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Rabbi Maurice Mayer:
German Revolutionary, Charleston Reformer,
and Anti-Abolitionist

by

Anton Hieke*

Seven rabbis held the pulpit of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) in Charleston, South Carolina, between Gustavus Poznanski, who held the post from 1836 to 1850, and David Levy, the congregation's first American-born rabbi, who served between 1875 and 1893. None of the rabbis during this crucial period of reform served as long as Moritz (Maurice) Mayer, who held the office for seven years ending in 1859. After Poznanski, he was only the second Reform rabbi in Charleston. Little is known of Mayer's early years as rabbi at KKBE because the congregational minutes do not cover the period between his appointment in 1852 and his receipt of life tenure in 1857. Today, Mayer is largely forgotten except for his translations of German Reform works into English.

He does not deserve this fate. In fact, Mayer may be described as the embodiment of mid-nineteenth century European and American Jewish history. He witnessed the most lasting religious, social, and political developments of his time and acted at the center of those changes. As a Forty-Eighter, a participant in the German Revolution of 1848–1849, he fought for political freedom. As an early and prominent member of the fraternal order of B'nai B'rith (today the International Order B'nai B'rith [IOBB]), he

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played a crucial role in its cultural-educational agenda. Mayer, a German-born American and Jew, sought to bridge German and American Judaism and Jewry spiritually, linguistically, and publicly.¹

He filled the pulpit of the oldest and arguably the most American of America's Reform congregations. While in Charleston, Mayer became one of the most active correspondents to American and German periodicals, pursuing a clear agenda. He was the only German champion of radical Reform in a non-German congregation and the one true Forty-Eighter to serve as a rabbi in a slaveholding society. As a southerner, he weathered the Civil War in New York. As a lawyer, he worked on important cases dealing with the nature of the war and its results. Most remarkably, especially in light of his earlier involvement in the German revolution for liberty, Mayer struggled against the abolitionism of his time. For him, his support for the revolution in Europe apparently stood in accord with and served as the very basis for his opposition to abolitionism in America. Finally, Maurice Mayer provides a case study of German and American Jewish identities in the mid-nineteenth century Atlantic world.

The following is intended to shed light on an overlooked rabbi and southern politician of Judaism in the 1850s. His biography and activities make him a remarkable and important figure in mid-nineteenth century European and American Jewish history. After offering a sketch of Mayer's life, this article will focus on his involvement in the German revolution, his southern rabbinate, and his political convictions in America, with an emphasis on his opposition to abolitionism.

*From Moses Maier to Dr. Maurice Mayer:
A Biographical Sketch*

Maurice Mayer as a person and personality has left few traces. He has sunk to such obscurity that even historian and rabbi Bertram Korn listed his death as 1862 instead of 1867.² Many eulogies and obituaries, however, present his life as a prominent German-born, southern radical Reformer.

The son of a merchant, Maurice Mayer was born in Dürkheim as Moses Maier in 1821. Dürkheim boasted one of the largest

The German Confederation in 1849. Locations that were especially important in Mayer's life include Dürkheim, where he was born in 1821; Speyer, where he attended school; Munich, where he attended university; Kaiserslautern, where he was a Candidate of Law; Göllheim, where he was a recruiter for the revolutionary effort; Wissembourg, where he hid before turning himself in; and Landau, where he was imprisoned. (Map by Anton Hieke.)

Jewish communities in the Bavarian/Rhenish Palatinate, with some two hundred Jews, and served as the seat of a rabbinate.³ Mayer was educated at the Latin school there and in Speyer, where his grade reports testified to his talent for languages. On graduation he moved to Munich to enter studies first in philosophy and then law. The 1846 academic year is the last that he appears as a student at Ludwigs Maximilians University. No proof is extant that Mayer studied at the prestigious University of Heidelberg, as obituaries claim, or earned his doctoral degree in Europe.⁴ When returning to the Palatinate he became a *Rechtskan-*

didat ("candidate of law") at the Royal Court in Kaiserslautern. After the failure of the German revolution in 1849, Mayer was indicted as one of the culprits. One of only four Palatinate Jews sentenced to death for their involvement, he chose exile.

Almost nothing is known of Mayer's flight to New York, how he escaped from prison, or which route he took. Possibly he traveled through Switzerland and Le Havre, as did other revolutionaries from the Palatinate.⁵ He arrived in New York City in the winter of 1849, using the name Moritz Mayer in German-speaking circles and Maurice Mayer in English ones, and taught German and arithmetic at "Rev. Dr. [Max] Lilienthal's Hebrew Commercial and Classical Boarding School." In 1850 he worked with the Committee in Aid of the German Political Refugees, which held mass meetings in churches as nondenominational fundraising events.⁶

Throughout his life in America, Mayer remained faithful to his ideal of German *Bildung* (education and cultivation), although not necessarily to the language. In New York he supported the young B'nai B'rith's educational and cultural activities. When four IOBB lodges in New York City jointly established the order's first library, the Maimonides Reading Institute and Library (now the Maimonides Library Association), Mayer helped initiate the project as the representative of Lebanon Lodge No. 9. In 1851, he drafted the institution's constitution and, with his election as librarian, oversaw the acquisition of books and Jewish periodicals, mostly German newspapers to which he later became a busy correspondent. For the library's lectures, the revolution's "red republican" spoke on socialism.⁷

Mayer might have prepared for the rabbinate in New York before becoming rabbi of Charleston's KKBE in 1852 at the age of thirty-one. After he left this position, he briefly served other Reform congregations, including Anshe Emeth in Albany (1862), Sinai in Chicago (1865), and occasionally Emanu-El in New York City, until his death.⁸ He affirmed after his resignation from Charleston that he was "terribly homesick for — — the cowl [*Kutte*]," and he was offered positions (such as in Curaçao in 1864), but the pulpit in Charleston remained his only long-term

synagogue employment.⁹ Contrary to Mayer's obituaries, he departed Charleston in 1859 after a fierce struggle with the board of trustees over money and authority, not because of alleged abolitionist convictions.¹⁰

After his resignation in Charleston, Mayer moved back to New York and into the legal profession.¹¹ In 1863 he became Grand Mazkir (secretary) of B'nai B'rith's Grand Lodge, a position he held until his death. In a eulogy, Reform Rabbi Samuel Hirsch of Philadelphia compared Mayer with George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and even "Moshe, the man, as his character was constituted as human, a character which only enabled him to become all the greatness which he did." The latter likely was a politer version of an unusual addendum to the eulogy in the *Jewish Messenger* that opined Mayer was "a good man [who] unhappily had no 'tact' [and] was not 'popular.'"¹²

Hirsch remembered Mayer—in German—as the "pride of American Judaism . . . perhaps the only one among all alive today who was capable of, skilled enough and willing to bring to the understanding of the English-speaking brethren the treasures which German knowledge has carved from Judaism." No doubt Mayer would have preferred an English eulogy. One of Mayer's greatest legacies is his translation of German Reform works. His literary endeavors—"if [translations] might be called such," in Mayer's words—opened German Reform thought to a broader English-speaking audience. Through these translations, Mayer sought to "contribute [his] own piece to the honor of Israel and Israel's God." Mayer's magnum opus as a translator was the first volume of Abraham Geiger's *Judaism and Its History*. Also important were his presentations of history in the making. In his correspondence and articles for American and European periodicals, he presented valuable insights into the development of contemporary Judaism, especially in the South, through such stories as that of Billy Simons, Charleston's black Jew, and his early discussion of Reform Judaism's development in America with an emphasis on Charleston.¹³

Mayer died on August 28, 1867, likely from lifelong "periodical attack[s] of sickness during the summer season," as the

Occident and American Jewish Advocate wrote and Mayer predicted in his private correspondence. His grave in Salem Fields Cemetery in Brooklyn is complemented by a “beautiful and appropriate monument” erected by the IOBB. Chicago’s third B’nai B’rith lodge was named in his honor a year later.¹⁴

The Red Republican

Begun in January 1848, the Sicilian revolt for independence from the Bourbon monarchy marked the beginning of developments that are only comparable to the wave of European revolutions in 1989 or to the Arab Spring. The young *Rechtskandidat* Mayer became deeply involved in the revolution and sacrificed his life in Europe for it. Historian Bertram Korn identifies Mayer as one of only forty true Jewish Forty-Eighters, Jews who had participated in the German Revolution of 1848–1849 and consequently immigrated to America. Mayer was also one of only seven who later served as rabbis in their new home.¹⁵ Contrary to Korn’s general assumption, however, Mayer was not one of the “obscure young men who had followed the leadership of older men” in the revolution.¹⁶ To the Bavarian authorities in 1850, Mayer was a “red republican” whom they sentenced to death as a culprit.

*A group of delegates
approaching St. Paul’s
Church in Frankfurt am
Main in March 1848 for the
first national assembly of
a unified German nation.*

*The German tricolor is
displayed over the building.*

*Painting by
Jean Ventadour, 1848.
(Wikimedia Commons.)*

From March 1848 onward, the German states were beset with revolutions aimed at unifying and democratizing the nation. The issues of “unity, justice, and liberty” (Germany’s national motto) were central; the German democratic colors, black, red, and gold, were omnipresent. The revolution of 1848 encountered a seemingly brittle conservative system as ruling monarchs fled their capitals, including Berlin and Vienna, and the Bavarian king abdicated.¹⁷ A democratically elected German national assembly introduced in Frankfurt am Main devised and passed German civil rights statutes in December 1848 and a constitution the following March. The refusal of the Austrian emperor and the several German kings to ratify these documents, and the Prussian king’s rejection of the crown of a lesser German empire in April 1849, anticipated the revolution’s eventual demise. The impotence of the central government had become apparent as early as November 9, 1848, when vice president of the assembly Robert Blum was court-martialed and shot in Austria. Primarily Prussian troops crushed the revolution within eighteen months.

Baden and the Bavarian Palatinate in the southwest had been centers of republicanism and civil war. When the Bavarian king refused to acknowledge the German constitution, his subjects in the Palatinate rioted and installed a “committee for national defense.”¹⁸ On May 17, 1849, this de facto provisional government acknowledged the German constitution and prepared to secede from Bavaria. Authorities crushed the rebellion the following month. Baden remained occupied and under martial law until 1852, and the Palatinate returned to Bavarian rule.

In the aftermath, the “Royal [Bavarian] Procurator General’s Office of the Palatinate” prosecuted the perpetrators of the revolution, secession, and armed resistance. A simple process of conviction, imprisonment, and execution was impossible in Bavaria as the Palatinate enjoyed a special jurisdiction that dictated trial by jury. Because the majority of the defendants had been educated in the legal system, they knew their advantage. The authorities initially prepared for some 1,400 men to be tried. Then the number dropped to 333. *Rechtskandidat* Moses Maier (Maurice Mayer) ap-

pears as number 27. He was charged as an “accomplice and conspirator through knowingly and willingly supporting sedition against the Bavarian king, . . . calling for and openly supporting civil war, . . . actively supporting the formation of illegal troops against the authority, . . . actively heading and supporting the insurrection against the Bavarian authority, [and] . . . passively supporting the insurrection through speeches, notices, and propaganda.” Each charge was punishable by death or exile.¹⁹

According to historian Bernhard Kukatzki, Mayer was one of the most “remarkable representatives . . . of the homegrown revolutionaries.”²⁰ When the revolution hit the German states and the constitution passed in the Palatinate, Mayer became an emissary to the “committee on defense” and, according to the bill of indictment, “took part in the armed rebellion and crimes against the internal security of the state.”²¹ Contemporary reports depicted Mayer as an ardent supporter of a “second revolution. He must appear as a red [fierce or socialist] republican and knew how to establish his position at any possible opportunity in Göllheim so that this recently calm county was predominantly instigated through him.” Mayer had been sent to Göllheim, fifteen miles from his native Dürkheim, to mobilize the people for the revolution and the defense of Palatinate independence. Contemporaries described Mayer as providing revolutionary speeches in which he repeatedly advocated “the [socialist] republic and thus at least the armed rebellion.” Mayer, according to the bill of indictment, strongly urged “casting off the princes’ yoke . . . [as he] described how all princes and governments oppressed and enslaved the people. He named the only remedy against it: the Republic [and] advertised a second revolution as a radical instrument.”²²

Mayer served on the revolutionary county commission and on the commission of recruitment, both foundations of the Palatinate’s secessionist administration, and “from the beginning to the end and at every opportunity he called on the [people] to support the revolutionary forces.”²³ He apparently succeeded as a recruiter. Ludwig Bamberger, a fellow Jewish revolutionary and later a cofounder of the Deutsche Bank, recalled that the two thousand

men from Göllheim constituted one of the largest contingents of the pitiful defense of the Palatinate. However, he also recalled that their fighting morale when facing the Prussians was as low as anybody else's in the Palatinate where, according to Friedrich Engels, the establishment of "independent bars [wine halls] was the first revolutionary act."²⁴

Mayer also acted as a leading member of the democratic societies, the core of the Palatinate's revolution. An informer of the Bavarian authorities reported that even "if all speakers were more or less intense, only [the speeches of the] candidates of the law Fries [and] Maier . . . can be described as trouble-stirring [to] the highest degree as they have called for an immediate attack."²⁵ A friend of Mayer's from Munich mockingly addressed him in a letter as a "democratic agitator of the people, future General-Auditor [of the independent Palatinate], to be found with the holy republican black-red-golden militia for the liberation of the Palatinate, . . . much-promising delighter of the people." Kukatzki sees Mayer's public appearance as the reason why many Jews in Göllheim joined the revolutionary side while Jews elsewhere largely awaited the outcome.²⁶

Kukatzki further asserts that Mayer "likely belonged to the group of Jews who believed—in their deep religious conviction—to have identified in the revolution a manifestation of the messianic age."²⁷ Mayer's motives were plainly political. In May and early June 1849 the German spring had largely run its course. Only the revolutionaries in a few regions like Baden and the Palatinate still clung to hope for the adoption of the constitution that never materialized. Among them were Jews for whom the constitution was the one prospect of ending inequality and injustice in Germany. Indeed, it brought temporary equality to Jews in several states for the duration of the revolution.²⁸

The essence of German civil rights and of the 1849 Frankfurt constitution was the separation of political concepts from religious creeds. Section VI, Article V of the proposed constitution would have established a novelty in Germany, granting freedom of religion and abolishing "state privileges [for any religious body] above others." The state further would have relinquished its right

A selection from Section VI, "Fundamental Rights of the German People," of the Frankfurt constitution of March 28, 1849. The portions of Article V shown here read as follows:

§144

Every German enjoys complete freedom of religion and conscience. No one is obliged to disclose his religious convictions.

§ 145

No German is limited in his common domestic and public religious exercises. Crimes and misdemeanors committed during the exercise of this freedom will be punished according to the law.

§ 146

The enjoyment of civic and civil rights is neither based on nor infringed by reason of any religious conviction. The same must not infringe the civic duties.

§ 147

Every religious society allocates and administers its affairs independently; they are bound, however, to the general jurisdiction of the state. No religious society enjoys state privileges above others; there is further no state church. New religious societies may be formed; the state's recognition of their commitment is not required.

§ 148

No one may be forced into a religious act or ceremony.

§ 149

The formula of oath shall be: "So help me God."

(Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches: Amtliche Ausgabe [Constitution of the German Empire: Government Edition], Frankfurt am Main, 1849. Courtesy of the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle an der Saale, Germany. Translation by Anton Hieke.)

and requirement to officially recognize any new religious body.²⁹ The constitution affirmed that the state would not interfere in religious matters and conversely also prohibited religious interference in state matters. This radical German revolution would have separated church and state, the *leitmotif* of what became Mayer's American political mission. Yet, apparently this was insufficient for him. As indicated, Mayer had "nam[ed] the only remedy against [enslaving the people]: the Republic." Republicans such as Mayer were in the minority. They most often referenced the Constitution of the United States, with its emphasis on federalism and the First Amendment.³⁰ Only the republic would have perfected the constitution by obliterating the last remnant of intertwining politics and religion and ultimately would have rescinded the divine right of the German princes.

As a "candidate of the law" and a Jew, Mayer represented both the majority and the minority in the revolution. "The Palatinate's lawyers were the engine and carriers of the movements for liberty, and put them on a legal basis," as historian Hannes Ziegler argues.³¹ Interestingly, despite Bavaria's record of antisemitism, the bill of indictment never referred to Mayer's Judaism. Apparently the Bavarian authorities wished to seem impartial. Individual contemporaries did not. One concluded,

Not only average subjects were affected by this epidemic [the revolution], it raged . . . especially among the class of lawyers, predominantly if the same were from Jewish stock. Their oratory skills and jabbering were heightened through this epidemic most terribly. These were the most dangerous because of the infection they spread and which mostly originated in them.³²

Jewish participants especially faced having their motives questioned. In the Palatinate, Lazarus Straus(s) of Otterberg and later of Talbotton and Columbus, Georgia, had been elected to the community council in June 1849. He faced the allegation that his support for the revolution wavered because he showed greater concern with "a bettering of the social position of the Jews." Mayer was characterized as "a Jew who cannot deny his ancestry through his impertinence which lasts as long as he does not have to face any danger for himself."³³

Mayer was taken to jail on June 30, 1849. He likely turned himself in.³⁴ The possessions found on him symbolized his convictions: a loaded gun on a "student's chain," the German eagle and colors, and a letter written in Western Yiddish. Mayer apparently found time during the revolution to further his Jewish studies. His possessions included a note with compositions by several cantors and rabbis.³⁵

Mayer was eventually charged with "not only provoking high treason through public speeches or pamphlets and [other] printed material, but also of the real participation and contribution to both crimes [of] armed rebellion and high treason."³⁶ Mayer was among the few active Jewish participants in the Palatinate revolution and among the few who were sentenced to death. Like three others, he chose exile and moved to New York City. None of the death sentences were actually carried out; the defendants were later pardoned.³⁷ Since Mayer's case never went to trial, the accuracy of the accusations against him remains unverified.

Reverend Dr. Maurice Mayer of Charleston

In 1851, KKBE advertised for a rabbi in several American and European Jewish periodicals. After receiving two applications, the congregation accepted Mayer's over that of Isaac Mayer Wise, possibly because Wise had rejected the position the previous year.³⁸ Mayer, who was supported by traditionalist Isaac Leeser, was invited to Charleston on April 4, 1852. With this, the minutes of the congregation break off for five years. Mayer delivered a sermon at KKBE the following month and won election in June.³⁹

This was Mayer's first and most important employment as a rabbi, as well as his first American home outside the moderate Reformers' environment in New York. In Charleston, he became a personal friend of his predecessor, Gustavus Poznanski, and a close ally of David Einhorn immediately after the Reformer's arrival in America in 1856.⁴⁰ Korn asserts that "none of [the] rabbis [among the Forty-Eighters] was an extreme radical theologically. All of them were moderate Reformers or traditionalists in America: Even in Europe their political views were more radical than their religious concepts." Maurice Mayer, however, identified as a

radical Reformer. As he wrote in 1856, “all young congregations are sternly Orthodox. . . . That does not matter, though. The sun never rests as it turns to the west!”⁴¹ From his perspective, the future of Judaism was European and American and thus in modernity and Reform.

Mayer repeatedly voiced his pride in the fact that he was a German rabbi in a reforming Sephardic congregation. He introduced the confirmation of children on Shavuot in 1855, “according to Rab. [Leopold] Stein [of Frankfurt am Main] with some alterations.” KKBE’s new book of hymns appeared a year later and, according to Einhorn’s *Sinai*, entailed “original compositions by members of the congregation [especially Penina Moïse] and their minister, Dr. Mayer, partially metric translations of German hymns.”⁴² The next year *Sinai* further reported that KKBE also adopted parts of the prayer order of Einhorn’s *Har Sinai* in Baltimore “in the translations of Dr. Mayer [into English].” The congregation abolished the *Mussafim* and the *aliyot*. Einhorn never “doubt[ed] that this brave congregation will be consequent enough to abolish the prayers for a return to Jerusalem as well [as] the proclaimed denial of the belief in a restoration of the sacrificial cult.”⁴³

The Frankfurt am Main newspaper *Der Israelitische Volkslehrer* reported in 1857 that Mayer was appointed “for life (a considerable raise of [his] salary included) in appreciation of [his] achievements.”⁴⁴ Earlier, in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, Mayer had warned German rabbis not to come to American congregations lightheartedly. He emphasized that they should insist on a minimum salary and employment for life as “[t]he position [is] a most precarious one, and all it often takes is the disapproval of one single influential member of the congregation to build a majority *against* [the rabbi’s] re-election.” He concluded that the “plentiful” negative examples he offered were, “thank goodness, not mine.”⁴⁵ Less than two years later, they became his.

The minutes of KKBE resume at Mayer’s appointment for life. They show that money and the question of authority—the crux of Mayer’s warnings in the *Allgemeine*—as well as Mayer’s health, contributed to his resignation. He wrote in August 1858

that "as soon as I am able to walk [I] will go to the North to restore my health." A few days later, Mayer informed the board of trustees of his intention to travel to the North, as "I have cause to apprehend the return of the disease [*sic*] under which I have suffered so much."⁴⁶

Mayer neither requested the board's consent for leaving the city, as the minutes note, nor did the trustees offer it. They rather stopped his pay "from the time of his departure . . . at a time his clerical services were most likely to be needed." The board referred to the yellow fever epidemic of 1858. Mayer declared in a private letter from New York at the end of October, "I must not return to Charleston. . . . This year, the conditions there are worse than ever; even native [Charlestonians] have fallen victim to the [yellow] fever." The epidemic was indeed the gravest since 1817. More than seven hundred people, mostly Irish- and German-born immigrants, died in September and October, when Mayer departed the city.⁴⁷

The correspondence between the rabbi and board as noted in the minutes reflects the fierce argument over the discontinuance of his salary. In April 1859, Mayer threatened to sue the congregation, an action that infuriated the board. Mayer offered his resignation as rabbi on September 5, 1859, and the board accepted it. In November, a resolution "recalled [Mayer] as [temporary] minister of this Congregation on the same terms and condition as [before]." It is unknown whether or not Mayer accepted, but correspondence shows that he had been back in Charleston since at least the end of March and until early 1860.⁴⁸

The quarrels over the rabbi's presence or absence in Charleston and the board's reluctant payments were manifestations of a deeper estrangement on both sides. In October 1858, Mayer wrote to Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal of Chicago that "if possible—and I strongly advise you as a friend—stay away from all community relations [intrigues]—I too, does it not surprise you?, consider relieving myself of them as soon as possible." In March 1859, Mayer mentioned the secretive manner of the "Portuguese" (the old families) in Charleston who fought battles over "old and new prejudices. . . . It is for this reason [and my health] that I will leave

as soon as possible for wherever I might find a suitable position which I find acceptable."⁴⁹

During the second half of 1857 unrest unfolded in KKBE, though not necessarily with the rabbi in the center. In August, the organist, Mr. Greatorex, was reminded to "comply fully and strictly to the stipulations of his agreement" or be fired. The board hedged, following legal advice. In November, the board threatened congregants with lawsuits if they failed to pay their dues. Arrears of six hundred dollars had accumulated. The keeper of the synagogue, Samuel Bennett, resigned in June, and the fire loan debt was met through subscriptions. The Society for the Religious Instruction of Jewish Youth and the Ladies Sabbath School Society

*From the minutes of Congregation Kahal Kodesh Beth Elohim,
June 10, 1858, showing the passage quoted on the facing page.
(Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.)*

had to keep the congregation afloat by donating five hundred dollars each. At the same time, Mayer was criticized for "making frequent personal allusions . . . on doctrinal points [which] have been in conflict with the cherished principles of some of the members."⁵⁰ His conduct thus further contributed to the pitiful

financial situation. The paucity of funds (soon solved through selling property in the city), the numerous resignations of members, and the strained relations with the rabbi illustrate a congregation close to collapse.

To prevent Mayer from his "impulses" in regard to doctrinal points, the board asked him to submit to censorship.⁵¹ Given the descriptions of Mayer's brusque personality, he likely did not conduct his rabbinic behavior with diplomacy. Rather than comply, Mayer offered his resignation. The board immediately backpedaled, allowing Mayer to achieve his one victory in this struggle over authority. On June 6, 1858, however, the board strongly condemned the rabbi for studying law and expressed their "serious disapproval" of Mayer testifying in court under oath while bareheaded. The board considered his behavior to be against "the established usage of our holy religion and . . . inconsistent with the dignity of a Jewish Minister."⁵² Mayer promptly replied that the

opposition [has] manifested against me for the last year. . . . I cannot conceive how a Board of Trustees consisting of Laymen, should take it upon themselves, to teach their minister the laws and usages of his religion. Therefore, it must not astonish you when I maintain that upon this point, I do place my opinion in competition with, or rather above yours. I should think that, with all due respect, I might be the only person to decide upon what is [Jewish] Law, or what is not.⁵³

The board deemed his letter a matter for a general meeting of the congregation. Eventually, Mayer offered to withdraw the letter (an offer the board accepted) and promised to end his studies and to keep his head covered when under oath. Only three board members voted against forcing the rabbi to do so, among them Mayer's brother-in-law Jacob Ottolengui.⁵⁴ Mayer does not appear in the minutes again until August 16, when he informed the board of his decision to take an indefinite leave.

In the decades before and after Mayer, none of its rabbis had departed KKBE unblemished or voluntarily. Under Poznanski, the "father of reforms in America," the congregation suffered rupture. Following Poznanski's appointment for life as rabbi (apparently

never a good sign in Charleston during this era), he repeatedly resigned over various controversies. Traditionalist Julius Eckman, who arrived in 1850, left just a year later after a petition urged him to do so for his "own self-respect. . . . He will no longer retain an office, that places him in opposition to so many of his congregation, and renders him an obstacle to their peace and harmony." The Reform-minded Mayer was at least publicly appreciated after his resignation and not verbally abused the way Eckman had been.⁵⁵ After the Civil War, Joseph H. M. Chumaceiro, who served between 1868 and 1874, resigned repeatedly when his authority was questioned. Apparently Mayer fell victim to the same unrest that ended the terms of many predecessors and successors. None of the rabbis seemed to be able to satisfy the majority of the congregation for a longer period. The congregation was divided into factions on its path to Reform, and board control dominated over rabbinic authority. Mayer's position in relation to abolitionists and the abolitionist movement played no role in his dismissal from KKBE.

Mayer, Charleston, and American Judaism

As a rabbi, Mayer did not devise original Reform concepts. His merits lay in bridging German and American Judaism and Jewry. David Einhorn wrote in the *Sinai* in 1856: "American Jewry might possess no more than about ten German theologians full of energy, dedication and thorough education. They have progressed further in five years than Germany has in half a century."⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, Einhorn counted Mayer among those "ten German theologians." Yet Mayer, unlike Einhorn, was a German Reformer who had spiritually arrived in America. As a rabbi he was first and foremost a politician for American values in Jewish affairs.

Although Mayer considered Einhorn to be the "leader of the party of progress" in America, the two men differed greatly when it came to German language and culture.⁵⁷ For Einhorn these provided the essence of Reform Judaism; thus Reform Judaism was in fact *German* Judaism.⁵⁸ Mayer was far more nuanced than Einhorn. He promoted or implemented German Reform elements in

Charleston and emphasized that he “honor[s], love[s] and support[s] everything which is truly German, i.e., purely *gemütlich*, honest, and true.” On another occasion he wrote, “Truth, openness, and German honesty have always been my principles.” Mayer criticized those Germans who “take considerable effort to disguise their German nature to such a degree that they even converse with their compatriots only in the English language.”⁵⁹

Mayer saw German Reform as a crown of Judaism, but one that had to be made accessible to all Jews and under American conditions. During his career Mayer translated some ten works of German Reformers and other Jewish publications from German into English. His work, however, transcended immediate access to German Reform thought. Mayer presented an *American Reform* that was not just a mirror of its German counterpart. Einhorn’s version of Reform excluded anybody incapable of understanding German, a group that included the majority of American-born Jews. In his approach to language, Mayer was closer to Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise, both champions of the English language as a link for American Jews. Mayer perceived it as a necessity, as a translator and rabbi, “to bring [German ideas] closer to the English-speaking audience—Jewish and Christian—as it is rather backward in matters of Judaism.” In 1859 he strongly advised Chicago’s Bernhard Felsenthal to put English in the foreground when dedicating the *Jüdischer Reformverein* “so that the congregation can present its true position and intent to the general audience.” When Leo Merzbacher, rabbi of German-speaking Temple Emanu-El in New York, died in October 1856, Mayer was one of four rabbis to speak at his grave. Unlike the others, he did so “in English with an eloquent tongue.”⁶⁰

Mayer’s authority within American Judaism as rabbi of KKBE has to be seen as the basis for his political writings in American and German periodicals. Through his busy correspondence to the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, notice of the Jewish South reached Europe with a clear political purpose. Within American Judaism he acted as a leader in the opposition to Orthodox Judaism and served among the champions of radical Reform, whose framework of tradition he outlined in his German-

*Some of Mayer's rabbinical colleagues, rivals, and correspondents.
 Left to right: Isaac Mayer Wise, Bernhard Felsenthal, and David Einhorn.
 (Felsenthal from Morris A. Gutstein, A Priceless Heritage.
 Wise and Einhorn from Wikimedia Commons.)*

language "History of the Religious Turn among the Israelites of North America," published in Einhorn's *Sinai*. In this article, he alluded to a felt obligation to become American Reform's spokesman during the Cleveland debates (described below) because he was rabbi of the "congregation [that] is for America what the Temple of Hamburg is for Germany [i.e., the cradle of Reform]." ⁶¹ Mayer believed that Isaac Mayer Wise had forfeited this position by his support for the Cleveland plan of union and his willingness to sacrifice essential Reform creeds for it. Mayer gladly deferred the leadership to Einhorn as soon as the latter reached America.

Almost all of Mayer's contributions appeared during his time in Charleston, whereas he published almost nothing before or after with the exception of one timid argument in support of Reform Judaism in 1853. ⁶² Despite Mayer's furthering reforms at KKBE, his correspondence demonstrates that he was a politician rather than a theologian. With few exceptions, his publications focused on the defense of the freedom of the individual and the society at large from the interference of doctrinal, religious-based influences, either Christian or Jewish. ⁶³

One of Bernhard Illowy's more colorful criticisms of Mayer: "I call Dr. Mayer himself as eyewitness that the wife of a local Jewish preacher, while on vacation [and] in the presence of her husband, has had lunch in a Christian restaurant of nothing but forbidden dishes. I call the wife of Dr. Mayer as witness that a Jewish preacher of one of this country's largest and oldest congregations, while on vacation [and] in the presence of his wife, has had lunch in a Christian restaurant consisting of nothing but forbidden dishes. (Jeshurun, Nissan 5618 [April 1858].)

From Charleston, Mayer actively participated in the mid-nineteenth century struggle over Judaism's future in America, including its constant personal attacks and counterattacks among rabbis. Periodicals printed quarrels involving rabbis such as Leeser (called the archenemy of Reform), Solomon Jacobs of Charleston's Orthodox Shearit Israel, and even Bernhard Illowy, a fellow Forty-Eighter then in New York, in the German Orthodox newspaper *Jeshurun*.⁶⁴ In 1857, Mayer affirmed that "what we have to fight first and foremost is modern Phariseeism: alias, Neo-Orthodoxy."⁶⁵

It was Mayer's and the American rabbis' tendency to attack one another in European papers that accounted for Ludwig Philippson's outburst against them. Philippson, the editor of the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, who was a Reformer himself, berated American Judaism and Jewry as "a mere nobody" for the progress of Jews in general. Out of the harbor of American social and political equality, these ever-quarreling American rabbis, it seems, appeared to German Jews as too distracted by this public *Effekthascherei* (playing to the gallery) to support others in their struggle for the same equality. Without limiting his scorn to Mayer, Philippson added to one of Mayer's correspondences in 1857 that

this fishing for applause for the sake of personal ambitions, these *small* men giving themselves airs, . . . this hypocritical and sophisticated play with theology . . . is despicable. . . . If you [i.e., American rabbis], who have styled themselves the leaders of Judaism and Jewry—in America, if you present nothing else than fussiness and striving for pettiness—so the sponge of oblivion will come over you sooner than you think.⁶⁶

Mayer, however, neither "fished for applause" nor "play[ed] with theology" as Philippson implied. Mayer quarreled and argued for political reasons with the aim of strengthening the Reform side in its infancy in America.

To Mayer, Isaac M. Wise was likely America's least acceptable pulpit leader. Wise, for his part, minimized Mayer's memory some three decades after his death. Wise once briefly mentioned in his *Reminiscences* a "Dr. Moritz Mayer, a teacher in [Max] Lilienthal's school [in 1851]," and thus blotted out Mayer's rabbinate in Charleston and his translations. It is telling that Wise mentions Mayer as a teacher, especially considering their collaboration on Wise's *Hymns, Psalms & Prayers, In English and German*, published in 1868, one year after Mayer's death. Mayer had characterized Wise as a false leader of Reform and battled Wise's version of it. Mayer had declined an offer from Wise to work for the *Israelite* because he had identified plagiarism in the periodical. Mayer asserted his unwillingness "to dishonor my quill and paper with works for this newspaper."⁶⁷ An *Israelite* writer, in turn, publicly

questioned Mayer's ability as a translator.⁶⁸ These Reform leaders obviously did not stand on the best terms, although Mayer's positions on American identity and abolitionism closely resembled those of Wise.

The Cleveland Conference in 1855 apparently instigated Mayer's fierce defense of Reform through his public quarrels on behalf of Reform Judaism in America and Germany. He strongly rejected the central authority over American Judaism, or *beth din*, which Leeser and Wise sought to establish, as incompatible with the American concepts of voluntarism and individual freedom. Mayer initiated an American and European campaign against the "Cleveland Folly" and against the "misdeeds of the suicidal key players," Wise and Leeser. Mayer "was convinced of the impossibility of a union of Orthodox and Reformers." He presented Wise as surrendering his Reform convictions for the sake of forming such a union.⁶⁹

In sermons and communications to the board, he urged his congregation in Charleston to support his position because "the result of [this struggle] will prove, whether we have a right to exist or not." To the German audience, he explained that the conference primarily sought to "halt the further spreading of reforms [and] to destroy everything which has been achieved so far." Mayer concluded that the affirmation of the divine origin of Torah *and* Talmud especially had caused "Schadenfreude and triumph on the one [Orthodox] side and consternation as well as shock on the other [Reform]."⁷⁰ This plan of union ultimately failed.

Beginning with his arrival in the United States, Mayer sought to link American and German Jews in fact on the two continents and in spirit on American soil. He consistently based this endeavor on his quest to defend American freedom of conviction and to reject any doctrinal interference. When plans were formulated for a central Jewish authority in America in 1855, Mayer drew on his authority as the rabbi of the oldest Reform congregation in America to oppose the initiative. His struggle against the conference emphasized Mayer's principles. The very concept of union, Mayer believed, endangered Reform Judaism as it was flourishing on

American soil. His resistance was further based on his belief in religious freedom for American Jews. A *beth din* on the European model would have created an *Einheitsgemeinde* (unified congregation) and thus would have eliminated the American tradition of congregational self-determination in religious matters and replaced it with a quasi-European model. Again, Mayer presented the same convictions by which he had lived during the German revolution: personal and religious freedom.

The Southerner

Ironically, the congregational authority Mayer supported provided the structure of his conflict within KKBE, and, as a result of his quarrels with the congregation, Mayer affirmed that he did not want another rabbinical position. He was not primarily a pulpit rabbi either by training or inclination. First and foremost he was an advocate and politician within Judaism and for Jews' rights within the society at large. Mayer's rejection of abolitionism can be understood best within this context.

On the occasion of the centennial of the revolution, Bertram Korn concluded that most "of the Jewish 'Forty-Eighters' . . . maintained their devotion to liberal principles in America. (Some became outspoken adherents of abolitionism almost as soon as they reached America.) . . . Even if abolitionism did not draw them to its banners, most of [them] became ardent supporters of the Republican party." Other documents seemingly confirm Korn's conclusion. In its obituary for Mayer, the *Charleston Daily News* attested to his liberal religious and political convictions.⁷¹ The history of congregation Beth Emeth of Albany, New York, observes that in 1862, "after the outbreak of the Civil War, an abolitionist, *Rabbi Moritz Mayer*, forced to leave Charleston, South Carolina because of his views, came to the pulpit at Anshe Emeth."⁷² Contrary to these descriptions, neither Mayer's political liberalism nor his abolitionism contributed to his departure from KKBE. Mayer did not support abolitionism or the Republican Party. He was well integrated into southern society.

He came to the most prominent slaveholders' bastion in the United States after only two years in the country, and after mov-

ing to Charleston in 1852 he apparently became a southerner with southern convictions. In 1853, Mayer married Rachel Ottolengui, the daughter of Abraham and Sarah Ottolengui, and thus into a “real, old-Portuguese family,” in Mayer’s words.⁷³ This family both accepted and practiced slavery. Abraham Ottolengui owned seventeen slaves in 1850, the year of his death. His sons Jacob and Israel, Mayer’s brothers-in-law, owned seven slaves in 1860.

Marriage announcement. (Occident, 1853.)

Marrying into the Ottolengui family facilitated his transformation from an observer of the southern version of American liberty into an adherent of the southern ethos. Mayer’s personal acculturation to America included support of the southern side from the flawed Compromise of 1850 onward through the simmering conflict between North and South. Mayer likely did not own slaves, but a fellow Forty-Eighter from the Palatinate, Lazarus Straus, who lived in Talbotton, Georgia, did own one in 1860.⁷⁴

In 1855, when Mayer’s busy correspondence to the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* had commenced, he wrote:

[As] I live in North America’s main slave state [I] likely have some knowledge in the matter. Yet I wish to ignore [it] as it is

not relevant to the core of Jewish interest. Just that much might be mentioned: If the Europeans were to judge by their *own* experience and not by adopted or concocted prejudices, or by slanderous claims of the northern fanatics [abolitionists], they surely *would have to* express and admit to different opinions. The institution of slavery, as much as it may be attacked on the basis of principle and as much as it is attacked out of a misguided philanthropy, is a *charity*. At least the “southern provinces of North America” do not know the pauperism under which our North as well as Europe suffer so miserably.⁷⁵

Thus Mayer did not display a disdain in his correspondence for the institution of slavery in general, although he conceded that it “may be attacked on the basis of principle.” His defense of slavery against “misguided philanthropy” demonstrates a Jewish paternalism grounded in his acculturation to southern mores.

The article is a rare example of Mayer discussing slavery — albeit not abolitionism — as a concept. Apparently none of Mayer’s correspondence to American papers treats the subject. Mayer’s stance, only identifiable in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, apparently had a specific purpose. He wrote in response to Ludwig Philippson’s editorial, “Some Troubling Signs from beyond the Ocean.”⁷⁶ Philippson had described slavery and, by implication, the South that continued to support it, as one of the greatest threats to American liberty. Mayer utterly disagreed. Almost all of his letters to Germany concerning Charleston and southern society emphasized the opposite.

In his notes to the *Allgemeine* discussing the South, blacks and slavery played a minor role but further reveal Mayer’s stance on the issues. When he reported the case of Billy Simons in Charleston in 1857, he presented the curiosity of a black Jewish congregant, a symbol of southern and particularly Jewish tolerance. In another letter to the *Allgemeine*, Mayer wrote of “an act of the highest tolerance among the Christians of this community [Charleston]” when he was invited to preach at the orphanage’s house of worship in the city along with representatives of the Christian churches, thus as an equal. He concluded his report on Simons: “Whereas blacks and colored people in the South as well as in the *free* North are segregated in every public place, church,

theater etc., our Uncle Billy takes his seat among his white coreligionists in the temple.”⁷⁷ Mayer did not ponder the implications for Simons that his coreligionists at KKBE were slave owners. His was a political, not a moral defense of slavery, as his other publications show.

In 1859, *Russell's Magazine* in Charleston published “The Slave Law of the Jews, in the time of Jesus and the Apostles.” Historians Elizabeth Fox Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese assume that the anonymous author—“a Jewish scholar of this city of high standing,” according to the magazine—was Mayer. His authorship cannot be proven but seems apparent given the time, subject, style, scope, and references to, among other things, German legislation. The article systematically undermines the Christian underpinning of abolitionism by emphatically rejecting any biblical antislavery tradition “upon which the opponents of the ‘peculiar institution’ set such great value.” Whereas Rabbi Morris Raphall’s defense of slavery in January 1861 emphasized its theological basis in Judaism, Mayer’s article offers an excursion into the historical “Slave Law of Judea.” Its structure follows Judge John Belton O’Neill’s *The Negro Law of South Carolina* (1848) in order to “show the striking similarity between the two systems.” Mayer emphasized, for instance, that the development of “Biblical Law [led to enactments that] vastly resemble the Fugitive Slave Law of our country.” The article constructs a sociohistorical, legal framework for the founders of Christianity as based on Jewish heritage. It concluded, “we never find [that Jesus and the Apostles] condemn the Slave Law as it existed in their time.” Moreover, “whenever they refer to slavery, as far as we can perceive from the New Testament . . . they certainly enforced the existing laws [concerning it].” The article draws an image of Jewish tradition promoting slavery for the benefit of the enslaved and thus justifies southern paternalism from a Jewish (and thus consequently Christian) perspective.⁷⁸

Why should Maurice Mayer, a champion of liberty in 1849, attack the foundation of Christian abolitionism by deconstructing its Jewish roots a mere decade after he fled Germany? In his “Anus Mundi 5615 [1855],” Mayer’s review of the year’s events for

the *Occident*, he discusses “our own beloved, glorious home, the *United States of North America*. . . . Here we are free — . . . ; here we are Americans before the law and that great Magna Charta of 1787, a rock, we hope, on which all attempts of religious fanaticism and intolerance will wreck beyond recovery.”⁷⁹

Mayer’s depiction of the Constitution as a “rock . . . [to wreck] all attempts of religious fanaticism and intolerance” was a declaration of creed that went beyond a commonplace. In his correspondence to Germany, Mayer especially considered the rising “fanaticism of abolitionism” in the debates over slavery in the 1850s as “exceedingly more intolerant than the nativist [Know-Nothing] fanaticism had been” and “harboring dangers for Jews.” The dangers were not grounded in the personal freedom of blacks but in the interference of religion with politics of which Christian abolitionism was the most apparent form in Mayer’s time. In Mayer’s estimation, as Christian abolitionism established a foothold in the North, the South, ironically, more fully embodied his convictions concerning the German revolution, despite the existence of slavery. Mayer sarcastically referred to the “*free North*” when presenting the case of Billy Simons. This became a recurring feature in his correspondence. When discussing the influence of religion in American politics, Mayer noted that the trains of “the (so-called *free*) states” halted on Sundays. Yet, he added, “Here in the south as well, i.e., in the despised slave states, the same has been attempted, but to no avail.”⁸⁰

The failed German constitution that Moses Maier had defended foresaw the separation of church and state. For Maurice Mayer, the South emerged as the protector of the First Amendment, guarding the same principle in America. In 1857 he observed that since

political fanaticism attempts to take possession of power in this glorious Union—and [it] has not given up since—it cannot be of no importance to us Jews which party may win. It does not take a prophetic clairvoyance to claim that Jews will never be the last chosen as fanaticism’s victims once it prevails. This is regardless of the shape it takes, be it political or religious and whatever name it might bear—fanaticism of slavery [abolitionism, the Re-

publican Party] or nativism [the Know-Nothing, or American Party] – it will always threaten the Jews.⁸¹

Mayer concluded that the abolition of slavery was conceptually a “demonstration of a Christian-national necessity” since it was based on the intertwining of a sociopolitical project (abolitionism) with Christianity. Mayer concluded, “The American Jews are fortunate that the old, conservative Democratic Party was victorious in the last [1856] presidential election and has chosen James Buchanan, the old statesman, as head of our Republic for the next four years.”⁸² German historian Werner Steger sees the attraction of the conservative Democratic Party for immigrants in the party’s refusal to regulate social or economic matters in contrast to the Whig, Republican, and the American Parties. The Democratic Party position stood in striking contrast to the overregulation of German autocratic governments in the years following the revolution for self-determination. Mayer viewed the Democratic Party and the slaveholding south as bulwarks of Jewish equality. He added in the same letter to the *Allgemeine* in 1857: “It is a curious fact that every fanaticism yet in existence in America has originated and flourished in the North, [but] has been crushed in the slave states. The Know-Nothingism (the fanaticism of nativism) received its first fatal blow in Virginia, and was entirely disregarded

President James Buchanan, “the old statesman,” c. 1860. (Photograph by Matthew Brady, National Archives and Records Administration. Wikimedia Commons.)

in Charleston.” Threats to Jews’ constitutional rights, or “fanaticism” in Mayer’s words, rushed like waves from the North to be broken at the Mason-Dixon Line. He apparently saw the South first as a bulwark against nativism, then against abolitionism. In his juxtaposition of North and South, Mayer never hinted at the fact that nativists and abolitionists failed to enjoy universal acceptance in the North but were rather perceived by many northerners also as radicals.⁸³

Where southern practices did not meet the promise of preserving the barrier between politics and religion, Mayer pointed to incompatibility with the American or South Carolinian constitutions. For instance, in 1855 Mayer observed that South Carolina’s college students had to attend public worship on Sundays and study William Paley’s *Evidences of Christianity*.⁸⁴ He concluded that the trustees of the colleges “usurp[ed] a right against the very letter of the constitution of South Carolina.” He opined that the “secular literary institutions [the colleges] when tinctured with sectarianism are but the seminaries of the doctrines of ‘Christian State’ and the like.” He called on the legislature to strive against any such “tincture with sectarianism.” Mayer also opposed the Swiss-American treaty of 1850 (which went into effect in 1855) because of discrimination against Jews by Swiss cantons. His letters to American and European periodicals reflected that he did so in opposition to Swiss antisemitism but especially to American acceptance of the cantons’ political discrimination on the basis of religion—another “tincture with sectarianism.” The rabbi discussed all of these issues in his sermons and in the press. According to historian James Hagy, his references to political matters fostered unrest in his congregation.⁸⁵

Other Forty-Eighters, as historian Jayme Sokolow observes, were involved in the Republican Party but disregarded abolitionism, often as a response to the antisemitism some of its adherents exhibited. Others, like Michael Heilprin, became abolitionists but lived on northern soil. Sokolow concludes: “Only German Reform rabbis and Reform Jews became avowed abolitionists . . . because the issues surrounding abolitionism seemed related to the problems Reform Judaism faced in the mid-nineteenth century.” Other

rabbis of Mayer's German Reform circle, including Einhorn and Felsenthal, fit this pattern and compared the freedom of Jews to that of African Americans.⁸⁶ In contrast, Mayer was a radical Reformer who provides an example of southern acculturation. Seemingly the abolitionists' antisemitism was less critical for him than their pronounced Christianity. Whereas other Forty-Eighters strove for freedom in general, Mayer advocated freedom from religious interference. For Mayer, the Christian emphasis and background of many abolitionists threatened the separation of church and state.

Mayer's first book-length translation in Charleston was Isidor Kalisch's *Guide for Rational Inquiries into the Biblical Writings* (1857), which dealt directly with Judaism and Christianity. In his preface to the work, the only one he wrote for any of his translations, Mayer indirectly referred to his involvement in the German revolution:

It can not be denied, unless we are determined to offer a deaf ear to the loud preaching and proclamations of history, that the great political bankrupt [*sic*] under which the Monarchies and sham Republics of Europe have been, and still are suffering, and which has led to oppression and persecution, to revolutions and reactions, and their most melancholy results for the people of that continent, has been caused by that unfortunate "*Union of State and Church*," and its mother, that most absurd of all doctrines, the doctrine of "*Christian State*."⁸⁷

For Mayer, any project ostentatiously conceived through the Christian religion, including abolitionism, harbored the threat of intertwining politics and religion in America, Mayer's dreaded Christian State.⁸⁸

Although a true Forty-Eighter struggling against abolitionism may seem peculiar, his stance was in accord with the rejection of other Christian projects by his Jewish contemporaries. Historian Marni Davis, for example, demonstrates in her discussion of the Jewish stance on the nineteenth-century temperance movement that Jews did not reject it out of a defense of alcohol as such but rather for its sociopolitical implications. She observes that American Jews

were also looking beyond their own interests. They insisted that the anti-alcohol movement sought to undermine the constitutional rights of all Americans. . . . Their Jewish identity, as they understood it, did not isolate them from the broader political culture; rather, it positioned them to defend the Constitution, and the national body as a whole.⁸⁹

Resistance to perceived Christian causes, including abolitionism and prohibition, was based partly on the issues themselves but even more on opposition to their underlying philosophy. Although Mayer and Wise had their differences, here they apparently concurred. Historian Sefton Temkin finds that Wise partly remained silent on the issue of abolition because he “appears to have suspected some of the Abolitionists of a disposition to tamper with the guarantees of liberty and equality.” Wise “suspected the political parsons of trying to inject Christianity into the Constitution.” Two decades later during the temperance movement, Wise “believed [prohibition] to be a fight between religious tyrants and defenders of the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution,” according to Davis.⁹⁰

Unlike Wise, Mayer suspected abolitionists of more than just “tampering” and attacked them outright for what he perceived as the potential danger they posed to constitutional freedoms. Because he died before the height of the temperance movement, Mayer did not take a stance on the issue, but his position would have likely mirrored Wise’s. Mayer’s failure to condemn slavery stemmed from his belief in a political and social equilibrium rather than a true conviction supporting the institution. A successful Christianity-based abolitionism would have threatened the Jews’ position as equals by challenging the secular nature of the Constitution. Thus, for Mayer, it would have provided the threshold to a Christian America. In the end, the abolition of slavery came as a war measure during the Civil War and was not the outcome of a Christian project. Mayer’s fears thus remained untested.

Oddly, as a busy correspondent and the only Forty-Eighter rabbi in the south, Mayer failed to comment on the second great revolution in his life, the one for southern independence. The Civil War never seems to have played a role in Mayer’s writings during

his northern exile. The only reference in his extant correspondence was the mere allusion in a letter to Felsenthal that "in matters of religion I hate and fear secession! I believe in reunion there!"⁹¹ Here, in 1864, he was remarking about religious divisions in Felsenthal's Chicago congregation. Whether he believed in political reunion as an outcome of the war remains unclear. An ardent opponent of slavery, Felsenthal was probably not the best addressee for Mayer's convictions. Mayer may have been unwilling to share beliefs that may or may not have been marked by his life in South Carolina and his wife's southern heritage.

The Mayers remained southerners in Union territory during the Civil War and were strongly affected by the Confederacy's struggle for independence and its eventual collapse. In 1861 Mayer served as the legal counsel for the lone German defendant when the crew of the schooner *Savannah* came to trial in New York for piracy. The trial would determine whether Confederate seamen would be granted the status of prisoners of war. Thus the essence of the dispute was a legal definition of the war itself as the suppression of a rebellion or conflict between nations. Mayer argued along with the other defense counsels that the Confederate States of America was a de facto nation.⁹²

An investment of the Mayers' entire property in Charleston in Confederate bonds during the war by their trustee Benjamin Mordecai left them impoverished after 1865. Winning a suit against Mordecai in the South Carolina Supreme Court in 1869 did not change this fact, since they could not recover their losses from the defendant.⁹³

Conclusion

Mayer's rejection of abolitionism did not necessarily make him an ardent defender of slavery in betrayal of his earlier creed. As indicated, rejecting abolitionism on the grounds that it infused politics with religion was compatible with Mayer's previous revolutionary convictions and deeds in Germany. Ironically, Mayer apparently found in the Christian South a society free of a larger political religious zeal in opposition to what he perceived as fanaticism. His favorable depiction of the South for a German Jewish

audience has to be seen in this light. Mayer never corresponded publicly on the subject of the Civil War, and any other references to it are extremely rare. This may demonstrate Mayer's struggle with the fact that after his claim that Christian abolitionism threatened the American constitutional framework, this southern polity now threatened it more gravely through a war for the preservation of slavery and independence. In the words of Wise's *Israelite* on South Carolina's secession in December 1860: "The fanatics in both sections of the country succeeded in destroying the most admirable fabric of government."⁹⁴

Rechtskandidat Moses Maier was a fighter in the German revolution for liberty in 1849. He struggled against autocracy and for a republic. For his convictions, he was sentenced to death and sacrificed his European life by escaping to America. The Reverend Dr. Maurice Mayer of Charleston, South Carolina, became a southerner by acculturation and marriage. As rabbi of the American "cradle of Reform," he struggled against a central authority for American Judaism. As a southern Jewish Reformer he fought abolitionism. Mayer's German and American biographies seem contradictory and incompatible yet were not: his European revolutionary convictions remained the same on American soil throughout his political endeavors within Judaism and in the society at large.

The republican revolution Maier had supported in Germany had failed partly because it lacked traditions on which to rely. In Charleston, Mayer fought for the preservation of the political traditions of the American republic. At the core of both was his belief in the freedom of conscience from interference under either a Christian or a Jewish name. The German constitution of 1849, whose defense was apparently Moses Maier's reason for participating in the revolution, would have granted the separation of church and state. Maier's ideal of a German republic would have perfected the concept. After his flight to America, Maurice Mayer found the ideal lived. Becoming a southerner, he defended the American concept of separation of church and state by denouncing Christian abolitionism. By disentangling politics and religion, the American Constitution had done justice to Jews to a degree

unheard of in Europe while cementing social injustice for African Americans. Mayer was apparently unwilling to sacrifice the first for a remedy of the second, since both were part of the same Constitution. His correspondence to Germany has to be seen as presenting this southern, different, and most un-European version of society: a democratic society granting the desired freedom of conscience but based on slavery. Mayer was a political and social advocate of the South in his correspondence to German periodicals. As such, he answered German Jewish accusations that his adopted region threatened the American concept of political equality for Jews by perpetuating inequality in the form of slavery. However, he understood the separation of church and state as the basis for any Jewish equality in America. He professed instead that the South was the region true to American ideals by denying such intertwinement of politics and religion. His constant references to the political and social dangers for Jews embodied in nativism and abolitionism, with their northern origins and their rejection in the South, highlighted his argument.

Moses Maier had been born and raised as an outsider in a society intrinsically interwoven with faith-based convictions and had struggled against it. Maurice Mayer may have rejected slavery for moral reasons, as he wrote, but he resisted its abolition for political reasons because he perceived abolitionism as based on the Christian faith. The success of abolitionism as a Christian project would have weakened the dam between church and state that the Constitution and Bill of Rights had constructed. Mayer repeatedly voiced his fear of this possibility. Abolition would test American republican traditions with uncertain results for Jews when based on the Christian religion. When Mayer saw the future of Judaism "in the west," it was modernity he referred to. He aimed not merely for Reform Judaism but for the concept it represented to him: modernity granted a new conception of society that allowed the individual to thrive without doctrinal interference.

*Translation by Maurice Mayer of Abraham Geiger's
Judaism & Its History, 1866.
(Courtesy of internetarchive.org.)*

Appendix

Selected Works by Maurice Mayer⁹⁵

As Contributor

Wise, Isaac M., et. al. *Hymns, Psalms & Prayers, In English and German*. Cincinnati, 1868.

Translations by Maurice Mayer

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Hecht, Emanuel and Samuel Adler, eds. *Biblical History for Israelitish Schools, with a Brief Outline of the Geography of Palestine*. New York, 1859. Ten editions until 1881.

Kalisch, Isidor. *A Guide for Rational Inquiries into the Biblical Writings: Being an Examination of the Doctrinal Difference between Judaism and Primitive Christianity, Based upon a Critical Exposition of the Book of Matthew*. Cincinnati, 1857. Multiple editions.

Munk, Salomon. "On the Philosophy and Philosophical Writers of the Jews." *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 11 (1853): 248-256, 289-299; 13 (1855): 263-273. Follows the German translation of Bernhard Beer from the French original.

[Neuda, Fanny]. *Hours of Devotion: A Book of Prayers and Meditations for the Use of the Daughters of Israel, During Public Service and at Home: For all Conditions of Woman's Life*. New York, 1866. Five editions until 1900.

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———. “Did Indeed the Jews Crucify Jesus?” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 23 (1866): 541–546; 24 (1866): 27–32, 59–65, 116–124, 164–172, 213–221.

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NOTES

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¹ “Germany” here and below refers to a sociocultural concept rather than a political unit. A truly unified German state did not exist until 1871. One of the first to speak of a German nation in the modern sense was Madame de Staël in her *De l’Allemagne*, published in 1813. It is the description of a nation-state in the making, comparable to Tacitus’s *De Origine et situ Germanorum* in its scope and intention. See Anne Germaine de Staël, *Über Deutschland: Vollständige und neu durchgesehene Fassung der deutschen Erstausgabe von 1814*, trans. Friedrich Buchholz, ed. Monika Bosse (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 26.

² Bertram Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati, 1954), 20.

³ “Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer, gehalten in der Ramahloge zu Chicago am 4. September 1867, von Dr. B. Felsenthal,” *Hebrew Leader*, September 1, 1867. Records of a legal matter in Dürkheim in 1846 show that Moses Maier (Moritz Mayer) was the son of Simon Maier and Sara Dosenheimer. He had three younger sisters—Johanna, Rosalia, and Gertrude—for whom Mayer and his widowed mother were joint guardians. *Beilage zum Amts- und Intelligenzblatte für die Pfalz* (Speyer), March 26, 1846, 318; Klaus-Dieter Alicke, *Lexikon der jüdischen Gemeinden im deutschen Sprachraum* (Munich, 2008), 1:218.

⁴ “Jahresbericht über den Stand der Lateinischen Schule und den Realcursus zu Dürkheim an der Haardt im Schuljahre 1836/37,” *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* (Munich),

accessed September 12, 2013, www.Bsb-muenchen-digital.de; "Jahresbericht über das Königl. Bayer. Lyceum, Gymnasium und die Lateinische Schule zu Speier in der Pfalz: für das Studienjahr 1840/41," *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, accessed September 12, 2013, www.Bsb-muenchen-digital.de; *Verzeichniß des Lehrer-Personals und der sämtlichen Studirenden an der königl. Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München in den beiden Semestern des Studienjahres 1844/45* (Munich, 1845), 27; *Verzeichniß des Lehrer-Personals und der sämtlichen Studirenden an der königl. Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München in den beiden Semestern des Studienjahres 1846/47* (Munich, 1847), 28; Gustav Toepke, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg* (Heidelberg, 1904), vols. 5 (1807–1846) and 6 (1846–1870). The doctorate may have been the result of typical German "self-aggrandizement" upon arrival in America, as Philip Cohen suspects for "Dr." David Einhorn. See Cohen, "The Problem of Paganism and its Solution in the Theology of David Einhorn," in *Textures and Meanings: Thirty Years of Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*, ed. Leonard H. Ehrlich et al. (Amherst, MA, 2004), accessed January 12, 2014, www.umass.edu/judaic/anniversaryvolume.

⁵ See Roland Paul, "Pfälzische politische Flüchtlinge 1849 in der Schweiz—zwischen Rückkehr und Übersee-Emigration," in *Die Pfalz und die Revolution 1848/49*, ed. Hans Feneks, Joachim Kerman, and Karl Scherer (Kaiserslautern, 2000), 2:263–288. Paul identifies some nine hundred refugees from the Palatinate (p. 269).

⁶ *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 9 (1851): 104–105 (hereafter cited as *Occident*). See also Hans Günther Reissner, "The German-American Jews (1800–1850)," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 10 (1965): 105; Korn, *Eventful Years*, 5.

⁷ After 1859, Mayer apparently resumed his lectures. In 1861, for instance, he lectured on the biography of Isaac Marcus Jost. *Occident* 19 (1861): 12–16, 58–65. On the library, see Julius Bien, "B'nè B'rith: History of the Independent Order," *Menorah* 3 (July–December 1887): 246–249.

⁸ *Occident* 20 (1862): 47; 23 (1865): 95; *Jewish Messenger*, September 6, 1867; "Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer," *Hebrew Leader*, September 1, 1867; "Our History," *Congregation Beth Emeth* (Albany, NY), accessed August 12, 2013, http://bethem.pmhclients.com/images/uploads/updated_history.pdf. There is, however, but one reference to Maurice Mayer in the minutes of Emanu-El: "On account of services rendered to the Congregation on various occasions by Doctor M. Mayer, the amount due by him was remitted and the President was authorized to permit him to occupy the same pew he has for the coming year." The rabbi then was Samuel Adler. Congregation Emanu-El Minute Book, April 2, 1865, 103; Congregation Emanu-El archivist Frances A. Hess, e-mail to author, March 27, 2014.

⁹ Moritz Mayer to Bernhard Felsenthal, January 14, 1862, Bernhard Felsenthal Papers, MS-153, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as Felsenthal Papers). The pair of dashes appears in the handwritten original. See also the original letters: Bernhard Felsenthal Papers, P-21, American Jewish Historical Society, New York. On offers from Curaçao, see Mayer to Felsenthal, August 18, 1864, Felsenthal Papers.

¹⁰ See, for instance, "Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer," *Charleston Daily News*, September 2, 1867.

¹¹ His company was at 112 Broadway, and he lived at 108 E. 14th Street. H. Wilson, *Trow's New York City Directory* 78 (New York, 1864).

¹² Samuel Hirsch, *Gedächtniß-Rede auf den verewigten Dr. Moritz Mayer, gehalten in der Synagoge der Ref. Gem. Keneseth-Israel zu Philadelphia, am Sabbath, den 7ten September 1867 (7. Elul '27)* (Philadelphia, 1867), 4, 5; Diaconus, "My Conversations with Jacobs xix: Mayer is dead," *Jewish Messenger*, September 6, 1867.

¹³ Hirsch, *Gedächtniß-Rede*, 4, 5; *Jewish Messenger*, September 6, 1867; Mayer to Felsenthal, June 20, 1866, Felsenthal Papers; Moritz Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges unter den Israeliten Nordamerika's," *Sinai* (Baltimore) 1 (1856): 101-107, 171-181, 197-205, 241-245. See also "Annus Mundi 5615," *Occident* 13 (1855): 282-297, 330-340, 382-396.

¹⁴ "Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer"; Reissner, "The German-American Jews," 100; *Occident* 17 (1859): 150; *Jewish Messenger*, September 16, 1868; Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago, 2012), 75.

¹⁵ The others were Isidor Kalisch (b. Krotoschin, Posen, d. Newark, NJ), Henry Hochheimer (b. Bavaria, d. Baltimore), Benjamin Szold (b. Nemiskert, Hungary, d. Berkeley Springs, WV), Adolph Huebsch (b. Liptoszentmiklas, Hungary, d. New York), and Bernard Illoway (b. Kolin, Bohemia, d. Cincinnati). The seventh was Wolf Schlessinger, who, facing arrest in Sulzbach, Bavaria, escaped to New York where he remained only until 1850 when he returned to Sulzbach. His birth and death locations are unknown. Korn, *Eventful Years*, 19; Bertram Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America," *American Jewish Archives* 2 (1949): 18.

¹⁶ Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America," 6.

¹⁷ The following relies on Ulrich Speck, *1848: Chronik einer deutschen Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

¹⁸ See Gerhard Nestler, "Die pfälzische Presse in den Revolutionsjahren 1848/49," in Feneks, Kerman, and Scherer, *Die Pfalz und die Revolution*, 2:89; Speck, *1848: Chronik einer deutschen Revolution*, 137.

¹⁹ *Anklag-Akte, errichtet durch die K[önigliche]. General=Staatsprokuratur der Pfalz, nebst Urtheil der Anklagekammer des k. Appellationsgerichts der Pfalz in Zweibrücken vom 29. Juni 1850, in der Untersuchung gegen Martin Reichard, entlassener Notär in Speyer, und 332 Consorten, wegen bewaffneter Rebellion gegen die bewaffnete Macht, Hoch- und Staatsverraths &c.* (Zweibrücken, 1850), 15-16. See the individual paragraphs in *Die fünf französischen Gesetzbücher in deutscher Sprache nach den besten Übersetzungen*, vol. 3, *Strafgesetzbuch* (Zweibrücken, 1832), 10, 15, 16. The French penal legislation was still valid in the Palatinate as a result of the previous French occupation under Napoleon.

²⁰ Bernhard Kukatzki, *Brave Männer und rote Republikaner: Pfälzische Juden und die Revolution 1848/49* (Landau, 1999), 15. See also Bernhard Kukatzki, "Die pfälzischen Juden und ihre Beteiligung an der Revolution 1848/49," in Feneks, Kerman, and Scherer, *Die Pfalz und die Revolution*, 2:193-220.

²¹ Bertram Korn identified Mayer as working with the “Ministry of Justice before the Revolution in Bavaria failed.” Korn, *Eventful Years*, 19.

²² *Anklag-Akte*, 15–16, 75; Otto Fleischmann, *Geschichte des pfälzischen Aufstandes im Jahre 1849: nach den zugänglichen Quellen geschildert* (Kaiserslautern, 1899), 241.

²³ *Anklag-Akte*, 16, 75.

²⁴ Ludwig Bamberger, *Erlebnisse aus der Pfälzischen Erhebung im Mai und Juni 1849* (Frankfurt am Main, 1849), 71, 80; Friedrich Engels in *Karl Marx – Friedrich Engels – Werke*, vol. 7, *Die deutsche Reichsverfassungskampagne* (Berlin, 1960), 146.

²⁵ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 17.

²⁶ Collection J1, number 114, folios 168–169, Landesarchiv Speyer, Rheinland-Pfalz; Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 5, 18.

²⁷ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 17.

²⁸ See, for instance, Reinhard Rürup, “The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation,” 1–54, and Werner E. Mosse, “The Revolution of 1848 – Jewish Emancipation in Germany and its Limits,” 389–402, both in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen, 1981).

²⁹ Section VI, Article V, German Constitution of 1849. “Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 28. März 1849 (Paulskirchenverfassung),” *Die Verfassungen in Deutschland (seit 1806)*, accessed January 2, 2014, verfassungen.de/de/de06-66/verfassung48-i.htm.

³⁰ *Anklag-Akte*, 16, 75; Timothy M. Roberts, “Diplomatische Reaktionen der Vereinigten Staaten während der Revolutionsjahre 1848/49,” in *Achtundvierziger/Forty-Eighters: Die deutschen Revolutionen von 1848/49, die Vereinigten Staaten und der amerikanische Bürgerkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang Huchdruck, Ulrich Bachteler, and Henning Zimmermann (Münster, 2000), 29–41.

³¹ Hannes Ziegler, “Gebremste Reaktion – Die Antwort der bayerischen Regierung auf die Pfälzer Mairevolution von 1849,” in Feneks, Kerman, and Scherer, *Die Pfalz und die Revolution*, 2:234.

³² Fleischmann, *Geschichte des Pfälzischen Aufstandes*, 359, also quoted in Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 17.

³³ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 15, 17; Collection H1, number 1975, folio 96f, Landesarchiv Speyer.

³⁴ Before his arrest, he hid with his relatives in Weißenburg/Wissembourg in the French Alsace for two weeks. The mayor of Wissembourg vouched for Mayer’s good conduct in writing by stating that he had been in the city “for the past fourteen days and that his behavior always had been impeccable.” As it was not addressed to anyone in particular, it seems likely that Mayer had asked for this before turning himself over to the Bavarian authorities. “Verzeichniss der am 30. Juni 1849 in das Bezirksgefängniß Landau abgegebenen Gefangenen,” Collection J1, number 114, Landesarchiv Speyer; Letter of mayor of Wissembourg [no addressee], Département du Bas-Rhin, June 27, 1849, *ibid.*

³⁵ Collection J1, number 114, folio 170, Landesarchiv Speyer; Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 27–28.

³⁶ *Anklag-Akte*, 75.

³⁷ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 29; Frank Lorenz Müller, *Die Revolution von 1848/49* (Darmstadt, 2002), 138.

³⁸ Advertisement published in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* (Leipzig) (hereafter cited as *Allgemeine*), the *Archives Israélites* (Paris), the *Jewish Chronicle* (London), the *Asmonean*, and the *Occident*; Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Congregation minutes, December 21, 1851, February 2, 1852, and April 4, 1852, Special Collections, College of Charleston (hereafter cited as KKBE Minutes).

³⁹ Mayer, “Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges,” 179; *Occident* 10 (1852): 224. For evidence of Leeser’s endorsement, see Mayer’s obituary in *Occident* 25 (1867): 359.

⁴⁰ Poznanski had married Maurice and Rachel Mayer and was initially appointed as trustee for their property in Charleston when they relocated to New York after Mayer’s resignation in 1859. Rachel M. Mayer v. Benjamin Mordecai and Others, *Reports of Cases Heard and Determined by The Supreme Court of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 1871), 1:396.

⁴¹ Korn, *Eventful Years*, 20; Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, and June 23, 1856, Felsenthal Papers.

⁴² Mayer, “Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges,” 180; *Hymns Written for the Use of Hebrew Congregations* (Charleston, SC, 1856). Despite later references in his obituaries, Mayer denounced the idea that he had introduced his own German-based prayer book at KKBE. The *Jewish Messenger* of September 6, 1867, also mentioned, “The prayers [*sic*] book used in nearly all German [Jewish] congregations were prepared by him.” See the earlier rectification in *Jeshurun* (Frankfurt am Main) 4 (1858): 396.

⁴³ Mayer, “Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges,” 180; *Sinai* 1 (1856): 59, 192, 258. Mayer had sent the book of hymns to Chicago in 1859 at Felsenthal’s request. Any references to Charleston’s hymns in Chicago need to be researched. See Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers.

⁴⁴ *Der Israelitische Volkslehrer* (Frankfurt am Main) 7 (1857): 166. See also the Letter of Acceptance by Maurice Mayer, April 1, 1857, KKBE Minutes.

⁴⁵ *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 104, 105.

⁴⁶ Mayer to Felsenthal, August 16, 1858, Felsenthal Papers; September 5, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁴⁷ September 5, 1858, KKBE Minutes; Mayer to Felsenthal, October 29, 1858, Felsenthal Papers; *Report of the Committee of the City Council of Charleston, upon the Epidemic Yellow Fever, of 1858* (Charleston, SC, 1859), 67, 68. See also *Occident* 16 (1858): 409.

⁴⁸ March 6, 1859, April 3, 1859, September 5, 1859, October 2, 1859, and November 23, 1859, KKBE Minutes; Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, and July 5, 1859, Felsenthal Papers.

⁴⁹ Mayer to Felsenthal, October 29, 1858, and March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers. By that time, Mayer had concluded all correspondence with the *Allgemeine*.

⁵⁰ June 15, July 20, 1857, November 15, 1857, January 3, 1858, April 4, 1858, May 2, 1858, and June 6, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁵¹ James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 268–269.

⁵² January 6, 1858, and June 6, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁵³ June 10, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁵⁴ June 13, 1858, and July 4, 1858, KKBE Minutes. The others were Joseph Oppenheim and Isaac DaVega. DaVega apparently was a friend and partner. They collaborated on the *Savannah* defense counsel, and Mayer's widow lived in DaVega's New York household in 1870. See Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, New York, New York.

⁵⁵ Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges," 198; May 4, 1851, KKBE Minutes; "The Rev. Dr. M. Mayer," *Occident* 17 (1859): 200. On Eckman's roving career, see Joshua Stamper, *Pioneer Rabbi of the West: The Life and Times of Julius Eckman* (Portland, OR, 1988).

⁵⁶ *Sinai* 1 (1856): 258.

⁵⁷ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 282.

⁵⁸ See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 248; Robert Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York, 1986), 80.

⁵⁹ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 295, 296; Mayer to Felsenthal, June 23, 1856, Felsenthal Papers.

⁶⁰ Mayer to Felsenthal, June 20, 1866, and March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers; *Sinai* 1 (1856): 324. In 1861 the *Jüdischer Reformverein* organized Sinai, Chicago's first Reform congregation.

⁶¹ Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges," 197.

⁶² "The Occident's Sins against Reformers," *Occident* 11 (1853): 156–161.

⁶³ Exceptions include "Curious Discovery—The Original Melodies of the Psalms Restored," *Occident* 13 (1855): 373–376, "An Ancient Hebrew Drinking Song," *Occident* 24 (1867): 466–469.

⁶⁴ *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 102; Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges," 243; See "Life and Orthodoxy," *Occident* 13 (1856): 431–440, 476–485, 542–549, 580–585; *Occident* 14 (1856): 10–17; 57–65, 114–122, 215–229; *Jeshurun* 4 (1858): 392–398, 590–601. Note the surprising speed with which two American rabbis quarreled in a European paper at the time: Illowy charged Mayer with literary dilettantism in the April 1858 edition of *Jeshurun*. Mayer indicated that he received this issue through his book dealer in Charleston and contacted Illowy in New York at the end of that same month. By mid-May, Mayer received Illowy's reply in Charleston through the mail. He published his open letter in Cincinnati's *Israelite* and sent a copy of the letter to the *Jeshurun* in Germany. Illowy answered the letter in the *Israelite* by the end of June and mailed his reply to the *Jeshurun* in time for both men to have their opinions published in that periodical's August issue.

⁶⁵ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 133.

⁶⁶ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 297. Mayer's extremely unfavorable review of *Deutsch-Amerikanische Skizzen: Für jüdische Auswanderer und Nichtauswanderer* (German-American Sketches: For Jewish Emigrants and Non-Emigrants) that appeared in 1857 in Philippson's *Israelitische Volksbibliothek* apparently caused the rupture in the relationship. Philippson's outburst immediately followed Mayer's review.

⁶⁷ Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers. Attacks and counterattacks were selective. Mayer's privately voiced complaints of Einhorn's censorship in the *Sinai* never reached the public. See Mayer to Felsenthal, October 29, 1858, Felsenthal Papers.

⁶⁸ "Dr. Mayer vs. The Israelite," *Occident* 18 (1860): 221–222.

⁶⁹ See Cornelia Wilhelm, *Deutsche Juden in Amerika: Bürgerliches Selbstbewusstsein und jüdische Identität in den Orden B'nai B'rith und Treue Schwestern, 1843–1914* (Stuttgart, 2007), 122; Mayer to Felsenthal, June 23, 1856, Felsenthal Papers; *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 88, 102.

⁷⁰ Mayer to Board of Trustees of KKBE, December 13, 1855, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston; *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 88–89.

⁷¹ Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America," 11; *Charleston Daily News*, September 2, 1867.

⁷² "Our History," *Congregation Beth Emeth*. Anshe Emeth had merged with Beth El in 1885 to form Beth Emeth.

⁷³ "Married," *Occident* 11 (1853): 476; *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 296.

⁷⁴ Jacob Ottolengui owned five and Israel two slaves in 1860. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 93, 386; *List of the Taxpayers of the City of Charleston for 1860* (Charleston, SC, 1861), 214; Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 326–327. On Forty-Eighters who moved to the South and supported slavery, see Werner Steger, "Das andere 1848: Deutsche Immigranten in den Südstaaten der USA," in *Achtundvierziger/Forty-Eighters*, 85–97.

⁷⁵ *Allgemeine* 19 (1855): 450, emphasis in the original.

⁷⁶ "Einige schlimme Anzeichen von jenseits des Oceans," *Allgemeine* 19 (1855): 278.

⁷⁷ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 339, 521. See also Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 50 (March 1961): 175–176; Ralph Melnick, "Billy Simons: The Black Jew of Charleston," *American Jewish Archives* 32 (1980): 3–8; Jacob S. Dorman, *Chosen People: The Rise of American Black Israelite Religions* (Oxford, 2013), 66.

⁷⁸ "The Slave Law of the Jews, in the time of Jesus and the Apostles," *Russell's Magazine* 5 (1859): 97, 98, 100, 105, 108; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge, 2005), 526, 756; John Belton O'Neill, *The Negro Law in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 1848).

⁷⁹ [Maurice Mayer], "Annus Mundi 5615," *Occident* 13 (1855): 391.

⁸⁰ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 276–277, 278.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 276.

⁸³ Steger, "Das andere 1848," 86; *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 278; Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought*, rev. ed. (Knoxville, TN, 1995).

⁸⁴ William Paley, *Evidences of Christianity* (London, 1851).

⁸⁵ "South Carolina Colleges," *Occident* 12 (1855): 605–607. For Mayer's quest against the Swiss-American treaty, see *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 617–618, 23 (1859): 365, and Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 87–88.

⁸⁶ Jayme A. Sokolow, "Revolution and Reform: The Antebellum Jewish Abolitionists," in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York, 2010), 127–131, 137.

⁸⁷ Maurice Mayer, preface to Isidor Kalisch, *A Guide for Rational Inquiries into the Biblical Writings: Being an Examination of the Doctrinal Difference between Judaism and Primitive Christianity, Based upon a Critical Exposition of the Book of Matthew*, trans. Maurice Mayer (Cincinnati, 1857), iii. The "sham republic" likely was Switzerland.

⁸⁸ Louis Ruchames, "The Abolitionists and the Jews: Some Further Thoughts," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 145–156.

⁸⁹ Marni Davis, *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (New York, 2012), 52–53.

⁹⁰ Sefton D. Temkin, "Isaac Mayer Wise and the Civil War," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 168; Davis, *Jews and Booze*, 51.

⁹¹ Mayer to Felsenthal, August 18, 1864, Felsenthal Papers.

⁹² See Mayer's arguments in *Trial of the Officers and Crew of the Privateer Savannah, on the Charge of Piracy* (New York, 1862), 164–169; John D. Gordon, III, "The Trial of the Officers and Crew of the Schooner 'Savannah,'" *Supreme Court Historical Society Yearbook* (1983): 31–45; Burrus Carnahan, *Act of Justice: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Law of War* (Lexington, KY, 2007), 65–66.

⁹³ *Mayer v. Mordecai*, 393–399. For an abridged representation of the case, see *Mayer v. Mordecai* in *The American Reports containing All Decisions of General Interest Decided in the Courts of Last Resort of the Several States*, ed. Isaac Grant Thompson (Rochester, NY, 1912), 7:26–33.

⁹⁴ *Israelite*, December 28, 1860, 205, quoted in Temkin, "Isaac Mayer Wise and the Civil War," 165.

⁹⁵ In his compilation of Mayer's works, Korn attributed to Mayer the editorship of Ben Sirah's *Volksbuch über Moral und Sittenlehre* (New York, 1850). Apart from a few indirect references, this work is largely unidentifiable. According to Cyrus Adler, it was published in New York in 1840 while Mayer was still in the Palatinate. Isaac Mayer Wise refers to it as having appeared in New York in 1850 and been prepared by "Dr. Mayer, of Hartford, Conn." Cyrus Adler, *Catalogue of the Leaser Library* (Philadelphia, 1883), 7; "Translations by Maurice Mayer," Bertram Korn Papers, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio; I. M. Wise, "Reformed Judaism," in *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise*, ed. David Philipson and Louis Grossmann (Cincinnati, 1900), 351.