



Moses Margoliouth: Understanding a Hebrew-Christian Convert in Context
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In nineteenth century Europe, Jews converted to Christianity in large numbers. When analyzing these conversions, historians have traditionally focused on either economic necessity or religious persecution as reasons for conversion. However, some Jews converted to Christianity out of true belief—often aided by Christian conversion societies. One man who converted in this fashion was Moses Margoliouth. Margoliouth was born in Sulwaki, Poland, a small almost exclusively Jewish town. He descended from a lineage of Rabbis, but felt stifled as a young man growing up in this community. Thus, at the young age of 19-years-old, Margoliouth embarked on a trip to Poland—a trip from which he would never return. Margoliouth ended up in Liverpool, England where he quickly met and engaged with the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews (LSPCJ). Founded in 1809, members of the LSPCJ were actively, and mostly unsuccessfully, attempting to attract Jews to Christianity by simultaneously praising Judaism and rebuking its more modern manifestation (Rabbinic Judaism). Margoliouth, however, became enamored with this society and converted. As a Christian Margoliouth was a prolific author, a devout clergyman and a staunch believer in the necessity for Christians to proselytize and convert as many Jews as possible.

The goal of my project is first to better understand the conversion society that aided Margoliouth in his complete transformation of his ideological views. I then hope to analyze Margoliouth as an intellectual historian and religious zealot by closely examining his writings. By looking at Margoliouth himself, as well as the larger society, I hope to figure out why he was so keen on converting other Jews. Traveling to the British Library in London and Bodleian Library in Oxford enabled me to get a much clearer sense of this convert in context. In these libraries I was able to read Margoliouth's sermons, as well as his hand-written applications to different literary societies asking for funding to continue publishing his many written works. I also learned more about his inter-personal relationships with fellow converts, Jews and Evangelicals. I am now confident that

I have the necessary information I need to write comprehensively on Margoliouth, from the perspective of his personal narrative, his private and public writings, and through the conversion society in which he was a part.

Living on my own for nearly three weeks in London was a really important personal growth experience. I feel truly grateful to have been given such an opportunity. CURF enabled me to pursue something I am intellectually passionate about and for that I am very thankful!