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## BENJAMIN DISRAELI: A PSEUDO-CHRISTIAN OR A LOYAL JEW? A TWOFACED JEW OR A DEVOTED CHRISTIAN? OR A JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN?

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### Abstract

Benjamin Disraeli was a well-known politician and author in England during Victorian Age whose endeavours and contributions to shape politics and society cannot be overlooked. By virtue of his ethnic and religious origins, he was always approached with suspicion. Due to his colour and Semitic appearance, all his attempts to constitute a new social system in his country were not thoroughly adopted by society. Although he did his level best for England and English people, he failed to convince people about his sincerity. Because his discourses about the English and the Jew seemed people so conflicting that they could not go beyond this dilemma. His religious tendencies remained in the minds of people as a vague image which disturbed them too much. In order to analyze the politic and literary understanding of Benjamin Disraeli better, focusing on his ethnic and religious identity seems to be crucial. In this study, his ethnic and religious tendencies have been tried to be revealed.

**Keywords:** Benjamin Disraeli, Judaeo-Christian, Sephardic Jews, Ashkenazim Jews, Disraelian Judaism.

Benjamin Disraeli, a politician, prime minister and a productive novelist, has always been known as 'the man of contradictions'. Although his exoteric appearance and clothing prove his oriental and Jewish roots, his compliments for England, for English people and for Christianity lead people to conflicting opinions about him. In spite of the fact that there are no records showing denial of his Jewish heritage and there are many admissions approving his Jewish ancestors; his general attitudes as a politician against the poor, the miserable, the persecuted and his politic steps and approaches for outsiders have confused the minds of people to understand his political, racial and religious position in England in 19th century.

There are many elements hinting at his racial and religious obsession in his works. His direct or indirect mentioning of exile, persecution or exclusion, which is typical of many Jewish authors, proves this racial obsession. Some of the outsiders in his novels mostly suffer from poverty and statelessness. Talking about history and the lineage of families and characters are other important elements indicating his racial tendencies. Important events usually happen on Saturdays, the holy day for Jews, and they all are coincidental. Otherness also constitutes a

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considerable part in his works. These are enough for people to become aware of his ethnical sensibility.

In his works, he not only tries to present the superiority of his race to other races but the superiority of Sephardic Jews<sup>1</sup> to all other Jewish groups. Many of his powerful, wealthy, kind-hearted and benevolent protagonists are Jews whose descendants are from Iberian Peninsula where Sephardic Jews dispersed to Europe and other continents.

But nevertheless the minds of people have confused and they have difficulty to understand his political, racial and religious position in England in 19th century. He always states that there is more freedom in England than in any country in the world. It is a happy land for all people and it should be sublimated. The English is the truest and bravest nation. One of the most considerable problems putting people into trouble is the lack of faith in their hearts. Christian churches have lost their mission and function. They do not protect the people as they did in the middle ages; so, the situation of people in the country, particularly the poor, becomes worse day by day. If the government aim to improve their country, they ought to strengthen the churches.

His deep feelings for England, English society and Christianity put a huge question mark in the minds of reader. The big question is; how can a Jew adore England more than Israel? Or how can Christianity be prior to Judaism for a Jew? That seems to be quite controversial for the reader in evaluating his Christianity as a phony or in assessing him as a two-faced Jew.

Indeed, Disraeli is neither a Jew nor a Christian. The most appropriate concept describes himself is 'Judo-Christian'. He believes that Judaism and Christianity cannot be discussed apart from each other. The modern and new version of Judaism can be defined as Christianity and it is more comprehensive than Judaism. Because it is not only for the Jews like Judaism, it is a religion for all people. In his novels, especially in *Tancred*, he focuses on this reality.

Disraeli was a religious Christian but people saw and defined him as a Jew. In Berlin Conference, Bismarck introduced him: "Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann / The old Jew, that's the man." (Gelernter, 2005: 2) He never rejected his Jewish origins. "No record exists of Disraeli concealing his identity in an autobiographical account, and his son's 'Memoir', in any case, leaves no doubt about the family's Jewish heritage." (Ragussis, 1995: 181) It is true that there are no records showing that Disraeli hides his origins but he has confessions about his Jewish roots. In the 'Memoir', which he published as a preface to his father's work, 'Curiosities of Literature', in 1849, he wrote: "My grandfather who became an English Denizen in 1748, was an Italian descendent from one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish Peninsula at the end of fifteenth century..." (Ragussis, 1995: 176).

Not only does he confess his origins but also boasts of it. When the parliamentarians giped at him because of his descent, he did not need to conceal it nor did he keep silent; vice versa he advocated his race proudly: "Yes, I am a Jew and when the ancestors of the right honourable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon." (Goldberg, 2000).

When he was thirteen, he was baptized in a Christian church. In these years, conversion to Christianity among Jews was so popular. The Jews immigrated to Europe, or Jews in European diaspora in other words, particularly to England in 19th century, have gained some individual rights in the long run. But the pressure on them, especially by chief rabbis, was still so strict that those behaving against the rules of Judaism were harshly punished. The punishments such as whipping, exile, death were disturbing the Jews living in comfortable and

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<sup>1</sup> Sephardic Jews are Jews who define themselves in terms of the Jewish customs and traditions which originated in the Iberian Peninsula before the expulsion of Jews from that area in the late fifteenth century. For Disraeli, they are superior to all other Jews by blood, lineage, culture and wealth.

free societies. Restrictions of food, drink, thoughts, sexuality, life styles led them to change their religion. One of the most striking reasons of their conversion was getting themselves out of these oppressive norms of Judaism.

These attitudes were true for the Jews in general but not for D'Israeli family. Because they were conscious Jews and this consciousness can be understood from their struggle to get the surname which none of the families before or after them ventured to hold. Some critics assert that his conversion is due to his father's fury at synagogue but for T.A. Jenkins, Isaac Disraeli has decided to this conversion for social advancement of his son. He does not want any obstacles in front of his son to reach a high career in society (Jenkins, 2004: 9). It is claimed that young Disraeli has objected and resisted to conversion. However, this baptism does not annihilate his Jewish sensibility and awareness. In all his life, he puts on black clothes which lead people to describe him as an outsider, a Jew. Early in his childhood, when he was nine years old in boarding school, he did not act like other Christian children; he did not pray like them and he took Hebrew lessons on Saturdays. This is enough to testify that he was deliberately brought up on Jewish consciousness and culture (Jenkins, 1996: 3).

Lineage and blood are two crucial concepts in Disraeli's works that cannot be glossed over. Never do the characters forget their pasts and their ancestors, particularly the ones who have been depicted with good traits, great habits, patriotic spirits and wonderful appearances. What is most striking about these characters is their identity; they all are outsiders. In *Sybil*, Lady Maud is one of them who says:

I know it is the fashion to deride the crusades, but don't you think they had their origin in a great impulse, and, in a certain sense, led to great results? Pardon me if I speak with emphasis, but I never can forget I am a daughter of first Crusaders (Disraeli, 1981: 105).

In *Sybil*, the origins of these characters are, to some extent, unclear while in *Coningsby* and *Tancred* it is quite explicit. The predecessors of these strong characters have been exiled from Iberian Peninsula where they had been forced to either convert their religion or leave the country, giving up all their properties back. Sidonia, Mr. Wallinger, Mrs. Millbank, *Tancred* are such characters. Take Sidonia for example who "... was descended from a very ancient and noble family of Arragon, that, in the course of ages, had given to the state many distinguished citizens...this illustrious family during all these period, in common with two-thirds of the Arragonese nobility, secretly adhered to the ancient faith and ceremonies of their fathers; a belief in the unity of God of Sinai, and the rights and observances of the laws of Moses." (Disraeli, 1982: 123).

Studying Disraeli's Jewishness, the most outstanding and dominant figure, Sidonia, should meticulously be scrutinized. He, both in *Coningsby* and *Tancred*, has been ornated with extraordinary features and is alleged that he represents the Rotchschilds. Disraeli seems to identify with Sidonia. For Henry Ford, by introducing Sidonia, Disraeli tries to present a Jewish prototype in the personality of Sidonia and he would like the world to see himself in this personality (Ford, 1920: 223). But Sidonia is not a main character in the novels and does not involve in events directly. Disraeli intentionally describes him in this way because although the Jews are happy in England since their identity is not a problem for gentiles, their integration period to society in which they have later participated has been painful. They did not have same rights and privileges as Englishmen. It is true that they were not facing problems as they had faced in Iberian Peninsula a few centuries ago or in other European countries in the same century; but, nevertheless their racial and religious identity hindered them from a thorough integration. They could not find high positions in society and in state institutions. For instance, as Todd M. Endelman declares, without conversion and concealing their identity, the entrance of Jewish politicians to English parliament was only in early 1900s (Endelman, 2002: 258).

In *Tancred*, the author tells readers the history of Bellamont family, the family of Lord Montacute, *Tancred*, in the same way. Giving the details of this privileged family's last seven

hundred years, he emphasizes the fact that they have awarded important statesmen and bureaucrats to the State and they constituted a considerable part of the State (Disraeli, 2007: 8-14). As most Jewish authors do, Disraeli does not choose the names of his characters arbitrarily. Lord of Bellamont reminds the reader The Belmonte Jews. They are a Jewish community of Marranos<sup>2</sup> that have survived in secrecy for hundreds of years by maintaining a tradition of endogamy and by hiding all the external signs of their faith.

Michael Ragussis propounds that to put 'the Jewish Question' on the agenda, Disraeli prefers a strategy used by his father in the 1830s and by Aguilar in the 1840s: to constitute and consolidate the idea of the English Jews by representing their prehistory in Inquisitorial Spain and Portugal (Ragussis, 1995: 182). Through telling the history of English Jews, he tries to point out Jewish reliefs in diaspora. But Michael Ragussis states that for T. P. O'Connor, Disraeli destroys the culture of Christian Spain and Portugal under the mask of Christianity (Ragussis, 1995: 205).

In *Sybil*, he draws abject living conditions of outsiders in England. Marney is a town in which agricultural labourers live. The landowners have spent their last fifty years on destroying the houses of people in order not to be responsible for care of the population living there. It is a town consisting of expelled inhabitants. They live in wretched tenements in unhealthy and miserable conditions, they cannot even find anything to eat and to drink (Disraeli, 1981: 52-53). This simple and brief description – described in the book in detail – can be evaluated by readers as living conditions of any outsider or of any nation. But the following statements prove Disraeli's central sore point: The Jewish Question. He also defines the Jews as an unhappy race:

The people of Marney took refuge in conventicles, which abounded; little plain buildings of pale brick, with the names painted on them of Sion, Bethel, Bethesda; names of a distant land, and the language of a persecuted and ancient race... (Disraeli, 1981: 54)

In another part of book, in a dialogue among *Sybil*, her father and Stephen Morley, *Sybil* says: "I hope if ever we regain our right, my father, and that we ever can, save by the interposition of divine will, seems to me clearly impossible, that you will never forget how bitter is to be driven from the soil, and that you will bring back the people to the land." (Disraeli, 1981: 81) Although the exile, expulsion or persecution they are exposed to seem as cruelty in their history, Disraeli calls attention to another point: it led their race to remain pure and clean of which he is proud:

'The Hebrews have never blended with their conquerors.' said the lady, proudly... 'But if you wish to make a race endure, rely upon it you should expatriate them. Conquer them, and they may blend with their conquerors; exile them, and they will live apart and forever.' (Disraeli, 2007: 134 - 135)

Disraeli tries to reveal the superiority of Jews to other races. "The Hebrew is an unmixed race... An unmixed race of a first rate organisation are the aristocracy of Nature." (Disraeli, 1982: 192 - 193) For Sidonia, in spite of degeneration on Jews for thousands of years, physical persecutions, exile, punishments, the nature of this sheer race has not been spoilt. An arbitrary and mixed race can die out when exposed to all these oppressions; but an unmixed, pure and persecuted race will never disappear since ordinary races cannot dominate a superior race. And this superior race has shaped European intellectuality. Any intellectual movement which the Jews are not in cannot be observed in Europe. There are a great many Jews shaping the European society and intellect; Russian diplomats, professors in different countries, novelists, artists etc (Disraeli, 1982: 218 - 222).

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<sup>2</sup> Marranos, in other words secret Jews, also known as anusim, were sephardic Jews (Jews resident in the Iberian peninsula) who were forced to adopt Christianity under threat of expulsion but who continued to practice Judaism secretly, thus preserving their Jewish identity. The term in Spanish meant pigs; it stemmed from the ritual prohibition against eating pork, a prohibition practiced by both Jews and Muslims.

As a pure and unmixed race, Disraeli avows the fact that the Jews, wherever they have been exiled, preserved their culture. They do not give up their traditions, even under pressure. The Jews in desert have a festival and Tancred participates in it:

'It is one of our great national festivals' says Eva, slightly waving her palm branch; 'the celebration of the Hebrew vintage, the Feast of Tabernacles.' 'The vineyards of Israel have ceased to exist, but the external law enjoins the children of Israel still to celebrate the vintage. A race that persists in celebrating their vintage, although they have no fruits to gather, will regain their vineyards. What sublime inexorability in the law? But what an indomitable spirit in the people?' (Disraeli, 2007: 268)

Focusing on Jews and their past, interestingly, Disraeli gives the history of Jewish families whose origins reach at Iberian Peninsula. He speaks of those Jewish families as if they were the unique Jews in the world. Other Jews, except for the ones descending from Spain or Portugal, are not mentioned in detail in his works. The history of outsiders who are not rich and have been associated with pejorative attributes, at least not with good and extraordinary features, is not introduced. The superiority of a race, the Jews, is conspicuous in his works, but what is more striking is the superiority of a group among them. That is to say, not only is the superiority of Jewish race brought fore, but the superiority of Sephardim Jews is especially emphasized.

Disraeli compares the Jews and the other races with respect to superiority. "We agree that half Christendom worships a Jewess, and the other half a Jew. Now let me ask one more question. Which is the superior race, the worshipped or the worshippers?" (Disraeli, 2007: 168) Yet, in particular, as Todd M. Endelman claims, this superiority comes out among Jews, too. And Disraeli believes fact that Sephardim Jews are – by culture, learning, wealth, descent, manners, even by blood – superior to Ashkenazim Jews (Endelman, 1996: 22). Edward Stanley notes in his diary that Disraeli stated that there are two races among Hebrews. The ones who settled along the shores of Mediterranean look down on the other and refuse to associate with the others. For him, this superior race is Sephardim Jews (Endelman, 1996: 23).

The superior race Sephardim Jews are descended from Iberian Peninsula, Spain and Portugal. The inferior race is the Ashkenazim<sup>3</sup> and they are mostly Italian, Polish, French and German Jews. Disraeli himself is an Italian Jew like his mother. He does not want people to think of him as an Ashkenazi Jew, thereby he hints that he is a Sephardic Jew through indicating the presence of Sephardic Jews in Italy. Telling the history of Baroni family in Italy, Tancred asks Baroni whether he is Jew or not. Baroni replies: "Pure Sephardim, in nature and in name." (Disraeli, 2007: 232)

Reading Disraeli, one can easily figure out that he struggles to highlight Sephardim superiority. Because all the successful, wealthy, potent outsiders described with flawless personality have a connection with the Iberian Peninsula; their ancestors are from Spain or Portugal. The insignificant and secondary characters in his novels are outsiders, too. They are depicted with ordinary traits and negative features: they are unqualified, ignorant and poor people. Stressing on the roots of the former Jewish race, he does not detail the origins of the latter race. This is not a coincidence and it can be said that Disraeli deliberately refrains from mentioning the origins of Ashkenazim Jews.

Although he wants to accentuate Sephardim superiority, on the other hand, he does not want to disparage all Jews in general in the eyes of gentiles. The mission he has undertaken is to present the superiority of Jews to other races. However 'otherness' between Sephardic and

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<sup>3</sup> Ashkenazim are the Jews descended from the medieval Jewish communities along the Rhine in Germany from Alsace in the south to the Rhineland in the north. *Ashkenaz* is the medieval Hebrew name for this region and thus for Germany. Thus, *Ashkenazim* or *Ashkenazi Jews* are literally "German Jews." Later, Jews from Western and Central Europe came to be called "Ashkenaz" because the main centers of Jewish learning were located in Germany.

Ashkenazi societies in Europe was so common. Social ties between these same races have become so weak that they treated each other as if they were two different and hostile races. For instance, if a Sephardim married to an Ashkenazi woman, he would be deprived of all his Jewish rights. Likewise non-Sephardi teachers were forbidden to teach in Sephardi schools. Ashkenazi women were obstructed to serve in Sephardi synagogues (Endelman, 1996: 27). But Disraeli does not articulate these differences and otherness in his novels.

There are many other clues in his works leading people to think of the fact that he is a loyal Jew and he wants to emphasize on his race. Important events occur on Saturdays and it is defined as 'sacred day' (Disraeli, 1981: 362). Coincidences also play a significant role. Important events occur accidentally. For instance, two foremost characters in *Sybil*, Charles Egremont and Walter Gerard meet in an abbey ruins by chance; *Coningsby* and *Sidonia* meet in an inn escaping from rain by coincidence.

There are many characters emphasizing 'we' and 'others'. Otherness is important for them and they always talk about the others. The characters are usually under the harrow and Disraeli makes people feel the persecutions that his race faced in the past, especially during the exile. The integration of his expelled race from their home to the societies they sheltered stands as a constant problem. For instance, the most prominent character of *Coningsby* and *Tancred* is *Sidonia*, a Jew described with extraordinary abilities and features. But he is not seen in the incidents directly and does not appear in the novels generally. He just sometimes appears in the novels but after a short while he disappears again. It can be claimed that this is the integration of Jews to society. Albeit they are rich and powerful, they are always outsiders.

While he focuses on his Jewish identity and problems of Jews both in his works and in his politic life, the sympathy and affection of Disraeli to English people and his loyalty to England seem to people as a phony, at least a dilemma or paradox. He has usually been misunderstood due to these contradictions throughout all his political and social life. Many Englishmen were, partially right, confused about his identity and his aims.

His describing English people as 'brutal savages in an unknown island' and the Jews as 'priests in the temple of Solomon' made people to blame him on being a proud Jew against England and Englishmen. In fact, for Disraeli, both societies are indebted to each other. The Jews are thankful to the British since they have embraced them after expulsion from Iberian Peninsula and have not tormented them due to their identity. And the British are thankful to them because of their economic contributions to England during Napoleon War. For him, the Jews are the human family that has contributed most to human happiness and there are not any nations in the world except for the British who are so much thankful to Jews:

Vast as the obligations of the whole human family are to the Hebrew race, there is no portion of the modern population so much indebted to them as the British people. It was the sword of 'the Lord and Gideon' that won the boasted liberties of England (Disraeli, 2007: 184).

On the other hand, when Salisbury's quotes about Disraeli are read, one is likely get muddled. He says "zeal for the greatness of England was the passion of his life." (Gelernter, 2005: 4) In *Tancred*, Disraeli himself vindicates the confusion of people: "The general condition of England is superior to that of any other country... There is more political freedom, more social happiness, more sound religion and more material prosperity among us than in any nation in the world." (Disraeli, 2007: 36) In *Sybil*, too, *Sybil* describes English people as 'the truest, the freest, the bravest, the best natured and the best looking, the happiest and the most religious race upon the surface of this globe.' (Disraeli, 1981: 124)

During and after the Inquisition, in Europe, most of the Jews concealed their origin, religion and identity. The Disraeli family did not do this and chose 'D'Israeli' as a surname that no family in history had such an assertive selection. Yet, they could not save themselves to be accused of hypocrisy. Despite the fact that he was baptised, converted to Christianity and

declared his loyalty and zeal to England and Englishmen many times, people still today charge Disraeli with two-facedness, quackery and dishonesty. But Norma Claire Moruzzi claims that he may have been a charlatan but he was not a hypocrite. "Other assimilate Jews faced the same ambiguities of identity with shame and silence, only Disraeli re-appropriated these ambiguities and affirmed them in his creation of his distinctively Jewish role and voice." (Moruzzi, 2001: 76) Nevertheless, neither Jews nor Christians trusted and accepted him as a member of their religion, nation, race or society. What was the reason of being statelessness? What was the real cause of this expulsion?

As a man of contrasts, religious and racial understanding of Disraeli is quite different from other Christians and Jews. For him "All is race, there is no other truth." (Disraeli, 2007: 104) and he sees Jewishness as a race, not a religion. For Norma Claire Moruzzi, Disraeli's Jewishness was not a religious faith but a racial performance (Moruzzi, 2001: 75).

His Jewish inclination as religion can be summarized in one sentence: Judaism and Christianity are not different, they are same religions. He believes and defends in his works that Judaism is incomplete and the complete version of this religion is named as Christianity. In *Sybil*, St. Lys says:

In all these church discussions, we are apt to forget that the second Testament is avowedly only a supplement. Jehovah - Jesus came to complete 'the law and the prophets'. Christianity is completed Judaism or it is nothing. Christianity is incomprehensible without Judaism, as Judaism is incomplete without Christianity (Disraeli, 1981: 112).

And also Christianity owes all its truths and culture to Judaism. "Besso: 'My daughter tells me you are not uninterested in our people, which is the reason I ventured to ask you here.' Tancred: 'I cannot comprehend how a Christian can be uninterested in a people who have handed down to him immoral truths.'" (Disraeli, 2007: 272) On this issue, Disraeli thinks and feels something deeper. "Christianity is Judaism for multitude, but still it is Judaism." (Disraeli, 2007: 296) He believes that Jesus told the truths of heaven not only to the Hebrews but to the gentiles. On the other hand, Moses carried out the same duty just for the Hebrews. That is why it can be asserted that for him Christianity is Judaism for all people but Judaism is Judaism only for the Hebrews.

In a speech he made in House of Commons in 1847, he supported to remove Jewish disabilities and openly stated that all the early Christians were Jews (Ragussis, 1995: 202). And he believes that Christianity is the religion created by the Jews: "Sons of Israel, when you recollect that you created Christendom, you may pardon the Christians even their 'autos da fe'<sup>4</sup>." (Disraeli, 2007: 298)

In a dialogue in *Tancred*, Disraeli goes further and asserts that even Jesus is a prince of Israel and he is a Jew. Accordingly, Christianity has roots in Judaism. Fakredeen asks Tancred when people stopped worshipping gods, Tancred replies:

'When truth descended from Heaven in the person of Christ Jesus'. 'But truth had descended from Heaven before Jesus,' replied Fakredeen; 'since, as you tell me, God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, and since then to many of the prophets and princes of Israel', 'of whom Jesus was one' said Tancred; 'the descendant of King David as well as the son of God.' (Disraeli, 2007: 296)

Disraeli supports this idea once more in another part of the book. For him not only the first Jesuits but Jesus himself was a Jew in all his life until death. "...the church in which Jesus was born and which he never quitted, for he was born as Jew, lived a Jew and died a Jew; as he

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<sup>4</sup> The phrase auto da fe refers to the ritual of public penance of condemned heretics and apostates that took place when the Spanish Inquisition or the Portuguese Inquisition had decided their punishment, after the trial. In medieval Spanish it means "act of faith".

became a Prince of the house of David, which you do and must acknowledge him to have been." (Disraeli, 2007: 133)

Disraeli, through a dialogue between Sidonia and Tancred, confirms his beliefs once again. Sidonia says to Tancred:

I believe that God spoke to Moses on Mount Horeb and you believe that he was crucified, in the person of Jesus on Mount Cavalry. Both were, at least carnally, children of Israel: they spoke Hebrew to the Hebrews. The prophets were only Hebrews; the apostles were only Hebrews. The churches of Asia, which have vanished, were founded by a native Hebrew; and the church of Rome, which says it shall last forever and which converted this island to the faith of Moses and of Christ, vanquishing the Druids, Jupiter, Olympius, and Woden, who had successfully invaded it, was also founded by a native Hebrew (Disraeli, 2007: 85).

Disraeli believes the fact that the origins of these two religions are same and they are not in contradiction with each other as well. Thus, the members of these religions should not go against each other, conversely, they should combine. His struggle to unite them is not overlooked. But there is a serious barricade in front of them which prevents each society from keeping sincere feelings to one another. The Christians do not take a fancy to the Jews since they believe that Jesus was murdered, crucified by them. And almost all Christian societies have ostracized them and have not let them to integrate with their societies. The Jews wherever they harboured had to remain solitary and they blamed the Christians due to this expulsion; so they do not take a fancy to the Christians either. But in 'Life of Lord George Bentick', in order to remove this hostility between two societies and reconcile them, Disraeli tells that the expulsion of Jews from societies they live in started before Jesus (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5228-disraeli-benjamin-earl-of-beaconsfield>). By defending this, he tries to justify the Christians in the eyes of the Jews.

The love affairs in *Tancred or the New Crusade* strikingly resembles to the ones in *Sybil* or the *Two Nations*. In both, the protagonists fell in love with ladies who do not belong to their society. In *Tancred*, Lord de Montacute loves Eva Besso, a Jewish lady; in *Sybil*, a Norman aristocrat Lord Charles Egremont loves Sybil, a Saxon villager.

In *Sybil* the obstacle between the loves of protagonists is being the members of different social classes. When they disclose their feelings to each other, the difference saddens both of them and Sybil exclaims: "A union between the child and brother of nobles and a daughter of the people!... Believe me, the gulf is impassable." (Disraeli, 1981: 278 - 279) Yet, in spite of this class conflict, Disraeli manages to unite them and they marry at the end of novel.

Similarly, there is an abyss between *Tancred* and Eva Besso. *Tancred* is English and Christian; Eva is a Jew. They both are 'the other' for each other and their unification seems quite difficult:

Tancred: 'I know of nothing, I will know of nothing, but of my love.' 'There are those to whom I belong and to whom you belong. Yes,' she said, trying to withdraw her hand, 'fly, fly from me, son of Europe and of Christ!' 'I am a Christian in the land of Christ' said Tancred, 'and I kneel to a daughter of my Redeemer's race. Why should I fly?' (Disraeli, 2007: 339)

As a Christian, *Tancred's* Redeemer is Jesus and he is a Jew. So the root of Christians is a Semitic race, the Jew. Disraeli manages to unite two different social classes in *Sybil* but in *Tancred* he is not able to carry out the unification of two religions or races. At the end of novel, *Tancred* and Eva do not get marry. Disraeli himself is also aware of this difficulty and he cannot unite two religions although he manages to unite to social classes in *Sybil*.

## CONCLUSION



Harvey Sicherman states that Benjamin Disraeli was a converted Jew and he described himself to Queen Victoria as "The blank page between the Old and the New Testament." (Sicherman, 2007: 46) Disraeli himself confesses neither he is a Jew nor a Christian.

Although he frankly declared his admiration about English people and England countless times, he was not able to convince people that he was sincere in his feelings. Even today, many people believe that he was loyal to his religion and origins; it was just a mask he put on to hide his secret plots and he used it to reach at his sublime religious and racial objectives. The reasons leading people to these complicated thoughts were so many that they were absolutely right to think of he may have secret plans. Because, in his many works, in many sections he numerously admitted that the Jews are superior to all other races. They are an unmixed and superior race while the others are mixed and secondary. God spoke to all people in the world on Mount Sinai and proclaimed his rules there. So Western societies are grateful to Semitic races of their high culture and eternal truths.

He focused on the superiority of Jews to other races on the whole, and in particular he emphasized the superiority of Sephardim Jews to Ashkenazim Jews. The differences in lifestyles of these two groups cannot be observed in his works, because he did not want to scorn any group of Jews in the eyes of the goyim.

On the other hand, some other people think conversely. For them, he changed his religion and became a real Christian. To sublimate England and English people was his loftiest passion and he tried to achieve it. He did not have any hidden ideas since he was a plain politician. For Disraeli, there was more freedom, more wealth and more materialistic prosperity in this happy land. After Inquisition and the persecutions of Torquemada<sup>5</sup>, the Jews had to leave their land and give up all their belongings back. The only country in Europe was England which did not exclude them. Their Jewish roots and identity was not a problem and they found amenity there. Although they contributed English society too, they were nevertheless indebted to Englishmen of their affluence and existence.

None of these groups were absolutely right or absolutely wrong. The other ones understood him much better and described him as a Judo-Christian. They believe that Disraeli wanted to synthesize and according to this synthesis Christianity and Judaism are same religions; Christianity is the completed version of Judaism. Without Christianity, Judaism is incomplete and cannot meet the necessity of modern ages. Judaism is restricted only for the Jews; yet, Christianity is an extended religion and address to the gentiles as well, but it is still Judaism. Disraeli believed that Jesus was a Jew and persecution and expulsion of Jews started before Jesus. That is why, the Jews and the Christians do not need to be hostile to each other.

Perhaps the truest evaluation about Benjamin Disraeli and his racial-religious sensibility was carried out by Lady Battersea, a member of Rothschild family, the day after his death. She wrote a letter to her husband and said: "... not only loyal to his Queen and country, but also to the race from which he sprung, ... his racial instincts were his religion and he was true that religion until he drew his last breath." (Endelman, 1996: 21)

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<sup>5</sup> Tomas Torquemada was a friar in Spain. He was appointed as Inquisitor General in 1483 and persecuted Jews to give up their religion. His target group was marranos who seemed to adopt Christianity but acted Jewish doctrines secretly. He aimed to constitute a pure Spain both in race and religion and in order to reach this goal, it is asserted that he burned more than 2000 people then.

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