



# Congratulations to a Two-hundred-year-old

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

What could be more “current” here at the beginning of 2009 than to congratulate CMJ on its bicentenary? CMJ stands for “The Church’s Ministry among Jewish People.” The society was founded on February 15, 1809, under the name “The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews,” popularly called the “London Jews Society” (LJS).

There is cause for congratulations – and that for several reasons:

First, because it was the first Jewish mission society to be founded in modern times.

Second, because the establishment of LJS inspired the establishment of a number of similar Jewish mission societies in continental Europe over the following decades.

Third, because over these 200 years the gospel of Jesus has been proclaimed to Jews in many places, not just in Britain and Ireland, not just in continental Europe – west as well as east, Russia included – nor even just in Palestine/Israel, but also, for example, in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Abyssinia/Ethiopia, Argentina, the United States, South Africa, and Australia.

Fourth, and not least, because CMJ stands by its commitment to share the gospel with Jews. This is no matter of course. It goes without saying that there have been ups and downs for LJS/CMJ. Has any society been without them? Even societies with a far shorter history have experienced that! But a number of the Jewish mission societies which came into being in the nineteenth century thanks to inspiration from LJS, societies which also stood by the commitment to evangelize among Jews after the Holocaust, have now reformulated their former vision, and some even dissociate themselves from mission among Jewish people.

From the very beginning the London Jews Society had to face allegations that they were “influenced by foolish and Utopian expectations,” as is noted in the Second Report from 1810. The Committee countered such allegations in the following way:

They [the Committee] wish to distinguish between the restoration of Israel to their own country, and the conversion of Israel to Christianity. If nothing peculiar appeared in the aspect of the times – if neither

Jews nor Christians believed the future restoration of Israel – if no exposition of prophecy had awakened attention or excited expectation in men’s mind – if it were possible to place things as they stood many centuries ago – still your Committee would urge the importance and propriety of establishing a Jewish Mission. They cannot conceive any just reason why the Jews should be wholly neglected, and no means employed for their conversion.

The issue here is very clear, even if most of those who today are involved in missions to the Jews would use a different terminology: The Jews must not be neglected. They also need Jesus for salvation. Therefore, the society wants to work for the salvation of Israel.

What about today?

Robin Aldridge, Chairman of CMJ International and CEO of CMJ U.K., gives a clear answer to that question at the end of Kelvin Crombie’s recent book, *Restoring Israel: 200 Years of the CMJ Story* (2008) – which will be reviewed in the next issue of *Mishkan*. Aldridge writes:

... the work of CMJ continues true to the original vision of its forefathers proclaiming that there is no way to salvation and eternal life except through the spilled blood of Jesus the Jewish Messiah and Saviour of the world. Jew and Gentile have the same need, same hope and the same Lord. The sensitive sharing of the gospel with the Jewish people remains central and will continue to be central to the future. As more Jewish people make *aliyah* to Israel the work of CMJ will be increasingly focused on Israel. But wherever CMJ is at work it remains the ministry among Jewish people. We look forward with confidence in God to the future. Those of us who now hold the baton are determined to hand it on to the next generation, looking forward to the day “all Israel will be saved” and Jesus can return to claim His bride, Jew and Gentile one in Him.

In the bicentenary for its foundation, CMJ defined its mission succinctly on its homepage:

To encourage Jewish people to come to faith in Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah, to support them in serving him as Lord in the light of God’s purpose for them, and to equip the church to be involved in this mission.

*Mazal tov!*

