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Rethinking the Conversion and Career of Bishop Isaac Hellmuth

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

Bishop Isaac Hellmuth is the undisputed father of The University of Western Ontario, and his devotion to Christianity is celebrated as part of its rich history. Hellmuth, however, was born a Jew. Both Anglican and evangelical sources have treated his Judaism and his 1841 conversion to Christianity in a variety of ways, but they are limited. This paper will revisit Hellmuth's conversion and career through a Jewish lens, profiling a Christian missionary movement in which Hellmuth was active as both a prospective apostate and long-time emissary. Hellmuth's conversion has been described as an exclusively religious experience, but amidst European anti-Semitism, it might have been partly motivated by a desire for position and wealth. Certainly, Hellmuth's conversion reaped him rewards, although in London, Ontario, he was never quite able to elude his Jewish past.

"This Ambitious Polish Jew"

Rethinking the Conversion and Career of Bishop Isaac Hellmuth[1]

by Monda Halpern

Abstract

Bishop Isaac Hellmuth is the undisputed father of The University of Western Ontario, and his devotion to Christianity is celebrated as part of its rich history. Hellmuth, however, was born a Jew. Both Anglican and evangelical sources have treated his Judaism and his 1841 conversion to Christianity in a variety of ways, but they are limited. This paper will revisit Hellmuth's conversion and career through a Jewish lens, profiling a Christian missionary movement in which Hellmuth was active as both a prospective apostate and long-time emissary. Hellmuth's conversion has been described as an exclusively religious experience, but amidst European anti-Semitism, it might have been partly motivated by a desire for position and wealth. Certainly, Hellmuth's conversion reaped him rewards, although in London, Ontario, he was never quite able to elude his Jewish past.

Résumé: *L'évêque Isaac Hellmuth est incontestablement le père fondateur de l'Université Western Ontario, et son dévouement au christianisme est célébré comme une partie intégrale de la riche histoire de cette université. Et pourtant, Hellmuth était né Juif. Les sources anglicanes et évangéliques ont traité son judaïsme et sa conversion au christianisme en 1841 de différentes manières. Dans cet article on réexaminera la conversion et la carrière d'Hellmuth d'une perspective juive, mettant en évidence l'existence d'un mouvement missionnaire chrétien dans lequel Hellmuth oeuvrait aussi bien en tant qu'apostat éventuel qu'en tant qu'émissaire de longue date. La conversion d'Hellmuth a été décrite comme une expérience uniquement religieuse ; mais, dans le contexte d'anti-sémitisme européen, elle aurait pu être aussi partiellement motivée par un désir de position sociale et de richesse. La conversion d'Hellmuth lui a certes rapporté de nombreuses récompenses ; mais à London, Ontario, il n'a cependant jamais réussi à se dérober complètement à son passé juif.*

(Image courtesy of Diocese of Huron Archives)

As the first principal of Huron College in 1863, a founder of The Western University of London, Ontario, in 1878, and the first chancellor of Western from 1878 to 1884, Bishop Isaac Hellmuth is the undisputed father of The University of Western Ontario. In many ways, Hellmuth was the archetypal aristocrat, and a perfect university figurehead in conservative, Anglo-Protestant, Victorian Ontario; in addition to being white and male, he hailed from England, and was educated, affluent, and well-connected. Moreover, he was in Anglican orders. Hellmuth's devotion to Christianity, especially through institution building and higher education, is celebrated as part of the rich history of the university. Indeed, Western's Huron University College (formerly Huron College) retains the Anglican affiliation steadfastly promoted by Hellmuth. Attention to Hellmuth's Christian zeal, however, serves to mask the Bishop's true origins: Hellmuth was born a Jew and the son of a rabbi, and had himself been a rabbinical student.

[1] My sincere thanks goes to D.B. Weldon librarian Walter Zimmerman; Huron Diocesan archivist Mark Richardson; undergraduate research assistants Brett Stephenson, Josh Van Bemmel, Heather Stephenson, and Kiara Hart; archivists

Sources that reference Hellmuth have treated his Judaism in a variety of ways, all of which downplay his Jewish heritage. In the historical and university literature about Hellmuth, much of it written by Anglican clergy, his Judaism seldom gets mentioned at all,[2] and in those rare cases when it does, there is, understandably, only cursory allusion to his Jewish background.[3] In the few places where it gets discussed more fully, it is seen as an inconvenient path to greater things. Emphasis is on his conversion to Anglicanism in 1841,[4] a divine calling which facilitated his influence and renown, and the university's creation.

Phil Gold and Alan Langford; and colleagues Eli Nathans, Bill Acres, and Sonia Halpern. I am also grateful to David Man, descendant of Moses Samuel; and Jason Harding, descendant of Samuel Hirsch. Thank you, as well, to the Faculty of Social Science, The University of Western Ontario for its financial assistance. The title of this paper borrows from Anglican Diocese of Huron Archives, Huron University College (hereafter Huron Archives), Hellmuth, Rt. Rev. Isaac (1820-1901), Biography Collection. Clergy (hereafter Biography Collection), Alice Gibb, "Isaac Hellmuth, The man who founded Western," *London Magazine* (October/November 1983), 59. I intentionally employ the term "Polish Jew" here as it has been commonly used by both nineteenth and twentieth-century biographers of Hellmuth who reference his Eastern European Jewish background. As historians have pointed out, however, Jews in Poland in the nineteenth century were neither deemed Polish nor self-identified as Poles – they were simply Jews. Polish nationalism was a tenuous concept in any case.

[2] See, for example, Huron Archives, Biography Collection, Hellmuth's obituary in the *Proceedings of the Synod* (1901), 19-20, and Owsley Robert Rowley, *The Anglican Episcopate of Canada and Newfoundland* (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1928), 52-55, where there is no mention of Hellmuth's Judaism or conversion. Or see The University of Western Ontario's invitation to the annual Hellmuth Prize ceremony, in recognition of outstanding achievement in research. The invitation includes a brief biography of Hellmuth with no mention of his national or religious origins. The brochure *A Report to the Community from Huron University College 2001,* 9 simply states that "Huron's extraordinary founder, Bishop Isaac Hellmuth, grew up in Poland, studied in Germany and England, and spent his career in Canada, England and France." <www.huronuc.ca/campus info/Report 2000-2001>. Similar details appear on the Ontario Historical Plaque in tribute to Hellmuth on the Stevenson Lawson Building on Western's campus. These examples are in marked contrast to Orlo Miller's assertion in 1966 that "Today, fifty years after his death, there is still a tendency among Londoners in speaking of Hellmuth to emphasize rather the fact that he was a former Jew than that he was the founder of the University of Western Ontario." See Orlo Miller, *Gargoyles & Gentlemen: A History of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario 1834-1964* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966), 102.

[3] J.J. Talman and Ruth Davis Talman, for example, in their book *Western, 1878-1953* (St. Thomas, Ontario: The Sutherland Press, 1953) simply state that Hellmuth's background was "more cosmopolitan than was usually found in Canada at that time," citing, but not explaining, Hellmuth's birth to Jewish parents in Poland, his schooling in Germany, and his conversion in England. See p. 5. Talman in his book *Huron College, 1863-1963* (London, Ontario: Hunter Printing, 1963) again mentions Hellmuth's Jewish background, but does not discuss it. See p. 2. The same can be said for Ruth Helen Davis' 1925 MA thesis "The Beginnings and Development of The University of Western Ontario, 1879-1924" (London, Ontario: The University of Western Ontario), RT Applecart's 1937 MA thesis "The Origins of Huron College in Relation to the Religious Questions of the Period" (London, Ontario: The University of Western Ontario), and Phillip Carrington's book *The Anglican Church in Canada* (Collins: Toronto, 1963).

[4] Jews who converted to Christianity in the nineteenth-century were most often referred to as "Hebrew Christians" or "Jewish Christians." Today, they, along with Christians who practise Jewish rituals, are commonly known as "Messianic Jews" or "Jews for Jesus."

Today, those most often writing about Hellmuth are evangelical Christians who themselves were once Jewish, and who are aligned with various "Hebrew Christian" missionary organizations. Their focus is less on Hellmuth's prominence as a university founder and educator, or even as an Anglican, and more on Hellmuth's legacy as a "Hebrew Christian" role model, for whom Christianity and Christian missionary efforts happily triumphed over Judaism. This treatment of his conversion necessarily brings to light the tenacious work of mid-nineteenth-century Christian missionary groups directed at Jews, especially The London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews (LSPCJ).

With their exceedingly flattering portrayals of Hellmuth, and their uncritical treatment of the missionary agenda, both the Anglican and evangelical perspectives of the Bishop are limited, and certainly invite other interpretations. This article will revisit Hellmuth's conversion and career, and through a Jewish lens will consider the circumscribed ways they have been portrayed. In doing so, it will show that Hellmuth's conversion to Christianity, whether framed as a divine calling, the genesis of a university, or proof of missionary victory, signalled the magnitude of the Christian missionary movement which targeted Jews, a movement in which Hellmuth was active not only as a prospective apostate in Europe, but also as a long-time emissary in Canada.[5] Not surprisingly, Hellmuth's conversion by missionaries has long been described as an exclusively religious experience, but in the face of European anti-Semitism, it might have been at least partly motivated by his apparent desire for position and wealth. Certainly, Hellmuth's conversion to Christianity reaped him significant rewards, although in London, Ontario, he was never quite able to elude his Jewish past.

Isaac Hellmuth was born on 14 December 1820 near Warsaw, Poland, to Jewish parents.[6] His father, Jacob Hirsch (later Hirschman), was a rabbi, and as a child, Hellmuth was immersed in biblical and Jewish studies.[7] In 1836, after his

[5] In the brochure *A Report to the Community from Huron University College 2001*, 9. <www. huronuc. ca/campus info/Report 2000-2001>, the author notes that "Huron's extraordinary founder, Bishop Isaac Hellmuth, grew up in Poland, studied in Germany and England, and spent his career in Canada, England, and France. How appropriate that fostering international understanding and co-operation is now an integral part of Huron's mission." That Hellmuth's life could suggest notions of international understanding and cooperation is rather dubious by twenty-first century standards given Hellmuth's rigourous efforts to convert the Jews.

[6] Fr. William Cliff, "A Rare Man who Looked to the Future and Saw UWO," *Western News*, 125th Anniversary Edition, 18 September 2003, 3. [also published as "Bishop Isaac Hellmuth, " *Gazette* (Summer 2003), 14-17]. In some sources, his year of birth is cited as 1817. J.J. Talman references both years in two different sources; 1820 is cited in Talman and Talman, *Western*, 5, and 1817 is cited in Talman, *Huron College*, 2.

[7] Cliff, "A Rare Man," 3; Rev. A. Bernstein, B.D., *Some Jewish Witnesses for Christ* (London: The Operative Jewish Converts' Institution, Palestine House, 1909). Retrieved from the Digital Jewish Missions History Project, Jews for Jesus website. Hellmuth's original family name has only recently been confirmed

family had moved to Berlin, Hellmuth attended the prestigious University of Breslau, where he studied classical and near and Middle Eastern Literature, and began training as a rabbi.[8] It was at the University of Breslau that Hellmuth received Christianity. He encountered Breslau Hebrew professor Dr. S. Neumann, a Jew who had converted to Christianity, and a missionary with the LSPCJ, who "exercised great influence" over his Jewish students.[9]

In 1841, Hellmuth left Germany for England, the headquarters of several Christian missionary groups. He went to Liverpool under the aegis of the Home for Enquiring Jews, and lived for two years in a residence offering shelter to Jews considering conversion.[10] The leader of Enquiring Jews, J.G. Lazarus, acquainted Hellmuth with the most prominent clergy in Liverpool, while other members of the group helped him adapt to his new home.[11] With mentoring from evangelical the Reverend Hugh McNeile, and after much scrutiny and examination by various mission and church officials, Hellmuth became an Anglican. In October 1842, at the age of twenty-two, he was baptized at All Saints' Church in Liverpool by the Reverend H.S. Joseph, also of the LSPCJ.[12] The Reverend Charles H. Mockridge reported in 1896 that Hellmuth, "a man of Jewish extrac-

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by descendant Jason Harding, whose great, great, great grandfather was Samuel Hirsch, one of Isaac Hellmuth's brothers. See Huron Archives, Biography Collection, Mark Richardson, "Unlocking the Mystery of Hellmuth," *Huron Church News*, 56 (March 2006), 9. The topic of Hellmuth's original last name has been shrouded in mystery. In 1971, St. Catharines high school teacher L.N. Bronson, researching Polish immigrants to Canada, set out to discover it, but came up empty-handed. Historian John R.W. Gwynne-Timothy, in his chronicle of Western, states that, "according to family tradition," Hellmuth's name was Kirschmann. John Irvine, in his biographical treatment of Hellmuth (which he composed as if Hellmuth were writing about himself), correctly, albeit mysteriously, refers to him as Isaac Hirshman. But neither Gwynne-Timothy nor Irvine offers any primary source evidence for these names. See London Central Library, London Room, Historical Scrapbook Series, vol. 12, reel 5, 49, L.N. Bronson, "Remote Clue to Hellmuth's Family Name," *London Free Press*, 21 August 1971; John R.W. Gwynne-Timothy, *Western's First Century* (London, Ontario: The University of Western Ontario, 1978), 53; and John Irvine, "Isaac Hellmuth – his triumphs and destiny," *Huron Church News*, February 1987, 4.

[8] Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*; H.E. Turner, "Hellmuth, Isaac," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* <http://biographi.ca/EN>; and Cliff, "A Rare Man," 3.The city of Breslau is today in Poland (and called Wroclaw), but was a German city until 1945. Breslau's Jewish Theological Seminary was established in 1854, but Jewish Studies, including theological training, had already existed there before this time. See H.I. Bach, *The German Jew: A Synthesis of Judaism and Western Civilization, 1730-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 110.

[9] Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*; Neumann was professor of Hebrew at Breslau from 1834 to 1859. See James Arthur Muller, *Apostle of China*: *Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky 1831-1906* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 1937), 31. A.H. Crowfoot claims that Hellmuth encountered a Mr. Berling, also a Jewish convert to Christianity, and a missionary with the Society for the Conversion of the Jews. Under Mr. Berling's influence, Hellmuth studied and practiced Christianity clandestinely, too young and too fearful to disclose his new beliefs, especially to his father. See A.H. Crowfoot, *This Dreamer: Life of Isaac Hellmuth, Second Bishop of Huron* (Vancouver: The Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1963), 2-3.

[10] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer*, 3; Turner, "Hellmuth," 461. The Home for Enquiring Jews is also referred to as the Institution for Enquiring Jews.

[11] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer*, 3-4.

[12] Gwynne-Timothy, *Western's First Century,* 54; Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*.

tion, ... was led to see that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, and accordingly became a Christian."[13] From Liverpool, Hellmuth moved to London, where another missionary group, the Society for the Propagation for the Gospel Among the Jews, assisted him in his relocation.[14]

Hellmuth's encounter with these assorted societies indicates that there was no shortage of missions aimed at converting the Jews. Scholar B.Z. Sobel notes "at the close of the nineteenth century efforts at converting Jews were so extensive that the world appeared to be cluttered with a variety of missionary undertakings among [them]."[15] In Britain alone, where Hellmuth was baptized, there existed twenty-eight missionary organizations directed at Jews, comprising 120 stations, manned by 481 missionaries, and claiming an annual income $503,600.[16] In Europe, there existed twenty-one organizations, twenty-nine stations, forty missionaries, and an annual income of $64,950.[17] The figures for Britain, Europe and America at this time totalled ninety organizations, 213 stations, and 648 missionaries.[18] Canadian missions to the Jews also "received a lasting momentum that showed no signs of waning."[19]

By far, the largest and most influential of all of these groups was the LSPCJ. Established in London, England, in 1809 by apostate Joseph Samuel Christian Fredrich Frey, and becoming an Anglican institution in 1815, it was the first missionary organization specifically focussed on Jews.[20] Throughout the nineteenth century, LSPCJ mission stations "were established in virtually every major Jewish

[13] Rev. Charles H. Mockridge, *The Bishops of the Church of England in Canada and Newfoundland* (Toronto: F.N.W. Brown, 1896), 248. Mockridge was Canon of St. Alban's Cathedral in Toronto, and was Secretary-Treasurer of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada. See coverpage.

[14] Telephone interview by author with the Rev. Canon William G. Cliff, 25 September 2003, London, Ontario.

[15] B.Z. Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity: The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974),141. Sobel explains, however, that Christian attempts to convert Jews existed from the earliest days of the Church. By the nineteenth century, missionary organizations were virtually all Protestant, as Catholic missions largely directed their efforts at the "pagan world." See pp. 134, 138. Todd M. Endelman reminds his readers that for Christian missionary organizations, "missionary work was an expression of love and concern rather than intolerance and bigotry." See Todd M. Endelman, "Introduction," in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, edited by Todd M. Endelman (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 1.

[16] Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity,* 141; A. E. Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Missons [sic-Missions-JMH ed.* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902), Appendix B: Statistics of Societies at Present in Existence. In British Isles. Retrieved from the Digital Jewish Missions History Project, Jews for Jesus website.

[17] Thompson, *Century of Jewish Missions,* Appendix B: Statistics of Societies at Present in Existence. In Europe.

[18] Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity,* 141.

[19] Daniel Nessim, "The History of Jewish Missions in Canada," paper presented to The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism/North America, 27 April 2004, Toronto, Ontario, 7.

[20] Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain, up to the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1978), 114-15, 90.

community in Europe and the Near East creating a world wide network of missions to the Jews."[21] By 1902, the LSPCJ boasted fifty-two stations, 199 missionaries, and an annual income of $225,600.[22] In Germany, where it courted Hellmuth after its emergence there in 1820,

> "no mission, native or foreign, has rivalled the London Jews' Society in this field. Not only were its agents the prime factors in establishing most of the German societies, but they labored harmoniously side by side with them, and outnumbered their combined forces."[23]

That Hellmuth came to his Christianity at Breslau University was no accident. A.E. Thompson reported in his 1902 book *A Century of Jewish Missions* that the city of Breslau "has been favoured with many eminent missionaries. It has been a fruitful field."[24] Thompson cited Dr. S. Neumann, as well as the Reverend J.C. Hartman and the Reverend. J.F. de le Roi, who served as missionaries in Breslau for twenty-five years, thirty-two years, and eighteen years, respectively.[25] Sobel points out that "no community seemed too small, none too somnolent or insignificant to escape the evangelical zeal of the modern missionary movement,"[26] but perhaps more telling is that no community seemed too pious or learned. Breslau, as a centre for Talmudic scholars, and with an esteemed university that established a pioneering rabbinical school by 1854,[27] hardly seemed a propitious place for missionaries to proselytise. Among its population of almost 7,500 Jews by 1850,[28] they would have encountered many young men well versed in Torah and Jewish teachings. Indeed, German Benjamin Roth, in an 1854 letter to his son Solomon, asserted that this very knowledge was necessary in fending off the influence of missionaries:

> You do not have enough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. That way, you cannot engage in disputations with them; for they could easily lead you astray.... And, indeed, in my conversations with them I frequently exhibited them as such [swindlers] in the presence of company, something I could do since I have studied Scripture from my childhood days. And yet, even then it was a difficult task.[29]

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[21] *Ibid.*,115.

[22] The LSPCJ far exceeded other groups in number of stations, number of missionaries, and annual income. The British Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Jews, established in London in 1842, had the second highest number of stations at fourteen. The Free Church of Scotland, established in Edinborough in 1843, had the second highest number of missionaries at seventy-nine. And the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, established in London in 1876, had the second highest annual income at $45,000. See Thompson, *Century of Jewish Missions,* Appendix B: Statistics of Societies at Present in Existence. In British Isles.

[23] Thompson, *Century of Jewish Missions,* 134-35.

[24] *Ibid.*,136.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity,* 141.

[27] Nachum T. Gidal, *Jews in Germany: From Roman Times to the Weimer Republic*, English-Language Edition (Cologne: Konemann, 1998), 183.

[28] "Breslau," *Encyclopedia Judaic*, volume 4 (New York: MacMillan, 1971), 1356.

[29] Benjamin Roth, "Benjamin Roth Warns His Emigrant Son Solomon About Moral and Religious Dangers in America, 1854," in *Major Problems in American Religious History: Documents and Essays*, edited by Patrick Allitt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 172-73.

Yet, it was this same intellect that might have appealed to missionaries. These young Jewish scholars possessed both an intellectual and spiritual core which missionaries would have found more compelling and malleable than little or no scholarly and religious commitment. For missionaries, this trait meant that these passionate would-be rabbis, if converted, would make enthusiastic ministers, or at the very least, sceptical Jews who might renounce their training. In either case, the next generation of Jewish spiritual leaders and teachers would be fewer in number, and Judaism, presumably, would be weakened.

Moreover, missionaries knew that some of the students would have been vulnerable to self-reflection and change. Pressured by family to perpetuate its rabbinic legacy, some students were likely ambivalent, even resentful, toward their rabbinical training, and would have been open to a variety of other options, whether Christian in character or not. Conversion to Christianity, however, was the ultimate form of rebellion against these enormous familial expectations. As well, many of the students were away from home for the very first time, likely feeling both alone and liberated from oppressive family scrutiny. These young men might have welcomed a new crop of friends and mentors who relieved their loneliness, introduced them to fresh perspectives, and who spared them the seemingly rigid, all-consuming dictates of traditional Judaism. No doubt, Dr. Neumann and others possessed a superior level of intellect, sophistication, or charisma that young rabbinical students would have found alluring. None of these factors precluded a Christian motivation for conversion, but they did offer additional incentive.

Any sense of bitterness, confusion, or emancipation by young Jews might have been exacerbated by severe ideological tensions within the Jewish community in Breslau. The new Jewish Theological Seminary established in 1854, and headed by Rabbi Zacharias Frankel, promoted what may be deemed today Conservative Jewish teachings, but Orthodox Judaism and the relatively new Reform Judaism were both potent forces, and, throughout the early to mid century, their rabbis were in bitter opposition with each other, and with their shared foe Frankel.[30] Lay community leaders, however, were inclined towards liberalism, as were

[30] Gidal, *Jews in Germany,* 183, 244, 199; Jewish Museum of Berlin, *Stories of an Exhibition: Two Millennia of German Jewish History* (Berlin: Jewish Museum of Berlin, 2003), 103-104. Rabbi Salomon Tiktin and Rabbi Abraham Geiger personified the dispute between the Orthodox and Reform movements in Breslau. In the 1830s, the Orthodox Tiktin opposed the appointment of the Reform Geiger as a rabbi in Breslau, even appealing to the Breslau police commissioner to invalidate Geiger's installation. Despite this effort, Geiger assumed his position in 1840, and remained in this post for the next twenty-three years. The Orthodox and Reform branches remained split, each retaining their own rabbis, synagogues, and schools. Also at odds were Geiger and Frankel who at the second rabbinical conference in Frankfort in 1845 vehemently disagreed on several ritualistic points, differences that prompted Frankel to abandon the conference. Orthodox rabbis were also critical of Frankel, taking issue with various theological approaches. Also evident was the Orthodox opposition to rabbis who were academically trained at universities like Breslau, rather than religiously trained at traditional Jewish institutions. See Jewish Museum of Berlin,

Breslau's most prominent Jewish families.[31] Given this community feuding, it is likely that some Jewish youth in Breslau, especially those like Hellmuth training for the rabbinate, would have grown disillusioned and impatient with Judaism and the political wrangling of its leaders. Missionaries would have no doubt been aware of all of these community chasms, capitalizing on the hostility, disenchantment, or apathy that they spawned, and tracking those who converted or wanted to convert, even if for pragmatic and not religious reasons.Despite an impressive and aggressive presence throughout Europe, however, and many missionary reports to the contrary, missionaries only succeeded in converting a disproportionately small number of individual Jews.[32] Jewish commentator Moses Samuel, in his 1827 *Conversion of the Jews: Address from an Israelite to the Missionary Preachers*, stated that out of the 22,000 Jews living in Great Britain, for example, missionaries "find it the most difficult task to grasp at one or two infected with scepticism." Samuel underscored the rarity of conversions by pointing out that "the conversion of a solitary Polish Jew in London is hailed with such triumph as to require a public announcement in all the newspapers of so glorious an accession to the strength of Christianity." Samuel compared the uncommon apostate and the interest that he evoked to "the seldom-seen comet" that compels "the gaze of a staring multitude."[33] In 1844, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* agreed "we should have some hesitation to put full faith in the reported success of hired missionaries." The journal claimed that many of them were converted Jews, "who evidently must make some show of progress, in order to entitle them to their reward, without which nothing is done." The journal also asserted that missionaries mistakenly construed a Jew's mere receipt of their bible as evidence of his/her conversion, and that the LSPCJ likely counted the babies and toddlers of apostates among its converts. The journal concluded by noting that "unless the

Stories of an Exhhibition, 103; "Breslau," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 4, 1354, and "Frankel, Zacharias," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 7 (New York: MacMillan, 1971), 80-1; and Bach, *The German Jew,* 110-11. Tensions of this sort in Breslau continued into the 1860s, as evidenced by an 1863 article in *The Israelite* which reported on the "hyper-Orthodox" who "cry horror " against the Reformist rabbi thought likely to replace Geiger, and on the liberal congregation who "permits no retrogression," in the form of orthodoxy. See "Foreign Record – Breslau," *The Israelite*, 10 (2 October 1863), 107.

[31] "Breslau," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 4, 1355.

[32] The figure that is commonly cited is 224,000 European and American Jews who were baptized in the nineteenth century, although this number raises serious doubts, especially when examined on a per country basis. See Endelman, in Endelman, *Jewish Apostasy,* e.n. 6, 18-19.

[33] M. Samuel, *Conversion of the Jews: An Address from an Israelite to the Missionary Preachers Assembled at Liverpool to Promote Christianity amongst the Jews* (Liverpool: W. Wales and Co., 1827), 4-5. Courtesy of David Man <www. manfamily.org>. Moses Samuel (1795-1860), a Liverpool watchmaker, was a writer, editor, linguist, and Jewish activist. Although Samuel remained poor until his death, subsequent generations have transformed his modest shop into H. Samuel, the most successful retail jewellery business in the United Kingdom. See <http://www. manfamily.org/Samuel Family.html>.

value of a Jew's soul is really so great, the expense and labour are quite disproportionate to the success obtained."[34] Even some missionaries recognized the inadequate results of their work to convert the Jews. Hellmuth himself admitted in his 1865 sermon "The Conversion and Final Restoration of the Jews" that "it is now a little more than sixty years since the modern missionary movement commenced, and although the efforts among Jews and Gentiles have been crowned with God's blessing, little has been accomplished in comparison with what remains yet to be achieved."[35] Most blamed this failure on Jewish intolerance, indicting the "bigoted Orthodox Jews," and "their hostility to the truth."[36] In fact, the LSPCJ was right when it acknowledged that most Jews "thought it almost a crime and altogether a disgrace to listen to the voice of a Christian teacher," and that they held toward missionaries "a deeply rooted enmity in the heart."[37] In Germany, for example, Benjamin Roth wrote a letter to his son Solomon, who was preparing to leave for America. In the letter, Roth warned his son against the influence of missionaries, urging him to cleave to his Judaism:

> Never leave the religion that is yours by birth, the faith of your parents and ancestors. Neither wealth, nor friendship, nor the possibility of a brilliant career in life, nor seduction, nor even the love of a girl should move you or have the power make you change your religion. ... Also, never have any contact with missionaries. ... Consider them therefore only as self-seeking cheats, or as ranting visionaries, as I have come to know them.[38]

Britain's *Jewish Chronicle* expressed similar suspicion toward Hellmuth himself. In 1883, it praised his ambitious plans to compile a "Biblical Thesaurus," a tome that would translate, define, and analyse every word of the Bible's Hebrew text. The *Jewish Chronicle* "wish[ed] him success in his bold and original venture," but "express[ed] the hope – which may, or may not, be superfluous – that the work will be one of scholarship only, and that it will bear no trace of theological bias."[39]

Clearly, Jews generally understood missionaries as a problem, and as calculated, relentless, and unreasonable, but they worried that undue attention to

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[34] "London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, 2 (August 1844). <www. jewish-history.com/Occident/volume2/aug1844/shmad.html>.

[35] J. Hellmuth, D.D.,*The Divine Dispensations and their Gradual Development: Eight Discourses* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1866), 176.

[36] Thompson, *Century of Jewish Missions,* 136; London Society For Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, *The Fifty-Fifth Report* (London: London Society For Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, 1863), 61. The expression "very bigoted Jew" also appears here.

[37] "The London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews," *The Times*, 8 May 1852, 5. The LSPCJ also maintained, however, that in contrast to former days, "Jews were now disposed to hold intercourse with the society's missionaries." See London Society For Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, *The Fifty-Fifth Report*, 61.

[38] Roth, in Allitt, *Major Problems,* 172-73.

[39] "Notes of the Week," *The Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1883, 4. The article makes no mention of Hellmuth's Jewish background, although it does state that he had been a professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Literature.

missionary efforts would signal Jewish fear and vulnerability. They attempted to undermine the issue by insisting that they would devote only limited time and energy to it. Moses Samuel, for example, in his 1827 *Conversion of the Jews: an Address from an Israelite to the Missionary Preachers*, stated

> To write voluminous works against you would show an hostility to the christian [*sic*] faith which is not intended, and confer an importance upon your system of conversion which it does not deserve. It is a folly to enter the arena of controversy with you: the Jews, who are not wavering in their opinions, cannot benefit by it... . As for writing against you with a view of acquiring literary reputation, there are so many better subjects for talent or genius to exercise itself upon, that it is not worth while losing time in controversy, however boldly you may challenge us to the undertaking.[40]

In a similar fashion, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* informed its readers in 1844 that

> it is neither fear nor prudence which prevents us from speaking of them oftener, but only because we can fill our pages much better than with entering into a controversy which can lead to no result; since no matter how wrong we prove them in their mischievous course, they will still persevere in their folly; as the prophet says: '...the wicked will do wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand; but the wise will understand.'[41]

Despite this brave and dismissive attitude by commentators, Hellmuth's own family felt the sting of his conversion. According to Jewish law, baptism, which holds no religious meaning in Judaism, does not sever an apostate from his Jewish birthright.[42] But Hellmuth's conversion to Christianity was nevertheless regarded by his family as a deep betrayal, as "Christianity negates the fundamentals of Jewish faith, and one who accepts it rejects the very essence of Judaism."[43] Indeed, Orthodox rabbi Aryeh Kaplan noted in his 1976 indictment of Christian missionary efforts that for Jews, "conversion to another faith is an act of religious treason. It is one of the worst possible sins that a Jew can commit."[44] It is no wonder that when Hellmuth told his father of his new faith, "the outcome was worse than he had even dared to anticipate. He was turned out of house and home."[45] Indeed, Hellmuth's father cut him out of his will, and regarded him as dead.[46] Moreover,

[40] Samuel, *Conversion,* p. 3.

[41] "London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, 6.

[42] There is a difference of opinion on this point. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan argued that "a Jew who accepts Christianity...is no longer a Jew. He can no longer even be counted as part of a Jewish congregation." But, noted Kaplan, "Judaism teaches that there is always hope. No matter how far one strays from G-d and Torah he is always accepted back," although he "must completely disavow Christianity for all time and commit himself totally and without reservation to Judaism." See Aryeh Kaplan, "When a Jew Becomes a Christian," in *The Real Messiah? A Jewish Response to Missionaries*, edited by Aryeh Kaplan (New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth, 1976 and 1985; rpt. Toronto: Jews for Judaism, 2004), 11-12.

[43] Kaplan, "When a Jew Becomes and Christian," 11.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 3.

[46] M. Bourchier Sanford, "In Favour of the Jew," *The North American Review*, 152 (1891), 126; Bern-

"he became, as he afterwards told Bishop Mountain [Bishop of Quebec], an alien to his mother's children."[47]

This denunciation caused Hellmuth much distress. The story goes that Hellmuth, pained by his father's rejection, and/or not wanting to humiliate him further, abandoned his father's last name and adopted his mother's maiden name of Hellmuth.[48] Hellmuth's anguish is cited as the reason that he rarely spoke about his Jewish family.[49] He himself recognized that "what passed in my Fatherland...I do not wish to repeat. There are sacred ties of kindred and nationality, and a thousand tender associations which cluster around the heart...."[50] But although Hellmuth clearly grieved his family's loss, he held little regret: "There are painful memories in every Jewish bosom into which the love of Christ has come, for which that love far more than compensates...."[51] Besides, in both Germany and England, biographer A.H. Crowfoot reassures his readers, Hellmuth "found, as many converts from Judaism to Christianity have found before and since, that the Christian Church was a new family waiting to take the place of the family which had disowned him."[52] Some authors suggest that Hellmuth's family was harsh and unjustified in its rejection of Hellmuth, but Crowfoot's comment indicates that its reaction to his conversion was in fact common among Jewish families facing similar heartache.[53] Not surprisingly, Crowfoot and other biographers never use the word "disowned" to describe Hellmuth's own renunciation of his family through conversion.

Notwithstanding their inadequacy, and Jewish antagonism against them, formal missionary organizations in Europe and North America grew in popularity throughout the nineteenth century. This rise in organizations was attributable in great part to the belief by many evangelicals at this time, including Hellmuth,

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stein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*.

[47] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 3.

[48] *Ibid.*; Cliff, "A Rare Man," 3;Turner, "Hellmuth," 461; Gwynne-Timothy, *Western's First Century,* 53. Although this is a widely held notion, there are no historians of Hellmuth, Western, or Huron who provide primary source evidence that Hellmuth adopted his mother's last name, or that Hellmuth even was his mother's last name.

[49] Turner, "Hellmuth," 461.

[50] *Record*, 28 March 1868, in Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 3.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 3. A.H. Crowfoot was assistant to the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario, 1947-1962.

[53] Indeed, Louis Mayer, in his book *Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century: Brief Biographical Sketches* (1903; rpt: New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983) mentions several instances in which parents of apostates disowned or disinherited their children, or regarded them as dead. See, for example, the cases of Ridley Haim Herschell, 21, Freidrich Julius Stahl (although his parents and siblings later converted), 38, and Lewis Henry Salin, 141. When the founder of the LSPCJ, Joseph Samuel Christian Fredrich Frey, converted to Christianity in 1798, he too was spurned by his family – his father recited Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. See Scult, 93-95.

that the "'restoration and conversion of the Jews were vital events in the sequence that would lead to the millennium...'"[54]

Another significant factor in the growth of missions, however, was the temptation by Jews to assimilate with the promise of personal success.[55] This potential for upward mobility was rooted in the development of industrial capitalism, which created increased professional opportunities and rewards – provided one conformed to the dominant culture. The liberal ideas of the Enlightenment facilitated this proviso. It had challenged the "superstitions" of Orthodox Judaism, giving Jews permission to break away from its confining practices, and assimilate into mainstream society. Many Jews relaxed their traditional observance; yet, most were not prepared to renounce their Judaism – an enduring emblem of historical tyranny. For missionaries, however, the Jewish desire for assimilation was an invitation to their attempts at conversion.[56] In order to attract potential converts, then, "all the missions attempted to show the Jew not only otherworldly salvation but also a "this world" way – which led inexorably through a dominant Christian society."[57]

The extent to which spirituality motivated Hellmuth's conversion, therefore, is certainly up for debate. As historian John R.W. Gwynne-Timothy notes, "one can only ... leave to speculation the intellectual and spiritual factors which played upon his soul."[58] Hellmuth, as well as his biographers, only ever discussed his conversion in terms of a religious revelation, a sound narrative which highlights his divine connection, promotes the relevance and primacy of Christianity, and places his Christian faith at the heart of his privileged position and dedicated labours as a cleric, academic, and benefactor. Hellmuth's final decision to convert, however, might have been attributable to a variety of factors, among them his desire for social and material success. Naturally, it was in Hellmuth's best interest to conceal this aspiration, which helps to explain why, as a motivation for his conversion, it goes undocumented in his writings.[59] This consideration of material factors is certainly not to preclude the spiritual aspect of his conversion, but to suggest that such a complex and transformative process begs a multifac-

[54] W.H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millenialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790's to the 1840's* (London: Oxford, 1978), 50, in Nessim, "The History of Jewish Missions," 2. For Hellmuth's interpretations, see "The Conversion and Final Restoration of the Jews," in Hellmuth, 150-85.

[55] Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity,* 139.

[56] *Ibid.* Sobel notes the irony of Jews having to assume Christian identification in order to attain the social and material benefits of an increasingly secular society – an inconsistency that underscores the ultimate leverage of religion. See pp. 139-40.

[57] Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity,* 140.

[58] Gwynne-Timothy, *Western's First Century,* 53. This question of motivation assumes even more relevance given that one of Hellmuth's four brothers also left Judaism to become a Catholic missionary. See Richardson, "Unlocking the Mystery," 9.

[59] Its absence from the historical record, therefore, does not necessarily disqualify it as a possible factor in his conversion.

eted explanation to which this discussion contributes.

In nineteenth-century Germany, anti-Semitism was pervasive, and limited Jewish participation in almost every facet of life. The legal status of Jews varied by region and state, but they were generally subjected to protection fees, extraordinary taxes, residence requirements, and marriage restrictions, and they were virtually excluded from the upper echelons of government, law, academia, and the military. In the summer of 1819, many Jews were also the victims of violent pogroms, in which their homes and synagogues were destroyed.[60] David Vital notes that despite this overt discrimination, German Jews in the nineteenth century were increasingly urban, educated, and prosperous, attributes that should have helped ensure their full emancipation.[61] However, opposition to this prospect

> became more strident, implicitly supported by the central circumstance that both the machinery of state and the upper reaches of the hierarchical social system remained closed to them, surrounded by a moat that no Jew, no matter how effectively acculturated, politically loyal, and...'useful' was allowed to cross.[62]

Ironically, the Prussian edict of emancipation in 1812, and comparable acts in other German states that had pledged expanded liberties for Jews, had not helped stem the tide of conversion, but contributed to its greater numbers:

> The bestowal of emancipation raised their expectations about the possibilities for integration into German life, and when these expectations failed to be realized, their disappointment was that much greater, and thus the impetus to abandon a religious identity that had ceased to be meaningful was even stronger.[63]

Religious equality in Germany was not legally entrenched until 1871, thirty years after Hellmuth left Breslau for England.

In Germany, where Hellmuth grew up, attended university, and embraced Christianity, assimilation through conversion was a recognized and viable solution to the problem of restrictions: "a number of intellectuals and of those who had found a place in good middle-class society accepted baptism as a way to become part of Christian-Germany society."[64] Some of Breslau's most prominent Jewish families, for example, converted to Christianity in hopes of complete assimilation.[65] These conversions, many of which were pursued and achieved apart from missionaries, were inspired, then, by personal and professional opportunities that would have otherwise been closed to Jews. Sobel asserts that some conversions from Judaism to Christianity were "no doubt based on undiluted religious conviction; but great numbers were in large

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[60] Jewish Museum of Berlin, 89-91.

[61] David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe 1789-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 268.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Endelman, in Endelman, *Jewish Apostasy,* 10-11.

[64] Gidal, *Jews in Germany,* 198.

[65] "Breslau," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 4, 1355.

part attributable to a desire to assimilate with a majority culture that demanded assimilation as the price of full participation."[66] *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* underscored this point in 1844 when referring to conversions in England among foreigners like Hellmuth: they "can be induced, either from conviction (which is rare indeed), or some tangible advantage (which is more frequent)...."[67] Moses Samuel, in an 1819 address to supporters of the LSPCJ, blatantly avowed this same point: "If you have one converted Jew amongst you, hold him up to our view – let us see what ingredients he is composed of – whether fraud and avarice do not actuate him in his *converted* career!"[68] Clearly, Quebec's Bishop Mountain was also wary of this risk: before ordaining Hellmuth, Mountain weighed whether he was "an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."[69] Although there is no hard evidence that Hellmuth was among the Jews who converted to Christianity for social status and material gain, the relative popularity of conversion in Europe as a pragmatic response to rampant anti-Semitism is certainly suggestive.

For male apostates, the process of social and economic assimilation could be expedited or cemented in two ways: by adopting an Anglicized name and by entering into a Christian marriage.[70] Hellmuth did both. In dropping his family name, Hellmuth, rather than considering his father, might have simply desired to exchange his "Jewish name" Hirsch for one more in keeping with an Anglo-Protestant persona. Indeed, the name Hellmuth does not appear in some significant Jewish genealogy sources, omissions that raise questions about whether Hellmuth was in fact the maiden name of Isaac's Jewish mother, borrowed from elsewhere, or simply concocted.[71] In addition, in 1847, Hellmuth married Catherine Maria Evans, the daughter of prominent Major-Gen-

[66] Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity,* 132.

[67] "London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*.

[68] Samuel, *Conversion,* 16.

[69] Bishop's University Archives, Jasper Nicolls Papers, G.J. Mountain to Jasper Nicolls, 5 May 1846, in Richard W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-University Press, 2003), 120. In Mountain's view, Hellmuth was without "guile."

[70] For a discussion on marriage in this context, see Deborah Hertz, "Seductive Conversion in Berlin, 1770-1809," in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, edited by Todd M. Endelman (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 48-82.

[71] Dan Rottenberg's book, *Finding Our Fathers: A Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy* (New York: Random House, 1977), for example, makes no reference to the name. As well, the Family Names and Communities Databases at Beth Hatefutsoth – The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv, Israel, could locate no information about the etymology of the name Hellmuth, nor of any possible variants. E-mail correspondence between author and Danna Paz Prins, Beth Hatefutsoth – The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Internet & Databases Departments, Tel Aviv, Israel. If Hellmuth were the maiden name of Isaac's mother, these omissions raise equally provocative questions about the nature of her Jewish origins.

eral Thomas Evans of Montreal.[72] With this union, Hellmuth secured membership in an established Anglo-Protestant military family, thus gaining a foothold in privileged lay society. As Crowfoot points out, "Maria brought her husband not only charm and character, but also a plentiful supply of this world's goods" – a "fortune," declares historians J.J. and Ruth Davis Talman, that "had played such a large part in his schemes."[73]

By 1880, Hellmuth's social and material success was well documented in *The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men*. It described his "palatial" London, Ontario estate, and then lauded his appropriation of Anglo aristocratic culture: "It is said to require courage to take into the country the habits of refinement and intellectual tastes of an English gentleman. His Lordship, though a foreigner, has done this."[74] Regularly described as ambitious, and as a "born promoter" and "financier," Hellmuth consistently pushed the limits of his status, influence, and wealth. That the same could be said of other bishops means that he found his way into a profession well suited to his character and self-interests.

But if Hellmuth converted for more pragmatic than spiritual reasons, it is worth asking why he became a minister and missionary rather than strictly an entrepreneur or civil servant. Certainly with his rabbinical training and his extensive knowledge of theology, ministering (and for evangelicals, undertaking the requisite missionary work) was the logical profession for him to pursue. As well, unlike many converted laypeople for whom "authentic social ties with gentiles" still seemed out of reach,[75] he would assimilate almost immediately and thoroughly (facilitating marriage to a Christian which also solidified this process[76]). Moreover, Hellmuth believed that ministry work was highly prestigious, and equated it with both the economic and intellectual elite: in lamenting the modest remuneration and dubious quality of clergy in Canada, Hellmuth pointed out in 1876 that in England "to aspire to the Ministry of the Church is a sacred ambition, felt to be honourable in the most promising members of the noblest and wealthiest families," members who were "men of position and means, or distinguished at the great Universities for their intellectual attainments."[77]

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[72] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 9. For a biographical sketch of both Evans and his wife Harriet Ogden, see p. 79.

[73] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 10; Talman and Talman, *Western*, 27. After Catherine Maria died in 1884, Hellmuth made another profitable match in 1886. He married Mary Louisa Glyn, daughter of Admiral the Hon. Arthur Duncombe, and widow of the Hon. Ashley Carr Glyn, both the sons of Barons. See Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*.

[74] "Hellmuth, Isaac, Right Rev., D.D., D.C.L," *The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men,* Ontario Volume, 1880 <www.accessgenealogy.com>.

[75] Hertz, in Endelman, *Jewish Apostasy,* 66-67.

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] *Journal of the Synod of the Church of England in the Diocese of Huron,* Nineteenth Session, 1876

In 1844, Hellmuth left England, and immigrated to Canada East, where he himself sought to do Christian missionary work among the Jews. No doubt, Hellmuth felt compelled, or was expected by the movement, to engage in the same conversion efforts from which he as an "enquirer" benefited.[78] He went to Montreal where Jewish converts told him that work of this kind would be plentiful.[79] During this time, however, he received an enticing offer from the Home for Enquiring Jews to minister in New York.[80] According to Crowfoot, "his task would be to teach Jews who were anxious to learn more of Christ, and no object was nearer to his heart."[81] But Hellmuth declined the offer in favour of studies, then a position, at the University of Bishop's College, in Lennoxville, Canada East.[82]

In 1846, Hellmuth was ordained a deacon and a priest, and was then appointed vice principal of Bishop's, and professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Studies.[83] In this context, the term "Rabbinical Studies" generally meant exploring the "Old Testament" as the precursor to Christianity,[84] an approach for which Hellmuth utilized his Orthodox rabbinical knowledge and training from Breslau. Following on the heels of these achievements at Bishop's, he was also appointed rector of Sherbrooke.[85]

As a Jew born in Poland, Hellmuth travelled a rarely trodden road, but that Hellmuth the apostate and missionary had become a member of the clergy was not a particularly uncommon occurrence. At an 1852 meeting of the LSPCJ in London (England), the committee reported that before 1812, they could cite not "a single clergyman in the church of the house of Israel"; however, since that time, they maintained, "50 have been ordained in the church of England, to say nothing of those who have been appointed to the ministerial office in other churches."[86] Indeed, in 1903, apostate Louis Meyers penned the book *Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century: Brief Biographical Sketches*, in which he profiled twenty-one prominent male converts. Like Hellmuth, most were European-born, had an Orthodox upbringing, and became clergy, missionaries, and/or scholars.[87] In Canada, another of these clergy was

(London: Herald Steam Printing, 1879), 17-18.

[78] Endelman, in Endelman, *Jewish Apostasy,* 14-15.

[79] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 6; Christopher Nicholl, *Bishop's University, 1843-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 35.

[80] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 6.

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] Gwynne-Timothy, *Western's First Century,* 54; *Ibid.*, 6-7.

[83] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 7.

[84] Michael Brown, "Good Fences do not Necessarily Make Good Neighbors: Jews and Judaism in Canada's Schools and Universities," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 11 (Fall 1999), 6. <www.jcpa.org/cjc/cjc-brown-f99.htm> [Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs].

[85] Rowley, *The Anglican Episcopate,* 53.

[86] "The London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews," *The Times*, 5.

[87] Meyer, *Eminent Hebrew Christians*, *passim*.

Bishop Hellmuth, 16 July 1883. Courtesy of The J.J. Talman Regional Collection, The University of Western Ontario Archives, RC61.

Charles Freshman, who had been good friends with Hellmuth. Born in 1819 in Hungary to Orthodox Jewish parents, Freshman became a rabbi, and immigrated to Canada with his wife and five children in 1855. Once situated as the rabbi of a congregation in Quebec City, he began reading a bible sold to him in Hungary by a missionary to the Jews, and gradually renounced his Judaism. Freshman became a Wesleyan minister, and the first Wesleyan missionary to the Germans, among them Jews, in Canada.[88] When Freshman and his family were to be baptized in September 1859, Hellmuth was invited to the service.[89] Freshman wrote in his 1868 autobiography that Hellmuth "had on several occasions visited us and prayed with us, and proved, by various acts of kindness to myself and family, that he was a worthy and devoted labourer in the vineyard of his Master. A friend in need to me, and a beloved brother in Christ Jesus – 'an Israelite indeed.'"[90] With his continued affiliation with the LSPCJ, and with friendships with colleagues like Freshman, Hellmuth, far from enduring alone the aftermath of conversion, created a community for himself of like-minded individuals who shared and understood the nature of this dramatic journey. Historian Michael Brown refers to these "ex-Jews" as part of a "convert subculture."[91]

In contrast to this community of supportive converted friends, Hellmuth's Jewish family (that is, those who had not already renounced him) would have disapproved of his 1847 marriage to Catherine Maria Evans. They would have perceived the marriage of the "Jewish" Hellmuth and the gentile Catherine as intermarriage, an event regarded as a deep family tragedy, and rare among Jewish communities in Europe. One reason that intermarriage was viewed with such anguish was that according to Jewish laws of matrilineal descent, about which Hellmuth certainly knew, the children of a gentile mother, regardless of the Jewish father, could not be counted as Jewish.[92] This

[88] Rev. Charles Freshman, *Autobiography of the Rev. Charles Freshman* (Toronto: Samuel Rose, Wesleyan Book Room, 1868), 1-2, 50, 53-54, 63-65.

[89] *Ibid.*, 94.

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] Michael Brown, "The American Connection of Canadian Jews: 1759-1914," *Association for Jewish Studies [AJS] Review*, 3 (1978), 59.

[92] In 1854 in Sherbrooke, Mrs. Hellmuth gave birth to a son, Isidore Frederick. He was baptized at

meant that Hellmuth's Jewish family legacy would be virtually lost.[93] Of course, for Hellmuth the apostate and minister, his marriage to a Christian was not intermarriage at all, but was entirely appropriate, indeed mandatory.

In the summer of 1849, Hellmuth and his new wife visited England, where his former acquaintance with Jewish converts to Christianity proved extremely profitable. Hellmuth sought to raise funds for Bishop's College, and he approached "devout Christians, especially among the Evangelical party, who were glad to respond to the appeal of one who was himself a convert to Christianity."[94] Crowfoot asserts that "no doubt some of those who knew him in Liverpool would gladly give of their abundance to help forward the work of one whom they had known when he was an enquirer standing humbly on the threshold of the Church."[95] That summer alone, Hellmuth raised an impressive £1,000 for Bishop's College.[96] He later initiated similar fundraising missions for Huron College and Western.[97]

Crowfoot, in his biography of Hellmuth, refers consistently to the adult Hellmuth as Christian or a convert to Christianity until outlining his latter, contentious years at Bishop's College. In describing a conflict between Bishop's professor H.H. Miles and Hellmuth, Crowfoot revealingly states "race and temperament may have contributed their quota. Miles was a Scotsman, and the crest of Scotland is a thistle. Hellmuth was a Polish Jew."[98] Crowfoot is silent here on the significance of this characterization of Hellmuth, and on its seemingly negative implications. In turn, he also neglects to explain why men of Scottish and "Polish Jewish" backgrounds might necessarily be at odds. But his statement does indicate that while, for Crowfoot, Hellmuth's Christianity meant his hon-

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St. Peter's Church. The couple would have a second son, Gustavus, and a daughter, Harriet. See Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 17, 46; Mockridge, *The Bishops,* 255.

[93] According to Jewish law, Hellmuth's grandchildren could have only been Jewish by birth in the unlikely event that his daughter had first converted to Judaism, or his sons fathered children by Jewish women – neither of which happened.

[94] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 11

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] In both 1861 and 1862, for example, Hellmuth raised £5,000 in England. See Shaftesbury et al., "Final Appeal on Behalf of Huron College," in *The Gospel in Canada: And its Relation to Huron College* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1865), 111. Bishop Cronyn reported that Hellmuth's first visit to England on behalf of Huron College raised almost $23,000. See Bishop of Huron, "Introductory Address," in *The Gospel in Canada: And its Relation to Huron College* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1865), 8.

[98] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 15. Nicholl supposes that Miles' hostility toward Hellmuth was rooted in Hellmuth's focus on his networking and fundraising pursuits rather than on his teaching at Bishop's. Miles and others resented their own heavy teaching obligations, and the recognition and reward accorded Hellmuth for activities unrelated to the academic welfare of the college. See Nicholl, *Bishop's University,* 36, 37. See note I of this paper for comments regarding the term "Polish Jew."

our and respectability, his less desirable behaviours could easily be explained away by his Jewish heritage.

After experiencing increasing political turmoil at Bishop's, and in need of a change, Hellmuth resigned his various posts in Lennoxville and Sherbrooke in 1854, and assumed the position from 1854 to 1863 of general superintendent in British North America for the Colonial Church and School Society of London, England. The society oversaw the establishment or continuation of Anglican churches and schools in British North America, especially among groups who had rebuked or been denied Anglican ritual and education.[99] Crowfoot refers particularly to a group of French Canadian Roman Catholics who, after breaking from the Church in Quebec were so tormented by their community, were forced to flee to Illinois.[100]

Here, Crowfoot declares "any victim of religious persecution found a friend in Isaac Hellmuth. He knew what it meant to be cast out and become an alien to his mother's children."[101] Indeed, *The Globe* of Toronto reported in 1876 that he travelled to England to convert "with a view to avoiding the family discussions and the religious persecutions to which he would have been liable in his native land."[102] But these characterizations of Hellmuth as a casualty or potential casualty of religious persecution at the hands of his Jewish family and community serves to diminish the significance of the agony that Hellmuth had inflicted upon them, and surely undermines the historical victimization of Jews.

After nine years of this work, Hellmuth resigned and set his sights on a new challenge. Benjamin Cronyn, first Bishop of Huron, needed clergy to minister to his new diocese, and sought to establish a college in London, Canada West to train and ordain them. Cronyn, who had met Hellmuth in London years before when he worked for the Colonial Church and School Society, invited Hellmuth in 1863 to help establish Huron College, and to be professor of divinity and its first principal.[103] The school's motto proclaimed "Woe be unto me if I preach not the Gospel," a credo indicating the college's evangelical mandate as cited in its constitution, and consistent with the missionary impulse of its new principal.[104]

Although not widely acknowledged today, the new principal retained his affiliation with the LSPCJ, championing his evangelicalism among the Jews. He was a

[99] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 18-22. Among these groups were African-American slaves who fled the South via the underground railway, and Native Indians. See Carrington, *The Anglican Church,* 127-28.

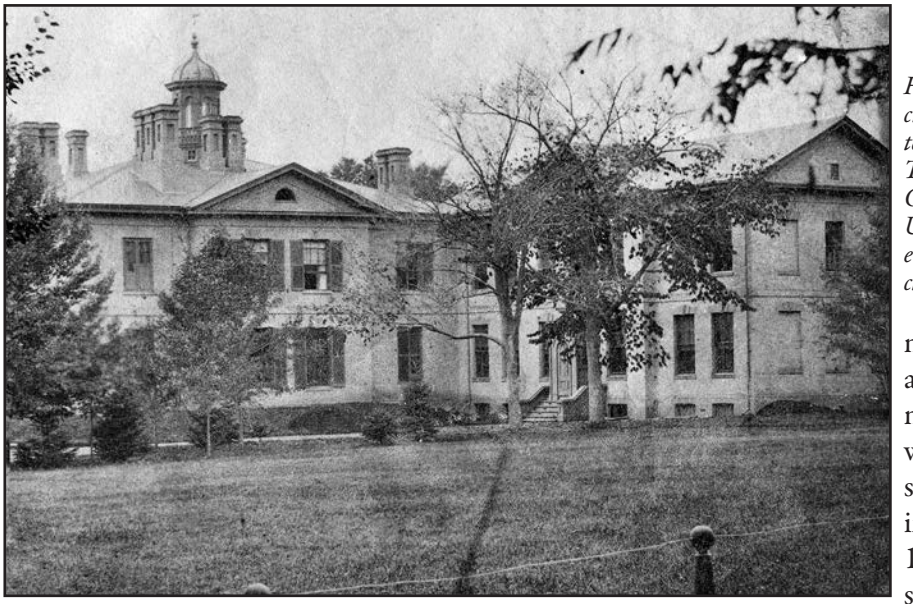
[100] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 22.

[101] *Ibid.*

[102] Huron Archives, Biography Collection, Hellmuth, Rt. Rev. Isaac (1820-1901), "Rev. Dr. Hellmuth," *The Globe*, Weekly Edition, 6 October 1876.

[103] *Ibid.*, 25.

[104] "About Us: A Brief Look at Huron – Past and Present," December 17 2003 <www.huronuc.on.ca/campus info>; The Right Rev. Dr. McIlvaine (Bishop of Ohio), "Inaugural Address," in *The Gospel in Canada: And its Relation to Huron College* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1865), 17.



Huron College, circa 1875. Courtesy of The J.J. Talman Regional Collection, The University of Western Ontario Archives, RC40093

prominent LSPCJ supporter and speaker in both North America and Britain.[105] In 1863, for example, Hellmuth promoted the expanding Toronto LSPCJ: he was "counted as one of the influential patrons of the society's first halting steps in its noteworthy efforts to evangelize Canadian Jews."[106] That same year, the LSPCJ annual report published in England listed "Rev., Dr. Hellmuth of Canada" as having paid undisclosed membership fees.[107] Indeed, in 1879, "at the suggestion" of Bishop Hellmuth, the Huron Diocese donated $150.56 to the LSPCJ, half the amount for foreign missions collected at the Diocese' annual missionary meetings.[108] As a speaker, Hellmuth, on his way to a missionary project in Cuba in 1875, made a stop in Philadelphia, where at Holy Trinity Church, he addressed a LSPCJ group.[109] As well, in England, "many a time did he pay a friendly visit to the Society's House – a delightful interlude in official routine – to encourage and to sympathize; on one occasion narrating the thrilling story of how, in early youth, he had found Him whom his soul loved."[110]

Even apart from his official work with the LSPCJ, Hellmuth promoted the conversion of the Jews during his years in London, Ontario. As The Reverend A. Bernstein noted in his 1909 tract *Some Jewish Witnesses For Christ*, Hellmuth "ever evinced hearty and unbounded in-

[105] Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*.

[106] Nessim, "The History of Jewish Missions," 7. Nessim cites A.F. Burt, *Our Montreal Mission* (London, England: Operative Jewish Converts Institution, 1903), 4, and William T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: From 1809 to 1908* (London: LSPCJ, 1908), 325-26.

[107] London Society For Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, *The Fifty-Fifth Report*, 15.

[108] *Journal of the Synod of the Church of England in the Diocese of Huron, 1877-1880*, Twenty-Second Session (London: Herald Steam Printing, 1879), 31.

[109] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 57.

[110] Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses.*

terest in the spiritual welfare of his brethren according to the flesh, and on many occasions advocated, from pulpit and platform, their claims to the gospel."[111] In 1865 at the Huron College Chapel, for instance, Hellmuth delivered a two-part sermon entitled "The Conversion and Final Restoration of the Jews." In it, he desired "to show that the Jews are destined to bear a still more signal testimony to the faith of Christ, when through divine grace and mercy, they shall have been converted, and brought to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah." Hellmuth concluded his address by praying that "the kingdom of Christ may come and comprehend within its wide dominion both Jew and Gentile, so that we may all become one fold under one Shepherd."[112]

Between 1867 and 1871, Hellmuth ascended to a variety of prominent positions in London. In addition to his posts at Huron College, and having founded Hellmuth's Boy's College in 1864, he established Hellmuth's Ladies College in 1869. More significantly, he became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, and bishop of the Huron diocese, succeeding Cronyn upon his death. In his capacity as bishop, he was an ambassador of sorts, preaching to mission and church groups, attending conferences, and travelling to foreign countries, all in the cause of evangelical Protestantism.[113]

Surprisingly, Hellmuth was not the only apostate to become an Anglican bishop. Hellmuth was second to Michael Solomon Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, from 1841 to 1845, and was followed in the nineteenth century by John Gottlieb Auer, Bishop of Cape Palmas, Liberia, from 1873 to 1874, and Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, Bishop of Shanghai, 1877 to 1884.[114] Alexander, Hellmuth, and Schereschewsky, had all been born in Eastern Europe, had all trained for the rabbinate, and had all encountered the LSPCJ.[115]

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[111] *Ibid.*

[112] Hellmuth, *The Divine Dispensations,* 148-49, 185. In outlining the main arguments of *Divine Dispensations*, Crowfoot makes no mention of Hellmuth's sermons on the conversion of the Jews. See Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 35. As the collection defended the veracity of the Five Books of Moses (albeit as they reveal Jesus Christ as the Messiah), several of the lectures focussed on the Jews, and testified to Hellmuth's extensive knowledge of Jewish theology. Interestingly, however, Hellmuth made no reference to his own Jewish background.

[113] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 57.

[114] Muller, *Apostle of China,* 111, f.n. 2. Of these five apostate bishops, only Schereschewsky gets profiled in Meyer, *Eminent Hebrew Christians,* 81-87. Alexander and Hellmuth receive mention in Myer's article "How Some Hebrews Have Found Christ," *Missionary Review of the World*, XVII, New Series (December 1904), 902-8. See David A. Rausch, "Introduction," in Meyer, *Eminent Hebrew Christians*, xxx, e.n. 32. Less attention is accorded to Auer as he died of fever only a year after his consecration as Bishop in 1873. Auer had been born in Württemberg, Germany in 1832. See "John Gottlieb Auer," *Virtual American Biographies.* <www.famousamericans.net/johngottliebauer>.

[115] "Michael Solomon Alexander," JCR [Jewish Communities & Records]- Exeter Synagogue Archives website, History of the Synagogue: the building; the artifacts; the people. Schereschewsky's early life was remarkably similar to Hellmuth's. Eleven years younger than Hellmuth, he was born in 1831 in Russian Lithuania. After the death of his parents, he lived with his affluent half-brother who provided

In 1878, Hellmuth helped found the Western University of London, Ontario, today The University of Western Ontario. Upon embarking upon this chapter of Hellmuth's life, Crowfoot asserts in his book the greatness of Hellmuth, describing him as "remarkable," "the Dreamer," and "the Man of Achievement."[116] For Crowfoot, Hellmuth's greatness is partly rooted in his martyrdom: Hellmuth, reflects Crowfoot, "followed Him out of the synagogue and into the Church, but at the cost of all he held dear."[117]

In fact, the price of Hellmuth's conversion might have been higher and more enduring than he anticipated. Despite his total adoption of a Christian identity, decades of devoted service to the Church, and the admiration and support of many Anglican clergy, parishioners, and students, Hellmuth could never quite escape his Jewish past. At various times, both his supporters and detractors raised the issue as a way to comment on his character, and, in the case of his critics, to express anti-Semitic sentiment.

There were those Londoners who graciously accepted Hellmuth's Jewish heritage.[118] At Huron College, for example, as at Bishop's, Hellmuth was a respected professor of Rabbinical Studies, whose Jewish background was deemed a complement to his teaching. G.J. Low, one of his first pupils at Huron, remembered

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Schereschewsky with a rigorous Jewish education. Then, at the age of fifteen, Schereschewsky left home to attend rabbinical school, eventually studying at the University of Breslau from 1852 to 1854. There, he came into contact with Dr. S. Neumann of the LSPCJ, the same Jewish convert to Christianity who guided Hellmuth. Under the influence of Neumann, as well as of LSPCJ missionaries at his former rabbinical school in Volhynia, Lithuania, Schereschewsky embraced Christianity. Like Hellmuth, Schereschewsky decided to immigrate to North America, and once in New York in 1854, he, like Hellmuth, made contact with various Christian missionary groups directed at Jews, and with prominent Jewish converts to Christianity, several of them Presbyterian Ministers. Schereschewsky was baptised in 1855, ordained a Presbyterian Minister in 1860, and consecrated Bishop in 1877. Schereschewsky's connection with Hellmuth went further when in 1888, Schereschewsky sent his fourteen-year-old daughter Caroline to Hellmuth's Ladies College in London, Ontario. Schereschewsky is best remembered for his Christian missionary work in China, and for his scholarly, laborious translations of the Old and New Testaments into Mandarin and Mongolian. "'The Old Testament has chiefly been assigned to me, owing to my familiarity with the Hebrew,'" Schereschewsky acknowledged. "'Being a Jew by birth and having enjoyed in my earlier years a good Jewish education, I know Hebrew better than any other language.'" Muller, *Apostle of China,* 27-33, 111, 211; 64-65.

[116] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 60.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] One reason for this tolerance might have been that, by 1861, there were only three Jews residing in London. See London Central Library, London Room, Dr. I. Goldstick, "The Jews of London, Ontario: The First One Hundred Years," *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory, 1963*, compiled by Dr. Eli Gottsman (Ottawa: Mortimer, 1963), 323. By 1871, the number of Jews reached 35, and by 1881, it reached 47. The numbers might have been even higher if one considers those Jews not willing to declare their religion or ethnicity for fear of anti-Semitism. Goldstick raises the interesting point that the 1861 census, the first which mentions Jews in London, referred only to those who practised the Jewish religion, not to Jews like Hellmuth who were only Jewish by background. By the 1881 census, Jewish referred to both religion and ethnicity. See p. 323.

> the value of his instructions especially in Hebrew language and literature; for he was a full-blooded Jew, brought up in the 'straitest sect of his religion' in Poland.... He was well versed, not only in the Hebrew Scriptures, but also in Talmudic and Cabalistic lore.[119]

As suggested by Low's description, for some Christian devotees, there seemed a certain cachet in having a Jew, one of God's "chosen people," as a divinity teacher. This may help explain why Hellmuth, who otherwise had little reason to remind Londoners of his Jewish background, was, in the classroom, "always quoting...learned and mystical Jews of the Middle Ages," and why he delivered an 1864 address at London City Hall on "the Jews and their literature."[120] George Naismith Luxton, Bishop of Huron from 1949 to 1969, claims in his Foreword to Crowfoot's book, that the clergy of the diocese of Huron were particularly accepting of Hellmuth:

> I have always been especially proud of Hellmuth's place in our Huron Episcopate. In the 1870's our people here, with all their Victorian prejudices and provincialism, had the breadth, the insight, and the liberality to elect (on the first ballot!) a converted Polish Jew to the See of Huron. This was a great tribute to Hellmuth, and, at the same time, they recorded a wonderful tribute for themselves![121]

In most cases, however, one need be cautious of optimistic interpretations of Hellmuth's treatment in London. There is little doubt that anti-Semitism nagged at him here, and that it served to undermine his many attributes and possibly impede his success. Indeed, if Crowfoot's glowing characterization of Hellmuth is accurate, it is worth considering why Hellmuth's clash at Bishop's and later conflicts with church officials were only a few of the many more disputes he would experience in London.

Perhaps the most notable of these conflicts was with Bishop Fulford of Montreal. The disagreement arose over Hellmuth's contentious public remarks in 1862, just before his arrival in London, when he expressed contempt for what he deemed the increasingly Tractarian character of British North American Anglican dioceses and colleges, which served to thwart evangelicalism. Fulford responded by defending the integrity of these institutions, and by attacking the credibility of Hellmuth, later accusing him and his father-in-law of greed and nepotism.[122] Historian Edward Beasley views Fulford's animosity as grounded partly in

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[119] G.J. Low, *A Parson's Ponderings* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1906), 158-59. Decades later, when J.J.Talman cited Low's recollections in his book on Huron College, he omitted this flattering reference to Hellmuth's Jewish background, stating that "Low wrote nothing more of his months at Huron." See Talman, *Huron College*, 16.

[120] Low, *A Parson's Ponderings,* 158-59; Talman, *Huron College*, 22. That Hellmuth incorporated in his classroom such extensive references to the Talmud and Kabbalah might also be suggestive of a unique, unconventional, and even subversive approach by Hellmuth to Christian theological teachings, a provocative idea that begs further study. Thanks to an anonymous peer-reviewer for raising this point.

[121] George Huron [George Naismith Luxton], "Foreword," in Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* v.

[122] See The University of Western Ontario, D.B. Weldon Library [microfiche], *Correspondence Arising out of the Pastoral Letter of The Right Reverend Francis Fulford, D.D., Lord Bishop of Montreal* [three letters between Adam Crooks and Bishop Fulford] (Toronto: W.C. Chewett, 1862), and Adam Crooks, *A Letter*

anti-Semitism.[123]

It is also worth considering why the ambitious and status-seeking Hellmuth, after all of his efforts as principal of Huron College, and as the mastermind, benefactor, and chief fundraiser of Western, never became president of the university. Historian Orlo Miller acknowledges that Hellmuth often alienated others due to his demanding, obstinate, and sometimes callous nature, but insisted that it was his Jewish heritage, combined with his superior intelligence, and not these character flaws, that served to deny him his due credit in London:[124]

> It is barely possible that his provincial Canadian contemporaries could have accepted a properly humble converso, but never one of such obvious intellectual attainments. The very silence of his contemporaries and his later biographers in respect of these facts is in itself eloquent evidence of the ambivalent character of the community's reaction to the son of a Warsaw rabbi.[125]

Writer John Irvine, in a 1987 issue of *Huron Church News*, maintains that from the viewpoint of Hellmuth's adversaries, his "most gnawing aspects" were his "forceful manner, the ability to stare another man down, a sense of presence, and being a forceful Jew." Irvine notes that with Hellmuth's every pursuit, "all these traits came to bear."[126] Historian Edward Beasley also notes that once in London, Hellmuth "endured more anti-Semitic remarks."[127]

Anti-Semitism directed at Hellmuth was certainly evident in reaction to the controversial Marsh case of 1879. In February of that year, two letters in the London *Evening Herald* charged that the education at Hellmuth's Ladies' College was inferior, that his boy's college was a financial drain on the Church, and that Hellmuth was short on spirituality. One of the letters was written by the wife of Huron College professor John Schulte, whom the Huron College Council fired in 1881 over the incident. It also terminated Archdeacon John Walker Marsh, himself a member of the council, who, it was later discovered, helped get the letter published. Both Hellmuth, who claimed to have nothing to do with the dismissals, and the Huron College Council were overwhelmingly condemned for overreacting to the affair, and for treating an apologetic Schulte and an indignant Marsh so harshly.[128] One observer of the

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to The Right Reverend Francis Fulford, D.D., Lord Bishop of Montreal and Metropolitan (Toronto: Globe Office, 1862).

[123] Edward Beasley, *Empire as the Triumph of Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005), 216. Richard Vaudry, however, views this friction as representing significant and numerous political schisms within the Anglican Church at this time, both within the Canadas and the Atlantic world. See Richard W. Vaudry, "Evangelical Anglicans and the Atlantic World: Politics, Ideology, and the British North American Connection," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, edited by G.A. Rawlyk (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 154-59.

[124] Miller, *Gargoyles & Gentlemen,* 101.

[125] *Ibid.*,102.

[126] Irvine, "Isaac Hellmuth," 4.

[127] Beasley, *Empire as the Triumph,* 216.

[128] Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 64-65.

time noted that Hellmuth was a "bully," whose behaviour revealed "an extraordinary combination of Jewish cunning and episcopal tyranny."[129]

In 1883, under uncertain circumstances and "very suddenly,"[130] Hellmuth resigned all of his posts in London, Ontario. To Miller, however, this turn of events was far from surprising. He brazenly states that Hellmuth was

> regarded as something of a freak – a sport, a graftling on the family tree of the Church of England in Canada. It is to this fact, disturbing as it may be to the good consciences of the descendants of the Anglo-Saxon founders of London, that the failure of Hellmuth's Canadian career must be attributed. His lonely and unequal battle ended, as it had to, in his defeat. The man who had a foot in each of two camps had a home in neither.[131]

Unlike some biographers who have regarded Hellmuth as the haughty overlord of a prestigious and celebrated academic and clerical career, Miller regards him as a demoralized victim of anti-Semitism whose ambitious efforts could never garner him his just rewards.

Clearly, for many in London, Hellmuth's Jewish heritage rivalled his Christian identity. His admirers generally regarded the long-since baptized Hellmuth in religious rather than racial terms, and as simply and wholly Christian. But as indicated in the above descriptions by Low and Luxton, which both reference issues of race, even some of his supporters unwittingly expressed ambiguity about the matter. Even with Hellmuth's conversion, therefore, it was not a stretch for his adversaries to mention his Jewish lineage (in order to undermine him). Todd M. Endelman writes that Jewish apostates "frequently found that the formal act of conversion was insufficient to convince gentile society that they had ceased to be Jews. ...Popular opinion in most countries accepted the notion of the immutability of Jewishness."[132]

In 1883, Hellmuth moved to England where he resided until his death. He held various positions into old age, retiring in 1899 due to ill health. He died on 28 May 1901 at eighty-one years of age, and was buried in the Privie Cemetery, Priory churchyard, in Bridlington, Yorkshire.[133]

Moses Samuel claimed that many a

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[129] Hellmuth's hostility toward Schulte might have had less to do with the offensive letter, however, and more to do with ambivalent feelings about Schulte's religious background. Schulte had also been born into a religion other than Anglicanism, a duality that might have resonated too keenly for Hellmuth. Moreover, Schulte had been born a Catholic, who in 1852 was ordained a Deacon and Priest, and later appointed professor at the Roman Catholic College in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Perhaps Hellmuth did not approve of Schulte's Catholic affiliation, despite his conversion to Anglicanism under Bishop Cronyn in 1862. See Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 65-66; Turner, "Hellmuth," 463-64. Of course, the reference here to "episcopal tyranny" is also prejudicial.

[130] Cliff, "A Rare Man," 3.

[131] Miller, *Gargoyles & Gentlemen,* 102.

[132] Endelman, in Endelman, *Jewish Apostasy,* 16. Interestingly, as discussed earlier, this view is in keeping with much Jewish opinion on the matter.

[133] Rowley, *The Anglican Episcopate,* 53, 55; Crowfoot, *This Dreamer,* 77.

Jewish convert to Christianity did not stay the course, but Hellmuth cannot be counted among them.[134] For almost seventy years he served the Anglican Church with passion and devotion, and was the model of evangelical commitment. For Hellmuth, even if Christian devotion took a back seat to assimilatory goals initially, his Christianity, and its expression through clerical service, became at some point equally, if not more, important. As bishop, his passionate addresses to the Synod of his diocese consistently reflect a deep Christian faith and commitment, and a prevailing concern for the future interests of the Church.[135]

Before he assumed this Christian zeal, however, Isaac Hellmuth had been a Jew, steeped in the Jewish beliefs and traditions that drew him to the rabbinate. His precise motivation for renouncing his Judaism is not entirely clear, but pervasive anti-Semitism in Europe and the seductive promise of a more advantaged life offer compelling reasons. Some might say that under such demeaning conditions, his decision might have also been motivated by Jewish self-loathing, which found expression in his own efforts to convert the Jews. Certainly, Hellmuth presents a challenge to practitioners of Jewish history who not only desire to examine Jewish life, but who often look for signs of its welfare and survival. In abandoning his own Judaism, and in unabashedly urging others to do the same, Isaac Hellmuth offered no such signs – yet, ironically, his Judaism remained with him as he struggled to achieve success in Anglo-Protestant Ontario.

[134] Samuel, *Conversion,* 6.

[135] *Journal of the Synod,* Nineteenth Session, 1876, 17-18, and see all sessions in *Journal of the Synod, 1877-1880.*