

WESLEY COLLEGE: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Lionel E. Fredman

(This paper was presented at the 9th annual conference of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies, Melbourne, on 11 July 1995)

I hope to shed some light on ethnic awareness and educational institutions as well as the specific and rewarding relationship of Wesley College (Melbourne) and the Jewish experience.

A number of questions suggest themselves. Was the connection due to Wesley's proximity to an emergent Jewish middle class in St. Kilda? Were there early role models for the students both as scholars and members of the leading families? Did Jewish students find special recognition and stimulus? Was a quality education the main factor in choice of school? Did Wesley adopt diversity as a conscious policy? Were their aims in choice of school realised? Were their abiding recollections of school years favourable? Did Jewish students make their mark in service as well as scholarship?

The only comparable study is by Morris Forbes on Sydney Grammar School, in the *AJHS Journal*, Volume X, Part 8, 1990. Wesley is well served by historians including Felix Myer's biography of the great Headmaster, Laurence A. Adamson, in 1932; the period between 1865 to 1919 edited by Nye in 1921; the period between 1920 and 1940 edited by a former headmaster and contributor, Harold Stewart, in 1941; and Blainey, Morrissey and Hulme who celebrated the centenary in 1967 with a readable and critical work much superior to the usual school histories. Geoffrey Blainey, who has become our best-known and most versatile historian, a contemporary and old friend, last year added some specific comments. Several of the staff were helpful, particularly Margaret Taft, editor of the *Lion* and Director of Admissions and Community Relations, who belongs to a well-known Jewish family, and Bruce Gregory, an old friend, who spends his retirement from teaching by sustaining the Old Wesley (OW) Collegians Association. I obtained significant verbal and written recollections from fifteen Jewish OWs to which I might add myself and two brothers who attended between 1944 and 1956. There was some useful material as well as glimpses of a changing institutional and educational world in past issues of the school magazines, the *Chronicle* and the *Lion*. The Adamson scrapbooks, used by the author of the entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB), were lost in the recent fire.

Blainey explains the attraction for Jewish students in the early years by referring to the standing and record of the headmaster between 1871 and 1875, Martin Howy Irving (formerly Professor of Classics at the University of Melbourne), the proximity of the school to Jewish residences, and the lack of compulsion in matters religious. We can develop these points further. The story of the Michaelis-Hallenstein families and St. Kilda Synagogue describes the upward mobility and relocation of an Anglo-Jewish middle class, including one who served them at their synagogue for over fifty years, my grandfather Joel. A former student and then headmaster of Melbourne Hebrew School between 1881 to 1886, he suddenly lost his job in 1886 when secular teaching was terminated. He made the move from his parents' home in North Melbourne across the river to St. Kilda in 1888. Moritz Michaelis had already laid the foundation stone of the St. Kilda synagogue in July 1872. That was also the year of a major Education Act and the debate encompassed the day school, Melbourne Hebrew College, opened in 1860 and operating as a Common School from 1865, and due to lose its grant. Michaelis favoured after-school Jewish instruction and criticised the concept of a day school but

not while the secular aims of the new laws were not being carried out in choice of books. In his memoirs published in 1899 he says that he lost, then recovered, his faith, but was never again strictly Orthodox. His principles and Fredman's disillusionment shaped the indifference of the St. Kilda establishment to day schools.

Moritz Michaelis sent his son, Frederick David, who in turn sent his sons, Frank and Archie, to Wesley. Joel Fredman sent his son, Stanley, there for all his secondary schooling to Matriculation because it was within easy walking distance from their residence, a short distance up Wellington Street hill from the Junction, and also because the school offered half fees to all clergy, not just Methodists. Proximity did not always apply. The next Fredman generation travelled from a residential medical practice at Northcote south, north of the river. Reflecting this social composition, St. Kilda was represented in the Legislative Assembly by Archie Michaelis between 1932–1952 and Baron Snider between 1955–1964, and adjacent Caulfield by Harold Cohen, after a period in the Legislative Council, between 1935–1943.

Wesley College, opening in 1866, was barely five years old when it attracted Irving as headmaster, presumably matching the then generous Professorial salaries, and attracting two of its most outstanding students ever, Samuel Alexander and Felix Meyer. Both were Jewish, both lived at St. Kilda, Alexander being a neighbour of the first headmaster, James Corrigan, and both obtained all three Exhibitions for the highest in the colony at Matriculation, the total number then awarded annually, in 1875 and 1876 respectively.

Alexander later won a scholarship to England, then a First at Balliol, and was chosen as a Fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford, the first Jew to be so chosen by Oxford or Cambridge. Appointed to the Chair of Philosophy at Manchester in 1893, he served for over thirty years as a distinguished and productive scholar, and recipient of the rare Order of Merit. His Gifford Lectures, published in 1920 as "Space, Time and Deity", caused a sensation. An American scholar, Michael Weinstein, says of Alexander that "he is one of the great solitaries of modern philosophy." Alexander introduced Arthur Balfour, senior politician and keen amateur philosopher, to Chaim Weizmann, Professor of Chemistry at Manchester, with important results for modern Jewry. He sat on committees which recommended the appointment of Boyce Gibson, father and son, to the Chair of Philosophy at Melbourne, so placing a significant number of Australian Jewish students in his debt. Though he lived abroad he praised his old headmaster, and remained in regular touch by letter, and praised his old school whose magazine in the later 1870s and early 1880s eagerly reported his career plans and rejoiced in his successes.

Meyer, however, remained in Melbourne, to become one of its most distinguished medical practitioners. A third early winner of the Powell scholarship for Dux in 1907 and an Exhibition in 1908 was Cecil Pincus, a grandson in the celebrated and productive family of Philip and Hannah Blashki. Rabbi Elias Blaubaum's son, Athol, won an Exhibition in 1899, when he also won Triple Colours for sport. D.V. Isaacs won the Exhibition for Physics in 1921.

Corrigan, an Inspector of National schools in Ireland, spent five hectic years in Victoria until his early death. In two ways he helped Jewish education. As a member of the Royal Commission on education in 1866 he advocated the "compromise" of ending state grants while permitting non-dogmatic religious instruction in the schools, which eventually became the modern "right-of-entry". Secondly, as a member of the Board of Education, he raised the standards of the Common schools and established scholarships which students could use at any secondary school, then a further set available at the

University, so providing a window of opportunity for many families, including Jewish families, of modest means.

Over the years, other Jewish students from Wesley have won Exhibitions and University prizes, and for some it has been the prelude to a distinguished career. When Hebrew became a Matriculation subject, Wesley boys Trevor Rapke (1926) and Norman Rose (1933) added to the Exhibition list. In 1970, HSC Distinctions replaced the Exhibitions and included Stephen Kolt and Norman Smorgon in 1976 and Mark Moshinsky in 1982. It is a long list and other Jewish students are included. Mark Moshinsky went further to win the Rhodes Scholarship for all-round excellence. Attending Wesley between 1977–1982 he became a Prefect and Dux in his final year and concluded his Arts/Law degree at the University with a First place, Supreme Court prize, and the Rhodes scholarship for 1988.

The non-government schools long retained their early prominence in secondary education, particularly in Victoria, where they enrol more than one-third of all students. Whoever provides the education, Australian Jews have utilised it with traditional zeal. By census 1986, over half (52 per cent) of Jews were classified by occupation as managers and professionals compared with less than one quarter (24 per cent) in the whole community, and 28 per cent had tertiary qualifications compared with one third of that (9.5 per cent) in the whole community.

Enrolments reached one hundred during Wesley's first year, then climbed, particularly under Irving, to reach 274. Thereafter they languished and did not recover until the early years of the new century. In the depressed 1890s, when a mere hundred names might be enrolled, the school advertised in the Jewish press in 1894 that it was "open to all denominations" and was "liberally supported by the Jewish members of the community." In the attendance list from opening until 1920, we can find eight Michaelis', two Hallensteins, eight Blaubaums, and a large number of Isaacs and Jacobs, some of whom may not be Jewish. So from the earliest years there have been effective role models for Jewish families and Jewish students at Wesley.

The oldest Victorian Public school is actually Scotch College, established in 1851 in Spring Street, soon moving to a government grant on Eastern Hill, which was not too far for any Jewish students in East Melbourne or Carlton. In 1916 the Junior school began the move to their capacious suburban site in Hawthorn. John Monash, not untypical with a hard-driving mother, was Dux and Exhibitioner in 1881, so acting as a role model for a number of prominent Old Boys. Without investigating too deeply I listed a Professor of Law and Governor-General, city solicitor and company director, his son (a barrister and MLC), a medical specialist, an MLA and Minister, academic lawyer and two medical practitioners.

The Sydney equivalent is Grammar, established by Act of Parliament and opened in 1857 as a non-denominational school, and still occupying a central city location which for long was near the favoured Jewish residential district of Darlinghurst. Of course, in Sydney the Jewish communal headquarters, including the press and museum, are still there; whereas in Melbourne, Jewish Carlton consists of memories shared with a couple of landmarks such as the Elgin Street Post Office. Darlinghurst was represented in parliament by Daniel Levy between 1904–1920. Sydney Grammar School's highest distinction is Captain, meaning Dux rather than Prefect, which was held by Levy in 1889 and earlier by Joseph Jacobs, attending between 1867–1871, the equivalent of Samuel Alexander, who made his career overseas as a Jewish historian, encyclopaedia editor and universal folklorist.

Perhaps the thrifty Methodist tradesmen who supported the infant Wesley College resembled in status and upward mobility the Jewish community rather than the more prestigious Anglicans and Presbyterians, of the established churches of England and Scotland. Just to pluck a few significant names: the Nicholas brothers, the great benefactors of the inter-regnum between Adamson and post World War Two, were sons of a Cornish miner, and so typical of thousands of Methodist emigrants. Of the two chief founders who gave their names to the most important scholarships, Walter Powell was a small ironmonger who took full advantage of the gold rushes, and Daniel Draper was a carpenter-turned-clergyman. In Blainey's words, "an expensive college ... to many of his (Reverend James Waugh) flock must have seemed little more than a status symbol."

Reverend Waugh was an Irish Methodist clergyman and son of an Irish Methodist clergyman, who decided that Colonial service was preferable to the Depression after 1848 in his native land. The first Methodist Fellowship had met for worship in 1837 in the home of a tailor. In 1841 they opened a permanent chapel and received a resident minister. By exchanging their central site in gold-rush Melbourne for the remote reaches of Lonsdale Street they could afford to build a vast Gothic Revival edifice with a spire, designed by Joseph Reed in 1858. Does it not resemble the celebrated move many years later by the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation from an overshadowed midget off Queen Street to a splendid dome in Toorak Road? Thirty years later, in 1889, the Methodists were the most active denomination by far, measured in numbers of churches and seats, but the Religion statistics still reflected the differences of status. Among the private schools called "colleges" or "grammar schools" the Wesley enrolments were clearly in third place behind both Scotch and Melbourne Grammar.

Jewish students and members of staff have served Wesley College in a variety of ways. Among the staff, the two senior English masters in my time were both Jewish — Louis Lesser and Arthur Phillips — but they did not identify. Both were active in producing the annual play, while Lesser ran the Scouts and Phillips ran the library. It was not until I had left the school that I realised Phillips' significance as a literary critic — he was of course the person who invented the potent phrase, the "cultural cringe" — and the significance of his brother, P.D. Phillips, and father, M.M. Phillips, as lawyers and public figures, and also their connection with a talented group of Jewish intellectuals and artists about the turn of the century. One of them, Louisa Henriques, married a great Australian (and OW) and MLA for St. Kilda between 1920–1927, Frederick Eggleston. We knew Phillips as "Tosh", some English slang of yesteryear, for he had a distinctive way of using that or some other expletive to expose his keen dislike of padded and unsightly prose. Geoffrey Blainey, praising his teaching, writes: "I owe him a lot and was proud to say so at his funeral."

Felix Meyer, an early and outstanding student, retained a lifelong affection for the school. He served as an early president from 1897-98 of the OW Collegians Association (founded in 1895), and many years later, in 1932, wrote a biography of L.A. Adamson, sub-titled "the story of a great headmaster." F.D. Michaelis was president in 1916. In the 1920s he made a substantial donation to the capital fund, and gave a racing VIII and a memorial prize for his son Frank, killed during World War One. Sidney Myer in the 1920s also made a substantial donation to the capital fund; his nephew Norman had attended the school. Mark Lazarus was on the first OW committee in 1895; a noted lawyer, his daughter Joan (later Rosanove) became the first woman to take Silk at the Victorian Bar.

More recently, Jack Joel donated a racing VIII and still rows with the Alan Mitchell OW Club. The many public services of Graeme Samuel include the Commission for the Future of the Jewish Community in Victoria which reported in October 1994, Chairman

of the Australian Opera since April 1995, and currently Chairman of the Wesley Foundation, key to long-term fund-raising.

In my time, Ron Rosanove rowed in the VIII and was a Prefect in 1945; a couple of years later Daryl Cohen and David Efron were Seniors in the Junior School; and in 1949 Geoffrey Harcourt was a Prefect, as was Irvin Rockman in 1955.

Representation in sport is a means of service and support as well as giving personal satisfaction. Forbes (AJHS Journal, 1990) gives a long list of Jewish students with a few prominent. His claim, that an ethos of service translates into work for the Jewish and general community after one leaves, certainly holds good for Wesley. But he adds that seldom did the Jewish students at Sydney Grammar excel at sports (though he gives some examples of those who did) and suggests that traditions of study and games on *Shabbat* acted as inhibitions. On the other hand, the sporting prowess of Jewish students at Wesley has been constant. Athol Blauhaum and Ron Rosanove have been mentioned. Without too much searching we can add R.A. Shmith (athletics), Ivan Rosanove (VIII), Lionel Efron (football), brothers Daryl and Trevor Cohen (football and Australian titles in weight-lifting), Bruce Levy (squash), father and son Clive and Joel Fredman (tennis; the latter is the other Joel's great-grandson), Graeme Sloman and Gregory Kolt (gymnastics), and Irvin Rockman (triple colours). Mark Kovacs is currently an Australian ranked tennis junior. One of those listed did say that the sporting types were more "acceptable" to the staff and their peers.

Of the considerable number of OWs engaged in parliamentary politics there are at least two well-known Jews. In the Blainey book, the photo of Sam Cohen (1934), Labor Senator between 1962–1969, sits opposite that of R.G. Menzies (1913), who of course was the Prime Minister for a record term between 1939–1941 and 1949–1966. Jews supporting the Liberal Party could be represented by (Sir) Archie Michaelis, Speaker and MLA for St. Kilda between 1932–1952. The most prominent in local government is Irvin Rockman, Lord Mayor of Melbourne in 1977–78, who joins the list of prominent past Mayors, Edward Cohen and the Centennial Lord Mayor (Sir) Benjamin Benjamin.

Almost every source I encountered rejected allegations that at the school there was anti-Semitism, whether in its strict sense or in some looser sense meaning persecution or prejudice. Some referred to verbal pinpricks or an "Establishment" mood while quick to add that this was outweighed by positive features. A prime culprit for isolated and offensive remarks was the gym master. Jewish students may have disliked the compulsion of this particular sport or exercise more than others; however, two expert Jewish gymnasts have been mentioned, one of whom, Gregory Kolt, is secretary of the OW club. One OW, a well-known academic from Adelaide (which is a gesture towards his pseudonym), in the early 1960s wrote a piece in the *Nation* alleging rampant anti-Semitism during his time there; but the only substantial evidence concerned one particular, awkward individual. Reading between the lines it seems that the author, who attended prayers and the Divinity class, found his Jewishness uncomfortable. Practical jokes involving purse-pinching or dropping coins were directed at Scots as well as at Jews. The classic *Punch* joke that "I hadn't been there more than two hours when bang went saxe-pence!" involves two Aberdeen Scots visiting London. When the headmaster, McNeil, refused to make alternative arrangements I did not sit for a school scholarship examination scheduled for the Day of Atonement. The senior assistant master expressed regret and I obtained a Junior Government scholarship. The school has been quite willing to award its own scholarships to intending Jewish students. Bearing in mind McNeil's rigid and stubborn personality — dare we risk another generalisation about the beleaguered Scots — I am unwilling to read too much into this unfortunate episode.

In his biography or memoir of Adamson in 1932, Felix Meyer tersely and forcefully said that Saturday morning detention/punishment for Jewish boys was "impossible". There was no mincing of words here.

For many years Jewish students had permission to withdraw from morning prayers, chapel services in school hours and the scheduled Divinity class. We must remember that Wesley College was a Methodist foundation, albeit becoming more diverse, and in the 1930s and 1940s the Chaplain took that class, and used a textbook denouncing in the manner of old-fashioned hard-shell Methodism the perils of drinking and dancing. Of course the boys rarely followed his advice, at least if their youthful boasts were believed.

The Chaplain required Jewish students if absent to read a textbook and face an examination in Old Testament history, a practice later followed at the sister school, Methodist Ladies College (MLC). Jewish students recalled that it was sometimes boring being left to their own devices but it was appreciated, and they responded with good marks. When Ron Rosanove became a Prefect in 1945 the Chaplain and headmaster took time to explain that it was customary for the Prefects to read an occasional Lesson and they wished to ascertain his views. He and they agreed he would do so if it were a suitable passage from the Old Testament.

When Caulfield Anglican School required all pupils to attend prayers and religious instruction, there was a protest from some Jewish parents which was reported in the daily press. The Reverend A.H. Wood, headmaster of MLC, offered places in his school for any girls who chose to leave the other school in protest.

Some respondents evaded the question of a liberal environment by emphasising practical motives such as winning a scholarship or following in father's footsteps as a student there. "Congenial enough, but not wonderful", said one cautiously, but this could reflect his own ambitions as a lawyer and public figure.

The Jewish clergy have a connection with the school; Rabbis Blaubaum and Goldman and Chazan Kowadlo sent their sons there, also my grandfather who was regarded as a clergyman for this purpose. Rabbi Sanger addressed an OW inter-faith chapel service in October 1968. Among the secular Zionist leadership, Samuel Wynn sent his three sons there including David, also a prominent vigneron.

A feature of Felix Meyer's book is not only the Jewish background of the author, but the many tributes and functions on Adamson's retirement, which he records. The headmaster told a school assembly that the Reverend Edwin Wilkin, resident president of Wesley (a former office which combined chaplain, bursar and housemaster), asked his friend Rabbi Danglow to attend his deathbed in 1916 and read the priestly benediction in Hebrew. The old and great headmaster was ecumenical, and so was his school.

The old adage of safety in numbers applies both to informal playground situations and official policy. Jewish students have been significant from the beginning. Now there are more than ten per cent, a proportion at times achieved in the past, but that is now over three hundred of a much larger student population who can thereby influence subjects and the contentment of their school years.

An essential part of the Wesley story is the rebuilding and renovation of the school in 1933-34 at an eventual cost of £200,000, or an astronomical sum in today's values, this amount being donated by the two brothers Nicholas. Almost everybody in Australia knew them as the highly successful pharmacists controlling the famous *Aspro* formula and mark, who had expanded into a corporate network and become one of our richest

families. However, few knew that Harry Shmith, pharmacist and entrepreneur, had played an essential part in their rise, and that he belonged to a prominent Jewish family who lived at St. Kilda and belonged to its congregation. Athol Shmith was a fashion photographer with a city studio who married a glamorous model, and Maurice Shmith ran York Motors and Yellow Cabs. He seemed the obvious choice for my father, son of the secretary of the St. Kilda synagogue, who needed a first car, as he had squatted as a solo GP in an outer Melbourne suburb. Unfortunately, it packed up on a country road and was towed home. My grandfather who walked to his work-place for over fifty years and never owned a car, rang up Maurice and naively asked how such things could happen.

The Company's "in-house" history by Smith and Barrie freely admits to allegations that the family treated Shmith unfairly and that it was unlikely that the brothers without his help could have produced and marketed a pure aspirin tablet. They say in extenuation that by late 1917 the firm, hut two years old, was coping with heavy losses, and Shmith and Broadby were willing to be bought out.

The press announcement in September 1915 of a licence to replace the suspended German patents described Shmith and George Nicholas as "the makers". It is surely unfair, to put it mildly, for the founders, the brothers Nicholas, to long ignore an essential person in securing the initial source of their company's massive and subsequent wealth, importance and global reach. By 1976, when Smith and Barrie appeared, its turnover was \$85million from one hundred countries. *Ex gratia* payments, even a public admission, have been made for much less.

Student numbers at Wesley College steadily increased under Adamson, headmaster between 1902 and 1932, peaking in 1927 at nearly six hundred, but falling to 505 (50 boarders) in 1932. They grew again, exceeding six hundred in 1936, seven hundred in 1940, and 745 in 1945, by which time I was on the scene. The total enrolment in my last year, 1948, was 855, in the senior and junior schools, located on one familiar St. Kilda Road campus, with four Jewish students out of forty-one in Form 6A and three out of thirty-seven in 6B, and thirty-five to forty in the whole school. In 1955, there were three Form 6 classes with ten Jewish students out of eighty-four. Now there are about 3,300 students in eleven discrete schools on three campuses (Pahran, Glen Waverley and Elsternwick), the largest Independent school in Australia. The school's Director of Admissions estimates the Jewish enrolment now at between ten and twelve per cent, varying considerably according to the campus or program. For example, her estimate is twenty per cent for Elsternwick. One recent OW estimated that nearly half his class were Jewish.

One of the features of the modern school was the successful phasing-in of a co-educational organisation between 1978 and 1987. Jewish girls and their parents responded positively; indeed my niece and her husband (Emma Fredman and Gregory Kolt) claim to be the first OWs to be married to each other. With two other Jewish girls at Glen Waverley, they were in the first class to go through.

Other features are the multi-campus and corporate organisation, and the development of the school's liberal reputation and ethnic diversity. According to one claim, forty-nine ethnic groups are represented among the students. The Divinity class with permission for Jewish students to withdraw and study Old Testament history has been replaced by the study of comparative religion in which all participate.

The arts and music programs, always a strength of the Australian Independent or "Public" schools, have added preparation for the Victorian College of the Arts and a

career path. An expanded sports list instead of the traditional colour "four" and the Arts and triple Arts awards are attempts to meet familiar allegation of excessive emphasis on sport while retaining its benefits. The school has continuing and positive attractions as in the past for Jewish parents seeking a quality education for their children, particularly at the upper-secondary level. Certainly the numbers and proportions of Jewish students are not declining. One OW, his last year being 1963, with sons at the school, declared emphatically that Jewish students have never been so comfortable at the school as now. Another, attending in the late 1970s, believes that the various ethnic groups and the majority have integrated with "no difficulty".

But the Jewish community has itself markedly changed, perhaps in no more obvious a way than in the rapid development of and high proportion attending the day schools. The first modern full-time Jewish day school in Victoria was Mount Scopus Memorial College, established in 1949. Now there are eight such schools, enrolling about seven-tenths of Jewish students of school age (compared with half in New South Wales) with a significant shrinkage from three-quarters at primary to half at secondary level. Such growth reflects greater Jewish awareness, but also community expectations in the 1960s of State Aid for non-government schools and of completion of secondary schooling as the norm. Such changes have been absorbed; meanwhile the system must cope with rising costs, conflicting aims and lack of mutual support.

There are persistent arguments among parents and students whether too much or too little time is spent on Jewish studies. Some want to lessen the narrowness of Jewish studies and the strain of a ruthlessly competitive HSC, while others argue that the survival of the Jewish community is at stake and the day school students do well in other subjects too. Some complain that there is no follow-up in the home, while others point to a familiar student expectation that "home" is where you relax after school and can suspend the curriculum, secular or Jewish.

The Commission for the Future of the Jewish Community in Victoria, reporting in October 1994 to the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV), drew attention to the large proportion of children not attending the day schools, the alternative provision in part-time classes organised by the United Jewish Education Board (UJEB), and to the positive benefits, at least as many parents see it, which an enriched and diverse environment such as Wesley provides, and the ready availability of inter-school social and sporting activities rather than heavy reliance on one system or even one individual school. They recommended also that while there are advantages in a diversity of day schools, the effects of debts, fees and an ageing community be candidly faced.

The Director of Admissions at Wesley declared that there was positive benefit and no risk to Jewish students attending Wesley as long as they were secure in their identity. Of two OWs prominent at the school, including sport, one replied that the Jewish day school system had changed his attitudes, while the other said he had received the best education possible in his time and was happy to send his sons there. It is a complex question and even brothers emerged with different school experiences, answers and expectations for the future education of their families.

In *Educating Johannah: a Year in Year 12*, Anne Henderson (Sydney, 1995) describes the atmosphere in her daughter's Year 12 at Abbotsleigh, at Wahroonga on Sydney's North Shore. "Reward for academic attainment is unquestioned" is a pithy statement many parents will be looking for. As the Hendersons are Roman Catholic and had previously sent their daughters to a private Catholic school, Genazzano, in Melbourne, their transfer to Anglican and prestigious Abbotsleigh is similar to Jewish students who transfer to Wesley from primary level at a Jewish day school, for example, the familiar

move from King David School with Years 1 to 8. Indeed “reward” is the name of the game and a vital part of this additional and strenuous rite of passage.

The motto of Wesley College appeared on the first Prospectus in 1866 and is even more appropriate for a multi-ethnic school. As the early headmasters included two distinguished classicists in Irving and Way, it is not surprising that they should cling to one of the better Latin mottos: *Sapere Aude*, or “dare to be wise” from Horace, *Epistles*, 1.2.40. Some translate it “dare to think independently”. The context declares: “begun is half done, dare to begin, or procrastinate like the rustic who waits for the river to flow by, but it flows on forever.” I remember Professor Boyce Gibson of the philosophy department at a school speech night long ago reminding us that it was one of the few school mottos which emphasised intelligence.

The badge, which is a lion, and the school colours of purple and gold, have some significance for Jewish students. The lion is a favourite device for decorating the breast-plate of the Torah scrolls and originates with Jacob’s blessings to his sons and specifically the identification of Judah by appearance and character with the lion (Genesis XLIX, 8–9). Though not the eldest, Judah had outstanding leadership qualities.

In the days when schoolboys read Byron and memorised lines of poetry, many had by heart these lines from “The Destruction of Sennacherib” (*Hebrew Melodies*, 1814)

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

The Assyrian leader, not content with the capture of Samaria and Israel and tribute from Judah, in 701BCE besieged and demanded the surrender of Jerusalem. Isaiah was confident that reformed behaviour of His people would result in Divine intervention; however, Graetz points out that the Assyrian turned aside to meet an Egyptian invasion and fled in disarray (*Popular History of the Jews*, 5th ed., 1935, Ch. VI). The Hebrew Bible refers to additional tribute and the overnight visit by an avenging angel which belongs to a plague tradition noted by Herodotus and embellished by Byron. From this respite the weak but idealistic King Hezekiah was able to lead a new “golden age”. Whatever the explanation, there is no reference to the Assyrian colours in the Bible story (II Kings, 18–19, Isaiah, 36–37). We do know that earlier, ca 1000BCE, King David’s ally, the Phoenicians, had a flourishing trade in purple-dyed cloth, from the seashell *murex*, which became so popular and yet so costly that it was even then a symbol of power and high office long before Assyrian soldiers, Roman magistrates and sundry empire-builders.

The Jewish significance of the Wesley badge and colours appears to be coincidental. According to Nye’s *History*, the College arms of 1877 were an attempt to illustrate the motto, and featured in one quarter a lion to signify the progress and vigilance which are parts of true daring. A vivid recollection for all OWs are the four marble lions, grasping the globe of immortality, the work of Caddori of Venice in the manner of the winged lion of his city, the personal gift of the headmaster, which are adjacent to the western facade of Adamson Hall and the panels containing the names of the fallen of World War One.

For many years the school colours were blue and white. However, many people preferred purple and gold which were the original colours, and bolder and more practicable, so they were introduced (or re-introduced) in 1903.

The Jewish experience could affect notable Methodist families, many of whom have attended Wesley or MLC. One of the oldest and most distinguished of these families are the Egglestons. One, a great Australian public figure, was Frederick William Eggleston, who at last in 1985 found an excellent and insightful biographer in Warren Osmond. It is clear that a group of middle-class, professional Anglo-Jews in the St. Kilda district played a vital part in his social and intellectual development about 1900 when he was in his twenties. He married one of them, Louisa or "Lulu" Henriques, and represented St. Kilda in the Legislative Assembly between 1920 and 1927, while later P.D. Phillips, from this circle, was prominent among the authors of Eggleston's obituaries in 1954.

Another mixed marriage involved a Jewish OW and his Presbyterian wife in Queensland, where he made his medical career; he was Sir Abraham Fryberg, who died recently in 1993 aged 92. After distinguished war service he returned to Public Health, becoming the state Director General of Health and Medical Services between 1947 to 1967. He belonged to both Brisbane Jewish congregations and joined in various Jewish activities.

With Wesley College as our focus we can thus illustrate the diversity of the Jewish experience in Australia.

