

False Pearl Mounted in Gilt Copper: Paternalism and Colonization in the New York Manumission Society, The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, and Columbia College

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I. Introduction

During the Columbia College Commencement rehearsal in 1811, a young man and soon-to-be-graduate named Stevenson gave his final oration. In it, he argued that “representatives ought to act according to the sentiments of their constituents.” This argument angered his professors, who not only disagreed with the statement, but demanded that Stevenson change it in time for the official proceedings. However, when the time came, Stevenson read the original version, prompting the faculty to demand that the College withhold his degree. The “Trinity Church Riot” as the incident became

known eventually went to court, where Stevenson was represented by Peter Augustus Jay, a prominent New York lawyer and the son of John Jay. Jay argued that considering that the College asked its students to debate political issues, they should therefore let the students express their true opinions. He argued that if the College did not permit a freedom of opinion, then students would be “simply mouthpieces of professors.”[1] Jay’s beliefs on pedagogy, however, did not align with his own philanthropic pursuits.

As a wealthy man from an influential family, Jay was well-known in New York. In the five years following the Trinity Church Riot, he served as a Columbia trustee. Jay was also a member of the New York Manumission Society (NYMS) as well as the treasurer and director of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews (ASMCJ). While Jay called for a freedom of expression for students in 1811, both the NYMS and ASMCJ extolled the opposite of this belief, instead attempting to dictate and constraint the lives of their subjects. Both societies gained traction among white upper class men looking to join the elite tradition of philanthropy. The two societies were inherently religious and paternalistic in their methods as they tried to better the lives of their subjects. With little to no input from those they were trying to help, the societies received mixed success in their pursuits.

Philanthropy began to take hold in the colonies during the 18th century, but charity had a long history in America. At the time, charity often meant giving money to the needy. The influx of philanthropic societies, many of which originated in London before developing American counterparts, institutionalized charitable giving into a voluntary association often with a constitution, officers, and elections. The goal of these associations was to better the new nations by improving the conditions that created the need for charity in the first place. Instead of donating money in a one-time contribution, these societies hoped to “inspire the poor [and others] with new hope and give them the means of self-support; through such aid, they could raise themselves to respectability.” This belief meant that “traditional charity--alms--was self-defeating; the money would be here today and gone tomorrow, and the poor [as well as other groups of people] would be as dependent as ever. By contrast, philanthropy removed the conditions it addressed; in its successful wake, charity would go out of business.”[2] Additionally,

philanthropy differed from earlier forms of charity in its reliance on religious groups, particularly evangelicals, who, inspired by the Second Great Awakening, “made the voluntary principle their own.”[3]

The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews

In the beginning of the 19th century, a group of wealthy men in New York met to discuss their mutual admiration for the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, a philanthropic conversion society whose mission was to convert Jews to Christianity, thereby granting them eternal salvation and a better life while still on Earth. Before bringing the London Society to America, the men first decided to gain more information about the state of Jews in New York. They set out to answer a few simple questions: How many Jews are there in New York City? How do the Jews feel about their own religious institutions and what are their feelings on the Church? Are Jews willing to be converted and what would be the best practices to do so? How did the London Society begin, and what methods of conversion do they use? By 1816, the group believed that Jews would welcome such a conversion society. They began to strategize on how to bring the London Society to the United States. By late December, they founded the Society for Colonizing and Evangelizing the Jews. Joseph S.C.F. Frey, a converted Jew from the London Society, arrived in the United States to help develop the new American society. However, when the society attempted to gain recognition from the New York State legislature, they received word that the legislature was concerned that the phrase “evangelizing and colonizing” in the name of the society violated the right to freedom of religion. The legislature would only affirm the society under a different name. Therefore, in 1820, the society was confirmed with the same purpose, but under the name the American Society for Meliorating (or Ameliorating) the Condition of the Jews.[4] The name change was merely ceremonial, and members of the society remarked on how the original name was better suited considering that the strategy for “ameliorating the condition of the Jews” was to evangelize and then colonize them.[5]

Jews faced forced conversion in Europe, but had hoped to leave it behind when they came to America. While there was no forced conversion in the United States due to the Constitution's promise of freedom of religion, there were still efforts made by Christians to convert Jews. "Puritan theologians were trying to save the souls of the Jews so they could spend eternity with God..." argues Oscar Reiss, author of *Jews in Colonial America*. "To convert a Jew was a personal glory and a step toward accelerating the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth." [6] Since conversion was an option in the United States instead of a demand like in parts of Europe, fewer Jews converted in the colonies. The ASMCJ aimed to convert enough Jews to populate at least one large colony, however they faced apathy and aggression from the Jewish colonial population. Jews felt that the ASMCJ used "hard, oppressive, and offensive language against Jews" which immediately put them at odds with the organization. "Neither persecution or detraction ever yet made a single convert," argued Solomon Henry Jackson, author of *The Jew*, the first Jewish newspaper in America. "Men will not listen to arguments, when, with the same breath, they are charged with follies they despise, or with crimes they detest or abhor[e]". [7] In this sense, the ASMCJ's mission was doomed to fail. By arguing that Jews should convert to Christianity, they alienated the very people they were trying to convince. While the ASMCJ was notably unsuccessful in converting Jews, still roughly one in seven to one in ten Jews converted to Christianity while in New England, most likely due to the oppressive conditions faced rather than the efforts of conversion societies. [8]

The purpose of the ASMCJ was twofold: not only were they hoping to convert Jews to Christianity, but they were also looking to group these newly converted Jews into a colony. The society was not successful in either of these endeavors. However, their message was well-received by Protestant Americans, who felt inspired by the call to help American Jews. These Christians formed their own conversion societies throughout the United States. By 1825, there were 231 auxiliary societies in cities and towns across America. A few years later, when Joseph Frey left the ASMCJ, there were approximately 400. Additionally, the ASMCJ raised a significant amount of money from donations. During its main span of activity from 1820-1827, the ASMCJ raised around \$16,000 and circulated approximately 2,000 copies of its magazine *Israel's Advocate*. [9]

Even as it was unsuccessful in its goals, the ASMCJ clearly captured a widespread sentiment among American Protestants at the time. Inspired by religious fervor and the Second Great Awakening, the desire to convert Jews, regardless of the success rate, was potent.

The New York Manumission Society

While the average person entering Simmon's Coffee Shop on January 25, 1785 may not have realized it, they would have been present at a historic occurrence: the first meeting of the New York Manumission Society. The NYMS was based on a society in Pennsylvania run in part by Quakers entitled the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, the Relief of Free Negroes, and Improving the Condition of the Colored Race. With the goal of "encouraging the manumission of slaves and the legal protection of slaves and free blacks," the NYMS was formally established ten days later.[10] During this second meeting, which was robustly attended by approximately thirty people, John Jay was unanimously elected chairman.[11]

The NYMS faced the difficult task of attempting to end an institution that was deeply entrenched in New York society. While many think of slavery as a predominantly Southern experience, it was at the foundation of life in the North as well. According to the 1790 United States Census, there were 25,978 African Americans in New York, of which only 4,654 were free. Additionally, almost 40% of white families in and around New York City owned slaves. These slaves worked in households as well as bakeries, print shops, and shipyards. Even for free black people, living in New York had challenges. Life was difficult as certain public amenities, such as a public education, were denied to free black people. It was also hard to find a job or good living conditions. Instead, free black people faced severe challenges and disenfranchisement.[12]

There was a genuine and clear need for life to change for African Americans in New York. However, the change would not be radical. Instead, the NYMS was a "fundamentally moderate" society that pushed for gradual emancipation instead of full abolition.[13] This meant that instead of freeing slaves immediately, the NYMS pushed

for freeing children born after a certain date. Part of the focus on children was the belief that they would be more readily freed by slaveholders.[14] By 1799, the NYMS succeeded in lobbying the New York State legislature to pass a gradual emancipation law “freeing children of slaves born after July 4, 1799, once they had served their masters until the age of twenty-eight for men and twenty-five for women.” However, children born after this date were kept as servants in a life that did not necessarily look different than that of a slave’s. Not only were these servants beaten, they often still owed service up until a certain age.[15] This forced servitude would end after the passage of complete emancipation, which was passed in 1817 in large part due to NYMS lobbying, freeing all slaves in New York State as of July 4, 1827.[16] Gradual emancipation is a key example of the NYMS’ moderate strategy. While the first emancipation law in New York was passed in 1799, there were still slaves as late in the state as 1848.[17]

The NYMS was also moderate in that it allowed its members to own slaves themselves. Both John and Peter Augustus Jay, two influential NYMS members, were slaveholders, even though both also supported gradual emancipation. In 1779, twenty years before the first gradual emancipation laws were passed in New York, John Jay bought his one of his first slaves, a fifteen-year-old boy named Benoit, in Martinique. Jay continued to own slaves throughout his life, including a woman named Abby who, in 1783, ran away from Jay’s home in Paris. Her escape was “a measure for which I [could] not conceive a motive,” wrote Jay. “I had promised to manumit her upon our return to America, provided she behaved properly in the meantime.” While he did not support slavery in theory, he also could not fathom why she would run away. Abby was eventually caught and imprisoned. Upon hearing the news, Jay wrote that he hoped “sobriety, solitude and want of employment [would] render her temper more obedient to reason.”[18] Soon after her imprisonment, Abby became ill and died, which most likely inspired Jay to free Benoit later that year. Upon Benoit’s manumission, Jay wrote that “the children of men are by nature equally free, and cannot without injustice be either reduced to or held in slavery.” However, Jay also required Benoit to work another three years to pay off his the “money expended on him.”[19] Even upon Benoit’s freedom, Jay remained a slaveholder, and there are records of him owning slaves as late as 1809, when he sold

a girl, Zilpah, who he found unruly.[20] By this time, sentiment against slave-owning members of the NYMS had grown significantly, and the members passed a constitutional amendment stating that “any member of the Society who may be the owner of a slave shall forfeit his right of membership unless he manumit such slave: and no person owning a slave shall be admitted a member.”[21] While Jay was no longer involved with the NYMS, this is evidence to show that while the NYMS was consistently moderate, it did progress in its beliefs.

Gradual emancipation was only the first of three goals established by the NYMS during their founding. The second project was the distribution of Samuel Hopkins’ *Dialogue on Slavery*, an anti-slavery work.[22] The third and final goal of the NYMS was the creation of the African Free School, whose aim was to educate free blacks who otherwise were not allowed in public schools. “The NYMS encouraged the education of black children and apprenticeship of black boys under skilled master craftsmen,” argues Manisha Sinha, author of *The Slave’s Cause*. “Abolitionists claimed that making free black people model citizens of the Republic would hasten the demise of racial slavery.”[23] The NYMS disbanded in 1849 having met all its stated goals, including gradual and then complete emancipation in New York State.[24]

Argumentation

The ASMCJ and NYMS are two examples of the rise of philanthropic societies in early New York. These Societies arose in conjunction with the Second Great Awakening, which spearheaded an influx in evangelicalism around the country. In New York, this religiosity cohered around a mission to help those who were ostracized from larger society. However, this philosophy was inherently paternalistic, portraying the subjects of the societies as inferior and without agency of their own. Additionally, the intention of colonization, whether in Palestine, Liberia, Haiti, or elsewhere was to remove this plight on society, even if through the guise of helping them. Even if the intention of these societies was to help the subject, it was also a social obligation for the members, who made up the upper echelons of New York society. This thesis use this framework to examine the similarities between the ASMCJ and NYMS, focusing

specifically on their condescending language and paternalism, religious basis, and colonial intentions. It will also argue that these societies were inherently connected with Columbia due to their prominence in New York City, and their makeup, which involved various alumni and trustees. This thesis will show an inextricable link between Columbia College, New York philanthropic societies, the plight of American Jews, and slavery.

II. Critical Comparison of the ASMCJ and NYMS

A Common Paternalism

Like most philanthropic societies at the time, both the ASMCJ and NYMS believed that the best way to improve conditions for the lower echelons of society was for wealthy white men to help them through the rigid social structure. In the case of the ASMCJ, this took the form of speeches about how the Jewish reputation was undeserved as well as highly encouraged conversion to Christianity. While the NYMS had better intentions and practices (while the intentions of the ASMCJ was sincere, the patronizing aspect is clear), that did not stop the Society from also treating their subjects as inferior. For the NYMS, the paternalism came through an attempt to improve the culture and mannerisms of free black people, asserting that they were not polite or respectable enough.

Beyond pushing for emancipation, the mission of the NYMS was to improve the lives of free black people in New York. However, their methods were often condescending towards those they were trying to help. They “operated under the paradoxical assumption that elite stewardship offered the best way to promote racially egalitarian attitudes,” a belief that was apparent in their actions.[25] As the NYMS attempted to convince the state legislature to embrace gradual emancipation, they also “visited with people in the free black community to exhort more circumspect conduct.” Part of this practice came from the Quakers, who, prominent in the abolition movement, had a “practice of exercising moral oversight of potentially wayward members.” The NYMS also issued guidelines for free black people, warning them “against admitting slaves or servants into their homes, receiving or purchasing anything from them, against

fiddling, dancing or any other noisy entertainment in their houses, whereby the tranquility of the neighborhood be disturbed.” Additionally, they attempted to police what social, economic, and cultural groups and events with which free black people could associate.[26] The concern even lasted as far as 1808 when NYMS members worried about the “looseness of manners and depravity of conduct” of free blacks. In response, they appointed a committee to “refor[m] among that part of the African race who are dissolute in their morals, keep houses of ill fame and are otherwise pursuing conduct injurious to themselves and others.”[27] The NYMS hoped that their efforts would succeed in convincing “white New Yorkers to perceive blacks as worthy recipients of assistance and ultimately freedom.”[28] In order to gain the support of white Americans, NYMS members attempted to convince black Americans to act in a way deemed proper in the eyes of white society. The focus on assimilation in order to gain more equal rights was characteristic of the actions taken by the NYMS.

In order to force free black people into accepting the conditions set forth by the NYMS, the society put forward a series of consequences were a freed black person to disobey their orders. For one, the NYMS began to compile a registry of freed blacks in New York City “to better keep track of their individual behavior.” The society believed that the register would help “to the end that [free black people] may be more sensible of their own privileges and may inform others of the disadvantages those labor under, from whom the Society's patronage is withheld.”[29] The NYMS believed that the services they provided were a privilege that could be taken away if free black people did not conform to the ideal envisioned by the white elites. Members of the NYMS “imagined a racially inclusive republic composed of worthy black citizens” and were unwilling to compromise on that ideal, instead resorting to using threats to force free black people to follow their strict rules.[30] One of the key strategies undertaken by the NYMS to increase the population of “worthy” people was the creation of the African Free School, which “sought to educate black children, slave and free, [and] impar[t] skills and manners.”[31] The NYMS hoped that a school would allow them to prevent behavior among African Americans that they believed reflected poorly on the community. Additionally, children were targeted to separate them from their parents who might be a poor cultural influence.[32] Members of the NYMS “felt that slavery often left blacks with

an incomplete cultural identity, and easy prey for the immorality and criminal tendencies they associated with the class position of the former slaves.”[33] They also hoped that it would allow them to educate African Americans and whites about the efficacy of black freedom.[34] The assimilation model as presented by the NYMS for free blacks was based on their belief that the seeming inferiority of African Americans was due to their position in society rather than any inherent trait. The NYMS was progressive among whites while also holding beliefs predicated on condescension.

The NYMS saw the African Free School as a privilege for free blacks that could be revoked. Admission to the school were included in the NYMS’ “patronage” powers, which were threatened to be withheld upon the discovery of inappropriate behavior on the part of free blacks. When the standards of appropriate conduct were violated in one instance, members of the NYMS debated how best to publicize the incident in order “to impress their minds with Sentiments of Respect for the Society.” “For NYMS leaders,” argues historian David Gellman, “black violations threatened their ability to shape the debate over slavery in New York.”[35] The history of the NYMS and the African Free School clearly shows that while NYMS members believed themselves to be working for the betterment of African Americans in New York, they were doing so in a manner that treated free blacks as inferior even as the NYMS argued that they were not. The NYMS relied on the elite white male members to make policy.[36]

While the NYMS was paternalistic in its methods as well as its actions pertaining to the African Free School, the ASMCJ was founded on inherently patronizing principles. As a conversion society, SCMJ members firmly believed that the Jewish people needed saving, which would in turn better their position on Earth and allow them entrance to Heaven. And, while the NYMS mainly extolled their paternalism through the African Free School, the ASMCJ was patronizing just by its very existence. As a society founded on the idea of converting Jews to Christianity, their mission relied on the idea that Jews could not choose for themselves and that the society had to choose for them. Additionally, they advocated for an inflation of Jews’ social position. “It is very uncharitable, as well as false, to conclude from this fact, ‘that the Jews are an idle set, and will not work.’ Those who are best acquainted with them, will be most ready to

testify, that few people are more industrious, persevering, and self-denying, in providing for their families, than the Jews are,” argued ASMCJ founding member Joseph Frey. “But the fact is, that instead of blaming the Jews for not earning their bread in any other way than by traffic, we out to blame the Christians, who every where excluded them from the common privileges of citizens.”[37] Frey, along with the rest of the ASMCJ, believed that it was every Christian’s responsibility to save Jews instead of ignore them. The ASMCJ believed that their work counted as “reparation for the wrongs [Jews] ha[d] received at the hands of Christians.”[38] The intentions of the ASMCJ were genuine and altruistic and yet predicated on a view of Jews as helpless and in need of assistance.

The ASMCJ recognized the systemic prejudices and discrimination against Jews, yet did not fully comprehend the full effect of these laws and practices. For instance, in Europe, Jews were excluded from apprenticeships because they were had not been baptized, which was against the law. This therefore prevented many Jews from getting higher paid jobs, keeping the majority of them in poverty. While ASMCJ members realized that this law was unfair and laid the blame of Christians, they believed the fault was trying to economically punish Jews for their religion when they should have been guiding them towards Christianity. The ASMCJ still believed that being Jewish was a problem, they just disagreed on how Christians should respond. They also did not fully accept that laws such as these were the reason Jews were often poor or uneducated, and instead believed that these were a result of the Jews’ religious identity and ethnicity.[39] Therefore, even as the ASMCJ attempted to improve the conditions for Jews, they still saw and spoke of them as inferior to Christians.

The paternalism of philanthropic societies was inherent to their central mission. Their goals were predicated on the idea that the generosity of wealthy elite men was the best option to help those in the lower strata of society. Neither society took advice from those they were attempting the help and pushed a paternalistic narrative of their subjects. However, this was not without its consequences. Both societies received pushback from those they were trying to help. On at least one occasion, black community leaders refused to allow the NYMS to dictate their behavior.[40] However, for the NYMS, this pushback was mainly in terms of free black people creating their own

schools as an alternative to the African Free School. In both 1803 and 1812 three different schools run by free black people were recorded in New York City. While it is unclear why these schools were opened, it implies that the African Free School did not satisfy the needs of the African American community, or that potentially certain free black people were opposed to the methods of the NYMS. In 1809, John Teasman, a black teacher at the African Free School, was fired from his position. Soon after, Teasman opened up his own school in New York City. Clearly, the NYMS' methods were not accepted or beloved by all. Rather, certain free black people preferred self-help methods of improvement rather than accepting philanthropy.[41]

The ASMCJ often received harsher and more direct criticism than the NYMS. Solomon Henry Jackson's *The Jew: Being a Defence of Judaism Against All Adversaries, and Particularly Against the Insidious Attacks of Israel's Advocate* was published monthly for three years as a direct rebuttal to *Israel's Advocate*, ASMCJ's publication run by Joseph Frey. "You [ASMCJ] *mock* us by offering to *bribe* us like *children*, with *toys*. You offer us *farms*.," wrote Jackson in the first edition of *The Jew*. "Keep your *toys*, keep your *farms*; ...do not offer us false pearl mounted in gilt copper: your gold must stand the touchstone of truth, and your jewelry altogether must stand the proof of the law..."[42] In another edition, Jackson took specific issue with the ASMCJ's name change, arguing that the society could "only be considered as a society instituted to evangelize Jews, that is, to convert them to [Christ]ianity; for as regards [to] meliorating, nothing further can be done than to allow them equal rights when they become citizens, and which the law provides for, and the constitution guarantees..."[43] The negative response by Jews to the ASMCJ is not surprising given their methods and goal. However, the public rebuttal by Jews illustrates important differences between Jews and free black people, as well as between the ASMCJ and the NYMS. The NYMS worked for the benefit of African Americans, while the ASMCJ worked to the detriment of many American Jews. At the same time, the Jewish condition, while worse than that of Protestants at the time, was significantly better than for African Americans, who were fighting for basic freedom. Jews, on the other hand, had many freedoms already and were fighting to be treated like other citizens. These distinctions are crucial to accept when comparing the realities of the two societies.

Religion and Philanthropy

The Second Great Awakening revolutionized the American populous, driving many Americans to church and invigorating their religious identity. This had a clear and impactful relationship on philanthropic societies, as they extolled many beliefs also found in Christianity. The ASMCJ is a clear example of a society founded on religious principles and purpose, but it was not alone. The NYMS, for instance, also based much of its work on religious texts. “The benevolent Creator and Father of Men, having given to them all, an equal right to life, liberty, and property; no foreign power on Earth can justly deprive them of either, but in conformity to impartial government and laws to which they have expressly or tacitly consented” began the constitution of the NYMS, proving the centrality of religion in the work begun by society members. “It is our duty, therefore” argued the writers of their constitution, “both as free citizens and Christians, not only to regard with compassion the injustice done to those among us, who are held as Slaves, but, to endeavour by all lawful ways and means, to enable them to share equally with us, in that civil and religious liberty.”[44] The constitution of the ASMCJ was even more explicit with its religious obligations: the society’s “sole object [was] to make every possible and proper exertion, in dependence on the blessing of the God of Abraham, to bring the Jews to the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the true Messiah, and to the experience of the power of his grace.”[45] Many members of the ASMCJ also believed in Christian Zionism, otherwise known as Restorationism, which dictated that before Jesus Christ returned to Earth, Jews would return to Israel, a belief that convinced many members of the ASMCJ to try and preach Christianity to Jews.[46] They believed that their work was instrumental to the advent of the Second Coming.[47] The emphasis on religion was the foundation and basis for the work of the entire society.

Religion was the driving force behind wealthy men’s philanthropy and its influence can be seen throughout the work of these two societies. Two decades after the NYMS’ constitution was written, a member of the society delivered an address which argued that white people did not have permission from God to enslave African Americans. “God gave the Israelites a right to enslave the heathen nations round about,

at least, to the jubilee,” wrote the NYMS member, citing Exodus. “We have no such right to the blacks. Our authority and power over them are usurped in opposition to the laws of Heaven.”[48] The ASMCJ also continued to use religious rhetoric and reasoning throughout their existence. Religion provided the foundation for these societies as well as their main argument for why others should join their cause.

Colonization, the ASMCJ, and the NYMS

While both the ASMCJ and NYMS were occupied with improving the lives of their subjects, they did not necessarily envision them coexisting with the members of the society. Instead, members of both societies argued for the creation of a colony, either of freed blacks or Jews, to separate them from the rest of civilized society. Their argument, that the people they worked to help would benefit from being autonomous and independent, was weakened by the fact that this independence would take place far removed from the rest of society. Even as the pushes for colonization was well intentioned, it is a clear example of the inherent prejudices by society members against those they worked to benefit.

As early as 1789, James Madison considered the idea of colonization after realizing that the NYMS’ plans for emancipation would mean that there would be a large new population of free blacks. Madison considered either creating a colony in the “wilderness of America” or on the West Coast of Africa.[49] Others argued for colonizing Puerto Rico.[50] Peter Augustus Jay, then-head of the NYMS “lobbied to apply revenues from public lands to colonize African Americans in Africa, Haiti, or ‘such countries as they may choose for their residence.’”[51] Colonization continued to gain traction through the following decades after the American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded at the end of 1816. Modelled after other philanthropic societies, such as the American Bible Society (which had Elias Boudinot, the original president of the ASMCJ as its one-time president), the ACS was a clear continuation of the sentiments expressed by members of the NYMS.[52] Colonization would, in the words of Senator Henry Clay, get “rid... of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of” American society and bring “redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted

quarter of the globe!”[53] Other influential American leaders, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe also supported colonization.[54] While the ACS was predominant in the South, it had auxiliary societies throughout the country.[55] Many free black people vocally opposed colonization, arguing that they did not want to leave the land on which their ancestors toiled. “We will never separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population of this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering and of wrong” agreed a large group of free black people in January 1817.[56] The push for colonization stemmed from the paternalism discussed earlier in this paper. Since the members of the NYMS believed that they were best suited to make decisions for freed black people, they therefore were not willing to listen to those free black people when they argued against colonization.

While the colony of Liberia was eventually a success, the ASMCJ was unsuccessful in their attempts to create a colony of converted Jews in America. Elias Boudinot, the first president of the ASMCJ, gave four thousand acres of land in Warren County, Pennsylvania to the Society in his will for a colony of converted Jews. Additionally, in 1823, John Robert Murray, a Columbia College trustee and member of ASMCJ convinced Stephen Van Rensselaer and Hezekiah Pierpont, two of the wealthiest men in New York to sell some of Pierpont’s land in Jefferson, Lewis, Franklin, and St. Lawrence counties in upstate New York at a severely discounted rate.[57] Yet even with this land, small crises such as its suitability, whether to rely on manufacturing or agriculture, and how long Jewish converts would be allowed to stay there entangled the members of the SCMJ in countless arguments to the point that the idea of a colony eventually dissolved.[58] However, the push for colonization echoed the attempts of the ACS and others. The rise of colonization attempts called into question the generosity and altruism of the philanthropic societies.

Connections to Columbia

Given that the membership of most philanthropic societies were wealthy and elite white men, it is no surprise that for groups based in New York, many of the members would be affiliated with Columbia College. As the most prestigious of the few places for

higher education in New York City, Columbia attracted young men from the upper echelons of society. Among the members of the ASMCJ, Reverend Philip Milledoler, the president of the original incarnation of the society, the Society for Evangelizing and Colonizing the Jews, was a Columbia alum. The first list of officers of the ASMCJ included four Columbia graduates: Milledoler, William Phillips, Colonel John Troup, and Peter Augustus Jay, who was also a trustee of the College.[59] Jay served as the director and treasurer of the ASMCJ. "In taking leave of the Soc[iet]y I heartily pray that it may be instrumental in promoting the spiritual & temporal welfare of that ancient & wonderful people whose present infidelity is among the strongest evidences of the Religion they reject," wrote Peter Jay as he resigned in 1822.[60] Elias Boudinot, the first president of ASMCJ was not affiliated with Columbia, but he was involved with both societies as he was also an antislavery advocate and the president of the American Bible Society.[61] Peter Augustus Jay was also a member of both societies. At the first meeting of the NYMS, at least four Columbia affiliates were present. John Jay (Peter Augustus' father), Alexander Hamilton, and Robert Livingston were alumni while James Duane was a trustee.[62] Many of the Columbia-NYMS affiliates were also slaveholders, including both John and Peter Augustus Jay, Hamilton, John Lawrence, and Matthew Clarkson.[63]

III. Conclusion

The push for philanthropy in 18th and 19th century New York made significant improvements in certain areas. However, these societies were complex organizations with seemingly contradictory goals. For instance, colonization efforts show how while both philanthropic societies attempted to improve the lives of their subjects, they did not want to live with them. Neither the NYMS nor the ASMCJ were radical. While both attempted to improve the lives of their subjects, neither was arguing for complete equality or an upheaval to the social and political foundation of the country. Additionally, both societies relied heavily on biased opinions, stereotypes, and paternalism. The societies were also interconnected to Columbia, placing them at least peripherally in the larger story of the University's history with slavery. Similarly to how John Jay could own

slaves as he pushed for gradual emancipation in New York, Columbia's history with slavery is long, complicated, and often seemingly contradictory.

Endnotes

[1] John Jay, *Memorials of Peter A. Jay: Compiled for His Descendants by His Great-Grandson* (Forgotten Books, 2018): 65-6.

[2] Robert A Gross, "Giving in America: From Charity to Philanthropy," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, ed. Lawrence J Friedman and Mark D McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 39.

[3] Gross 41

[4] Lorman Ratner, "Conversion of the Jews and Pre-Civil War Reform," *American Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1961): 45; Joseph SCF Frey, "The Object of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, Explained and Objections Answered," 1827, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

[5] Frey

[6] Oscar Reiss, *The Jews in Colonial America* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Company, 2003): 106.

[7] Linda P. Lerman, "Solomon H. Jackson's 'The Jew': A Contemporary American Jewish Response," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 20 (1998): 46, quoting Solomon Henry Jackson in the preface of the first volume March 1, 1823 issue of *The Jew*.

[8] Ratner 51; Reiss 107; Susanna Linsley, "Saving the Jews: Religious Toleration and the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 4 (November 24, 2014): 635.

[9] Linsley 635

[10] Walter Stahr, *John Jay: Founding Father*, Reissue edition (Diversion Books, 2017): 237.

[11] Thomas Robert Moseley, "A History of the New York Manumission Society, 1785-1849." (1963): 20; John Jay, "Document, 1785 January 25," January 25, 1785, John Jay Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[12] Moseley 14-16; Stahr 236

[13] David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom, 1777–1827*, 1 edition (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2008): 56.

[14] Sarah L. H. Gronningsater, "Born Free in the Master's House: Children and Gradual Emancipation in the Early American North," in *Child Slavery before and after Emancipation: An Argument for Child-Centered Slavery Studies*, ed. Anna Mae Duane, *Slaveries Since Emancipation* (Cambridge University Press, 2017): 124.

[15] Gronningsater 137

[16] Sinha 82-3; Gronningsater 139

[17] Gronningsater 139

[18] Stahr 127, 190

[19] Stahr 193

[20] Stahr 370

[21] Moseley 24, quoting New-York Manumission Society Records IX, 214.

[22] Gronningsater 133

[23] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, Reprint edition (Yale University Press, 2017): 115-6.

[24] Moseley 2; Sinha 82-3

[25] Gellman 54

[26] John L. Rury, "Philanthropy, Self Help, and Social Control: The New York Manumission Society and Free Blacks, 1785-1810," *Phylon* (1960-) 46, no. 3 (1985): 233-4, quoting and paraphrasing the NYMS.

[27] Rury 235 quoting NYMS

[28] Gellman 72-3

[29] Rury 234

[30] Sinha 115

[31] Gellman 72-3

[32] Rury 236

[33] Rury 235

[34] Gellman 72

[35] Gellman 75

[36] There were also a number of influential black writers who expressed their ideas in widely circulating pamphlets at this time including Jupiter Hammon, Cyrus Bustill, and Othello, among others (Sinha 79-81).

[37] Frey 9

[38] "The Second Report of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews" (The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, May 14, 1824), Milledoler Pamphlets, New York Historical Society: 27.

[39] Frey 10

[40] Rury 237

[41] Rury 239-40

[42] Solomon Henry Jackson, "Article 1," *The Jew; Being a Defence of Judaism Against All Adversaries, and Particularly Against the Insidious Attacks of Isreal's Advocate (1823-1825)*; New York, March 1, 1823.

[43] Lerman 46, quoting Solomon Henry Jackson.

[44] "Constitution of the Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves, and Protecting Such of Them as Have Been, or May Be Liberated.—," 1795, New York Manumission Society Papers, New York Historical Society.

[45] Philip Milledoler, "An Account of the Origin and Formation of the American Society for Evangelizing the Jews; with the Constitution and An Address to the Public," 1817, Milledoler Pamphlets, New York Historical Society.

[46] Linsley 627

[47] Ratner 44

[48] "An Address Delivered by a Member of the Manumission Society on the 17th of August 1816 and Again, on the 1st of January 1817, (by Order of the Society)," August 17, 1816, New York Historical Society: 2.

[49] Sinha 90

[50] Sinha 132

[51] Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, 1 edition (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013): 257, quoting Peter Augustus Jay.

[52] Sinha 162-3, correspondence noted with John Murray

[53] Sinha 164

[54] Sinha 91

[55] Sinha 164

[56] Sinha 164-5

[57] Wilder 257-8

[58] Linsley 636

[59] Elias Boudinot, "Constitution of the American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews, with an Address from the Hon. Elias Boudinot.," 1820, Milledoler Pamphlets, New York Historical Society.

[60] Wilder 257, quoting Peter Augustus Jay.

[61] Sinha 187

[62] Stahr 237

[63] Wilder 243

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