HERBERT MARTIN JAMES LOEWE IN OXFORD

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One of the catalogues of the Hartley Library (at the University of Southampton) has the surprising entry: ‘MS 175 Oxford Minister’s Fund Papers, 1913–41’. It is surprising because after Rev. Moses H. Segal (who had become the minister of the Oxford Jewish congregation in 1901) left the city in 1909, there was no resident minister for the next thirty years.1 The resident Jewish population was tiny, a mere handful of families, and it is unlikely that they could have afforded to pay a minister. It was only after the expansion of the community — because of evacuation from the major cities during the Second World War — that a minister came into residence. It proved to be a temporary appointment and he left in 1948. There has been no resident minister since.2 However, while the resident Jewish population for the first four decades of the twentieth century was small, the number of undergraduates increased and it was for these students that the ‘Oxford Minister’ was intended.

The entry in the library catalogue covered a number of separate files of which one (MS 175/19/2) was headed ‘Correspondence of the Fund 1913–30’. This file referred to the fund which was raised to supplement the small college stipend for Herbert Loewe who was appointed in 1914 Lecturer in Hebrew at Exeter College, Oxford. He proved to be the ‘minister’, but Loewe made it clear that he did not consider himself such. The file of letters forms the core of this article. In addition, another file (MS 175/19/1) is entitled ‘Minutes and account book of the Oxford Fund 1914’, although in fact the accounts go up to 1941. This second document details some of the activities of the fund’s trustees, concentrating on the financial aspects.

The background to Loewe’s filling ‘an unofficial Jewish chaplaincy’ (as his son Raphael Loewe called it)3 is quite clear. The second MS, ‘Minutes and account book . . .’, begins with a short section headed ‘History’, which is useful although not completely accurate and to which other material can be added. It starts: ‘It had long been felt that the Jewish congregation at Oxford was sorely suffering from the

*The Jewish Journal of Sociology, vol. 48, nos. 1 and 2, 2006*

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lack of a permanant(eightic) Jewish influence such as has existed at the sister university’. A comparison with the situation at Cambridge University is indeed instructive. In both universities, the number of Jewish undergraduates was growing but in both the resident Jewish community was equally small and neither had a minister. The ‘History’ noted: ‘It was found that there were at Oxford between forty & fifty Resident Jewish undergraduates, and that without a leader, their spiritual needs were being greatly neglected’. The religious and social needs of the students at Cambridge were, on the other hand, to some extent catered for by dons such as Israel Abrahams as well as by others, whereas Oxford (once Segal had left in 1909) was bereft of such ministrations.

It is necessary, at first, to establish the background to the appointment of Herbert Loewe. After Moses Segal left Oxford, and in the absence of a minister, there was an intense discussion (to some extent publicly in the Jewish Chronicle) about this fear that in their formative years the undergraduates would be estranged from Jewish influence. In addition, there were developments relating to the form of religious services in the Oxford synagogue. As to the latter, it was thought necessary to incorporate elements from the new Liberal Judaism (the brainchild of Claude Goldsmid Montefiore). It was noted that at a meeting of the University Section on 16 June 1912, attended by three men (Harold Laski, Victor Gollancz, and Basil Henriques), ‘Nothing was decided but it was felt to be of the greatest importance to make the synagogue services more attractive and Judaism as a whole a greater reality in Oxford’. In future it was the Friday evening services which were to be concentrated on — Saturday morning services were suspended. The first part of the service was to be read in Hebrew while the second was to consist of prayers in English, including some from the Liberal synagogue.

As to the vexed question of the lack of Jewish influence on undergraduates, six of them had written a joint letter to the Jewish Chronicle — published on 10 May 1912 — which David Lewis paraphrases in his book on Oxford Jewry; they suggested that to remedy the problem of these young men ‘being deprived of strong and continuous Jewish influence’, ‘either a chair in some branch of Jewish learning be endowed, to be filled by a scholar of distinction, or provision be made for the residence of a Jewish minister’ (p. 48). There followed an exchange of letters and other items in the newspaper in which the question was raised of whether the weak position of the Jews in Oxford — both resident and undergraduates — should be strengthened by improvements to the environment (the physical aspects of the synagogue building) or by a change of personnel. For example, B. Liebermann (a graduate of Jews’ College who was then at Worcester College, Oxford) suggested that an appointment be made of a Lecturer or Reader in Rabbinics.
At the same time Basil Henriques, still an undergraduate, wrote: 9

I am going to bring in a very big reform and hope to get an endowment for a resident minister which will mean at least £10,000 . . . I simply long to achieve my object which is to make religion an attractive reality among the Jews up here. At present it is far from being a reality or in the smallest degree attractive.

David Lewis concludes (p. 52) this episode as follows:

The Chief Rabbi had by now found his solution, with which others helped, notably A. H. Jessel, formerly of Balliol, Vice-President of the United Synagogue. By means which are not at all clear, Herbert Loewe, from Queen’s College, Cambridge, steeped in the traditions which Solomon Schechter and Israel Abrahams had established there and with varied experience in travel, archaeology, Semitics, and Rabbinics, was found a post as Lecturer in Hebrew at Exeter. Loewe had been at Queen’s but was in fact then at St Catharine’s College. The reference for the rôle of Albert Henry Jessel is the Jewish Chronicle (12 January 1917, p. 10) which printed an account of Jessel’s funeral — he died on 6 January 1917, aged 52 — as well as eulogistic messages. One of the latter was from Lt. B. L. Q. Henriques, who wrote that Jessel ‘saw the need of a permanent Jewish influence in the University, and was one of the first to join the movement which ultimately led to the appointment there of Mr. Herbert Loewe’. In the absence of other sources about the origins of Loewe’s appointment which were then available to him, David Lewis inevitably referred to Henriques’s encomium, natural in a eulogy. But Jessel’s rôle appears to have been minimal: it was others who got the scheme going. Thus the biography of Basil L. Q. Henriques, in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, includes this statement:

He showed his capacity for persuasion by joining with Claude Montefiore and the Chief Rabbi to promote the establishment of an academic post in rabbinical studies. The first holder of this post was Herbert M. J. Loewe, who became Henriques’s brother-in-law.

[Herbert Loewe’s sister Rose married Basil Henriques on 19 July 1916.]

This account is paralleled by that given by Lionel Louis Loewe, in his life of Henriques (p. 16):

Basil had been at work at the centre of things. He and C.G.M. [sc. Claude Goldsmid Montefiore] and the Chief Rabbi had moved some of the lay leaders of the Jewish Community to endow an academic post at Oxford independently of the Oxford Hebrew Congregation but with a gentleman’s agreement that the holder would act as guide, philosopher and friend to that body.

There is no doubt that Chief Rabbi J. H. Hertz and Claude Montefiore were major players along with Henriques. A very great many of the
letters in the ‘Correspondence of the Fund’ file in the Hartley Library were between Hertz and Montefiore. One of the contributors to the fund, Julia Matilda Cohen (the widow of Nathaniel Louis Cohen, 1847–1913), in a letter of 15 February 1914 in which she promised £50 a year, added: ‘It is a good augury that its bulwarks should be on the one hand the Chief Rabbi & on the other the President of the Liberal Synagogue — so that every Oxford Israelite should man the ship and feel “dans son assiette” in it’. The significance was the association between the Chief Rabbi, the leader of religious Orthodoxy, and (as Julia Cohen had noted) the head of the newly-formed Liberal movement, which was anathema to many Orthodox Jews.

The letters in the Hartley Library demonstrate that A. H. Jessel, who was given a major role by David Lewis, was not in fact greatly involved, at least during the period covered by the documents in the file up to his death in 1917: he appears merely as a contributor to the fund to support Loewe, to the extent of £5 annually. It was indeed one of the first of the Chief Rabbi’s ventures; Dr. Joseph Herman Hertz (1872–1946) had been elected to the post on 16 February 1913 and formally installed two months later, on 14 April.

Although the MS ‘History’ states: ‘A meeting of the four gentlemen who are now trustees of the fund was held in January 1914’, the first reference to the creation of the fund, in fact the practicality of putting in place in Oxford someone to minister to the needs of Jewish undergraduates, began earlier, at least twelve months before Loewe was due to take up his position in the Michaelmas Term, 1914. The first two letters in the file are both dated 11 November 1913 and refer to previous activities. One of the letters was from Lord Swaythling — addressed to the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz (spelled Herz) — and the other was from Hertz to Swaythling. Swaythling enclosed a letter from ‘Mr. Liebermann’ (not included in the file of letters) and added:

I also would be much obliged if you would let me know how you got on in sounding Mr. Loewe, naturally, without committing us. Mr. Montefiore thought that Mr. Loewe’s was a most excellent suggestion, and would agree to take part under certain conditions, which I think I could arrange quite easily with Mr. Loewe, if you find that he would consider the position.

The Chief Rabbi’s letter stated that he had had ‘a most satisfactory interview with Mr. Herbert Loewe’ and added: ‘I am anxious to meet you and other friends of this Oxford Scheme’. The project quickly got under way.

The MS ‘History’, referring to the meeting of the four trustees in January 1914, stated:

Although they unanimously felt that Mr. Herbert Loewe, then fellow(sic) of St Catharines College, Cambridge, would be able to fill the post, it would be
almost impossible to raise a capital sum, sufficient for providing him with a reasonable salary. It was agreed, therefore, not to make a public appeal, but privately to ask certain members of the community to bind themselves & their heirs to pay annually subscriptions towards the salary of Mr. Loewe so long as he should continue to hold the post to the satisfaction of the Trustees.

In fact, the fund-raising had begun earlier: on 12 December 1913, Swaythling in a letter to Basil Henriques mentioned the first promised contributions each of £10 per year from three men: Arthur Franklin, Ernest Franklin, and the Hon. Gerald Montagu. Arthur and Ernest Franklin were cousins of Lord Swaythling, members of the ‘Cousinhood’ of inter-related families who were in effect the lay leaders of Anglo-Jewry. The letter reported on a suggestion which had been made that ‘the College that takes the Lectureship should pay a small sum, say £50, and we pay the balance, in order to have him more directly under the control of the College’.

Although no appointment to Oxford had yet taken place, fund-raising continued for the next few months. Generally, either or both of the Chief Rabbi and Claude Montefiore would write to a prospective donor proposing a visit, hoping the result would be positive. Sometimes they were unsuccessful. One person wrote on 16 February 1914 turning down such a visit: his son-in-law had explained the Oxford scheme to him but the writer did not feel ‘sufficiently moved by it to contribute’.

Apparently the first formal association with Exeter College came in March 1914. Montefiore wrote to Hertz that he had had a card from the Rector of Exeter (Lewis R. Farnell) ‘to say he would be glad to see Loewe’. Three days later Montefiore wrote that he had just seen Farnell and the interview had been ‘satisfactory on the whole’. The Lectureship at the College, he explained, was tenable for a year and the holder had to be re-elected: ‘Burney is the present holder, but he does not particularly want it’. If the College elected Loewe in October it would be on the understanding that he be re-elected. Moreover, the Lectureship was worth only £22 per year. Montefiore warned that Farnell had said that he was speaking unofficially and he was not sure that the Fellows would carry out or approve of the plan. Farnell added: ‘we should all hold our tongues’, so that when he would mention the matter to the Fellows they would not have heard of it. Montefiore told Hertz that he had written to Farnell saying: ‘we will hold our tongues’, and that as soon as Lord Swaythling returned they would have a meeting and would write to Farnell officially. However, speaking for himself Montefiore could see no objection to the annual re-election, ‘provided the College says it is understood that, if Loewe suits them, they will reelect (sic) him annually as a matter of course’. Farnell wrote on April 25, acknowledging the receipt of communications (presumably from Montefiore)
and saying, somewhat strangely: [they were] ‘authorising me finally to bring the question of Mr. Loewe’s appointment as our Hebrew Lecturer before our College meeting’, to be held on 1 May (my italics). After the interview, Farnell said in a letter to Herbert Loewe (dated 6 May) that he had delayed writing, ‘until I could deal with a certain difficulty to which I alluded in my telegram’. He reported that Loewe’s application to join the college had been discussed at a formal college meeting and had been warmly received, ‘and we were all very much impressed with your testimonials’. The ‘difficulty’ arose from the fact that the Hebrew Lecturer at Exeter was Dr. Burney of St John’s College, and they did not want to act in a way ‘that might seem unfriendly or unappreciative to him’. Burney had received Farnell’s statement about the situation and Burney had replied in ‘the most genial & sympathetic way’, not wishing to stand in the way. But the college’s action would be all the easier if Burney were elected, as he was expected to be, to the recently-vacated Oriel Professorship. That would probably be known within three weeks and Farnell suggested that ‘the question might stand over till then’.

However, Loewe wrote to Montefiore on 15 June: ‘The election of Burney seems to be protracted’ and he was worried because he wanted to be settled by October — the start of the Michaelmas Term. He had given notice to leave his post at Cambridge and wanted to move soon. He asked if it could be possible ‘to arrange the Jewish part of the scheme now’. In fact arrangements had been put in hand by Elkan Adler, solicitor, who had been drawing up a contract for the subscribers.

Two copies of a draft agreement exist, both dated 1 August 1914, between ‘the subscribers’ of the one part, and on the other part the Chief Rabbi, Lord Swaythling, C. G. Montefiore, and Basil Henriques (‘the present trustees’). It went on that ‘WHEREAS HERBERT LOEWE has been recently appointed Lecturer in Hebrew to Exeter College in the University of Oxford AND WHEREAS the subscribers are desirous of providing a yearly fund of Three Hundred & ninety two pounds [in the “Minute and account book . . .”] [or £250 in the “Correspondence . . .”] for the purpose of supplementing the salary of the said Herbert Loewe so long as he holds the said post of Lecturer or any similar post in the University of Oxford AND WHEREAS the subscribers are desirous of providing a yearly fund of Three Hundred & ninety two pounds . . .’ [or £250 in the “Correspondence . . .”] for the purpose of supplementing the salary of the said Herbert Loewe so long as he holds the said post of Lecturer or any similar post in the University of Oxford or any College thereof’ [added in the ‘Correspondence . . .’ — ‘and also the post of Minister to the Oxford Hebrew Congregation’]. A second draft agreement (dated only 1915) increased the yearly sum to be paid to Loewe to £400 and, as to his duties, changed them to ‘WHEREAS the said Herbert Loewe has been requested by the Trustees to use his best endeavours to promote the interests of Jewish Students at the said University which the said Herbert Loewe has agreed to do’. No mention is made of ‘the post of Minister to the Oxford Hebrew Congregation’. Yet it appears
that the word ‘Minister’ continued to be used. Thus, in a letter dated 22 July 1917 to Dr. Hertz, Julia M. Cohen, enclosing her annual cheque ‘for the Oxford Minister’s Fund’, went on to ask, ‘By the way, isn’t “Minister” a misnomer? . . . would not the “Oxford Jewish Social Worker” or some such paraphrase of that epithet be more appropriate — perhaps the “Oxford Jewish Sociologist?”’.

Meanwhile Loewe had engaged rooms in July 1914, ‘technically’ having been in residence at Exeter College since his appointment, as he explained to Lord Swaythling in a letter of 17 September. However, a month earlier, on 18 August, he had addressed (from Brondesbury Road in London) a somewhat exasperated letter to the Chief Rabbi in which he said that since he might be called any moment for military service he could ‘no longer postpone making arrangements for leaving Cambridge and settling in Oxford’. He had a number of expenses to meet but had received no money from either Exeter or from ‘the Jewish authorities’. He had given notice at Cambridge and had to remove his goods; he needed also to say whether he would definitely take the rooms he had engaged in Oxford ‘which I require until I am able to marry and take a house’. The agreement dated 1 August was a little premature.

After Burney was elected to the Oriel professorship, Loewe’s position became clearer. What appears to have been the first public announcement of his new rôle came in an interview with him, published in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 9 October 1914 (p. 12): ‘From Cambridge to Oxford. Interview for the Jewish Chronicle with Mr. Herbert M. J. Loewe, M.A.’. It stated: ‘The appointment of Mr. Herbert Loewe as Lecturer in Oriental Languages at Exeter College, Oxford, is an event of more than passing significance’. Loewe described his appointment thus:

I am going to Oxford to take up a College appointment. Owing to the death of Dr. Driver, who was succeeded by Dr. Cooke, a vacancy occurred in the Oriental teaching staff of the University. Dr. Burney, who was Hebrew and Arabic lecturer at Exeter College, succeeded Dr. Cooke, and I was invited by the Rector of Exeter to fill the vacancy caused by Dr. Burney’s appointment. I shall shortly enter upon my duties.

The draft agreement of 1 August stated that the first payment to Loewe would be made on 1 September and in fact it was only slightly delayed. Just before the *Jewish Chronicle* interview, Loewe received from the fund his first payment, of £100. The second draft agreement said that the first quarterly payment had been made on 14 September. On 17 September Loewe sent Dr. Hertz a letter of thanks and enclosed a receipt. He was effusive in his gratitude to the Chief Rabbi: ‘May I once more thank you most emphatically for all your efforts on my behalf and assure you of my deep sense of gratitude. I quite realize
that without your constant labours, the affair would long ago have come to an end’.

There were two other preliminary matters. First, the agreement with the subscribers included their obligation to bind their heirs to continue to subscribe to the fund, but two subscribers decided to subscribe only in their lifetime. Second, in a letter of 31 August, addressed from St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, Loewe wrote formally to Dr. Hertz that if all four trustees were unanimously of the opinion that he was not fulfilling his duties at Oxford he would ‘resign all claim to the salary for which the Trustees are responsible’.

He started work on the project straight away. His academic duties were light, as he explained to Hertz in a letter of 1 November 1914. He had two courses of lectures and two pupils (presumably for tutorials), one taking Arabic Pass Moderations and another who had to read Rashi on Bereshith for a scholarship. Most of the letter was devoted to his religious work. He had ‘unconsciously produced revolutionary changes’. There had been problems because of the need to accommodate the non-Orthodox undergraduates. Services were held on Friday evenings and increasingly many of the prayers were said in English. Loewe told Hertz: ‘On Fridays, you know, the Hebrew & English portions used to be rendered in Anglican plainsong — à la Church of England curate only more so — it only needed a touch of the Holy Ghost to make you fancy you were in church’. Loewe had suggested ‘that if the Hebrew were read like the litany, then it would only be fair to “dawwen” & chant the English prayers’. They had seen the humour of it and reversed his suggestion so that the last Friday evening service was rendered ‘in a more civilised way’. Moreover, he had revived Saturday morning services although so far attracting only half a minyan, and the Adler Society [the Jewish students’ society], to which he had given a paper, was proposing to start a synagogue choir. He believed that there was a deep religious feeling ‘dormant in orthodox & liberal alike and it will fructify in the future’. But he thought less of other members of the congregation. The townsfolk, he said, were ‘rather aloof. The trouble is that Mrs A, who won’t visit Mrs B, complains that Mrs C won’t visit her. I hope that when I am married my wife will be able to draw them together’. His ‘unaided bachelor efforts’ could not deal with the Jewish women students.

Two events led to a change in his life. First, in the autumn of 1915 he married Ethel Hyamson (who had been born in Oxford during the temporary residence of her family in the city), and he then volunteered for the army. He was commissioned into the South Staffordshire Regiment, later the Lincolnshire Regiment, despite the fact that he had a bad arm and poor eyesight. He was sent to India where he was joined by his wife and he was appointed an Inspector of a Clothing
Factory. His son Raphael was born in India in 1919. (His brother Lionel Louis was commissioned in the Royal Sussex Regiment and later the Gordon Highlanders and saw active service.)

Herbert Loewe’s decision to join the army caused some little disturbance, since apparently he did not officially inform the trustees. Lord Swaythling wrote to Dr. Hertz on 22 December 1915 that although he had signed the quarterly cheque for Loewe, ‘for our protection we ought to inform the subscribers that Mr. Loewe is not now in Oxford’. According to an unsigned copy of a letter to Basil Henrikes, dated 9 February 1916 — presumably from Dr. Hertz since Montefiore is referred to in the letter — ‘Lord Swaythling refuses to sign any cheques unless all the subscribers are notified that no actual teaching is at present being done by Loewe at Oxford, as he has enlisted and is now in India. I am strongly against this proposal of Lord Swaythling. Under present conditions you know what the answer of many of the subscribers would be, and as Fellows, for example, of Universities are not penalised for enlisting I fail to see why we should act otherwise’. Henrikes, who was in the army, replied that he agreed with Hertz and Montefiore:

I feel that Loewe served the Oxford Congregation best by taking the lead in applying for a commission. When he did so, there were few only of the Oxford Jews who were serving, and I think his example had an important effect. Although I think that he should have officially informed us before taking the step, yet our answer would without the smallest doubt have been to assure him of the continuance of his salary.

The subscribers were informed of the position after the trustees had considered the matter, taken legal advice, and had had communication from Exeter College. (In an undated letter Farnell told Montefiore that while Loewe was serving in the army, he ‘is still our official Hebrew Lecturer, receiving the stipend & being published as such in the University Calendar’.) This was explained by the Chief Rabbi in a letter of 10 September 1916 to Julia M. Cohen in reply to one she had sent him on 6 August 1916 telling the Chief Rabbi that her son Charles, on leave from Salonika, had told her that ‘none of the university posts that have temporarily fallen into abeyance owing to the War are continuing their payments to men who for the moment have left their work to become officers in the Army’. She thought that this was applicable to ‘the gentleman who undertook the post not of minister but of, as it were, religious don to Jewish undergraduates at Oxford — inasmuch as there are practically no Jewish undergraduates at Oxford!’ and she asked Hertz whether he thought the Fund should be maintained.

He discussed the matter with Montefiore who answered, in a letter of 12 September, that the only modification might be to give Loewe his
£400 less his army pay: 'That is what a lot of the Universities are
doing to their Professors, Lecturers etc.'. However, it is clear that the
full amount of the fund’s ‘salary’ was paid to Loewe while he was
in the army. Normally this was paid in four instalments, amounting
to £392 — although slightly less in 1917, and in the following three
years.

There had been a slight hiccup in 1917. Herbert Loewe, described as
‘Asst. Superintendent, Army Clothing Factory, Alipore’, wrote from
Calcutta to Hertz on 25 August 1917, thanking him for his help and
his efforts, and hoping to build up ‘a true Jewish environment at
Oxford’. But he was uneasy about his future as ‘if the Trustees had
informed me six months ago that there would be no salary in March,
I could have prepared to some extent for the contingency’. He was
worried that if, on his return, the trustees did not wish to proceed
with the Oxford scheme he would be in a great difficulty, having cut
his ties with Cambridge. He ended: ‘I cannot lose the feeling that I
am being regarded as a nuisance and a Schnorrer, instead of a salaried
official and that my salary is a dole dependent on the inclination of
my employers’. The matter was apparently settled to Loewe’s satis-
faction when he returned to Oxford in 1920 after his release from the
army and resumed his academic and pastoral duties. The letters in
the file then become rarer, and are largely taken up with Loewe’s
complaints about the size of his salary and the trustees’ efforts to deal
with them.

Thus a copy letter (unsigned, but undoubtedly from Hertz) of 10
February 1925, addressed to Montefiore, referred to a letter received
from Loewe (not included in the file) and commented: ‘There is a
terrible drain on his slender purse due to the fact that he is the
United Synagogue and Jewish Board of Guardians in one of the
Oxford Jewish community. He cannot turn away the Jewish beggars
that pester him and throw them on the hands of the public authorities.
It would render his position impossible. The fact of the matter is, his
salary is hopelessly inadequate. Something should be done. I am sure
there must be half a dozen people who, if they receive a letter signed
by the two of us, would consent to become contributing members to
the fund’.

Montefiore’s initial response, on 11 February, was not encouraging.
He was ‘very sorry for Loewe, but I am not clear that he is a very
good manager. I am not clear that he ought to give money to the
schnorers… After all we don’t give money to L that L may give
money to endless beggars… I quite admit that L’s salary is not
large, but certainly Dr. A has managed for years on a very small
salary’. Since he thought that ‘Dr. A’ was a much better manager
than Loewe he concluded by asking what would be a reasonable
salary and added: ‘I think he has 2 children?’. Montefiore must have
softened as a circular letter appealing for funds, signed by Hertz and Montefiore and addressed from Montefiore’s house, was sent to nine people on 17 March 1925 (another copy is dated 14 June 1925): Sir Phillip Sassoon; Lady Sassoon; Frank D. Benjamin; Lord Bearsted; Samuel Samuel; B. Baron (Brighton); Sir Edward Stern; Gustave Tuck; and Charles Sebag-Montefiore. The letter gave the background to Loewe’s appointment: ‘Mr. Loewe has fulfilled the work entrusted to him with zeal and enthusiasm, and while the Jewish undergraduates have in him a valuable friend and helper, it is also a real advantage that a Jewish scholar of mark has been added to the University’.

The letter then explained that the annual £400 was no longer a reasonable salary, in view of the rise in the cost of living. However, there is little record of responses to this appeal or to others made later. A letter to Lord Bearsted of 21 May 1929 mentioned that his late father, when appealed to in 1925, gave £100 as an annual donation of £25 for four years, and asked him to continue it. To some extent the new appeal was successful and from 1925 Loewe’s sum from the fund rose to £473 per year. There was also some help for Loewe from Montefiore who wrote to Hertz on 2 June (presumably 1929), telling him ‘in strictest confidence’ that Loewe had helped him in ‘some Rabbinic material for a new book of mine . . . and I induced him in 1928 & 1929 to accept £100 each year for this help. Of course any time given to me means less time for some other remunerative work; still I hope that in ’28 & ’29 he has been the gainer. But of course, that will not go on — in 1930 at the outside’. [This may have been Montefiore’s book, Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings, published in 1930.]

But Herbert Loewe’s financial situation remained difficult. Montefiore wrote to Hertz on 20 February [1930] that he had seen ‘H. Loewe today and he spoke to me about his Private Affairs which have filled me with very deep concern. It is most painful to hear that he is heavily in debt’. The point was forcefully made by Herbert Loewe, in the last letter in the file, dated 23 February 1930, to Hertz. He thanked the Chief Rabbi for taking ‘prompt steps’ when the position had been put to him earlier, and an extra £70 yearly was added, making the annual amount £470(sic). But it had not been increased since. In the meantime Loewe had supplemented his income by undertaking ‘hack work’ and by limiting his expenditure. (The extra work he undertook included, after the death of Israel Abrahams in 1925, driving to Cambridge for some teaching, going to Wellington College, Berkshire, on Sundays to teach some Jewish pupils there, and some teaching at other places.)

Despite these measures his overdraft had continued to rise and a limit had been reached. First he had had to give up some of his work because his health had deteriorated; and his bankers had just called a halt to his overdraft. ‘It has reached a point that it will take me years to wipe off
and if I were to die tomorrow, the provision I have made for my wife and children would be practically absorbed’.

Loewe compared his situation with that of others in a similar position. The University Commission for teachers in university positions fixed the minimum salary for such as he at £800–£850. He commented that he had ‘to represent the Jews in Oxford and my social calls are heavy; moreover the cost of an isolated Jewish household is obviously heavier than that of one in a Community. Not only are the dietary laws more expensive to carry out, but I have to bear all the obligations of a Community without the aid of any Communal funds. All eleeomosynary burdens fall on me alone, though occasionally you and Mr. Archer have given me sums for the charity box’. He compared his economic position with that of the beadle of a London synagogue, recently advertised, offering a salary of £350, free of income tax, a house and a pension. He looked back to his time at Cambridge, when he was earning a ‘comfortable competence and I would have had the next vacant Fellowship at my College, together with an independent career, freedom from anxiety and liberty to devote myself to research’. He concluded: ‘I hope that the Trustees will succeed in re-organising this post so that in dignity and emolument it will be equal to an ordinary non-Jewish academic position. As I have already stated the letter from my Bankers this week admits of no delay’.

In the academic year 1930–1931 the annual sum paid to Loewe amounted to £693, but in 1931 he returned to Cambridge where he became University Reader in Rabbinics, and in 1933 he was elected to an Honorary Fellowship at Queen’s College. In practice, the ‘Oxford’ fund continued to be paid to him while he was at Cambridge although reduced to annual sums varying from £316 to £378. He died in October 1940, at the age of 58, and the last payment was made to his widow in January 1941.

There are several accounts about several aspects of Herbert Loewe’s time at both Oxford and Cambridge, and of his work and influence. First is the evidence of his sons. A substantial article by Michael Loewe (who had been University Lecturer in Chinese at Cambridge) is supplemented by a short note by his other son, Raphael Loewe. Michael Loewe deals essentially with his family’s home life but his article includes material on his father’s attitudes and activities. First, it was a religiously Orthodox household but while his father ‘taught us that he chose to obey the traditional rules out of a love for their holiness… For him there was no conflict between a reverent and ever deep love for the Torah and the full force of textual criticism where this was needed… This combination of a heartfelt faith and an open mind was rare’. Thus Michael Loewe and his brother Raphael ‘were deeply privileged to be brought up in a home that was in many ways exceptional; that of a practising Jewish household.
where members of other faiths, or Jews who did not observe all the pronouncements of the Rabbinic law, could express their views with full confidence that they would be received on terms of equality and with respect.

To this openness was added Herbert Loewe’s duties towards the University undergraduates. Michael Loewe referred to freshmen arriving in October who might be homesick, or some might fall into debt or fall into a romantic attachment. ‘Such an emergency would call for careful handling from a senior man or woman who shared the young person’s faith and whose judgement would be acceptable’. He instances the case of a student who came from an Orthodox home but would be exposed to ideas in archaeology or anthropology which cast doubt on the Hebrew scriptures. Moreover, Herbert Loewe was able to explain to college tutors, on behalf of students, the intricacies of Orthodox observance.

The Loewe home was open on Saturday afternoons for undergraduates, for ‘tea, cakes and good cheer’; or as Raphael Loewe put it, Herbert Loewe ‘made his home in Beaumont Street a focus for Jewish undergraduate activity. It was here that on Sabbaths and Festivals he dispensed a generous hospitality in the tradition which he himself had witnessed, when a student, in Israel Abrahams’ home in Cambridge’. And he would act as a prison visitor in the case of a Jewish prisoner in the Oxford jail, would visit the sick in hospital, or would arrange a Jewish funeral. In all he was acting, in these capacities, as — in the words Julia Cohen used in 1917 — the ‘Oxford Jewish Social Worker’.

Edgar Duschinsky (later Duchin) came to Oxford as an undergraduate in 1928 and remembered Herbert Loewe: 16

Undoubtedly the great Jewish personality of my period was Herbert J. Loewe . . . He and his wife kept open house in their beautiful residence in Beaumont Street where they lived with their two sons, Raphael and Michael . . . His great strength was . . . his tolerance. He steadfastly refused to listen to the complaints of the more orthodox students and also their parents and insisted that the services should hold a fair balance between the claims of the orthodox and the progressives or liberals. I remember he was particularly annoyed when a group of Jewish mothers, prompted by the B’nai Brith of which they were members, descended once in term-time to check that the arrangements for kashrut for their dear sons were satisfactory. Herbert and Mrs. Loewe kept open house especially on Friday evenings and were careful to invite students to dinner or lunch in rotation.

Sydney Brookfield recalled the last major act which Loewe performed in 1931 before leaving for Cambridge. He realized that the year was the centenary of Adolf Neubauer, a considerable scholar, and a special memorial service was arranged for 21 June
1931 with a printed order of service.\textsuperscript{17} 'The undergraduates formed a choir, especially trained by the organ scholar at Exeter College'.\textsuperscript{18}

There is, however, another side to the Neubauer celebration. It concerns the relationship between the Chief Rabbi (J. H. Hertz) and Herbert Loewe. Despite the cordiality between them at the start of Loewe’s connection with Oxford, it is clear that relations between them became increasingly frosty. Hertz was given no rôle in the Neubauer celebration because (as Loewe told Hertz) the service would be conducted by undergraduates or those with Oxford degrees. However, he had added that if Hertz did not attend (as he had intimated) then his absence, in the presence of the Vice-Chancellor of the University and other dignitaries, would certainly be noticed. Hertz reluctantly attended but subsequently wrote to Loewe expressing his indignation at having been persuaded to attend a ceremony at which he had been slighted by not being given the recognition and respect to which he was entitled as the Chief Rabbi. He added that he now regretted the effort he had made to establish the Oxford fund.\textsuperscript{19}

To conclude, it must be stressed that in both Oxford and Cambridge, Herbert Loewe greatly influenced a generation of students. Through his friendship and intellectual openness, a number of them came to attain positions of prominence in the Anglo-Jewish community: for example, Robert Carvalho, Judge Alan Mocatta, and Leon and Cecil Roth. He also made a great impression on Donald Coggan, a future Archbishop of Canterbury: in the inaugural Donald Coggan Lecture, ‘Jewish–Christian Relations — from Holocaust to Hope’ (delivered by George Carey, then Archbishop of Canterbury, in Washington, D.C. on 24 April 2001), Carey said:\textsuperscript{20}

It is no exaggeration to say that his [Coggan’s] entire ministry was grounded in a love of the Hebrew scriptures and by implication a love of the Jewish people. In a moving address a few years ago he said: ‘I found myself, as a Christian to be in debt, everlastingly in debt, to the people of the book, the people of the Land, the people of Israel’. Not for him an ‘Old Testament’ detached from the faith and history of a real people. At Cambridge as an undergraduate he sat at the feet of Herbert Loewe and ‘learned to explore with him the treasures of later Judaism, vibrant with a faith of its own’.

\textit{Acknowledgements}

I am greatly indebted to Professor Raphael Loewe for his encouragement and advice, and for providing much useful information and many insights. I should also like to thank the Librarian of the Hartley Library, University of Southampton, for making available documents in his care and for giving permission to quote from them.
NOTES

1 David Lewis, *The Jews of Oxford*, 1992, p. 48, says that after Segal left in June 1909 there was talk of appointing visiting ministers during term time. Nothing came of it, but ‘some help was given by B. Liebermann(sic), a Jews’ College graduate, who was up at Worcester reading Oriental Languages from 1910 to 1912’. However, this was reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 October 1910, p. 12, as Mr. B. Liebermann, BA, having been appointed minister of the Oxford Hebrew Congregation. David Lewis does not, however, include him in a list of ministers to the congregation, op. cit., p.106.

2 A major reason for the absence of a minister, in the latter part of the 20th and the early 21st centuries, despite the growth of the community, is the fact that the synagogue caters for all types of Judaism, Orthodox, Liberal, and Masorti. It would be impossible for one minister to deal with all of them. However, there is a resident Lubavitch rabbi who ministers to Habad of Oxford.


4 The figure of 40–50 Jewish undergraduates is too high and was perhaps used in order to stress the need for the new post.

5 See Raphael Loewe, op. cit. in Note 3 above, pp. 171–2. Ephraim Lipson was a graduate of History at Cambridge in 1910, but finding no employment there, had moved to Oxford as a freelance tutor and researcher. He appears not to have been active at first in the Oxford Jewish community, but in 1916 he became President of the congregation. Later he was Reader in Economic History in the University, but in the early 1930s he left Oxford, not having been elected to the chair of Economic History. He became a freelance writer and cut himself off from economic history.


7 Lewis, op. cit. in Note 1 above, p. 49.

8 Ibid., p. 50.

9 Loewe, *Basil Henriques*, p. 15.

10 The four trustees were the Chief Rabbi (Dr. J. H. Hertz), Lord Swaythling, Claude Goldsmid Montefiore, and Basil Henriques.

11 In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 October 1917, p. 20, Ephraim Lipson, writing in his capacity as president of the Oxford Hebrew Congregation, drew the attention of undergraduates to the services held every Friday night and Saturday mornings.

12 He had started army training at least in May 1915 when he wrote to the Chief Rabbi saying that he wanted to know if he could use a bicycle on the Sabbath in order to undertake military training since there was limited time for training; but if not allowed, he would walk. The Chief Rabbi replied that during the war he could be exempt from strict observance. From Papers of Chief Rabbi J. H. Hertz, Hartley Library, MS 175/30/11. Referred to in www.art.man.ac.uk/HISTORY/research/workingpapers/wp_51.pdf, p. 19. The writer, however, refers to Loewe as ‘an upper class Jewish student at Oxford University’. 
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14 Obituary in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 October 1940.


18 Sydney Brookfield. ‘Memories of the Thirties’, in Silver Jackson, op. cit. in Note 15 above, pp. 27–8.

19 Private communication from Raphael Loewe.

20 www.msgr.ca/msgr-8/holocaust_inaugeral_donald_coggan_lecture.htm. The spelling of ‘inaugeral’ is necessary to access the website.