

How Christ Church Jerusalem Came to be Built 1834-1849
Chronology & Notes Based on Original Sources

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The material below is drawn from the research of Christ Church historian Kelvin Crombie. It is a detailed chronology using archival material that highlights the religious motivation and diplomatic efforts that led to the building of Christ Church, the first Protestant Church in the Levant. It is made available here to point scholars and students towards the archival sources that will help them in their research and provide essential background to anyone studying 19th century Palestine/Eretz Israel, British –Turkish relations, Middle Eastern Church history and more.

The handwriting of some of the quotes cited below is at times obscure and difficult to read. We recommend that those wanting to use these sources in publications first check with the originals. Many thanks to Kathyryn Betcher and Leslie Richardson for their help.

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1. The Idea

Prior to the building of Christ Church, Protestant Christians in Jerusalem met in many different locations. Primarily, worship took place in the home of one of the first English missionaries, in particular the house of John Nicolayson. Later, when the land was purchased to build the church, they worshipped in a small room of an existing building. This site is where the Christ Church dining room is currently located.

1834: The first mention of the building of a Protestant church in Jerusalem is found in the London Jews Society (LJS) Minutes of 25 November 1834. Letters were read from Rev. C. Perry and Rev. G Crossland (or Cropland?) on the subject of establishing a Hebrew Christian Church at Jerusalem. The LJS Committee approved this suggestion and thereupon directed that immediate steps should be taken to carry out the idea. They also established a special fund and donations were invited towards fulfilling this vision.¹

1835: On 3 March, Nicolayson wrote the following:

‘It appears that the American missionaries have not despaired of establishing themselves, and forming a church at Jerusalem; and we know not why our Society, acting on the principles of our Apostolic Church, should shrink from making a similar attempt, in dependence on the Divine blessing, with a special view to the benefit of God’s people, the Jews.’²

In a subsequent communication to Mr. John Nicolayson, dated 26 June 1835, the LJS Committee informed him that it was not “their intention to have a mere material fabric erected at Jerusalem, but they hoped by the blessing of God upon them, and his exertions, to see a living Church of true believers in the Holy City.” They trusted that the measures proposed would lead to the accomplishment of both.

1836: Nicolayson came to London in 1836 to meet with the LJS Committee, and to be ordained by the Bishop of London.

At the meeting of the LJS General Committee on 16 December 1836, Nicolayson laid forth his proposals. The Committee resolved:

- I. To which the establishment of a Protestant Church in which service shall be conducted according to the order of the Church of England is essential in order to exhibit practically what Christianity is, as distinguished from the corruptions of Roman, Greek and Armenian

Churches, which are so peculiarly offensive to the Jews, and which confirm their prejudices against Christianity, as an idolatrous and unscriptural system.

- II. It is, on the whole, more desirable to erect a new building for the proposed Church and Mission House than to remodel an old one; this plan would involve fewer practical difficulties in obtaining suitable premises and in securing the possession of them. There is reason to believe that a piece of ground might be obtained within the walls in a conspicuous situation near the Jaffa Gate, on the North West declivity of Mount Zion, at a convenient distance from the Jewish and Christian quarters.
- III. There is a great reason to hope that the requisite permission may be obtained from the Egyptian Government, and that the best method of securing this would be to obtain the transmission of an order from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in England to Colonel Campbell the British Diplomatic Agent at the Egyptian Court to make formal request on the Society's behalf.
- IV. An immediate increase of the force of the Mission is absolutely essential for carrying on the plans contemplated by the Committee, and a Printing Press is necessary in order to give full effect to the Mission.³

The same meeting resolved to ask Sir Thomas Baring, the President of the LJS, to apply to Lord Palmerston to communicate this request to Colonel Campbell.⁴

The Committee resolved that a certain amount of money had already been given towards the building of the Church, but some of this had been defrayed towards printing the Liturgy.⁵

2. The Idea is Endorsed by LJS and Official Request Made

1837:

On **10 March** the Foreign Office informed Baring that a letter had been sent to Campbell two days prior. Baring presented the letter to the General Committee on 14 March. The letter stated:

‘... his Lordship has had great pleasure in instructing Colonel Campbell to request the Pasha of Egypt to allow the Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, to erect at Jerusalem a Protestant Church and other buildings for the use of the Missionaries of the Society...’⁶

On **18 March**, for the purpose of establishing a Hebrew Church in Jerusalem, the General Committee appointed Mr. Nicolayson to work on,

‘obtaining the concurrence of the Egyptian Government, and eventually of the Porte, for the erection of a Hebrew Church to negotiate and conclude the purchase of a piece of ground in an eligible situation for the building of such church together with habitations for the Society’s Missionaries ... and further that Mr. Nicolayson be authorized to purchase a piece of ground beyond the walls of the city of Jerusalem, for the purpose of a burial ground, the sum to be expended for the above objects not to exceed one thousand pounds.’⁷

Mr. Nicolayson, ordained by the Bishop of London with the view of taking charge of the proposed church, returned to Jerusalem in the summer of 1837 with authority to purchase ground for the church and church related properties. Plans were ordered to be prepared, and the work proceeded without delay.

9 May. The General Committee confirmed that Nicolayson was to return to Jerusalem with authority to purchase land for building a church and for purchasing land for a burial ground.

‘the Committee will take into consideration the nature of the building to be erected, and the sum to be expended for its erection as well as the propriety of appointing an Architect or Clerk of Works to proceed from England to Malta ... that, as soon as a sufficient sum shall have been subscribed for the contemplated object, Mr. Scoles (*the architect*) be employed to prepare a(*quote itself is unclear*) plan that the building may proceed without delay.’⁸

30 May. The General Committee resolved to provide Nicolayson with official letters that he could produce to Colonel Campbell and Mr. Farren, the Consul-General at Damascus. Also, ‘that he be thereby authorized to receive the papers from the Egyptian Government (*authorizing the building of the church*), and to arrange with Colonel Campbell or Farren for obtaining such official assistance as may be necessary for the security of all purchases directed by this Committee or made on their behalf.’⁹

3. Permission for a Firman to Build a Church Refused

20 September. A letter from Mr. Strangeways from the Foreign Office [FO] to Sir Thomas Baring stated that the Turkish Government had reviewed the request for the *Firman* but, due to the Mohametan Law, the request is being denied. The Mohametan Law forbids the building of any churches or chapels in a location where one has not existed previously. If building has previously been done on a new church or a new chapel in the Turkish property it had been done without the

knowledge or consent of the government. The only solution that the government offered at this time was to hire a house, fix it up into a chapel and after a decent amount of time had passed apply again to repair an existing church.¹⁰

4. A New Option – Buy or Build a House for Worship

10 October. In view of the above stated information, the LJS General Committee resolved to give Nicolayson full authority to purchase a house or houses for the purposes contemplated by the Society.

1838:

A letter written by Nicolayson from Jerusalem on 11 November 1837 was brought before the General Committee on 23 January 1838. The General Committee resolved, ‘that a *Firman* having been refused that Mr. Nicolayson be authorized to acquire in the most valid mode which he may find practicable, a piece of ground with or without buildings and proceed in the erection of such buildings as shall be necessary in fulfillment of existing instructions.’¹¹

18 October. Nicolayson wrote to the Committee that he had completed the purchase of two adjoining premises at Jerusalem, for the sum of 530 pounds and 240 pounds respectively, which, with a further sum of 30 pounds for expenses, amount to the total sum of 800 pounds.¹²

The Committee resolved to ‘approve of Mr. Nicolayson’s proposal to make suitable presents to Aboo Selamech the Agent, and to Signor Hohannes, the person in whose name the premises are purchased and that the cloth requested for this purpose, be purchased and sent out as soon as possible.’¹³

20 October. Nicolayson wrote to Campbell:

‘Perhaps you are aware that when the application for permission to erect a Protestant Church at Jerusalem was refused by the Egyptian Government to that of Constantinople and then made there by His Excellency the Ambassador, the answer was that though there was a difficulty in giving a public *Firman* to that effect, there would be no objection made to the purchase of a private house which we might accommodate to our purpose. When this reply reached Lord Palmerston he expressly advised and encouraged our friends to proceed on this plan, who accordingly sent me instructions to this effect. In consequence I have made inquiry and found two small adjoining houses for sale which would sufficiently answer the purpose. These I intend to purchase in my own name and for my own use. The Mehkameh having received, rather more than a year ago, and order from Sheriff Pasha prohibiting the sale of any landed property to foreigners without an express permission to this effect,

they demand such a permission as the only condition on which they can comply with my proposal.

The enclosed is a Memorial addressed to His Highness, stating that I, as a British Subject, having resided in these countries for more than twelve years, and experienced much inconvenience in obtaining houses for hire, wish to purchase two small adjoining buildings for my more convenient residence, and request His Highness's permission to this effect in an order addressed to the Mehkamed authorizing them to make the desired sale to me.

I beg therefore now to request of you, Sir, the favor of presenting the enclosed memorial (which I left open for your perusal) to His Highness, and of using all the influence you consistently can to secure the desired object.

By kindly acceding to this request you will confer a great favor not only upon me but upon all my connexions in England and further an object approved and encouraged by Her Majesty's Government at home as you are aware.¹⁴

26 October. The General Committee had learned 'with thankfulness that Daily Hebrew Service has been commenced at Jerusalem with an English and Arabic Service on Sundays; that they likewise rejoice to hear that the Rev. J. Nicolayson has completed the purchase of a portion of ground, for the purposes contemplated by the Society and that he be authorized to draw, the additional sum of 500 pounds as he may require it for the preparation of building materials, and to take measures for proceeding with the building as soon as possible in the spring.'¹⁵

11 December. Committee resolved to approve Nicolayson to use 500 pounds for building of the Church 'and that he be requested to use every means in his power to obtain permission to transfer the purchase to his own name in trust for the Society.'¹⁶

1839:

29 May. Nicolayson letter to LJS in which he alludes to conversation with 'W Young Esq, Her Majesty's Vice Consul at Jerusalem, respecting the proposed Church at Jerusalem, and directing the attention of the Committee to certain clauses of an Act of Parliament, passed in the 6th year of George IV, Cap (?) LXXVII having reference to the mode of erecting Churches, and providing for British Chaplains at Foreign Stations, under the superintendence of British Consuls.'¹⁷

7 June. General Committed resolved that Nicolayson could draw up to 500 pounds 'on account of the expenses of building the Church.'¹⁸

June 20; July 20; July 29. Nicolayson wrote letters to LJS GC recommending purchasing remaining portions of land, and to erect wall to separate LJS's property from the mosque.¹⁹

23 July. The General Committee resolved that they were appreciative of Mr. Young's interest in their project, yet informed Nicolayson and Young that Parliament,

‘are unable to avail themselves of its provisions consistently with the conditions and circumstances of their Ecclesiastical & Missionary Institutions there, as, although the projected Church is meant to serve as a place of public worship, according to the Liturgy and Rites of the Anglican Church to all British Subjects who shall choose to frequent it, the main object of its erection is the promotion of the extension of Christianity amongst the Jews, the funds contributed are furnished in that view, and no engagements or measures could be entered on, which could in any wise interfere with, or compromise these Missionary purposes.’

They also stated that it is the opinion of this Committee that, as to Clause 11, ‘any of Her Majesty's subjects might contribute the half of the money required for purchasing, building or hiring a Church, Hospital or Burial Ground, where a Consul-General, or a Consul is resident.’

On finding that according to Clause 13 the Chaplain is to be appointed by Her Majesty, and to be at her pleasure, this Committee thinks it most essential that they should alone have undivided power to name the Clergyman, as he is to be the Head Missionary to the Jews, and to withdraw him or maintain him at its discretion subject to the approval of the Bishop of London...²⁰

Sept 10. LJS General Committee resolve to agree that Nicolayson: 1) purchase remaining portions of property; 2) erect a wall separating the property from the mosque;²¹ 3) secure the services of Aboo Selameh and pay 50 pounds ‘in order to defray the extraordinary expenses caused by the necessary intercourse with the Authorities.’²²

13 & 18 September. Private letters were exchanged between Nicolayson, Young and Cartwright.

16 November. Consul-General Campbell wrote to Young concerning the building of the Church:

‘...it appears to me that Mr. Nicolayson has concealed from you my correspondence with him upon the subject. The facts are simply as follows, and copies of all the papers relative to it are in the possession of Mr. Nicolayson.

I received long time since a dispatch from Viscount Palmerston with enclosures from Sir Thomas Baring, relative to the erection of a Protestant Chapel in Jerusalem, and I was directed by His Lordship to apply to Mehmet Ali for that permission.

The Viceroy expressed every readiness on his own part to comply with His Lordship's request, but stated that a Firman for that purpose was necessary to be attained from the Porte, and in consequence His Excellency Lord Ponsonby was requested by Lord Palmerston to obtain that Firman.

The Porte, as you will see on the perusal of my correspondence with Mr. Nicolayson refuse to grant a Firman and consequently any attempt to build at present a Protestant Chapel at Jerusalem, might not only compromise Her Majesty's Government with the Porte but might also compromise you with local authorities, as you could not, officially interfere, if they were to put a stop to the building.

I believe the reason of the Porte's objection is the plea of Jerusalem being one of the Holy Cities, not only has Mehmet Ali granted permission to us to build a Protestant Chapel here, but has even given the spot of ground for its erection.

In regard to the ground for Mr. Nicolayson's house, it was applied for by me on that Gentleman's assurance that it was intended for a private residence for himself, and if therefore (which I cannot believe) Mr. Nicolayson is building a Chapel on the ground, he is acting most unfairly...²³

21 November. The LJS General Committee resolved that

'attaching much importance to the continued friendly co-operation of Her Majesty's Vice Consul at Jerusalem, regret to learn that the mode of proceeding with the Church at Jerusalem in some particulars has not received his full approbation. That as the Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews cannot, as a Society, erect a Church in the manner preferred by Mr. Young, under the Act of 6th of George IV for erecting Churches and providing salaries for British Chaplains at Foreign Stations under the superintendence of British Consuls, the Committee trusts that in directing Mr. Nicolayson to proceed with the Church, according to the means already possessed by the Society, and which have hitherto been blessed of God, they may still continue to receive the friendly and official sanction of the Vice Consul.'²⁴

The digging of the foundations commenced on 27 December 1839, and the building was intended, under the original plan, to be the home of the missionaries.

1840:

10 February. Foundations were laid for what is now known as the Alexander building.

13 April. Digging of the foundations of the Church itself commenced.

May. Mr. C. W. Hillier was appointed as architect to carry on the work of constructing the new Church under the direction of Rev. Nicolayson. He left London in that month for Jerusalem, but unfortunately died in Jerusalem only a month after his arrival.

Due to the Syrian Crisis, the work on the property was greatly hindered for many months because of continued rising tensions.

5: Renewed Efforts to obtain Firman due to British Support for Turkey in the War

11 November. Nicolayson wrote to the General Committee recommending that permission now be sought to try to obtain a *Firman* once again from Constantinople for erection of the Church.²⁵

1841:

6 January: Nicolayson writes to the LJS from Beirut.

12 January: LJS General Committee resolves that immediate steps be taken to obtain a *Firman* from Constantinople. The GC determined that it would be best to ask Sir Thomas Baring to write to Palmerston concerning this issue.²⁶ At the same meeting the GC resolved to inform Nicolayson not to proceed with building, but to wait for the issuing of the *Firman* from Constantinople.

1 February: Baring wrote to Palmerston, reminding the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the previous letter of 1837 and the difficulties encountered in obtaining their object. He continued:

‘The Sultan’s authority having through the success of the Allied Powers and your Lordship’s instrumentality, been re-established in Syria, and Jerusalem restored to the Ottoman Empire, the Society earnestly hope that your Lordship will be pleased, as a grateful acknowledgement to Providence for the success of your able negotiations and the skill and intrepidity of the Agency employed to carry the well planned measures into effect, promote the erection of a monument of National gratitude by

interceding with the Porte, and by making use of the influence now in your hands, to procure a *Firman* for the complete accomplishment of the object contemplated, and for the Sultan's permission to have the property registered in the name of the Rev. John Nicolayson to be held by him in behalf of the Society.²⁷

8 February. J. Backhouse, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote to Mr. Baring concerning his letter, stating it was the Society's wish that:

‘...advantage might be taken of the present state of affairs in the Levant, to obtain from the Porte the formal recognition of a Protestant Chapel at Jerusalem, and the registration of such Chapel in the name of the Rev. J. Nicolayson, on behalf of the Society, I am to acquaint you that Her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople has been instructed to take such steps as he may think best calculated for the accomplishment of the objective of the Society.²⁸

26 March: The LJS GC held a meeting. They decided to place the Jerusalem mission on a stronger footing.²⁹ At the same meeting was the first mention made of Mr. Johns, who later would be the architect to work under Nicolayson.³⁰

10 April: The General Committee stated that ‘the existing aspect of political affairs in the east presents a favorable opportunity for strengthening and rendering more operative the Missionary establishment at Jerusalem as a centre or Head Station of Missions in Jerusalem and Syria.’³¹

At the same meeting it was resolved ‘that active measures be adopted to forward, as speedily as may be found, the erection of the New Church at Jerusalem.’³²

They also resolved that the title to be given to the New Church be “The Apostolic Anglican Church” at Jerusalem, from whence the word of the Lord may sound forth to His ancient and still beloved people the Jews, through the whole length and breadth of the land of their forefathers.³³

The Committee then resolved that there would need to be a suitably ordained Anglican minister ‘and being a native of Great Britain or Ireland be appointed at the head of the Jerusalem Mission’ to minister in this new Church, and that Nicolayson ‘be appointed to take rank next in succession to the Chief Missionary ...’³⁴

The Committee also discussed their desire to express their strong feelings of respect for, and gratitude to the Rev. J. Nicolayson for the spontaneous and impartial conduct so truly characteristic of the humility of a real Christian in his self-demurring offer to officiate in a subordinate capacity under an English born Ordained Clergyman of the established Church, in the event of the proposed

enlargement of the Missionary establishment at Jerusalem being carried into execution.³⁵

Lastly, the Committee requested that Nicolayson leave London as soon as possible and travel to Jerusalem via Constantinople, and that

‘the Right Hon. Lord Ashley be respectfully requested to give from himself and also to obtain from Lord Palmerston, letters of introduction and instruction to Lord Ponsonby the British Ambassador at Constantinople, as shall enable Mr. Nicolayson to obtain from the Sultan a *Firman* sufficiently effective to protect the Missionaries and to legalize and facilitate the erection of the Church at Jerusalem.’³⁶

The Committee also informed the new physician and architect to make haste to Jerusalem.

13 April: The LJS GC meeting resolved that Nicolayson and Mr. Johns were to proceed instead to Malta ‘to engage a suitable foreman for the building operations. They were also instructed to conclude a contract with such foreman, and for him to bring out two or more Maltese stone masons.’³⁷

At the same meeting, Nicolayson was instructed that ‘after obtaining the needed stone masons at Malta he was to proceed to Constantinople to obtain the *Firman*, and then upon return to Jerusalem, to obtain the remaining portion of land adjacent to what he had already obtained.’³⁸

This meeting resolved the following about the Church,

‘...that the limits of the building plan for the Church be that it have convenient sitting room for 300 persons (without gallery) and that the expense do not exceed 2000 pounds; according to such estimate as can be furnished at present; and that the style of building be plain Gothic or Norman, and that the plan be so formed as to admit of enlargement by future additions of transepts side-aisles and Chancel.’³⁹

6. Nicolayson in Constantinople

Nicolayson sent letters to the GC on 16 and 17 June 1841, and in response, the GC resolved on 13 July that Nicolayson

‘be requested to remain at Constantinople as his absence even for a single day might be injurious to the objective which he is sent, to promote; that he be instructed to urge forward his application on every possible occasion; and that he be authorized to pay such fees or gratuities as he may find necessary, even though that amount should appear unusually large, as expedition is of far greater consequence than expenses.’⁴⁰

27 July. GC meeting, Rev. W Ayerst reported that Palmerston had requested via Ashley that they wanted ‘Nicolayson’s services for a short time placed at the disposal of Her Majesty’s Government.’⁴¹

12 August. Johns, the architect, wrote a letter to LJS GC with plans for the Church.

17 August. LJS GC reported:

‘His Excellency Baron Bunsen reported to the Committee that the British Ambassador at Constantinople had acquainted Lord Palmerston that he believed a direct application to the Turkish Government for permission to build the Church would be met with a refusal and therefore declined making one, but he recommended that the building should be immediately proceeded with, and stated that in case of any obstructions to its progress occurring, he promised to apply for an official permission for continuing the repairs and hoped to obtain it.’⁴²

28 August. While Ponsonby took upon himself the seemingly impossible task of obtaining a *Firman*, Nicolayson returned to Jerusalem to obtain further documentation he thought would assist with the task. Palmerston meanwhile sent a very blunt letter to Ponsonby stating:

‘I have accordingly to instruct your Excellency to apply earnestly for such a *Firman*. It cannot be supposed that at a moment when the whole of Syria has so lately been restored to the Sultan by the powerful intervention of Great Britain, so small a favor as this [*permission to build a church*] could be refused to the British Government upon grounds of a pedantic adherence to Mohammedan doctrine.’⁴³

17 September. LJS GC read through Nicolayson’s letter of 30 October 1839, and resolved that ‘notwithstanding the interpositions of the unexpected claims mentioned in Lord Ponsonby’s letter of the 17 August, the Rev. John Nicolayson be instructed to proceed with the building at all hazards and as quickly as possible.’

Lord Ponsonby learned from the Turkish authorities that they could not permit the building of a new church in Jerusalem. ‘The Porte’ he told Nicolayson ‘will not violate the Law.’ Ponsonby proposed that Nicolayson ‘procure the site of an ancient Church and erect the new Building thereon.’ Nicolayson in turn approved of this plan, and assured Ponsonby that the area he purchased several years previously, had been a Chapel belonging to the Convent of Jacobius.

All seemed to be going well. Ponsonby then learned that the Porte permits new churches to be built on the site of existing ones, but those churches had to be

either Catholic or Orthodox or of a recognized Christian sect. He wrote to Palmerston, saying that,

‘If the Porte could now be induced to grant to the Protestant Christians similar privileges, the Porte would have to contend against the opposition of the Clergy of the Catholic and Greek Churches whose influence will probably be exerted to the utmost to prevent the establishment in this Country of a Church considered by them to be a dangerous rival.’⁴⁴

Ponsonby stated it again, two weeks later, to Palmerston after further exertions had been made:

‘With respect to the affairs of the Protestant Church to be erected in Jerusalem, the Porte positively refused a Firman as being contrary to ancient practice and rights, the real motive is probably the fear of bringing on the clamor of other sects...This plan will certainly be furiously opposed by the priests, Catholics and Greeks, and I think it better to obtain from the Sublime Porte, if possible, distinct acknowledgement of the Rights of England to have a Church dedicated to her National Worship in this country.

I propose to say that when the churches for the Catholics were allowed, the Protestant Church of England was not established and it is now established over a vast portion of the world, and belongs to the most powerful nation; the close Ally of the Sublime Porte; that England has a strong claim perhaps the right, to demand that the Porte shall not exclude Her Church from the benefits the Porte permits other Churches to enjoy.’⁴⁵

Then in September, Ponsonby was able to gleefully write to Palmerston, ‘I expect to succeed in obtaining a *Firman* to authorize the erection of a Protestant Church at Jerusalem.’ In the same letter he acknowledges Palmerston’s letter of 4 August that mentioned the King of Prussia’s interest in the proposed church. Ponsonby sounded a warning to Palmerston, by stating that he had thus far negotiated the matter himself and didn’t really need Prussian interference.⁴⁶

Ponsonby’s apprehension that Prussian involvement in British affairs in Constantinople would be detrimental proved to be well founded. As instructed, he met his Prussian counterpart, Count de Koenigsmark, in mid September concerning the establishment of ‘Protestant Churches in this country.’ In a communiqué then to Palmerston on 15 September, Ponsonby spoke of progress and optimism, but also sounded a warning against asking too much of the Turks. He wrote:

‘Since the above mentioned interview took place I have learned from those who I employed to further the measure that nothing more will be obtained than an unavowed permission from the Ottoman Ministers for us

to build an English Church at Jerusalem, and a promise that they (the Ministers) will order the Turkish Authorities (including the Cadi at Jerusalem) not to oppose our erecting it; but a condition that the Fabrick shall be modest and unostentatious in appearance and dimensions and not calculated to attract attention. I hope to have this promise in writing. The Porte will not, I fear, grant any *Firman*.

If we do obtain these things I am certain we shall, ere long, be enabled thereby to do all we can reasonably desire as to the establishment of Protestant Churches.

I presume Her Majesty's Government would not attempt to force the Will of the Porte on a matter connected with the religious feelings of the Turks. It would be mischievous, and I think unsuccessful and therefore it is better to be contented to obtain a footing now which will secure our ultimate success, than to risk a total failure by grasping at too much. Persons unacquainted with this country may imagine that it is easy to carry such points, it is far otherwise and I assure your Lordship that this measure would have totally failed but for the aid I was fortunately enabled to secure.⁴⁷

Although stating that no *Firman* would be issued, a tacit permission to build the church was a major breakthrough. Word of this 'promise' made its way to London, and from London to Jerusalem.

Unfortunately subsequent communiqués showed deterioration in the situation – resulting, it would appear, from Prussian interference. Ponsonby wrote on 15 September to Palmerston: 'The difficulties about the Protestant Church at Jerusalem, which were before so great, have been increased by the demands made by the Prussian envoy.'

The Prussian Ambassador, stated Ponsonby, had sent an official note, which, he continued 'has excited great alarm by the extent of its demands.' He continued:

'The building of a Church is opposed in the Divan by the Ulema⁴⁸ who have seats there and bring matters connected with religious opinions, as they are commonly received by the mass of the Turks, it may be difficult for the Ottoman Ministers to overcome the Zealots.

If we do gain this point it will be mainly owing to the learning of Mr. Frederick Pisani⁴⁹ who has carried on controversial discussions with an ability and zeal that may at last be successful...'

Ponsonby concluded this statement by stating that Pisani's success had now been jeopardized by 'injudicious Measures.'⁵⁰ And again Ponsonby wrote on 6 October:

‘The affair of the Church at Jerusalem having been violently opposed by some members of the Council of Justice upon the ground of religious opinions, I considered it my duty to proceed in it with great caution and to avoid if possible, either wounding the feelings of honest men on such a subject, or of enabling men of another description to accuse me of endeavouring to obtain privileges mischievous to the national religion. I hoped to gain the point without having recourse to positive demand... I think I should have succeeded by the means I wished to use, if the Prussian Minister had not been ordered to make proposition to the Porte which gave strength to the prejudices relied upon by our adversaries for support, but finding that I could not carry the measure in the way I desired, I wrote an enclosed official note in which I asserted the Right of Her Majesty’s Government to insist upon the consent of the Sublime Porte to the building of a Church at Jerusalem for the performance of the rites of the Anglican Church.

This Note was given on the 3rd to Rifaat Pasha who will immediately commit it to the Council. His Excellencies language on that day was to the following effect, referring to the opinion of the Council before that he, Rifaat Pasha, had received my official note. His Excellency said:

The Council refuses to grant permission for the erection of the Church because...

It is contrary to the religious law of the Turks;

The Porte is not bound by any Treaty to grant that permission;

The Franks⁵¹ cannot possess any landed property in Turkey;

The present is not the proper time to grant such permission owing to the state of minds in Syria; The Patriarch⁵² will oppose the erection of a Protestant Church; The law of this Country being contrary to the demand, no foreign Government can find fault with the refusal given by the Sublime Porte...’

Ponsonby also stated that Rifaat Pasha had said that Count de Koenigsmark had asked for permission for Prussians to ‘perform the rites of their religion in Turkey like other nations, and Rifaat Pasha says that the Porte refuses to give such a note.’⁵³ By October, therefore, as the final touches were being put to the Bishopric Plan in London, the environment was becoming noticeably uncomfortable in Constantinople for British designs in Jerusalem.

An official from the British Embassy, Mr. Bankhead, had met with Sarim Effendi at the Porte on 12 November 1841 and discussed Bishop Alexander. It was only too obvious that the Turks were very wary about this new British initiative.⁵⁴ In a subsequent communiqué to the Foreign Office, Ponsonby reiterated that the Turks were concerned about granting special privileges for Bishop Alexander.⁵⁵ Then in a response communiqué from Aberdeen, the new foreign secretary, he mentioned

that he had sent to Constantinople the letter from Bunsen, showing that the idea of the Bishopric came from Prussia, and not from England!

This reveals an interesting bit of political jockeying. It appears that to take the heat off the British Embassy and Ponsonby's endeavours to secure permission for the building of the Church at Jerusalem, Aberdeen wanted to show that Britain was not solely responsible for both issues – the Church in Jerusalem, and Bishop Alexander, but wanted some of the pressure to be transferred to the Prussians.⁵⁶

23 November. Johns letter of 12 August was read, and the GC resolved that, 'Mr. Johns be informed that this Committee consider a regular Chancel as indispensable to the beauty and order of the Church at Jerusalem, and cannot consent to have the Communion Table in any other than its usual place as the East end. They also hope that Mr. Johns will take care that the Church stand due East and West.'⁵⁷

7. Bishop Alexander's Involvement

The coming of Bishop Alexander was going to add another strand to this situation. From the 23 November LJS General Committee meeting Alexander was entrusted with the responsibility for the building of the Church:

'to facilitate and accelerate the building of the Church the Committee request the Bishop of Jerusalem in all cases of emergency to act for this Committee according to his discretion, having due regard to that economy which is necessary in that great and sacred undertaking.'⁵⁸

8. Laying Foundations for the Physical Church 1842

On **28 February** Bishop Alexander placed the first stone underground upon the foundations of the new Protestant Church. Altogether eight stones were laid, one by Alexander, and one by each of the other seven mission workers. Such an act so soon after arrival was a major challenge to the Turkish Governor (*Pasha*) and Muslim authorities, as the building of a new church was a challenge to Islamic Law.

The foundation-laying event was of great significance for the small Protestant community and in particular for Alexander, for whom the issue of completing the building of the first Protestant church in the Ottoman Empire, was of major importance. A bishop without a church was incongruous to the local inhabitants.

Alexander and Nicolayson based their authority to build upon the information provided by Palmerston to Shaftesbury in October 1841 which stated that Ambassador Ponsonby in Constantinople 'had obtained a positive promise' that

instructions ‘should be forthwith sent’ to the Governor of Jerusalem granting permission for the Church to be built. Nicolayson and Alexander were oblivious to the intense battles then ensuing in Constantinople between the Turkish religious leaders, the *ulema*, and the British and Prussian Ambassadors.⁵⁹

In a letter to Chevalier Bunsen in April, Alexander stated that no obstacle had been placed before them concerning the building of the Church. He had feared that the Governor-General of Syria, Mustapha Pasha, would have been opposed, but, following a recent visit to Jerusalem, in April, Mustapha ‘has done or said nothing to impede our progress, as was generally feared, from the general impression, that he is not friendly disposed towards us, but from a circumstance which has transpired, it became evident that he took it for granted that we have a right to build the Church.’⁶⁰ The problem remained however that there was still no official permit to build the Church.

But still for the time being Alexander and Nicolayson continued with their plans, despite the perennial Jerusalem problem, a situation that Alexander terms the ‘general natural tardiness of the people.’⁶¹ On 7 August a master stonemason and several laborers left Malta en-route for Jerusalem to speed up construction on the Church.⁶² All being well, the Church was projected to be ready within the year.

9. Further Foundations for the Physical and Spiritual Church

On **30 October 1842** Alexander bestowed deacon’s orders upon E.M. Tarkover,⁶³ a Jewish believer, and Mr. William Whitmarsh, a Gentile believer. The occasion prompted Nicolayson to write, somewhat prophetically:

‘It is deeply interesting to observe that, by today’s solemnities, the nucleus of a Hebrew Christian Church in this city is now complete in all its offices, as well as functions. There is now here a Bishop, a priest (Ewald), and a deacon also, all “Hebrew of Hebrews,” a fact in the history of Jerusalem which had not been realized since its final destruction by Adrian (sic Hadrian) in the second century; and which thus completes also the chain of restored connection between the first Hebrew church here... and its present, distant, yet genuine off-shoot. May it grow into a great tree of life, under whose branches the dispersed of Israel shall find shelter, and whose fruits shall be the healing of the nations!’

All of this extra activity prompted Alexander to write ‘through the instrumentality of the Society, a Hebrew-Christian congregation, in its complete form, is now established on Mount Zion!’⁶⁴ And before the completion of the one year we shall (d.v) have performed all the ordinances of the Church.⁶⁵

The timing of the above event was quite significant. For on 1 November, All Saints Day, the foundation stone above ground for the new Church was laid. This event was a red-letter day for the fledgling Hebrew Christian-Protestant community.

Mrs. Alexander was given the honor of laying the foundation stone. A memorandum was placed within the stone, which merely stated: 'The foundation stone of this church...'⁶⁶ As there was no silver trowel available for the occasion, the Bishop offered his fish-slice. Johns, the architect, wrote:

'In the centre of the stone was a cavity, in which was placed a tin case,... a variety of gold, silver and copper coins of Her present Majesty's reign, and, to prevent the possibility of their being extracted, the whole was filled in as one solid body, with molten solder, and some masonry immediately built over...

The ceremony being completed, the whole party proceeded to the Chapel, to the evening prayers, after which the Bishop gave an appropriate address; in the evening, at sunset, the workmen were, through the hospitality of the Bishop, entertained by the distribution of bread and wine, of the country... the whole of these immense foundations having been built in less than nine months.'⁶⁷

There is no evidence that the name of St. James was inscribed within the foundations of what became known as Christ Church.

Another significant event was the arrival, on the 4th of November, of a new Turkish Governor Izzet Pasha. Alexander, Nicolayson, Tarkover and Ewald were introduced to him by Consul Young.⁶⁸ Izzet Pasha soon afterwards set about determining the scene of his new domain. No doubt he was impressed (and concerned) by the events since Alexander's arrival and the obvious challenge to the established *status quo*. This could only have been confirmed by the visit of the Jewish delegation from Tiberias on the 5th of November.⁶⁹ The new pasha also took great interest in the new church being built.

10. Johns dismissed

The architect, James Johns, and LJS came into dispute towards the end of 1842. There is some evidence that this dispute was over concern about how he handled the budget for the Church building, while other sources indicate they were dissatisfied with his professionalism. By December 1842 the Church was without an architect.⁷⁰

Later, in 1844 Johns produced a book entitled *The Cathedral Church of St. James in Jerusalem* on his own initiative, and LJS took him to task for using their plans.

Johns claimed that he had done the plans from his memory once back in England.⁷¹ Later, in a Memoir entitled “Hebrew Church at Jerusalem”, LJS wrote:

‘Memo: Mr. Johns plan thus submitted and adopted, differs materially from the plan published under the title “The Anglican Church of St. James” which latter never seems to have been considered by the Committee, the work not having been published until March 1844, more than two years after Mr. Johns connection with the Society terminated; nor does it appear from the Minutes that any proposal to call the Church “St. James” was ever entertained by, or suggested by the Committee.’⁷²

LJS appointed a new architect, Matthew Habershon in January 1843, as well as a site supervisor, named R. Bates Critchlow.

At this stage the King of Prussia also wanted his say in the planned church, and his architect, August Stuler made some drawings which the Prussian king thought were more modest. In fact the Prussian Consul in Beirut was approached by the Prussians to try to persuade the British to adapt their plan in favor of the Prussian initiative. However, it was now all too late. The progress made under Johns had put the project too far ahead for any changes.⁷³

11. Church Construction Stopped

Shortly after arriving back in Jerusalem Alexander received the news that Rabbis Eleazer and Benjamin were soon to rejoin Nicolayson, followed soon after by Rabbi Abraham; three ‘believing’ Rabbis.⁷⁴ The final break had been made. Ewald wrote ‘I went into the Jewish quarter. There was again a great excitement amongst the Jews... no one is permitted to speak to them, and they are given up by the Jews as lost.’⁷⁵

This was a high point for the infant Hebrew Christian community. It was followed by an immediate low. On 14 January 1843 the Turkish Governor, Izzet Pasha, sent his *dragoman* (interpreter) to Nicolayson,

‘stating that His Excellency having applied first to the British Consul regarding the Church in building here and been told by the Consul that he knows nothing about it and has no orders on the subject either from his own Government or from Constantinople, His Excellency must desire the building to be stopped till orders shall have been obtained from Constantinople.’

Nicolayson then asked the Pasha to issue this decision in writing, which was declined, and then insisted upon seeing the Pasha, a meeting that was not permitted initially.⁷⁶

Nicolayson immediately dispatched a letter to Young, concluding ‘As this affects British property and the rights of British Subjects, I beg to ask your advice in this

case.⁷⁷ Young responded the same day, stating he had no authority to interfere, but insisted he will refer the matter to London, Constantinople and to the Consul-General in Beirut.⁷⁸ Alexander meanwhile wrote a letter immediately to Ambassador Stratford Canning in Constantinople.⁷⁹

Ironically, the following day, 15 January, the two men who had been sent out from London to construct the Church, Matthew Habershon and R. Bates Critchlow, arrived in Jerusalem.

Nicolayson met with the Pasha on 16 January and explained their situation, and also requested permission to continue until the necessary confirmation arrived from Constantinople, as, he stated, permission 'had been promised by the Porte to Lord Ponsonby.' The Pasha however insisted that as neither he, nor Young, had received direct orders 'he must require us to desist till orders be procured from Constantinople, and that he had accordingly prohibited all native workmen from continuing in our employ.'⁸⁰

Bishop Alexander then proposed to the LJS Local Committee that he, accompanied by Nicolayson, proceed to Constantinople, which the Committee enthusiastically endorsed.⁸¹ At the same meeting, Nicolayson mentioned that the three rabbis, the likely cause of the over exposure of the Mission and subsequent stoppage of the church construction, had declared they would 'disconnect themselves entirely from the Jews and rejoin the Christian Church here.'⁸²

12. Trip to Beirut

Alexander left for Constantinople via Beirut on 20 January. The recently appointed Prussian Consul, Mr. Ernest Gustav Schultz, arrived in Jerusalem about the same time, proof of the King of Prussia's plan to further German interests in the Holy Land upon the LJS-Anglican foundation on 'Mount Zion.'⁸³

While in Jaffa, Alexander sent a letter forward to Consul-General Rose proposing steps for resuming construction of the church building. Once they arrived in Beirut, the Bishop, the Consul-General and Nicolayson could then begin discussions in earnest.

At their subsequent meeting in Beirut Rose produced materials just received from Jerusalem, a letter from Young of January 20 and one from the Prussian Consul-General, von Wildenbruch,⁸⁴ who refers to a letter he had received from his new consul in Jerusalem, Mr. Schultz, dated 23 January. Young stated in his letter, 'I learnt today that there is a *Firman* from Constantinople to the Pasha on the subject of the building of the Church.' The Prussian Consul stated that he had just been informed by Young, that the Pasha 'acted in compliance with the *Firman* from Constantinople, which declares the ground on which the Church had been erected as '*Wakf*,' Moslem religious property, and claims it as such.'⁸⁵

Consul-General Rose stated in correspondence to Foreign Secretary Aberdeen that Alexander and Nicolayson continued to state they were justified in building the Church due to the tacit permission or positive information passed on from Ponsonby to Palmerston to Shaftesbury to Nicolayson in 1841. Rose informed Alexander and Nicolayson though, that this was no guarantee of government approval, as Young himself had informed Nicolayson that the Turkish Government 'would not sanction the continuance of the building of the Church without a *Firman*.' Rose also stated that Nicolayson 'does not reply to this observation.'⁸⁶

Despite the obvious non-compliance of Nicolayson and Alexander with the request of Young, Rose nevertheless was concerned that the Turkish authorities were dealing with this matter in an unfair manner. He informed Aberdeen that if indeed the Turks were claiming this land as '*Wakf*,' he would instruct Young to apply Article 24 of the Capitulations⁸⁷ 'inasmuch as the ground is held in the name of the Rev. Mr. Nicolayson.' But, he added, such a proceeding would then be referred to Constantinople, a reference he suggested 'which would probably never take place.' In other words this approach would get buried in Turkish bureaucracy.⁸⁸

Rose was now taking matters seriously, and asked Alexander not to proceed to Constantinople where his presence would be a great embarrassment for the British.⁸⁹ Alexander agreed, and then wrote to Bunsen on 30 January describing the difficulties with the building and asking him to use his influence with the British Government on behalf of the project.⁹⁰

Rose tried to assure Alexander that the British Government was not working against him. He also informed Aberdeen of the peculiar nature of the situation in the East, where the suspension of the 'British' church 'is considered as a slight, or proof of mistrust' of Britain.⁹¹ Rose and von Wildenbruch then visited the Governor-General of Syria, Assad Pasha, asking him that while the issue was being discussed in Constantinople, the *status-quo* remain as before, and that he permit the building to continue. They impressed upon Assad Pasha that the previous Governor of Jerusalem had permitted the building to continue unimpeded, and they shared that 'excitement and erroneous impressions had been caused,' by the disruption 'which had best have been avoided.'⁹²

Assad Pasha then related to Rose false information from an individual about Rose's own involvement in this project, that the *Seraskier*⁹³ (general or commander) had demanded the cessation of the building, while he, Rose had urged its continuation. Assad stated 'that the *Seraskier* was right, as the Law of Empire forbids the erection of Foreign Churches.' Rose assured the Pasha that 'the statement of the person was entirely destitute of truth.' As the British and Prussian Consuls-General departed from this meeting, von Wildenbruch said to Rose 'It is a Russian intrigue.'

At the end of this discussion Rose concluded that Assad Pasha would not change the decision of Izzet Pasha, the Governor of Jerusalem, and concluded, as von Wildenbruch had already done, that the work of the British in Jerusalem had the effect of causing 'jealousy and alarm' for the Russian Government, who 'would have wished that the Jews her subjects should have become Greeks, not Protestants.'⁹⁴

Rose had also asked Alexander to accept the Turkish decision to stop construction of the church, to return immediately to Jerusalem (which Alexander did on 3 February), and to abide by the stipulations of the British Government.⁹⁵ In return Rose and his Prussian counterpart agreed to assist as best they could to gain the permit or *Firman* to continue the building. Alexander assured Rose that he would do his utmost in the future 'to make the wishes of Her Majesty's Government the Rule of his conduct.'⁹⁶

Prior to leaving Beirut Alexander and Nicolayson did finally admit that it had been wrong for the Russian Rabbis to seek protection in the home of a British subject. In this context Rose wrote:

'I then stated confidentially that I must previous to Bishop Alexander's departure relieve myself of responsibility by earnestly cautioning him, that if the Mission continued to adopt proceedings which could not be countenanced by Her Majesty's Servants and, which therefore must prove to the World that the members of it were deprived of that powerful aid, consequences might ensue, which would not only prejudice the cause of the Mission, but endanger the personal safety of those who composed it.

I drew the attention of Bishop Alexander to the fact that the inhabitants of Jerusalem consisted of a variety of Sects, each remarkable for its blind attachment to its own creed, and aversion to those of its neighbours ... that the proceedings of the Mission had indisposed the inhabitants of Jerusalem towards them, and awakened their watchful bigotry and caused suspicion, perhaps alarm to the Local Authorities.

Finally the Porte would be too happy perhaps to urge that the presence of Bishop Alexander had produced disorder.'⁹⁷

This was indeed a sobering reprimand for Alexander. But Rose, in order to reveal the delicate position in which he found himself, trying to allay Turkish suspicion and opposition on the one hand, and upholding British interests on the other, wrote this important statement to Aberdeen on 4 February:

'In conclusion I have the honor to represent with the greatest respect to Your Lordship, that if matters continue in their present state at Jerusalem, the influence of Her Majesty's Government in this Country, particularly in

that City, will be materially hurt, and that unless a Firman, or permission, be obtained to resume the building of the Church, the position of Bishop Alexander will be anomalous, and the source of perpetual embarrassment to Her Majesty's Government and to himself.'⁹⁸

Prior to returning to Jerusalem, Alexander wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, admitting:

'This is an important Crisis in our Mission, and I cannot but hope that it will ultimately tend to good. In the meantime I hope we shall be permitted to continue our Services as usual as the interruption has only reference to the building of the Church which according to the custom of the country cannot be done without a firman. From a letter of Lord Aberdeen to the Consul at Jerusalem it appears that the negotiating with the Porte on the part of HM Government is proceeding, we may therefore hope that the answer will give a fresh impetus to renew them...'

Alexander then described other relevant issues in Jerusalem:

'During this month I received a most friendly and interesting letter from the Coptic Patriarch at Cairo, requesting me to undertake the Superintendence and Direction of his community in Jerusalem. They are a small body, but they have two spacious convents ... But I feel under existing circumstances that it would not be prudent in me to comply with His holiness's request, as it would excite great jealousy on the part of the other existing Churches in the Holy City. But the fact is deeply interesting, proving how much some of them feel drawn towards us. Amongst the Jews likewise there is a great stir; on the very day on which the building of the Church was stopped the three Rabbis, of whom your Grace may have heard, have again come out from among the Jews, determined to become Christians at all hazards. Numbers of others are said to be equally on the point of coming out and I trust ere long we shall be able to give British protection to all who wish to join our Church.'⁹⁹

He also wrote to Sir Richard Steele from Beirut, in a manner that hinted of a degree of self-justification:

'It is needful for me to tell you that the British Government made an application, through Lord Ponsonby, the late Ambassador at Constantinople, for such a firman, but the Porte refused on the ground, that it was against the Turkish Law to give a firman for the building of a new Christian Church in Jerusalem. A promise however was made to Lord Ponsonby that the building of the Church should not be interfered with, upon which promise we have proceeded hitherto, and no obstacle was placed in our way on the part of the Authorities. It is the general opinion, that the present hindrance has been brought about by intrigue on

the part of many parties, to whom the raising of the Standard of Truth in its pure scriptural form, cannot but be obnoxious.’¹⁰⁰

On the return to Jerusalem via Alexandria, Bishop Michael Solomon Alexander had time to contemplate all these events. This entire episode, beginning with the controversy with the three rabbis, and subsequent political ramifications, then the halt to construction of the church building, and the resultant trip to Beirut, brought him closer to an understanding of real world of politics and Islamic law in the Levant.

The Palmerston Government that had installed him was no longer in power. The Aberdeen Government was much less sympathetic to his cause. And despite the power and prestige of Britain, and its involvement in helping Turkey regain control over the Holy Land in 1840, the Law of Empire and Law of Islam was an all powerful consideration. It would seem that this episode had a sobering and maturing effect upon the young Protestant-Jewish Bishop.

13. Debate in Parliament

An interesting debate took place in the House of Commons on 11 April 1843 concerning Alexander and the Protestant cause in Jerusalem. Dr. John Bowring (later Sir John Bowring) wanted the correspondence between the British Government and the Turkish Porte to be produced, so as to prove the ineligibility of the Bishopric and indeed of the Protestant presence in Jerusalem. Dr. Bowring made some stinging remarks, also referring to the poor witness of a married Bishop, and with six children as well. Bowring ‘thought that the circumstance of the Bishop being married was not calculated to serve him in the estimation of the people amongst whom he went. Amongst the whole east... it was impossible to connect the idea of sanctity with the Episcopal character, unless the individual had also the reputation of celibacy.’ Dr. Bowring also saw fit to challenge the propriety of sending out a Jew as Bishop, and also cast doubt upon the academic qualifications of Bishop Alexander.¹⁰¹

Dr. Bowring stated that he himself had spoken to Mehmet Ali about this matter, and the Egyptian leader had said that the Court of the Mechami stated that this issue ‘had been settled since the period of the Mahomedan conquest, that no new Christian church should be erected.’¹⁰²

14. Repercussions from Previous Events

The episode concerning the three rabbis, the stoppage of the church, Alexander’s trip to Beirut and subsequent contact with Consul-General Rose, engendered much response and activity in Jerusalem, Beirut, Constantinople and London.

Foreign Secretary Aberdeen had no choice but to become more pro-active in these affairs, as the debate in Parliament and public interest had increased exposure to

what was happening in Jerusalem. He sent a strong message to Ambassador Canning on 20 March, stating that the Foreign Office had been considering for some time information coming from the Consul-General in Syria and from the Consul in Jerusalem:

‘... respecting the conduct of Turkish Authorities at Jerusalem and Beyrout with regard to the Protestant Church at Jerusalem, the erection of which, after having been for some time tacitly permitted by the Turkish authorities has at length been abruptly and somewhat arbitrarily stopped.

Although that building had certainly been commenced without the express authority of the Porte, which had always declined granting a formal permission for that object, yet, as it had been stated to Her Majesty’s Government Ambassador at Constantinople (as appears from a Dispatch, dated Sept 18 1841, number 288) that he had reason to suppose that, provided the fabric should be modest and unostentatious in appearance and should form part of the Consular residence, no obstruction would be thrown by the Turkish Authorities in the way of its erection; as that building had not for many months been opposed or obstructed, Her Majesty’s Government had certainly hoped that the further prosecution of it might and would have been allowed.

Her Majesty’s Government still entertain a hope that, on a temperate representation of their wishes being made to that effect, the Turkish Government may be induced to permit the building to be recommenced and to continue without further interruption.’

Aberdeen then instructed Canning to bring the matter to the attention of the Turkish minister and:

‘... to represent to him the disappointment which has been felt at the sudden interruption of the work after having been so long permitted by the Turkish Authorities at Jerusalem, and that you will request the Turkish Minister to convey such orders to the Pasha of Jerusalem as shall empower him to authorize recommencement and unobstructed prosecution of the Building.

I hesitate to instruct Your Excellency to demand from the Porte a formal Firman for the above object as it appears to me that it might not be prudent to risk a repetition of the positive refusal which has been already given by it more than once to such a proposition.’¹⁰³

It is obvious from this comment that Aberdeen was walking a diplomatic tightrope. He felt he had a right ‘to demand’ a political favor which Turkey owed Britain, but realized there would probably be a ‘positive refusal’ again to the proposal.

On the same day he also wrote to Consul Young, with instructions concerning both Bishop Alexander and the construction of the church. He informed Young that he had acted properly in not getting involved in the church affair 'as the parties have acted without the declared sanction of the Porte.' However, Aberdeen stated:

- 1) If the Turks agree to the church being built, he was to assist.
- 2) If the works are only 'tacitly' allowed to be continued, as heretofore, he was to have nothing further to do in the matter than to employ his best efforts to induce the Pasha to give full extent to the 'tacit' permission of the Porte.
- 3) If the Turks refused permission for further construction of the church, then he must have nothing at all to do with it.

Aberdeen also informed Young that he perceived there were problems between him and Alexander 'which for the benefit of the public service' the Foreign Secretary thought 'ought to be corrected.' Aberdeen then provided Young with advice that, should Alexander contravene the Laws of the Turkish Government '... in such a manner as wantonly to excite the hostility of the Turkish Authorities, you as British Consul have not the power to protect him, even if you were authorized by your Government to do so...' ¹⁰⁴

Indeed the relationship between the two senior British representatives was strained. It was not so much because of their differing personalities but due to the differing instructions both were operating under. Concerning these ambiguities Young stated to Aberdeen:

'The agents of the Society appear to me to have extravagant notions on the subject of protection, and in regard to their privileges. In these matters I think that the Bishop has been misled by these, and on the other hand the Bishop's position here is rather novel, being charged with the direction of Ecclesiastical Matters, he is at the same time head of a private mission and consequently continually liable to be put forward in questions belonging to this private society, which are altogether of a secular character and have led him into inconvenient discussions.' ¹⁰⁵

15. Alexander and the Church (September)

One issue in particular continued to concern the Bishop – the building of the Protestant Church. Alexander wrote to Sir Stratford Canning on 20 September, in response to a letter Canning had written to him on 20 May. He stated:

'I am sorry to learn ... that our Church affairs were nor progressing as we had hoped. I trust better prospects are presenting themselves. It would at all events be very desirable to have the matter settled if possible one way or the other, for if the Church is not to be built, we might then proceed

with the building of the Houses, which we greatly need, but at present all is at a standstill ... Our Services are being regularly conducted in the small temporary Chapel, and I am on general terms of friendship with all the Authorities of the different Churches... I need not say, Jerusalem is beginning to attract general and universal notice. The number of Europeans is considerably on the increase, and many, particularly French families are expected to come and reside here. I trust and pray that it may all tend to promote the best interests of this wonderful but desolate country, and that the predicted time may soon arrive, when in the strictest sense of the word Jerusalem shall again become a Praise in the Earth.¹⁰⁶

In view of the attitude of the French and Russians towards British activities in Jerusalem, it is only understandable that much opposition towards the building of the British Church in Jerusalem would be encountered. Canning in Constantinople and Alexander in Jerusalem had many obstacles to overcome.

16. Nicolayson to Constantinople

On the 1st of November, Nicolayson left Jerusalem for Constantinople to present information to the British Ambassador 'in consequence of' wrote Alexander 'a *Firman* for our Church.'¹⁰⁷ Young actually communicated to Aberdeen:

'I learn indirectly that one of his objects is to obtain permission to purchase, if not my present dwelling, such property as will annex it to the Society's premises and thereby give to the whole the appearance of being part and parcel of the Consular Residence.'¹⁰⁸

Young also stated that Nicolayson had failed to consult him about the trip.¹⁰⁹ In fact the initiative did not actually come from Alexander and Nicolayson, but from London. The LJS Committee, frustrated by the lack of action concerning the church building, had requested the direct assistance of Bunsen.¹¹⁰ Bunsen had stated that Nicolayson's presence in Constantinople to assist Canning was imperative. In fact, the Prussian Ambassador, Count Koenigsmark and his successor M. Le Coq, were both instructed by Berlin to support Canning in this quest.¹¹¹

En-route to Constantinople Nicolayson was requested to visit Rose and the Prussian Consul-General von Wildenbruch in Beirut (which he failed to do) and that in Constantinople he was to 'use every means according with his instructions to obtain this object, which is so essential to the completion of the Church.'¹¹² But, wrote Ayerst, the secretary of the LJS, despite all this Prussian assistance, 'you will do as far as may be to attend to British interests in arranging with the authorities. The more the English form and appearance our church and establishment & arrangements can wear the better.'¹¹³

A memorandum, from Bunsen and the LJS, was sent to Nicolayson at Constantinople, requiring him to urge Ambassador Canning 'to obtain the *Firman*' and to assist him in refuting the 'allegations contained in the hostile petition got up at Jerusalem & sent up to Constantinople.' The two allegations sent to Constantinople in a petition from the Muslim and Turkish authorities were that the purchase of the LJS property was illegal and invalid, and also that there was no precedent for giving a *Firman* to build a new church where there had not been an old one previously.¹¹⁴

In view of such accusations, Nicolayson, who purchased the property in 1838 during the Egyptian period, was the best able to answer the first accusation. As pertaining to the second accusation, the argument they intended to use, was, that there had been a church on that property, albeit a Jacobite one. They were unsure, however, if this argument would succeed.

Realizing that the chances of being granted permission to build a church were very negligible, a new plan had begun to crystallize in late 1843. Young explains this move in a dispatch to Aberdeen:

'Some time back, when Mr. Johns was the Society's Architect here, I found him one morning, measuring one of my terraces, and drawing lines, in such a direction as would pass through nearly a third of my house, taking off two upper and three lower rooms. On my enquiring of him the object of his admeasurements, he replied, that in order to render the Society's Premises complete they would require of me a part of my Dwelling...

In October last, I receive a Letter from a friend in England stating to me as a warning that "They (the Society) have it in view to connect "the Society's property with your new "house"; and suppose that this will be "putting the Church under Consular protection.""¹¹⁵

So, Ayerst continued:

'The ground taken by Lord Aberdeen, and adopted by Prussia, to have a *Firman* for building a Church for the Consul, or for the Consuls, of Gt. Brit & Prussia. The proposal to be made to the Porte will state: That the Church is no ostentatious building and will not have a prominent object but be contained within a square formed of dwellings - & school houses, enclosing the Church from all sides. The plan of Mr. Habershon has been drawn upon this principle.'¹¹⁶

Even so there was uncertainty that the Turks would accept this proposal, and if in fact they would require the Consul or Consuls to live in the premises attached to the Church. The Prussians were actually prepared to fund the building of a house for their Consul, while the British Government was not prepared to do the same

for their Consul. Ayerst stated, though that from the LJS and British perspective, 'it may also seem desirable that the house of the Prussian Consul should not form part of that square but rather be built behind the Church near the Bishop's house or the Hospices.'

'The most desirable,' Ayerst added, would be that the Consular residence 'will be near the Church.' He then concluded 'that a room or two in one of the houses forming the square be appointed for the Office (not residence) of the Consular Agents, to demonstrate the official nature of the Church in the eyes of the Turks.'¹¹⁷ As noble and helpful a gesture as the Prussian offer was, it was potentially harmful to purely LJS and British interests. If the Prussians funded the building of a Consulate on LJS property, it could seriously complicate ownership issues later on.

Nicolayson and Canning really were encountering numerous difficulties. But further confusion was added when Ayerst wrote again soon afterwards, relaying the decisions of a meeting of the LJS General Committee, on 26 December 1843. The Committee stated that it would be preferable to obtain permission for the church as a Mission Church rather than as a Consular Church, and concluded that if possible 'let it be connected with the Bishop's residence.'¹¹⁸

Despite the high profile nature of the issue at stake, Rose was not happy that Nicolayson had journeyed to Constantinople without having informed Young, violating an agreement they had previously made.¹¹⁹ He was also not happy with Alexander, as the head of the work in Jerusalem.

This was not the only issue about which Rose was upset with Alexander. Despite assurances in February, Alexander still seemed determined to challenge Consul-General Rose on numerous issues. Tarkover, with Alexander's consent, had requested a British passport, a request summarily dismissed by Rose as Tarkover was not a British subject. Alexander had written to Rose and stated that because Tarkover was ordained he must be a subject of the British Crown as he swears allegiance to the Queen. Alexander had in fact, so he informed Rose, written to the Archbishop of Canterbury on this point. It was in one sense a good case Alexander was presenting.

Rose quickly rejected the idea in his letter to Aberdeen where he stated that Alexander was making a mistake and giving a wrong impression by making Tarkover a priest. Rose informed the Foreign Minister that if conversion to Protestantism makes a person British, then,

'If it were known that the fact of a foreigner becoming a British clergyman rendered him a British subject, I really believe, My Lord, that nearly the whole Druse people and a great many Maronites and Syrian Christians would eagerly profess conversion to Protestantism and become Ministers of their new creed.'¹²⁰

Again the young Bishop experienced the ambiguities of living and ministering in the east. It seemed that nearly everything he did carried with it a potential offense to one party or group or another.

17. Challenges in Constantinople

Throughout January, Nicolayson continued his efforts in Constantinople. Both the British and Prussian Ambassadors now increased their exertions. Canning had received the title deed to the LJS property and asked Nicolayson to draw a sketch from memory. He then informed Nicolayson that the Turkish officials wanted the matter deferred again, but that he, Canning, had insisted it be discussed now. This was agreed to, but Canning informed Nicolayson that a Turkish official stated that although it would go before the Council of Ministers, the *ulema*, there would be opposition and delays, especially from the President of the Council.

It was obvious that the Turkish officials were trying to draw this matter out – and eventually ‘kill’ it. Nicolayson in Constantinople and Alexander in Jerusalem waited patiently. There was a hold-up due to a minor crisis concerning Admiral Walker, a political matter that caused concern for the Turkish authorities. Once Canning ironed that out, there was another delay. This time it concerned a letter Alexander had written on 4 October, ‘which’, Canning stated to Nicolayson ‘some opponent here had brought to their knowledge.’ Canning, very diplomatically, was also able to defuse this obstacle.

Then a major crisis erupted. There were two occasions where Turkish subjects were executed for religious reasons, one being a Muslim who confessed faith in Jesus. Canning had remonstrated with the Turkish Government over this. Nicolayson wrote:

‘The Ambassadors of course reported both these occurrences to their respective Governments, and about the 10th Inst, the British and the French Ambassadors received instructions to state explicitly and peremptorily to the Porte that unless they pledge themselves to put a stop to all persecution on account of religion their Governments must withdraw from all Alliances with them. A Note to this effect was immediately presented ... and 15 days given to deliberate on the answer ... the Turks in general are in the greatest alarm & perplexity...’¹²¹

Nicolayson also stated Austria too added its concern alongside Britain and France. This really was a crisis for the Turks - the Christian European Powers challenging their authority to act on affairs of religion within her own domains.

‘You will easily conceive’ wrote Nicolayson ‘that while such a crisis is pending all matters of minor importance must be in abeyance.’ Nicolayson did not believe the Turks would do anything that would prejudice its relationship to the Christian

European Powers 'upon whose support the continuance of the Empire depends.'¹²²

Meanwhile however, Nicolayson was able to report that the plan and drawings sent from Jerusalem had given Canning 'a distinct idea of the need of permission to purchase more (land) as well as of the possibility of connecting it with the Consulate as implied in his instructions.'¹²³

Aberdeen's assistant, John Bidwell, sent Young a message on 16 March instructing him to send a sketch of the plan of Young's present dwelling 'showing how or in what manner the Premises now belonging to the Society ... could be made to appear as part and parcel of the Consular Residence.'¹²⁴ Herein lay the germ of an idea. Young complied on 30 May.¹²⁵

In late March, the Turks finally made an offer, but 'in a form that the Ambassadors could not accept ... and therefore demanded an audience with the Sultan himself.' The Sultan was obviously prepared to issue a written order to the local authorities in Jerusalem to permit the building to continue.¹²⁶ However this was insufficient, as it was not a *Firman*, and therefore was not binding. Canning and Le Coq then pressed their requests again. Canning stated to Nicolayson 'we must allow them a little breathing space first.'¹²⁷ In fact, Canning later told Nicolayson not to call on him again, but to wait until called for by Canning.

Nicolayson finally concluded that there were really only two options left: 1) to leave the matter in the hands of the ambassadors to secure a *Firman*, or 2) to make do with a written order (not an *Imperial Firman*) to the local authorities in Jerusalem to permit the building of the Church to re-commence.¹²⁸ Frustrated and disappointed, Nicolayson left Constantinople and returned to Jerusalem on 7 June.

The last official correspondence relating to this issue was contained in a dispatch sent by Canning to Aberdeen on 3 May in which,

'It appeared that the consent of the Turkish Government to the resumption of the works would depend on the report which the Pasha of Saida had been called upon to furnish with reference to the Buildings proposed to be erected at Jerusalem for the accommodation of the British and Prussian Consulates, among which the Chapel was to be included.'¹²⁹

The *Times* newspaper of 17 June carried an article announcing that they had received letters from Constantinople dated 27 May announcing 'that a *Firman* had been at length obtained by the British Ambassador to permit the building of a Protestant Church at Jerusalem.'¹³⁰ Alas, this was a false hope. Meanwhile, plans were being considered for building an official home for Bishop Alexander adjacent to the unfinished Church.

Shortly after Nicolayson returned though, the Secretary of Legation at the British Embassy in Constantinople, Mr. Alison, arrived at Jaffa on 23 June. He had come to see for himself in order to give Canning a first hand report, as well as report to Young what Canning was proposing. He gave those in Jerusalem an optimistic report that upon his return to Constantinople permission would be forthcoming.

In view of this news, the Jerusalem Local Committee requested the Committee in London to furnish a definite plan so that building could recommence once permission was granted.¹³¹ Mr. Habershon, the architect, was in London and presented fresh plans 'as best he could devise under the circumstances in which that building was left by Mr. Johns and capable of seating 300 persons.' Those plans were accepted, but the General Committee recommended some minor modifications.¹³²

Alexander was now expectant that one of the major objectives of his tenure, construction of the Protestant church, would soon be a reality.

18. Petition to Lord Aberdeen

Despite all the efforts of Ambassadors Ponsonby and Canning, there were no breakthroughs in gaining a *Firman* for building the church.

In desperation, the LJS solicited a petition. They obtained the signatures of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, many other bishops, nobility and dignitaries in the Church, 1400 clergy and over 14,000 other citizens. In many ways it was a unique phenomenon.

Led by Shaftesbury, the delegation presented the petition to Aberdeen on 18 March. Although primarily requesting permission to build the Church, the delegation also requested the granting of official recognition to the Protestant Bishop in Jerusalem, and for those professing the Protestant faith. The heart of the petition is found in these words:

'... the Society most deeply regret, that whilst the Greeks, Roman Catholics, Armenians, and other minor sects of Christians, enjoy the permission to worship God in their respective temples, and whilst no privilege is withheld on the representations of French and Russian diplomacy, - the pure Reformed religion of the British nation, to whom, under God, Turkey is indebted for the recovery of Syria, should be alone proscribed, and her Protestant children alone denied the possession of a consecrated building for the service of God, and especially that recognition of the Protestant faith which is indispensable to ensure protection.'¹³³

Aberdeen sent a copy of the petition to Ambassador Canning on 20 March, stating also the Government's eagerness to obtain permission for the Protestant church to

be built. He also stated that the last reference he had on the matter was the communication on 3 May 1844 when the Turks informed Canning that the advice of the Pasha of Saida (Sidon) was sought.

Aberdeen asked Canning to follow this matter up, emphasizing:

‘I have to desire that Your Excellency will now ascertain from the Turkish Government whether the report in Question has been received from Syria, & the course which in that case the Porte is prepared to take on this matter.’¹³⁴

At this point Aberdeen expresses quite clearly the importance of the submitted Memorial, stating to his Ambassador in

Constantinople:

‘In the event of any further hesitation being shown by the Porte to grant the necessary permission for the resumption and completion of the works, Your Excellency will call the attention of the Turkish Ministers to the enclosed Memorial, and take such further measures as may appear to you best calculated for giving effect to the wishes expressed in it.

You will at the same time express the earnest hope of Her Majesty’s Government that no further impediment may be opposed to the completion of the Buildings, and that the Porte will no longer object to grant the formal sanction of a *Firman* for that purpose.’¹³⁵

The matter had now been expressed forthrightly from the highest level. The public voice in Britain had forced even this less than sympathetic government to take heed of the immense interest in having a British and Protestant church in Jerusalem. There is little doubt that this move was heavily influenced by the lead taken by Shaftesbury, the leading clergy, as well as knowledge of the debt Turkey still owed to Britain from 1840.

And such an initiative would also greatly encourage and assist the endeavours of Alexander and Nicolayson to receive the necessary permission, an Imperial *Firman*, and then complete the building of the church.

19. Finally – a *Firman* for the Church

Sir Stratford Canning had an important audience with the Sultan of Turkey and Caliph of Islam on 25 August. At that meeting a high principle of Islamic law was about to be overturned. Canning recorded for posterity:

‘His Highness took occasion to confirm what His Minister for Foreign Affairs had previously announced to me, namely, that he consented to

issue an Imperial *Firman* for the completion of the Protestant Church at Jerusalem and other suspended buildings with which that sacred edifice is connected. I have much pleasure in adding that His Highness particularly requested me to represent this concession as a mark of the cordial satisfaction which he felt in complying with Her Majesty's wishes.

It cannot but gratify Your Lordship to learn that in every thing which fell from the Sultan's lips at this Audience there was a marked expression of good-will towards the British Crown and Nation, as well as of the most friendly consideration for Her Majesty's person, and confidence in the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards this Empire.¹³⁶

Canning received a translation of a special memorandum from the Porte on 2 September. Then on 4 October Aberdeen wrote an important letter to Shaftesbury stating that in response to the petition presented in March on the behalf of the LJS, he was pleased to announce that an Imperial *Firman* had been 'obtained from the Sultan by Her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, by which permission is granted for the erection of the desired building within the precincts of the British Consulate.'¹³⁷

The *Firman* stated:

It has been represented, both now and before, on the part of the British Embassy residing at my Court, that British and Prussian Protestant subjects visiting Jerusalem, meet with difficulties and obstructions, owing to their not possessing a place of worship for the observance of Protestant rites, and it has been requested that permission should be given to erect, for the first time, a special Protestant place of worship, within the British Consular residence at Jerusalem.

Whereas, it is in accordance with the perfect amity and cordial relations existing between the Government of Great Britain and my Sublime Porte, that the requests of that Government shall be complied with as far as possible; and whereas, moreover, the aforesaid place of worship is to be within the Consular residence, my Royal permission is therefore granted for the erection of the aforesaid special place of worship, within the aforesaid Consular residence. And my Imperial order having been issued for that purpose, the present decree, containing permission, has been specially given from my Imperial Divan.

This document was also one of the most tangible expressions given of the *Hatti Sherif of Gulhane* of 1839. The Sultan was forced to make this compromise for political expediency – but he knew others elsewhere would not understand real-politic. Hence the *Firman* continued:

When, therefore, it becomes known unto you, Vallee of Said, Governor of Jerusalem, and others aforesaid, that our Royal permission has been granted for the erection in the manner above stated, of the aforesaid place of worship, you will be careful that no person do in any manner oppose the erection of the aforesaid place of worship in the manner stated. And you will not act in contravention hereof. For which purpose my Imperial Firman is issued.

*On its arrival you will act in accordance with my Imperial Firman, issued for this purpose in the manner aforesaid; be it thus known unto you, giving full faith to the Imperial cipher.*¹³⁸

Immediately after this statement appeared, the LJS made it very clear that the chapel being part of the consular residence would cause them no inconvenience, as legally, the Consular Act held no provision for possessing such chapels. In other words there would be no ownership problems with the British Government over this provision. The Church belonged to the LJS.

20. A New Consul & Delivery of the *Firman*

Consul Young resigned in 1845, and James Finn was chosen to replace him. Finn, an LJS Committee member, and previous acquaintance of Bishop Alexander, was an author of several books on Jewish subjects – and had recently married Elizabeth Ann, daughter of Alexander’s long-term friend Alexander McCaul. The signs were there for a promising future between Bishop and Consul. Both men were avowed *Restorationists* and committed to a Jewish return to the Holy Land.

Until Finn’s arrival Henry Newbolt temporarily held the position. Newbolt, who arrived in Jerusalem on 12 October, brought with him the *Firman*. The instructions given to Newbolt were very specific. In order to uphold the terms of the *Firman* it was imperative that the British Consulate be as close to the proposed Church as possible. Accordingly, on 16 October the Archives of the British Consulate were transferred from Young’s house to ‘a building adjoining the present Protestant place of Worship in the immediate vicinity of the new Anglican church.’¹³⁹

Immediately following the transfer of the archives, Newbolt, Consul Young and the Prussian Consul Mr. Schultz presented the *Imperial Firman* to Ali Pasha, Governor of Jerusalem, together with an order from the Turkish Governor-General of Syria.

The Governor read the *Firman*, ‘but objected’ wrote Newbolt ‘to the continuation of the building of the present church on the premises of the Society on the plea that it is not within the British Consular Residence as specified in the *Firman* of the Sultan.’¹⁴⁰ Newbolt contended that in fact the British Cancellaria¹⁴¹ was on the

same premises of the Protestant church to be built and actually adjoining the proposed church building. The Pasha then agreed to visit the proposed church building the following day, a visit delayed until the day after.

On 18 October, the Pasha with a large entourage visited the site of the proposed church and closely inspected the premises. Newbolt wrote of the Pasha's conclusion:

‘Although on this occasion His Excellency could not refuse to acknowledge the present Cancellaria as the British Consulate, he still argued that the *Firman* did not authorize the continuation of the present Church, but a new place of worship for British and Prussian Protestant subjects within the Consulate, that the Consulate never having been on the premises before, he could not consider the continuation of the present church as agreeing with the order of the *Firman*.’¹⁴²

Newbolt endeavoured to explain to the Governor that he could no longer refer to Consul Young's house as the British Consulate, but that he, Newbolt, had specifically set up the British Consulate on the LJS premises in order to act in accordance with the specifications of the *Firman*. But all to no avail, ‘and’ continued Newbolt ‘he further requested (there being at the time laborers employed preparing for the foundation of a house for Bishop Alexander) that the people then employed on the premises should be stopped...’¹⁴³ Nicolayson's prognosis of this hindrance was:

‘The wording of the *Firman* gave the local authorities here the advantage of founding their opposition at once on the alleged inapplicability of that document, to the resuming of the building previously commenced, as not being “within the Consulate” and the Pasha persisted in demanding a delay till the matter could be referred to Beyrout... We are fully aware, both of the source of this opposition, and of its extent and object. In order to render the present *Firman* unavailing for our purposes, a counter-memorial has been addressed by a powerful party here, to the Sublime Porte.’¹⁴⁴

The technicality produced by the Pasha and opponents to the scheme was that the British Consul at that time had as his office a small room adjacent to the temporary chapel a few meters away from the unfinished church building. This then did not permit, according to the Pasha, the literal wording of the *Firman* to be fulfilled. In other words, the church had to be constructed within that premise, not atop the foundations of the church already begun.

Alexander in his exuberance after receiving word of the *Firman*, had ordered construction to be restarted, and in particular upon his proposed house attached to the church. Consul Newbolt, after consulting with the Governor, informed Alexander on 18 October:

‘His Excellency then requested that the workmen who are now employed and at work on the grounds might be stopped, giving as his reasons, that the arrival of the new Consul with the *Firman* was fully known in the City, and that the feeling against building a Protestant Church was so strong that he apprehended difficulties should workmen be seen employed in the immediate vicinity of the church.’¹⁴⁵

Newbolt implored the Bishop to refrain from upsetting the *status quo*, while he referred the matter back to Consul-General Rose. One could feel some sympathy for Consul Newbolt, so very quickly thrust into the middle of what was potentially an explosive situation. Yet he stuck to his convictions, and responded to Alexander, that he would pursue his endeavors to meet with the Pasha and further discuss this issue, but in the meantime, he requested ‘I hope you will not resume the work on the premises of the Society, or if so, I cannot be responsible for any consequences,’¹⁴⁶ Alexander agreed and replied that he would indeed stop any further construction work.¹⁴⁷

One could imagine Alexander’s annoyance by this new obstacle. In view though of his previous poor relationship with Young, it would appear that he was determined to work alongside the new, albeit temporary, Consul.

But such temperance was obviously not felt by Alexander’s associates. After confiding with them, Alexander wrote the following day to Newbolt,

‘I find there is a strong feeling in the Mission against being again stopped proceeding with any work on the Premises of the Church, and I would beg of you to submit to His Excellency the Pasha that what is now being done, is only in a small preparatory manner, and cannot possibly lead to any realization of the Pasha’s fears.’¹⁴⁸

Newbolt finally met with the Pasha on 20 October, and laid before him the Bishop’s requests. The Governor was unmoved, and requested Newbolt to desist from any further building until the messengers had returned from Beirut – with a reply from Consul-General Rose, and also one from the Turkish Governor-General there.¹⁴⁹ He explained to Newbolt that although he anticipated no disturbance, yet,

‘The people here were hasty, and easily excited, and...there would still be great talk about the English building a church, that this reaching the ears of his superiors, he would be blamed for allowing the work without being certain that he was right in so doing.’¹⁵⁰

The Governor was being extra cautious, as he knew from the events of the previous year, that opposition from the local sheikhs could easily lead to civil unrest, as was also apparent with the much less serious issue of the raising of the

French flag in 1843. Such were the sensitivities of the local Muslim population of Jerusalem. And Alexander did well to listen to this sound advice – as frustrating as it was for him.

Rose's reply reached Newbolt on 2 November – a mere five days before Alexander was due to begin a trip to Egypt and England. Rose stated that he had 'failed in his endeavours' with the Turkish Governor-General 'for the execution of the *Firman*, but obtained a letter from him, directing Ali Pasha to cause no hindrance to the work that he had stopped on the premises, unless there could be assigned some legal and regular obstacle for his hindrance of such work ...' The work being referred to here was not on the construction of the church itself (the subject of the counter complaint sent to Constantinople), but the work on Bishop Alexander's private house adjacent to the Church.

Newbolt again sought and received an audience with Ali Pasha. And again the Pasha procrastinated, stating that the order did not permit Bishop Alexander 'to build on the premises of the Church, or, that he was allowed to build a new house ...' Newbolt responded that according to his translation received from Rose, it says that 'Bishop Alexander having undertaken to build a house for himself, that should it be in accordance with the law and rule, no hindrance was to be made to such building, or, if any legal or regular obstacle, that such should be given in writing.'¹⁵¹

Newbolt's request for the objections to be placed in writing were adhered to – but they were in Turkish, which Newbolt had no capability in Jerusalem to adequately translate. These were then sent back to Rose in Beirut. Newbolt wrote of these presumed objections:

'It is true that at present the Cancellaria is but one small room forming part of the building of the present Protestant place of Worship, but His excellency cannot object to it on account of its size. The church cannot literally be built within it, but I should hardly take such to be the real meaning of the *Firman*...'¹⁵²

It was a frustrating period. Newbolt stated to Aberdeen 'In all my interviews with Ali Pasha on the subject of the *Firman* there appears to me to have been predetermined opposition ...'¹⁵³ Indeed there was – and had been from the very outset of the building, and even of Alexander's entrance into the city. Alexander meanwhile was waiting anxiously. He desperately desired to have the issue settled before leaving for England.

In a sense, on this issue hinged much of the credibility of his presence in Jerusalem. Indeed there were a number of Jewish people who had acknowledged Jesus as Messiah (some perhaps with dubious motives), but in the East it was essential to have a tangible expression of one's community in which a member

would feel secure. An officially recognized Church building would be therefore be of much assistance for Alexander to accomplish this goal.

Besides, although of German-Polish extraction, Alexander was by now a flag-bearer of Britain. And it was the ultimate insult that the nation which played the leading role in aiding Turkey regain Palestine in 1840 was now being denied permission to build a church in Jerusalem.

Rose failed in his attempts to get the suspension of building rescinded, so he informed Newbolt to demand written information from Ali Pasha as to his reasons for not carrying out the wishes of the *Firman*.¹⁵⁴ Newbolt accordingly wrote to Ali Pasha on 24 November requesting written reasons so he could transmit them 'to Her Majesty's Consul General for the information of His Excellency Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, and Her Britannic Majesty's Government.'¹⁵⁵

The letter from Ali Pasha reiterated the claim that the church was not within the Consular residence, and that as Alexander's house immediately adjoined the proposed church, it was seen to be contiguous with it – work could not be continued. But what was especially galling in the letter, translated from the Turkish, was the false claim that the area where the Church was to be built was in fact 'the property of *Wakf*'¹⁵⁶ since it was adjoining a Muslim place of worship.¹⁵⁷

The Muslim opponents in Jerusalem were persevering in their opposition, this time attempting to claim that the LJS property was actually Islamic *Wakf* property.

And so the matter found its way back to Ambassador Canning, who, as much as anyone else, was annoyed by this further hindrance, and immediately set about clarifying the *Firman*.

21. The Bitter and the Sweet

En route to England via Egypt while still a day's journey outside Cairo, Alexander died suddenly on the night of November 22/23. When news of his death arrived in Jerusalem, it was Nicolayson's duty to inform the family and the local community. Alexander's daughter Deborah describes how the news came to her:

'One afternoon I was ready dressed for a ride with Mr. and Bessie Nicolayson; very hurriedly Mr. Nicolayson arrived at our home and without taking notice of me, went into the drawing room to interview Miss Cecil. I was eventually sent for and saw that something was wrong and asked at once if any news had come of Mama. She was the one I naturally expected might be ill. I was told that a messenger had just come from Egypt and that Papa had been taken very ill, before they reached Cairo.

Later on, the sad – and most overwhelming event of his death in his sleep – was broken to me. I was simply stunned. I tried to cry but tears are never my relief in sorrow. I was roused by a fearful commotion in the nursery where I found all my dear little sisters and brother in floods of tears, and Margaret, our English nurse, in hysterics on the floor. I threw a glass of cold water over her, and then tried to comfort the dear little ones.¹⁵⁸

Nicolayson's was an unenviable task, as he states:

‘How deeply and tenderly the departed was beloved as well as revered by all here, the effect of the painful announcement I had to make, in the opening of my sermon on the Sunday morning after its receipt, most affectingly showed. Scarcely any present who was not dissolved in tears.

I may mention that, having waited yesterday on both the patriarchs here, the Armenian and the Greek, to make the melancholy announcement to them, they both expressed their deep sympathy, particularly for the afflicted widow and orphans; and the former (the Armenian patriarch), sent the Bishop Procurator, and the Dragoman of the convent, to my house to-day to express still more emphatically his sincere condolence. He was personally much attached to our late beloved Bishop, who, indeed, was universally esteemed by all who knew him personally.¹⁵⁹

In one of those bittersweet ironies of history, at the very time when people were mourning for the passing of the Bishop, two Tartar messengers arrived at sunset on 9 December, bearing fresh dispatches from Constantinople containing ‘fresh, most explicit, and peremptory orders to our new Pasha here,’ wrote Nicolayson ‘for the instant removal of all impediment to “resuming the erection of the English Protestant Church already commenced here,” and of other buildings.’ He continued:

‘While this is highly gratifying, it serves, too, to renew the grief still so fresh, by the very thought of how our dear Bishop would have rejoiced in it, had he still been among us.’¹⁶⁰

It was during the time of Finn and Gobat that the Hebrew Protestant Church was finally completed. Although its initial intended name was the ‘Apostolic Anglican Church’, Gobat requested in 1847 that the designated name be changed to Christ Church.¹⁶¹

The General Committee on 10 November 1847 directed that ‘the designation of the Protestant Church at Jerusalem should be Christ Church.’¹⁶² Also, a letter from W. Ayerst to Nicolayson dated 8 Dec 1847: ‘I have just written a line to Bishop Gobat to supply an omission I made yesterday in writing:’

‘The Committee wish that the new Church should be called “Christ Church” and I trust that this will be agreeable to his Lordships views and wishes.’

Christ Church was consecrated on 21 January 1849. The following year Protestants were officially recognized as a community in the Turkish Empire.

List of Archives

CSL – Conrad Schick Library and Archives at Christ Church, Jerusalem.

FO – Archive of the British Foreign Office at the Public Record Office, London.

LAMBETH – Archive of the Anglican Church at Lambeth Palace Library, London.

LJS – The London Jews Society (full name: London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews).

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Footnotes

1 LJS General Committee, 25 November 1834.
2 Jewish Intelligence, [JI], 1836, p. 17.
3 LJS General Committee, 16 December 1836, Minute L. 167.
4 LJS General Committee, 16 January 12836, Minute L. 168.
5 LJS General Committee, 16 January 1836, Minute L. 168.
6 W. Fox Strangeways, Foreign Office to Sir Thomas Baring, 10 March 1837. Minute L283.
7 LJS General Committee, 18 March 1837, Minute L. 294.
8 LJS General Committee, 9 May 1837, Minute L. 339.
9 LJS General Committee, 30 May 1837, Minute L. 362.
10 NA [National Archives], FO 78/535, Thomas Strangeways to Thomas Baring, September 1837.
11 LJS General Committee, 23 January 1838, Minute L. 580.
12 LJS General Committee, 11 December 1838, Minute L. 1074.
13 LJS General Committee, 11 December 1838, Minute L. 1075. A foreigner couldn't legally
14 purchase land under Turkish control, so a third party stepped in temporarily.
15 National Archives, FO 78/535, Nicolayson to Campbell. 20 October 1838.
16 LJS General Committee, 26 October 1838, Minute L. 958.
17 LJS General Committee, 11 December 1838, Minute L. 1077.
18 LJS General Committee, 23 July 1839, Minute L. 1521.
19 LJS General Committee, 7 June 1839, Minute L. 1394.
20 LJS General Committee, 10 September 1839, Minute L. 1556.
21 LJS General Committee, 23 July 1839, Minute L. L.1521.
22 LJS General Committee, 10 September, 1839, Minute L. 1556.
23 LJS General Committee, 10 September 1839, Minute L. 1558.
24 Found in National Archives, FO 78/540, Young to Rose, 10 February 1843, quoting Campbell to
25 Young, 16 November 1839.
26 CMJ General Committee, 21 November 1839, Minute L. 1697.
27 LJS General Committee, 12 January 1841, Minute M. 1024.
28 LJS General Committee, 12 January 1841, Minutes M. 1024 & 1025.
29 LJS General Committee, 9 February 1841, Minute M. 1096.
30 Backhouse to Baring, in LJS General Committee, 23 February 1841, Minute M. 1138.
31 LJS General Committee, 26 March 1841, Minute M.1299.
32 LJS General Committee, 26 March 1841, Minute M. 1301.
33 LJS General Committee, 10 April 1841, Minute M. 1313.
34 LJS General Committee, 10 April 1841, Minute M. 1314.
35 LJS General Committee, 10 April 1841, Minute M. 1315.
36 LJS General Committee, 10 April 1841, Minutes M. 1316 & 1317.
37 LJS General Committee, 10 April, Minute M. 1319.
38 LJS General Committee, 10 April 1841, Minute M. 1320.
39 LJS General Committee, 13 April 1841, Minutes M. 1352a and b.
40 LJS General Committee, 13 April 1841, Minutes M. 1345 & 1349.
41 LJS General Committee, 13 April 1841, Minute M. 1352 i.
42 LJS General Committee, 13 July 1841, Minute M. 1814.
43 LJS General Committee, 27 July 1841, Minute 1842.
44 LJS General Committee, 17 August 1841, Minute M. 1946.
45 Palmerston to Ponsonby, 28 August 1841, FO 78/429.
46 Ponsonby to Palmerston, 18 August 1841, FO 78/437 (No 270, p. 62).
47 Ponsonby to Palmerston, 2 September 1841, FO 78/437 (No. 280, p. 161).
48 Ponsonby to Palmerston, 8 September 1841, FO 78/437 (No 284, p. 187).
49 Ponsonby to Palmerston, 15 September 1841, FO 78/437 (No 288).
50 The Muslim jurists and legal scholars, who are experts in the *Sharia*, the Islamic Law.
51 Pisani was the dragoman or interpreter, who accomplished valuable work on behalf of the British
Embassy.
Ponsonby to Aberdeen, 29 September 1841, FO 78/437 (No 4).
Franks was a general term applied to all Europeans within the Turkish Empire.

52 Refers to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, either of Constantinople or of Jerusalem, who for the
53 most part actually resided in Constantinople.

54 Ponsonby to Palmerston, 6 October 1841, FO 78/437 (No 9, p. 284).

55 Ponsonby to Aberdeen, 22 January 1842, FO 78/473.

56 Ponsonby to Aberdeen, 24 February 1842, FO. 78/473 (No 19).

57 Aberdeen to Ponsonby, 24 March 1842, FO 78/473 (No 27).

58 LJS General Committee, 23 November 1841, Minute M. 2339.

59 LJS General Committee, 23 November 1841, Minute M. 2340.

60 Tibawi, A. L., *British Interests in Palestine 1800-1901: A Study of Religious and Educational
Enterprise* (Oxford: 1961) pp. 60-61.

61 Alexander to Chevalier Bunsen, Easter Monday 1842, in *Jl* 1842, p. 192.

62 Alexander to LJS London, 16 April 1842, in *Jl*, 1842, p. 248.

63 *Jl*, 1842, p. 353.

64 Tarkover soon after began a small school, 'which' Alexander wrote 'I trust will increase, and
prove a blessing.' Alexander to LJS London, 30 November, 1842, in *Jl*, 1843, p. 59.

65 Despite Alexander's association of Mount Zion with the area where the LJS was located, this was
not actually the location of the Mount Zion of the Bible.

66 Alexander to LJS London, in *Jl* 1842, p. 403.

67 Johns, J. W., *The Anglican Cathedral Church of Saint James, Mount Zion, Jerusalem* (London:
1844), Illustration between pp. 13 & 14..

68 J. W. Johns, *The Anglican Cathedral Church of St. James Jerusalem*, (London, 1844), pp. 5-6.

69 Ewald, *ibid*, p. 142.

70 The following day, 6 November, Alexander baptized another Jewish adult, Mr. Michael
Weinkauff, a contact of Ewald from some years previously, who had arrived in Jerusalem at the
time Ewald initially hosted the three rabbis.

71 See Jerusalem, Local Committee Book I, No 84, 13 December 1842. Also Yaron Parry, p. 66.

72 Perry, Y., 'The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews in Palestine: 1809-
1841', MA dissertation, University of Haifa, 1996 (Hebrew), p. 66.

73 Hebrew Christian Church at Jerusalem (some particulars respecting the erection of the Church)
[Miscellaneous papers c.102, d55/1 LJS Archives Bodleian Library, 10 February 1888.]

74 Perry, Y., 'the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews in Palestine: 1809-
1841', MA dissertation, University of Haifa, 1996 (Hebrew), p. 67.

75 LJS Local Committee, 17 January 1843, Minute 104, in *Journal 1842- 1867*, [henceforth *Journal*],
p. 37, Schick Library.

76 Journal of Ewald, in *Jl*, 1843, p. 168.

77 Journal, *ibid*, p. 34.

78 Nicolayson to Young, 14 January 1843, *Journal*, p. 35.

79 Young to Nicolayson, 14 January 1843, *ibid*, p. 36.

80 Alexander to Stratford Canning, 14 January 1843, MSS 3393, [No f.66], Lambeth.

81 Report of Visit 17 January 1843, in *Journal*, *ibid*, p. 36.

82 LJS Local Committee, 17 January 1843, Minute 105, *ibid*, p. 37.

83 LJS Local Committee, 17 January 1843, Minute 108, *ibid*, p. 37.

84 Ewald, *ibid*, p. 149.

85 Ludwig von Wildenbruch, 1803 – 1874.

86 Rose to Aberdeen, 26 January 1843, FO 78/535 (No 9).

87 Rose to Aberdeen, 26 January 1843, FO 78/535 (No 9).

88 Which, according to Aberdeen, provided Britain with certain extra-territorial rights.

89 Rose to Aberdeen, 26 January 1843, FO 78/535 (No 9).

90 Rose to Aberdeen, 15 February 1843 FO 78/535 (No 193).

91 Alexander to Bunsen, 30 January 1843, MSS 3393, Lambeth.

92 Rose to Aberdeen, 4 February 1843 FO 78/535 (No 11).

93 Rose to Aberdeen, 4 February 1843, FO 78/535 (No 11).

94 A Turkish general, and in particular the commander-in-chief or Minister of War. In this context it
would seem it was the latter, and an important part of the Ottoman Government.

Rose to Aberdeen, 4 February 1843, FO 78.535 (No 11).

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- 95 Rose to Aberdeen, 15 February 1843, FO 78/535 (No 19).
- 96 Rose to Aberdeen, 4 February 1843, FO 78/535 (No 11).
- 97 Rose to Aberdeen, 6 February 1843, FO 78/535 (No 13).
- 98 Rose to Aberdeen, 4 February 1843, FO 78.535 (No 11).
- 99 Alexander to Archbishop of Canterbury, 27 February 1842, pp.1-3, St. Anthony's.
- 100 Alexander to Sir Richard Steele, 28 February 1843, St. Anthony's.
- 101 Morning Post, 12 April 1843, in *Jl*, 1843, p. 154.
- 102 Morning Post, *ibid*, p. 155.
- 103 Aberdeen to Canning, 20 March 1843, FO 78/513 (No 41).
- 104 Aberdeen to Young, 3 April 1843, FO 78/540.
- 105 Young to Aberdeen, 1 May 1843, FO 78/540 (No 24).
- 106 Alexander to Sir Stratford Canning, 20 September 1843, MSS 3397, Lambeth.
- 107 Alexander to Sir Robert Inglis, 21 December 1843, pp. 187-9, Lambeth.
- 108 Young to Aberdeen, 2 January 1844, FO 78/581 (p. 17).
- 109 Young to Aberdeen, 2 January 1844, FO 78/581 (p. 17).
- 110 Ayerst to Nicolayson, in *Letters London to Nicolayson, 1843-1856*, 15 December 1843, No 46, Schick Library.
- 111 Ayerst to Nicolayson, 15 December 1843, *ibid*, No 46, Schick Library.
- 112 Ayerst to Nicolayson, 15 December 1843, *ibid*, No 46, Schick Library.
- 113 Ayerst to Nicolayson, *ibid*, Schick Library.
- 114 Memo to Nicolayson, in letter from Ayerst to Nicolayson, 15 December 1843, *ibid*, Schick Library.
- 115 Young to Aberdeen, 30 May 1844, FO 78/581 (No 12).
- 116 Ayerst to Nicolayson, 15 December 1843, *ibid*, Schick Library.
- 117 Ayerst to Nicolayson, 15 December 1843, *ibid*, Schick Library.
- 118 Ayerst to Nicolayson, 4 January 1844, *ibid*, No 47, Schick Library.
- 119 Rose to Aberdeen, 26 December 1843, FO 78/537 (No 77).
- 120 Rose to Aberdeen, 26 December 1843, FO 78/537 (No 77).
- 121 Nicolayson to LJS London, 26 February 1844, No 87, in *Letters from Jerusalem to London, 1841-1844*, Schick Library.
- 122 Nicolayson to LJS London, *ibid*.
- 123 Nicolayson to London, *ibid*.
- 124 Bidwell to Young, 16 March 1844, FO 78/581 (No 2).
- 125 Young to Aberdeen, 30 May 1844, FO 78/581 (No 12).
- 126 See Nicolayson to London, 26 April 1844, No 91, *ibid*.
- 127 Nicolayson to London, 27 March 1844, No 90, *ibid*.
- 128 Nicolayson to London, 26 April 1844, No 91, *ibid*.
- 129 Aberdeen to Canning, 20 March 1845, FO 78/592 (No 32). Here Aberdeen was reminding Canning of his dispatch of 3 May 1844.
- 130 Times, 17 June 1844, quoted in *Jl*, 1844, p. 247.
- 131 LJS Local Committee, 58th Meeting, 25 June 1844, Minute 213, *ibid*.
- 132 LJS Local Committee, 63rd meeting, 30 July 1844, Minute 227, *ibid*. Mr. Johns the second architect had laid the foundations for the new church. Mr. Hillier had been the first architect but died in Jerusalem in 1840 after a stay of only one month.
- 133 Presentation of a Memorial from the Society to Lord Aberdeen, in *Jl*, 1845, pp. 125-127.
- 134 Aberdeen to Canning, 20 March 1845, FO 78/592 (No 32).
- 135 Aberdeen to Canning, 20 March 1845, FO 78/592 (No 32).
- 136 Canning to Aberdeen, 25 August 1845, FO 78/600 (No199).
- 137 Aberdeen to Lord Ashley, 4 October 1845, in *Jl*, 1845, p. 369.
- 138 Sultan of Turkey to British Government, 10 September 1845, in *Jl*, 1845, p. 370.
- 139 Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 186). This building, henceforth also known as the *Cancellaria*, is where the present Conrad Schick Library (& LJS Archive) is located, which itself is attached to the Alexander Lounge, the location of the 'Protestant place of Worship' or St. James Chapel, in November 1845.
- 140 Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 186).

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- ¹⁴¹ Place where official business takes place and where archives and official documents are located.
- ¹⁴² Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 187).
- ¹⁴³ Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 187).
- ¹⁴⁴ Nicolayson to LJS London, 1 November, 1845, in *Jl*, 1846, pp. 26-27.
- ¹⁴⁵ Consul Newbolt to Bishop Alexander, 18 October, 1845, FO 78/626 (No 190).
- ¹⁴⁶ Consul Newbolt to Bishop Alexander, 19 October 1845, FO 78/626 (No 192).
- ¹⁴⁷ Bishop Alexander to Consul Newbolt, 19 October, 1845, FO 78/626 (No 192).
- ¹⁴⁸ Alexander to Newbolt, 19 October 1845, FO 78/626 (No 192).
- ¹⁴⁹ Newbolt to Alexander, 20 October 1845, FO 78/626 (No 193).
- ¹⁵⁰ Newbolt to Alexander, 20 October 1845, FO 78/626 (No 193).
- ¹⁵¹ Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 186).
- ¹⁵² Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 188).
- ¹⁵³ Newbolt to Aberdeen, 4 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 188).
- ¹⁵⁴ Winbolt to Aberdeen, 5 December 1845, FO 78/626 (No 201). It so happened that shortly after issuing this suspension order, Ali Pasha was transferred to Damascus, and he was succeeded by Mahamet, former pasha of Acre.
- ¹⁵⁵ Translation of letter from Winbolt to Ali Pasha, Governor of Jerusalem, 24 November 1845, FO 78/626 (No 203).
- ¹⁵⁶ Italics mine.
- ¹⁵⁷ Translation of letter from Ali Pasha to Consul Winbolt, FO 78/626 (No 204-5).
- ¹⁵⁸ Ransom, D. R. M., 'Memoir', Conrad Schick Library, Jerusalem, 1913, p. 35.
- ¹⁵⁹ Nicolayson to LJS London, 9 December 1845, in *Jl*, 1846, p. 97.
- ¹⁶⁰ Nicolayson to LJS London, *ibid*, p. 97.
- ¹⁶¹ 'Apostolic Anglican Church of Jerusalem.' LJS General Committee Meeting 10 April 1841, M. 1315, Bodleian. And LJS General Committee, 10 November 1847, 'Hebrew Christian Church at Jerusalem,' d 55/1, Bodleian.
- ¹⁶² Hebrew Christian Church at Jerusalem, LJS Archives Bodleian Library, d 55/1.