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CHILDREN, JEWS AND MISSIONARIES.

The case of “Jewish Advocate for the Young”

The London Society for Promoting Christianity among Jews was established in 1809 in London. It was the oldest and the largest society in the field of nineteenth-century British “Jewish missions.” Seeking Jewish conversion, it operated not only among Jews in British colonial spaces but also beyond them. The Society employed a wide range of missionary methods. Its periodicals were one of the main elements in the London Society’s fundraising scheme and in dissemination of its propaganda. Apart from magazines dedicated to a general audience, there appeared press which targeted specific groups of readers. Such was the case of a missionary periodical for children – “Jewish Advocate for the Young” (also appearing under other titles).

In my presentation I wish to examine how the image of Jews and Judaism was constructed in this periodical, paying a special attention to the wood-cut print images published in it between 1846 and 1875. My claim is that the generally stereotypical image of Jews in the missionary press, was subjected to further simplification in the magazines for children and also visually adapted to what British Victorian missionaries thought to be proper for a juvenile audience. I will attempt to answer the following questions: what kind of images were published in this missionary periodical?, what was the editing policy towards the visual presentation of Jews and Judaism?, how reliable are visual illustrations of Jewish life and religious customs in various countries presented in this magazine?, how these images differ from other known ethnographic or pseudo-ethnographic depictions of Jews and Judaism? My analysis will be set in the broader context by comparing images in “Jewish Advocate for the Young” with other types of Victorian missionary press dedicated to children and adults.

The paper will be accompanied by a ppt presentation.