Interests*, 68-69; Perry, *British Mission*, 67.

George Aberdeen, in favour of the LJS. It was signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, other prelates, 1,400 parochial clergy, and 15,000 laity. The memorandum asked for an immediate removal of the obstacles for the building of the new church of the LJS in Jerusalem, arguing that the Ottomans were assisted by Britain in regaining control in Syria and Palestine.³³ This memorandum shows the broad support in Britain for the LJS and its mission to the Jews in Palestine.

The memorandum stimulated Sir Stratford Canning (1786-1880), the English ambassador in Constantinople at the time, to resume negotiations with the Porte in order to obtain the necessary *firman* for the church. Finally, in September 1845, a *firman* for building a Protestant Church in Jerusalem was granted by the Sublime Porte. It was addressed to the Governor General of Syria, the Governor of Jerusalem, "and others", and stated that the Protestant place of worship should "be within the Consular residence". Furthermore, the addressees should take care that no one opposed the erection of the church, when it was built "in the manner stated" by the *firman*.³⁴ However, the LJS and Alexander were not to enjoy the privileges granted for long; on 16 October 1845 the consuls of Britain and Prussia presented the *firman* to the Governor of Jerusalem. Only two days later, the Governor came to see the building site and discovered the church being built was not within the grounds of the consular residence. Moreover, the *firman* had granted permission to *erect* a place of worship and not to complete a building.³⁵ Consequently, the construction of the church was stopped again.

As a result of the intervention of Stratford Canning, a new *firman* for the building of the church was granted on 9 December 1845. This enabled the LJS to complete the building. Finally, three years later, the first Protestant church building in Palestine was finished and could be consecrated by the name of Christ Church.³⁶ As Alexander had died in November 1845, it was consecrated by his successor Gobat on the seventh anniversary of Alexander's entry into Jerusalem: 21 January 1849.³⁷

³³ Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 129; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 73; Perry, *British Mission*, 69-70.

³⁴ Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 128-129. Cf. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 74.

³⁵ Tibawi, *British Interests*, 74.

³⁶ King Frederick William IV had proposed to call the church "Israel's Trust", "The Consolation", "Comfort of Israel", or "Messiah's Church". Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 129.

³⁷ The entrance of the first Protestant bishop in Jerusalem is celebrated in Christ Church until this day. For the consecration, see also Tibawi, *British Interests*, 99; Perry, *British Mission*, 108.

The LJS hospital: conflict between the leaders of the Jewish community and the LJS

On 21 January 1842, the LJS sent the British physician Edward Macgowan to Jerusalem, where he arrived as a medical missionary as part of Alexander's entourage. Melville Bergheim had come to Jerusalem a few months earlier. In a small room on the LJS premises they started the medical treatment of Jewish patients. With the permission of the LJS board, Macgowan rented a building in September 1842 in order to renovate it and start a hospital. On 12 December 1844, the "Hospital for Poor and Sick Jews" was opened. During Alexander's episcopate the hospital concentrated mainly on treating Jewish people, but from the 1850s onwards people with other religious backgrounds were also welcome.³⁸

In the hospital no direct religious instruction was given to the patients, although Hebrew copies of the Bible were in every ward.³⁹ John Aiton, a traveller in Jerusalem, wrote about the hospital that

plenty of New Testaments in the Hebrew tongue are laid on the tables. But while every facility is given to the reading of the Gospels, there is nothing like compulsion, or any indication that the conversion of the inmates is the sole but distinguished object [...]. On the contrary, everything is done, so far as the funds will admit of it, for the benefit of the whole body of the Jews in Palestine.⁴⁰

It seems that the Jewish patients were treated in the hospital without any pressure to convert to Protestantism.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the LJS missionaries must have been pleased with every Jewish conversion to Christianity.⁴²

The leaders of the Jewish community in Jerusalem were fiercely opposed to the mission hospital. When on 21 January 1845 one of the Jewish patients died there, the Chief Rabbis of the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities in Jerusalem refused to bury him. Eventually the deceased was buried in the British cemetery. In the synagogues of

³⁸ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 239; Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 130; Perry, *British Mission*, 71-72.

³⁹ Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, 70.

⁴⁰ J. Aiton., *The Lands of the Messiah*, London, 1852, 319, quoted in Irwin, "Bishop Alexander", 325 and Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 239-240.

⁴¹ According to the biographers of Alexander's successor, Samuel Gobat, Gobat criticised this policy. He disagreed with all efforts made especially for Jews without preaching the Gospel to them, such as a hospital solely for Jews in which the New Testament was not read, in order not to put off the Jews. Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 348-349. For Gobat's view on mission, see the next chapter.

⁴² Cf. Irwin, "Bishop Alexander", 325.

both the Ashkenazi and the Sephardim an anathema against the hospital was read, which stated that all Jews were forbidden to work in or enter the mission hospital. If anyone did so, they would be excluded from the congregation, their sons would not be circumcised, no proper burial rites would be performed and they would not be buried in a Jewish cemetery.⁴³ Within 24 hours all Jewish people, both patients and servants, had left the hospital, but in a few weeks the patients returned to again receive medical care.⁴⁴

Foundation of new missionary institutions

During Alexander's episcopate several new institutions were set up. One of these was the Hebrew College in Jerusalem, opened by Alexander on 19 May 1843. In the "Statement of Proceedings" the establishment of this college had already been planned; it declared that the bishop should establish a college for Jewish converts under his care. According to the "Statement", Alexander was also allowed to receive Druses and Eastern Christians in the college if funds sufficed. Members of the Greek Orthodox clergy were only admitted in the college with the permission from their spiritual superiors and for a "subsidiary purpose".⁴⁵ In practice, the college was an institution for training Jewish converts as missionaries. At the start there were four students: three rabbis, Lauria, Goldberg and Hirsch, who were in the process of conversion, and the assistant to the church's architect, Edward Jonas.⁴⁶ Head of the college was Reverend

⁴³ Anathema read in the synagogues of the Ashkenazim in Jerusalem on 25 January 1845. The anathema read in the synagogues of the Sephardim does not contain the part about the funeral rites and burial. For the text of both anathemas and a letter about this situation from Consul Young to Aberdeen, see Hyamson, *The British Consulate* 1, 67-73.

⁴⁴ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 239; Perry, *British Mission*, 75. Perry quotes a letter from Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) which states that he countered the LJS initiative in the medical field by sending the Jewish doctor Simon Fränkel (1806-1880). Perry, *British Mission*, 77.

⁴⁵ "Statement of Proceedings", Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 110, 112.

⁴⁶ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 237; Perry, *British Mission*, 62. Two of them, the Russian rabbi Goldberg and Lauria, had earlier caused tension between Consul Young and Bishop Alexander. Together with another Russian Jew they had taken refuge in the house of one of Alexander's missionaries. According to the LJS missionaries the three were candidates for conversion, which also made them fugitives from the jurisdiction of the Russian Consular agent Rabbi Bordaki, as they were Russian citizens. The rabbis refused to appear before Bordaki. Bordaki asked Young for help to send them back to him. Young tried to achieve this; in several letters he asked Alexander to deliver up the men. However, to Alexander this was a religious issue rather than the political matter it was to Young. Consequently, the bishop refused to give up the three men, but was at last persuaded to stop protecting them. This affair led to a deterioration of the relationship between

William Douglas Veitch; subjects taught were Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, English, German and divinity, which had to be taught in strict conformity with the doctrines of the Church of England.⁴⁷ In 1846, Hebrew College was closed because of a lack of funds.⁴⁸

Two other institutions established during Alexander's episcopate were the School of Industry and the Enquirer's Home. When Jews converted to Christianity they were often banished from their community and lost their jobs. The School of Industry, opened in 1843, was an LJS institution intended to help Jews who had become Protestants. Its purpose was to train proselytes in different crafts such as carpentry and woodcarving, thus enabling them to make a living. They made objects required for the mission, such as furniture for the new church, and artefacts from olive wood which were said to be very popular among travellers. After a few years the School of Industry began to decline. It was reopened on 21 December 1848 under the name 'House of Industry' under the direction of Paul Isaac Hershon (1818-1888).⁴⁹

Also in 1843, a so-called "Enquirer's home" was opened. This home was established to provide "enquirers", i.e., those who were interested in Christianity, with free board, lodging and clothing. At the same time the potential converts underwent observation and religious instruction prior to their admittance into the School of Industry or the Hebrew College for permanent training after their conversion.⁵⁰

Furthermore, Alexander established an elementary school in Jerusalem.⁵¹ It seems, however, that this institution never really got off the ground. According to the LJS missionary Henry Crawford (1815-1863), Alexander brought a teacher with him to Jerusalem, who however became completely discouraged as a result of the "heterogeneous material" i.e., the children that were presented to him.⁵² In his annual

Alexander and the British Consul. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 63-64. Cf. Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 132-134. For this and more information, see Hyamson, *The British Consulate*, 47-60.

⁴⁷ Smith, *the Protestant Bishopric*, 156; Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric*, Documents, 112.

⁴⁸ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 237; Perry, *British Mission*, 63.

⁴⁹ Smith, *The Protestant Bishopric*, 157; Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 237-238; Perry, *British Mission*, 63-64.

⁵⁰ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 238; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 76; Irwin, "Bishop Alexander", 321.

⁵¹ The Palestine traveller Tobler mentions an elementary school established by Alexander, see Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem. The Old City*, 256. Perry also mentions a small co-educational school founded during Alexander's episcopate, but he does not give further information about the school. Perry, *British Mission*, 62

⁵² "The Diocesan Schools at Jerusalem", Crawford to the editor of the *Record*, 25 November (n.d.), Oxford/BL, Dep. CMJ c.110.

report for 1871 Gobat also states that the schoolteacher who had come from Britain had already lost heart before he had begun teaching. As a result, Alexander did not succeed in opening a school, according to Gobat.⁵³

At the initiative of Bishop Alexander, a Bible depot was opened early in 1844. In the depot Bibles were sold in Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Italian, French, German and Spanish. Besides Bibles, other literature was also provided, such as Hebrew translations of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or McCaul's *The Old Paths*. The depot was administered by Jewish converts, who read the Bible to visitors and discussed it. Its opening caused a great stir and the rabbis pronounced an excommunication against all Jews who should enter the Bible depot.⁵⁴

Conflicts between Prussia and Bishop Alexander

After a few years Bishop Alexander started to have clashes with the Prussian Consul General for Syria and Palestine in Beirut, Anton von Wildenbruch (1803-1874), and the Prussian Consul in Jerusalem, Ernst Gustav Schultz (1818-1851).⁵⁵ These conflicts uncovered several questions and problems Prussia had regarding the "Statement of Proceedings". One of the disagreements was about a Protestant community in the Lebanese town of Hasbayya in 1844. In this town several members of the Greek Orthodox Church had expressed a desire to become Protestants. They had asked ABCFM missionaries to come and provide religious education and hoped for protection from the Protestant powers, especially Britain.⁵⁶ Before the American missionaries could send out the two teachers of religion they had in mind, the 'new' Protestants also

⁵³ Gobat, Annual Report for 1877, Jerusalem, 10 November 1871, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 483.

⁵⁴ Gidney, *The History of the LJS*, 238; Perry, *British Mission*, 64; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 76.

⁵⁵ Alexander's relations with the British consul Young were not very harmonious either. In addition to the conflict about two Russian Jews (see n. 36), they had different views on British protection for non-British Jewish converts. In some cases Alexander asked for the protection of non-British Jews, which was refused by Young every time the bishop asked him. Young based his refusal on the instructions he had received from the British government in 1842, i.e., that he was not allowed to grant British protection to persons who might associate themselves with Bishop Alexander's congregation; see Chapter 2. For the conflicts between Alexander and Young, see Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 132-135; Tibawi, *British Interests*, 71-72.

⁵⁶ The American Board missionaries involved in the Hasbayya case were Eli Smith, William Thomson, and George Whiting. On the basis of archive material from the ABCFM, Tibawi writes that these Greek Orthodox wanted to become Protestants, because of the attitude of their religious leaders towards the taxes demanded by the civil authorities, which they felt to be oppressive. Tibawi, *American Interests*, 108. Tibawi discusses this incident in Hasbayya without mentioning the involvement of Bishop Alexander and the Prussian consuls.

asked for spiritual support because of the hostility of the Greek clergy in Hasbayya. As a result, some of them had returned to the Greek Orthodox Church.⁵⁷ When Alexander briefly stopped in Beirut on his way to Jerusalem, the people from Hasbayya approached him with their request for spiritual support. Whereas the American missionaries in principle viewed the request from the Hasbayya people positively,⁵⁸ Alexander refused it.⁵⁹ The bishop based his decision on the view that the dogmas of the Greek Orthodox Church did not differ essentially from the Anglican Church he represented, so that a transfer from one church to the other was not justifiable. In addition, the “Statement of Proceedings” forbade him to interfere in the affairs of the Greek Orthodox Church. Alexander’s refusal annoyed Von Wildenbruch, as he did not agree with Alexander’s actions in this matter.⁶⁰

This stance on the part of the bishop towards Greek Orthodox Christians who were willing to become Protestants was reason for concern to Prussia. Frederick William IV decided to interfere, taking into account the possible future efforts of a Prussian clergy. The King feared that if Greek Orthodox church members desired to convert to Protestantism, the Protestant bishop would order the (future) Prussian consulate-chaplain in Jerusalem to reject these potential proselytes. The consulate-chaplain, however, would be obliged to admit them according to the principles and practice of the German Evangelical Church. Frederick William IV thought it unjustifiable not to admit those who had left their church on grounds of conscience. He wanted Bunsen to discuss the matter with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. Bunsen, however, put off the meeting, as he believed it to be premature to discuss the matter, among other reasons because there was no Prussian

⁵⁷ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 135-136

⁵⁸ The American missionaries were in doubt as it offered a “golden opportunity” to gain so many converts and to prove to the Board that their mission was a success. For their deliberations, see H. Badr, “American Protestant Missionary Beginnings”, 232-236. Cf. C.E. Farah, “Protestantism and Politics: The 19th Century Dimension in Syria”, D. Kushner (ed.), *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period. Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, Jerusalem, Leiden, 1986, 324.

⁵⁹ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 135-136. The Hasbayya-affair became an issue on diplomatic level. This paragraph, however, only focuses on the disagreement between Alexander and the Prussian representatives, and Frederick William IV’s view of Alexander’s attitude towards the Hasbayya-affair. For information about the attitude of the English and Prussian representatives, such as Rose and Wildenbruch, the American missionaries, the Greek patriarch and the Ottoman authorities in this affair, see Farah, “Protestantism”, 320-340. Cf. Tibawi, *American Interests*, 108-112; Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 135-139; Badr, “American Protestant Missionary Beginnings”, 232-235.

⁶⁰ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 136-139.

chapel in the Prussian consulate yet. Such a discussion might lead to mutual distrust. Thereupon the King decided to postpone negotiations with the English prelates. However, before a meeting could take place, another conflict occurred.⁶¹

This disagreement between Alexander and Prussia was about the bishop's refusal to allow Prussian Protestants to use the LJS church after its completion. Alexander stated that he would only admit Anglican clergymen, consecrated by him and under his jurisdiction, to conduct a service in German. They were required to use the liturgy of the Church of England and to have the approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He could not allow Lutheran ministers to conduct services.⁶²

Schultz did not agree with this exclusion of Lutheran ministers. He wrote a document in which he listed his objections to the current situation of the bishopric in Jerusalem and its future. The consul even proposed to cancel the agreement between Britain and Prussia as a possible solution for the problems. Schultz criticised the position of the LJS regarding the bishopric; in his opinion, the Jerusalem bishopric almost seemed to be incorporated into the LJS. Apart from this hardly anything was done to promote the real aim Frederic William IV had had with the establishment of the bishopric: unity of action of the Protestants in the Ottoman Empire. On one point even this goal was directly obstructed; according to the consul, Alexander had been unfavourably disposed towards Protestant clergy who were not ordained Episcopalians from the start. He asked for an agreement that would make it possible for ordained Prussian clergy to work as pastor under the jurisdiction of the bishop.⁶³

The Prussian King asked Bunsen to discuss these conflicts with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. The King wanted four issues or questions to be clarified. The first concerned Alexander's statement that in the Anglican Church no other rite than the Anglican was accepted. Secondly, Bunsen had to find out the possibilities for intercommunion; could German church members and Anglicans receive communion together? The third question was whether the Prussian clergymen who were sent to Jerusalem and had been ordained by the bishop would have the necessary freedom in exercising their office. Finally, Bunsen had to discuss the attitude of the Anglican Church concerning the switch of Greek Orthodox church members to

⁶¹ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 137-138.

⁶² Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 140.

⁶³ For this and for more information about Schultz's criticism, which also led to differences between him and Bunsen, see Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 139-143.

the Protestant Church. With the matter of Hasbayya in mind, the King wanted his envoy to stick to the fact that Prussia had set itself no similar restrictions regarding the conversion of Eastern Christians.⁶⁴

In the meantime the King stuck to his plan for an independent Prussian Palestine Mission which would cooperate with the bishopric in Jerusalem.⁶⁵ As the buildings planned and financed by the LJS only served the English interest, the King wanted a *firman* for Prussia allowing the building of a Prussian consulate, with a chapel, school and hospital as soon as possible.⁶⁶

Death of Bishop Alexander

Early in November 1845 Alexander went to visit Egypt together with his wife and eldest daughter. From there they planned to travel to England. On 23 November 1845, while still on his way to Egypt, Alexander died at the age of 46. His body was returned to Jerusalem where he was buried in the English cemetery. Thirty-one Jews signed a letter of condolence to the bishop's wife, in which they praised Alexander's affectionate love for Israel and his inspiring piety and exemplary life.⁶⁷

With only a small number of Jewish converts, Alexander's mission does not appear to have been very successful. Nevertheless, existing LJS institutions were developed further and new ones were set up in cooperation with the bishop. During his short episcopate Protestant missionary activities had considerably increased and the Protestant bishopric had been instituted. Under Alexander's rule the foundation for future Protestant missionary efforts was laid. He acted in accordance with the "Statement of Proceedings" and directed his energies towards the mission to the Jews only. This mission was also very important to the people in Britain, as demonstrated by the memorandum of March 1845 in favour of the LJS church in Jerusalem, signed by thousands.

As a result of the efforts put in by Alexander and the LJS missionaries, the Protestant mission faced fierce opposition from the heads of the Jewish community. It seems that Alexander did not have any notable clashes with the other denominations

⁶⁴ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 143-144.

⁶⁵ See Chapter 2; Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 144.

⁶⁶ Lückhoff, *Anglikaner*, 144.

⁶⁷ Gidney, *the History of the LJS*, 240-241; Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*, 102-107.

in Jerusalem. This might easily be explained by the fact that he strictly refrained from making converts among the members of other churches. His attitude towards the Greek Orthodox in Hasbayya, who declared themselves Protestants, is an excellent example of his opinion on the conversion of Eastern Christians to Protestantism.

Alexander's treatment of the Greek Orthodox in Hasbayya, together with his view of the position of Prussian clergymen, caused conflicts with Prussia. The differences between the bishop and the Prussian representatives demonstrate that the Prussians held a different view on some issues stated in the "Statement of Proceedings": the bishopric's missionary aim, i.e., the mission to the Jews, the restrictions regarding receiving converts from the Eastern churches, and the position of the Prussian clergy and Prussian congregations within the Protestant bishopric. In view of these issues it comes as no surprise that after Alexander's death Prussia chose a candidate who suited the Prussian views better.