

## CHAPTER THREE

### RECONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY IN JEWISH IRELAND

Chapter Three surveys the foundation, evolution and fragmentation of Ireland's principal Jewries with the aim of examining communal life from a plurality of perspectives, and is intended as an antidote to the largely nostalgic and one-dimensional history that currently prevails.<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter a strong emphasis is placed upon the restoration of the Anglo-Jewish context of Irish Jewry in the period of mass emigration. This allows us, on the one hand, to discern the patterns that locate Irish Jewry firmly within the broader context of this phenomenon. This contrasts with prevailing claims that the community is historically somehow 'unique' (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2), which may reflect the somewhat parochial and insular outlook that is characteristic of Irish society in general. On the other hand, a focus on context allows for the identification of some significant distinctive traits, both on the national and the local level. The internal diversity that emerges with respect to Ireland alone underlines the importance of evaluating each provincial Jewry in its own individual right rather than in relation to the largest British communities and the most dominant trends. My analysis reveals that the smaller communities of Belfast, Cork and Limerick should not be assumed to have been mirror images of their larger sister-community in Dublin, just as Irish Jewry as a whole was not simply a pale reflection or, indeed, a caricature, of its mainland British counterpart. This ties in with the final aim of this chapter, which is to prove that the scarcity and nature of the sources does not, as is frequently assumed, preclude a thorough analysis or mean that the sources are of little or no historical importance, or reflect the purported inconsequentiality of small and outlying provincial Jewries.

Section 3.1 provides a detailed review of the establishment, evolution and fragmentation of the Jewish communities of Dublin, Belfast and Cork. Due to the lack of sources, the Limerick community cannot be included in this analysis. With respect to Dublin, there is a particular focus on writing the pre-existing 'native' contingent back into communal history and on charting the evolution of the relationship between 'native' and newcomer as the community slowly reconstituted

---

<sup>1</sup> On this theme, see Katrina Goldstone, 'Who Will Remember Us? Memorialising the Multicultural City', in *Dublin's Future: New Visions for Ireland's Capital City*, ed. Lorcan Sirr (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2011), 116-30; Goldstone, 'Now You See Us', 102-09.

itself in response to accelerated immigration. In Dublin and in Belfast, the gradual transfer of communal leadership from ‘native’ to immigrant hands is also closely considered. As will be shown, many of the typical features of mass emigration that have been set out in Sections 1.4 and 1.5 are visible in terms of the cultural and economic pressures that were experienced by the ‘native’ establishment in Dublin and in Belfast. ‘Native’ concerns and expectations with relation to the educational, cultural and occupational profile of the immigrants, and aspirations concerning anglicisation and conformance to established authority, follow recognisable patterns. When it comes to acculturation, however, considerable differences are observable between the Irish and mainland British contexts. As the majority of Ireland’s anglicising institutions were immigrant-led they cannot be regarded as tools of external cultural imperialism. They therefore have much to disclose about the immigrant attitude towards acculturation in Ireland, about the process itself, and about the gradual emergence of localised Jewish identities. The sources reveal some unexpected details concerning the character, aspirations and interrelationships of the immigrant community, underlining the hitherto unacknowledged complexity of the relationship between immigrant and ‘native’ in the Irish setting. All of the above processes are found to have been affected by the inadequacy of central Anglo-Jewish support – financial, spiritual and moral – that has been observed in Section 1.5.

Section 3.2 enhances these findings through a shift from more general features of communal development to a closer examination of Ireland’s immigrant community itself. A number of existing assumptions are confronted pertaining to the cultural, economic and religious character of the immigrant contingent. In particular, the role of external negative stereotypes is investigated with respect to the construction of an ambivalent communal narrative of Jewish moneylending. The frequently stormy nature of internal immigrant relations is then closely surveyed, and found to be an important means of elaborating our overall understanding of Jewish life in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As a whole, this chapter highlights the merit of examining and evaluating individual provincial communities in their own right, and the importance of balancing existing narrative – local, national and international – with sources and context.

### 3.1 'NATIVES', 'FOREIGNERS' AND THE RESURRECTION OF IRELAND'S JEWISH COMMUNITIES

When the Board of Deputies appoint a registrar . . . in my opinion they do not make inquiries how many synagogues there are in Dublin; and although managed by Poles, I may tell him they are not ignorant, but as clever – if not cleverer – than the University men.<sup>2</sup>

This section charts the evolution of Ireland's Jewish community in the time of mass emigration, investigating the way in which the broader issues that have been identified in the foregoing chapters were manifest in the particular setting of Ireland. Although the nature of the sources has dictated a focus on Dublin, the internal diversity of Irish Jewry is also highlighted through an examination of each of the three principal Irish communities in its own right. This broadens and deepens our understanding of Irish Jewry during its foundation period while challenging many traditional assumptions, especially when it comes to the acculturation process and the character of intracommunal relationships. Due to the nature of the sources that have survived from Limerick, its Jewish community cannot be investigated in any great depth and is examined instead in the context of communal divisions in Section 3.2. Section 3.1 explores how the difference in setting between England and Ireland impacted on the course of acculturation among new immigrants, and on the gradual transfer of communal leadership from 'native' to immigrant hands. The range of internal Jewish relationships is another particular focus of the analysis: that of 'natives' and immigrants in the Irish context, that of the respective Jewish authorities of Ireland and England, and that of Anglo-Jewry with the congregations of Dublin, Belfast and Cork. Throughout, the emphasis rests upon understanding individual communities with relation to their proper historical context, in terms of themselves, of each other and of the broader framework of British provincial Jewry.

---

<sup>2</sup> R. S. Green, *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 September 1902.

### 3.1.1 DUBLIN

#### 3.1.1.1 THE ORIGINS AND CHARACTER OF THE 'NATIVE' COMMUNITY

The DHC was founded circa 1822 by a group of Jews of west and central European origin. In 1836, the congregation moved from its original premises in a private home at 40 Stafford Street (now Wolfe Tone Street) to a converted chapel at 12 Mary's Abbey, where it remained until 1892.<sup>3</sup> There is no reliable information as to the size of Dublin's Jewish community for most of the nineteenth century, as denominational information was not collated under the census until 1861.<sup>4</sup> The only statistics that are available for the Mary's Abbey congregation are the records of births and deaths that were kept by its minister, Rev. Julius Sandheim, and the exact capacity of the synagogue is disputed in the secondary sources.<sup>5</sup> Although Hyman states that this so-called 'native' community never exceeded 350 souls at its peak,<sup>6</sup> it has left so little trace of its presence in Dublin's broader historical record that even this modest figure seems considerably overstated. The DHC's first published laws, dated 1839, imply a small membership. By the mid-1870s, the congregation was described in the *Jewish Chronicle* as 'respectable but unfortunately dwindling'.<sup>7</sup> Thus any increase in numbers that might, by some stretch of the imagination, have occurred in between 1839 and 1875 was certainly not sustained.

From its early days services in the DHC were limited to Saturdays, the principal festivals, lifecycle events and other specific occasions, as opposed to daily worship or even the full cycle of Shabbat services.<sup>8</sup> 'Watchers' for the critically ill, deceased and recently interred were chosen by lot from among the members of the community, and members who did not reside locally as well as visiting Jews were

---

<sup>3</sup> On the origins and early make-up of the DHC, see Myer Nerwich, Preface to *Laws and Regulations of the Hebrew Congregation in Dublin* (London, 1839), v-x; Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, chap. 13, 14, 16-20; Shillman, *Short History*, chap. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 155.

<sup>5</sup> Sandheim's records, which cover the period 1820-1879 and 1842-1872, respectively, are reproduced in Appendix V of Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*. Hyman believed that the Mary's Abbey synagogue held ninety people, a conceivable number but one which does not accord with a community of the size that he suggests (*Jews of Ireland*, 105). Shillman had previously stated that the synagogue seated 160 men and sixty women (*Short History*, 77).

<sup>6</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 155.

<sup>7</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 February 1874.

<sup>8</sup> Rules 3-6, *Laws and Regulations*.

liable to be inveigled into performing this service.<sup>9</sup> This indicates that the community was neither large nor socially diverse enough at this time to employ regular, locally-based Jewish ‘watchers’. The rules surrounding the apportioning of *aliyot* for the reading of the Torah also indicate a limited membership, and make what is traditionally regarded as an honour sound more of a chore. *Aliyot* were allotted in advance and strictly by rotation; no substitution was permitted, and fines were applied for non-attendance of this ‘summons’ even where the person in question was out of town.<sup>10</sup> Cohens and Levites, who must traditionally be called to the Torah before ordinary ‘Israelites’, are specifically mentioned in these stipulations but without the possibility of substitution,<sup>11</sup> suggesting that potential replacements were limited. That coercion was necessary implies that attendance by the majority of members was irregular. This indicates that the DHC was suffering from the same lack of interest that beset the Anglo-Jewish middle classes, whereby synagogue membership had come primarily to be associated with social prestige and attendance was poor outside of the High Holydays.<sup>12</sup> Unlike its larger Anglo-Jewish counterparts, without some degree of compulsion a small congregation such as the DHC could not have remained viable for long.

During this period the DHC was unable to employ a rabbi, and was dependent instead on a less-qualified multi-functional minister. In 1847 an unmarried man was sought to fill the combined position of *baal-koreh* (reader), *hazan* (cantor), secretary and Hebrew teacher. The combination of this preferred marital status with a wide range of duties would have narrowed the field to candidates that were either young and inexperienced, or older and less-qualified. Either way, remuneration would have been economical.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Rules 85, 101-105, 108, and 111, *Laws and Regulations*. Christians could be employed as substitutes, but only for one of the two appointed Jewish ‘watchers’. According to the *Jewish Chronicle* (4 October 1901), it was not unusual at this time for members of provincial congregations to be appointed by lot for duties relating to death, burial and *shiva* (mourning).

<sup>10</sup> Rules 229 and 233, *Laws and Regulations*. Regular synagogue-goers could be called up as replacements and were invited to offer a charitable donation equivalent to the non-attendance fine that was payable by the guilty party (Rule 234).

<sup>11</sup> Rule 232, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>12</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 103-05.

<sup>13</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 April 1847 and 14 May 1847. Nevertheless, the DHC had some interesting figures associated with it at this time. While Meyer Mensor, who lived in Dublin from 1849 to 1857, claimed to have a doctorate from the University of Berlin and was widely known by the title ‘Dr.’, Hyman was unable to find any record of Mensor in the university archives. Furthermore, his exact association with the DHC is unclear; although his appointment as lecturer and teacher was announced in the *Jewish Chronicle*, Hyman does not believe that he had any official connection with the congregation, and the DHC again sought a teacher and lecturer in 1854, while Mensor was still living

The DHC did not only follow the Anglo-Jewish middle classes in terms of synagogue attendance. Its *Laws* provide an insight into the anglicised, rather formal and stuffy atmosphere that later earned it the nickname ‘the Englishe shul’ (English synagogue) among the immigrant community.<sup>14</sup> The influence of contemporary Christian norms upon the congregation’s self-image is clear from the preface:

Religion being the source which yields every quality of excellence, it justly and necessarily requires the framing and upholding of such laws and regulations as would preserve a social establishment founded on its basis . . . whilst it proves [man’s] truest comfort in every circumstance of his life here below, smoothes his passage to one far more desirable, lasting, and unmixed with sorrow.<sup>15</sup>

With regard to the congregation’s practices, the importance of maintaining strict Victorian standards of decorum is clear from the following rules:

12. No one shall hold a conversation, or cause any disturbance, or have any dispute during service; but shall preserve order and decorum . . .
38. The Children shall not go round with the הקפות [*Hakafot*, the parading of the Torah scrolls on the festival of Simhat Torah], but shall all stand arranged in a line, at each side of the ארון הקודש [*Aron Hakodesh*, Ark] with lights in their hands, in proper order, and decorum . . .
46. No one is allowed to cause any noise, or disturbance, during the reading of the מגילה [*Megillah*, the book of Esther], either morning or evening, but every one shall behave with decorum, then, as well as at any other time of Prayers . . .

---

in Dublin (*Jewish Chronicle*, 25 August 1854). Mensor was very well-regarded and wrote a number of scholarly letters and articles for the *Jewish Chronicle* on topics such as Hebrew grammar, Torah and Halakhah (rabbinic law). Although Mensor’s departure for the United States in 1857 was lamented in the *Chronicle* as part of an ongoing ‘brain drain’, Hyman relates that Mensor, together with his ‘Hibernian’ wife and ‘plagiarized stock of sermons’ was soon sent packing by the Americans. Returning to England in 1861, Mensor converted to Christianity and ended his chequered career as an Anglican vicar (Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 126-28). For examples of Mensor’s letters and articles, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 August 1849, 4 July 1851, 2 April 1852, and 25 December 1857. Also see *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 June 1849 (Mensor’s appointment to the DHC); 6 November 1856 and 13 November 1857 (Mensor’s departure for the US). Rev. Philipp Bender served in Dublin from 1861 to 1881. Bender was widely respected both within and beyond the Jewish community and ran a successful multi-denominational boys’ school in Dublin’s city centre. After relocating to England, Bender continued to devote himself to education (Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 130-32). Bender frequently advertised for pupils in the *Jewish Chronicle* (e.g., 6 October 1871 and 25 March 1881) and his departure from Dublin was noted in the *Chronicle*’s retrospective of the year (23 September 1881). For Bender’s obituary, which dwells on his time in Dublin, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 April 1901.

<sup>14</sup> Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Nerwich, Preface to *Laws and Regulations*, v.

113. Persons having disputes in private affairs, or any differences, are not allowed to state or mention their grievances in the Synagogue, under any pretence whatever.<sup>16</sup>

Other indications of the DHC's cultural leanings were the ceremonial installation of new officers to their seats in the synagogue<sup>17</sup> and the staging of elaborate confirmation services for its boys. One such ceremony, held in 1856, is described in the *Jewish Chronicle* as having been conducted by Dublin's 'pastor' (subsequently styled 'the reverend gentleman'). This involved 'an inquisitorial and catechetical examination of [the boy's] religious and moral duties' before the open ark. The service concluded with 'the rehearsal of the Decalogue and a most suitable prayer'.<sup>18</sup> The *Chronicle* later noted that such rites 'seem to have been received with great satisfaction by the congregation',<sup>19</sup> and on another occasion reported favourable coverage by the local press.<sup>20</sup> In 1858, the DHC was complimented by the *Jewish Chronicle* on being one of the first provincial congregations to introduce 'pulpit instruction'.<sup>21</sup> These reports, together with the *Laws*, show that the membership of the DHC shared the wider Anglo-Jewish taste for ritual and liturgical modifications that tested the boundaries of traditional Orthodoxy. Many of these innovations were tolerated as opposed to endorsed by the chief rabbinate, in order to fend off the challenge that was posed by religious reform.<sup>22</sup> Around 1859 the congregation began to specifically designate itself the 'Dublin Hebrew Congregation'.<sup>23</sup> The DHC was quick to align itself with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, although it was not always in a position to appoint an Irish representative.<sup>24</sup> Its ministers and teachers were expected to be competent in English and accredited by the Chief Rabbi.<sup>25</sup> This

---

<sup>16</sup> *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>17</sup> Rule 145, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>18</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 31 October 1856. The *Chronicle* heartily endorsed this rite and wished to see it more widely introduced among British Jewry (12 December 1856).

<sup>19</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 October 1861.

<sup>20</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 July 1878.

<sup>21</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 October 1858.

<sup>22</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 105-09 (on Anglo-Jewish religious acculturation). The compromised form of Orthodoxy that resulted, in particular under Hermann Adler's chief rabbinate, was derided by its opponents as 'Adlerism'.

<sup>23</sup> The first mention of the congregation as the DHC appears to be in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 4 November 1859.

<sup>24</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 November 1853, 25 November 1853, 26 May 1880, and 3 May 1901. The DHC, like many other provincial congregations, initially appointed a London-based representative, John Dyte, presumably for practical reasons. In 1880 the first local candidate, John D. Rosenthal, was appointed; however, in 1901 the congregation again elected a London resident, Lionel W. Harris, brother of Ernest.

<sup>25</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 April 1847, 25 April 1851, and 6 December 1861.

is of course a further, clear sign that the congregation was anglicised and aligned with the values that were represented by the chief rabbinate.

The integrity of the congregation's membership was seen as crucial. It is not particularly surprising to discover that anyone 'married against the דת ישראל [*dat Yisrael*, law of Israel, e.g., to a non-Jew]' was not even permitted to engage a seat, let alone receive any form of honour.<sup>26</sup> It was up to the synagogue committee whether intermarried Jews – together with those who 'did not profess the religion as a יהודי [*Yehudi*, Jew, i.e., apostates or converts to Christianity]' – would be permitted a Jewish burial.<sup>27</sup> What is intriguing are the rules concerning offerings of Torah scrolls or other 'sacred effects' to the community. These had to be endorsed by a general meeting, in order to ascertain 'whether such offer, or offers, may be accepted from such person'.<sup>28</sup> If accepted these items were immediately entered into a register, and the donor was deemed to 'have no further claim thereon'.<sup>29</sup> Torah scrolls would only be accepted on condition that they were fit for immediate use, and did not require any restoration work which would incur expense upon the congregation.<sup>30</sup> These laws presumably reflect actual conflicts that had at some point arisen in the course of such offerings.

Contemporary reports in the *Jewish Chronicle* imply a closeknit, middle class community, whose members enjoyed good social and working relations with each other.<sup>31</sup> Hyman, furthermore, assumes that 'there was none of the communal bickering that was to characterise the conduct of the congregation towards the end of the century'.<sup>32</sup> The *Laws*, which strongly suggest otherwise, reveal this pronouncement to be both biased and stereotyped. In addition to the rules concerning offerings cited above, the DHC had a set of elaborate and detailed conventions for handling complaints and disputes of various sorts, involving 'watchers',<sup>33</sup> business and synagogue matters, and honorary and paid officials of the congregation. Any complaints, grievances or grudges regarding honorary or paid officers and synagogue

---

<sup>26</sup> Rule 9, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>27</sup> Rule 110, *Laws and Regulations*. Again, the *Jewish Chronicle* (4 October 1901) notes that this was not an unusual regulation for a Jewish congregation at this time.

<sup>28</sup> Rule 81, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>29</sup> Rule 82, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>30</sup> Rule 82B, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>31</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 November 1845, 4 February 1853, 18 November 1859, 13 March 1863, 16 December 1864, and 13 February 1874.

<sup>32</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 159.

<sup>33</sup> Rule 106, *Laws and Regulations*. 'Watchers' who entertained 'any unfriendly feelings, or otherwise' towards each other were entitled to request a substitution.



affairs were required to be brought to the president.<sup>34</sup> In the case of honorary officers, a committee was appointed to investigate and arbitrate. Paid officers were themselves entitled to complain if they felt they had been mistreated by any member of the congregation, including the president, in the course of a dispute. Business matters could either be settled privately, put to arbitration by synagogue officers or, surprisingly, brought to the civil courts.<sup>35</sup> Anyone who disregarded the congregation's laws and refused to submit to communal authority was denied all congregational privileges until a resolution had been reached.<sup>36</sup>

As a small provincial community the DHC was run for many years by a select committee of long-serving honorary officers, and this continued even after the so-called 'free member' system was abolished in the early twentieth century in favour of elected officials.<sup>37</sup> One example was John D. Rosenthal, a distinguished solicitor who was active in Jewish and non-Jewish philanthropy, and had reportedly been the first Jew to receive an LL.D. from Trinity College Dublin.<sup>38</sup> Rosenthal served almost thirty years as honorary secretary, and approximately fifteen years as the Dublin representative to the Board of Deputies.<sup>39</sup> Rosenthal's contemporary, Marinus de Groot, was a native of the Netherlands who had spent most of his life in the British Isles and was a naturalised British citizen. He became a respected merchant and magistrate in Dublin, and was characterised by the *Chronicle* as having been active 'in promoting the charities and the general interests of Judaism'.<sup>40</sup> De Groot was president of the DHC for over twenty-five years, an almost record achievement that is humorously summed up by 'Halitvack' as having 'lived and died in harness' to the congregation.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Rules 147, 193, and 194, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>35</sup> Rules 114-6, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>36</sup> Rule 236, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>37</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1904-1905, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>38</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 May 1907. Rosenthal's son, Lionel, became the first ever Jewish Foundation Scholar at Trinity (*Jewish Chronicle*, 28 May 1875).

<sup>39</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1906 and 6 May 1898. Rosenthal was described in the *Chronicle* as having a 'well-developed Irish accent, and teeming with Irish wit and humour' (16 May 1902).

<sup>40</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 February 1900 (De Groot's contribution to the DHC).

<sup>41</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1906. For an interesting and still pertinent critique of long-serving synagogue functionaries such as De Groot, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 February 1900. When De Groot passed away, 'a solemn and appropriate discourse' was delivered in the synagogue, which had been 'tastefully draped in black and violet'. De Groot was later remembered by a former minister of the DHC, Rev. Lewis Mendelsohn, as 'a courteous and courtly gentleman of the old school'. 'Halitvack', in contrast, had described him as 'one of the old stock of thoroughly and unquestioningly believing Jewry' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 26 April 1901, 21 March 1913, and 8 June 1906).

The DHC was generally regarded as a prosperous community in its early years.<sup>42</sup> In 1855 its income was boosted by a bequest which yielded a yearly annuity of one hundred pounds.<sup>43</sup> Any comments on the annual balance sheets were positive; in 1864 the congregation's financial position was described as 'very satisfactory',<sup>44</sup> and in 1875 a 'considerable surplus' was recorded, partly owing to the 'munificent liberality' of members over the High Holydays.<sup>45</sup> The general affluence of the Dublin community was also reflected in the frequent and often substantial donations that were made by its members to a range of Jewish causes, from cases of personal and communal distress in Britain and overseas<sup>46</sup> to the building of new provincial synagogues<sup>47</sup> and to Anglo-Jewish charities of varying sorts.<sup>48</sup> Dublin Jews also contributed generously to local non-Jewish causes, in particular the Hospital Sunday Fund,<sup>49</sup> on the committee of which Sandheim served for many years.<sup>50</sup> During the final illness in 1868 of a leading member, Henry Lazarus, prayers were offered by a prominent clergyman in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral in recognition of Lazarus's longstanding generosity towards its charitable institutions.<sup>51</sup> Communal provisions for Dublin's Jewish poor in this period are considered in greater detail in Chapter Four.

---

<sup>42</sup> For example, in 1859 the *Jewish Chronicle* described the DHC as 'well conducted and prosperous' (18 November 1859).

<sup>43</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 January 1855.

<sup>44</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 October 1864.

<sup>45</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 November 1875.

<sup>46</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 February 1860. A significant proportion of the items pertaining to the Jews of Dublin which appear in the *Jewish Chronicle* in the years 1840-1880 relate to charitable donations by members of the community. Their contribution towards the Jews of Morocco Relief Fund, for example, was lauded as impressive given the size of the congregation, even though it included a number of so-called 'peace offerings' from Christian friends.

<sup>47</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 June 1848, 21 February 1873, and 23 July 1869. Dublin Jews contributed to the building of synagogues in Birmingham, Middlesbrough and Newport, among other places.

<sup>48</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 March 1864. These included the Jews' Free School, the Jews' Hospital, the Jews' Orphan Asylum, the Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor, to name but a few. In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1864, Lewis Harris offered to contribute fifty pounds towards the creation of a charitable institution to mark the Montefiores' 'immense disinterested and noble deeds' in 'the cause of Judaism'.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 November 1874. Donations were encouraged by way of an appropriately-themed sermon.

<sup>50</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 159. In 1874 Sandheim raised forty-two pounds and two shillings for the Hospital Fund and served on its council (*Jewish Chronicle*, 20 November 1874).

<sup>51</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 January 1868. Lazarus's funeral was attended by 'gentry of all denominations'. Although the report states that there was a full attendance from the DHC, the Jewish presence was allegedly exceeded 'by at least ten-fold' by Christian mourners.

### 3.1.1.2 THE IMPACT OF MASS IMMIGRATION ON DUBLIN'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

The purported congeniality, prosperity and equilibrium of Dublin's Jewish community was quick to change with the increasing presence of central and east European Jews from the mid 1870s on. In 1883, less than ten years after this influx had begun, the city's first *hevra* (small synagogue), then known as the Dublin New Hebrew Congregation (DNHC), was founded in St. Kevin's Parade. Within the next ten years as many as five more small synagogues had been established.<sup>52</sup> Hyman characterises this as part of the acculturation process, stating rather condescendingly, 'The newcomer was neither intellectually nor spiritually prepared to enter at once into liturgical fellowship with his Irish-born brethren-in-faith. Differences of language, character and temperament kept them apart'.<sup>53</sup> Although some Anglo-Jewish historians note the significance of *landsmanshaft* (localised ties) in contributing towards the splintering of British immigrant Jewry,<sup>54</sup> it is impossible in retrospect to determine what place, if any, intra-Jewish ethnic rivalries played in Ireland. This is because the Irish communal narrative has been so thoroughly harmonised around the Litvak experience as to leave only vestigial traces of communal minorities (see Section 2.1).

Bill Williams' findings on Manchester are perhaps the best means for understanding the splits that occurred within the Dublin community at this time.<sup>55</sup> Despite major differences in size and setting between these respective Jewries, Williams' model for interpreting the evolution of Manchester's communal leadership coincides with the evidence that is provided in the Irish sources, as will be demonstrated below. In Manchester, a rising class of prosperous immigrants wished to reflect their rapid transition from rags to riches by gaining status within the social and religious institutions of their more established counterparts. However the existing communal hierarchy was jealously guarded by the Anglo-Jewish middle classes, who tended to regard wealthy immigrants as brash, insufficiently acculturated *arrivistes*.

---

<sup>52</sup> A timeline for the establishment of Dublin's *hevrot* is provided in Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 165. However this should only be regarded as approximate, as Hyman's dates, aside from that given for the DNHC, do not always tally with the information provided in other sources.

<sup>53</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 202; Endelman, *Jews of Britain 1656-2000*, 145-46.

<sup>55</sup> Bill Williams, "'East and West': Class and Community in Manchester Jewry, 1850-1914', in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. David Cesarani (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 15-33; Williams, *Manchester Jewry*, chap. 12.

Excluded from positions of responsibility within the mainstream community, these aspirant leaders instead redirected their efforts – and wealth – inwards towards their fellow immigrants. Energy and resources were channelled into the construction of alternative communal institutions along more traditional Jewish religious and social lines. These new organisations were tailored to the ritual and social requirements, expectations and temperament of the immigrant community, as opposed to the cultural and economic agenda of established Anglo-Jewry that has been outlined in Section 1.5. Much of this alternative communal infrastructure was transitional in character, helping to ease the acclimatisation of immigrants to their adopted society and culture. The emerging immigrant leaders gradually assumed the role of cultural mediators between Jewish masses and elite in Manchester’s rapidly transforming society. Ultimately they joined with the Jewish establishment in alliances of convenience which resulted in the formation of a new, more diverse Jewish elite in the city. All of the internal social processes that Williams describes are visible in the evolution of Dublin’s Jewish community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, despite radical differences in the context and composition of the community with respect to Manchester.

Although Duffy has already applied Williams’ findings to the Dublin context some years ago and has quite correctly argued the need for a more nuanced historiography, his analysis is undermined by an overemphasis on matters of class and economics to the exclusion of other factors, and has therefore been largely ignored by other historians.<sup>56</sup> Williams’ conclusions are in fact far more subtle than Duffy’s interpretation suggests, in highlighting the significance of the spiritual, socio-economic and ritual needs of immigrant Jews alongside the uncomfortable economic and social realities of nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish society that have been outlined in Chapter One, above. Williams emphasises the inadequacy of the pre-existing infrastructure to the requirements and expectations of the immigrant community. He argues that these factors were of just as much importance as the exclusion of aspirant immigrant leaders from the establishment hierarchy in creating alternative, transitional outlets for the ambition of aspirant immigrant leaders.

In Dublin the communal split was attributed to ritual concerns from the very beginning, in accordance with Williams’ emphasis on these matters. Correspondence

---

<sup>56</sup> Duffy, ‘Socio-Economic Analysis’, esp. chap. 4. Ó Gráda is virtually the only scholar to pay any attention to Duffy’s work, which he quite rightly treats with caution.

that appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* late in 1885 cited the infrequency of services in the DHC, the distance of the Mary's Abbey synagogue from the centre of immigrant Jewish residence in the South Circular Road area, its inadequate capacity and suspicions that the congregation's Torah scrolls were unfit.<sup>57</sup> The delicate condition of the DHC's Torah scrolls was attested by a number of DNHC supporters,<sup>58</sup> and would appear to be corroborated by the presentation of four new scrolls to the congregation between 1886 and 1902, one of which had been written by the congregation's minister, Rev. Israel Leventon.<sup>59</sup> Leventon had previously refuted the claims put forward by the leaders of the DNHC, maintaining that its founders had left as they had been barred from becoming free members.<sup>60</sup> The DNHC leadership insisted that the members of the congregation had been obstructed and denied assistance in carrying out 'our rites' and appealed to the Beth Din (rabbinical court) in London for arbitration and assistance.<sup>61</sup> Education was another point of dispute between the rival communal factions, and a marker of cultural difference, as we will see below. This was something that the immigrant community presented as an ongoing cause for concern. In 1885 the urgent necessity of establishing a Jewish school in Dublin was stated, and in 1889 the DHC was accused of neglecting the children of the community.<sup>62</sup> Differences regarding *shehita* may also have been a factor in communal disputes,<sup>63</sup> and one which Williams believes to have been underrated as a symbol of the social and religious divisions that existed between 'native' and 'foreigner'.<sup>64</sup> Indeed *shehita* was of central significance in bitter disputes that arose between immigrant factions and the chief rabbinate in London in 1892-1893 and in 1911, in Liverpool in 1904 and in Manchester in 1907.<sup>65</sup>

A number of unsuccessful attempts were made to heal the ongoing rift between Dublin's 'native' and immigrant communities. During his pastoral visit in

---

<sup>57</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 165, citing *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 November 1885.

<sup>58</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1885. It was contended that the then minister of the DHC, Rev. Israel Leventon, had himself brought the delicate condition of the DHC's Torah scrolls to the attention of the synagogue committee. Allegedly repairs had been refused even though Robert Bradlaw, who subsequently became president of the DNHC, and a Mr. Harman had offered to meet over half of the cost. It was also claimed that Leventon asked those receiving *aliyot* to take care not to cause further damage when touching the text with their *tallitot* (prayer shawls).

<sup>59</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 February 1886, 18 August 1899, 6 September 1901, and 12 December 1902.

<sup>60</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1885.

<sup>61</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1885.

<sup>62</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1885 and 23 August 1889..

<sup>63</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', 86.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, 'Class and Community', 28-9.

<sup>65</sup> Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 209ff; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 146-47; Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 178-79.

1888, Hermann Adler dismissed the underlying issues as mainly ‘local inconveniences’ which he somewhat over-optimistically believed to be ‘in a fair way of being removed’.<sup>66</sup> The following year the DHC was accused in the *Jewish Chronicle* by ‘A Spectator’ of having split the community through its intolerance. This correspondent urged the congregation to ‘throw off their prejudices against their Russian brethren . . . and endeavour to create one united Synagogue instead of the three congregations now existing whereby the interests of the poor are greatly prejudiced’.<sup>67</sup> The letter elicited a very lengthy rebuttal from Ernest Harris, then a free member of the DHC. Harris noted ‘the arrogant and overbearing manner’ with which the DHC’s attempts to reunite the community had been met, and accused the immigrant leadership of placing insurmountable conditions and obstacles in the way of re-amalgamation. Although Harris felt that the immigrants were constructing a ‘sort of Ghetto’ which he deplored, and accused their leadership of ‘having a considerable idea of their own importance’, he believed that the real problem was the ‘the total absence of ecclesiastical control’ by the Anglo-Jewish leadership. This left ‘the only body [in Dublin] worthy of the name of a congregation’ completely bereft of the authority and influence that was required in order fully to assert itself.<sup>68</sup> These comments reflect, on the one hand, the social and cultural tensions that arose from the immigrant challenge to Dublin’s ‘native’ communal hierarchy. On the other hand, it illustrates the way in which the lack of central Anglo-Jewish support for existing provincial congregations, that has been discussed in Section 1.5, impacted on the established provincial leadership. In response to Harris, ‘A Spectator’ accused the DHC of having scuppered the rapprochement that had been reached under Adler’s mediation, by failing to follow up on its commitments. He challenged the DHC to reconsider its failings and to engage in further negotiations.<sup>69</sup> Later in 1889, representatives of the DHC and the Lennox Street *hevra* were optimistic regarding amalgamation. The Lennox Street leaders stated that placing themselves ‘under the

---

<sup>66</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 August 1888.

<sup>67</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 August 1889.

<sup>68</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 August 1889; Duffy, ‘Socio-Economic Analysis’. One of Duffy’s central contentions is that the leaders of the DHC fell out with the Anglo-Jewish establishment over the lack of central leadership of which Harris complains. Duffy believes that the DNHC took advantage of this situation in order to make its case before the Anglo-Jewish authorities, leading to a temporary improvement in the relationship between the two. While the type of rift between the DHC and the Anglo-Jewish centre that is posited by Duffy seems improbable, it is impossible to address his claims conclusively in the absence of one of his key sources, contemporary correspondence that was, at the time of his research, held by the Solomons family who are no longer resident in Dublin.

<sup>69</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 August 1889.

protection and guidance of the DHC' could only be a positive step.<sup>70</sup> The precise outcome of these talks are unclear; although there was no physical amalgamation, the *hevra* may well have placed itself under DHC authority. Subsequently, at any rate, relations between the two congregations were cordial as, in 1908, the DHC supported the application of the Lennox Street cantor for certification by the Chief Rabbi.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.1.1.3 THE RELOCATION OF THE DHC TO ADELAIDE ROAD

With the overall failure of initial attempts to heal Dublin's communal divisions, it was hoped or assumed that the construction of a new, purpose-built synagogue at Adelaide Road would serve to reunify the community.<sup>72</sup> Although efforts to relocate the DHC had begun as early as 1870, eliciting a number of weighty pledges, the project was soon abandoned for reasons that are now unknown.<sup>73</sup> By the close of the 1880s the need for larger, more suitable premises had become pressing. In April 1890 an appeal appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* which summed up the community's predicament. This stated that the Mary's Abbey synagogue had become far too small and inadequate for communal needs and was located in a now undesirable neighbourhood, which was inconvenient to the centre of immigrant Jewish settlement in the South Circular Road area. As 'little in the shape of contributions is to be expected from the foreign Jews', it was hoped that English co-religionists would step up to provide the three thousand pounds that was required to build on the new site that had been procured in Adelaide Road. The alternative was a crippling debt that threatened to prevent the DHC from being able to engage a suitably-qualified minister for the foreseeable future, an obvious plea to Anglo-Jewish religious snobbery. The piece concluded, 'In those who are anxious to raise the tone

---

<sup>70</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 November 1889.

<sup>71</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Chief Rabbi, 4 November 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 June 1890 and 23 September 1892.

<sup>73</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 October 1870, 21 July 1871, 11 August 1871, 27 September 1872, and 18 October 1872. The intention to relocate the DHC was first expressed in October 1870. However, efforts did not really take off until the following summer when Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler suggested in the course of his pastoral visit that the construction of a purpose-built synagogue, school and vestry-room would constitute the first steps towards improving synagogue attendance. Although the *Jewish Chronicle* had announced within a few weeks that the DHC was 'on the eve of building', by September these plans were apparently deemed to have little chance of fulfilment, and by October the community had become 'quiescent' on the matter. Without reference to the relevant minutebooks of the DHC, which appear in the catalogue of the Irish Jewish Museum but could not be located in the summer of 2012, it is impossible to surmise why relocation plans were abandoned and the issue dropped at this point.

of our clergy, especially in the Provinces, this appeal cannot but awaken a sympathetic echo'.<sup>74</sup> A parallel appeal was launched in Dublin's non-Jewish press.<sup>75</sup> While the DHC's plea for outside assistance in building the Adelaide Road synagogue has frequently been noted by commentators as something of a curiosity, when duly interrogated the logic of this decision becomes clear. Firstly, the snowballing economic demands that were placed by the growing contingent of poor immigrants on the few affluent members that still remained in the congregation severely limited the resources that were available for building and equipping the new complex.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, the *Jewish Chronicle* shows that such appeals were relatively commonplace at the time, and it has already been noted that members of Dublin's 'native' community had been quick and open-handed in responding to similar pleas while they were in the position to do so.

The *Jewish Chronicle* was highly supportive of the DHC efforts to raise the tone of the Dublin community, appealing to the self-interest of British Jews and cautioning them against apathy. The *Chronicle* reminded its readers of the past generosity of Irish Jews towards Anglo-Jewish charities which, it believed, merited reciprocation.<sup>77</sup> Later, it was claimed that 'this synagogue is to be erected chiefly to supply the spiritual needs of the considerable foreign Jewish population which has made Dublin its home'.<sup>78</sup> Although repeated appeals failed to awaken any significant response from English Jews, the plans for the new synagogue complex were approved early in 1891 and building commenced the following year.<sup>79</sup> The cornerstone was laid in November 1892, when coins and a parchment containing the date of the ceremony and the names of those involved were placed in a cavity in the foundations

---

<sup>74</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 April 1890 and 24 December 1897.

<sup>75</sup> Shillman, *Short History*, 98.

<sup>76</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 April 1890. By 1890 the DHC claimed to have only twelve or thirteen of its original families left.

<sup>77</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 June 1890. The *Chronicle* also provided regular updates on the Dublin Synagogue and School Building Fund (e.g., 20 June 1890, 8 August 1890, 17 October 1890, 22 August 1890, and 13 February 1891).

<sup>78</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 February 1891.

<sup>79</sup> On the approval of the plans for Adelaide Road synagogue, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 February 1891. The precise level of the debt that was incurred by the DHC is unclear as it is variously stated as £2,000, £2,500 and £3,000. It appears to have amounted to approximately fifty per cent of the building costs, which were reportedly between £5,000 and £6,000 (*Jewish Chronicle*, 27 November 1891, 9 December 1892, and 11 November 1892). At one point the Anglo-Jewish community was openly blamed for the extent of this debt in failing to come up with the pledges that had been offered towards the construction of the new synagogue complex (*Jewish Chronicle*, 28 April 1899).



of the building.<sup>80</sup> The synagogue was consecrated by the Chief Rabbi that December, in a lavish ceremony that reportedly attracted much public interest and was attended by several local dignitaries, receiving considerable coverage in the press, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Following the service, there was a collection for the building fund.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the congregation's best efforts, it would be a long time before its considerable debt would be cleared. Almost five years after the consecration of the synagogue, in February 1897, a fresh appeal was launched in the Anglo-Jewish press when foreclosure was threatened.<sup>82</sup> That December, the leading free members of the DHC appealed directly to the readers of the *Jewish Chronicle*. They stated that, despite the best efforts of the congregation's few better-off families, it had still not been possible to paint, decorate or enclose the synagogue, leaving the property open and vulnerable.<sup>83</sup> The letter continued:

We earnestly and fervently beg of our wealthy English coreligionists to help us in our extremity. There is now a population here of more than two thousand Israelites, and it would be a lasting disgrace to the whole community if the Synagogue has to pass into other hands, which it most assuredly will unless external help comes forward. . . .

We implore our coreligionists in England not to desert us in this crisis. By coming forward now and assisting to lessen the heavy debt and interest they will have the satisfaction of knowing that they have preserved for coreligionists in this part of the Empire a fitting place of worship.<sup>84</sup>

The renewed appeal was again strongly endorsed by the *Chronicle*, which recalled that this was the only occasion on which the DHC had sought outside assistance. Readers were also reminded that they owed the Dublin community for relieving them of so many immigrants:

---

<sup>80</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 November 1892. The following year De Groot and Rosenthal, then president and secretary of the DHC respectively, were presented with commemorative silver trowels to mark their participation in the cornerstone ceremony. In proposing a toast, Maurice Solomons expressed the hope that these gifts would be symbolic of the fervour and good feeling that should always prevail among Dublin's Jews (*Jewish Chronicle*, 29 September 1893).

<sup>81</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* confidently asserted that the consecration ceremony 'must undoubtedly prove advantageous to the Dublin Jews and increase the estimation in which they and their religion are held by their Christian fellow-citizens' (9 December 1892).

<sup>82</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 February 1897.

<sup>83</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to M. E. Solomons, 12 July 1904, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1. Harris refers somewhat smugly to 'nuisances and other objectionable practices' taking place on synagogue grounds due to the lack of a wall and felt that it was 'disgraceful' to leave the synagogue unprotected 'on open common', claiming that 'when I suggest a remedy, I am always opposed on the grounds of expense'.

<sup>84</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 December 1897.

Let us help them, and show them that for their taking charge of a very large body of our foreign brethren we shall not leave them in the lurch in helping them with some assistance for their religious and educational requirements.

. . . Local effort is quite unequal to the emergency, and extraneous assistance is absolutely indispensable . . .<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be another five years before the synagogue could finally be painted.<sup>86</sup> The Chief Rabbi expressed his ‘deep concern’ at this ongoing crisis, which he partly attributed to Dublin’s communal disunity during a pastoral visit in May 1898:

[The Chief Rabbi] urged the members present to make a supreme effort to remove this burden, which threatened the preservation of the synagogue, nay, even the very existence of their ancient congregation. He was hopeful that if they did their duty to the utmost in this respect, and if their brethren in Dublin would unite in this pressing need with fraternal solicitude, their coreligionists in the sister island would not withhold their willing help.<sup>87</sup>

Almost a year later, in April 1899, ‘A Provincial Congregant’ wrote that ‘the congregation is now almost paralysed’ and feared that it would no longer be able to maintain its English-speaking minister and teacher.<sup>88</sup> In March 1900, the DHC executive again appealed for assistance in reducing the debt that was ‘now pressing severely and dangerously on the synagogue and schools’.<sup>89</sup> This finally seemed to awaken sufficient response in London to merit coverage by the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>90</sup> Records do not reveal exactly when and how this crippling debt was finally cleared, however it had been reduced to manageable proportions by 1913 thanks to the efforts of Gudansky.<sup>91</sup> The DHC’s two decades of financial difficulties and the apathy with which its repeated appeals for assistance were met further illustrate the observations of Section 1.5 that, once immigrants had been successfully offloaded to the Provinces, the Anglo-Jewish middle classes believed that their obligation towards the newcomers had largely been discharged.

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 April 1902.

<sup>87</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1898.

<sup>88</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 April 1899.

<sup>89</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 March 1900.

<sup>90</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 September 1901, 3 January 1902, and 22 May 1903. Ephraim Vallentine, who collected in London on behalf of the DHC, was subsequently nominated as the first honorary free member of the congregation.

<sup>91</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 January 1913.

Even without the burden of the DHC's huge liability, congregational finances were no longer what they had been. From as early as 1878, the contributions made by Dublin Jews to appeals sponsored by the *Jewish Chronicle* went down to practically nil, another indication that east European immigration to Ireland predated the era of pogroms and May Laws. In 1906 Harris apologised for his inability to garner any local subscriptions towards the Jews' College centenary celebrations, on account of the exigency of local demands. He explained, 'Any friends I asked pleaded that the calls on them here were so many that they could not give to Institutions in London'. Harris concluded by noting apologetically that his obligations were such that 'I find it difficult to satisfy all'.<sup>92</sup> By 1883 an anonymous local correspondent to the *Chronicle* was lamenting the 'rapid decline of a once prosperous congregation', which he goes on to describe as:

Supported at present by scarcely half a dozen families, who are heavily taxed in order to keep the synagogue open, with the hope that one day they may have an increase of members and lighten in some degree the load . . . There exists a large number of poor but respectable Jews who for years past have not been able to obtain for their children suitable religious education.<sup>93</sup>

The consistency and extent of the demands on DHC funds by the beginning of the twentieth century is obvious from its correspondence books, and this appears to have coincided with an increased rate of default among members.<sup>94</sup> The DHC continued to dispense relief to needy individuals well after the establishment of the Dublin Jewish Board of Guardians (DJBG) in 1889.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the congregation made regular grants to the DJBG and a variety of other local charities such as the Jewish Hospital Aid Association, the Dublin Jewish Ladies' Charitable Society and a local Jewish shelter.<sup>96</sup> This support tended to be on a modest scale, and was ultimately contingent on the congregation's overall financial situation.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Percy M. Castillo, 12 June 1906, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>93</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 October 1883.

<sup>94</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1905-1906, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>95</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to A. E. Sydney, 24 March 1911, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2. In 1911 Harris requested five pounds of the dividend from the Samuel Lewis Bequest for the DHC 'as the number of applicants have considerably increased'. On the Lewis Bequest, see Chapter Four.

<sup>96</sup> Annual balance sheets, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>97</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letters to L. Berman, DJBG, 2 March 1908, Joseph Zlotover, Hon. Sec., DJBG, 9 January 1912, H. Silverman, Hon. Sec., HBS, 11 March 1908, Julius Leventon, Hon. Sec., School Committee, 7 July 1910, and Philip Sayers, 2 January 1911, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

### 3.1.1.4 ‘GOING NATIVE’: THE BEGINNINGS OF A COMMUNAL CONSOLIDATION

The building of the Adelaide Road synagogue failed to heal the rifts within the community, which remained a frequent topic of sermons by visiting Anglo-Jewish clerics.<sup>98</sup> On his pastoral visits in 1892 and 1898, the Chief Rabbi again met with representatives of the *hevrot*, and exhorted the community to unite. On the second occasion, Adler addressed a congregation of reportedly almost one thousand, mostly immigrant Jews in Adelaide Road, stating that it was ‘a source of deep regret that . . . they had not abandoned their various unsuitable, small and insalubrious places of worship, and rallied round their new and spacious temple of prayer’.<sup>99</sup>

Despite ongoing divisions in the Dublin community, however, many immigrant Jews did gradually become integrated into both the congregation and leadership of the DHC, reflecting the process that was first elaborated by Williams and corresponding with the evolution of other provincial communities.<sup>100</sup> In a small community such as Dublin, the alliances of convenience between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ elements that Williams identifies were a logical progression, as the rapid influx from central and eastern Europe placed Dublin’s tiny ‘native’ contingent in a significantly less powerful position than that of its often more numerous mainland British counterparts. In Dublin the ‘natives’ were always too few in number to have the option of separating themselves physically from the ever-increasing ‘foreign’ element, or of employing others to implement their cultural agenda of anglicisation.<sup>101</sup> Thus leading members of the DHC, such as Rosa and Maurice Solomons, were tirelessly occupied in the sort of ‘improving’ activities that are discussed below. These were moulded along the lines of contemporary Anglo-Jewish organisations,<sup>102</sup> and primarily oriented to the education and welfare of younger members of the community.

---

<sup>98</sup> E.g., *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 October 1900 and 26 August 1904.

<sup>99</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1898.

<sup>100</sup> Williams, ‘Class and Community’; Williams, *Manchester Jewry*. Ben Braber, *Jews in Glasgow 1879-1939: Immigration and Integration* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), identified comparable social and cultural processes in Glasgow (with thanks to Cristin Sarg for this reference). In London, too, increased prosperity prompted immigrants to progress from *hevrot* to more mainstream and affluent synagogues (Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 199).

<sup>101</sup> Rozin, *Rich and Poor*, esp. 129-30, for the starkly contrasting position of London’s Jewish elite.

<sup>102</sup> For a detailed description of this kind of activity in London, see Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, chap. 5.

Ó Gráda has noted the prominence of wealthier immigrants among the leadership of the DHC in the 1900s and 1910s.<sup>103</sup> A rapprochement was eventually reached with Bradlaw family, although the DHC records indicate the persistence of residual tensions.<sup>104</sup> Robert Bradlaw, one of the foremost leaders of the immigrant community and a founder of the DNHC, was given the honour of carrying one of the Torah scrolls during the consecration of the Adelaide Road Synagogue.<sup>105</sup> His son Henry was elected joint honorary secretary of the DHC in 1899.<sup>106</sup> Bradlaw's efforts in organising the new cemetery at Dolphins Barn, which he had reportedly intended as a conciliatory gesture, as well as his other services to the community, were eventually recognised by the DHC, and Gudansky was one of the officiants at Bradlaw's funeral in 1904.<sup>107</sup> While the Wigoder family maintained their leading role in the Camden Street *hevra*, a synagogue that Harris strongly disapproved of,<sup>108</sup> all of the Wigoder sons were *bar-mitzvah* in Adelaide Road, their sister Sara was engaged and married there, and her brother Louis was a founder and stalwart of the local JLB.<sup>109</sup> Their father, Myer Joel, enjoyed a good relationship with Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog<sup>110</sup> and, in 1899, their uncle George had been appointed honorary surgeon-*mohel* (circumciser) to the DHC.<sup>111</sup> Conversely, prominent members of the DHC such as

---

<sup>103</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 48. Ó Gráda appears to be unaware of Williams' research, as he merely makes this passing observation in the course of his analysis of the role of moneylending in the Dublin community.

<sup>104</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letters to H. J. Bradlaw, 3 March 1904, 11 March 1904, 11 April 1904, 5 May 1904, 19 August 1904, 22 August 1904, and 30 August 1904, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1; Harris, Letters to [?] Bradlaw, undated, and A. E. Sydney, 22 April 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2. The legal case between Hyman Barron and Robert Bradlaw in 1903-1904 concerning the membership scheme of the HBS is probably another example of the persistent tensions between the Bradlaw family, who had been prominent in the establishment of the DNHC, and the DHC. Even though in this case Bradlaw was acting on behalf of the HBS, the matter certainly appears to have been personal on Barron's side and it was probably impossible to prevent old resentments from creeping in. DHC Correspondence Book No. 1; HBS Minutes, 1884-1910; Chapter Four.

<sup>105</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1892.

<sup>106</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899.

<sup>107</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 August 1898, 10 July 1903, and 4 March 1904.

<sup>108</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letters to Rev. M. Hyamson, 13 February 1912 and 20 February 1912, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2. When the Camden Street *hevra* sought to have its minister, Rev. Jaffe, authorised by the Chief Rabbi to perform marriages in 1912, Harris reported to the Board of Deputies that the congregation met in a private house which accommodated the women in an upstairs room with an 'aperture' in the floor through which they could peer in order to follow the proceedings below. He described Jaffe as 'a self styled Minister without any recognition from any official authority' and did not believe that either he or the synagogue were fit for the performance of marriage rites. Finally, Harris noted that 'the Members of this Congregation have never in any way helped to bear the burdens of the Community'.

<sup>109</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', 91; M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 100-01, 108; G. Wigoder, *Dublin*, 17-18.

<sup>110</sup> Isaac Herzog, Preface to M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, ix.

<sup>111</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899.

Ernest Harris and Maurice Solomons were deeply involved in immigrant-led organisations. Harris acted as honorary solicitor to the DJBG and the Holy Burial Society (HBS) and was appointed honorary vice president of the local branch of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), while both served as presidents of the Young Men's Zionist Association (YMZA).<sup>112</sup> This blurring of communal boundaries suggests not only a deferral by the newcomers to the superior education and qualifications of the established leadership, but an aspiration to these attributes themselves. Initially the emerging leaders of the immigrant community may have wished not simply to assert themselves within alternative Jewish institutions, but to supplant the existing establishment altogether. This possibility is indicated by the letter from R. S. Green, the secretary of the so-called Poles' Burial Society, quoted above, which challenges the Anglo-Jewish denigration of immigrants as ignorant in comparison to their educated native-born co-religionists, and incapable of running communal organisations in an efficient manner.<sup>113</sup>

While it would be naïve to assume that the differences of class and culture that had arisen between 'natives' and immigrants were minimal or easily overcome, the social boundaries of Jewish Dublin evidently soon became obscured. As a result, the relationship between these two respective factions is often highly ambiguous and difficult to unravel. This is particularly the case when it comes to the apparent communal consensus regarding Jewish nationalism that is indicated by the involvement of 'native' leaders such as Harris and Solomons in Zionist organisations, and by the hosting of Zionist activities by the DHC.<sup>114</sup> Practical economic and social

---

<sup>112</sup> Harris also represented Dublin on the executive of the English Zionist Federation from 1909 to 1910. For examples of 'native' involvement in Zionist activity in Dublin, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1909 and 1 April 1910; Ernest W. Harris, Letters to S. Levy, Sec., YMZA, 2 December 1906, and Israel Cohen, English Zionist Federation, 24 March 1910, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2; John D. White, 'The Irish Jewish Experience in Public Life from 1555 to Present Day 2013', *Nachlath Dublin Magazine* (2013-14): 41. Harris's communal obligations were such that he was sometimes compelled to withdraw from existing commitments or turn down additional ones due to time constraints. For example, on being informed that of his election as an honorary life member of the local branch of the Grand Order of Israel, Harris responded that he was connected with so many societies and institutions that he was unable to attend 'to half of them'. On discovering what the position would have entailed, Harris promptly declined. Harris, Letters to B. Scher, Hon. Sec. Grand Order of Israel, 14 October 1904, and J. Shillman, Grand Order of Israel, [28?] October 1904, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 September 1902. Duffy has identified similar ambitions among the leadership of the DNHC ('Socio-Economic Analysis', chap. 4).

<sup>114</sup> A Zionist Hanukkah celebration was hosted in the DHC in 1906, and the synagogue premises were used for Zionist meetings for a number of years, only to be banned due to the mishandling of DHC property. *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 December 1906 and 6 December 1907; Ernest W. Harris, Letter to L.

concerns were no doubt to the fore when it came to forging alliances between ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’, as was the case in other provincial communities such as Manchester. Dublin’s immigrant charities and mutual aid organisations relieved to a degree the burden that fell upon the leaders of the DHC, while the establishment of formalised educational, cultural and social facilities that were geared to specific immigrant needs hastened acculturation and reduced the likelihood that poorer Jews would become a burden on the non-Jewish public. As well as addressing the internal requirements of the community, these developments would have had a positive impact on its external image, when it came to negative stereotyping and commentary among wider Irish society.

The relationship between the Wigoder and Bradlaw families, which is discussed in Section 3.2, suggests that these differences were equally intricate within the immigrant community itself. However, little hard evidence has survived to indicate the nature of the distinctions of class, ethnicity and culture that existed within the immigrant community, in this period at least. As our grasp of this will only ever be vague, it is crucial to avoid the crude transplantation of the class distinctions, concerns and politics of the mainland British context onto the Irish communities, *quâ* Duffy, Hyman *et al.* The best that can be done, in the absence of more detailed information, is to recognise the complexity of Jewish society in Dublin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to remain wary of any misleading assumptions that are based on reductive and sweeping comparisons. Indeed the significance and appropriateness of simplistic constructions of ‘class’ in the mainland British context itself are disputed by some leading Anglo-Jewish historians, and should therefore be treated with caution across the board.<sup>115</sup>

The DHC was inevitably affected by the integration of such a sizeable ‘foreign’ contingent, and made limited concessions to immigrant sensibilities. On special occasions, discourses were sometimes permitted to be given in Yiddish.<sup>116</sup> However the Council was keen to prevent this from becoming a regular element of services, especially on Shabbat mornings, when attendance was good and the

---

Benjamin, Hon. Sec., Hovevei Zion, 14 August 1903, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1; Section 2.2, above.

<sup>115</sup> E.g., Williams, ‘Class and Community’; Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 142-44; Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*.

<sup>116</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1892, 8 February 1901, and 5 June 1903.

congregation was socially mixed.<sup>117</sup> Despite the growing immigrant presence, and in strong contrast to the *hevrot*, attendance at the DHC appears to have remained erratic outside of the Jewish festivals.<sup>118</sup> In 1907, at considerable expense to the DHC, a daily service was started in Stamer Street better to facilitate those living in the South Circular Road area. Initially, poorer members of the community had to be paid in order to ensure a *minyan* (quorum).<sup>119</sup> Despite these efforts, congregants appear to have complained that Stamer Street was less conveniently situated than the previous site in Lombard Street.<sup>120</sup> Stamer Street also became the venue for religion classes for the children of immigrant families, which were sponsored by the DHC (see below).<sup>121</sup> This falling off in support for communal worship parallels the processes that were observable in other British communities at the time. As has already been noted, increased acculturation and the membership of ‘native’ synagogues were accompanied by a growing laxity in synagogue turnout. Immigrant attendance dwindled, meanwhile, for other reasons such as the demands of earning a living and the conscious wish to move away from the strict religious observance that was characteristic of the traditional east European milieu.<sup>122</sup>

While the DHC remained essentially ‘English’ in disposition, the increasing ‘foreign’ presence inevitably brought about some changes in its character. This is clear from a new draft of its *Laws*, which were revised in 1905 to include a detailed set of guidelines for the conduct of debates. These strongly resemble the kind of rules that are found in immigrant organisations, such as the *hevrot* that are examined below. Participants were now officially banned from speaking without authorisation, from introducing unsanctioned resolutions, from interrupting each other without due cause, from digressing from the point at hand, and from disrupting the proceedings. The rules also state:

---

<sup>117</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Mr. Levin, 19 March 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2. Harris believed that lengthy discourses in Yiddish would be tedious for those unacquainted with the language, as well as being ‘a distinct retrograde movement in a synagogue where a large number would object to its introduction’.

<sup>118</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 September 1901, 18 April 1902, and 5 October 1906; DHC Minutes, 9 November 1913. Poor attendance at the DHC appears to have been an ongoing preoccupation of Gudansky’s judging by his sermons, while Rev. Glickman’s duties included ensuring adequate numbers for the Stamer Street *minyan* (service).

<sup>119</sup> DHC Minutes, 20 October 1907; DHC Annual Reports, 1907-1909 and 1911, in DHC Minutes 1904-1915; Ernest W. Harris, Letters to Chief Rabbi, [?] April 1908, and Rev. A. Glickman, 9 April 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Chief Rabbi, [?] April 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>121</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1908, in DHC Minutes 1904-1915.

<sup>122</sup> Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, chap. 7; Endelman, *Modern British Jewry*, 147-48.



It is incumbent on all connected with the Congregation to maintain its good name and reputation by their conduct and actions, whether towards the Congregation or otherwise. Should any case arise which, in the opinion of the Council, should be taken cognizance of, they shall convene a meeting for that purpose to investigate same. Should the result of such deliberation render it necessary, they may call upon the Member or Seatholder in fault to resign, and they shall have power to decline to receive payment from him, and his name shall at once be removed from the list of Members or Seatholders.

The duties of all of the congregation's paid officials were also, for the first time, set out in the revised *Laws*. These reflect the increase in size of the congregation, the broadening scope of its responsibilities and its relations with other sections of the community, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The presence of friction between the Council and its officials is indicated, surrounding the definition and execution of duties. The minister, for example, required a warden's permission to participate in services that were held under the auspices any other congregation. Both minister and *hazan* were forbidden from having any business connections. The *hazan* and *shamash* (beadle) were instructed as to precisely when to arrive at the synagogue for services, for which the *hazan* was explicitly directed to don his 'clerical dress'.<sup>123</sup> These rules were revisited in 1913, and elaborated in even greater detail with relation to dress, punctuality, attendance at funerals and *shiva* (mourning), the duties surrounding the slaughter, preparation and sale of kosher meat, and other matters. The most junior minister, Rev. Glickman, was now expressly instructed to assist strangers by finding them seats and furnishing them with a *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *siddur* (prayerbook).<sup>124</sup> The DHC correspondence demonstrates the way in which the revised *Laws* constituted a response to specific situations, such as a laxity in attendance at the Stamer Street *minyán* rooms by the ministers, and an apparent confusion as to the chain of command in the allocation of *mitzvot* (honours).<sup>125</sup> Tensions also clearly existed between the officials themselves, as the new *Laws* conclude, 'The Committee earnestly request the various Officials to show a spirit of

---

<sup>123</sup> DHC Minutes. The revised *Laws* were put to a Special General Meeting on 8 May 1905.

<sup>124</sup> DHC Minutes, 9 November 1913.

<sup>125</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letters to Rev. A. Glickman, 9 April 1908 and H. A. Barron, 9 June 1909; Harris and David J. Cohen, Letter to Rev. A. Gudansky, 31 October 1912, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2. Other tensions between the DHC leadership and its paid officials are indicated by the DHC correspondence, e.g., Harris, Letters to H. A. Barron, 15 June 1909, and Rev. E. E. Gavron, 9 April 1911, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2. It is clear from the correspondence as a whole that paid officials were very much treated as employees of the congregation and, as such, were addressed in a manner that comes across as somewhat disrespectful to the modern reader.

charitableness and good will towards one another, to live in concord and harmony and thereby avert the unpleasant exhibition of ill will which has occasionally been shown'.<sup>126</sup>

The changing economic circumstances of Dublin's Jewish community are also reflected in the redrafted *Laws*, which include new provisions regarding the payment of arrears and the reduction or waiver of marriage rates 'in special cases', at the Council's discretion.<sup>127</sup> These are similar to the concessions that were offered by other Irish synagogues, and are examined in greater detail in Chapter Four. In contrast to the 1839 *Laws*, there no longer appears to be any requirement or expectation for arrears to be repaid should an individual's circumstances improve.<sup>128</sup>

Decorum appears to have become an even more pressing concern than before,<sup>129</sup> and the suggestions that were made in this regard reflect the incursion of the more traditional habits of the immigrant contingent. In 1906 it was proposed to regulate the announcement of donations during services, and to restrict the number of special blessings (*misheberakh*) as well as those who were permitted to make them.<sup>130</sup> In the light of increasing difficulties with the 'maintenance of decorum during Divine Service' in September 1912, further recommendations were made in consultation with the ministers. These included:

- Reducing the number of *aliyot* on Shabbat to eight, except on special occasions;
- Commencing Shabbat services at 09:00 and the reading of the Torah at 09:30;
- Reading the Ten Commandments in English on sabbaths and festivals;
- Reciting the *Avinu Malkenu* prayer with due solemnity over the High Holydays, 'in accordance with the Din [law]';
- 'That the Chazan be asked to avoid too much singing and that the work of the Readers be solemn and impressive';
- Taking steps 'to secure proper decorum in the Synagogue such as cessation of conversation, frequent moving out of Synagogue especially by

---

<sup>126</sup> DHC Minutes, 9 November 1913.

<sup>127</sup> DHC Special General Meeting, 8 January 1905.

<sup>128</sup> Rule 186, *Laws and Regulations*.

<sup>129</sup> DHC Special General Meeting, 8 January 1905. Under the new *Laws*, the *shamash* was specifically required to 'maintain decorum' under the authority of the wardens.

<sup>130</sup> DHC Minutes, 13 May 1906. The DHC Annual Report for 1912 shows that the frequent interjection of *misheberakh* blessings remained an issue.

children. No smoking or talking to be allowed in the passages, vestry room or outside the Synagogue’;

- Barring people from entering or leaving the synagogue during the sermon.<sup>131</sup>

In the revised ministerial duties of 1913, Gudansky was instructed to ensure that Shabbat services would finish by 10:45 except on special occasions, when they could be permitted to run to 11:00.<sup>132</sup>

The highest compliment that could apparently be paid to the ministers in the congregation’s annual reports was efficiency; for example the 1914 report states: ‘Your Ministers have conducted the Divine Services in an efficient manner. It is to be hoped that more decorum will be observed during prayers in the future’.<sup>133</sup>

In 1915, after again commending the ministers on their efficiency, the following observation is recorded: ‘The Wardens have noted with surprise the carrying on of conversations, and the continued ingress and egress, of Members during Service. This practice is most improper, and it is to be hoped that more decorum will be observed in future while the Prayers are being recited.’<sup>134</sup>

Conversation, the arbitrary interjection of *misheberakh* blessings and the constant tramping in and out of children were not all that the leaders of the DHC had to contend with at this time. Personal feuds and resentments between congregants were also becoming an increasing feature of synagogue life. Not the most consequential, but certainly the most amusing of these disputes occurred in 1907, whereby Harris was compelled to berate Arthur Shiftz as follows:

Mr. Israel Weiner has lodged with me a complaint against you for behaving in a manner calculated to disturb him and others attending Divine Service on the second day of Yomtov (20th inst.), and for placing some prickly plant on his seat whereby he states he experienced a great deal of bodily suffering, if such was the case I must express my strong disapproval, and trust that you will see that unless decorum and order is observed in a place of Worship, the service cannot be conducted in a fit and proper manner, and I hope you will aid me to effect this.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> DHC Minutes, 9 September 1912, and 20 October 1912.

<sup>132</sup> DHC Minutes, 9 November 1913.

<sup>133</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1914, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>134</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1915, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>135</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Arthur Shiftz, 24 May 1907, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

Harris had already attempted to placate Weiner: ‘I regret exceedingly that such conduct as you state should have taken place during Divine Service during the recent Festival. . . . I do not think it advisable for you to bring the matter into Court, it would not redound to the credit of the Community. . . . If you wish to change your seat I will do what I [can] for you’.<sup>136</sup> After the matter was investigated, the Council predictably concluded that the best that could be done was to ‘take measures to preserve order in the Synagogue’.<sup>137</sup>

### 3.1.1.5 EDUCATION AND ACCULTURATION

As noted above, the DHC sponsored a variety of ‘improving’ activities for members of Dublin’s immigrant community. The Adelaide Girls’ Friendly Society was established in April 1900 under the tutelage of Rosa Solomons. This was intended ‘for the improvement and recreation of young Jewish girls’ aged fourteen and upwards, with the leading principles of ‘self-reliance and self-support’. The girls learned practical skills as well as organising various entertainments that raised funds for communal charities.<sup>138</sup> In 1909, on her retirement as president of the club, Solomons dwelt on its continuing ‘efficacy’ and ‘steady advancement’.<sup>139</sup> For boys, there were sports clubs, such as the Adelaide Cricket Club (founded in 1901) and the Jewish Athletic Association (*circa* 1902).<sup>140</sup> In 1908 a company of the JLB was enrolled under the command of Samuel Weinstock. The Dublin brigade’s annual inspections, which were carried out by British Army officers, included activities such as marching, drilling, physical exercises and music, and the boys were regularly complimented on their personal appearance and athletic prowess. This was typically followed by a lengthy oration by Maurice Solomons, now president of the DHC, which dwelt upon the physical and psychological benefits that were to be derived from membership of the JLB. Solomons believed that it was the duty of the Jewish

---

<sup>136</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Israel Weiner, 28 May 1907, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>137</sup> DHC Minutes, 22 June 1907 and 20 October 1907.

<sup>138</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 December 1900, 12 April 1901, and 23 December 1904; Bloom, ‘Girlhood Recollections’, 29. Bloom recalls the activities of the club as sewing, singing, marching, painting, cookery and Hebrew.

<sup>139</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 October 1909 and 3 December 1909; Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare*, 177. Liedtke notes how anglicisation was strategically encouraged in England by targeting the future Jewish homemakers.

<sup>140</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 May 1901 and 23 October 1903.

community and all religious bodies to promote and support movements ‘of that essential character’.<sup>141</sup>

For adults, in addition to sports, the DHC supported appropriate social and intellectual pursuits. These included the Hebrew Young Men’s Society which was started by Rev. Mendelsohn in 1891, with the explicit purpose of ‘anglicising’ its members and assisting them into professional careers.<sup>142</sup> For ladies, a female branch of the Jewish Study Society was founded in 1900, also under the direction of Mendelsohn.<sup>143</sup> A Jewish Young Ladies’ Society, affiliated to the National Association of Girls’ Clubs, was inaugurated in 1914.<sup>144</sup> This appears to have been distinct from the Adelaide Girls’ Friendly Society, and the name implies a broader cross-communal membership. In 1895 the DHC assisted in the re-opening of the communal reading rooms that had reputedly evolved out of informal meetings in the Spiro home. Once the DHC came on board, all sense of immigrant agency was written out of the official narrative of what eventually became the Jewish Literary and Debating Society,<sup>145</sup> as related by the *Jewish Chronicle*. Those who originally opened the rooms had been commended by the *Chronicle* for their show of ‘energy and self-reliance’ in aspiring ‘to raise their educational status and thus assimilate themselves with their English coreligionists’. The writer continued, ‘We are so accustomed to treating the poorer-classes as children, to thinking and acting for them, that these independent doings of the Dublin Jews come like a healthy breath of revivifying air . . .’<sup>146</sup> The reading rooms were now, however, presented as having the aim of ‘raising the tone of all the young men of the community, especially of the foreign element, and for *developing in them* a taste for reading and speaking [emphasis

---

<sup>141</sup> E.g., *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 April 1908 and 6 May 1910.

<sup>142</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1891 and 17 July 1903.

<sup>143</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 August 1900.

<sup>144</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 January 1914 and 3 April 1914.

<sup>145</sup> On the origins of this enterprise, see Bloom, ‘Girlhood Recollections’, 22, and Interview with Gottfried, 18-19. The *Jewish Chronicle* of 10 January 1890 reports that the opening of the original reading rooms was contemporaneous with the first ‘entertainment’ of Dublin’s Montefiore Club, which consisted of music, comediatta and dancing. This is the sole, tantalising mention of any organised social activity for more acculturated Irish Jews in this period. On the subsequent establishment of the Literary and Debating Society, which was later more popularly known as the Literary and Social Club reflecting what would become its dominant function, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 November 1901, 29 November 1901, 10 January 1902, 6 February 1903, and 18 December 1903. By 1912 the main activities of the club had expanded to include dances, chess and draughts tournaments. Despite the patronage of the DHC and, subsequently, the OAM, the Society struggled throughout its early years (*Jewish Chronicle*, 20 September 1912).

<sup>146</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 January 1890.

added]'.<sup>147</sup> Mendelsohn paternally exhorted those who availed of the rooms to bear in mind the great advantages that were to be gained from their efforts, and cautioned them against becoming disheartened at the inevitably slow rate of their progress.<sup>148</sup> Immigrants who wished to better themselves through the reading rooms were thus recast into the passive objects of anglicisation with whom they had initially been contrasted. Ironically, the Jewish Literary and Debating Society ended up as a purely social club which revolved around cards and snooker, and had nothing whatsoever to do with literary pursuits.<sup>149</sup>

Perhaps the DHC's most thorough instrument of anglicisation was its national school. From the very beginning, Hebrew and religious education for the children of the DHC appears to have been an ongoing preoccupation. In the early days periodic praise for the progress achieved implies that, at other times, the situation was not quite so satisfactory.<sup>150</sup> In response to comments made by the Chief Rabbi during his pastoral visit in 1871, a committee was formed to investigate the establishment of a religion school for girls, the outcome of which is unclear.<sup>151</sup> In 1882 Rosa and Maurice Solomons began a 'sabbath school' at the DHC, in response to what was regarded as a widespread and lamentable state of ignorance on religious matters among the children.<sup>152</sup> Attendance and resources appear to have remained poor, despite ongoing efforts to improve the facilities and the education that were on offer.<sup>153</sup> In stark contrast to the overall dissatisfaction of the congregational authorities in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Chief Rabbi felt that sabbath school standards were adequate, given that it was principally run by volunteers.<sup>154</sup> It is not quite clear whether this comment should be accepted at face value, or understood as back-handed in terms of the educational standards that could be expected in smaller

---

<sup>147</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 June 1895, 26 July 1895, and 15 November 1895.

<sup>148</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 June 1896.

<sup>149</sup> David Jackson, 'The Jewish Literary and Debating Society' (talk given at the Maccabi Gathering, 22 July 2013).

<sup>150</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 April 1856, 6 March 1863, 21 July 1871, 16 December 1864, and 26 October 1883.

<sup>151</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 July 1871.

<sup>152</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 October 1883.

<sup>153</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 June 1885; Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 198; Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 229. In 1885, a new religious education programme was introduced under Rev. Francis Cohen, a graduate of Jews' College and a protégé of Adler's. This followed the model that had been established by the Jewish Association for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge, the predecessor of the United Synagogues' Jewish Religious Education Board, which aimed to moderate Jewish religious instruction in state schools. This, however, appeared to have little impact on attendance as Hyman notes that the school only had about forty children on its rolls in 1890.

<sup>154</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 July 1888, 3 April 1891, and 10 August 1888.

provincial communities. Repeated exhortations over the years show that the apparently unsatisfactory nature of the religious education that was provided by the DHC was partly due to the attitude of parents, who remained lukewarm on the matter.<sup>155</sup> This may be a further indication of a correlation among immigrants between membership of the DHC and socio-economic advancement. In London, concern for material matters among any branch of the Jewish community was frequently accompanied by a comparable lack of interest in, and drop in standards of religious education.<sup>156</sup>

Although the relocation to purpose-built premises in Adelaide Road in 1892 led to a rapid improvement in the quality of the education that was provided by the DHC, this was not sustained. By early 1894 the school was under the tutelage of the National Board of Education, its Jewish teachers had obtained official certification and there were approximately one hundred pupils on the rolls, with a good average attendance. The school followed the National Curriculum, taught practical subjects such as knitting, sewing and book-keeping, and provided additional Hebrew and religion classes at a 'nominal' charge.<sup>157</sup> In 1896 an almost record pass rate of 98.7 per cent was attained, which was surpassed the following year.<sup>158</sup> Annual summer excursions to the coast or countryside were organised for the pupils, which seemed to place as much emphasis on the hearty and substantial refreshments that were provided as on the physical and sporting pursuits that were encouraged.<sup>159</sup> By 1900 the DHC authorities believed the national school to be successful in helping the children of immigrant families to learn English and in encouraging them to pursue higher education.<sup>160</sup> From around 1901 the school's annual prizegiving, which was reported each year in painstaking detail to the *Jewish Chronicle*, became a much grander affair incorporating presentations by local non-Jewish dignitaries who would glowingly attest to the children's achievements.<sup>161</sup> In 1909 the Jewish National Examination,

---

<sup>155</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 December 1889, 3 April 1891, and 9 April 1897.

<sup>156</sup> Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 215-16, 233.

<sup>157</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 November 1893, 23 February 1894, and 23 March 1894.

<sup>158</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 November 1896 and 24 December 1897.

<sup>159</sup> E.g., *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 August 1895.

<sup>160</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 March 1900 and 21 March 1913. In 1913 Mendelsohn described the Jews of Dublin as 'marked by culture' and taking full advantage of the city's educational possibilities, in particular those presented by Trinity College. He notes that many had taken up professional careers and were now practising throughout the British Isles and colonies.

<sup>161</sup> See *Jewish Chronicle* (5 April 1901 and 7 April 1905) for examples of the reports on the Adelaide Road NS annual prizegiving. These tended to place as much – and sometimes more – emphasis on the donors of the prizes than on the recipients (e.g., *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 March 1903 and 18 March 1904).

which comprised subjects such as Jewish history and Anglo-Jewish literature, was first held simultaneously in Dublin, Belfast and Cork.<sup>162</sup> Despite this promising start, attendance at the Adelaide Road National School was soon reported to be dropping, perhaps due to the relative inconvenience of its location to the South Circular Road area, and the school eventually closed in the 1920s.<sup>163</sup>

Location was not the only issue with the national school. Immigrant parents had never been satisfied with the kind of religious education that was provided by the DHC and Harris believed, probably with good reason, that some were put off by the idea of sending their children to a school that was located in the DHC.<sup>164</sup> Even after the school was re-established on a more formal footing in 1892, it remained in competition with more traditional, extra-curricular Jewish learning. In 1893 the Talmud Torah (religious education board) was established to provide free religious tuition for poor children.<sup>165</sup> By 1900 the immigrant community was in a position to arrange for the provision of Hebrew instruction at a non-Jewish national school, where a classroom was set aside and a Jewish teacher formally appointed.<sup>166</sup>

This ongoing refusal to engage with the education offered by the DHC remained a bone of contention between ‘natives’ and immigrants. In 1889 Harris had lamented the formation of ‘a sort of Ghetto’, which allowed the children to grow up ‘with the ideas of their parents instead of having an education to suit them for the battle of life in the land of their adoption’, rather than benefiting from ‘the inestimable advantages of a school where their children might receive an education, both secular and religious, in accordance with Anglo Jewish ideas’.<sup>167</sup> Around ten years later the Chief Rabbi raised the matter during a pastoral visit. He warned the newcomers of the perils of sending their children to non-Jewish schools where, he believed, they risked exposure to conversionist influence. Adler regarded the *melamdim* (traditional Hebrew teachers) as ‘depriving [their pupils] of the ethical teaching so essential to

---

The book prizes, interestingly, do not appear to have had any Jewish significance whatsoever; in 1904 Harris’s suggestions included the illustrated works of Rabelais, a book on the great sieges of history, and lives of novelists and poets (Letter to M. E. Solomons, 18 February 1904, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1). From 1911 this prizegiving incorporated the Stamer Street religion classes (*Jewish Chronicle*, 9 June 1911).

<sup>162</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 July 1910. In 1910 the most successful candidate in the Jewish National Examination was rewarded with a national scholarship.

<sup>163</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1913; Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 124.

<sup>164</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1885; Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Julius Leventon, 8 April 1907, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>165</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 198-99.

<sup>166</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 September 1900.

<sup>167</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 August 1889.



their welfare'.<sup>168</sup> In the early twentieth century, the inadequacy of Jewish education in Dublin became a frequent refrain of Gudansky's.<sup>169</sup>

The DHC's annual report of 1907 noted that the national school's demanding timetable left little room for religion classes. At the same time, it was not considered practical to introduce additional Hebrew tuition as the children's days were already full, and the location of the school made it impractical for them to remain on for extra lessons.<sup>170</sup> Harris now disagreed with placing secular institutions under the control of religious communities, feeling this to be out of tune with the times. He had come around to the view that the real responsibility of the DHC, which it completely neglected, was the provision of religious education.<sup>171</sup> In 1909 a *heder* (traditional religion school) for girls aged six to sixteen was inaugurated in the DHC premises at Stamer Street. This met three times weekly for two hours at a time and provided instruction in Hebrew, the Jewish festivals, Jewish history, and the morals and ethics of Judaism. According to the DHC annual report of 1909, the classes were 'formed to meet the need of instruction for Jewish Girls in the tenets of our Holy Faith, and to imbue them with a spirit of love and pride for their race and religion'. Although attendance was described as 'most gratifying' from the outset, this was not a financially self-sustaining activity and parents continually had to be reminded 'that the existence of our holy nation largely depends on the upbringing of our daughters'.<sup>172</sup> On the suggestion of Rev. Moses Hyamson, who made a pastoral visit in 1909 on behalf of the Chief Rabbi, Gudansky was instructed to start analogous classes for boys on a trial basis.<sup>173</sup> Harris believed that similar attempts had been

---

<sup>168</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1898. In contrast with Adler's views and with the situation in some English schools, Jewish pupils remembered the teachers in non-Jewish schools at this time as having been respectful of their religious sensibilities and obligations (Section 2.1, above; Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 150). However these recollections cannot necessarily be accepted entirely at face value, especially in the context of the conflicting communal attitudes regarding the Jewish experience in Ireland that are considered in Chapter Two.

<sup>169</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1903, 5 June 1903, 24 May 1907, and 29 December 1911. For example, in his sermon on Rosh Hashanah in 1903, Gudansky reportedly 'took exception to the present imperfect and insufficient system of Hebrew instruction, and exhorted his hearers to rouse themselves from their apathy'.

<sup>170</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1907, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>171</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Julius Leventon, 8 April 1907, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>172</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 June 1909; DHC Annual Report, 1909, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915; Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare*, 177.

<sup>173</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1909, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915; DHC Minutes, 29 May 1910. Hyamson (1863-1948) was an acolyte of Adler's who had controversially been appointed to the London Beth Din in 1902 as part of a group of young, anglicised candidates who were not considered to be suitably qualified by the immigrant community (Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 147-48).

obstructed in the past by the professional *melamdin* of the immigrant community.<sup>174</sup> This effort was also a thorough flop, and was forced to wind up in 1912 due to poor attendance and a lack of parental interest.<sup>175</sup> That same year the DHC was described in the *Jewish Chronicle* as a ‘listless congregation’ where Jewish education was neglected.<sup>176</sup> The girls’ classes, in contrast, continued to flourish; by 1913 these boasted a roll of 175 pupils and an average attendance of eighty-five per cent.<sup>177</sup> This indicates that immigrant parents maintained traditional gender distinctions when it came to their children’s Jewish education, in that what was deemed acceptable for their daughters was not regarded as suitable for their sons.<sup>178</sup> In 1915 the DHC again attempted to set up religion classes for boys, this time on Shabbat. These were reported to be very popular, though still at an ‘experimental stage’. It is nevertheless revealing that parents still had to be exhorted to support the classes on the grounds that they would ‘prove of immense benefit to the Boys from a Religious as well as from an educational standpoint.’<sup>179</sup>

Ultimately it must be emphasised that the entire ‘native’ *mission civilitrice* was circumscribed by statistical concerns, which would have made it virtually impossible to promote any programme of anglicisation without the consent of the immigrants themselves. Circumstances also precluded any significant possibility of resorting to the enforcement of such an agenda through communal discipline as occurred in England, albeit with limited success.<sup>180</sup> On the other hand, it is clear from the sources that the ‘improving’ activities that were led by the DHC were more a labour of love – albeit difficult, frustrating and paternalistic – than just a tiresome chore. This was especially the case where the congregation’s children were involved. For example, the DHC authorities appear to have expended considerable effort in organising periodic treats. These were regularly enhanced by the Solomons family’s magic lantern, an early form of image projector. The DHC leaders appear to have

---

<sup>174</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Chief Rabbi, 8 July 1909, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>175</sup> DHC Annual Reports, 1910-1912, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>176</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 May 1912.

<sup>177</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1913, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>178</sup> This contrasts strongly with the apparently progressive parental attitude towards female secular education among Dublin’s immigrant Jewish families (see Section 3.2, below). Gartner (*Jewish Immigrant*, 231) notes the attitude of immigrant parents in London towards their children’s secular education, where there was considerable flexibility, and religious instruction, which was generally kept within the community.

<sup>179</sup> DHC Annual Report, 1915, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915.

<sup>180</sup> Livshin, ‘Acculturation of Children in Manchester’, 79-96; Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare*, chap. 5; Rozin, *Rich and Poor*, chap. 4, 5. Compare with Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 347-49.

been highly gratified by the children's enthusiastic response to these gestures.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore the comments of Harris and Mendelsohn, above, regarding higher education indicate that the motives of the established leadership were not purely mercenary, but were genuinely geared towards the benefit and socio-economic betterment of the immigrant community. Nevertheless the DHC authorities were frequently accused of being reluctant to hand the reins of power over to others. On one of these occasions, Harris justified his position as follows:

I have tried to do the work connected with it to the best of my ability, and have never shirked my duty, no matter how unpopular. As regards the other 'Heads', they likewise have given their time for many years, and have freely subscribed on every occasion when the needs of the Congregation required it, and have always taken a [illegible] in its welfare and that is why they have [illegible] positions of responsibility.<sup>182</sup>

Although a large proportion of the sources relate to Ireland's Jewish establishment and its worldview, it is nevertheless possible to gain a degree of insight into immigrant communal life that does not have to be filtered through the lens of either the DHC or the *Jewish Chronicle*. The Lennox Street Hebrew Congregation (LSHC) was founded *circa* 1887, and fell into the category that was described to the *Jewish Chronicle* as occupying 'the upper part of insanitary and otherwise unsuitable houses'.<sup>183</sup> June Levine, on the other hand, remembers it in later years as 'a proper synagogue, but very small'.<sup>184</sup> Its minutes, which are probably a rare example of such a record, are most revealing as to the character of Dublin's immigrant community in this period, especially with relation to acculturation and the increasing use of the English language.

On the assumption that the secretary of the LSHC would have been deemed by his peers to have had at least an acceptable – if not high – command of English, the

---

<sup>181</sup> E.g., *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 March 1893 and 3 March 1899.

<sup>182</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to H. J. Bradlaw, 11 April 1904, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1. Harris referred repeatedly in the DHC correspondence to accusations that 'native' leaders held on to positions of power to the exclusion of younger, equally capable men. For this reason, in 1906, he decided to resign all the positions he held in various communal organisations. When it came to resigning his presidency of the DHC, Harris received so many letters from free members and seatholders of the congregation that he was persuaded to change his mind (Letters to John D. Rosenthal, 6 January 1904, and Joseph Isaacs, 3 January 1905, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1; Letters to S. Levy, Sec., YMZA, 2 December 1906 and 19 December 1906, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2). In 1909 two longstanding members of the council resigned, apparently due to popular opposition to their re-election (Letters to Mr. Cohen, 6 November 1909 and Mr. Levitt, 26 November 1909, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2).

<sup>183</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 April 1890.

<sup>184</sup> Johnston, *Dublin Belles*, 110.

minutes indicate that the level of Jewish education among synagogue members was superior to that of English. There is a strong contrast in the standard of handwriting between English and Yiddish, with constant mistakes and idiosyncrasies in grammar and spelling where English is used. The text is liberally peppered with superfluous exclamation marks, which reflect the excitable personalities that made up the *hevra*. Conversely the designation ‘Hebrew Congregation’, the choice formally to record synagogue proceedings and the use of English, however ungrammatical, reveal a certain absorption of and aspiration to conform to contemporary Anglo-Jewish *mores*. The formal adoption of English at such an early juncture accords with Michelle Heanue’s findings with regard to the remarkably rapid decline of Yiddish in Ireland at both communal and individual levels.<sup>185</sup> This indicates a high degree of voluntarism in the process of anglicisation among Dublin’s immigrant community, which contrasts strongly with the manipulative or enforced nature of acculturation in some larger mainland British cities.

This is corroborated by the isolated snippets of information provided by the *Jewish Chronicle* regarding Dublin’s other *hevrot*, which indicate that anglicisation was the general trend among Dublin’s wider immigrant community at this time. The reader-cum-Hebrew teacher in the DNHC was required from very early on to have English-language skills<sup>186</sup> and, again, the designation ‘Hebrew Congregation’ is significant. In 1913 the Camden Street *hevra* elected its own representative to the Board of Deputies.<sup>187</sup> This demonstrates a desire to strengthen the congregation’s ties with the Anglo-Jewish establishment, and formally to come under its authority. This evidence of the beginnings of a very voluntary acculturation contrasts with Harris’s notion of a self-imposed ‘ghetto’. In addition, it serves as a further caution against the reductive and sweeping judgements of scholars such as Hyman or, indeed, of anyone who would assume that the patterns that have been ascribed to broader Anglo-Jewry

---

<sup>185</sup> Michelle Heanue, *The Decline in the Use of the Yiddish Language in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Jewish Museum Educational Pamphlet No. 5, 2000); Sarah Smyth, personal conversation with the author, 9 October 2013. Although the transition from Yiddish to English in Ireland follows recognised linguistic patterns that are inherent in the migration process, Heanue finds that it occurred with particular speed in the Irish context. Although she attributes this to the small size of the community and the lack of new waves of immigrants to replenish the Yiddish-speaking population, this is clearly not the full story. Sarah Smyth, who is currently researching linguistic patterns among immigrants to Ireland in general, does not believe that the Jewish linguistic transition can have occurred as rapidly as is typically assumed.

<sup>186</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* (31 July 1885 and 16 October 1885) for advertisements for this position.

<sup>187</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 June 1913. This was George Wigoder, who also acted as surgeon-*mohel* for the DHC.

during the mass emigration period can simply be transplanted onto its Irish branch. As has been shown in Section 1.5, anglicisation can in retrospect be understood as having been an inevitable outcome of the immigrant experience, with or without coercion on behalf of the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy. On the other hand, the sources indicate that in Ireland acculturation was, from relatively early on, a conscious decision that was made by immigrants as opposed to a gradual process arising from continued exposure to the host culture. This shows that immigrants were capable of being agents, as opposed to mere passive objects, in this process. It is impossible to avoid some correlation between the relative absence of compulsion and the apparent appetite for acculturation within Ireland's immigrant community. As Endelman observes, immigrants had left eastern Europe in order to start anew rather than faithfully to recreate their old way of life in the west. Thus they were not actually opposed to anglicisation, once this was allowed to proceed on their own terms.<sup>188</sup> Feldman has highlighted the complexity of the acculturation process in London's Jewish East End. He identifies a tendency which he terms 'anglicism' among more traditionally-minded immigrants, that occurred in parallel with externally-imposed programmes of anglicisation. 'Anglicism' espoused loyalty and patriotism towards the British Crown in conjunction with a level of acculturation that did not conflict with traditional Orthodox values.<sup>189</sup> As with Green's work on migrant destinations (see Section 2.1), Feldman's findings remind us that agency was an ever-present factor in the historical processes of mass emigration. Nevertheless, when considering the pace and character of acculturation among immigrant communities, as Section 1.5 has observed it is important to acknowledge the difference in expectations and perspectives that existed between 'natives' and newcomers.

It is also notable that anglicised *mores* were so quick to permeate the world of the *hevrot*, given that these had been set up in order to fulfil the decidedly traditional functions that had not been catered for within the original DHC.<sup>190</sup> The DNHC held services three times a day, in addition to nightly Talmud sessions.<sup>191</sup> The *hevrot* at Camden Street and Lombard Street were also home to regular Talmud study

---

<sup>188</sup> Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 179.

<sup>189</sup> Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, chap. 14.

<sup>190</sup> For a contemporary account of *hevra* worship, see Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 188-89.

<sup>191</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1885 and 5 August 1910; M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 70.

groups.<sup>192</sup> The form of the LSHC minutes suggests that, in addition to fulfilling customary religious functions, the *hevrot* were run along traditional, informal lines. Meetings in the LSHC appear to have been irregular, and much of the congregational business may therefore have been conducted on an individualistic and *ad hoc* basis.

The earliest surviving minutes of the LSHC date from July 1892, apparently in the wake of some kind of reorganisation or revamping. All of the quotations that follow have been faithfully transcribed from the minutebook. The purpose of the first recorded meeting was to discuss the composition of the new board, to adopt the rules and regulations of ‘auer New Constituted Synagogue’ (which were ‘Unianmusley’ adopted by the Board), to appoint honorary officers (who were ‘Uninammously Ellected’), trustees and free members and to ‘sumond’ a general meeting to endorse the rules.<sup>193</sup> At this time synagogue facilities appear to have been very basic; one minute urges the president, Joseph Rubinstein, to pressurise the landlord to remove the ‘Nutions by errecting proper Sanetery arrangment for the Conveyence of Members of aur Congragation!’.<sup>194</sup> At another meeting, a lack of hygiene within the sanctuary was discussed: ‘Mr. W. Beker said that Uncleanlines Exsists in The Synagogue especially upon the Seats. where upon the president asured that Cleanlines will exist for the future as he has ingaged a special women at a salery of one shilling and six pence per week including Linen Whashing’.<sup>195</sup>

The day-to-day running of the *hevra* appears, naturally, to have been fraught with controversy, often over matters that appear trivial to the modern observer.<sup>196</sup> Just as the DHC was influenced by the changing composition of its membership, *hevrot* such as the LSHC became increasingly preoccupied with presenting themselves as respectable, anglicised communities. As noted above, the cantor’s application for certification from the Chief Rabbi was supported by the DHC, with the comment from Harris, ‘I quite agree that it is most undesirable that there should be a

---

<sup>192</sup> M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 94 (Camden Street); *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 November 1913 (Lombard Street). There was also a Talmud group (*hevra shass*) under the auspices of the DHC, which was led by Gavron in Stamer Street (*Jewish Chronicle*, 8 July 1910, 26 April 1912, and 7 June 1912).

<sup>193</sup> Minutes of the Lennox Street Hebrew Congregation, Irish Jewish Museum, Case 1 (hereafter cited as LSHC Minutes), 23 July 1892.

<sup>194</sup> LSHC Minutes, 9 April 1893. The landlord appears to have held to his commitment to improve these facilities within two weeks (13 May 1893), as there is no further mention of the matter in the minutes.

<sup>195</sup> LSHC Minutes, 4 June 1893. The purported lack of immigrant hygiene was a major preoccupation of the Anglo-Jewish elite. This topic is considered in detail in Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare*, chap. 7; for a direct example, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 October 1893.

<sup>196</sup> For a closer survey of the controversies which beset the LSHC, see Section 3.2.

number of officials here connected with Chevras who only hold authorisation from Ecclesiastical Authorities in Russia'.<sup>197</sup> While the congregation's only surviving Laws and Regulations date from a much later period, they evince a noticeable concern for decorum.<sup>198</sup> The final rule states that 'any member or seat holder who in the opinion of the Council has been guilty of improper or disgraceful conduct during Divine Service shall be liable to be expelled by the Council from membership . . .'.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>197</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Chief Rabbi, 4 November 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.

<sup>198</sup> Rule 40, Lennox Street Hebrew Congregation, Irish Jewish Museum, Box 48, Cat. 51, No. 1, undated. As in the DHC, the *shamash* was required to maintain decorum under the wardens' authority.

<sup>199</sup> Rule 45b, LSHC.

### 3.1.1.6 THE UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION

In 1908 the launch of the United Hebrew Congregation (UHC) marked a concerted attempt to unite Dublin's immigrant community within a conveniently located, purpose-built synagogue.<sup>200</sup> The UHC began on a high, enjoying widespread communal support, and boasting a plan of action which included the identification of a suitable site for the new synagogue.<sup>201</sup> Notwithstanding the committee's initial optimism and the practical consideration of pooling resources, it took seven years to close down the grand total of one *hevra*.<sup>202</sup> The project also had the full support of the Chief Rabbi, now J. H. Hertz, on condition that the UHC would 'loyally co-operate with the parent Synagogue at Adelaide Road'.<sup>203</sup> Relations between the respective organisations, however, appear to have been strained, and their precise association at this time is unclear from the sources. Although DHC representatives were invited to UHC meetings from November 1909, the UHC committee felt that any close collaboration with the DHC was impossible to contemplate at that point. It is logical therefore to assume that the two congregations had no formal relationship but rather co-operated on an *ad hoc* basis, as the need arose.<sup>204</sup> Issues also appear to have existed with the leadership of the Lombard Street *hevra*, initially at least.<sup>205</sup>

The UHC building appeal, which received a prominent airing in the *Jewish Chronicle* in December 1913, played on the need for a fitting place of immigrant worship and education, acknowledged a generous pledge by Lord Rothschild, and

---

<sup>200</sup> Minutes of the United Hebrew Congregation, 10 October 1909 (Irish Jewish Museum, Box m/s 81-83, Cat. 48.08, No. 4). The four *hevrot* that participated in the creation of the UHC were Camden Street, Oakfield Place, the LSHC and the DNHC.

<sup>201</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 August 1910. In the end it took another three years to identify a site, Greenville House, that was both conveniently located and suitable for development. Initially Greenville House had been deemed too distant from the main centre of Jewish settlement, but various issues with the other proposed sites, legal and otherwise, steered the committee's eventual decision (*Jewish Chronicle*, 7 February 1913; UHC Minutes, 1909-1913).

<sup>202</sup> UHC Minutes, 7 August 1910 and 14 September 1913 (Camden Street). On the eventual closure of the other *hevrot*, which finally occurred between the late 1960s and early 1980s, see Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 205. The sole survivor was the DNHC, nowadays known as Mahzikei Hadath (or, colloquially, as 'Maxie'), which relocated in 1968 to the suburb of Terenure. It is unclear when this designation was adopted and whether or not it has any relevance to other groups of the same name. Mahzikei Hadath (Upholders of the Law) was established in 1879 in Galicia to promote traditional values and combat modernism (Nicolas de Lange, *An Introduction to Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69). In 1891-1892 in London a vicious dispute erupted when the local *Hevra Mahzikei Hadath* challenged the authority of the chief rabbinate (Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 145-49; Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 209ff.).

<sup>203</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 November 1913.

<sup>204</sup> UHC Minutes, 26 February 1911 (discussion regarding co-operation with the DHC); UHC Minutes, 24 October and 28 November 1909 (invitation for DHC representatives to attend UHC meetings).

<sup>205</sup> UHC Minutes, 31 July 1910 and 14 September 1913.



stressed the reluctance of the congregation to have to appeal to its Anglo-Jewish brethren. Readers were reminded that the project had the full endorsement of the Chief Rabbi through the reproduction of Hertz's letter of support. A sum of over £1,850 had already been raised in Dublin, which seems considerable given the purported economic circumstances of the community at the time.<sup>206</sup> The congregation advertised for a rabbi the following October.<sup>207</sup> The construction of the Greenville Hall synagogue was delayed by the outbreak of World War One and, although worship commenced in the new site, Greenville House, in 1916, the foundation stone of the synagogue was not laid until 1924. The Greenville Hall synagogue was formally consecrated by Isaac Herzog in 1925,<sup>208</sup> an indication that the UHC was by this time fully integrated into the formal communal framework of Jewish Dublin.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the UHC – initially at least – is the apparent unity of purpose, lack of bickering and courtesy that persisted in the face of the difficulties that were involved in raising sufficient funds, in obtaining a suitable site and in waiting for an appropriate time to build. This was sufficiently notable to be recorded in the proceedings; a meeting in July 1910 acknowledged how much had been achieved ‘by working in unity hand in hand’,<sup>209</sup> while the Second Annual Report of 1916 noted:

It is gratifying to be able to report that ambitious hopes entertained at the founding of the United Hebrew Congregation none been so far fully realised the year which has been brought to a close was successful in every respect, and the relation between the members were characterized by the usual harmony and unity of purpose [*sic*]  
 . . .<sup>210</sup>

The undated Rules of the UHC, on the other hand, indicate that such harmony did not always prevail. Regulations concerning the order of debate set out in detail the procedures for meetings, stipulating who was permitted to speak and when, and ruling on interruptions and points of order such as the use of ‘unparliamentary and offensive expressions’. Any meeting which descended into disorder was to be adjourned, and the Chair was empowered to veto any further debate on contentious

---

<sup>206</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 December 1913.

<sup>207</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1914.

<sup>208</sup> Shillman, *Short History*, 22; Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 48-49.

<sup>209</sup> UHC Minutes, 31 July 1910.

<sup>210</sup> Second Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1915-1916 (Irish Jewish Museum, Box m/s 81-83).

matters.<sup>211</sup> As with the DHC appearances were important, thus members found to be ‘guilty of improper or disgraceful conduct calculated to reflect on the Community’ were liable to expulsion from the congregation.<sup>212</sup> The Rules also indicate the type of difficulties that arose concerning the UHC’s three paid officials. As in the DHC all were instructed to arrive punctually at the synagogue, and to be appropriately attired for services. Interestingly both the first *hazan* and second reader, but not the minister, are warned as to the consequences of neglecting their duties. All paid officials were barred from any kind of involvement in business, and prior permission was required by the minister before participating in services in any other congregation.<sup>213</sup>

As had already been the case in the DNHC and the LSHC, the early records of the UHC show an aspiration to present the congregation as anglicised and worshipping ‘according to the manner sanctioned by the Jewish Ecclesiastical authorities of the United Kingdom’.<sup>214</sup> From the outset, the congregation placed itself under Anglo-Jewish authority by contributing to the Chief Rabbi’s Fund and the Board of Deputies.<sup>215</sup> At the same time, the culturally transitional nature of the UHC membership is indicated by the minutes which, although written in a good hand, bear similarities to those of Lennox Street in terms of spelling and grammar.

### 3.1.2 BELFAST

While the Jewish presence in Belfast is more recent than in Dublin, the background of the two communities is somewhat analogous. According to Hyman, the Belfast Hebrew Congregation (BHC) was founded in 1861 by a circle of German Jewish merchants who initially worshipped in each other’s homes.<sup>216</sup> In 1871 the foundation stone was laid for the city’s first synagogue, in Great Victoria Street.<sup>217</sup> Although the congregation had gained the Chief Rabbi’s approval as early as 1864 some differences may have arisen between the two parties, as the new synagogue was

---

<sup>211</sup> Rule 22, United Hebrew Congregation (Irish Jewish Museum, Box m/s 81-83, Cat. 48.05 No. 1, undated).

<sup>212</sup> Rule 47, UHC.

<sup>213</sup> Rules 51-53, 56, UHC.

<sup>214</sup> Rule 2, UHC.

<sup>215</sup> UHC Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1915-1916.

<sup>216</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, chap. 24; and Shillman, *Short History*, 134-36 (history of the Belfast community); *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 October 1864 (the congregation’s first services).

<sup>217</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 July 1871 (describes Great Victoria Street as ‘one of the best thoroughfares of the town’); *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 September 1871 (description of the new synagogue and its interior).

not automatically aligned to the chief rabbinate.<sup>218</sup> This was perhaps due to somewhat liberal leanings as indicated by an advertisement, in 1869, for a minister ‘of the *non-orthodox culte*’.<sup>219</sup> Nevertheless in 1871 the BHC was deemed worthy of a pastoral visit from Nathan Adler, who ‘expressed his high appreciation’ of its work and ‘expiated upon the duties [the congregation] would have to fulfil, and the rights they would enjoy’ by coming under his authority. The BHC soon complied with Adler’s wishes and opted to align itself with the chief rabbinate.<sup>220</sup> The community grew rapidly, presumably with the encouragement of the Anglo-Jewish authorities. In 1892 a new school and *mikveh* (ritual bath) were opened in Fleetwood Street, which was more accessible to the city’s growing immigrant population and subsequently came to be regarded as a ‘branch synagogue’ of the BHC.<sup>221</sup> By 1893 the community had outgrown the Great Victoria Street synagogue.<sup>222</sup> In 1897, 5 Regent Street was purchased to house a national school, which opened the following March with ninety children on the rolls.<sup>223</sup> This was a far cry from the early days, when services could only be held every second Shabbat due to the difficulty of raising a *minyan*.<sup>224</sup>

As in Dublin, various innovations were introduced in Belfast according to the prevailing Anglo-Jewish fashion, indicating the religious leanings of the congregation at this time. Many were instigated by Rev. Dr. Joseph Chotzner, who served two stints in Belfast, from 1869 to 1880 and 1892 to 1897, respectively. These included a choir, confirmation services, congregational singing, children’s services for both genders, and regular lectures and Bible readings in English.<sup>225</sup> It comes as little

---

<sup>218</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 July 1871.

<sup>219</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 January 1869. The advertisement, which had originally appeared in a German newspaper, prompted the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* to ponder, ‘Should there really be a sufficient number of coreligionists at Belfast to form a congregation?’

<sup>220</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 July 1871. However, the BHC was not eligible for representation at the Board of Deputies until the Board was reorganised and expanded in the early 1900s (*Jewish Chronicle*, 21 February 1902).

<sup>221</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 June 1891, 27 May 1892, and 14 March 1902. As noted in Section 2.1, the growth of the community was partly encouraged by the Anglo-Jewish Dispersion Committee in collaboration with communal leaders (*Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1910).

<sup>222</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 September 1893. On the High Holydays, even with the addition of two ‘overflow’ venues, it was reportedly impossible to accommodate the entire community.

<sup>223</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 December 1897 and 22 April 1898.

<sup>224</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 July 1909. According to a ‘typically Irish’ anecdote, a visitor who called to the BHC one Friday night to find the synagogue closed was informed by the caretaker that there was to be no sabbath that week.

<sup>225</sup> Alexander Carlebach, ‘The Rev. Dr. Joseph Chotzner’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 21 (1968): 261-73; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 May 1914 (Chotzner’s obituary). Chotzner was a graduate of Zacharias Frankel’s celebrated Breslau Seminary, which advocated measured and moderate religious reform, and was awarded his doctorate by the University of Breslau. Chotzner regarded himself as something of a literary scholar, although Carlebach describes his work as

surprise that although the *Jewish Chronicle* regarded Chotzner as a fitting representative of Judaism to the outside world, members of the immigrant community were considerably less impressed by his efforts.<sup>226</sup> He, in turn, was stridently critical of what he perceived as their shortcomings, fearing that these reflected badly on more acculturated Jews and resulted in episodes such as the Limerick Boycott.<sup>227</sup>

Differences of opinion over Chotzner are not the only outward indications of the tensions that existed between the BHC and Belfast's broader immigrant contingent. In August 1901 a group of worshippers had reportedly forced entry into Regent Street on Shabbat, having been locked out by the communal authorities.<sup>228</sup> Although this incident was dismissed by the BHC as an attempt by 'certain dissenting members' to challenge its hegemony over these premises, it prompted the decision to relocate to Fleetwood Street, which was renovated accordingly.<sup>229</sup> Although this resulted in a split and the establishment of a rival congregation in Regent Street, these

---

'amateurish'. During his time in Belfast, Chotzner frequently lectured to non-Jewish audiences and maintained an ongoing correspondence with various enlightened Jewish journals such as *Hamagid*, the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*. The introduction of a choir was deemed to add 'considerably to the solemnity and attractiveness of the services' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 3 October 1879). The BHC's first confirmation service was held on a Sunday afternoon and featured a prelude on the harmonium and the singing of 'an appropriate Psalm' by the choir (*Jewish Chronicle*, 3 October 1879). Chotzner then examined the pupils and delivered 'a touching address', before the choir concluded the service with the *Adon Olam* hymn. 'The service . . . was a most solemn one, and produced a deep impression upon all present, among whom were a number of Christian friends' (*Jewish Chronicle*). Further innovations were introduced following Chotzner's return to Belfast in 1892 (*Jewish Chronicle*, 22 September 1893).

<sup>226</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 March 1876; BHC Minutes, 2 April 1911. Chotzner was lauded as one of those Jews 'who understand their religion and possess the gift of expounding it clearly' and was thus capable of conveying to non-Jews 'correct notions of the ancestral faith'. In common with the immigrant community one of Chotzner's successors, Rev. B. L. Rosengard, does not appear to have thought much of his efforts. Rosengard introduced further changes to the way in which services were conducted and increased the frequency of religious instruction for children, reportedly leading to a 'rapid improvement of the moral tone of the community' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 27 September 1889 and 30 May 1890). However it is difficult to tell precisely where Rosengard's efforts were primarily aimed: Germanic laxity, east European traditionalism or, indeed, both. In his probationary address, Rosengard had exhorted the congregation to firmly adhere to their ancient faith in order to prove their devotion to the world. He went on to urge his listeners to pursue rigorously the cause of true religion and morality, while embracing modern enlightenment (*Jewish Chronicle*, 23 August 1889).

<sup>227</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, 14 February 1896, quoted in Carlebach, 'Chotzner', 268. These purported shortcomings included 'bigotry in petty religious matters' and 'fanaticism, which is almost unbearable to every even moderately educated person'. On Chotzner's condescending attitude towards immigrants, see also 265-66.

<sup>228</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 August 1901.

<sup>229</sup> BHC Minutes, 8 December 1901 and 22 December 1901. One correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 'NFMO', dismissed this as a typical provincial quarrel arising from a deliberate attempt to split the congregation on unwarranted grounds. However, NFMO's assertions regarding the convenience of Great Victoria Street, the adequacy of communal accommodation, and the refusal of the Commissioners of Education to sanction the use of the school for worship appear to be debateable (*Jewish Chronicle*, 30 August 1901). BHC Minutes, 4 August 1901, 24 November 1901, 29 July 1913, and 7 September 1913 (8 Commissioners of National Education).

differences persisted for less than two years. As part of the agreement to re-amalgamate in April 1903, the need for a new, centrally-located synagogue was finally acknowledged by the leaders of the BHC.<sup>230</sup> While negotiations were underway for the purchase of two adjacent houses in Fleetwood Street, an appeal appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* for assistance in building a new synagogue in Belfast. This came from the Belfast New Hebrew Congregation (BNHC), which had been established in the early 1890s in Jackson Street and appears to have hitherto enjoyed amicable relations with the BHC.<sup>231</sup> The leaders of the BNHC accused the BHC authorities of being too slow in acting upon existing promises to build a new, suitably located synagogue to replace the now inadequate facilities in Great Victoria Street and Fleetwood Street. Declaring significant communal support both in Belfast and beyond, the BNHC claimed to have acquired its own premises and to be in the process of negotiating with a building contractor.<sup>232</sup> Although the BHC initially refuted these assertions and stubbornly adhered to its original plan of extending Fleetwood Street, this new dispute resulted in a commitment to construct a new synagogue that would serve the entire community in a mutually convenient location.<sup>233</sup> In November 1903 a joint building appeal was launched in the Anglo-Jewish press, bearing the Chief Rabbi's seal of approval.<sup>234</sup> In March 1904 Lady Paula Jaffe laid the foundation stone for the new synagogue in Annesley Road, which was consecrated by the Chief Rabbi that September. In his sermon, Adler dwelt on familiar themes (see Section 1.5): the importance of dignity and decorum during worship in order to create a holy atmosphere, and the communal harmony that was necessary for the development and advancement of the community:

There must by unity and unanimity, loving sympathy, disinterested devotion, and the warm fraternal spirit . . . The opening of this

---

<sup>230</sup> BHC Minutes, 30 November 1902, 2 December 1902, 7 December 1902, 10 December 1902, 11 December 1902, 2 April 1903, 5 April 1903, and 10 May 1903 (negotiations regarding re-amalgamation).

<sup>231</sup> There is practically no information on the BNHC in the sources. The *Jewish Chronicle* only contains the occasional report on its activities, which included a nightly Talmud group (4 August 1893, 6 April 1894, and 25 November 1904). In 1900 members of the BNHC were granted the use of Regent Street for services, indicating cordial relations between the two congregations. However, use of the BHC *shohet* and *mikveh* remained conditional on joining the BHC (Minutes, 12 August 1900).

<sup>232</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 May 1903, 5 June 1903, 12 June 1903, and 19 June 1903 (correspondence on this dispute).

<sup>233</sup> BHC Minutes, 7 December 1902, 11 June 1903, 12 July 1903, and 18 November 1903; *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 July 1903.

<sup>234</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 November 1903; BHC Minutes, 24 September 1903 and 19 October 1903 (on the limited efforts to fundraise locally). Ironically this joint appeal was significantly less ostentatious than that of the BNHC some months previously.

synagogue must mean the closing of its doors for ever on all spite and hatred and jealousy . . . The little differences and differentiations of types and tastes and temperaments between English Jew and foreign Jew should, and must, be merged into the tense striving, the fervent aspiration towards a common goal. The duty which lies nearest to us all is to show a manly and united front, to strengthen the principle of Jewish solidarity, to avoid all strife and split and schism, to advance this synagogue – its status, its power for good in our lives – by unity . . .<sup>235</sup>

This was clearly not the end of rival *minyanim* and synagogues; in 1909 the BHC ruled that High Holyday services could only be conducted in the synagogue, while in 1913 the president, Sir Otto Jaffe, refused to sanction the use of the school for High Holyday overflow, even though the Commissioners for National Education had raised no objection.<sup>236</sup> In 1911 a further, seemingly fruitless, attempt was made to establish another synagogue.<sup>237</sup>

Intra-Jewish disputes in Belfast centred on somewhat more complex matters than the cultural proclivities that divided ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ contingents in Dublin and in many other provincial communities. The ‘native’ element appears to have dwindled far more rapidly in Belfast than in Dublin; with the exception of Jaffe’s negligible input, the BHC seems to have been entirely immigrant-run by the late 1890s. This means that the transfer of leadership from ‘native’ to immigrant occurred far more rapidly in Belfast than in other provincial communities. The virtual disappearance of Belfast’s ‘native’ contingent within the space of a few decades enabled immigrants speedily to infiltrate Belfast’s communal establishment. This transition cannot, therefore, strictly have followed the pattern that has been established by Williams and found to apply to Dublin. There appears to have been little in the way of alternative communal infrastructure in Belfast, and there is no evidence to suggest that membership of the BHC and its hierarchy was equated by newcomers with a level of social advancement beyond the prestige that routinely accompanied any position of communal leadership, as was the case with the DHC. Neither does this rapid accession to mainstream leadership necessarily represent an alignment of wealthier, socially ambitious newcomers with the values that an acculturated communal establishment might be seen to have represented. A thin

---

<sup>235</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 September 1904 and 4 March 1904 (laying of the foundation stone and description of the synagogue).

<sup>236</sup> BHC Minutes, 22 August 1909 and 14 September 1913.

<sup>237</sup> BHC Minutes, 17 December 1911.

veneer of anglicised respectability, inherited from the BHC's Germanic founders, barely masked the chaotic and argumentative traits of the traditional, small-town Jewish background of its new leaders. While there are no sources to illuminate the nature of the congregation's transition from 'native'- to immigrant-led, what can be stated with certainty is that, like its Dublin counterpart, the BHC rapidly became a hybrid of 'native' and immigrant characteristics.

Another significant difference between Belfast and Dublin was the presence of the Jaffe family, who remained important patrons of the community from their arrival in Belfast *circa* 1850, to their departure in 1916 as a result of wartime anti-German sentiment.<sup>238</sup> Daniel Jaffe, who financed the construction of the Great Victoria Street synagogue in 1871, had relocated from Germany to Belfast around 1850 in order to set up what proved to be a highly successful linen house and export business.<sup>239</sup> In 1899 his widow Frederike settled the outstanding mortgage of four hundred pounds on the synagogue.<sup>240</sup> His better-known son, Otto, acted as a magistrate, harbour commissioner, high sheriff of Belfast and German vice-consul, and was awarded an honorary degree by the Royal (now National) University of Ireland.<sup>241</sup> Jaffe also served two terms as lord mayor of Belfast, in 1899-1900 and 1904-1905, and was knighted in 1900. He inherited his parents' interest in the BHC, financing the renovation of the Great Victoria Street synagogue in 1900, the building of a new synagogue at Annesley Road in 1904 and, thereafter, its annual ground rent.<sup>242</sup> Together with his wife Paula, who had a particular interest in children's education,

---

<sup>238</sup> Gillian McIntosh, 'Sir Otto Jaffé'. McIntosh stresses that although there was a degree of confusion as to the relative role and significance of Jewishness, Germanness and Russianness in Britain during World War One, it was the heightened anti-German sentiment following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 as opposed to anti-Jewish sentiment that finally drove the Jaffes from Belfast, reportedly to Sir Otto's great distress.

<sup>239</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 204. Jaffe's munificence was repeatedly remarked upon in the *Jewish Chronicle* (e.g., 14 July 1871). His obituary notes that he was involved in numerous non-Jewish public institutions in Belfast and elsewhere, and left several legacies to charitable institutions in Ireland and abroad. Jaffe's contribution to the linen industry was marked by the erection of a public fountain in the city (*Jewish Chronicle*, 6 February 1874, 25 December 1872, and 23 March 1877).

<sup>240</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899 and 19 January 1900.

<sup>241</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 August 1907.

<sup>242</sup> BHC Minutes, 28 March 1900; *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 April 1882, 27 January 1899, 2 March 1900, 8 February 1901, and 22 January 1904; Gillian McIntosh, 'What the Gardener Heard, or the Indiscretion of Lady Paula Jaffé: Remembering the Jaffés in the Context of Two Wars' (paper presented at the Symposium on Jewish Community, Identity and Memory: Perspectives from Belfast, Queen's University Belfast, 11 September 2012). McIntosh observes that, as in the case of Robert Briscoe, Jaffe's appointment as lord mayor attracted a degree of opposition, open and covert, which is reported in the minutes and proceedings of Belfast City Council. Although he was the first Jew in Ireland to receive a number of these honours, Jaffe has hitherto received little attention from historians of Irish Jewry. On his second appointment as lord mayor, a favourable contrast was made in the *Jewish Chronicle* (15 January 1904) between the conditions for Jews in Belfast compared with Limerick.

Jaffe financed the renovation of the Jewish national school in 1899 and, in 1907, endowed a state-of-the-art, purpose-built premises in Cliftonville Road.<sup>243</sup> Jaffe also readily assisted the congregation in a number of lesser ways, by settling its solicitors' fees on the purchase of Regent Street, by paying for its utilities, and by increasing his annual subscription in 1908 by the handsome sum of twenty-five pounds, to cover a pay rise for the community's controversial minister Rev. J. Rosenzweig (see Section 3.2).<sup>244</sup> At the same time there were limits to Jaffe's generosity. In 1898 he drew the unfavourable comparison between his financing of the purchase of Regent Street and the lack of parental support for the national school that it accommodated.<sup>245</sup> The following year Jaffe urged the community to be more economical in its use of light and heat, commenting that 'Great Victoria Street uses more gas than he and his servants and stables combined'.<sup>246</sup> In 1903, when the congregation faced a deficit of over four hundred pounds, he threatened to resign as treasurer unless the committee could learn to balance its books.<sup>247</sup> The BHC authorities were quick to pick up on these less-than-subtle hints. The leadership was, naturally, fearful of offending Sir Otto as the Jaffes not only provided a financial safety cushion for the community, but lent it a degree of social prestige thanks to their high public profile.<sup>248</sup>

In recognition of his contribution to the BHC, Jaffe was presented with at least three illuminated addresses: in 1899, to mark his appointment as magistrate,<sup>249</sup> in 1900, to commemorate his knighthood;<sup>250</sup> and in 1905, in recognition of his

---

<sup>243</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899 (renovation of the school in Regent Street); *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 August 1906, 1 March 1907, and 8 March 1907 (construction and opening of the Jaffe Memorial National Schools); Shillman, *Short History*, 135. The school was described by contemporary commentators as being among the best of its kind.

<sup>244</sup> BHC Minutes, 31 July 1898, 29 November 1908, and 1 December 1908. During his pastoral visit in 1898, Hermann Adler had lamented the BHC's ongoing debt in relation to the national schools and suggested that Jaffe might clear it, which he appears to have done (*Jewish Chronicle*, 10 June 1898).

<sup>245</sup> BHC Minutes, 31 July 1898 and 15 January 1899.

<sup>246</sup> BHC Minutes, 20 April 1899, 17 December 1899, and 4 January 1900.

<sup>247</sup> BHC Minutes, 15 November 1903.

<sup>248</sup> BHC Minutes, 29 November 1903 and 3 August 1910 (in response to Jaffe's threat to resign as treasurer, a scheme was rapidly devised to improve communal finances and, in 1910, funds were raised within the community to cover the renovation of the synagogue); *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899 and 27 April 1900; BHC Minutes, 12 January 1904 (the vicarious prestige that was attained through the Jaffes).

<sup>249</sup> BHC Minutes, 15 September 1899; *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899. The BHC committee decided to cap the subscription list at half a guinea so as not to discourage poorer members of the community from contributing. Various sub-committees were formed to organise the subscription list, the venue and the refreshments, which were to include a selection of fruitcakes.

<sup>250</sup> BHC Minutes, 4 March 1900 and 28 March 1900; *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 April 1900. On this occasion, the address was financed by the committee alone. In his presentation speech, Rev. Joseph Myers exhorted the community to show its gratitude to the Jaffe family 'by using their best endeavours to uphold the dignity of the Jewish race in Belfast'. This, of course, follows typical Anglo-Jewish



munificence in the building of the Annesley Street synagogue.<sup>251</sup> Jaffe was appointed honorary life president of the synagogue in 1900.<sup>252</sup> As was the case for the leaders of the DHC, Jaffe's response to these gestures indicates that his attachment to the BHC was largely sincere and not simply patriarchal or perfunctory. In 1899 he expressed his gratitude and gratification at the community's evident respect for his parents, and its appreciation of both his and his father's contributions. Jaffe assured those present that he would treasure the address as a memento of the occasion and of the BHC's kindly feelings towards his family.<sup>253</sup> Although he was a rather big fish in a small pond, Jaffe appears to have taken his presidency of the congregation seriously. The BHC minutes show that he attended a reasonable proportion of communal meetings, given his other commitments. Furthermore Jaffe never abused his role as chair, despite his evidently frequent frustration at proceedings.

Notwithstanding the Jaffes' munificence both the congregation and the school faced ongoing financial hardship, illustrating again the type of difficulties that confronted smaller provincial communities (see above and Section 1.5). In February 1898 the Belfast community was forced to follow its Dublin counterpart in appealing to Anglo-Jewish generosity for assistance in purchasing and adapting the Regent Street premises to house its national school. The appeal aimed to strike a chord among the acculturated Anglo-Jewish middle classes by emphasising the school's Jewish and secular credentials. It also pointed out the modest economic condition of the local community, few of whom were in affluent circumstances.<sup>254</sup> The school was opened in March 1898 under the auspices of the National Board of Education for Secular and Religious Instruction, and the management of Rev. Joseph Myers (previously of the CHC) together with two 'English' teachers.<sup>255</sup> Adler, who had initially refused to endorse the appeal, now recognised the difference in context *vis-à-vis* England and took up the cause of Jewish national education in Ireland. On his

---

conventions for addressing immigrant audiences (see above and Section 1.5) and is likely to have coincided with the hopes of the Jaffes themselves.

<sup>251</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 November 1903 and 11 August 1905; BHC Minutes, 17 September 1903. Jaffe had opened the subscription list for Annesley Street with a hefty pledge of one thousand pounds.

<sup>252</sup> BHC Minutes, 18 November 1900, 15 September 1899, 13 July 1902, and 28 July 1902. In this capacity, Jaffe was frequently referred to in gushing terms in the minutes as the 'worthy president'.

<sup>253</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 October 1899.

<sup>254</sup> BHC Minutes, 28 November 1897 and 25 January 1898; *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 December 1897, 24 December 1897, 31 December 1897, and 11 February 1898.

<sup>255</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 April 1898.

pastoral visit in May 1898 he declared himself satisfied with the school.<sup>256</sup> However, as was the case in Dublin, in spite of this and the positive reports of government inspectors, there was ongoing dissatisfaction within the community as to the running of the school, its facilities and its lingering debt.<sup>257</sup> This was due in part to difficulties in raising regular fees from parents, many of whom were either reluctant or unable to pay.<sup>258</sup> Various efforts were made to increase school income, such as the introduction of extra-curricular Hebrew lessons for children attending other schools, and regular collections at communal gatherings or celebrations.<sup>259</sup> This may indicate a conflict over the depth and character of Jewish religious education that was provided in the school which may have prompted parents in Belfast, like their Dublin counterparts, to opt instead to send their children to *melamdim*. The *mikveh* in Regent Street placed further financial strain on the communal coffers.<sup>260</sup> From 1901 Myers was left to make his own way to and from the school, in order to save the community two shillings and sixpence a week on tram fares.<sup>261</sup> Things did not greatly improve with the opening of the new school in 1906.<sup>262</sup> Although the situation appears to have eased after the school became financially independent of the BHC, the congregation continued to experience economic difficulties.<sup>263</sup> These were exacerbated in 1914 with the outbreak of war and the loss of Rosenzweig, which led to a suspension of the annual grant of fifty pounds that was received from the Provincial Ministers' Fund.<sup>264</sup>

With the growth of the Belfast community, various activities were introduced to assist new immigrants with the acculturation process. These included the Jewish Mutual Improvement Society, which was established in 1893 and meet thrice weekly for debates and readings;<sup>265</sup> a Literary and Debating Society (founded in 1900);<sup>266</sup> the

---

<sup>256</sup> BHC Minutes, 25 January 1898; *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 May 1898 and 10 June 1898.

<sup>257</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 June 1900, 14 March 1902, and 20 March 1903 (reports on the School's annual inspections); *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 January 1899 and 16 February 1906 (its ongoing difficulties); BHC Minutes, 5 March 1902 (the inadequacy of its facilities). Again, the contrast between official Jewish and, in this case, government views on the performance of the national school and the communal perspective is interesting to note.

<sup>258</sup> BHC Minutes, 13 August 1899, 29 October 1899, 25 March 1900, 6 June 1901, 9 February 1902, and 20 April 1904.

<sup>259</sup> BHC Minutes, 13 August 1899, 29 October 1899, and 16 December 1900 (lessons took place six or seven days a week for three hours at a stretch); BHC Minutes, 25 March 1900 (fundraising at communal events).

<sup>260</sup> BHC Minutes, 7 April 1901.

<sup>261</sup> BHC Minutes, 24 February 1901.

<sup>262</sup> BHC Minutes, 29 November 1908, 1 December 1908, 13 December 1908, 22 December 1908, and 24 January 1909.

<sup>263</sup> BHC Minutes, 18 November 1913, 27 November 1913, and 29 March 1914.

<sup>264</sup> BHC Minutes, 25 August 1914 and 6 September 1914.

<sup>265</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 November 1893.

JLB (1902);<sup>267</sup> the Young Men's Hebrew Association (1903);<sup>268</sup> a Jewish cycling club (1905);<sup>269</sup> and a naturalisation society (1907).<sup>270</sup> Given the tiny size of Belfast's 'native' contingent by this time, much of the impetus behind these organisations had to have come from within the immigrant community itself. This further corroborates my argument that acculturation among Ireland's immigrant Jewish communities was, from relatively early on, a voluntary process that was the result of a conscious choice that had been made by the immigrants themselves.

### 3.1.3 CORK

The CHC was founded in December 1881 with the sanction of the Chief Rabbi.<sup>271</sup> Eighteen months later the community was described as being composed of approximately thirty people, almost all of whom were recently arrived 'foreigners', who were characterised as hard-working, struggling traders. The congregation itself was 'poor', with a low weekly income that was sufficient only to meet the cost of a *shohet* – of the non-multi-tasking variety – and the rent of one room to serve as a place of worship. Considerable and, reportedly, impartial assistance had been received from a local Presbyterian minister, Rev. Kerr, who had helped in securing a Jewish burial ground among other matters. The *Jewish Chronicle* regarded the nascent CHC as another of the many struggling provincial communities which merited greater support from their better-off co-religionists in England.<sup>272</sup>

The Cork community was particularly renowned for its resentments, feuding and in-fighting and, from its very inception, appears to have been riven by petty internal squabbles.<sup>273</sup> Hyman believes that, by its second year, the CHC had already split. The community remained bitterly divided until the 1920s, despite repeated attempts at re-amalgamation. Virtually nothing is known about the rival congregation beyond some heated letters that were printed in the *Chronicle* in the autumn of

---

<sup>266</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 31 August 1900 and 7 September 1900. This appears to have been connected with the local branch of Dorshei Zion. It is unclear whether this is the same as the Jewish Literary Society which featured in the *Jewish Chronicle* from 1907 onwards (e.g., 8 February 1907).

<sup>267</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 April 1902 and 9 May 1902.

<sup>268</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 January 1903.

<sup>269</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 June 1905.

<sup>270</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 July 1907.

<sup>271</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 December 1881.

<sup>272</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 June 1883 and 14 August 1888.

<sup>273</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 August 1888.

1915.<sup>274</sup> Although Larry Elyan asserted that the split had centred around synagogue attendance, religious and/or ritual differences may be indicated by the name that was chosen by the new congregation, Remnant of Israel, and by its parallel claim to the designation of CHC.<sup>275</sup> Such competing contentions were inevitable in smaller communities such as Cork or Limerick, where there was no pre-existing ‘native’ contingent for the newcomers to define themselves over and against.

As Section 1.5 has shown, on his 1888 pastoral visit Hermann Adler had urged the congregation to cultivate non-Jewish goodwill by acquiring and using the English language and by dealing honourable and considerately with their neighbours. These comments reflect the automatic Anglo-Jewish assumption that immigrants were to some degree responsible for attracting anti-Jewish sentiment.<sup>276</sup> Despite the pledges that were made to Adler in 1888, the community appears to have been slow in framing any formal laws; instead, the minutes show that rules were devised in response to issues as they arose.<sup>277</sup> Following one of the bitterest communal controversies, concerning the building of a new synagogue and school, a range of rulings were introduced to ensure order during meetings. These indicate a fractious community that fully indulged its grudges. Members who persistently interrupted others, disobeyed the chair, or caused any form of disturbance were liable to be suspended from membership pending ‘a full and ample apology’, which was to be recorded in the minutes.<sup>278</sup>

The congregation did eventually succeed in raising the funds to employ a competent Hebrew and religion teacher, with the assistance of the Provincial Ministers’ Fund.<sup>279</sup> Myers was appointed in 1890 and, by 1893, the CHC was in a position to afford a second minister.<sup>280</sup> In 1891 the community established its own accredited national school, which incorporated both secular and religious instruction.

---

<sup>274</sup> ‘Cork Hebrew Congregation, Cork, Republic of Ireland’, Jewish Communities and Records United Kingdom, [http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Ireland/cork1\\_hc/index.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Ireland/cork1_hc/index.htm) (accessed 23 May 2011).

<sup>275</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 219, 223-24; *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 October 1900 and 26 October 1900; CHC Minutes, 10 December 1909, 17 December 1909, 18 December 1909, and 15 December 1912; Laurence Elyan, ‘The Jews of Cork’, *Commentary* (Dec. 1952), [www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-jews-of-cork/](http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-jews-of-cork/) (accessed 23 June 2011); Section 3.2, below.

<sup>276</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 August 1888.

<sup>277</sup> CHC Minutes, 24 August 1899, 31 March 1901, 31 August 1902, 28 September 1902, 9 November 1902, 26 November 1905, 30 November 1902, 15 March 1903, 22 March 1903, 28 April 1907, and 19 October 1913, regarding the appointment of officers and eligibility for office, seats and seat rentals, conditions of membership, the distribution of *aliyot* and the relationship of officers with other congregations.

<sup>278</sup> CHC Minutes, 10 August 1913.

<sup>279</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 August 1888.

<sup>280</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 223-24; *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 April 1893.

This proved so popular that it had to be relocated to larger premises in 1896.<sup>281</sup> These seem to have been impressive achievements for a community that was so modest in numbers and means. Assistance for the school relocation project was sought from wider Anglo-Jewry; the Cork community, now numbering approximately three hundred people, was still extremely poor, claiming to have only two to three members who were ‘in moderately easy circumstances’.<sup>282</sup> A formal appeal was opened in 1898, when the situation reached the point of a foreclosure which was depicted as threatening ‘the moral wreck of the congregation’ itself.<sup>283</sup> A fresh appeal, endorsed by the Chief Rabbi, was launched the following year in the *Jewish Chronicle*, under the shadow of legal proceedings.<sup>284</sup> In addition to the national school, a free *heder* was opened for girls in 1909 and a girls’ sabbath school was started in 1913.<sup>285</sup>

The community’s economic struggles persisted throughout its first few decades of existence, notwithstanding the *Chronicle’s* exhortations for assistance. This again illustrates the general lack of Anglo-Jewish interest in the fortunes of the small provincial communities that were used to alleviate the socio-economic pressures that were experienced by the ‘centre’. The CHC’s financial concerns were particularly pronounced when it came to the construction and maintenance of communal property. The stressful situation provided a perfect excuse for simmering internecine tensions and resentments to bubble to the surface, occasionally resulting in legal action.<sup>286</sup> In 1910 a new plea was published in the pages of the *Chronicle* for assistance in raising the five hundred pounds that was still required for the building of a new synagogue.<sup>287</sup> This appears to have had little effect as almost a year later, when the appeal was relaunched, the same amount was reported as outstanding.<sup>288</sup> Building finally commenced on the new synagogue in December 1912, and the foundation stone was laid with due ceremony the following February.<sup>289</sup> At the annual general meeting in 1913, the outgoing treasurer ‘prided himself’ on being able to report a healthy balance of fifty pounds, nine shillings and elevenpence (which would have

---

<sup>281</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 August 1893; Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 223-24.

<sup>282</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 January 1896.

<sup>283</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 September 1898, 28 October 1898, and 2 December 1898.

<sup>284</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 February 1899, 17 February 1899, 24 February 1899, and 3 March 1899.

<sup>285</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 October 1909 and 28 March 1913.

<sup>286</sup> CHC Minutes, 5 January 1901, 6 April 1902, 7 March 1903, 24 November 1912, 19 October 1913, and 9 August 1914.

<sup>287</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 December 1910.

<sup>288</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 October 1911.

<sup>289</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 December 1912 and 7 February 1913.

been greater still had twenty-five pounds not been spent on bringing legal proceedings against an erstwhile trustee who had been slow in signing over synagogue property).<sup>290</sup> This prosperity was, however, short-lived as construction had to be suspended the following year due to lack of funds.<sup>291</sup> The synagogue finally opened in 1914, with a renewed appeal for assistance in clearing the congregational debt.<sup>292</sup> Although Cork's two congregations had reunited in worship in December 1912 for the first time in sixteen years,<sup>293</sup> it would take many more years for a full rapprochement to be reached.

In 1903 United Synagogues had threatened to remove the CHC from its subscription list due to arrears of twenty-three pounds and two shillings. These were subsequently written off in return for a commitment to regular future payments with immediate effect.<sup>294</sup> Despite the dismissive assessment of the Anglo-Jewish establishment,<sup>295</sup> which has been noted in Section 1.5, the members of the CHC appear to have taken the Chief Rabbi's regular exhortations to provincial Jewry very seriously. The minutes indicate a community that, while analogous in size, composition and character to Dublin's *hevrot*, was considerably more aligned to the Anglo-Jewish elite from its very outset than its spiritual counterparts in Dublin. This was in the best interest of both the CHC leadership and the Anglo-Jewish 'centre', given the absence of any 'native' Jewish contingent in Cork to assume the role of intermediary, mentor and representative of the central establishment. A direct relationship with London, as opposed to Dublin, was also entirely natural for all of the smaller Irish communities at this time as London was the *de facto* centre of Anglo-Jewry to which all provincial congregations were expected to defer. In many ways the lack of an established Jewish presence in Cork was beneficial, allowing the city's immigrant Jewish population to construct its own, direct relationship with the Anglo-Jewish authorities that was, in relative terms, positive and cordial. The CHC was integrated into the United Synagogues system, subscribed to the Chief Rabbi's Fund and sought the Chief Rabbi's endorsement in choosing its minister.<sup>296</sup> The

---

<sup>290</sup> CHC Minutes, 19 October 1913 and 16 November 1913; *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 March 1913.

<sup>291</sup> CHC Minutes, 19 April 1914.

<sup>292</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 September 1914.

<sup>293</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 December 1912.

<sup>294</sup> CHC Minutes, 15 March 1903.

<sup>295</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 March 1903.

<sup>296</sup> CHC Minutes, 18 December 1910, 17 March 1912, 12 May 1901, and 14 July 1901.

congregation's officials were required to have a sound knowledge of English.<sup>297</sup> The community had a number of its own anglicising ventures which again, of necessity, would have been immigrant-led and, therefore, representative of the entirely voluntary aspirations in terms of acculturation that have been identified above. These initiatives included a Hebrew Young Men's Association, which was established in 1896 with the objective of mutual improvement through debates, lectures and a reading room; a Jewish Young Men's Literary Association (founded in 1899), and a Jewish Athletic Association (1909).<sup>298</sup> Interestingly, there is no mention in any of the sources of any traditional religious study groups. Although economic exigencies often overrode traditional religious pursuits among Britain's immigrant Jews, we have seen that this was not the case in the other principal Irish communities.

### 3.1.4 CONCLUSIONS

Focusing of necessity on Dublin, this section has examined the evolution of Jewish communal life in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the broader context of the mass emigration period. In particular, Ireland has been considered with relation to its most immediate setting as a British provincial Jewry, allowing us to discern both similarities and major differences between the Irish communities and their larger British counterparts. Traditional approaches, in contrast, have failed to make much distinction between Ireland and Britain. As a result Irish Jewry has tended to be relativised, on the one hand in terms of mainland Britain and, on the other with relation to Dublin, as the largest and best documented of the Irish communities.

The section opened by examining Jewish communal life in Dublin which was, in the late 1880s, a vanishing provincial outpost that followed Anglo-Jewish religious and cultural patterns. By the early twentieth century Dublin had been transformed by east European immigration into a vibrant and rich immigrant-led community that abounded with charitable, religious, social and educational institutions. It is apparent that, despite some significant differences in size and setting, Williams' model for the

---

<sup>297</sup> CHC Minutes, 19 October 1913 and 2 November 1913. The rival CHC, however, only required its reader-cum-*shohet*-cum-teacher to have a 'fair' knowledge of English (*Jewish Chronicle*, 17 September 1915). This may be a further indication that cultural and/or ritual differences underpinned this schism.

<sup>298</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 July 1896, 29 December 1899, and 24 September 1909.

development of Manchester's Jewish community and the emergence of its new, more culturally diverse Jewish elite, is useful in helping us to understand the evolution of communal leadership and institutions in Dublin. However while class and ethnicity certainly played a role in Dublin's communal divisions, these seem to have been considerably more complex and fluid, and less defined in many respects, than those visible in major English cities such as London and Manchester. Although Dublin and Belfast both had established 'native' contingents prior to accelerated immigration, the transfer of communal leadership from 'native' to immigrant hands in Belfast was a rather more complex affair than in Dublin. Smaller communities, such as Cork, were entirely immigrant-led from the beginning. Notwithstanding a traditional character that was more analogous to Dublin's *hevrot*, from its outset the CHC aligned itself with the chief rabbinate and cultivated a direct relationship with the central Anglo-Jewish leadership. Belfast, in contrast, started out as a more liberal-leaning congregation that did not immediately come under the Chief Rabbi's tutelage. This shows that the small size of the Irish community has never precluded internal diversity. Indeed it is likely that, were the sources available to allow for an examination of Ireland's smaller congregations, further evidence would be uncovered to support this view. This challenges the assumption that it is appropriate to treat British provincial Jewry as a generalised entity, or to view the history of this period purely through the lens of the communal majority in London. Rather, it supports alternative historiographies that emphasise the significance of local as well as global factors in shaping and defining the character and identity of each individual community and thus, by extension, of Jewry as a whole.<sup>299</sup>

The ongoing financial difficulties that were encountered by all of the main Irish communities in this period, whether or not they had a 'native' contingent, show that provincial communities were left to bear a significant proportion of the burden of mass immigration with little assistance from the Anglo-Jewish 'centre'. As Chapter One has argued, no prosperous Jewish establishment was equal to the burden of mass immigration. Nevertheless the extent to which the Anglo-Jewish middle classes seriously attempted to meet this burden is questionable. As Section 3.1.1 has shown, despite the prior generosity of Dublin Jews to Anglo-Jewish causes, English Jews were reluctant to succour the Dublin community in its time of financial need. This

---

<sup>299</sup> Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry*; Gilman, 'Frontier'.



indicates that, as Section 1.5 has suggested, while the Anglo-Jewish authorities were eager to offload their immigration problem to suitable parts of the Provinces they were somewhat less quick to provide the support that these nascent communities required, whether financial, spiritual or moral. Given the absence of any meaningful Anglo-Jewish input, efforts to advance acculturation and anglicisation in all of the major Irish communities were largely the outcome of conscious choices, that were made by immigrants themselves on an overwhelmingly voluntary basis. The sources reveal that, from a very early point, the English language and English forms were widely and readily adopted by immigrant Jews within what were regarded by the Jewish establishment as thoroughly traditional, and therefore retrograde, institutions. This reflected, and perhaps influenced, the choices that were adopted by individual immigrant families, as set out by Heanue. In Dublin, where there was already a small, acculturated Jewish elite, a set of culturally hybrid institutions gradually emerged as traditional and anglicised organisations came to meet in the middle. Although these might be seen as emblematic of the course of acculturation in Jewish Ireland, it could well be that this phenomenon is not unique in the annals of British provincial Jewry. These findings contrast with the situation in some of the larger British communities, where acculturation was, to an extent, an external imposition that the Jewish elite believed could only successfully be achieved by means of manipulation and coercion. It also shows that immigrants did not necessarily have to be the passive recipients of anglicisation, but were capable of becoming agents of cultural change in their own right. This supplements Endelman's argument that immigrants were not opposed to anglicisation when left to their own devices by showing that, when free of external interference, immigrants could be keen and quick to acculturate even though their rate of acculturation may not have matched the demands and expectations of their more established counterparts (see Section 1.5). These conclusions also tally with Feldman's contentions regarding the Jewish East End of London. However, given the demographics of the Irish communities with respect to 'natives' and immigrants, the process in question is probably better understood in the Irish context as 'anglicisation' or 'acculturation' as opposed to 'anglicism'. The evidence from the Irish communities suggests that the cultural aspirations of Ireland's immigrant Jewish community were more far-reaching than those identified by Feldman as anglicism. Instead, Ireland's immigrant Jewish communal life was from very early on based

around anglicised forms of institutional organisation and social activity that, in some cases, promoted the use of the English language within the immigrant milieu.

In sum this section corroborates one of my principal arguments, that the history of Irish Jewry should not simply be dismissed as a straightforward replica of its mainland British counterpart and, by extension, that each provincial community has its own unique social and cultural context which merits examination in its own right.<sup>300</sup>

### 3.2 COMMUNAL LIFE/COMMUNAL STRIFE

I think if Dr. Adler was to attend to the miserable squabbles that take place in the congregations in Ireland he would have to devote his whole time to that purpose . . .<sup>301</sup>

Having investigated the broader processes that affected Ireland's Jewish community, it is now time to turn to its more mundane but nevertheless equally revealing details. While Section 3.1 concentrated to a large extent on Dublin's 'native' contingent and relations between the Irish provincial communities and the Anglo-Jewish establishment, the focus of the chapter now shifts to primarily local affairs. Here the characters, concerns and interrelationships of Ireland's immigrant community are examined in greater detail. This section commences with a contextual re-assessment of features of the Irish Jewish immigrant milieu which have, in the past, been a frequent focus of less-than-objective commentary. These include a purported materialism, what is widely assumed to be a disproportionate involvement in moneylending, and the impact of a new environment and altered circumstances on the quality of Jewish observance. Perspectives from both within and beyond the community are considered. This enables us to explore the influence that external negative stereotyping has wielded upon the internal evaluations of communal life that form the basis of the existing historiography of Irish Jewry. The second part of the analysis focuses on the type of controversy for which Irish Jews were renowned, in common with their peers throughout Britain. As will be shown, internecine conflict

---

<sup>300</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis'. Although Duffy also argues for the unique and individual nature of the Dublin community, in basing this upon the misplaced notion derived from communal narrative of a longstanding, distinctly Irish Jewish character that evolved over hundreds of years of uninterrupted Jewish presence in Ireland, he fails to locate nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish Jewry within its correct – British – context.

<sup>301</sup> 'NFMO', *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 August 1901.

provides an effective vehicle for investigating internal immigrant relations in their own right. This fulfils the dual function of elaborating and reinforcing the findings of Section 3.1 while laying the foundations for the analysis of communal institutions that follows in Chapter Four.

### 3.2.1 COMMUNAL LIFE

The steady acculturation of Ireland's immigrant community was marked by a shift in emphasis to secular education and pursuits, mirroring its gradual linguistic transition from Yiddish to English. Primary sources, and the growing number of reports to the *Jewish Chronicle* of academic achievement within the immigrant community, show that the ambition of the immigrants to achieve social and cultural parity with their 'native' counterparts was beginning to be realised.<sup>302</sup> The *Chronicle* items nevertheless indicate a somewhat conflicted mindset among immigrant parents in this period. In the secular arena, the achievements and accomplishments of girls were equally prized and prioritised by Jewish parents as those of boys. As Section 3.1 has noted, religious learning was in contrast governed by a more traditional outlook which distinguished between the standards and expectations that were applied to male and female education, respectively. This paradox probably reflects a wider confusion arising from the demands and exigencies of acculturation, and represents an incomplete ideological transition from 'old' to 'new'. In many instances, secular prowess came at the cost of traditional values. While similar processes have been identified in other British immigrant communities (see Section 3.1) it is unclear whether, in the Irish case, this progression was down to purely material concerns or the wish to escape customary religious strictures, or whether it was a consequence of the voluntary acculturation that has been identified above. Increased religious laxity alarmed those in the community who were concerned at missionary activities that targeted unwitting and vulnerable Jewish children with gifts and entertainments.<sup>303</sup>

---

<sup>302</sup> Examples of primary sources are M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 66-67; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1906. As the twentieth century progressed, social and academic announcements came to represent an increasing proportion of the items that were reported by members of the Irish communities to the *Jewish Chronicle*. In the case of Cork, from 1915 on, these came to outnumber the other news items that were reported to the *Chronicle*. The access of Irish immigrants to higher education appears to have surpassed that of their counterparts in London, where this was a relatively rare phenomenon (Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 230-31).

<sup>303</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 May 1907 and 28 May 1909; DJBG Minutes, 29 September 1912; Bloom, 'Girlhood Recollections', 29; Mark Gilfillan, 'The Free Church of Scotland and Jewish Edinburgh,

In this vein, more than one observer has perceived a growing materialism among the newcomers. This has been based on an uncritical and, at times, distorted presentation of contemporary sources. Once the original comments are placed in context, it becomes clear that they merit more detailed interrogation and should be approached with greater caution, as the matter is rather more complex than existing, reductive assessments imply. A good example is Myer Joel Wigoder whose remarks, below, have been regurgitated to the point of becoming hackneyed, as a straightforward critique of immigrant brashness.<sup>304</sup> When Wigoder's text is more fully quoted (below, in italics), it becomes clear that his views were, in fact, far more nuanced than this tendentious interpretation suggests:

*. . . The flow of immigration into Ireland has been heavy and unsystematic . . . In general, the changing from one land to another has played havoc with the social values as we formerly appreciated them.*

Here the predominant factor is money; learning and dignity are relegated to the background. One often sees people who were well respected in their former lands, for their knowledge or their qualities of leadership, here standing outside a Synagogue during the Festivals, because they could not afford to pay for a seat. In contrast, men who were unknown abroad, but who have managed to acquire wealth, rule the community, dominate the public institutions, and constitute the authorities in the Synagogues. The process of developing a balanced community will take two or three generations. . . .

*The community is virtually in a state of flux . . .*<sup>305</sup>

Thus it is evident that Wigoder is attributing the undesirable traits that he despises to the unsettling processes of emigration, resettlement and acculturation,

---

1886-1908' (paper presented at the Jews on the 'Celtic Fringe' Conference, University of Ulster, Belfast, 5-6 September 2011). Anger within the Jewish community at missionary activity was such that demonstrations were staged at conversionist meetings during May 1909, and the idea of a petition to Dublin Corporation requesting a ban on conversionist activity was mooted. Although these rallies appear to have been non-violent, they did reportedly attract a police presence. The *Jewish Chronicle* strongly disapproved of such action, opining that it was wiser for Jews to refrain from dignifying missionaries with any form of response. Instead readers were advised 'loyally to pursue the practice of their own faith and to treat the conversionists with contempt'. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Jewish fears tended to be misplaced. Bloom dismisses the conversionist overtures that she encountered in Dublin, while Mark Gilfillan has identified a similar cynicism among Edinburgh's Jews. In 1912 the DJBG undertook to investigate Gudansky's concerns that missionaries were targeting poor children within the community; as the matter was never revisited, it seems likely that these were largely unfounded. Although Bloom believed that the Adelaide Girls' Friendly Society was intended to counteract conversionist influence, there is nothing in either the contemporary reports to the *Jewish Chronicle* or in the Society's activities as they are described in any of the sources to corroborate this impression. Instead, it is likely that the situation in London (outlined in Rozin, *Rich and Poor*, 191) played on the anxieties of provincial communities.

<sup>304</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', 76-77; Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 96-98.

<sup>305</sup> M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 66-67.

which had cast the immigrant community into ‘a state of flux’. In contrast, Duffy has inferred a clear-cut contrast between the types of immigrant Jew that he believed to be represented by Wigoder and Robert Bradlaw, respectively. In so doing, he failed to recognise – probably due to Wigoder’s use of Bradlaw’s Hebrew name, Reuben, in his memoir – that the two families were connected through marriage and Wigoder actually held Bradlaw in high regard. Wigoder’s brother George was married to Bradlaw’s daughter Jessie, and Wigoder describes Bradlaw as ‘one of the most respected leaders of the Dublin community’.<sup>306</sup>

‘Halitvack’ believed that the crux of the issue was the wish to keep up with one’s neighbours: ‘The spirit of emulation in worldly affairs is too strong, and all laws of economy are often overstepped . . . they all want to be thought of equal standing with the best amongst them, and the results are that living in Dublin has come to be extremely expensive . . .’<sup>307</sup> This reminds us that, as Section 2.1 has argued, Jews migrated to Ireland to make better lives for themselves and their families. As this was not an aspiration that could be fulfilled through the neglect of either secular education or material matters, the pressures of daily existence in Ireland posed a considerable threat to traditional Jewish observance and practice,<sup>308</sup> as it did in other provincial communities. Many Irish Jews were left with little choice but to work on sabbaths and Jewish festivals, although this remained a contentious matter. Larry Elyan attributed the acrimonious split in the CHC to his grandfather Myer Elyan’s dogged insistence on regular synagogue attendance.<sup>309</sup> Meanwhile, in Belfast, a Christian observer castigated the city’s Jews in the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* for their neglect of the holy sabbath.<sup>310</sup>

As Rivlin observes, there was little opportunity in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for those with a good Hebrew education, and

---

<sup>306</sup> M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 52-56; Duffy, ‘Socio-Economic Analysis’, 76-77.

<sup>307</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1906.

<sup>308</sup> For an overview of the hardships involved in some of the most common Jewish immigrant professions at this time, see Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 72-77.

<sup>309</sup> Elyan, ‘Jews of Cork’; Bloom, ‘Girlhood Recollections’, 30-31; Bloom, Interview with Gottfried, 7-10. According to Bloom’s parents, Myer Elyan, when minister of the CHC, had cursed those who persisted in working on Jewish holy days from the *bimah* (pulpit). His grandson, however, denounced this as a ‘highly coloured travesty . . . an absurd *bubbeh-meise* [old wives’ tale]’ arising from the coincidental death of a man who had been publicly rebuked by his grandfather. The CHC Minutes (17 November 1912) would appear to support Larry Elyan’s version of events in recording ‘a scathing attack by Mr. [Myer] Elyan on the members of the congregation resulting in disorder’.

<sup>310</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 December 1876.

determined religious scholars remained poor throughout their lives.<sup>311</sup> Wigoder himself had had to struggle ‘to save myself from being completely submerged by economic facts’ while working around the clock to make a living in Dublin, with little opportunity for the study that he prized so highly.<sup>312</sup> Not everybody shared Wigoder’s determination and devotion to Jewish learning; without it he felt incomplete, and his grandson Geoffrey relates that Wigoder used to sit in his shop immersed in study, and became impatient when disturbed by customers.<sup>313</sup> On the other hand, Wigoder also valued secular achievement, and was delighted when his daughter Sara followed her brothers into the Royal College of Surgeons.<sup>314</sup>

As pragmatism co-existed with a strong sense of religious Orthodoxy – or at least its outward conventions – it can be tricky to discern the boundaries between sincerity and the need to maintain appearances. In a small and intimate community such as Dublin, this was a far greater concern than in the principal British communities. These were so large that any laxity in personal religious observance did not alienate one from the wider community and its social and economic support networks, leading to a rapid decline in general observance.<sup>315</sup> While Leventhal recalled an upbringing of strict ritual observance, Leslie Daiken’s short story ‘As the Light Terrible and Holy’ depicts a purportedly typical Yom Kippur in a Dublin *hevra* where the holiest day of the Jewish year is observed in a purely perfunctory manner by the congregation. The men that are present are more concerned with discussing business and card-playing than with prayer and atonement, while the boys scribble graffiti on the book-rests in a desperate attempt to stave off their insufferable boredom.<sup>316</sup> Although it is impossible to know how faithful Daiken’s representation is to the reality, to ‘Halitvack’ the immigrant community was nothing more than ‘nervously orthodox’:

A Jew with a cigarette in his mouth on the South Circular Road on a Sabbath day would be as startling a sight as if it happened in the Market square in Okmyan. This is all due to the fact, no doubt, that

---

<sup>311</sup> Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 96.

<sup>312</sup> M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 51-57.

<sup>313</sup> M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 66; G. Wigoder, *Dublin’s Fair City*, 9.

<sup>314</sup> M. J. Wigoder, *My Life*, 96-97, 101.

<sup>315</sup> Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 147-48.

<sup>316</sup> Leventhal, ‘To Be a Jew’, 209; Leslie Daiken, ‘As the Light Terrible and Holy’, *Dublin Magazine* (Jan.-Mar. 1946): 32-38.

everybody knows everybody else, and a certain standard of self-respect and general decorum has to be maintained.<sup>317</sup>

These double standards persisted well into the 1940s when June Levine was growing up. According to her, ‘It didn’t matter how far you had to walk [on Shabbat]. Certainly if you didn’t walk you would be seen not to walk’.<sup>318</sup>

Equally ambiguous were the Jewish dietary laws. Levine recalls the importance of food to the immigrant community: ‘Food and comfort were all these people had to give each other . . . they made a cocoon of the family and food was the currency of a mother’s comfort. So there was a great emphasis on food, on not eating food that wasn’t kosher, as well as on religious matters . . .’<sup>319</sup> Nevertheless, even setting aside the fastidiousness that has been enabled by modern technology and living conditions,<sup>320</sup> standards appear to have been somewhat questionable. Rivlin notes a universal willingness to buy and sell products that, while deemed free of animal products, were not actually certified as kosher.<sup>321</sup> What she fails to account for is the expediency that was a necessary feature of Jewish immigrant life in a small, outlying country such as Ireland. This is perhaps best illustrated by Bloom’s recollections of Passover in Dublin. Bloom describes how members of the community were cynical at the idea of paying inflated prices for special Passover fruits, when the only apparent difference was ‘the ould fellow with the whiskers’ who adorned the packaging. Instead, an alternative arrangement was made with a local grocer, who set aside containers of dried fruit to be opened during the festival in the presence of the local rabbi.<sup>322</sup>

Although Rivlin believes that the standards for meat were higher than those for other foods,<sup>323</sup> this appears to be debateable. In 1907 the *Jewish Chronicle* reported ‘much consternation’ when a Christian butcher in Dublin was found to have sold non-kosher meat to Jewish customers. This was attributed to the absence of a

---

<sup>317</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1906.

<sup>318</sup> Johnston, *Dublin Belles*, 108.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 February 2013. Dina Brawer, in reminding us that the Jewish mothers of the past did not have separate sinks, dishwashers, Passover kitchens or multiple sets of crockery and cutlery observes, ‘Our [modern Jewish] socioeconomics have led to inflation in the quality of religious observance. We no longer question whether something is kosher but rather how kosher it is.’

<sup>321</sup> Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 4-6, 59. Rivlin claims that in the past, the *hekhsher* (seal of kashrut) was less valued in Ireland than elsewhere, even among very Orthodox Jews, and views the community as a whole as having always been traditional, as opposed to ‘totally Observant’.

<sup>322</sup> Jessie S. Bloom, ‘Pessach’, 5.

<sup>323</sup> Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 4-6.

communal regulatory board and a lack of superintendence by local slaughterers.<sup>324</sup> *Shehita* appears to have been an ongoing problem, and one that was not restricted to Dublin. It was the subject of repeated complaints to the communal authorities in Belfast, even after the formation of a dedicated Shehita Board by the BHC in 1910. The *shohtim*, Revs. Barnett and Myrowitz, were repeatedly condemned for being unpunctual and slapdash in their work, and were accused of helping themselves to more than their allotted share of the meat, which they allegedly sold on to others.<sup>325</sup> Things were no better in Cork judging by the following letter, which was sent to the synagogue by a former president, Simon Spiro, in 1919:

I would ask you to convey my acknowledgement to the President and Officers of the Congregation for a further supply of 'Trifah' meat which was sent to me on Tuesday last.

The parcel was sealed in the usual way, and there was nothing to arouse my suspicions in any way till the Rev. Mr. Shatz was good enough to inform me on the following day that the parcel contained a quantity of 'Trifah' meat.

I must admit that we found no difference in taste, presumably because we get it so often. I have no blame for Mr. Jones. If he knowingly sends us 'Trifah' meat instead of 'Kosher', it is because he is convinced that the meat killed by him or his men, is as good if not better than the meat killed by Mr. Shatz. Obviously, some of our communal leaders are of the same opinion, and why not?

. . . I can quite understand the reason for a renewal of the demand for increased seat-rent. If the members of the Cork Congregation have special dietary privileges which are not enjoyed by any other Congregation, surely no one should object to pay a higher rent for his seat.<sup>326</sup>

It is clear that the issue of *shehita* in Ireland eventually became something of a joke among the Anglo-Jewish establishment; in 1910 the *Jewish Chronicle* printed a spoof letter from a 'Rory O'Moses, Ballymeshugar, Ireland', which refers ironically to a 'Trifah Board'.<sup>327</sup> Harris had already acknowledged that *shehita* in Dublin was in a 'most unsatisfactory state', which he predictably attributed to the lack of appropriate qualifications among the officials attached to the various *hevrot*.<sup>328</sup> However, the

---

<sup>324</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 April 1907.

<sup>325</sup> BHC Minutes, 20 July 1909, 29 July 1909, 18 December 1910, 25 January 1910, 26 February 1911, 29 October 1911, 10 March 1912, and 27 September 1914 for examples of the issues and complaints that arose in Belfast regarding *shehita* and on the formation of the Belfast Shehita Board.

<sup>326</sup> Simon Spiro, Letter to J. T. Clein, Hon. Sec., Cork Hebrew Congregation, 30 May 1919 (Irish Jewish Museum, uncatalogued).

<sup>327</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 March 1910. 'Trifah' or *treif* refers to non-kosher meat, while 'Ballymeshugar' is a pun on the Hebrew/Yiddish word *meshugah*, 'crazy'.

<sup>328</sup> Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Chief Rabbi, 4 November 1908, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 2.



inclusion of a number of instructions pertaining to *shehita* in the revised ministerial duties of 1913, coinciding with the establishment of a formal community-wide regulatory body, suggests that the salaried officials of the DHC were equally responsible for the situation.<sup>329</sup> The establishment of a Shehita Board in Dublin had taken five years of negotiation, corroborating Williams' observation that *shehita* was a delicate and contentious matter that should not be underestimated in its importance to communal relations in the Provinces. On the other hand, there is no evidence in the Irish sources of the kind of acrimonious divisions surrounding *shehita* that were seen at the time in England.<sup>330</sup>

Hermann Adler's repeated exhortations to the various Irish congregations on the subject of moneylending and of building appropriate relations with the host community have, like Wigoder's remarks, widely been taken up as a straightforward reflection of conditions in the Irish communities.<sup>331</sup> However Adler's criticisms should not necessarily be assumed to have been endorsed by Dublin's Jewish establishment, let alone its immigrant counterpart. An ironic piece from the *Jewish Chronicle* which pokes fun at the Anglo-Jewish attitude towards the Provinces in general (see Section 1.5), indicates that the pastoral sermon he delivered at the DHC in 1898, which included recommendations regarding personal habits, business dealings and relations with the host community among other things, had not been welcomed by the Dublin leadership. This places a revealing, albeit presumably fictitious, remark in the mouth of 'Mr. M. E. S—n' (presumably, Solomons): 'Well, Sir, when the Chief Rabbi pays us his next Pastoral visit let him not lecture us'.<sup>332</sup>

Section 1.5 has indicated that similar advice was a regular feature of Adler's stock repertoire in addressing 'foreign' and provincial communities. Thus when viewed in context, the sermons he gave in Ireland are simply an element of the bigger Anglo-Jewish *mission civilitrice* among immigrants. They were also a sign of

---

<sup>329</sup> DHC Minutes, 9 November 1913.

<sup>330</sup> Williams, 'Class and Community', 28-29; Section 3.1, above. In 1909 efforts to establish a Shehita Board under the auspices of Rev. Hyamson were declared successful in the *Jewish Chronicle*. The situation was obviously not destined to be quite that straightforward, although precisely why is unclear. The DHC had, initially at least, considered it unadvisable to send a representative to the meeting summoned by Hyamson, however the reasons for this reluctance are not set out in the minutes. Inconclusive as this is, it is still considerably more information than we have from the immigrant perspective. *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 June 1909; DHC Annual Reports, 1908 and 1913, in DHC Minutes, 1904-1915; DHC Minutes, 20 April 1909 and 29 August 1909.

<sup>331</sup> Keogh and McCarthy, *Limerick Boycott*, 12-13; Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 67. For detailed examples of Adler's pastoral speeches to Irish audiences, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1892 and 20 May 1898.

<sup>332</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 February 1899.

establishment nervousness at the spectre of increased anti-Jewish sentiment, for which the recent arrivals were deemed responsible.<sup>333</sup> These admonitions were routinely reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*. In 1893, in delivering a homily at the Great Synagogue in London, Hermann Adler urged his immigrant audience to behave in such a way as ‘to evoke the good-will, the esteem and favour of your fellow-citizens’.<sup>334</sup> In this respect Mendelsohn’s inaugural address to the DHC, which Ó Gráda assumes to be indicative of the reality in Dublin, was in fact nothing more than standard fare which might just as well have been scripted by Adler himself. Mendelsohn appealed to his audience to co-operate closely with the DHC authorities for ‘sustaining suitably the House of God’ and ‘to act honourably, fairly and kindly towards their fellow-citizens of all creeds and classes, and thus assist in being the means of ennobling the Jewish race, and securing the respect of those amongst whom they are destined to live’.<sup>335</sup>

The influence of unflattering external assumptions upon internal Jewish attitudes towards sensitive issues such as moneylending, and the combined impact of these twin elements upon the historical record, should not be underestimated. The naïve assessment of the Jewish relationship with non-Jews that has been outlined above forms part of Ó Gráda’s detailed analysis of the Jewish association with moneylending, which situates this much maligned profession within the wider socio-economic context of late nineteenth-century Ireland. While acknowledging the stigma that has traditionally accompanied this pursuit, Ó Gráda makes a strong case for its economic relevance in a society where the majority of the population was denied access to any other form of credit. He finds the Jewish involvement in moneylending to have been significant, generally as an unofficial sideline. This tended to be a small-scale and risky undertaking, which involved the loan of minor sums to the poorer classes on little or no security. The possibility of default was high, while the opportunity for recovering bad debts was so marginal that it was easier and

---

<sup>333</sup> Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 162ff.

<sup>334</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 October 1893. This was merely a prelude to the main topic of the day, ‘the important subject of cleanliness in your persons, your dress, and your dwellings’, a convoluted and incredibly patronising reminder that as soap and water were cheap they could, therefore, be used freely by all.

<sup>335</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 February 1895; Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 67-68; as compared with Adler’s 1898 pastoral homily in the DHC (*Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1898). Nevertheless Mendelsohn’s appointment appears to have been universally welcomed and, judging by the warm farewell he received from the community, he remained well-regarded across the board (*Jewish Chronicle*, 24 August 1900).

more cost-effective to write them off.<sup>336</sup> The distinct possibility that Jewish pedlars and lenders would encounter open anti-Jewish sentiment in the courtroom must undoubtedly have influenced their willingness to pursue bad debts.<sup>337</sup> Nevertheless Ó Gráda argues that a wealthier, more successful class of moneylenders rapidly emerged from the ranks of the immigrant community. In the absence of any significant documentary evidence, this appears to be based on largely circumstantial assumptions such as Duffy's unsubstantiated theories, Joseph Edelstein's fictional lender Moses Levenstein, and an investigation by the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) into popular allegations concerning Jewish moneylending.<sup>338</sup> As Ó Gráda admits, only a tiny proportion of Jews were licensed lenders; a glance at the 1901 and 1911 censuses shows that very few openly admitted to this or potentially related professions, and the wording of the DMP report does not suggest that unlicensed Jewish lenders were believed to be numerous.<sup>339</sup>

Ó Gráda disregards the fact that Levenstein is a character in a novel that was intended to function as a polemic on the immigrant community, as Edelstein saw it.<sup>340</sup> As such it should be treated with caution, and not assumed to be authoritative, objective, or even necessarily accurate, as a representation of moneylending in the Jewish community at the turn of the twentieth century. This is highlighted, if anything, by the novel's sensational and melodramatic style and content. In fact, the sources provide little concrete indication of the lucrative type of enterprise that Duffy and Ó Gráda presuppose, but rather suggest that the overwhelming majority of Jews provided credit and loans as a sideline, on a modest and small-scale basis.

Duffy constructs his less sympathetic, highly class-driven picture of Jewish lending in this period upon a combination of Williams' model and the accusations of Rev. Leventon, that the founders of the DNHC were moneylenders who had been

---

<sup>336</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, chap. 3; Ernest W. Harris, Letter to Joseph Prag, 24 May 1904, in DHC Correspondence Book No. 1. As noted in Section 2.3, the weekly instalment business in which many immigrant Jews earned their main living, posed a similarly high risk of default.

<sup>337</sup> See Section 2.2, above.

<sup>338</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', chap. 2, 4; Edelstein, *Moneylender*.

<sup>339</sup> Dublin Metropolitan Police, 'Report on Jews, 1903' (National Archives of Ireland, CSORP 23538); Lenten, '1901 Census' and 'Census 1911'. The report estimates the number of licensed lenders to be 'about forty-seven', and refers to allegations 'that there are others who are not registered, who carry on the money lending business principally with the working class, without any security except that the borrower may be working'. In the 1901 census, only one person classed himself a moneylender while four declared themselves 'collectors' and a further seven claimed more genteelly to be financial or commission 'agents'. By 1911 the figures had risen to thirteen moneylenders, two collectors and eleven agents.

<sup>340</sup> Edelstein, 'Author's Comment', *Moneylender*; Section 2.2, above.

excluded from the leadership of the DHC. Central to his argument is the figure of Robert Bradlaw. Duffy speculates that the rule barring moneylenders from becoming free members of the DHC had been deliberately introduced in 1881 with the express intention of thwarting the ambitions of Bradlaw and his cronies.<sup>341</sup> However there is no direct evidence of Bradlaw's involvement in the loan business; his son Henry denied Leventon's allegations, and the 1901 census describes him as a 'Retired Agent'.<sup>342</sup> Despite the admitted ambiguity of this designation, it is far from clear what role, if any, moneylending played in building and maintaining Bradlaw's material success. While there is much evidence of, and nostalgic pride in, the humble Jewish immigrant made good in Ireland,<sup>343</sup> Duffy's depiction of the wealthy lenders as 'the effective ruling class' of the immigrant community in this period<sup>344</sup> appears to be nothing more than an assumption.

The role of perennial negative stereotypes in contributing to such images, even among those who wish to present an objective or sympathetic picture of Irish Jewry,<sup>345</sup> has barely been considered. Sam Johnson has noted the linkage in late nineteenth-century British discourse of contemporary stereotypes of the east European Jewish moneylender and the Irish gombeen man.<sup>346</sup> In a more immediate context, Mac Gréil has demonstrated the longevity of the association between Jews and finance even though, as he points out, no Jew has ever been prominent in Irish economic affairs.<sup>347</sup> In contrast to such preconceptions, Marleen Wynn recalls that her uncle Abraham Stein, who was not in the loan business, was owed a substantial amount of money from minor, informal loans on his death in 1954. A number of untraceable promissory notes from a variety of acquaintances were found in Stein's safe, and many of his debtors took full advantage of the opportunity to default. His

---

<sup>341</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', chap. 4; Section 3.1, above.

<sup>342</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1885; Lenten, '1901 Census'.

<sup>343</sup> Rivlin, for example, dilates upon this at length in *Shalom Ireland*, 76-83.

<sup>344</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', 77, quoted in Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 62.

<sup>345</sup> Goldstone, 'Rewriting You', 305-14. With thanks to Katrina Goldstone for emphasising the frequently unintentional nature of negative stereotyping (personal conversation with the author, 2 October 2013).

<sup>346</sup> Johnson, *Britain and Eastern Europe's 'Jewish Question'*, 190-96. This mirrors the Russian narrative of Jewish 'exploitation' with its frequent references to the widely unpopular *kulak* class.

<sup>347</sup> Mac Gréil, *Prejudice and Tolerance*, 334; Mac Gréil, *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited*, 210-11. In 1972-1973, sixty per cent of Mac Gréil's respondents agreed that Jews were over-represented in the control of money matters, with only twenty-five per cent disagreeing. In 1988-1989, the numbers agreeing had fallen to thirty-three per cent, but those who declared themselves undecided were now surprisingly numerous. This bears out the observations of Laqueur, *Changing Face of Antisemitism*, chap. 8.

widow Bessie was left with nothing, and the Wynn family still has ornaments that Stein had accepted on different occasions in lieu of cash repayments.<sup>348</sup>

Ó Gráda notes, with little reflection, the sensitivity of Jewish attitudes towards moneylending from the time of mass emigration to the present day.<sup>349</sup> Both Duffy and Ó Gráda recognise the internal social divisions that existed within Ireland's Jewish community itself, but fail to consider their probable influence upon the unfavourable images that persist.<sup>350</sup> Duffy may well have placed too much emphasis on the provision of credit by Jewish lenders and wholesalers to less well-off co-religionists as having contributed to the assumed development of a wealthy class of moneylenders within the community.<sup>351</sup> As Chapter Four shows, there were a number of more favourable options available within the community for obtaining credit, and it is therefore plausible to assume that many Jewish borrowers availed of these rather than turning to lenders.<sup>352</sup> Duffy fails to register the significance of his observations that loans tended to be an outgrowth of other business ventures, and that class divisions within the community were attributable to a variety of circumstances such as ethnicity, religious observance and occupation as well as straightforward economic matters.<sup>353</sup>

In terms of the sources, Robert Briscoe's declared distaste for moneylending as well as his central role in introducing regulatory legislation to control this profession in 1933 must necessarily be viewed in the broader context of contemporary political attitudes, not least the IRA's anti-moneylender campaign of 1926. Section 2.2 has already noted the way in which Irish nationalist politics were infused with traditional anti-Jewish prejudice, and the unconscious influence that this may have had upon Briscoe should not be underestimated notwithstanding his parents' apparent dislike of moneylending.<sup>354</sup> Hermann Adler's oft-cited comments are perhaps even more misleading in this respect, given that they are more indicative of characteristic

---

<sup>348</sup> Marleen Wynn, personal conversation with the author, 19 February 2013.

<sup>349</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 66-68.

<sup>350</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, chap. 5; 243 (n.90); Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis'. Ó Gráda observes what he terms a social hierarchy among the streets in the South Circular Road area that had a high concentration of Jewish residents. He also relates comments by an elderly interviewee regarding the contempt felt by working-class Jews towards the lenders. As already noted, Duffy's entire thesis is constructed around theories of class.

<sup>351</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', 79.

<sup>352</sup> One example is the case of Louis Goldberg (Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, 11).

<sup>353</sup> Duffy, 'Socio-Economic Analysis', 77.

<sup>354</sup> Briscoe, *For the Life of Me*, 16. For a brief overview of the IRA anti-moneylender campaign, see Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 68.

establishment prejudice than of the reality in Ireland or, indeed, in any of the other provincial communities that found themselves on the receiving end of his oratory (see Section 1.5).

It is also important to interrogate the motives behind specific narratives that have played on the traditional Jewish discomfiture surrounding moneylending, such as the assumption that it was the cause of communal divisions in Limerick and Belfast. In the case of Limerick, a distaste for fellow congregants who practised this profession has been depicted as a central concern of the founders of a small, breakaway synagogue in the late 1890s or early 1900s.<sup>355</sup> However these anti-moneylender polemics can equally be understood as an appeal to wider public opinion, both Jewish and non-Jewish. In emphasising such a sensitive matter, the secessionists were making a compelling case for legitimation and endorsement by the outside world over and above their more numerous and longer-established rivals. This plea to popular prejudice appears to have been somewhat successful, given that Limerick's internecine disputes made it into the Anglo-Jewish and Hebrew-language presses, as well as receiving a considerable airing in local non-Jewish newspapers.<sup>356</sup> More plausibly – and very revealingly, coming as it does from a non-Jewish source – local KC R. Adams attributed the split to petty ritual differences.<sup>357</sup> One Limerick Jew, Sol Goldberg, commented ironically that even the community itself did not know

---

<sup>355</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 67; Ryan, 'Mayor's Court of Conscience', 49-50; Keogh and McCarthy, *Limerick Boycott*, 12-13. The *Jewish Chronicle* (14 August 1888) reported that internal divisions existed among the Limerick community in the late 1880s and correspondence to a local newspaper suggests that the split may already have occurred by the mid-1890s, but it is not clear exactly when the rival synagogue was actually founded.

<sup>356</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 May 1904 and 10 June 1904; Section 2.3, above. The anti-moneylender rhetoric within the Limerick community may well have resonated with Anglo-Jewish prejudice given some establishment reactions to the Boycott. Deputy D. Q. Henriques, for example, was concerned that Limerick's Jews may have been 'deficient in any of the qualities that went to make good citizens'. Such views were completely refuted by the Board's official investigation. Once again, my thanks to Dror Segev for his observations regarding the Hebrew press (personal conversation with the author, 26 November 2011). Ryan provides an overview of this very public dispute, including selected correspondence from the local press ('Mayor's Court of Conscience', 49-52). Although Ryan speculates as to whether differences regarding Zionism may have been a factor in the split, this appears unlikely given that the *Jewish Chronicle* archives indicate a general consensus on Zionism throughout the entire Jewish community of Ireland, and not just in Dublin, as noted in Sections 2.2 and 3.1. As Section 2.3 has argued, negative coverage of internecine Jewish disputes in the local non-Jewish press must have played a part in fomenting the type of atmosphere in which the Limerick Boycott could occur.

<sup>357</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 March 1902.

what the quarrel was actually about; he believed that the real cause had been nothing more than petty begrudgery.<sup>358</sup>

In Belfast an embarrassing misunderstanding arose in the 1920s surrounding the role and activities of the communal minister, *mohel* and *shohet*, Rev. S. D. Barnett. Barnett stood as guarantor for his sister-in-law's loan business, creating the mistaken impression among local Christians that the rabbi of the Belfast community was involved in moneylending, at a time when there was in fact no rabbi in Belfast. As Barnett was a controversial figure who had both supporters and detractors within the community, a heated disagreement ensued. When the matter became critical and a communal split was threatened, the Chief Rabbi himself was forced to arbitrate. Although this dispute occurred decades after the one in Limerick, Pamela Linden is of the view that similar concerns such as ritual observance, class conflict and the desired character and external image of the community were the real issues behind the Barnett controversy, as opposed to moneylending itself. She believes that this incident directly precipitated the appointment to the BHC of Rabbi Jacob Schachter in 1926.<sup>359</sup>

The understandable desire among Jews to dissociate themselves from the unpopular profession of moneylending has led to a number of automatic assumptions, that have been constructed around traditional non-Jewish negative stereotypes. However the evidence suggests that the Jewish involvement in this pursuit is not necessarily as straightforward a matter as it might outwardly seem. It is clear that a number of factors must be taken into account when approaching the topic, not least the class divisions and concerns of the acculturated Jewish establishment at the turn of

---

<sup>358</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 March 1902. In his letter Sol Goldberg quoted from Deut. 32:15, 'Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked', a reference to the purported complacency and ingratitude of the Israelites that had, according to the author of the passage, given rise to idolatry.

<sup>359</sup> With gratitude to Pamela Linden for outlining the events surrounding the Barnett moneylending controversy, which she examines in detail in her forthcoming thesis (personal conversation with the author, 6 December 2012). Barnett was the son of the respected rabbi Gershon Barnett, and was born and commenced his career in the Russian empire. He was appointed to the BHC in 1908 following a year in Sunderland. Although Barnett was reportedly selected from a large number of candidates and the Sunderland community claimed to regret his loss, he was not long in attracting controversy in Belfast and his misdemeanours are a frequent feature of the BHC minutes. Barnett was repeatedly rebuked and threatened with further action in respect of unauthorised absences and neglect of his duties as *shohet* and *hazan*, and discussions regarding his periodic increments frequently led to disagreements (e.g., BHC Minutes, 27 November 1910). Nevertheless Barnett persistently managed to evade any serious or long-term consequences. On Barnett's appointment to the BHC, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 June 1908; on Barnett Senior, see 25 January 1924. On Barnett's transgressions, see BHC Minutes, 8 March 1910, 12 March 1911, 26 March 1911, 19 November 1911, 18 February 1912, 1 September 1912, 16 February 1913, 2 March 1913, 17 April 1913, 4 January 1914, and 19 April 1914. For a brief outline of Schachter's life and career, see Richard Froggatt, 'Jacob Schachter (1886-1971)', *The Dictionary of Ulster Biography*, <http://www.newulsterbiography.co.uk/index.php/home/viewPerson/1962> (accessed 16 October 2013).

the twentieth century, and the aspects of the Jewish relationship with broader society that still remain unresolved today. It is incumbent therefore on historians to interrogate all default presuppositions regarding moneylending and the Jewish community, whether they relate to Ireland or elsewhere.

### **3.2.2 COMMUNAL STRIFE**

The focus now returns inwards to consider more closely another aspect of communal life: the type of discord that arose within Ireland's immigrant community itself, as distinct from the disputes that arose between newcomer and 'native' as the community reconstituted itself in response to accelerated immigration (see Section 3.1). While internal disagreements feature prominently in Irish communal narrative these have never been taken particularly seriously by observers, let alone been examined for what they have to disclose about Jewish communal life in Ireland during its foundation period. As all of the Irish communities besides Dublin and Belfast were founded solely by immigrants, they did not directly experience the divisions between 'native' and 'foreign' factions that beset more established Jewries. However, in common with other traditionally-oriented east European communities,<sup>360</sup> there was no shortage of conflict to occupy Irish Jews. In common with 'native'/immigrant disputes these were often centred on ritual matters, and some have been preserved in popular memory in some form or other long after the disappearance of formal communal records. The remainder of this section is devoted to elaborating further our understanding of Jewish communal life in Ireland through a detailed examination of the nature of some of the most persistent internal disputes, of how these were played out and – often uneasily – resolved.

#### **3.2.2.1 BELFAST**

As Section 3.1 has shown, by the early twentieth century the leadership of Belfast's Jewish community had effectively been transferred into 'foreign' hands. In 1911 the BHC was ironically described in the *Jewish Chronicle* as 'one of the least

---

<sup>360</sup> See Section 1.5, above. Many of these vicious, sometimes violent, disputes have been recorded in the contemporary Hebrew press (Dror Segev, personal conversation with the author, 2 February 2014; email to the author, 26 February 2014).



quarrelsome in Ireland’, a situation which was attributed to the local Jewish involvement in Freemasonry.<sup>361</sup> This could not have been further from the truth as, in fact, Belfast was perhaps the most divided of all Ireland’s Jewries.<sup>362</sup> The community was frequently riven with disagreement and what recording secretary William Aronstam termed ‘cross-talk’, something he recounted with obvious relish in the congregational minutebooks. One of Belfast’s most explosive and seemingly intractable disputes centred on a favourite source of controversy among east European Jews: interment.<sup>363</sup>

The precise relationship between the burial board of the BHC and the city’s Hevra Kadisha (Holy Burial Society) is unclear, as each claimed to be the original society from which its rival had evolved.<sup>364</sup> The two organisations appear to have co-existed in what can only be presumed to have been relative harmony until May 1909, when the BHC began seeking a new burial ground.<sup>365</sup> Within a few months, a suitable site had been purchased at Carnmoney, a management committee had been appointed, the plans had been approved by local government, and all that seemed to remain was the matter of fundraising.<sup>366</sup> In January 1910 negotiations commenced with a view to reintegrating the Hevra Kadisha into the BHC, and a set of proposals was presented to the synagogue council within a few weeks.<sup>367</sup> However this was only the beginning of the matter; the decision in 1909 by the Hevra Kadisha to register legally as a friendly society was set to raise a stubborn obstacle to re-amalgamation with the BHC, leading to a contentious, four-year-long dispute.<sup>368</sup> The Hevra Kadisha’s legal status, which it was reluctant to change or relinquish, precluded

---

<sup>361</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 July 1911; on the purported unity of the Belfast community, see 2 July 1909.

<sup>362</sup> BHC Minutes, 20 August 1899, 13 July 1902, 18 October 1903, 12 September 1909, 18 December 1910, and 21 May 1911 (examples of the petty grievances and minor disputes that beset the community).

<sup>363</sup> Segev, conversation with the author, 2 February 2014.

<sup>364</sup> BHC Minutes, 11 December 1910; *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 December 1911. It is also unclear how either of these burial societies may have related to the Belfast Hebrew New Burial Society, whose activities were reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* between 1902 and 1907.

<sup>365</sup> BHC Minutes, 5 May 1909, appears to signal the beginning of the dispute when the BHC committee resolves to put a stop on Hevra Kadisha funds and to request a copy of the society’s rules from the Registrar General.

<sup>366</sup> BHC Minutes, 18 July 1909, 29 July 1909, 1 August 1909, 22 August 1909, and 12 September 1909; *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1909 and 31 December 1909. Jaffe was appointed treasurer of the finance committee in the expectation that he would be generous enough to make good any potential shortfall in connection with Carnmoney cemetery. In January 1910 a relatively large advertisement appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle*, appealing for assistance in collecting the thousand pounds that remained outstanding on the purchase of the site. Reportedly five hundred pounds had already been raised in Belfast through considerable communal self-sacrifice (*Jewish Chronicle*, 10 January 1910).

<sup>367</sup> BHC Minutes, 16 January 1910 and 27 February 1910.

<sup>368</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 January 1911.

the BHC from any involvement in the management of the cemetery, were it to be placed under Hevra Kadisha auspices.<sup>369</sup> For its part, the Hevra Kadisha objected to the BHC's unilateral decision to purchase what it considered to be an overly expensive plot of land, and its levy of a two-penny 'poll-tax' to offset the ensuing debt.<sup>370</sup> The matter finally came to a head when the BHC's annual general meeting in December 1910 descended into disorder, following various accusations against the leaders of both parties. Subsequent negotiations proved to be fruitless.<sup>371</sup>

A rapprochement appeared to be on the cards following the 1911 annual general meeting, when both parties agreed to draft proposals which envisaged a close future co-operation.<sup>372</sup> However, by the time a general meeting was called in March 1912 to consider the finer points of the new arrangements, communal emotion was already running high. The meeting rapidly descended into chaos before the main business was even tabled, as the 'political feeling' of some reached boiling point while others grew impatient with the endless deliberations. Although 'comparative quietness' was eventually restored, this was a mere interregnum before a fresh argument erupted following the suggestion that new blood was needed on both committees. When the vice-president attempted to move the proceedings on, some 'resorted to "unparliamentary procedure"; with the result that Mr. Freeman left the chair; amid a shower of expressions of censure; intermixed with some of approval'. The minutes continue:

---

<sup>369</sup> BHC Minutes, 8 March 1910, 20 March 1910, 8 May 1910, and 5 June 1910. In an attempt to negotiate this impasse, it was decided to set aside part of the cemetery for control by the Hevra Kadisha.

<sup>370</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 December 1911. The Hevra Kadisha argued that this additional fee was beyond the means of Belfast's Jewish poor.

<sup>371</sup> BHC Minutes, 11 December 1910 and 26 February 1911. During the 1910 AGM the president of the Hevra Kadisha, Max E. Miller, was blamed for fomenting divisions between the two groups, while Jaffe was accused of partisan bias. At the council meeting on 26 February, when one person questioned a statement from the previous minutes suggesting that a settlement between the two parties was imminent, 'the chairman replied in the negative'.

<sup>372</sup> BHC Minutes, 30 December 1911, 24 January 1912, 28 January 1912, 30 January 1912, 13 February 1912, and 15 February 1912. At the 1911 AGM a number of members urged a compromise, arguing that the split was destructive and detrimental to communal interests, and had arisen from largely insignificant matters. Miller promised to place the ensuing resolution before the Hevra Kadisha without delay. This newfound goodwill was, however, doomed as soon as Miller expressed doubts regarding the impartiality of the BHC solicitor; 'a lengthy discussion then followed; many gentlemen taking part; and the same arguments were repeated again and again'. Things were smoothed over and 'the meeting then broke-up with a feeling that an understanding had been arrived at; and with the anticipation that there will be a satisfactory ending to an affair that threatened to uproot all the good that had been established in the Community'. Under the subsequent draft proposals, the Hevra Kadisha was given responsibility for maintaining the cemetery and for building a mortuary, and undertook to pay the BHC an annual subsidy until such time as the site had been paid for, although its official status continued to present a legal obstacle.

No one took the chair; but some one took to the table; and voiced his opinions from it. Objection was taken to some of this speaker's remarks and an attempt was made to pull him down; after which an umbrella and a coat were seen in the air; but no one was hurt; the ambulance was therefore not required; and not even the secretary received a pin scratch.<sup>373</sup>

A further eight-month impasse ensued, centred again on the Hevra Kadisha's legal standing.<sup>374</sup>

In January 1913 more detailed terms of amalgamation were considered by the BHC.<sup>375</sup> In April the BHC finally agreed to relinquish control of the cemetery to the Hevra Kadisha, dissolved its Burial Board and undertook to pay the subscriptions of BHC members who did not yet wish to join the Hevra Kadisha, in order to secure their entitlements.<sup>376</sup> The Hevra Kadisha adopted the agreement in a special general meeting in September.<sup>377</sup> Again, however, the newfound communal harmony was destined to be short-lived; further arbitration was required after complaints were received that 'Christian or other men' had been hired 'to prevent the Belfast Chevra Kadisha, in conducting Burial Rites at the Cemetery of Carnmoney'.<sup>378</sup> The matter came to court in February 1914, when the BHC was awarded costs and damages.<sup>379</sup> This proved to be the final straw for Jaffe, who promptly resigned his presidency and membership of the BHC to the horror of its committee. Jaffe informed the BHC that he had withdrawn his guarantee of the congregational account, and requested that no further cheques be presented to him for authorisation.<sup>380</sup> This elicited the following response from the BHC, which merits quoting in full:

Sir,

At a special meeting of the Council of the BHC held yesterday, your letter of the 17th inst. was read and discussed and in reply I am directed to submit to you the following resolution which was unanimously passed:-

That we, the Council representing the members and seatholders of the BHC have heard with sincere sorrow and poignant grief the severe blow – nay, calamity – our esteemed and beloved president has

---

<sup>373</sup> BHC Minutes, 24 March 1912.

<sup>374</sup> BHC Minutes, 8 December 1912 and 15 December 1912.

<sup>375</sup> BHC Minutes, 26 January 1913. These new terms included an arrangement allowing those who had let membership of either group lapse as a result of the dispute to rejoin with full benefits and no penalties.

<sup>376</sup> BHC Minutes, 13 April 1913.

<sup>377</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 September 1913.

<sup>378</sup> BHC Minutes, 5 October 1913 and 19 October 1913.

<sup>379</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 February 1914. The Hevra Kadisha had proffered no defence.

<sup>380</sup> BHC Minutes, 19 October 1913.

in view of inflicting upon the Belfast Jewish Community, by resigning the position he has so worthily and so adoringly occupied for many years.

We desire to record our high appreciation of, and our heartfelt gratitude for the innumerable invaluable services Sir Otto and Lady Jaffe have rendered to our community, and we are highly sensible of the curtesy and consideration they have at all times shown to their numerous calls for their helpful assistance.

We are thoroughly conscious that the long period during which Sir Otto has occupied as president, has not been without its attendant difficulties, but that by his wise management and sagacity he overcame all purplexities.

We also gratefully recall that the kindnesses and benefactions that Sir Otto and Lady Jaffe have so liberally and so readily extended to the members of our community have not been commenced by them, but that it was Sir Otto's beloved father, the late Mr. Daniel Joseph Jaffe, of blessed memory, who has been the first Israelite in the City of Belfast to kindle the light of Judaism – a light which we are proud to say, notwithstanding our disagreement on the matters of internal management, is burning with all brightness and splendour.

Taking into consideration what the family of Jaffe has been to the Belfast Jewish Community, we cannot reconcile ourselves to believe that because a section of our congregation does not happen to see eye to eye with its beloved president, on some small matter appertaining to the management the Jewish Cemetery, that Sir Otto will, in his declining years with one severe stroke, cut all the sacred associations with Jews and Judaism and abandon the holy trust transmitted to him by his illustrious ancestors – famous Rabbis and philanthropists in Israel;

We beg our beloved and esteemed president the unkind step he is about to undertake [*sic*], and to grant an interview to a deputation representing the two sections of the community, so as to enable us to place before him the exact point of dispute with a view of having matters ameiably settled,

Trusting to hear from you again . . . <sup>381</sup>

Jaffe consented to receive the deputation, and agreed to remain on as president, to the obvious relief of the synagogue authorities.<sup>382</sup> Within ten days, Rev. A. A. Green had arrived from London to settle the dispute once and for all. Green opened his visit on a predictable note, in emphasising the horror of London's Jewish establishment at the prospect of a public scandal involving the BHC, and appealing to the congregation not to lower its prestige among the non-Jewish population by persisting with this embarrassing feud. A legal agreement was soon drawn up, which

---

<sup>381</sup> BHC Minutes, 2 November 1913.

<sup>382</sup> BHC Minutes, 27 November 1913.

Jaffe was unanimously authorised to sign on behalf of the BHC.<sup>383</sup> The BHC undertook to draw up new rules for the management of both the synagogue and the cemetery, and to pay the legal expenses arising from the arbitration process.<sup>384</sup> Belfast was back in the *Jewish Chronicle* within a matter of weeks, however, when it was reported that the Hevra Kadisha had decided that Green's arbitration was excessive and unlawful, and had accused the BHC of claiming undue authority under the award.<sup>385</sup> The *Chronicle* was disgusted with this show of disrespect towards Green, which it condemned as simultaneously detrimental to the dignity of the Jewish people, un-English and un-Irish. Readers were pointedly reminded that 'Ireland . . . has already witnessed one acute outburst of Jew-baiting'.<sup>386</sup> The dispute was uneasily settled that August, when both parties finally agreed on management rules for Carnmoney.<sup>387</sup>

Another source of frequent and particularly heated controversy in the BHC was its clergy and, in this respect, Rosenzweig was at least as controversial as Barnett.<sup>388</sup> He is now best remembered locally for indiscreet remarks that were made to the press in September 1911, when he claimed that the Jews of Ulster were fearful of Home Rule, believing that it would place them in a precarious position. One member of the BHC committee, H. M. Miller, was quick to repudiate Rosenzweig's remarks, claiming that Belfast's Jews had always been treated courteously by both political factions and did not feel they had anything to fear from the political climate.<sup>389</sup> Rosenzweig defended his views by referring to the traditional axiom of Jewish vulnerability in times of political unrest.<sup>390</sup> Although the editors of the *Jewish Chronicle* dismissed this incident as a 'Storm in an Egg-Cup', Rosenzweig had visited

---

<sup>383</sup> BHC Minutes, 7 December 1913 and 14 December 1913. In a possible indication of resentments between Belfast and London, Green also reassured the BHC that Belfast was the real capital and intellectual centre of Ireland. He acknowledged Jaffe as being on a par with London's Jewish elite, in retaining his Jewish identity notwithstanding his rise to public prominence.

<sup>384</sup> BHC Minutes, 1 February 1914, 5 February 1914, 22 February 1914, 1 March 1914, 17 May 1914, and 14 June 1914. For discussions regarding the new BHC rules, see BHC Minutes, 29 November 1914. In April a sub-committee was appointed to manage the cemetery and its finances (BHC Minutes, 26 April 1914). For the sub-committee's report, see BHC Minutes, 2 May 1914.

<sup>385</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 May 1914.

<sup>386</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 May 1914.

<sup>387</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 May 1914 and 14 August 1914. For the new cemetery rules, see BHC Minutes, 21 June 1914 and 10 August 1914.

<sup>388</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 May 1905. Rosenzweig was born and educated in Poland, moved to Britain around 1890 and was appointed to Belfast in 1905. He studied English and philosophy at the University of Bangor, where he subsequently lectured in Hebrew.

<sup>389</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 September 1911.

<sup>390</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 September 1911.

unwelcome publicity upon a community which to this day prefers to keep a low public profile.<sup>391</sup>

While Rosenzweig appears to have been popular initially, the community was soon divided as to his merits. The *Jewish Chronicle* praised Rosenzweig's efforts among Christian communities both in Bangor and in Belfast, although some BHC committee members objected to him speaking in churches.<sup>392</sup> In 1908 his request to bring forward an increment of twenty-five pounds by six months led to a heated discussion where there was 'much disorder and uproar, many scuffles taking place'. As Section 3.1 has noted, in order to defuse the situation Jaffe volunteered to raise his annual subscription by twenty-five pounds.<sup>393</sup> In April 1911, conversely, Rosenzweig was offered a financial inducement to remain in Belfast, and the following comment was recorded in the minutes: 'Mr. Goldring said that before the Rev. came to Belfast, the Jews were looked upon as savages; as mere nobodies, but now they were taken up as human beings; and even honoured'.<sup>394</sup>

Later that year, when Rosenzweig sought his rabbinic diploma, the BHC was wary of the possibility of having to raise his salary accordingly. He was promptly reminded of his terms of employment, and permission to travel to the Russian empire for *smiha* (ordination) was withheld.<sup>395</sup> As there was no Chief Rabbi at the time to oversee this process in England, however, the BHC was reluctantly persuaded to allow Rosenzweig to journey to Poland.<sup>396</sup> The granting of a month's leave for this journey led to a 'heated discussion' and 'uproar' at the annual general meeting that December.<sup>397</sup> Subsequently members who doubted the legitimacy of Rosenzweig's rabbinic diploma, perhaps because of where it had been granted, began to disrupt services by leaving the synagogue just as Rosenzweig was about to preach. A general meeting was called, which soon descended into chaos as 'several members began to

---

<sup>391</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 September 1911; BHC Minutes, 3 September 1911. The BHC minutes record a general consensus to 'let sleeping dogs lie' as the matter had quickly blown over. Maurice Goldring commented 'that in affairs of this kind, extreme cautiousness should be exercised'. Linden ('Indifferent to Boyne and Rome') has remarked on the consistent reticence of most Belfast Jews over the years when it comes to politics.

<sup>392</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 May 1905 and 12 November 1909; BHC Minutes, 18 December 1910.

<sup>393</sup> BHC Minutes, 29 November 1908 and 1 December 1908. The motion supporting Rosenzweig's pay rise was passed by thirty-nine votes to twenty-two.

<sup>394</sup> BHC Minutes, 2 April 1911.

<sup>395</sup> BHC Minutes, 22 October 1911 and 17 December 1911. The committee argued that it should not be necessary to travel as far as Russia to receive *smiha* and was loathe to grant Rosenzweig prolonged leave before the summer vacation period.

<sup>396</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 December 1911.

<sup>397</sup> BHC Minutes, 10 December 1911.

give their opinions at the one and the same time; but these were not distinct'. During the ensuing fracas, 'Mr. Elliott was seen stamping the floor of the room with his umbrella very vigorously to ease his feelings', an illuminating observation which was later partially deleted from the minutes. After a protracted discussion, the meeting eventually resolved to retain Rosenzweig as minister, and not as rabbi, of the congregation.<sup>398</sup>

Following this episode, Rosenzweig was increasingly rebuked for unauthorised absences and for neglect of his duties in the school, as congregational secretary and as minister.<sup>399</sup> After two unsuccessful attempts by his detractors to get rid of him, Rosenzweig finally decided to resign in June 1914; after a heated discussion as to whether his letter should be accepted or whether Rosenzweig should instead be fired, his resignation was indeed accepted and he readily availed of the generous compensation that was proffered for effecting a prompt departure.<sup>400</sup> Rosenzweig described the circumstances of his resignation as 'too undignified and too painful to mention'; he protested that he had always done his best for the BHC 'spiritually, socially; and morally', for insufficient financial reward.<sup>401</sup> The *Chronicle* reported that he planned to stay on in Belfast to pursue a literary and journalistic career, and opined that the congregation's loss would be literature's gain.<sup>402</sup> Whether or not this was actually the case is not evident from the sources.

### 3.2.2.2 LIMERICK

The absence of any substantial records relating to the LHC has left this community in the unfortunate position of being defined principally in negative terms, as there is little that can realistically be said about it beyond the Boycott and its

---

<sup>398</sup> BHC Minutes, 24 January 1912, on the disruption of services and the calling of the general meeting. The minutes of the general meeting (10 March 1912) refer to a comment that 'a Shaitel [the head-covering traditionally worn by married Jewish women], specially borrowed for the occasion [of Rosenzweig's ordination] acted an important part in the matter. Here there was much laughter.'

<sup>399</sup> BHC Minutes, 24 January 1912, 7 April 1912, 20 October 1912, 24 November 1912, 8 December 1912, 15 December 1912, 21 December 1913, 4 January 1914, and 1 February 1914. It is conceivable that Rosenzweig's apparent neglect of his duties was intended as a sign of his personal dissatisfaction with the behaviour of some members of the congregation. As Barnett was also repeatedly rebuked for poor attendance at daily services, a fine was introduced but this proved impossible to implement. When, as a result, Barnett was penalised in December 1912, the decision was promptly revoked after he pleaded genuine grounds for the absence in question.

<sup>400</sup> BHC Minutes, 11 February 1912, 19 April 1914, 26 April 1914, 9 June 1914, and 14 June 1914.

<sup>401</sup> BHC Minutes, 14 June 1914.

<sup>402</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1914.

vicious internecine disputes. In the wake of the communal split that has been described in Section 2.3, feelings ran so high that fisticuffs broke out on more than one occasion, and in some of the resulting court-cases the synagogue itself was mentioned. In one of the more notorious of these incidents, a member of the LHC had allegedly entered the rival synagogue without permission, leading to a brawl in which damage was caused to furniture and fixtures.<sup>403</sup> The feud was ultimately resolved through a protracted and delicate mediation process facilitated by the Board of Deputies, in which the breakaway congregation was bound to hand over its religious artefacts to the Board so as to prevent a recurrence of the split. Arbitration was required twice more, to secure administrative powers for representatives of the smaller congregation within the reunited community, and later to appoint a marriage secretary. The *Jewish Chronicle* archives indicate that tensions persisted for at least a further ten years.<sup>404</sup>

As in Belfast, the purchase of a cemetery had led to a bitter dispute, and this too was aired in the *Limerick Chronicle* in 1902. Contemporary reports relate that the rival congregations had agreed to collaborate on the project, while each faction was keen to claim the credit for its success. However the breakaway group appears to have attempted to hijack the project by unilaterally signing the deeds to the cemetery, in the belief that it could raise the remaining funds that were required independently. The LHC authorities responded by denouncing their rivals for deliberately delaying the purchase of the cemetery out of resentment at not having full control of the project. The LHC also condemned the seceders for withholding their agreed portion of the funding, forcing the LHC to borrow from the bank.<sup>405</sup> The surviving LHC records elaborate this narrative, by accusing the leaders of the breakaway faction of misappropriating cemetery funds, of causing trouble with the community's supporters in London and of planting 'real and imagined seeds of deceit and rumour in many quarters'. According to this version of events, the outstanding funds were raised among the members of the LHC in order to fulfil their 'upright and holy dream' of procuring a fitting burial ground. Rival leaders 'who are doomed to eternal shame, because they did us great harm and defiled the name of the congregation of Israel before the gentiles' were consequently barred from holding office in the newly-

---

<sup>403</sup> Ryan, 'Jewish Immigrants in Limerick', 167-8; Ryan, 'Mayor's Court of Conscience', 49-50.

<sup>404</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 November 1904, 26 May 1905, 26 June 1914, 24 July 1914, and 28 August 1914.

<sup>405</sup> Ryan, 'Mayor's Court of Conscience', 50-51.



formed Hevra Kadisha.<sup>406</sup> Although the cemetery was open to all Jews, burials could only to be performed either by the minister of the LHC or by a minister authorised either by him or by the Chief Rabbi.<sup>407</sup> This implies that the breakaway synagogue was not answerable to the Chief Rabbi, indicating that the efforts of its leaders to enlist Anglo-Jewish support had merely succeeded in tarnishing the collective communal reputation.

### 3.2.2.3 CORK

In the fractious community of Cork, most of the disputes appear to have been of a relatively minor nature – at least to the distanced observer – with no serious external consequences. In 1896 the communal minutebook notes ‘some disgraceful proceedings’ in the local police courts involving members of the community.<sup>408</sup> Around the same time, a number of other quarrels arose surrounding the authorisation of marriages within the community.<sup>409</sup> In 1900 Solomon Criger and Lewis Clein were censured by a special general meeting of the CHC for ‘making improper use’ of the congregational seal, but the exact nature of their misdemeanour is not recorded in the minutes.<sup>410</sup> The annual general meeting in 1901 noted the ‘outrageous conduct of a seat holder during Divine Service . . . by making use of profane language in the most cowardly and insolent manner towards the Hon. Sec. by reason of the latter having enforced the warrant of the court of Conscience against . . . Lewis S. Clein for non-

---

<sup>406</sup> Record of the Limerick HBS. This highly illuminating and pompous document, which is practically the only surviving record of the LHC from this time, equates the leaders of the breakaway synagogue to the biblical ‘quarrelmongers’ Korah (Num. 16:1-40) and Sanballat (Neh. 2-6).

<sup>407</sup> Rule 10, Registered Rules of the Limerick Jewish Burial Ground at Kilmurry, County Limerick; (National Library of Ireland, Manuscripts Collection, MS 22,436, undated).

<sup>408</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 November 1896.

<sup>409</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 November 1897, 17 June 1898, 24 February 1899, 24 March 1899, 25 November 1904, 24 February 1905, and 26 May 1905. These involved the practice of *stille huppah* (illegal marriages) and the accreditation by the Board of Deputies of recognised marriage secretaries. *Shtille huppah* was problematic in the eyes of the mainstream Jewish authorities not only because it projected what was regarded as the wrong sort of communal image but because it resulted in a loss of revenue for mainstream communities. The lack of any formal legal obligation also made it impossible to coerce absent or absconding husbands into supporting their families, who consequently became a burden on the communal purse (Williams, *Manchester Jewry*, 273).

<sup>410</sup> CHC Minutes, 2 September 1900. Although the minutes state ‘Solomon Kruger’, the surname appears elsewhere in the sources in its Yiddish form (spelt variously Criger, Crieger, Krieger and Kreiger), all apparently with reference to the same individual. The spelling Criger is used here, as the version that is recorded in the 1901 census returns.

payment of seat rent'.<sup>411</sup> Clein was issued two summonses 'for creating disturbance during divine service at the synagogue' and 'for abusive language towards the Hon. Sec. on the same occasion'. However, in order 'to avert further chilul Hashem [profanity]', the matter was eventually settled by arbitration; Clein was fined five shillings and levied an additional threepence on his subscription until his arrears were paid off. These penalties were to be remitted promptly under threat of expulsion.<sup>412</sup> In 1913 Simon Spiro complained of 'the disgraceful conduct indulged in by some of the members at our last meeting' consisting of 'personal attacks insult and abuse' towards other congregants and 'defying the ruling of the chair, under threats of violence'.<sup>413</sup>

A meeting in November 1905 recorded:

With disgust and abhorrence the unmanly and unjewish act which has been committed in the synagogue recently whereby the tallit of one of the worshippers had been cut and destroyed by some person unknown and that a sum of one guinea be offered as a reward which will be paid by the congregation to any person or persons who will give such information as will lead to the conviction of the person who committed such an outrage.<sup>414</sup>

As this is the sole reference to this act of vandalism, it can be assumed that the perpetrator was never identified. The reaction to this incident may cast doubt on Elyan's claim that, in brawls ensuing from the split in the CHC, the synagogue's Torah scroll had been used as a weapon.<sup>415</sup> On the other hand, internecine Jewish disputes were prone to become violent and there is ample evidence from the contemporary Hebrew press that Torah scrolls – like *tallitot* – were not always treated with the reverence that is implied by Jewish tradition.<sup>416</sup> Thus it is impossible conclusively either to refute or to verify Elyan's assertions.

---

<sup>411</sup> CHC Minutes, 13 October 1901. The original text refers to 'W. Lewis, S. Clein', a possible error in transcription.

<sup>412</sup> CHC Minutes, 13 October 1901. A newspaper article is here inserted in the minutes, claiming that the decision to proceed against Clein, Criger and another member, referred to only as Sayers (conceivably the Gedalia Sayers mentioned below), had been passed in secret without their consent.

<sup>413</sup> Simon Spiro, Letter to Mr. Scher, 25 July 1913 (Irish Jewish Museum, uncatalogued).

<sup>414</sup> CHC Minutes, 26 November 1905.

<sup>415</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 117.

<sup>416</sup> Segev, email to author, 26 February 2014.

Perhaps the worst communal controversy in Cork arose from the building of the new synagogue and schools.<sup>417</sup> Even the procurement of a suitable site was mired in controversy, due to the ‘blackguardly conduct’ which resulted in Criger and Gedalia Sayers being barred from holding office in the synagogue ‘so long as a Jewish congregation exists in Cork’.<sup>418</sup> The next hurdle was the lack of funding, which forced the community to remain split between two places of worship until 1912.<sup>419</sup> The building committee then fell out over accusations, reported to the Jewish press, that certain individuals were retaining congregational funds.<sup>420</sup> When the committee’s accounts were deemed to require further investigation, the trustees went on the defensive and refused to hand over the books. According to the minutes, Sayers became exasperated, making ‘insolent remarks and abuse’, until ‘his conduct became so intolerable the committee decided to have nothing further to do with the audit’ while he remained present.<sup>421</sup> Sayers was removed from the committee and his membership was suspended pending provision of the account books. His fellow trustee, Criger, resigned before he was pushed.<sup>422</sup> Criger seems to have attempted to rally the congregation for support, as he received the following censure from Solomon Clein:

In a vigorous speech [Clein] denounced the rebellious conduct of Mr. S. Criger who ascended the bimah on the previous day urging those present not to support the legitimate decisions of the congregation in making provisions for the rebuilding of the synagogues and for the payment of the balance due on the building of the synagogue. Other members characterised the conduct of Mr. Criger as most reprehensible in view of the fact that the congregation is exhausting every means within its power to extricate itself from the unfortunate position in which we have been landed in connection with the synagogue and the

---

<sup>417</sup> CHC Minutes, 25 February 1912, 17 March 1912, 6 October 1912, 17 November 1912, 16 March 1913, 20 March 1913, 4 May 1913, 10 August 1913, 24 May 1914, 14 June 1914, 26 July 1914, 9 August 1914, 16 August 1914, 11 October 1914, and 8 November 1914.

<sup>418</sup> CHC Minutes, 12 May 1901. Although the minutes and correspondence cited below consistently refer to a J. Sayers, it has not been possible to pinpoint this individual in the 1901 census returns. The only J. (Joseph) Sayers named in the census was just one year old in 1901. While a George Sayers, who was aged thirty in 1901, may well have had the Hebrew name Gedalia, the sources suggest that Gedalia Sayers, who is only mentioned in the minutes on this one occasion, and J. Sayers are one and the same person. The ‘J’ is possibly the result of an error in transcription.

<sup>419</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 December 1910 and 6 December 1912.

<sup>420</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 March 1913, 14 March 1913, and 21 March 1913. The *Jewish Chronicle* decided to discourage further communications ‘on this interesting, if not inspiring, topic’ due to the nature of the correspondence, and subsequently printed an apology to those who had been maligned.

<sup>421</sup> CHC Minutes, 24 May 1914.

<sup>422</sup> CHC Minutes, 26 July 1914, 9 August 1914, and 16 August 1914. The previous year, one of the members of the building committee had resigned ‘remarking it was below his dignity to be a member of a body which included Mr. J. Sayers in its membership’ (20 March 1913).

schools. Mr. Criger was called upon for an explanation of his conduct but maintained that he acted within his rights, whereupon it was proposed and agreed that Mr. Criger be forthwith suspended from membership until such time as he gives a satisfactory apology.<sup>423</sup>

Criger, in response, threatened legal proceedings over a sum of seven pounds which he alleged was owing to him from the building fund.<sup>424</sup> Although the outcome of this enthralling saga is unfortunately not recorded in the minutes, a subsequent exchange of correspondence over the recruitment of a *melamed-cum-shohet-cum-reader* in the *Jewish Chronicle* indicates that Criger reacted by resurrecting or perpetuating the rival ‘Remnant of Israel’ congregation. Spiro, then president of the original CHC, dismissed this move as the capricious action of a handful of dissatisfied members. Criger argued that Spiro had deliberately understated the statistics for his congregation, and attempted to appeal to Anglo-Jewish sensibilities by claiming that his members were ‘without exception, the respected, wealthy gentlemen with erudition in Talmudic lore and university education’. This was clearly unsuccessful, as the editor promptly intervened to terminate this exchange of views concerning a ‘very reprehensible inter-communal quarrel, which reflects no credit on either of the parties involved’.<sup>425</sup>

#### 3.2.2.4 DUBLIN

Although it is probably safe to assume that controversy was also the order of the day within Dublin’s synagogues, relatively little has survived in the way of detail beyond what has been outlined in Section 3.1.<sup>426</sup> However the behaviour that reportedly occurred in the city’s many *hevrot* was occasionally sufficient to incur the approbation of the entire Anglo-Jewish establishment. In his address at the Great Synagogue in 1893, the Chief Rabbi cited Dublin as an example of how not to behave:

Was it not heart-rending to read of the behaviour of some of our brethren in Dublin, who instead of worshipping in decorous fashion with their English brethren at the new synagogue consecrated last

---

<sup>423</sup> CHC Minutes, 16 August 1914.

<sup>424</sup> CHC Minutes, 11 October 1914 and 8 November 1914.

<sup>425</sup> Quoted in ‘Cork Hebrew Congregation’ (JCR-UK). Here Criger describes himself as ‘one of the founders or re-establishers’ of the rival CHC.

<sup>426</sup> The tensions that arose between the DHC and Dublin’s Board of Guardians and HBS are examined in Chapter Four.

winter, preferred to meet in an unsuitable dwelling, and had profaned the festival of *Simchat Torah*, just celebrated, by imbibing strong drink within their so-called synagogue, and then breaking out in unseemly wrangling, and, as a climax to their turpitude, dragging their strife before a court of law! It is the purpose of these addresses to teach you to avoid such evil ways.<sup>427</sup>

Unfortunately, this is the only source that I have discovered for this incident, therefore whether or not Adler has provided a faithful representation of the events in question is probably debateable. As to whether the behaviour in this unidentified *hevra* was really any worse than that which was to be found among any other group of provincial immigrants, is a matter for other historians of British provincial Jewry to determine.

In the LSHC one of the most inflammatory disputes that is recorded in the minutes concerns the following breach of protocol:

The President Brought forward a verry Grave and serjous charge for disSubordination against the treasurer E. Wachman . . . that Mr. Wachman Without the Least intimation to the Board or to the President or to the Seat holders, did take forcible possession of a Seat in the Presidentals, Box without the authorety or Concent of any Single individuel. the president said . . . he the President Declines to Entertain a forcibal Claim.

The committee was divided as to whether this behaviour, which was generally agreed to be inappropriate, should be censured at the cost of Wachman's feelings. The secretary, H. L. Rubinstein, was in favour of disciplinary action, fearing that otherwise 'Still Graver disubordination would be the Result and qounsequently disunity would be the Result'. The president, Joseph Rubinstein, eventually decided to allow Wachman to remain in the box, while he resumed the private seat that he claimed to 'prevere'. Despite his lip service to Wachman's sensibilities, Rubinstein reserved the right to allot the remaining vacant seats in the box, and cautioned Wachman against interfering 'in the Discharge of duties of the presedents durring Divene service and after it'.<sup>428</sup>

---

<sup>427</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 October 1893.

<sup>428</sup> LSHC Minutes, 27 August 1893.

### 3.2.3 CONCLUSIONS

This section enhances the picture of Jewish communal life in Ireland that has been provided in Section 3.1 by investigating aspects of the immigrant experience in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Limerick. The first half of the section re-examined matters that have attracted regular, frequently ambivalent commentary over the years, such as the alleged materialism of the immigrant community and the assumed extent of its involvement in the practice of moneylending. In this respect, the contribution of external negative stereotypes towards informing the received wisdom that has traditionally formed the basis of communal historiography has been interrogated, and current presuppositions have been challenged.

The analysis shifted in the second half of the section to intracommunal disputes, an issue which so far appears to have received insufficient attention from Anglo-Jewish historians. It has been revealed that, in the absence of any powerful 'native' establishment with which to compete for control over communal functions and institutions, the disagreements that arose among immigrants themselves had the potential to be at least as serious and divisive – if not more so – than those that raged between the immigrant and acculturated leaderships in mainland Britain. I believe that the significance of communal divisions in Ireland – and perhaps in other British provincial communities – has been vastly underestimated by observers. First they are important to the historical record in offering considerable insight into the character of internal Jewish relations. While this has long been recognised with respect to 'native'/immigrant interactions, the same cannot be said when it comes to the assessment of immigrant/immigrant relationships. Furthermore the consequences of what are superficially dismissed as puerile and, in retrospect, amusing schisms for the long-term viability of individual communities needs to be acknowledged.<sup>429</sup> In Ireland such supposedly trivial quarrels in fact contributed to the long-term fragmentation of all of the principal communities into a variety of parallel religious, social, educational, charitable and cultural institutions and activities. On the occasions when dispute did not lead to actual schism, communal organisations remained riven by rival factions which co-existed uneasily as long as matters ticked

---

<sup>429</sup> As a case in point, Feldman (*Englishmen and Jews*) has demonstrated the way in which discord and fragmentation undermined the effectiveness and long-term viability of immigrant institutions of different sorts in the Jewish East End of London.

over. With the least excuse – to the distanced observer at any rate – smouldering resentments exploded into often vicious, sometimes intractable quarrels. This volatile tradition of feuding and fragmentation may well be argued to have had a serious and lasting effect, in terms of contributing to the present, precarious situation of Ireland’s Jewish community.<sup>430</sup> For this reason the internecine disputes of Irish Jewry merit more than the condescending and dismissive caricaturing that they have received to date. Indeed as both Chapters Three and Four illustrate, it is impossible comprehensively to consider any aspect of Ireland’s Jewish communal life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without taking communal divisions into account. This provides a strong counterpoint to the congenial, nostalgic, predominantly positive and solidary picture of Irish Jewish communal life that is frequently encountered, reminding us that life is never quite that straightforward, and that all assumptions to the contrary should be treated with due scepticism by any serious scholar.

### **3.3 CONCLUSIONS: JEWISH COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY IN IRELAND (1822-1914)**

This chapter has proved categorically that the patchiness and scarcity of formal records does not preclude a thorough and nuanced analysis of Ireland’s Jewish community in its foundation period. By recovering and reinterpreting hitherto neglected sources and by placing them in their appropriate Jewish context, it has been possible to discern both comparable and distinctive patterns in the evolution of Irish Jewry during its foundation period. This has revealed that, contrary to received wisdom, the Irish communities were collectively neither unique nor generic *vis-à-vis* the wider Jewish world.

Similarities have been discovered with regard to the patterns of immigration, the cultural and economic demands that were placed on the pre-existing ‘native’ community, and the tensions that arose between immigrant and ‘native’ surrounding issues such as ritual observance and religious education. The struggles to establish the Irish communities on a sounder economic footing have also been found to be illustrative of the general plight of British provincial Jewry in this period, as discussed

---

<sup>430</sup> Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland*, 60. Ireland’s former Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, argues that had the Orthodox community come together to pool its resources in the 1980s in order to invest in creating a unified communal infrastructure, this might have helped to prevent the haemorrhaging levels of emigration that have left Irish Jewry in its current predicament.

in Section 1.5. In addition the transition of communal leadership from ‘native’ to immigrant control has been seen, in the case of Dublin, to have followed a similar course to that first identified by Williams with respect to Manchester despite considerable differences in size and context between the respective communities. This shows that aspirant immigrant leaders, when denied the status they craved within the mainstream communal hierarchy, channelled their energies into creating a set of alternative institutions to meet the specific religious, cultural and economic needs of their own communities. This point will be particularly relevant to the survey of communal institutions that follows in Chapter Four. However Williams’ model for the evolution of communal leadership does not apply to Belfast, despite the existence of a ‘native’ establishment prior to accelerated east European immigration. The CHC, like the other smaller Irish communities, was immigrant led from its outset and chose to come under the direct tutelage of the Anglo-Jewish ‘centre’ in London. Differences in the character of communal leadership represent only one element of the internal diversity of Irish Jewry at this time, as opposed to the harmonised view of the community and, indeed, of provincial Jewry as a whole that is advanced by some scholars.

My detailed examination of communal life in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Limerick has also allowed for a more nuanced understanding of acculturation in the Irish context. It is now evident that the process of acculturation and the construction of a localised Irish Jewish identity did not follow Anglo-Jewish trends. Anglicisation in Ireland has been revealed to have been a largely voluntary and selective process – as well as a matter of perspective – in the absence of the kind of attempted coercion that prevailed in the larger mainland British communities. As time progressed the boundaries between ‘natives’ and immigrants in Ireland, as represented by their respective communal institutions, became increasingly blurred. It is now apparent that their relationship was far more complex than straightforward matters of ‘class’ and/or culture, even though the lack of primary sources means that its precise details will never be known. One particularly interesting feature is the apparent cross-communal consensus regarding Zionism, which stands in stark contrast to the rejection of Jewish nationalism by the ‘native’ establishments of the major western communities.

These findings were complemented by an examination of the internal communal life of Ireland’s immigrant Jews. Section 3.2 tackled another set of



existing presuppositions, concerning the religious and economic values of the Irish immigrant community. The role of non-Jewish negative stereotyping was also interrogated, with respect to the construction of communal narrative and the assumptions of traditional Irish Jewish historiography. The discord that beset Irish immigrant Jews in this period was then, for the first time, investigated in a serious manner as an intrinsic feature of Jewish life in Ireland from the late nineteenth century right up to the present day. This was argued not only to have posed a serious challenge to communal solidarity in the short term, but to have had a damaging effect on communal viability in the long term. The persistence of internal conflict that is frequently underrated in its severity, forms a strong counterpoint to the rose-tinted assertions of conventional historiography.

Chapter Four will investigate the relevance of these conclusions to the communal institutions that were established to meet the specific economic needs of the immigrant community.

