

Tongue Ties: the Emergence of the Anglophone Cultural Sphere in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

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In the 17th and 18th centuries, a scattered web of fortune-seeking Jewish merchants traded in the port cities of the British Atlantic world. Divided by vast distances, these traders were linked by mercantile, familial and religious connections to a loose transnational ethnic network. These early colonial communities have become the focus of considerable recent research, as historians place the small outposts of North American and Caribbean Jewry into a larger matrix of social and religious interaction, intellectual cross-fertilization, and mercantile interdependence within the Atlantic world.¹

As in the broader field of Atlantic history, these studies focus on the 18th century, and almost uniformly terminate before 1825. Historians of American Jewry would be well served to extend the transnational focus of scholarship on Jewish Atlantic world into the 19th century. Not to do so risks neglecting the continuity in the contacts between these communities, as well as ignoring a host of common trends that continued to link the American Jewish experience with that of their brethren abroad. I will argue that the cultural connections between the communities of what until the American Revolution was the British Atlantic were not only strengthened over the course of the 19th century, but deepened and broadened. Moreover, I will suggest that by the middle decades of the century a common cultural identity replaced geographic proximity as the primary bond between the vastly expanded Jewish communities of North America, the British West Indies and England. Although distant from the traditional trade routes of the Atlantic world, the Jews who moved to the flourishing British imperial outposts in Australia and

¹ See Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting; The First Migration, 1654-1820* (Baltimore, 1992); Norman Fiering and Paolo Bernardini, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West* (New York, 2004); introduction to Edith Gelles, ed., *The Letters of Abigail Levy Franks, 1753-1748*; Leo Herschowitz and Isidore Meyer, *The Lee Max Friedman Collection of American Jewish Colonial Correspondence: Letters of the Franks Family, 1733-1748* (Waltham, MA, 1968); Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York, 2004); Holly Snyder, "A Sense of Place: Jews, Identity and Social Status in Colonial British America, 1654-1831," Doctoral Dissertation, Brandeis University, 2000.

South Africa also participated in this cultural sphere. This Anglophone sphere, however, was neither a monolithic nor an exclusive entity. It did not encompass all Jews or all Jewish cultural activity within the national boundaries of these countries. Many German immigrants, particularly in the Midwest, retained stronger cultural ties to the *heimat*.

This transition from Atlantic network to Anglophone cultural community was enabled by a series of innovations in the technologies of transportation and communication. I will examine the impact of this technological revolution on cultural interchange among English-speaking Jews in the first section of this paper. While these developments facilitated the circulation of information, ideas, customs and fashions, this cultural cargo only gained traction because of similarities in the challenges and opportunities which Jews confronted in these diverse settings. In the second section I will argue that significant congruities in the social and religious pressures faced by the Jewish communities of America and the British Empire overrode the structural differences in religious and political environment between these two contexts. Although English Jews and their colonial cousins were dissenters within an Anglican Empire, and drew their hierarchical religious model from the Established church, closer examination of power relations at the synagogue level suggests a pattern of trusteeism, lay dominance and congregational autonomy not far removed from that of their American co-religionists. More important, I will argue, was a common preoccupation across the Anglophone community with the challenge of proselytizing missionaries, the pressures for religious reform, and the problems of pervasive religious laxity and the breakdown of communal authority. Similarly the strategies adopted by Jewish communities across the English-speaking world to counter these threats were drawn from a common repertoire. This is unsurprising given the circulation of books and newspapers, the movement of ministers, and the influence of transnational trends within the Church.

While Jews in the port cities of Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, Kingston and London were in intermittent contact during the 18th century, the transformation of the technologies of communication and transportation in the 19th century revolutionized these relationships. The introduction of iron steamships,

propellers, and reliable compasses in the 1830s made transatlantic voyages shorter and safer.² These innovations largely freed transoceanic transport from the vicissitudes of the weather. By 1838, passengers could reliably cross from England to New York in 15 days. Under sail, this journey took three to six weeks.³ Advances in the speed, safety and frequency of ocean travel spurred immigration by collapsing the distance, duration and difficulty of voyages. Transoceanic travel also became cheaper. By the 1850s, the London *Jewish Chronicle* regularly advertised passage on steam clippers from Liverpool to Australia, a voyage of “under sixty days,” for a base price of £14.⁴ This transformation of travel led to the enlargement of the Jewish communities at the centre and periphery of the English-speaking world, persuading immigrants from Central Europe to cross the Atlantic to America and England, and encouraging others to seek opportunity by settling in the colonial outposts of the British Empire. It also made trans-Atlantic tourism possible, although this was still very limited.⁵

While this transport revolution eased the movement of people, it also linked the English-speaking Jewish world into a single market. In its most basic form, this enabled an entrepreneur like Samuel Myer Isaacs, a minister in New York, to derive a source of income by operating a bookstore out of his home, selling newspapers (he was the sole agent in New York for the London *Jewish Chronicle*), almanacs, prayer books, ritual objects, and Jewish art (including picture portraits of Moses Montefiore) imported from England.⁶ On a much larger scale, improved trade and communication links facilitated the distribution of books, periodicals and other Jewish cultural cargo across the globe. For example, Isaac Leeser, the editor of the *Occident* in Philadelphia, received “three files of local newspapers” describing the consecration of the new synagogue in Sydney

² See Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), 144-148; Robert Kubicek, “British Expansion, Empire, and Technological Change,” in Andrew Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 249-251; London *Jewish Chronicle*, February 24, 1854.

³ Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (London, 2002), 168.

⁴ London *Jewish Chronicle*, October 16, 1857.

⁵ See, for examples, London *Jewish Chronicle*, May 28, 1852; *Occident*, 3:3, June, 1845.

⁶ London *Jewish Chronicle*, January 26, 1846; Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore, 1992), 215.

Australia, as well as the official program, barely a few months after the event.⁷ An extract from the correspondence between George Moss, who lived in Sydney, and the London *Voice of Jacob* reveals how information also flowed in the opposite direction:

your American correspondent, touches very justly on the want of union. It is so both in the old and new worlds, nor have the antipodes escaped the contagion. We are all too apathetic Mr Leeser of the *Occident*, has done the faith some service in his articles on ‘The demands of the Times’ Since I have written the above, Dr. Adler’s portrait has been received. Some of my old fashioned friends were surprised at seeing the worthy Rabbi minus a beard, a fur cap, and a Polish peltz; not being prepared for the appearance of a modern ecclesiastic.⁸

Notwithstanding the improvement in transportation, the delay in transmission of information was still considerable and travel never entirely predictable. The *Occident* generally reprinted news culled from English newspapers two months after it had originally appeared.⁹ The wait could be much longer. In 1844, for example, the publication in the *Occident* of the official proceedings of congregation Nidhe Israel of Bridgetown, Barbados were delayed for months “owing to the circuitous voyage of the vessel” carrying the mail.¹⁰ Mishaps of this sort occasionally became the source of friction. In 1854, the trustees of the Sydney Synagogue expressed their frustration with Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler in an overhasty letter to the London *Jewish Chronicle*, criticizing his failure to find a suitable candidate to fill the congregation’s pulpit. Much to their eventual embarrassment, the chagrined letter to the *Chronicle* crossed the Atlantic just as Adler’s delayed but placatory response sailed from London.¹¹ As this incident suggests, travel to Australia was particularly long and risky, given the remoteness of the destination.¹² Despite the difficulty of the passage, the allures of gold-rush Australia

⁷ *Occident*, 2:7, October, 1844; Order of Service Arranged for the Consecration of the New Sydney Synagogue, 1844; see also *Occident*, 5:11, February, 1848.

⁸ *Voice of Jacob*, May 22, 1846.

⁹ See, for example, *Occident*, 4:10, January, 1847.

¹⁰ *Occident*, 2:2, May, 1844.

¹¹ See, for example, London *Jewish Chronicle*, January 27, 1854; February 16, 1855; Israel Porush, “The Chief Rabbinate and Early Australian Jewry,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society*, 2, 9, 1948: 488.

¹² London *Jewish Chronicle*, February 24, 1854.

attracted thousands of Jewish immigrants from 1851. The Jewish population grew from fewer than 2,000 at the beginning of the decade to over 5,000 ten years later.¹³ The new accessibility of Australia – and its rising status in the Jewish world - was demonstrated by the frequent fundraising visits of rabbinic emissaries collecting funds for the Holy Land.¹⁴

Publishing also underwent a technological transformation during this period. Improvements in printing, particularly the introduction of the steam-powered press, dramatically reduced the cost of the publishing and purchasing of printed material. The reduction of the stamp tax in England made mass national publishing possible. These developments underpinned the emergence of the Jewish press in America, England, Australia and the West Indies at much the same time. Although Jewish publishers printed primarily for the local market, newspapers and books circulated widely. Here the press was aided by advances in the technologies of transportation and trade. In 1844, the London *Voice of Jacob* boasted of its subscribers at the “extreme side of the habitable globe.” Because of the improvement in the regularity of mail to Australia, it was “able to maintain, by our stamped copies, a regular mode of communication for the amelioration and advancement of the religious, moral, and social interests of the Jewish colonists.”¹⁵ As early as 1845, the Philadelphia *Occident* had subscribers in Canada, Barbados, St Thomas, Grenada, Jamaica, Venezuela, England, Brazil, Porto Rico, New Zealand, New South Wales, and Van Diemen’s Land. The number of foreign subscribers does not reveal the full extent of readership. Newspapers passed through multiple hands: shared among communities, collected by literary societies, and sometimes reprinted in the local press.¹⁶

These twin revolutions in printing and transportation tied the dispersed outposts of English-speaking Jewry into a transnational intellectual and cultural community. This

¹³ Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (New York, 1997), 50.

¹⁴ See for example, *London Jewish Chronicle*, June 5, 1863.

¹⁵ *Voice of Jacob*, March 22, 1844.

¹⁶ The New York *Jewish Messenger* offered a special club rate. Sydney *Voice of Jacob*, September 5, 1842; *Occident*, vol. 5:8, November, 1847; E. Yechiel Simon, “Samuel Myer Isaacs: a 19th Century Jewish Minister in New York City,” *Yeshiva University, D.H.L.*, 197, 147-148.

replicated a pattern within the broader English-speaking world. Newspapers modeled on familiar metropolitan publications sprouted wherever English-speakers gathered in numbers.¹⁷ Imported American and English periodicals provided news and a degree of comfort for immigrants pining for a distant homeland. The English-language Jewish newspapers that emerged in the early 1840s - the *First Fruits of the West* in Kingston, Jamaica, the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* in Philadelphia, the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Voice of Jacob* in London - served a similar purpose for far-flung Jewish communities. Jewish immigrants from England, accustomed to reading both general and Jewish newspapers, carried a newspaper culture with them to the colonies. The prevalence of stage migration by immigrants from Central Europe, often involving temporary stops in England on the way to America or the colonies, aided this form of cultural transmission.¹⁸ Many immigrants from Britain continued to read the English Jewish press, and later encouraged (and sometimes edited) local Jewish newspapers. For example, George Moss, a free immigrant from England, started the *Voice of Jacob, or the Hebrew's Monthly Miscellany* in Sydney in May 1842.¹⁹ Styled as a “colonial re-publication,” the newspaper reprinted articles culled from back issues of the London *Voice of Jacob* and chapters from an assortment of books (including Isaac Leeser’s translation of Johlson’s *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion*) which were deemed “applicable to our case in this colony.”²⁰ Although it ceased publication after only three issues, the newspaper was met with delight by its London counterpart.²¹

The *Occident*, London *Voice of Jacob* and London *Jewish Chronicle* reported extensively on English-speaking Jewish communities around the world, relying on correspondents and each others columns to supply information. These articles provided

¹⁷ See Alan Crown, “The Jewish Press, Community and Jewish Publishing in Australia,” in Alan Crown, ed., *Noblesse Oblige: Essays in Honor of David Kessler OBE* (London, 1998): 38-39.

¹⁸ See Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875* (Manchester, 1976), 71.

¹⁹ For Moss, see Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 48.

²⁰ Sydney *Voice of Jacob*, May 27, 1842; June 24, 1842; September 5, 1842.

²¹ “It is a well established truth, that ‘the best efforts of non-official laborers for the public advantage, are rarely understood or appreciated except at a distance of time or place.’ ... But who would have thought that the distance, in our individual case would have been the greatest attainable on earth! – i.e., half way round it. Few will imagine our surprise and pleasure, a few hours since, when waited upon by one of the earliest friends of our undertaking, with the duplicate of the ‘Voice of Jacob,’ reprinted for the Jews in the Australian colonies, at Sydney, 27th May, 1842!!” See *Voice of Jacob*, November 25, 1842; December 23, 1842; January 20, 1843; June 20, 1843; *Voice of Jacob*, May 22, 1846.

an important source of local news for colonial communities.²² In Australia, where the small Jewish population was scattered over vast distances, the columns written for the London *Voice of Jacob* by George Moss supplied news from Sydney to the remote hinterland.²³ Newspapers provided much more than news, in many cases serving as the only connection between isolated communities and the broader Jewish world. On the most mundane level, the broad distribution of newspapers made them an ideal bulletin board for advertising to an international audience. Isaac Leeser promoted a variety of publishing initiatives in the pages of the *Occident*: tracts distributed from London at the “extreme low rate of one penny,” the books of the newly formed Jewish Publication Society, and works that he himself had written.²⁴ Remote congregations advertised pulpit positions. The Sydney Synagogue, for example, unsuccessfully advertised for a minister in the London *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Occident*.²⁵ A number of West Indian congregations posted similar advertisements.²⁶ In much the same manner, colonial congregations often used the pages of the American and English Jewish press to appeal for contributions towards the building of new synagogues.²⁷ In 1847, the Sydney Synagogue appealed to the readership of the *Occident* for “law-books, reports, pamphlets, sermons, addresses, &c., connected with the American synagogues and charity schools” to stock its news library.²⁸ The press could also be used for political purposes. In 1844, the Jamaican Jewish community attempted to rouse the English-speaking Jewish world in protest against the anti-Jewish policies of the Russian government by sending a

²² For reporting on Australia and America in the British Jewish press, see London *Jewish Chronicle*, February 1, 1850; July 23, 1852; June 24, 1853; August 18, 1854, January 5, 1855; *Voice of Jacob*, October 29, 1841; November 12, 1841; November 25, 1842; April 25, 1845; May 9, 1845; August 28, 1846. See also George Bergman, “Australia and New Zealand and the ‘Voice of Jacob,’” *Australian Jewish Historical Society*, 7, 1973: 276-286. For reporting on England and Australia in the *Occident* see *Occident*, 1:2, May, 1843; 2:12, March, 1845; 4:10, January, 1847; 5:11, February, 1848. For reporting on the “distant colony” of Cape Town, see *Voice of Jacob*, January 7, 1842; London *Jewish Chronicle*, March 7, 1862. For reporting on the West Indies see *Occident*, 2:2, May, 1844; 2:6, September, 1844; 3:3, June 1845; 4:5, August, 1846; 5:4, July, 1847; *Voice of Jacob*, May 9, 1845.

²³ Crown, “Jewish Publishing in Australia”: 40.

²⁴ See, for example, *Occident*, 3:3, June, 1845.

²⁵ The advertisement stipulated that eligible candidates should “not exceeding forty-five years of age,” should be able to deliver sermons on Sabbaths and festivals, act as the first reader, perform marriage ceremonies and funerals, and serve as teacher, mohel, and shochet. See *Occident*, 5:11, February, 1848; 19:7, October, 1861.

²⁶ *Occident*, 1:5, August, 1843; *Voice of Jacob*, August 16, 1844.

²⁷ See, for example, the appeal of the Cape Town congregation for funds to build a new synagogue in London *Jewish Chronicle*, March 7, 1862; see also *Voice of Jacob*, November 25, 1842.

²⁸ *Occident*, 4:11, February, 1847.

proclamation to the *Occident*, *Voice of Jacob*, and *First Fruits of the West*. The use of a public appeal in the press demonstrated an awareness of its potential as a method of mobilizing political opinion and organizing concerted action, particularly given “the difficulty and expense of transmitting to each [congregation] a number of documents by mail, the only other practical method.”²⁹

Alongside these practical functions, newspapers also provided a forum for debate and discussion. Articles and letters on contentious subjects involving common interest were often reprinted, becoming the focus of editorials and discussion in letter columns.³⁰ The Sydney *Voice of Jacob* published reports detailing the growing rifts over religious reform in England and America. Even at a vast physical remove, George Moss felt that it was important that the colonial community participate in this debate. Although “but a feather in the balance,” he hoped that “we shall not be altogether unappreciated and overlooked.”³¹ Similarly Isaac Leeser’s editorials were often reprinted in the London *Jewish Chronicle*, and in turn, the *Occident* reprinted articles from the Anglo Jewish press.³² The improvement of communication created a transatlantic community of readers. The *Occident* regularly printed letters written by subscribers in England and the West Indies.³³ This flow of newspapers was matched by the wide distribution of novels (most notably the works of Grace Aguilar and the Moss sisters), catechisms and tracts with Jewish themes.

Publishers were not the only beneficiaries of the dramatic expansion of the Anglophone Jewish diaspora. Ministers, particularly those with saleable skills - primarily preaching - were highly sought after in what became a transcontinental ministerial marketplace. Ministers able to preach eloquently in English were a scarce commodity,

²⁹ *Occident*, 2:2, May, 1844.

³⁰ See, for example, *Occident*, vol. 2:11, February, 1845; 3:3, June 1845; *Occident*, 4:2, May, 1846.

³¹ Sydney *Voice of Jacob*, September 5, 1842.

³² See, for example, London *Jewish Chronicle*, January 12, 1849.

³³ Leeser proudly published a letter from Benjamin Elkin of Devonshire, England: “The whole of your works adorn my library, and the reading of your sermons aloud has formed part of our home Sabbath devotions. The *Occident* affords me great pleasure, especially your bold and able defense of Judaism. Here, where there is an established religion, this cannot be done to fearlessly, and you will find that the *Voice* does not like to transfer to its column’s even Dias’ Letters.” *Occident*, vol. 2:11, February, 1845.

and could pursue the opportunities for personal and financial advancement that the English-speaking diaspora offered. England competed with America for a limited pool of ministers. The German congregation in Jamaica was careful to promise candidates for its vacant pulpit that the “dignity and emoluments of the post are equaled in very few home synagogues,” pointing out that “there are besides, many opportunities for a scholar to improve his income, compatibly with his sacred functions.”³⁴ American congregations poached a number of prominent preachers by offering salaries well above that of British synagogues. Samuel Myer Isaacs moved from London to New York in 1839, swapping a low status position for the pulpit of a leading New York congregation. Morris Raphall arranged a lecture tour to America in 1849, undoubtedly undertaken with an eye to finding alternative employment after his Birmingham congregation was forced to reduce his salary.³⁵ Others who followed in their footsteps included Henry Abraham Henry, who left the Western Synagogue in London for Cincinnati in 1849; Sabato Morais who spent five years at Bevis Marks in London before assuming the pulpit of Mikve Israel in Philadelphia in 1851; Arnold Fischel who moved from England to become preacher at Shearith Israel in New York; Dattner Jacobson who left Melbourne for an appointment at Gates of Prayer in New Orleans; Henry Marks who left the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation for the Mount Street Temple in Cincinnati; and Emanuel Myers who moved from London to the newly formed synagogue in the gold rush town of Ballarat in Australia, followed by stints in Melbourne, Montreal and Waco, Texas.

These ministers carried considerable cultural baggage with them, further integrating and interconnecting the dispersed outposts of the Anglophone diaspora. Ministers were important agents of cultural transmission. Religious leaders trained in England, including Raphall, Samuel and Jacob Isaacs, and Moses Nathan were instrumental in introducing regular preaching to America, Australia and the West Indies.³⁶ Isaac Leeser wrote that the demand for vernacular sermons within American synagogues stemmed from the desire to emulate the innovations of English preachers.

³⁴ *Voice of Jacob*, August 16, 1844.

³⁵ Finestein, *Anglo-Jewry in Changing Times*, 181-182, 194; *London Jewish Chronicle*, February 1, 1850; February 8, 1850.

³⁶ See Morris Joseph, “About Preaching,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 3, 1891: 126-127; *London Jewish Chronicle*, October 7, 1870; *Occident*, 3:3, June 1845.

According to Leeser, “the general inquiry” was “Why cannot our ministers do as Mr. Nathan or Mr. Rosenfeld, or Messrs. Isaacs, or Mr. Marks, or Dr. Raphall does?”³⁷

While it would be foolhardy to solely ascribe the introduction of vernacular sermons to the efforts of imported preachers occupying American pulpits, the simultaneous rise of both preaching and the press across the Anglophone diaspora points to the presence of common underlying trends. Although the movement of people and newspapers facilitated transnational dialogue, the rise of publishing and preaching in America, England, Australia and Jamaica was itself a response to a set of common concerns and shared social pressures. These concerns and pressures, and the strategies adopted to mitigate their effects, produced and sustained the Anglophone cultural sphere.

The American Jewish community appeared unhealthy at mid-century: swollen by immigration, plagued by a low level of synagogue affiliation and high rate of intermarriage, and struggling to adapt traditional Jewish institutions to the free-wheeling American circumstances. The community grew from approximately 15,000 in 1840 to over 125,000 by 1860.³⁸ Although larger in the early 1840s, with a population of approximately 30,000, the English Jewish community attracted many fewer immigrants.³⁹ Nonetheless communal leaders worried about the welfare of their community, pointing to the persistence of poverty and pauperism, and endemic religious indifference. These concerns were galvanized by the growth of missionary societies, such as the Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews and the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. Although their success was very limited, these well-funded organizations were seen to prey upon the poor and poorly educated: targeting isolated communities (missions were established in China and Tasmania), vulnerable individuals (orphans and hospitalized patients), and those ignorant of Jewish law.⁴⁰

³⁷ In 1844, Moses Nathan ministered in St. Thomas, Jamaica, Joseph Rosenfeld in Charleston, Samuel Myer Isaacs in New York, David Isaacs in Liverpool, Morris Raphall in Birmingham, and David Marks at the reform West London Synagogue of British Jews in London. *Occident*, vol. 2:7, October, 1844.

³⁸ For population statistics, see Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004), 375.

³⁹ Vivian Lipman, “The Anglo-Jewish Community in Victorian Society,” in Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami, eds., *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews in England*, (Jerusalem, 1975): 151-159; Alderman, “English Jews”: 128.

⁴⁰ See Jonathan Sarna, “The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions,” in Naomi Cohen, ed., *Essential Papers on Jewish-Christian Relations in the United States* (New York, 1990); *Annual Report of the Tasmanian Auxiliary to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the*

The strategies adopted in response to this perceived crisis suggest the melding of Jewish and Victorian values. Across America and the British Empire communities formed scores of literary societies, debating clubs, and library associations; started Sunday schools; purchased edificatory novels and Jewish newspapers; and pushed for the introduction of instructional sermons. This embrace of popular education mirrored trends within American and British society. The move towards compulsory schooling in both societies in the early decades of the 19th century produced the democratization of learning: mass literacy spurred a dramatic growth of the press and book publishing, and stimulated a plethora of popular educational initiatives.⁴¹ In both countries, popular education became enmeshed with religious revivalism. Evangelicals stoked the desire for learning and seized the opportunities that it provided, directing the energies of their adherents into an educational framework of public meetings, lectures, newspapers, tract societies and Sunday schools.⁴² Partly as a result of this evangelical impetus, education and learning became inflected with ethical overtones. Not only was education widely viewed as a vehicle for advancement and social betterment, but it also became the means to achieve moral improvement.

Jews in England and America embraced education and self-improvement with a fervor that would be familiar to evangelists. Indeed, Isaac Leeser's perennial proclamations of the power of education suggested the melding of enlightenment and evangelical influences.⁴³ But for Leeser and legions of others, the primary attraction of education was the perceived benefits for the Jewish community. Secular and religious learning promised to be a panacea for a plethora of communal ills. Some of these

Jews, for 1850; Darkness Made Light or, The Story of 'Old Sam' The Christian Jews by the Secretary of the Tasmanian Auxiliary to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews.

⁴¹ See Joseph Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford, 1994), xv, 14-52, 55-59, 77-101; James Walvin, *English Urban Life 1776-1851* (London, 1984), 92-108; James Walvin, *Victorian Values* (Athens, GA, 1988), 81-95; J.F.C. Harrison, *Learning and Living 1790-1960* (Toronto, 1961), 43-61.

⁴² See Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: the Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (New York, 1976), 135-144; Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989), 49-122; Walvin, *English Urban Life*, 102; Kett, *Pursuit of Knowledge*, 55-59.

⁴³ See for examples *Occident*, vol. 1:4, July, 1843; vol. 1:9, December, 1843; vol. 2:2, May, 1844; vol. 7:2, May, 1849.

concerns reflected those of the middle class society that Jews aspired to, and in increasing numbers, joined – temperance, labor unrest, and vice. At mid-century, at least a quarter of the London Jewish community, by far the largest in the country, was economically marginal or dependent on communal relief.⁴⁴ Typical then was the call of one correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle* for a “great mental regeneration” among the Jewish working classes.⁴⁵ Another correspondent cited Bentham: “Gross ignorance describes no difficulties: a little learning is dangerous, a great deal is highly essential.”⁴⁶ Jewish social reformers in England saw education as the mean to ameliorate Jewish welfare. Similarly in America, Isaac Leeser argued that learning would “ennoble the laborer,” enabling the working man to “elevate himself above his conditions,” or at least “enjoy in the sphere assigned to him.”⁴⁷

Education also seemed to provide the means to staunch the religious laxity and apathy that troubled the Jewish communities of England and America, and, for traditionalists, to counteract the religious reformism that threatened to undermine its established institutions.⁴⁸ Ignorance was a “fatal disease” that plagued the key Jewish communities of the English-speaking world - “England, America and the West India Islands” – and that threatened to “carry its havoc much farther.”⁴⁹ Leeser was also certain that education would prove to be an antidote to reform. To his mind, the “reform mania” arose from the “very defective training of both teachers and laymen.”⁵⁰ Writing in 1844, Samuel Myer Isaacs argued that “Charleston would not now suffer from dissension” had “religious education been the polar star of parents ambition.”⁵¹ Moreover, education

⁴⁴ See Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (Berkeley, 2002), 81.

⁴⁵ *London Jewish Chronicle*, February 4, 1842.

⁴⁶ *London Jewish Chronicle*, January 21, 1842.

⁴⁷ *Occident*, vol. 3:7, October, 1845.

⁴⁸ For example, a Sabbath synagogue census conducted in London in 1841 found that only 10 percent of Jews were in attendance. Cited in David Feldman, “Popery, Rabbinism, and Reform: Evangelicals and Jews in Early Victorian England,” in Dana Wood, ed., *Christianity and Judaism* (London, 1992): 379. See also Lipman, “Anglo-Jewish Community”: 158.

⁴⁹ *Occident*, vol. 1:8, November, 1843.

⁵⁰ *Occident*, vol. 4:11, February, 1847.

⁵¹ *Occident*, vol. 1:12, March, 1844.

promised to counter the depredations of missionaries who preyed on the community.⁵² The London *Jewish Chronicle* was confident that “Apostasy would become less frequent were religious instruction given to the people.”⁵³

The initiatives proposed by Jewish innovators in America and England drew heavily on the models of their Christian counterparts. If inadequate Jewish education was regarded as the cause of the crisis within the Jewish community, the sermon was regarded as its solution. Regular preaching in English was presented as the corrective for the deficiencies of religious education available within America and England. Teaching from the pulpit would restore “healthy religious sentiment” and “make religion lovely in the eyes of the multitude.”⁵⁴ The sermon acquired similar status in many Protestant denominations, and was considered the most important tool for religious instruction.⁵⁵ While the sermon was regarded as the most important method of religious instruction for adults, the proponents of preaching realized that its impact was limited to its immediate audience. The press could supplement the pulpit, spreading the message of the preacher over vast distances. Again the innovations of the Second Great Awakening were a source of inspiration. Just as the success of evangelical missionizing persuaded Jewish innovators of the power of preaching, the industry and impact of evangelical publishers demonstrated the potential of the press. The evangelical movements grasped the implications of mass publishing, skillfully utilizing it to communicate with their followers and win new converts. Tracts, pamphlets and bibles were printed and distributed in unprecedented quantities. By 1830, there were 605 distinct religious newspapers in circulation in America.⁵⁶ Preachers and publishers worked in lockstep. Sermons were routinely reprinted in denominational newspapers as instructional and

⁵² See Jonathan Sarna, “The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions,” in Naomi Cohen, ed., *Essential Papers on Jewish-Christian Relations in the United States* (New York, 1990): 28-29.

⁵³ London *Jewish Chronicle*, April 15, 1842.

⁵⁴ *Occident*, vol. 6:4, July, 1848.

⁵⁵ Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 44.

⁵⁶ For the revolution in religious publishing see Billington, “Revivalism and Popular Religion”: 151, 153, 157; David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge, 1994), 1-2; Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 43-57; Hatch, *Democratization*, 125-133, 141-146; Kett, *Pursuit of Knowledge*, 55-59, 67-73; Noll, *History of Christian*, 227-229.

inspirational material. Printers also supplied a market of devoted readers who bought vast numbers of printed sermons.⁵⁷

It was no coincidence that many of the path-breaking preachers in America and England were also the pioneers of the English-language Jewish press. Isaac Leeser (*Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, 1843), Samuel Myer Isaacs (*Jewish Messenger*, 1858), and Isaac Mayer Wise (*American Israelite*, 1854) all started their own newspapers.⁵⁸ Moses Nathan launched a monthly periodical, *First Fruits of the West*, in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1844. In England, Morris Raphall started the *Hebrew Review and Magazine of Rabbinical Literature* (1834), and David Myer Isaacs edited the short-lived *Kos Jeshmoth* (1845).⁵⁹ Jacob Franklin, the founder of the *Voice of Jacob*, tried unsuccessfully to recruit Raphall as the newspaper's first editor.⁶⁰ These religious leaders, the majority of whom had been born in Continental Europe, were receptive to the innovations of their Central European colleagues.⁶¹ They were certainly influenced by the example of Ludwig Philippson, who started the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* as a young preacher in 1837, and by the wave of Jewish newspapers founded following the Damascus Affair.⁶² All recognized the potential of the press to reach and teach the dispersed Jewish communities of England and America. Moreover, the press provided a vehicle to advance their ambitions as educators, preachers and self-publicists. It would amplify their sermons across America, and provide them with a huge new audience. The *London Jewish Chronicle*, the *Voice of Jacob* and the *Occident* routinely publicized, recorded, summarized and critiqued sermons delivered by a variety of preachers.⁶³

⁵⁷ Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 15, 46-47.

⁵⁸ In addition, Wise started the German language *Die Deborah*, and David Einhorn edited *Sinai*. For the Jewish press in America and England during this period see Barkai, *Branching Out*, 107-108; Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 2-28; Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 206-212.

⁵⁹ *Occident*, vol. 3:8, November, 1845.

⁶⁰ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 8-10.

⁶¹ Raphall was born in Stockholm, the Isaacs brothers in Holland, and Leeser and Wise in Germany.

⁶² Philippson also started the *Israelitisches Predigt-und Schulmagazin*, which published many of his own sermons. For Philippson, see Kober, "Jewish Preaching": 111-113; Meyer "Jewish Self-Understanding": 153-155.

⁶³ See, for example, *London Jewish Chronicle*, February 4, 1842; *London Jewish Chronicle*, May 6, 1842; *Occident*, vol. 3:4, July, 1845; vol. 4:10, January, 1847.

Popular education appealed to Jewish leaders in both America and the British Empire because it seemed to offer the means to reverse many of the problems of an increasing anomic Jewish community. For ordinary Jews, literary societies, social clubs and library associations provided both entertainment and a vehicle for self-improvement and advancement. Jewish innovators, inspired by the successes of itinerant revivalist preachers, embraced preaching as the key to adult education. The sermon also served their interests. The professionalization of preaching and the status ascribed to the sermon would elevate the rabbinate. Preaching also appealed to those who demanded that their religion adopt recognizable and respectable forms that would not slow Jewish acceptance into middle-class society. The vernacular sermon was therefore in accord with the spirit of the age, the interests of many ministers and the demands of much of the laity. The press served similar purposes. For the first time, Jewish newspapers with national circulation linked Jewish communities across America and England. Newspapers were regarded as an important adjunct to the sermon. The press provided the means to preach to a dispersed Jewish population. The written word, and particularly the reprinted sermon, would supply the education essential to revitalizing the Jewish community in America, England and the British Empire.

A final example will illustrate how both of the processes described – the impact of technological transformation and the search for solutions to perceived perils facing the Jewish community – produced and sustained the Anglophone cultural sphere. In 1854, Samuel Elyard, an eccentric churchman published *An Address to the Jewish Ladies*, which he distributed from the steps of the synagogue to congregants departing the Saturday service.⁶⁴ The polemical tract supplied a series of textual arguments in support of the divinity of Christ. Otherwise typical of conversionist material, this pamphlet focused its sternest passages at the refutation of an anti-missionary article that had appeared in the *Occident*. Elyard quoted and cited Isaac Leeser, and challenged his interpretation of Biblical texts. In response, the Jewish community sought to exclude Elyard from the synagogue precinct, and redoubled its efforts to promote regular attendance at the Hebrew School and at Sabbath sermons. While a disputation of this sort

⁶⁴ Samuel Elyard, *An Address to the Jewish Ladies* (Sydney, 1854).

would not be surprising in America, Elyard wrote and published his tract in Sydney, Australia. The subject of the tract, and the response it generated neatly encapsulates the process which produced the emerging Anglophone cultural sphere: technological transformation enabled a newspaper printed in Philadelphia to be digested and debated far from its home market; while a shared concern with religious laxity and vulnerability to conversionists persuaded a distant audience of the wisdom of common solutions to these same problems.