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# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

## Conder, Josiah

(1789–1855)

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**Conder, Josiah** (1789–1855), bookseller and writer, was born in Falcon Street, Aldersgate, London, on 17 September 1789, the son of Thomas Conder (1746/7–1831), a map engraver and bookseller, and his wife, Elisabeth. His grandfather Dr John Conder was president of Old College, Homerton. In 1795 Josiah contracted smallpox, and the severity of the disease entirely destroyed his right eye. He was educated under the Revd Mr Palmer at Hackney, and at the early age of ten contributed essays to the *Monthly Preceptor*.

At thirteen Conder left school and entered the bookselling business of his father, at 30 Bucklersbury, London, where in his leisure he carried out a system of self-education. To the eleventh number of *The Athenaeum* (1806), edited by Dr Aikin, he contributed some lines entitled 'The Withered Oak', and about this time he became acquainted with James Montgomery and Ann Taylor. His poetical contributions to various periodicals being well received, in 1810 he published an anonymous volume entitled *The Associate Minstrels*, to which Ann and Jane Taylor and others contributed. It reached a second edition within three years.

In the autumn of 1811 his father retired from the business for health reasons, and Josiah Conder took it over. On 8 February 1815 he married Joan Elizabeth, second daughter of Roger Thomas of Southgate, Middlesex, and granddaughter on her mother's side of Louis François Roubiliac, the sculptor. They resided at his new shop at 18 St Paul's Churchyard until 1819, when he disposed of the business to B. J. Holdsworth. They had four sons and one daughter. Conder had become proprietor of the *Eclectic Review* in 1814, and he retained the management of this periodical until 1837, when he transferred it to Dr Thomas Price, having during his editorship supported the dissenting interest. He was a great letter-writer, and kept up a correspondence with James Montgomery, Robert Southey, Revd Robert Hall, Revd John Foster, and other literary men of the day. In 1818 he brought out a work in two volumes, entitled *On Protestant Nonconformity*, of which a second edition appeared in 1822. In 1824 he entered into an agreement with James Duncan of Paternoster Row to edit the afterwards well-known series of the *Modern Traveller*, undertaking in the first instance to furnish the

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volume on Palestine only. Ultimately he compiled the whole set of thirty volumes (1825–9), having assistance in only one or two of them. The series was successful, despite the fact of its editor's never having left his native country. On the establishment of the *Patriot* newspaper in 1832 to represent the principles of evangelical nonconformity, Conder became its editor, an office which he held for twenty-three years.

Conder was one of the most industrious of men. Throughout his life he worked long hours for the support of himself and his family, yet he found time to act as a preacher, and to keep up an extensive correspondence on religious and literary topics. He was a prolific writer, editor, and compiler. Some of his works in these roles include: *Thomas Johnson's Reasons for Dissent* (1821); *Memoirs of Pious Women, by Gibbons and Burder* (1823); *The Star in the East with other Poems* (1824); *The Law of the Sabbath* (1830; new edn, 1852); *Wages or the Whip* (an essay on free and slave labour, 1833); *The Congregational Hymn-Book* (1834; another edn, 1836); *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa, by T. Pringle, with a Sketch of the Author* (1835); *An Analytical Sketch of All Religions* (1838); and *The Psalms of David Imitated by I. Watts, Revised by J. Conder* (1851).

Conder wrote steadily until 9 November 1855, when he fell ill from jaundice, from which he never recovered. He died at his home, 28 Belsize Road, St John's Wood, London, on 27 December 1855, and was buried in Abney Park cemetery on 3 January 1856.

## Sources

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J. Harris, *The divine net: a discourse on the death of J. Conder* (1856)

*Eclectic Review*, 9 (1857), 244

## Archives

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Suffolk RO, Bury St Edmunds, corresp. and papers

## Likenesses

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B. R. Haydon, group portrait, oils, 1840 (*The Anti-slavery Society Convention, 1840*), NPG

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National Archives <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F57013>>