

## **Heroes of the Holocaust: Poland, the Warsaw Ghetto and Yeshua**

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#### **Introduction**

For many years I believed that there was little information available for the modern researcher describing the situation of Jewish believers (Messianic Jews, Hebrew Christians etc.) within the Warsaw Ghetto. Rabbi Dan Cohen Sherbock's brief statement in his book *Messianic Judaism* sums up my research findings as well.

Following the Holocaust, missions to the Jewish people ceased to function in those cities where the Jewish population had been largely eliminated. In Warsaw, for example, only a few hundred Jews survived the war; most of the workers stationed there escaped before the outbreak of the war, while others died in the Warsaw Ghetto or in one of several Concentration camps.<sup>1</sup>

But, is this really all we can know? The answer is yes and no. There is still very little known about the life and testimony of Jewish believers in the Warsaw Ghetto – especially those who did not identify with the Catholic Church. However, there is more than I realized available for consideration, especially if we include the Catholic Jewish Christians into our study.

On a more personal note, I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the subject of Missions to the Jews during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which included a considerable section on Holocaust related studies. However, I delimited my research to Protestant Jewish missions and did not study the Catholic missions to the Jews or the activities of various parishes, priests and Jewish Catholics during the time period. I have since discovered that the Catholic voice must be heard if we are to understand the plight of the Jewish believer in Jesus within the Warsaw Ghetto as much of the extant material and records we have available to us today comes from Catholic sources. It is this material that helps us better understand the Jewish believers in Jesus who endured the tragedy of the Warsaw Ghetto – both Catholic and non-Catholic believers.

The concern that many Evangelicals and Messianic Jews might have in including Catholics goes beyond religious doctrine to the problem of greater nominalism, therefore offering a skewed picture of Messianic faith in the Ghetto. Once it is understood that though there were certainly instances of nominalism, syncretistic *religio-nationalism*, and multi generational believers who may not have had an adult “conversion” experience, the value of the Catholic witness is still both credible and important; besides the fact that many of the Catholics had a genuine faith in Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, (London: Continuum, 2000) , 46.

We must also remember that there were many instances of nominalism among Jewish Protestant believers, especially in the case of children, who came to faith through local Evangelical churches and even through the Jewish missions, though the adult nominalism in these instances would have been rare.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this essay is to introduce the modern Messianic movement to the Jewish believers of the Warsaw Ghetto, and their unique testimony, witness, and contributions to both Jewish and Church life. These Messianic Jews were *unlikely and involuntary* heroes, yet are a dynamic part of our legacy that if better known could provide some critical lessons and inspiration for a new generation of Messianic Jews.

### **The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Evangelism**

The Holocaust was the most significant challenge to the survival of the Jewish people since the Babylonian Captivity. A number of other threats reshaped the Jewish community including the Crusades, Expulsions, Pogroms, and the ongoing conflicts related to the establishment of the modern state of Israel. Yet the reduction of Jewish population and destruction of Jewish life engendered by the Holocaust is incomparable to any other modern trauma brought upon the Jewish people.

The impact of this tragedy on the general Jewish population was massive, as was its impact on the community of Jewish followers of Jesus who had enjoyed a thriving community in the various countries affected by the Holocaust. The numbers of Jewish believers living in Europe prior to the Holocaust numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and most were either killed or moved to other parts of the globe. This created a twenty year plus decline in the Messianic movement<sup>3</sup>. The ensuing shift of Jewish life and culture from Europe to North America was just one further example of the impact the Holocaust had on Messianic Jewish life, and has shaped a new and distinctive community identity.<sup>4</sup>

We still live in the shadow of the Holocaust and the current Messianic and Jewish mission movements cannot be understood without developing a deeper understanding of what transpired amongst our spiritual forefathers before, during, and after the Holocaust.

For many years we have heard passionate and sincere advocates of the modern Messianic

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<sup>2</sup> See Mitchell Glaser, *A Survey of Missions to the Jews in Continental Europe 1900-1950*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, 1998), 25-56.

<sup>3</sup> Some question whether or not the movement of Jewish believers in Europe should be considered Messianic as they seemed to be more attached to the Gentile church and expression of the faith. This is a study outside the scope of this current chapter, however it should be noted that these Jewish believers met in their own communities and Bible studies and their services were primarily in Yiddish or Ladino. If one accepts a more sociological and ethnic understanding of Jewish identity (as Hitler did), then clearly this movement was quite Jewish in its own way.

<sup>4</sup> This Messianic movement is morphing again as the Russian Messianic movement continues to expand, institutions are developing and the focal point of the modern Messianic movement shifts to become more Israel-Centric.

movement, which we can date as initiating in the late 1960's, heralding our movement as the long awaited beginning of the "end times" and that there are now more Messianic Jews than there were at any other time in history – including the first century.

I do not wish to debate numbers (though I suspect there may have been more Jewish believers in Jesus in the years immediately preceding the Holocaust than today), but rather to emphasize the dramatic importance of what God accomplished through the Jewish believers who endured, and in rare cases, survived the Holocaust.

The achievements and witness of Jewish believers during the Holocaust and especially in the Warsaw Ghetto are essentially unknown to most present day Jewish believers. We stand on the shoulders of these heroes of the Holocaust – the Jewish believers of the Warsaw Ghetto – and their story, as much or as little as we know, must be told.

### **The Sources for Information**

I am especially grateful for the monumental and informative book written by Peter F. Dembowski entitled, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, which is perhaps the best source of information in English regarding Jewish believers in the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>5</sup> Clearly this was a labor of love and devotion in the case of Dembowski who lived through these terrible events himself.<sup>6</sup>

According to Dembowski, there are very limited primary sources for studying the role of the Jewish Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto, and even the secondary resources are minimal. He mentions an article by the modern Jewish historian, Havi Ben Sasson, where he summarizes the challenge to find available resources to study. Dembowski says, "Until Havi Ben Sasson's recent article – "Christians in the Ghetto" – an informative and bibliographic rich introductory study written by a staff member of the International School for Teaching the Holocaust, Yad Vashem – there were no works in English specifically treating the presence of Christian Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto: An Epitaph for the Unremembered*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Distinguished Service Professor (Emeritus) in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago. Born and raised in Warsaw, Poland, Dembowski was involved in the underground activities of the Polish Home Army and participated in the Polish uprising. He was twice a prisoner of the Germans – first at the infamous prison known as Pawiak, where comrades bribed corrupt Gestapo officials to win his freedom, and later at Stalag XB Sandbostel, where he remained until the prison was liberated by the British. Upon liberation, Dembowski joined the Polish Army in the West. For his war service, he was decorated twice with the Polish Cross of Valor and the Silver Service Cross with Swords.

<sup>7</sup> Ben-Sasson, Havi. 2003. "Christians in the Ghetto: All Saints Church, Birth of the Holy Virgin Church, and the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto." *Yad Vashem Studies* 31:153-73. Demobowski also suggests the following additional resources: Marian Malowist, "*Assimilationists and Neophytes at the Time of War – Operations in the Closed Jewish Quarter*", written in Polish and composed shortly before the summer of 1942 by a Jewish believer who later became a professor of history at the University of Warsaw. He translated his essay and it is included in a collection of documents taken from the Ringleblum Archives. He lists additional works written after the war, in Polish; Iwona Stefanczyk "*Christian Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto*" (1997), Ruta Sakowska "*The Christians in the Ghetto*", (1993),

Some other sources include Dr. Todd M. Endelman, the William Haber Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Michigan. He has written extensively on the subject of “Jewish Converts” to Christianity, and published an article in 1997, entitled, “Jewish Converts in Nineteenth-Century Warsaw: A Quantitative Analysis,” in the *Journal of Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 28-59. He is also the former director of the Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and writes from a more mainstream Jewish perspective.

Emmanuel Ringleblum, whose role as the Ghetto’s chief historian wrote what is called the *Togbukh fun varsherver geto* (Journal from the Warsaw Ghetto). Ringleblum hid the Journal with accompanying source documents from the Nazis in milk cans, which were discovered in 1948. As a socialist *hard liner* and one who embodied the traditional European prejudices against Jewish followers of Jesus, he generally took a more negative and harsher view of the Jewish believers.<sup>8</sup>

Another key source for information about Jewish believers, and in particular the Catholic Jews, may be found in the book entitled, *The Story of a Life*, written by Dr. Ludwik Hirszfeld and published in 2010 in English, translated by Marta A. Balinska.<sup>9</sup> This volume, also called, *Historia*, was penned in 1943-44, during the time Hirszfeld was hiding in the Polish countryside, having escaped the Ghetto immediately before the *Aktion*. According to Dembowski, the most important chapters in this book are those which describe the life of the author as a Christian Jew in the Ghetto. It is unique as it is a rare biographical work by a Jewish Christian.<sup>10</sup>

Though I greatly appreciate Dembowski’s work, he writes within a narrow frame of reference resulting from his Catholic orientation and lacks familiarity with the Jewish missions community and other Protestant communities. He mentions five key sources for information, other than the books and diaries listed above which could lead one to a better understanding of the Jewish believers in the Warsaw Ghetto. These five are: German documents, personal diaries, documents

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pages 138–140, Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, “*Catholic Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto*” (2001), pages 620–624 and Marian Fuks “*Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*”, included in *From the History of the Great Catastrophe of the Jewish People* (1996), pages 63–67. Fuks, according to Dembowski is a descendent of “baptized Jews”. Dembowski adds, there are some documents available English and in Polish, many of them preserved in the Jewish Historical Institute and Warsaw. Many of these documents, written in Polish touring Yiddish, or frequently Yiddish, translated into Polish, edited and published with important comments and annotations, but some of them still remain unpublished. Some Warsaw wartime documents contain specific information about Christian Jews, who are also mentioned quite often in the rich Polish postwar literature concerning the saving and hiding the Jews who managed to find themselves outside the Ghetto. Much of this information is scattered throughout the Jewish and non-Jewish literature.

<sup>8</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum.*, ed. and trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: IPicturebooks, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Ludwik Hirszfeld, *The Story of One Life*, ed. and trans. Marta A. Balinska, ed. William Schneider, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.amazon.com/Ludwik-Hirszfeld-Rochester-Studies-Medical/dp/158046338X>

written in the Ghetto that are not yet compiled, memoirs of survivors written after the events, and critical commentaries written by historians utilizing the above materials.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, he does not take into consideration the Journals of the Jewish Mission Agencies, or the documents of the International Missionary Council's International Christian Approach to the Jews. These agencies held several meetings during that time, and there are a number of other articles, biographies, and various materials that describe the activities of the Jewish believers who were either Protestant or who identified with the Jewish Mission agencies working in Warsaw at the time.<sup>12</sup>

And yet, he is quite right when it comes to primary source documents. There are very few and most of the Mission reports were secondary resources, written after the Ghetto was destroyed. One important outcome of writing this essay is the recognition that a further combing of the Mission and Protestant resources must be attempted to glean further information about the role and activities of the non-Catholic Jewish believers in the Ghetto.

### **The Nazi Invasion and the Construction of the Warsaw Ghetto**

Dr. Todd Endelman provides a good description of the growth of Warsaw's Jewish community:

Although Russian control arrested the development of a modern political system in Poland, the Polish capital became, nonetheless, a dynamic commercial-industrial center. This, along with the relaxation of restrictions on Jewish residence, encouraged Jewish migration to a city that earlier was of little importance in Polish Jewish life. Its Jewish population grew from 16,000 in 1816 to 41,000 in 1856 and then skyrocketed to 337,000 on the eve of World War I. Even by mid-century, Warsaw Jewry was the largest in the world. Stratified in both economic and religio-cultural terms, it was subject to a range of secularizing, assimilatory pressures similar to but not identical with those that influenced communities farther to the west.<sup>13</sup>

The Nazis invaded Poland in 1939 and within a short time, anti Jewish regulations were published and implemented, leading to the construction of what would become known as the Warsaw Ghetto. The Nazis also built Ghettos in other cities within Poland with large Jewish populations such as Lodz and Vilna.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Dembowski, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Journals of the British Jews Society, the Churches Ministry Among the Jews, the American Board of Missions to the Jews and the records of the Polish Baptist, Reformed and Presbyterian churches to simply identify a few.

<sup>13</sup> Todd M. Endelman, "Jewish Converts in Nineteenth-Century Warsaw: A Quantitative Analysis," in *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, vol. 4. no. 1 (Autumn, 1997), 30.

<sup>14</sup> <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>

The following paragraph from the web based, *Teachers Guide to the Holocaust*, provides a brief overview of the basic facts regarding the Warsaw Ghetto. <sup>15</sup>

Established in November 1940, it was surrounded by a wall and contained nearly 500,000 Jews.<sup>16</sup> About 45,000 Jews died there in 1941 alone, as a result of overcrowding, hard labor, lack of sanitation, insufficient food, starvation, and disease. During 1942, most of the ghetto residents were deported to Treblinka, leaving about 60,000 Jews in the ghetto.<sup>17</sup> A revolt took place in April 1943 when the Germans, commanded by General Jürgen Stroop, attempted to raze the ghetto and deport the remaining inhabitants to Treblinka.<sup>18</sup> The defense forces, commanded by Mordecai Anielewicz, included all Jewish political parties. The bitter fighting lasted twenty-eight days and ended with the destruction of the ghetto.<sup>19</sup>

The following summary of the four major stages of the Warsaw Ghetto, might be helpful:

1. October 1939–November 1940: the gradual isolation and gathering of the Jewish population.
2. November 1940–July 1942: the Ghetto was sealed off from the “Other Side”.
3. July 22, 1942–September 15, 1942: the “resettlement”, which is also referred to by its German euphemism, the *Aktion*, the transport to the capture of like a concentration camp and the liquidation of more than 300,000 Jewish people
4. October 1942–1943: The Jewish resistance *uprising* by the remaining Jewish population in the Ghetto, followed by the total destruction of the Ghetto.<sup>20</sup>

Emmanuel Ringelblum in his *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* describes a further detailed timeline of the Ghetto.<sup>21</sup> There are many web sites and books, which detail the construction, life and conditions and ultimate destruction of the Ghetto and Polish Jewry as well.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>

<sup>16</sup> (<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/gallery/G1941W1.htm#22058>  
<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/gallery/G1941W2.htm>)

<sup>17</sup> <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>

<sup>18</sup> (<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/gallery/G1941WGU.HTM>  
<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/gallery/WGU2.htm>)

<sup>19</sup> <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Demboski, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Ringelblum, 348-360. Also see [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Ringelblum\\_Emanuel](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Ringelblum_Emanuel)

<sup>22</sup> See Bibliography

## **An Overview of Jewish Missions in Poland Before the War**

Martin Parsons, a non-Jewish and ordained missionary to the Jewish people with the Churches Ministry Among the Jews (established in 1809), provides a thumbnail sketch of Jewish missions in Warsaw. The following excerpt was presented to a meeting of the International Missionary Council Christian Approach to the Jews (a precursor to the LCJE) in Vienna during 1937, two years prior to the Nazi invasion.

The American Board of Missions (Chosen People Ministries today) has a center in Warsaw on the east of the river. They have room for some inquirers, in addition to general evangelistic work. The Mildmay Mission (Messianic Testimony today) has a hall in the Jewish quarter in Warsaw and their work mainly touches poorer Jews. The American European Fellowship is in Warsaw and works particularly among children. They have a villa at Radoso, which is used in the Summer for children's work. The Bethel Mission in Lodz has an evangelistic center and a colony. In addition, in Poland there is one Pentecostal evangelist, one member of the Open Brethren, one member of the Closed Brethren and a few private evangelists living by faith. The four missions in Warsaw work together in close cooperation.<sup>23</sup>

CMJ built Emmanuel Hall in 1927, which became a showcase for messianic believers in Warsaw. Three Jewish believers especially gave superb field leadership to the efforts of CMJ in Poland: H. C. Carpenter, Paul Levertoff, and J. I. Landsmann. Martin Parsons took the helm in 1927, after Carpenter's retirement, and led the work up until the Nazi invasion.<sup>24</sup> Many effective missionaries served with CMJ during this period, not the least of which was Bazyli Jocz, father of Jakób.<sup>25</sup>

## **An Overview of Jewish Missions in Poland During World War II**

When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, conditions among the Jews were already terrible. But after the invasion, the Final Solution arrived in Poland like a raging storm from hell. Jews and missionaries to the Jews were rounded up, taken to concentration camps or killed. The actual bombing of Poland also did severe damage to the country. Chaos was everywhere and the work of the missions ground to a full halt from which it would never recover.

According to an early report from the International Missionary Council Christian Approach to the Jews (IMCCAJ):

Thousands of executions are reported. Hundreds of thousands are in concentration camps and compulsory labor camps. Three and a half million Jews are exposed to the worst

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<sup>23</sup> IMCCAJ Vienna Conference 1937

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.parsonsfamily.co.uk/martin\\_autobiography/poland.php](http://www.parsonsfamily.co.uk/martin_autobiography/poland.php)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ha-gefen.org.il/len/aalphabetic%20presentation/c13760/159845.php> and <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+legacy+of+Jakob+Jocz.-a014377469>

vindictiveness of the Nazis. Two hundred thousand more from all parts of the Reich form a terrible ghetto at Lublin where destitution and plague are adding to their miseries.

Here many native missionaries have been cut off by the war and the work of all British societies has been discontinued. The Danish Mission at Lvov has also been brought to an end. It is not known whether the American Board is still able to work. Some missionaries from the small Baltic States are also among the refugees.

All the missionary activities in German territories formerly carried on by British Societies have been presumed at an end. Extensive work in Poland has been suspended, including that of the Church Mission to the Jews, the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews, the Mildmay Mission to the Jews and the Barbican Mission.<sup>26</sup>

The Warsaw facility of CMJ was also destroyed in a Nazi bombing raid:

Four bombs fell on the mission premises of the Church Mission to Jews in Warsaw, which were destroyed together with the residences of the missionaries. Property valued at £20,000 was lost. R. Allison, the missionary at Lvov, escaped to Romania just before the Russian entry and no organized missionary work is being carried out there.<sup>27</sup>

Missions to the Jews died in Poland along with more than 800,000 Jewish people. The largest of the open and active fields of labor among the Jewish people for the sake of the gospel was over; the war marked the end of a people and the end of an era.

### **The Number of Jewish Believers in the Warsaw Ghetto**

There were two major groups of Jewish believers in the Warsaw Ghetto; Catholics and Protestants. I realize that this description sounds harsh to modern and more “Messianic ears.” We wish we could divide the Jewish believers between Catholics, Protestants and Messianic Jews, but for the most part the group we would call Messianic would identify as Protestants. You either were or were not Catholic, unless you were Jewish and involved with one of the Mission agencies; though there was a small movement in Poland that were seeking a more “authentic” Jewish expression of the faith. The Ghetto would include everybody!

There is no question that the Jewish people who were involved with the Jewish Missions in Poland and Warsaw, which may have been thousands, were forced to enter the Ghetto. It did not matter if you were a Socialist, Catholic, Protestant or Jewish Mission related Jew – as no Jewish person was exempt from the horrors of the Ghetto and the forthcoming death trip to Treblinka – if they lived long enough to make it.

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<sup>26</sup> IMCCAJ 1940:1

<sup>27</sup> IMCCAJ 1940:1



Discussion of Jewish identity, which was important to the Polish Jewish believers before the war, ceased as life in the Ghetto became their Jewish identity.

Dembowski explains how he determined the number of Jewish believers who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto at its height and suggests that the amount may have been between 5 and 6,000 Jewish Christians – the majority of whom were Catholic. He mentions a report that was written in the Jewish Gazette (viewed as a Nazi controlled publication) that states the amount was somewhere around 2,000 - based upon a 1939 census. However, this would mean that many of the Jewish Christians who were ordered into the Ghetto after 1939 would not have been counted and that the Jewish believers would have identified as Protestant or Catholic. Clearly the number was larger – perhaps even larger than the 5-6,000 figure.

The most reliable number, according to Dembowski, maybe be gleaned from the research of contemporary Roman Catholic historians Zdzislaw Kroll and Tadeusz Karolak, who determined the number to be approximately 5,000.<sup>28</sup>

Demobwski states that, “there were 5,200 Christians in the Ghetto, most of them Roman Catholic.”<sup>29</sup> This number, it seems, is primarily based on oral tradition, and the registries of the three Ghetto parishes, though their documents had been destroyed and needed to be recreated after the war. The well-regarded Mary Burg and Ghetto priest, Rev. Antoni Czarnecki affirm numbers in these ranges as well.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Philip Friedman, a Jewish historian of the Warsaw Ghetto asserts in this study, first published in 1957, “in Warsaw, more than 6,000 baptized Jews were ordered by the Nazis to move into the Ghetto, where they established their own churches. Food parcels were sent out to them by the Caritas and several priests moved in to minister to their spiritual needs.”<sup>31</sup>

We are able to get some insight into the possible number of Jewish believers in the Ghetto through a brief statement by Rachmiel Frydland. His anecdotal account is helpful, though his perspective on the numbers of Jewish people in the Ghetto is inconclusive at first glance. He also notes the years as 1944 and the Ghetto would have been demolished by that point. It is possible that he is speaking of Jewish believers in the Ghetto. This would confirm the numbers mentioned by others. Frydland writes,

In late 1944, by hiding in cemeteries, deserted churches, and the homes of fearful friends, I was one of the few surviving Jews in Warsaw outside the ghetto. In that enclosure were 5,000 Jews, the last of Warsaw's original 500,000. By God's enabling, I secretly slipped into the ghetto and was able to speak comfort to a few of the Jewish believers still alive. Other Jewish

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<sup>28</sup> Demboski, 66.

<sup>29</sup> Demboski, 68.

<sup>30</sup> Dembowski, 145. *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto*

<sup>31</sup> Dembowski, 146. *Phillip Friedman, Their Brothers Keepers.*

brethren heard the message and believed in Messiah Jesus. My friends in the ghetto insisted that I leave. They said that if God had preserved me thus far, I would be a witness to the woes they now experienced. At the end of the war, I could tell the story of their suffering. I was probably one of the last to leave the ghetto. It was only shortly afterward that the Germans obliterated the entire Jewish area.<sup>32</sup>

Frydland was one of the most well known Messianic Jewish survivors of the Holocaust whose first hand testimony provided information about the life of the Jewish believers in Warsaw before and to some degree during the war. Frydland eventually travelled to England, Israel and then the United States to serve the Messiah in a variety of capacities.

Endelman demonstrates that though still a minority, many thousands of Jewish people “converted” to Christianity from the late 19th century up until the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>33</sup> He shows that “conversion,” especially in Poland, was pervasive through the various strata of Jewish life, from the poorest to the wealthiest and from the common workman to the well educated professional.

His research is actually a response to another Polish scholar, Teodor Jeske-Choinski, whom he deemed anti-Semitic though he believes his research accurately details the numbers of Jewish believers: in the 19th and early 20th century, as well as their gender, ages and occupations.<sup>34</sup>

However, Endelman still affirms that the number of those who converted to Catholicism, Protestantism, or through the work of the Jewish missions in Poland, was around 2,000 people.<sup>35</sup> This is more than suggested by Jeske-Choinski.

Endelman adds,

No critic has ever suggested that he fabricated cases of conversion or their details. In fact, the problem is the opposite: the number of conversions in Warsaw was greater than the number he recorded. In addition to those he omitted inadvertently due too defective records and those he was paid to omit, it seems that he did not include those baptized by Anglican missionaries,

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.messianicassociation.org/bio-frydland.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Endelman, “Jewish Converts,” 32.

<sup>34</sup> Endelman, “Jewish Converts,” 38. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teodor\\_Jeske-Choiński](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teodor_Jeske-Choiński)

<sup>35</sup> Endelman, “Memories of Jewishness: Jewish Converts and their Jewish Pasts,” in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Meyers, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 316. Nationalists took steps to “unmask” families of Jewish origin, inaugurating what has become a tradition in Polish politics of his day. In 1904 the critic, editor and novelist, Teodor Jeske-Choinski published a book listing all Jews who have been baptized in Warsaw between 1819 and 1903. His motives were both ideological and mercenary: some wealthy converts and children of converts “hush” money asking for their names to be removed from the minutes, while others diligently bought up and destroy copies. Nonetheless, hundreds of Polish families suffered pain and embarrassment.

agents of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, probably because he did not have access to their records.<sup>36</sup>

We also should not simply assume that the majority of believers were Catholic. Endelman, reflecting on Jeske-Choinski's research, which studied the Warsaw Jewish population through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, affirms that the majority of Jewish "converts" to Christianity became Protestants.

Third and last, denominational choice also underscores the pragmatic nature of conversions in nineteenth-century Warsaw. Contrary to expectation, most Jews who became Christians did not become Roman Catholics. In fact, only 39 percent became Catholics, the same percentage as became Calvinists. The remaining 22 percent were baptized as Lutherans. In the last decades of the century, converting Jews were even less likely to become Catholics. In the 1820s, 79 percent of converts chose Catholicism; in the next decade, the Catholic share fell to 47 percent. But the fall toward the end of the century was even more dramatic: only 16 percent of converts chose Catholicism in the 1880s, 24 percent in the 1890s, and 24 percent as well in the years 1900-1903.<sup>37</sup>

Endelman suggests a number of reasons for the larger numbers of Jewish people turning to a non-Catholic expression of Christianity.

The paradox of Jews becoming Protestants in an overwhelmingly Catholic milieu becomes less paradoxical if their change of religion is viewed more as a decision to flee membership in the Jewish community and the disabilities and disadvantages it imposed and less as a decision to embrace Christianity and Polonism. Jews who became Christians chose Protestantism more often than Catholicism because it was less offensive to them as secularists and victims of religious intolerance. Roman Catholicism seemed idolatrous and ritualistic, while Protestantism, by comparison, appeared enlightened and rational.<sup>38</sup>

In somewhat of a backhanded compliment to the effectiveness of Jewish missions, which were identified as Protestants he suggests that one of the reasons Jews became Protestants is because the Protestants were more eager to convert the Jews and moved the process along quickly.

There was an additional, perhaps more important reason as well for preferring Protestantism: the conversion process itself was less bothersome. Catholic priests required a longer preparation time and a more rigorous pre-baptismal examination than their Protestant counterparts. Jeske-Choinski remarked that when a Jew needed a baptismal certificate on short notice in order to obtain a government contract or post, he went to a Protestant minister, not a Catholic priest, who required several weeks of preparation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Endelman, "Jewish Converts," 32.

<sup>37</sup> Endelman, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Engelman, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Engelman, 48.

He demonstrates his point by remarking on the success of CMJ amongst Polish Jews throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It should be recalled that over 900 conversions in nineteenth-century Warsaw were due to the missionary work of the militantly Protestant London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews.<sup>40</sup>

This is important in trying to determine the numbers of Jewish believers in the Ghetto, especially those who may not have been identified with the two main Catholic parishes, as there was no Protestant church within the Ghetto walls. It is possible that the Jewish believers who identified with the Jewish missions met privately and therefore we do not have records of their activities or it is possible that they simply chose to worship at the Catholic churches, though they were not Catholic. Frydland's visit to the Ghetto indicates this and though some of the Jewish believers involved with the Jewish missions or Protestant churches may have escaped prior to the Ghetto, there can be little doubt, based upon the numbers of longer term Jewish believers and assuming that their children followed their parents in their faith to some degree, that there were many of these non Catholic Jewish believers within the Ghetto.

### **The Way other Jews in the Ghetto Viewed the Jewish Believers**

In one of the most eye opening chapters of Dembowski's book he looks at the Jewish Christians through the eyes of the Jewish community. Within the Jewish community of the Ghetto were Orthodox Jews, assimilated or assimilationist Jews, and the Jewish Christians often described by the Yiddish word *mekhes*.

According to Endelman,

In the late 19th century a new term of opprobrium - *mekhes* - entered the Polish language from Judaism. The term, which comes it seems from the Hebrew word, *mekhes* (customs, tax, levy) and referred to the metaphorical levy (baptism) that Jews have to pay to enter Polish society, was used by both Jews and Poles as a term of opprobrium.<sup>41</sup>

An assimilated Jew, according to Endelman was proficient in the Polish language and comfortable with Polish culture, but maintained a connection to the Jewish community. This individual would be similar to a secular/cultural Jew today who is not religious, but still identifies with the greater Jewish community. The assimilationist on the other hand, was comfortable with Polish language and culture, but had rejected a relationship with the Jewish community. This individual could very well identify with the national religion of Poland – Catholicism, as well, but not necessarily.

On the other hand, the Jewish Christian, called a *mekhes*, usually identified with the assimilationist and was viewed as having rejected their connection within Jewish community.

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<sup>40</sup> Engelman, "Jewish Converts," 48.

<sup>41</sup> Endelman, "Memories of Jewishness," 316.

There is little doubt among historians that the Jewish Christians were a well-known group within Polish Jewish society and within the Warsaw Ghetto. The Jewish Christians sometimes took on important roles in the Ghetto for a variety of reasons. Czerniakow, the leader of the *Judenrat* and a secular Jew hired a number of Jewish Christians as they often had experience in various positions that *non-converted* Jews were unable to hold in Polish society.

Czerniakow was at times accused of giving the Jewish Christians *better jobs*, but his defense was that he did not care if the *mekhes* were Christians or Jews, but rather that they were productive parts of the Ghetto community and his job was to find the most effective people to do the work that needed to be done. There are numerous discussions regarding the Jewish men who served under the notorious Jewish police chief, Jozef Szerynski, whom many accused of being an anti Semite. We do not know a lot about his faith, but know he was a *longer-term* convert to Catholicism.

Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the well-known Jewish Holocaust historian, writes of these days in her classic volume on the Holocaust, *The War Against the Jews: 1933–1945*.

Some police chiefs and men were outsiders to the communities that they served, refugees or evacuees who found favor with the Germans, by whom they were appointed. Some were apostates. In Warsaw, the first police chief was Jozef Andrzej Szerynski, formerly a colonel in the Polish police, a Catholic convert, reputedly an anti-Semite. He undoubtedly recruited police from his circle of apostate friends. (The Warsaw Ghetto had a large population of converts to Catholicism, who were regarded as Jews under German racial law. They worship in the two churches within Ghetto limits). On March 18, 1941, Ringelblum noted that one hundred apostates served in the police in visible positions. One of them, he added, was heard in church to have shouted, “Down with the Jews.”<sup>42</sup>

Yet, some historians claim they served as a bridge between the Polish outside the Ghetto and the Jewish inhabitants within the Ghetto. The *hard line* Socialists like Ringelblum and also the Orthodox Jews used these Jewish policemen as an example of how Jews who become Christians turn their backs on the Jewish people. Again, this may have been true of some – but, not all. If it were true, the authenticity of their faith would have to be questioned.

The Jewish believers, especially the Catholics, were also accused of receiving greater advantages within the Ghetto, such as the opportunity to use the church gardens of the two main parishes within the Ghetto, to sometimes live in parish housing, to have their children go to Catholic schools, and to receive aid from the Catholic Charities Association – CARITAS.<sup>43</sup> When the Jewish believers allegedly accepted these types of privileges, it caused the “non-Christian”

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<sup>42</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933–1945*, (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1975).

<sup>43</sup> The Parish Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Lezsno street. Built between 1638 and 1731, this Baroque church was used as a political prison during the partitions of Poland. Situated inside the Ghetto, it became the parish church for the Jewish converts to Catholicism incarcerated there. It is said that tunnels connected the church with the outside world, and that they were used to smuggle food in and Jews out. The other church was All Saints' on Grzybowski Square.

Jewish residents of the Ghetto to become even angrier at the Jewish Christians than they were before for the usual religious and historical reasons. It is reported that there were mobs at times of religious Jews protesting the presence of the *mekhes* in the Ghetto.

The religious Jews especially complained about the *mekhes* who were placed in leadership positions by the *Judunrut*. According to Dembowski,

Adler, in his memoirs, goes on to list some of those important “Christian” officials; Col. Jozef Szerynski, head of the police, and some of his hand-picked assistance Ettinger, Ludwik Hirszfeld, chairman of the Health Council for infectious diseases, Dr. Mieczyslaw Kon, director of the Health Department; major Dr. Tadeusz Ganz, medical officer in the Polish army, commissioned to direct the battle against epidemics, Gomulinski, director of the Supply Office, Czarnecki, one of directors of the Fuel commission, Capt. Jerry Landau director of the Health Center; Dr. Jozeph Stein director of the *Czyste* hospital; Dr. Wilhelm Szenwic, department head in the *Czyste* hospital and Dr. Stanislaw Tylbor, deputy head of the General Secretariat, “as well as a legion of localizations occupied by the neophytes.”<sup>44</sup>

In summary, even though Jewish Christians held critical roles in running the Ghetto they were still viewed with disdain by both the religious and the socialist ideologues, including Ringelblum who appointed one of the members of his *Oneg Shabbat* (the secret code name for his group of writers and researchers), Marian Malowist to “research” the “converts.” According to Dembowski,

Malowist gives a history of the situation before the war, underscoring the fact that only rarely did the assimilationist and Christian Jews support the cause of the Jewish people. As with most Jews writing in the Ghetto, he presents baptism as a materialistic or sociopolitical choice. He simply does not consider the question of religious belief. He further classifies the assimilationist and neophytes according to their attitude towards Jews.<sup>45</sup>

Endelman agrees and describes the “convert” community as enjoying some degree of community and social privilege as a result of their *conversion*.

Among the 445,000 Jews crowded into the Warsaw ghetto at its peak were two thousand Christians of Jewish origin. In the hastily constructed world of the ghetto, they occupied an unusual niche. By the racial standards of the German occupation, of course, they were Jews, like the ghetto's other inhabitants, and in the end shared their fate. However, before the summer 1942 mass deportations ended the “normal” life of the ghetto, they enjoyed a privileged social position. Wealthier and better educated, on the whole, than most Warsaw Jews, they moved rapidly into high-ranking positions in the ghetto administration. The most prominent was Jozef Szerynski (real name Sheinkman), a colonel in the Polish police before the war, whom Adam Czerniakow appointed as the first commander of the ghetto police

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<sup>44</sup> Dembowski, 90.

<sup>45</sup> Dembowski, 94.

force. Szerynski in turn, surrounded himself with other converts. Baptized Jews were also conspicuous as hospital administrators and as heads of clinics and other public health units.<sup>46</sup>

He further mentions that the children of the “converts” were allowed to play in the gardens of the two key Catholic churches within the Ghetto and take advantage of the soup kitchens they sponsored as well as other forms of aid.<sup>47</sup> He tells us that the Jewish mainstream regarded the “converts” with suspicion and jealousy because they believed they were disloyal Jews who “sold out” for Christian benefits.

Generally speaking, the *mekhes*, whether Protestant or Catholic, were viewed negatively by the mainstream Jewish Ghetto community. Further, the more dominant Socialist leadership in the Ghetto, who were also philosophical materialists, did not see any validity to a spiritual conversion.

### **Significant Jewish Believers in the Ghetto and their Contributions**

One of the most moving chapters of Dembowski’s book is entitled “Christian Voices,” where he charts the lives and testimonies of believers – mostly Catholic – who lived through all or part of the terror of the Warsaw Ghetto. He mentions a number of individuals whose dedication to the gospel impacted the lives of others in the ghetto.

The most significant *voice* was that of the aforementioned Dr. Ludwick Hirszfelf, author of the book *The Story of a Life*, which is sometimes referred to as the *Historia*. Dembowski says, “Herzfelf is the most knowledgeable informant about the Ghetto and many aspects of the daily life of the Ghetto dwellers.”<sup>48</sup>

The book is an autobiography written soon after his escape from the Ghetto and provides a detailed description of his life and that of others as well as providing testimony of his faith. He had been a well-respected scientist who had served as a medical doctor in the Polish army in Yugoslavia where at he began his lifetime work of determining and describing blood types. Most scientists would agree that he was the one responsible for naming the various types/categories of blood we commonly use today. So, as a self identified assimilated Jew and a well-known scientist, he was accustomed to being treated with respect and honor and therefore the Ghetto was a harsh reminder of his heritage.

Endelman would agree that the well-known medical researcher and Catholic *convert*, Ludwik Hirszfelf was an exception to the rule as well as some others.<sup>49</sup> He writes,

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<sup>46</sup> Endelman, “Jewish Converts,” 28.

<sup>47</sup> Endelman, “Jewish Converts,” 29.

<sup>48</sup> Dembowski, 114.

<sup>49</sup> Ludwik Hirszfelf (1884-1954), one of the most prominent serologists of the twentieth century, established the nomenclature and the inheritance of blood groups, and opened the field of human population genetics. He also carried out ground-breaking research in the genetics of disease and immunology. Following World War II, he

A few became Christians from conviction. The bacteriologist Ludwik Hirszfled, who had converted before the war, recalled Jewish students of his who asked him to serve as godfather at their baptisms. He asked himself what motivated them, since changing their religion did not change their legal position in any way. His answer, whether correct or not, was that the charm of the religion of love was pulling them, the religion of the nation to which they felt they belonged.<sup>50</sup>

He adds,

In the case of Tadeusz Endelman, a young lawyer and friend of Hirszfled who was baptized in July 1942, knowing that deportation awaited him, it is clear that religious consolation was his only object.<sup>51</sup>

Hirszfled began what amounted to the first two years of medical school training in the Ghetto, although he was focusing on eradicating the place of typhus which was killing so many in the Ghetto. His role, which was significant in the Ghetto was also challenged by many as brought to light in the following description of his first lecture.

The chairman (Czerniakow) is present, evidently to prevent any demonstration against me by the Jewish nationalists. At the door, a woman doctor, and Jewish nationalist, urges the boycott of my lecture. My first words are a call to maintain dignity. Our enemy wishes to deprive us, Poles and Jews, of everything that represents science or art. *It is possible that we shall perish, but let us perish with dignity.*<sup>52</sup>

There is no question that Hirszfled viewed himself as a Pole, embracing the national religion of Poland – Catholicism – and fully blamed the atrocities of the Warsaw Ghetto on the Nazis. He had a difficult time attributing overt and ongoing anti-Semitism to the Poles. Therefore, his faith was somewhat of an amalgamation of religious nationalism, rooted and grounded in Jewish ethnicity. Very complicated indeed!

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founded Poland's first Institute of Immunology in Wroclaw, which now bears his name. His autobiographical memoir, *The Story of One Life*, first published in Poland in 1946, immediately became a bestseller and has been reedited several times since. It is an outstanding account of a Holocaust survivor and a writer capable of depicting the uniqueness and the tragedy of countless individuals caught up in the nightmare of 1939-45. He recalls his time as a physician in the Serbian army in 1915 and his satisfaction as one of the scientific elite who rebuilt Poland after the Treaty of Versailles; in so doing the contrast between the world before and the world after World War II could not be starker. Hirszfled escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943; he hid the manuscript for this book, and retrieved it only after the war. ([google.com/books/about/Ludwik\\_Hirszfled](http://google.com/books/about/Ludwik_Hirszfled)). Also see [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hirszfled\\_Ludwik](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hirszfled_Ludwik)

<sup>50</sup> Endelman, "Jewish Converts," 30.

<sup>51</sup> Endelman, "Jewish Converts," 30.

<sup>52</sup> Hirszfled, 295.



On the other hand, Hirszfled did see a distinction between those who were Christians by faith and those who were more nominal and *converted* to survive. This can be seen in the way he distinguishes between the baptized:

On Sunday all the Christians, not only the Catholics, attended Mass. Everybody was there: doctors, lawyers, those whose baptism was an expression of faith, those for whom it was a Polish national symbol, and those who, at a certain moment, accepted their baptism to further their own self-interest. But all felt the need to gather at least once a week in the church and to participate in the service.<sup>53</sup>

Dembowski refers us to a reflection by Hirszfled about the motivation of one of his fellow Christians in receiving baptism. He writes,

There were many people who were baptized in the Quarter – old and young, sometimes whole families. Some of my students were among them, men and women, and I was often asked to be the godfather. What motives drove them to the baptism? They never received any benefits from it. The change of faith did not entail any change in their legal status. No, they were attracted to it by the appeal of a religion of love. They were attracted by the religion of the nation to which they felt they belonged. They were attracted to the religion to which there was no room, or least there should not be any room, for hate. Jews are so weary of the atmosphere of universal antipathy?<sup>54</sup>

Dembowski offers a beautiful quote from the writings of Hirszfled to try and help us see inside the man's soul in order to understand the core of his faith.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo. Glory to God in the highest and peace and goodwill to men. Grzybowski Square and Twarda Street disappear. The excited and feverish crowd of the poor also disappears. We are immersed in the coldness and atmosphere of the place of worship. There is a throng of us they are lost in prayers. We can no longer see the killers and the haters—we are in the company of the enraptured. We are united in a sentiment of higher communion.<sup>55</sup>

Hirszfled also comments on this phrase on the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." He writes in his autobiography about this passage and suggests, "it is a question asked of God, followed by God's answer:"

What is wrong with you my son? –Why should I love those monstrous men? –For no reason. Love is a state of the spirit. Everybody possesses it, but sometimes in a dimmed and muffled state. But, it is as much an instinct as the hunger for life, as the joy of living. Love is a delight as much as rapture amid the starry silence and the transport of joy of the dancing stars. There are no small things here—everything emanates from the spirit. A heavenly music is heard. And

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<sup>53</sup> Hirszfled, 362-363. Quoted in Dembowski, 126-127.

<sup>54</sup> Hirszfled, 364. Quoted in Dembowski, 129.

<sup>55</sup> Dembowski, 127.

in this harmony the soul bends down sobbing in humiliation. And it embraces the world in rapture, it floats in oblivion. Horrible people, horrible things disappear: all resonates with the Great Harmony.<sup>56</sup>

He adds, “the Mass is over. We end the service and return to Earth, but our souls have been invigorated by the coolness of the life-giving sources.”<sup>57</sup>

One must honor those sincere Christians who helped the Jewish people and showed God’s love in very practical ways in a very difficult time as well. Their good testimony, motivated by a sincere love for the Lord was what helped believers like Hirszfeld remain close to the Lord and focus on His grace.

The example of Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker who saved thousands of Jewish children by smuggling them out of the Ghetto, also showed the love that some non Jewish Christians had for the Jewish people.<sup>58</sup> The work of Polish Christians in rescuing and hiding Jewish people is also detailed in the book entitled, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, by Nechama Tec.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Question of Authenticity**

We must conclude by asking ourselves “how” Christian and Jewish the Jewish believers in the Warsaw Ghetto were as they tragically suffered for both their race and their faith.

Endelman contends that the rationale for conversion was not spiritual at all and that those who became Christians did so in order to escape persecution and develop a better life.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, according to the records of various Jewish mission and churches, there were many “conversions” in the time period immediately preceding the Holocaust and these continued throughout 1939 and all the way till 1941 and the destruction of the Ghetto. Warsaw was actually a hotbed of Messianic activity and there were more than a dozen Jewish missions active in this city prior to the war.

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<sup>56</sup> Hirszfeld, 364–265. Quoted in Dembowsky, 128.

<sup>57</sup> Hirszfeld, 364. Quoted in Dembowsky, 128.

<sup>58</sup> See *Mother of the Children of the Holocaust: The Irena Sendler Story*, by Anna Mieszkowska, and movie of the same name directed by John Kent Harrison

<sup>59</sup> Nechama Tec, *Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland. When Light Pierced the Darkness*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1986.

<sup>60</sup> Endelman, “Jewish Converts,” 53. Patterns of apostasy uncover the depths of desperation and despair, the loss of hope in a better future, along with the spread of indifference to and alienation from traditional loyalties and customs. Such patterns also indicate those within the community on whom discrimination and exclusion weighed most heavily, thus reminding us that anti-Semitism, however much the rhetorical plaything of politicians and publicists, embittered the lives of flesh-and-blood Jews in concrete ways specific to their social status.

Ringleblum points out in his Diary that the Jewish “converts” lifestyle’s clearly indicated their inauthentic motives for “conversion.”<sup>61</sup> This reflects the common Jewish opinion of Jewish believers in Jesus. However, it is important to understand that as a Socialist and philosophical materialist, he would not have any room in his worldview for faith; Jewish, Christian, or Jewish Christian. His attitudes however reflect the dominant viewpoint of the Ghetto dwellers towards the Jewish believers in Jesus, whether or not the believers themselves were authentic in their spirituality; Protestant, Catholic or Jewish Mission related.

So, were the believers authentic believers? It would be helpful to create three groups of Jewish believers. Those who professed faith in Jesus in the years prior to the Nazi invasion, those who became believers within a few years of the event, and then those who became Christians in the Ghetto itself. Yet, even with the three categories, the verdict would be mixed. There are always tares growing in the midst of the wheat! Those who were long term Christians of Jewish origin could very well have come from families where the decision to become a believer was motivated by true spiritual conviction. This would surely have been the case with some. But, since we realize that the Lord does not have grandchildren, there is the distinct possibility that what started out as authentic became nominal after some generations and the Jewish identity of these families became minimal. Hirszfeld became a believer in his 20’s and the vitality of his faith, though mixed with nationalism, comes through in what he wrote and in the way he behaved.

The question as to whether or not the newer believers (the Catholic term *neophyte* is often used) were driven by a sincere faith in Jesus may be questioned as well. Some perhaps tried to take advantage or hoped that they would gain an advantage through “conversion,” but most realized that there was actually little material benefit to gain after some time in the Ghetto and the scorn of the community may have helped them decide against crossing the line to Christianity.

The believers Frydland spoke to and those who had come to faith through the Jewish mission agencies and Evangelical churches before and during the Ghetto may have counted the cost, as would many of the Catholics. These true believers would have found comfort in their dire straits through the Messiah. We know these believers were there, but we just do not have many records of their voices.

But, one day we will hear their stories of martyrdom and suffering, as their voices will be lifted with ours in praise and worship of the One who suffered on our behalf and was raised in triumph; conquering death, evil and conquering every enemy of God and His chosen people. The horror of the Ghetto will be a tear wiped away by the grace of our Messiah and Lord.

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<sup>61</sup> Ringelblum, 140.

## Conclusion

I was especially moved by a quote recorded by Dembowski taken from the last sermons of Rev. Antoni Czarnecki in July 1942 just before the *Aktion*. This pastor remained in the Ghetto until the very last moment and makes the following comments in his final sermon:

Here is my last day in the ghetto and the last Sunday Mass in the church: it was an enormous crowd, such as has never before seen in the church. I started the holy mass without singing and without organ music. I read the gospel according to St. Luke: 19:41–44, prescribed for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost; “As Jesus drew near and came in sight of the city he shed tears over it and said, ‘If you had only recognized on this the day the way of peace! But in fact it is hidden from your eyes! Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all around you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; they will dash you and the children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you, because you did not recognize the moment of your visitation; I read this vision of the destruction of Jerusalem with great difficulty. There was so much crying and clamoring in the church that I did not need to preach, even if I could. Jesus himself had spoken personally, movingly, and powerfully.”<sup>62</sup>

Finally Dembowski, tells a story that offers a fitting conclusion in this brief journey into this Ghetto of madness and pain.

Nothing more is to be found about the Christians in the Warsaw ghetto after the great *Aktion*. A proper ending of this sad history of the two Roman Catholic parishes in the Warsaw ghetto is to be found not only in the sympathetic farewell offered by a Jewish friend, but also in the poetic expression of the postwar writer Hanna Krall.

In her Polish short story “Salvation”, we read: “When the Germans cleared the church of all the Christian Jews, there was only one Jew left of the church: the crucified Jesus... Jesus came down from the cross and called (to the painting) of his mother: ‘Mame, kim...’ This means in Yiddish: ‘Come Mama.’ She (came down and) went to the Umschlagplatz.”<sup>63</sup>

Interestingly, in a note from her book, according to Dembowski, “Krall, who was not herself religious, cites these lines as one of the numerous, poignant Jewish–Christian anecdotes told in the Ghetto.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Dembowski, 131, 145.

<sup>63</sup> Dembowski, 133.

<sup>64</sup> Dembowski, 148. [http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205896.pdf](http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205896.pdf),  
[http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205896.pdf](http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205896.pdf),  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8O4gO4OhoAI&feature=related>

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