
The Conservative Rabbi—"Dissatisfied But Not Unhappy"

Abraham J. Karp

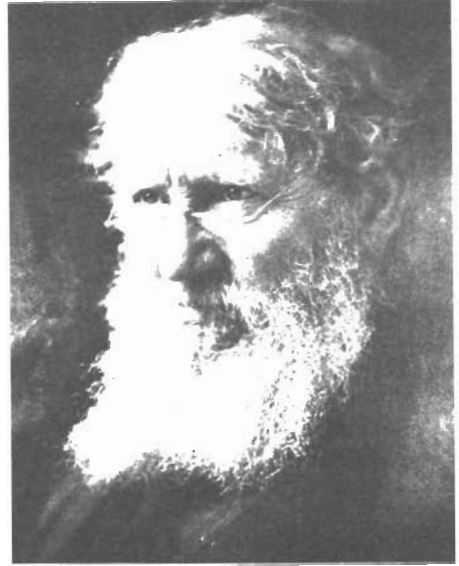
This essay on the Conservative rabbinate deals with its birth and early growth in the first two decades of the current century, followed by an account of how the rabbis established a functional definition of their vocation in the period between the world wars, and concludes with an examination of the twin tensions which affected the rabbis' perception of self and vocation: the tension of serving a movement which lacked a defined ideology and was marked by an ambivalent attitude toward Jewish law; and the tensions inherent in a vocation which is both a calling and a profession.

For this study the definition of rabbi is limited to *congregational rabbi*, though the Rabbinical Assembly's roster lists many academicians and communal servants, a good number of marked distinction. It does not deal with the Conservative rabbi as a national figure, though such names as Mordecai M. Kaplan, Jacob Kohn, Elias Solomon, Louis Finkelstein, Solomon Goldman, Israel Goldstein, Simon Greenberg, Morris Adler, Max Arzt, and Arthur I. Hertzberg come to mind; nor does it discuss the contribution of the Conservative rabbinate to Jewish learning and religious thought through such men as Louis Epstein, Milton Steinberg, Max Kadushin, Robert Gordis, Jacob B. Agus, Ben Zion Bokser, Isaac Klein, Harold M. Schulweis, and Samuel H. Dresner, congregational rabbis all, who have produced an impressive corpus of literature.

In a word, the theme of the essay limits itself to the Conservative rabbinate as a vocation serving the cause of Judaism and the Jew through spiritual leadership within the congregation: the challenges faced, the tensions perceived, and the responses to them.

Because it deals with an articulate body of men, and because it dwells on how they perceived the demands and the anomalies of their vocation, wherever possible their words are cited rather than paraphrased.

Rabbi Sabato Morais
(1823-1897)



Rabbi Solomon Schechter
(1847-1915)



Professor Louis Ginzberg
(1873-1953)



Rabbi Solomon Goldman
(1893-1953)

Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Rabbi Simon Greenberg
(born 1901)

Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America



Rabbi Louis Finkelstein
(born 1895)

Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Rabbi Israel Goldstein
(born 1896)

Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America



Rabbi Charles Eliezer Hillel Kauer
(1897-1971)

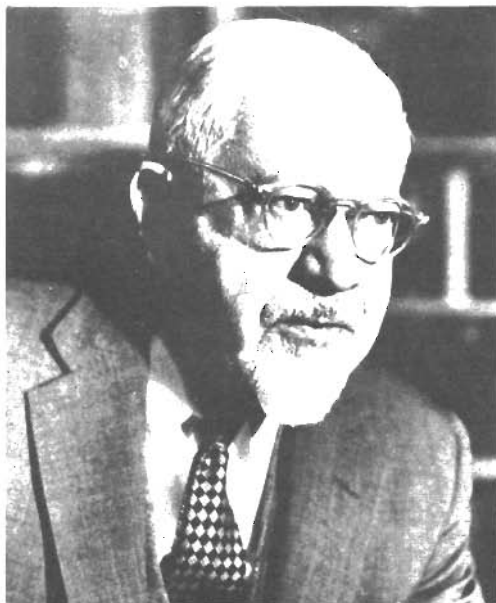
Rabbi Israel Levinthal
(1888-1982)

Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America



Rabbi Gerson D. Cohen
(born 1924)

chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary of America



Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan
(1881-1983)



Rabbi Isaac Klein
(1905-1979)

Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America



Michael Higger



Alexander Jonah Birnboim



Jacob Branowitz



Herbert Fagan



Isaac Kaminkowski



Louis Greenberg



Joel Sylvan Goffin



Elchan Hirsch



[Name obscured]



[Name obscured]



[Name obscured]



[Name obscured]

Class of 1926
Jewish Theological Seminary
of America
Courtesy Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Preface: A Conservative Congregation Seeks a Rabbi—1976

In 1976, a leading Conservative congregation was in the process of seeking a rabbi. Its rabbinic search committee, as the chairman reported, recognized that the procedure “is not easy and the responsibility is tremendous. Upon the decision of a relatively small group of people will depend the religious health of many.”¹ It therefore undertook a “program of self-education,” the first step of which was the drawing up of twelve characteristics “which might be important in a rabbi.” The congregation had been founded in 1915 by a group of ten men who left the leading Orthodox synagogue to form a Conservative congregation which they felt would better serve their spiritual needs as acculturated American Jews, placing its emphasis on family worship and the religious education of their children. In sixty years, the congregation had been served by six graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary, so that the characteristics which were chosen for a “Rabbinic Profile” were descriptive of what a Conservative congregation had come to expect of its rabbi.

The dozen points were:

1. *Scholarship*: depth of knowledge on Jewish matters.
2. *Youth*: appeal to and personal relationships with this group of the congregation.
3. *Pastoral activities*: fulfillment of duties such as counseling, hospital visits, and *shiva* calls.
4. *Sermons*: ability in both sermons and public speaking on other occasions (such as weddings, funerals, etc.), both speaking ability and content of message.
5. *Wife-supportive*: attitude of wife whether she is supportive of his rabbinical role. This includes an understanding of the time requirements of his position and the demands on his personal life because of his leadership position.
6. *Experience* in being the primary professional in a congregation with a wide scope of activities such as school, youth, adult education, sisterhood, etc.
7. *Educator*: skill as an educator or teacher in a classroom situation having more than ten students.
8. *Executive leadership*: possession of qualities needed in dealing with both staff and laity.

9. *Programming skills*, creativity, originality of ideas in programming, and ability to function as a resource person.
10. *Community involvement*, in both the Jewish and general community.
11. *Wife's involvement* in congregational activities such as sisterhood, adult education, attendance at services, etc.
12. *Importance of age*: a question raised relative to some of the other listed characteristics, assuming the rabbi is between thirty-five and fifty years old.

The characteristics are listed in descending order of importance, but their very listing as considerations by the search committee indicate them to be the legitimate expectations which a Conservative congregation may have of its rabbi: that he be scholar, pastor, youth worker, preacher, educator, executive, and creative program initiator; and that he have had the wisdom (and good fortune) to have married a woman who would share him with the congregational family and aid him in his work.

Roots of the Conservative Rabbinate

Conservative Judaism has three main institutional components. The oldest of these is the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, located in New York City, which trains its rabbis, teachers, and cantors. The thousand-odd Conservative congregations in the United States are organized in the United Synagogue of America. The movement's rabbis comprise the membership of the Rabbinical Assembly of America.

The Jewish Theological Seminary Association was organized in 1886 for "the preservation in America of the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism," and its Seminary was formally opened on January 2, 1887. It was reorganized in 1902 under its present name. The United Synagogue of America was founded in 1913, Dr. Solomon Schechter, president of the JTSA, serving as its first president (1902–1915). An Alumni Association of the Jewish Theological Seminary was organized in 1901. In 1918 it took on the more adequately descriptive name The Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary. In the 1930's, in recognition of the growing number of non-JTSA graduates on its lists, and in order to establish its position of

institutional independence and parity in the triad of Conservative Judaism, it changed the designation from "of the Jewish Theological Seminary" to "of America."

As early as 1866 Jonas Bondi, rabbi, publisher, and editor, noted that there had developed in American Jewish religious life a "golden middle way" which was termed "orthodox" by the left and "reformed" by the right, and which was apparently making such progress that it is "hated on both sides."² He identified this movement with "positive historical Judaism . . . [which] contains all the ideas of the development of Judaism."³ James Parton also noted the tripartite division of American Israel, but as he described it, "Perhaps one third of the Jews are still orthodox, another third neglect religion except on the greatest days of the religious year . . . another third are in various stages of Reform."⁴

W. M. Rosenblatt observed the threefold division in 1872: "I shall call the first the Radicals and the others the Orthodox; and between the two are what I shall term the Conservatives."⁵ As an avowed assimilationist, he consigned "Dr. Wise of Cincinnati, Dr. Lilienthal of the same city . . . Dr. Huebsch of the Bohemian Synagogue in New York . . . [and] Dr. Mielziner of Norfolk Street Synagogue" to the Conservatives.

Three religious tendencies, not yet movements, existed in the late sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century, the composition of each determined by the religious outlook of the perceiver. Thus Simon Wolf, after worshipping in Rodef Shalom, Philadelphia, during the High Holy Days of 1869, was surprised that its rabbi, Dr. Marcus Jastrow, was called Orthodox: "To say that the Rev. Jastrow is Orthodox was doing him a great injustice, for a minister who is in favor of a temple, an organ, pews . . . cannot be considered as reflecting the ideas of the past."⁶ Mr. Wolf would fully agree with the unanimous designation of Jastrow's Philadelphia colleague, the Reverend Sabato Morais of K. K. Mikveh Israel, as Orthodox. Yet in the early 1870's Morais put forth this plan for the ritual and liturgy of the American synagogue:

The badge we all should have proudly worn is that of "American Jews" . . . (not Portuguese and German, Polish and Hollander) . . . signifying that the circumstances which had given origin to marked differences in the ritual had ceased to exist, and that the necessity for reconstructing another . . . more

conformable to our changed condition had arrived. . . .

The demand is for a simpler prayer-book. . . . Expurge, then, what relates to the ordinances followed by the ancients in the performances of sacrificial rites; strike out what belongs to Mishnic and Talmudic lore . . . avoid, as far as practical, the reiterating of supplication, confession or sacred song . . . compare long-established Rituals . . . select what is more chaste in style, more exalting in ideas. . . . Then endeavor to fill up a portion of the space made empty by the expurgatory process with compositions suited to our existing wants, the printed and unedited writings of our philosophers and poets can supply a vast deal, the learning of our modern Rabbis may also be of service.⁷

Morais, expounding a centrist position, was attacked from both sides. Reform leaders criticized his meekness, the Orthodox his deviation from tradition. But what he proposed was the way to be pursued by those neither Orthodox nor Reform; what he laid out was the direction for Conservative Judaism. Already in the 1870's and more pronouncedly in the 1880's, some leading rabbis identified as Reform or Orthodox were becoming increasingly uncomfortable in Reform and Orthodoxy. The former, Rabbis Marcus Jastrow, Benjamin Szold, Alexander Kohut, and Aaron Wise, would not associate themselves with the thrust to Radical Reform as indicated by the platform adopted at the Philadelphia Conference in 1869 and even more so by the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885. Rabbis Sabato Morais, H. Pereira Mendes, Henry Schneeberger, and Bernard Drachman were not at home in the East European Orthodoxy which was then establishing itself as the "true" traditional Judaism, nor could the immigrant community accept them as their *rabbonim*. The religious radicalization of Reform and the growing insularity of Orthodoxy brought those with centrist tendencies together. Those from the right brought with them a commitment to Jewish law and its ritual and the synagogal mode of westernized traditional Jews, decorum, the sermon, the use of the vernacular; those from the left, an ideology expressive of the Positive-Historical Judaism of Zechariah Frankel, principal of the Jewish Theological Seminary at Breslau, of which Solomon Schechter wrote:

The historical school has never, to my knowledge, offered to the world a theological program of its own. . . . On the whole, its attitude toward religion may be defined as an enlightened skepticism combined with a staunch conservatism which is not even wholly devoid of a certain mystical touch. . . . It is not the mere revealed Bible that is of first importance to the Jew, but the Bible as it repeats itself in history . . . as it is interpreted in Tradition. . . . Since the interpre-

tation of Scripture or the Secondary Meaning is mainly the product of changing historical influences it follows that the centre of authority is actually removed from the Bible and placed in some *living body*, which, by reason of its being in touch with the ideal aspirations and the religious needs of the age, is best able to determine the nature of the Second Meaning.

It would follow then that what was needed in America was a body of individuals possessed of a knowledge of the total Jewish historical experience, committed to its traditions, and conversant with the needs of the age. The mandate to both the traditionalists and those of the historical school was clear: the establishment of a rabbinical seminary to train such a rabbinate.

In 1886 Judah D. Eisenstein, a leader of the Orthodox East European Jewish immigrant community, wrote in the *New Yorker Yiddische Zeitung* on "The Founding of the Seminary."

Judaism in America is divided into three factions or parties: Orthodox, Conservative and Radical. . . . Those who are called Conservative, or "middle of the roaders," wish to go in both directions. . . . The Conservative, like the radical, has no authority, since he does not rely on the *Shulhan Aruch* except for a small fraction of his ministry. . . .

There is a world of difference between the Radical and Conservative students; the Torah that the Radical studies was superficial in comparison with the Torah of a Conservative rabbinical student. To the Radical, secular knowledge is paramount. . . . The Conservative . . . looks upon Hebrew literature as of first importance and constantly immerses himself in it.⁸

Eisenstein's characterization of the Conservative student was not description but mandate. Unless the students of the proposed Conservative Seminary, he warns, are taught by teachers who are strictly observant, unless the studies are conducted with "covered heads" and are in strict accord with the *Shulhan Aruch*, and unless their training begins at an early age and continues in a Jewish all-day school in which the language of instruction is English but the secular studies are accorded a secondary position, "there will be no difference between the seminary which they contemplate establishing and the College in Cincinnati." Eisenstein had little faith in the new Seminary and became a leader in the enterprise of bringing a chief rabbi for New York's Orthodox Jewish community a year after the Seminary was established.⁹ Two years earlier nineteen rabbis had met in conference in Pittsburgh, adopting a platform for Reform Judaism. In the year be-

1886, the Jewish Theological Seminary was established. In the space of three years the three tendencies within American Judaism had become institutionalized as religious movements.

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

The Conservative rabbinate in America had its inception in the vestry room of Congregation Shearith Israel, New York, on Monday, January 3, 1887. On that day the preparatory class of the newly founded Jewish Theological Seminary of America held its first session. "Ten pupils were enrolled in the class," the Honorable Joseph Blumenthal, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association, reported to its first biennial convention, "and the tuition was for time imparted by the various members of the Advisory Board. This arrangement was, however, in the nature of things, only temporary, and on the first of February the class was placed in charge of Rev. B. Drachman as preceptor."¹⁰ He further reported to the thirty-one delegates, representing twenty-four congregations in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Haven, Pittsburgh, Galveston, and San Francisco, that:

During the year many applications for admission to the Seminary were received from students whose attainments were in advance of the studies pursued in the preparatory class. . . . The services of Dr. G. Lieberman were secured as preceptor, and the junior class organized. . . . The pupils of both classes . . . ten in the preparatory class, and four in the junior class . . . are prosecuting their studies diligently and earnestly, and are giving promise that our most ardent anticipations will be realized.¹¹

The composition of both the Advisory Board of Ministers and the "conservatives entitled to representation" point to the coalition nature of the constituency which founded the Jewish Theological Seminary as a

seminary where the Bible shall be impartially taught and rabbinical literature faithfully expounded, and more especially where youths, desirous of entering the ministry, may be thoroughly grounded in Jewish knowledge and inspired by the precept and the example of their instructors with the love of the Hebrew language, and a spirit of fidelity and devotion of the Jewish law.¹²

Of the rabbis, five—Sabato Morais (president of the faculty), Henry P. Mendes, Bernard Drachman, Henry W. Schneeberger, and Abraham P. Mendes—were traditionalists who comfortably termed themselves Orthodox; and five—Alexander Kohut, Marcus Jastrow, Henry S. Jacobs, Frederick De Sola Mendes, and Aaron Wise—had broken with traditional Judaism and were considered by their congregations and themselves as adherents of Historical Judaism at the border (which side of the border is open to dispute) of Reform Judaism.¹³ The congregations ranged all the way from the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol of New York, the first and leading East European Orthodox synagogue,¹⁴ to the Sefardi Shearith Israel of New York, officially Orthodox, formally traditional, to Ahawath Chesed, Rodef Sholom and Shaarey Tefila of New York, then and now in the Reform camp. Of the founding congregations only B'nai Jeshurun of New York and Chizuk Amuno of Baltimore have been and are today Conservative congregations.

What influenced these disparate individuals and congregations to join together to establish a new seminary?

The immediate impetus came from a recognition of the radical nature of American Reform expressed in the platform adopted by the nineteen leading Reform rabbis who met in Pittsburgh in 1885. That Dr. Isaac M. Wise, president of Hebrew Union College, presided at this conference led to the realization that the existing seminary, the Hebrew Union College, which had from its inception indicated respect for, if not adherence to, traditional Judaism,¹⁵ had now turned to Radical Reform. What better proof of this than the total disregard of kashrut at the banquet celebrating the first ordination exercises of the College. The shellfish served was not only an affront to Jewish tradition, but also a betrayal of the traditional Jews who had served the College, Sabato Morais among them.¹⁶ Such a seminary would not produce a rabbinate which would be “reverent, thoughtful, and ready to lend its aid to the moral elevation of millions among our co-religionists who do need refining influences and a soul-inspiring example,”¹⁷ as Morais expressed it to Kaufmann Kohler. Nor did Morais think that the needful co-religionists could do it for themselves. Responding to an inquiring reporter of the *New York Herald* about Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Vilna, who was being brought to serve as chief rabbi of the Association of the American Orthodox Congregations, he

stated: "I never before heard of Rabbi Joseph. I am familiar with the manner in which the Hebrews in the place whence he comes are educated, and I know he is not a cultured man. He does not possess the knowledge nor the literary attainments which a rabbi should possess."¹⁸

The coalition was based on a dissociation from both Radical Reform and East European Orthodoxy. The former was dangerous to Judaism, the latter inimical to America. The rapidly growing American Jewish community would need rabbis who would be true to the traditions of Judaism and fully at home in the culture of America. The new seminary was founded to fashion such a rabbinate.

Of the ten students in the preparatory class, four had been born in New York, three in Hungary, and three in Russia. Those born in New York and two from Hungary were attending City College of New York; the others, recent arrivals, were in public school. Their average age was fifteen. All four in the junior class—aged seventeen, nineteen, twenty-five, and twenty-seven—had recently arrived from Russia and were still in public school. Of the fourteen students only one remained till ordination, Joseph Herman Hertz, who rose to the position of Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. One reason for the wide defection was the nature of the rabbinic positions that awaited a Seminary-ordained rabbi, described by Joseph Blumenthal in his presidential address:

This . . . is more urgent than the training of silver-tongued and golden-priced orators for city pulpits. In little places where the congregations are supported by only a handful of members, but one congregational officer can be afforded, and that is usually and naturally a *chazan*. We hope to give these places in one person a reader and as well—a preacher.¹⁹

If the spirits of prospective rabbis were cast down by the candid appraisal of Blumenthal, they should have been stirred by the challenge of Morais:

Well-meaning, but unwise orthodoxy, tells us that by keeping altogether aloof from "Reformers" . . . we will guard our children from the effects of teaching subversive of Holy Writ. . . . Isolation is an impossibility. It would be inadvisable if it were possible. . . .

This is the laboratory in which we try to mould the minds of men who will thus mightily battle for the religion hallowed by the suffering of ages. . . . By the

the moral force of our disciples, synagogues will be stripped of meretricious garments, and will put on the vesture given by Ezra and the Sages; pulpits now converted into a nursery for the propagation of heresies, will become strongholds of the written and oral law.²⁰

Of the members of the Advisory Board of Ministers (to which Rabbis Benjamin Szold and Aaron Bettelheim were added), not one was succeeded by a graduate of the Seminary he had helped found and maintain. It is surprising that the Seminary survived into the twentieth century. It lacked the ingredients which gave life and strength to its elder sister institution, Hebrew Union College: a natural constituency, an ideology which served the felt needs of that constituency, and a charismatic, energetic leader.

The German-Jewish immigrant community had established its synagogues in the middle of the nineteenth century as sanctuaries of the faith and portals to America. In an America which accepted the synagogue as a component of the American religious landscape and the rabbi as colleague to the minister, synagogues were built and maintained and rabbis elected and respected as an expression of civic pride and responsibility. In the last decades of the century the Hebrew Union College was needed to provide English-speaking rabbis for the second generation of German Jews, which had rapidly Americanized and was well along a total emancipatory process. The Pittsburgh Platform, with its expression of broad religious universalism, its rejection of a ritual which insulates and religious observance which isolates, gave ideological underpinning and religious sanction to national, cultural, and religious assimilation. Isaac Mayer Wise, who intuited the felt needs of that community and had the imagination, skills, and energy to fashion institutions to meet them, succeeded in a quarter of a century in enlisting almost every major congregation in America in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. They then provided ready pulpits for graduates of his Hebrew Union College. The Seminary could provide neither constituency nor ideology nor a charismatic leader.

The group which would become its natural constituency, composed of acculturated East European immigrants and their children, had not yet come into being. The immigrants came, transplanted their *shtetlach*, and appointed cantors and traditionally ordained rabbis who eked out a living largely through kashrut supervision. English-

speaking rabbis were viewed as a threat to the sanctity of the synagogue, which was a fortress against an America bent on the destruction of the ancestral faith. Judaism could only be preserved through hermetic insulation which assured the continuity of the language, the ritual, and the synagogue ways and mores of the Old World. These had been tried and tested. They had survived and saved. Why change them now? The Seminary and the rabbis it produced or was about to produce would expose Judaism and the faithful Jews to influences which would destroy both, the leaders of the East European religious community inveighed.

Nor did the Seminary have the appropriate leaders to appeal to the East European immigrant, who would hardly respond to a Sefardi *hazzan* or a Central European-trained moderate Reform rabbi. As for ideology—the lack thereof was an embarrassment then, as it would be for a long time to come. Morais felt the need to refer to this at the opening of his Report of the President of the Faculty in 1888: “The opponents of the Jewish Theological Seminary still clamor for a definition of that purpose, ignoring the fact that the institution has set it forth unequivocally.” But the definition which he offered was one that would hardly lure gifted young men into its student body, or congregations into its ranks.

Morais recognized the need for a charismatic leader, and as early as 1890 he chose the man. Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen of Philadelphia reported that “in the year 1890, I had the privilege of bearing a message from Sabato Morais and his colleagues of the Jewish Theological Seminary . . . asking Schechter to consider the possibility of joining the teaching staff of that institution.”²¹

For a dozen years thereafter, sporadic attempts were made, largely by a group of intellectual Jews in Philadelphia, to bring Dr. Solomon Schechter to America. Cyrus Adler, Judge Mayer Sulzberger, and Solomon Solis-Cohen corresponded with him, and brought him for a series of lectures at the newly established Gratz College in 1895. With the passing of Alexander Kohut in 1894 and Sabato Morais in 1897, the Seminary was left with neither an intellectual leader nor an administrative head. Bernard Drachman, as dean of faculty, aided by the Rabbinic Advisory Board, carried on as best he could, but the Seminary was neither an institution of higher learning nor a functioning rabbinic seminary. By the end of the century it had produced less than a

minyan of graduates. The rabbinic board was interested in it as an institution for the training of an American rabbinate; the Philadelphia lay leaders looked to it as a potential center of Jewish scholarship. To them Schechter was the one person who could accomplish both. His scholarly reputation was solid, based on East European grounding in traditional studies, and training in the scientific method in two West European institutes of higher learning in Vienna and Berlin. He was now a reader in rabbinics at Cambridge University, turning out scholarly works in a readable elegant English, and what was more, he was a man of great energy and unmistakable charisma.

The Schechter Era

It was during the incumbency of Solomon Schechter as president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1902–1915, that the Conservative rabbinate took shape and became a factor in the religious life of American Jewry. In 1901, when the Alumni Association of the Jewish Theological Seminary was organized, there were only fifteen graduates and former students who were considered eligible for membership.²² By 1916, the Alumni Association's membership had grown to sixty-one rabbis occupying pulpits or engaged in associated activities. One could go clear across the continent and find Conservative rabbis in New York, Boston, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Toledo, Columbus, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Sioux City, Denver, and Spokane, and returning by a more southern route, meet them in Dallas and Beaumont, Texas, in Kansas City and Joplin, Missouri, in Montgomery, Alabama, in Louisville, Greensboro, Pittsburgh, Altoona, Baltimore, and Newark. Colleagues in Kingston, Jamaica, in Montreal and Hamilton, Canada, and in the seat of Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire gave the association an international constituency

Prior to coming to America, Schechter had viewed the presidency of the Seminary as an opportunity for "founding a school on a scientific basis."²³ "In your country," he wrote to Sulzberger, "I can hope to 'make school' and to leave students which may prove useful to the cause of Judaism as well as that of Jewish scholarship."²⁴ Equally important, he realized, was to make the Seminary an institution for the

training of a scholarly rabbinate. In his Inaugural Address, he outlined a broad program:

We all agree that the office of a Jewish minister is to teach Judaism; he should accordingly receive such a training as to enable him to say: "I regard nothing Jewish as foreign to me." He should know everything Jewish—Bible, Talmud, Midrash, Liturgy, Jewish ethics and Jewish philosophy; Jewish history and Jewish mysticism, and even Jewish folklore.²⁵

In what must have been an oblique critique of the rabbis whom the other seminary was ordaining, he stated: "It is hardly necessary to remark that the Jewish ministry and Jewish scholarship are not irreconcilable. The usefulness of a minister does not increase in an *inverse ratio* to his knowledge."²⁶

What we also find here is the intimation that in the modern rabbinate, alas, that formula is often true—the demands of the rabbinate leave little time and energy for scholarship. It is a prejudice which was present in all Jewish institutions of higher learning, East European *yeshivot* (*oder a lamdon, oder a rov*) and Western seminaries equally. It persisted in the Seminary which Schechter built, in large measure because of the scholarly distinction of the faculty he appointed.

The course of study reflected Schechter's pledge to draw up "the curriculum of the studies for the classes, in such a way as to include in it almost every branch of Jewish literature."

1. *The Bible* . . . grammar of Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic . . . a thorough acquaintance with the ancient and modern commentaries . . . Biblical Archaeology.
 2. *Talmud of Babylon and Jerusalem* . . . taught on philological and critical lines . . . the Mekilta, Sifri and Sifra, the Midrash Rabba . . . Codes of Maimonides, R. Jacob b. Asher, R. Joseph Caro, R. Abraham Danzig. . . .
 3. *Jewish History and the History of Jewish Literature*. . . .
 4. *Theology and Catechism* . . . Jewish philosophy and ethics, the Jewish liturgies. . . .
 5. *Homiletics, including a proper training in Elocution and Pastoral Work* . . . the initiation of the student in the profession of teaching . . . visiting the poor, ministering to the sick and dying . . . preparation for the practical part of the minister's vocation.
- Hazanuth* . . . optional with the students of the Senior Class.

The requirements for ordination called for the successful completion of four years of postgraduate studies, and the admission requirements, in addition to “the Degree of Bachelor of Arts . . . from a university or college of good standing,” included knowledge of the Hebrew language, the ability to translate and interpret at sight any portion of the Pentateuch and stated selections from the books of Judges, Isaiah, the Psalms, and Daniel, most of the *Seder Moed* of the Mishnah, the first thirteen pages of *Gemara*, *Berakoth*, and a general acquaintance with the prayerbook and Jewish history.

Schechter asked for more than a learned clergy (which the requirements listed above were fashioned to provide): he called for a rabbinite committed to the disciplines of Judaism, but open to its multifaceted ideological composition.

Judaism demands control over all your actions, and interferes even with your menu. It sanctifies the seasons and regulates your history. . . . It teaches that disobedience is the strength of sin. It insists upon the observance both of the spirit and of the letter.

And yet,

You must not think that our intention is to convert this school of learning into a drill ground where young men will be forced into a certain groove of thinking, or, rather not thinking; and after being equipped with a few devotional texts, and supplied with certain catchwords, will be let loose upon an unsuspecting public to proclaim their own virtues and the infallibility of their masters. . . . I would consider my work . . . a complete failure if this institution would not in the future produce such extremes as on the one side a roving mystic who would denounce me as a sober Philistine; on the other side, an advanced critic, who would rail at me as a narrow minded fanatic, while a third devotee of strict orthodoxy would raise protest against any critical views I may entertain.²⁷

Schechter thus drew what became the hallmark of the Conservative rabbinate, commitment to the disciplines of Judaism and wide latitude for one’s theological beliefs and ideological stance. He thus laid the foundation for the ideological diversity which has marked the Conservative rabbinate, bound together more by institutional loyalty than ideological agreement. This diversity became evident in the different kinds of pulpits which the rabbis occupied, and in the beginnings of an ideological cleavage between colleagues which recreated the diversity in thought and practice that had marked the group of rabbis who

joined to found the Seminary in 1886.

Schechter's expectation that the Seminary would produce religious diversity was fulfilled in his own lifetime. Mordecai M. Kaplan, Charles I. Hoffman, Jacob Kohn, and Eugene Kohn were among the first of the "advanced critics" which the Seminary produced in good numbers, and C. E. Hillel Kauvar and Herman Abramowitz were among the early graduates who called themselves Orthodox.

Seminary-ordained Paul Chertoff was rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, Rochester, New York, an Orthodox synagogue, which had separate seating of men and women, fully traditional Sabbath and weekday services, a cantor facing the ark, an all-male choir. It was the chief support of the Vaad Hakashrut, and recognized as its rabbinic authority the Orthodox "Chief Rabbi" Solomon Sadowsky. Contemporary and colleague Herman H. Rubenovitz introduced the use of the organ and a mixed choir to his conservative congregation, Mishkan Tefila, Boston.

What did the Seminary graduate face? Newly ordained Rabbi Herman H. Rubenovitz describes what he found:

I arrived in Boston in the fall of 1910. . . . Assimilation was rampant, and its leading exponent was . . . the Rabbi of Reform Temple Israel, the wealthiest and most socially prominent Jewish congregation in New England. Hebrew had been practically eliminated from its service . . . the traditional Sabbath had been made secondary to the Sunday service. Even intermarriage between Jew and gentile was openly advocated. But what was even more menacing to the future of Judaism hereabouts, was the fact that by far the greater part of the Sunday morning Congregation which Rabbi Charles Fleischer²⁸ addressed, was made up of the sons and daughters of orthodox Jewish parents. The Orthodox . . . synagogue worship . . . was, with few exceptions, utterly devoid of decorum, and its spiritual quality all too often lost in noise and confusion . . . alienated the youth. When . . . these young people purchased seats for the High Holidays, they saw little of the interior of the synagogue, but instead mostly congregated on the sidewalk outside. . . . Religious instruction of the boys—the girls were completely neglected—was conducted in dark and dingy vestries, or by itinerant *rabbis* . . . teaching the Bar Mitzvah chant and the Kaddish prayer. Little congregations sprang up like mushrooms. . . . Every other day the community was rocked by some new scandal connected with the administration of *Kashrut*.²⁹

Rubenovitz saw the Jews of Boston as "hopelessly divided into two hostile camps . . . a stagnant Orthodoxy on the one hand and a militant, radical Reform Judaism on the other." His was a "long and bitter

struggle to establish the Conservative view. I not only had to overcome the inertia in my own congregation, the very human tendency to cling to the old familiar ways, but I also had to face the denunciations of those in the Orthodox camp who branded me a heretic and reformer."³⁰

The natural constituency for the Conservative rabbi were the sons and daughters of the East European immigrant community, some of whom Rubenovitz saw either filling the pews at the Sunday services of the Reform temple or socializing in front of the Orthodox synagogues on the holiest days, but with the majority turning away from all religious mooring. Rubenovitz reminisced: "Wherever I went I appealed to the younger generation to accept a new synthesis of tradition and modern spirit; to provide well-housed and properly graded Hebrew schools; to participate actively in the upbuilding of Zion; to create a comprehensive program of adult education."³¹

Rabbi Rubenovitz remained at Mishkan Tefila for the remainder of his life and saw it become the leading Conservative congregation in New England. More typical of the challenges facing a Seminary graduate in the early years of the twentieth century was the tenure of Rabbi Paul Chertoff at Congregation Beth Israel.

Founded in 1874 as an Orthodox synagogue for Rochester's growing community of East European immigrants, it was forced by its younger, more acculturated members to engage Seminary-ordained Nathan Blechman in 1906 as "Preacher and Teacher." The title rabbi was reserved by the congregation for the communal Orthodox rabbi, and they referred to their "preacher" as "our Rev. Dr. Blechman."³² He was succeeded by Dr. Jacob Lauterbach, and in 1911, Seminary-ordained Paul Chertoff was elected to serve as preacher "to deliver lectures and teach in daily school at a salary of \$1,200, for one year trial by a vote of 35-16."³³ Preaching duties were divided between Rabbi Chertoff and the Orthodox communal *rov*, Solomon Sadowsky. "The Preacher will lecture the first day of Rosh Hashanah and after Musaf on Yom Kippur in English: Rabbi Sadowsky will deliver a sermon on the second day of Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat Shuva in Yiddish," the minutes of the congregation's board of directors specify.³⁴ The Conservative congregational rabbi was designated "Preacher" or "Reverend"; he was not accorded the rabbinic status which was reserved only for the Orthodox communal *rov*.

gation had assumed a double burden of financial support, its traditional participation in maintaining a communal *rov*, and the salary of its own preacher. Before the year was over, the board, though recognizing the need for a "Preacher and Teacher," claimed that the congregation did not have sufficient income to pay his salary. It requested the board of education (largely comprising younger members) to do what it had done in the past, i.e., to solicit special pledges beyond the regular dues with which to pay the salary of the preacher. Rabbi Chertoff had apparently done a splendid job in organizing and running the congregational schools, so the money was raised and the preacher reelected, but this time by the close margin of 29–23.³⁵ The congregation was in constant financial difficulties, and it was split by the issue of priority of *rov* vs. preacher, which was but an indication of a more deeply rooted division between adherence to Orthodoxy and a growing tendency toward Conservative Judaism, especially among the younger members. Rabbi Chertoff encouraged the latter, a group of whom left in 1915 to organize a Conservative congregation, Beth El. The best young leaders gone, Rabbi Chertoff left a year later.

During his tenure he instituted a broad program of education through the congregational schools and youth clubs, and turned the congregation toward the newly organized United Synagogue of America.³⁶

As indicated by the case of Rabbi Chertoff, many of the early graduates of the Seminary were faced with the problem of serving in congregations which did not accord them full rabbinic status (whether in title or in fact) and which were almost always in financial straits as well as ideological conflict. Clearly, what was needed, a growing number of rabbis felt, was a national organization of like-minded congregations which would recognize the rabbinic status of Seminary ordination, help strengthen the individual congregations through programmatic aid, and help fashion the ideological stance of Conservative Judaism.

In the fall of 1909, Rabbi Rubenovitz suggested to Rabbi Charles I. Hoffman, president of the Alumni Association of the Jewish Theological Seminary, that the graduates of the Seminary take the lead "in the establishment of a union of conservative forces in America." At its annual meeting the Alumni Association, after a "lively discussion," voted unanimously to sponsor the launching of "a Union of Conservative Congregations." Some of the purposes of such a union would be

“to print an inexpensive prayerbook; to prevent the isolated man [i.e., rabbi] from being swallowed up; to prevent the isolated synagogue from being swallowed up; to see that our views are fairly represented in the Jewish press; to have a regular traveling representation; to have a Sabbath observance department.”³⁷ The leaders of the Alumni Association urged that the organization be a union of *Conservative* congregations, but the more traditionally oriented rabbis and the leaders of the Seminary insisted that it be directed, as Cyrus Adler expressed it, to “the 1600 congregations remaining outside the fold of Reform.” Dr. Schechter urged that, traditionalist and liberal forces having joined to found the Seminary, the same should obtain in establishing the union of congregations, which took the name of the United Synagogue of America.³⁸ “This United Synagogue,” he stated at the founding convention, “has not been called into life with any purpose of creating a new division.” He spoke of “this Conservative, or if you prefer to call it, this Orthodox tendency.”³⁹ The rabbis of liberal orientation, though unhappy with Schechter’s stance, accepted it as a needed compromise for the time. The traditionalist rabbis could continue to call themselves Orthodox. The ferment within the congregations could continue, and the rabbis would be at the vortex of forces within their congregations, pulling to the right or to the left. It made their daily lives all the more difficult, but it afforded them the opportunity to exert great influence on the direction which their congregations would take. A rabbi of deep ideological commitment possessed of leadership abilities could be a “spiritual leader” (as rabbis came to be called) of considerable significance.

The Conservative rabbi in the first decades of the century perceived himself as standing in confrontation with Orthodoxy, whether he was a liberal like Rabbi Rubenovitz, in conflict with members of his congregation opposed to his program of changes in synagogue ritual, or a traditionalist like Rabbi Chertoff, chafing at the denial of rabbinic status by the Orthodox communal *rov* and his followers. Schechter saw differently. To him the confrontation was with Reform, which asserted “that the destruction of the Law is its fulfilment.” The danger to the Conservative rabbi lay not in combative congregants or imperious rabbis; the danger lay in themselves, in their perception of what the rabbinate demanded and in what constituted success in the calling. He feared that the Conservative rabbi would be tempted to emulate

his visibly successful Reform colleague. In jeopardy were the quintessential qualities which the rabbinate as a calling demanded: scholarship, sacrifice, humility, and authenticity.

"It is hardly necessary to remark," he noted in his Inaugural Address in 1902, "that the Jewish ministry and Jewish scholarship are not irreconcilable." He observed, however, that in the American rabbinate scholarship and success were not synonymous, so he urged his graduating students six years later, "It would not even injure the Rabbi if he should from time to time engage in some scientific work, publishing occasionally a learned article."⁴⁰ He inveighed against "the Rabbi who will use his freedom of interpretation to explain the laws regarding the Sabbath in such a way that they should not interfere with his own pleasures and comfort."⁴¹ In obvious reference to Reform's "mission idea" he asked:

We constantly speak of ourselves as a nation of priests and a people with a mission. . . . Where are our Parishes profiting from our priestly calling? And where are the converts giving evidence of our missionary activity? . . . We want teachers for our own youth. . . . We want students who will continue the work of the old Yeshivot in a new country . . . with more scientific discipline.⁴²

"The office of rabbi," he reminded his students-disciples, "means service, not mastery and dominion. . . . Humility . . . the very calling of Moses . . . is the suppression of our ego, which does not know when it shines."⁴³ And lest the pulpit become empty of Jewish content, as he had observed in the temples about him, he warned, "Do not deceive yourself that you will help Judaism much by becoming exponents of topics belonging more to the Lyceum than to the synagogue."⁴⁴ Only when the synagogue retains its distinctiveness will its message contain authenticity. And commenting on the "successful" rabbis about him, Schechter stated, "It is not the highest praise for a rabbi that he is invited to preach in some church, or that he has succeeded in procuring some high ecclesiastic or statesman to preach in the synagogue. . . . It does not help Judaism. . . . It rather reflects upon our sense of religious delicacy, upon our confidence in our own cause, or even self-respect."⁴⁵

Schechter was impressed by the native ability of his students but looked with some trepidation at their driving ambition. He saw the day when they would be the spiritual heads of congregations of size

and influence, when they would be looked to as spokesmen for authentic Judaism. He looked to that day with soaring hope and sober concern.

The "Between Wars" Era

Schechter had charged the Conservative rabbinate with the task "to organize new congregations and to raise the old ones from the sloth of indifference and the vice of strife into which they have fallen."⁴⁶ The generation of rabbis which issued from what was now called "Schechter's Seminary"⁴⁷ now set itself to this task. In the process the rabbis fashioned a new synagogue for America, differing substantially both from the radical Reform temple and from the East European shul.

Both temple and shul were responses to the melting-pot image of America, which the immigrant understood as permitting religious expression but demanding cultural and ethnic assimilation. Reform synagogue and rabbi had yielded to such an America, temples taking on aspects of the "American" Protestant church, such as Sunday worship in the vernacular sans headcovering or *tallit*, and the rabbi becoming preeminently a pastor and preacher like his Protestant colleague. Orthodoxy withdrew from such an America, insulating itself from its influences in *shtetlach* where Hebrew was the sole language of worship and Yiddish the language of discourse, with rabbis striving valiantly to retain the East European pattern of the rabbinate, the communal *rov* as scholar, judge, and ritual arbiter. The Conservative rabbi, who in his ministry associated with both Reform and Orthodoxy, felt called upon to assume the rabbinic obligations delineated by both.

The post-World War I American scene was marked by a turning from the melting-pot image to that of cultural pluralism. Within the American rabbinate, the Conservative rabbis became its most pronounced adherents, and Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan its most influential ideologist. He and his colleagues structured their synagogues to meet the needs of an American Jewry which defined its Jewishness in the broadest terms—cultural, religious, ethnic—but which recognized that the climate of America would most readily and comfortably accept its institutionalization as a religious community, with the synagogue as its central institution.

The challenge and opportunity for Conservative Judaism in the Midwest is described by Cleveland-born Rabbi Abraham Burstein:

In the great midwest section . . . there are over a million Jews. . . . Fully three-quarters are of decidedly conservative sympathies in matters Jewish. Yet they have been largely beyond the reach of any united Jewish influence that stresses that type of Judaism to which they would prefer to be faithful. Either they have been beyond the reach of any influence at all, or they have succumbed to a denatured kind of Judaism which is but a temporary halt in the process of assimilation. In the large centers there have existed the same faults that have beset traditional Judaism everywhere in this country. . . . Customs retained by immigrant groups have driven our young far from the observances of their elders.⁴⁸

The pages of the *United Synagogue Recorder* for the years 1921–1929 contain numerous descriptions of the activities of the Conservative synagogues in communities large and small. They range from daily services to Sabbath and holiday worship to schools, youth clubs, adult education, forums, dramatic groups, athletic activities, and more.

As Schechter demanded, new congregations were established and old altered, the rabbi serving as initiator, as maintainer, and, when and where necessary, as reviver, as the following reports indicate. In the spring of 1923

Temple Israel, of Scranton [Pa.], is one of the newest synagogues in the United States . . . founded only one year and a half ago by the leading Jews of Scranton. . . . The first service held was the High Holy days in 1921 under the leadership of Rabbi A. H. Kohn who received the call to take charge of building up this new conservative synagogue. . . . Under the ministry of Rabbi Kohn [Temple Israel] has made very rapid progress . . . and has already won a reputation among the conservative Jewish synagogues of U.S.A. . . . Services are held three times daily, and on Sabbaths, festivals and holidays you always find a large congregation of worshippers. At the late Friday night Services . . . visiting speakers from New York were delighted to find such a large turn-out considering the location of the Temple, being in the non-Jewish section of the city. . . .

The following are the activities built up by the untiring efforts of the Rabbi:

1. *Educational.* A Hebrew School . . . over 100 children attending daily. . . . The religious school meets every Sunday morning and the children are taught the elements of Jewish ethics, ceremonies and Jewish history.
2. *Social and Communal Activities.* Boy Scout Troop . . . second leading troop in the city. . . . Girl Scout Troup . . . carried away all the prizes for scout work. . . . Both troops go to summer camp. . . .
3. *The Ham-Zam-Rim Society* . . . the musical glee club of the Junior congre-

- gation . . . only boys of musical and vocal talents are accepted. . . .
4. *The Zadik-Zadik Club* of the Junior Auxiliary look after the social programs. . . .
 5. *Junior Menorah Society* high school boys and girls meets weekly for discussion . . . and papers are read by members. . . .
 6. *The Progress Club*, consists of older sons and daughters of members . . . organized by the Rabbi. . . . They are now beginning to function more Jewishly.

A Bible class has been organized by the Rabbi, which is patronized by a good number of the Sisterhood.

Temple Israel has already outgrown its seating capacity and a building committee has been appointed . . . for the construction of a new temple.⁴⁹

Far more challenging was the enterprise of turning Anshe Emet into the Cleveland Jewish Center. “Like a good many Jewish congregations in America,” Martha Marks reported, “it was founded some fifty-five years ago [i.e., 1870] by a number of men who wanted a minyan.” A quarter of a century later, when Anshe Emet built its synagogue, the bimah was removed from the center and the curtain from the gallery. Later it merged with another synagogue, extending a call to Rabbi Solomon Goldman, who was serving a Conservative congregation in Cleveland. He set about turning the center Conservative, the first step of which was to allow men and women to sit together in the synagogue. Twelve members brought the congregation to court, accusing its rabbi of seeking to introduce Conservative Judaism, “which is detrimental to and disruptive of orthodox Judaism.” The congregation had overextended itself and had to pay off a debt of \$175,000 besides meeting an annual budget of \$90,000, a large sum in 1925. The aforementioned chronicler reported: “It is unfortunate that hundreds of well-to-do families in the vicinity of the Center, who have benefited from the Center—sent the children to the Athletic Department . . . come to all services . . . were satisfied to allow the ‘rich men of the Jewish Center’ to bear the burden.”

The chief burden in such situations, and they seem to have been endemic to the emerging Conservative congregations, was borne by the rabbi. He had to keep the congregation viable, financially and programmatically, and to bear the brunt of defamation by those who accused him of being a “destroyer of Judaism.” Goldman’s great talents and boundless energy could cope with it all.

A gifted orator, he attracted record congregations to the late Friday

night, Sabbath, and holiday services. He found it necessary to press upon his congregation the importance of decorum. "Worship without decorum is unworthy of an intelligent congregation," declared a card signed by the rabbi, given to each entering worshipper. He emphasized education, and could point to a Hebrew school of six hundred and a religious school of one thousand. "The High School was founded by Rabbi Goldman three years ago," the chronicler reported, "and we feel amply rewarded for all the efforts that we have put into it." At that time the rabbi also founded the Center Forum, featuring leading lecturers. Despite the warning of Dr. Schechter, the platform was given to such as H. A. Overstreet, Bruce Bliven, Sherwood Anderson, and Norman Thomas. Apparently apologetically it was stated that "an effort is made to make this program Jewish."

Courses in the Bible, the Hebrew language, Jewish history, philosophy, religion, etc., were offered, with the promise, "For next year a much more elaborate program is planned to include a number of secular courses, which will be given by members of college faculties." Among the fifty-nine clubs meeting in the building, one, the Deoth Club, is singled out for "particular mention." "It is a group of young men, college graduates, most of them Phi Beta Kappas from Harvard, Columbia, Ohio State, Michigan and Western Reserve meeting fortnightly under the leadership of Rabbi Goldman for the study of civilization."

The center hosted "one of the finest congregational libraries in the country" and ambitious programs of social and athletic activities. The building was used by many organizations, and the chronicler boasted especially that all important Zionist meetings were held there. And she emphasized that Rabbi Goldman had from the start attempted to involve gifted young men and young women in the work of the institution.

The Center Forum is headed by a Michigan and Columbia graduate. . . . The Religious School is under the leadership of . . . a Harvard B.A. and LL.B., Phi Beta Kappa, possessor of several prizes in English and Menorah prize. . . . The principal of the High School . . . is a B.A. and M.S. Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard.⁵⁰

Those financing the Seminary hoped that the Seminary's graduates would "civilize" and Americanize the sons and daughters of the East

European immigrants.⁵¹ The graduates of the Seminary aspired to educate Jewishly and attract to synagogue activities the most gifted of them, and thus to demonstrate that the Jewish cultural heritage could capture the interest of the most academically accomplished. The Conservative rabbis' allegiance to Positive-Historical Judaism was rooted in the conviction that the historical Jewish spiritual experience was of more than historical interest. They felt obligated to prove that to educated young Jews, upon whom the future of the Jewish community in America depended, the Jewish heritage, sympathetically absorbed and understood, could offer meaning and direction in life. The Conservative rabbi apparently needed constant self-reassurance that the Judaism he espoused was not only deep in roots but promising in flower. Hence the inordinate emphasis on Jewish education by the Conservative rabbinate, education of self and of those about them, and the ongoing agonizing search for a coherent ideology.

More typical than the experience of Rabbi Solomon Goldman was that of Rabbi Harry R. Goldberger at the Sinai Israel Congregation, Steubenville, Ohio.

Since the arrival of our worthy rabbi, much work was accomplished for the cause of Judaism in our community. . . . Friday evening services . . . are attended by many young and old. . . . The children of the city attend every Saturday morning their own services at which the Rabbi delivers a sermon.

The Hebrew School meets every day, and about seventy-five children are receiving a modern Hebrew education conducted by the Rabbi. The Sunday School has an attendance of one hundred and thirty children. . . . A play was presented Purim at the local High School by Young Judean Club under the supervision of the Rabbi. . . . The Bible Class for adults owes much to our Rabbi. . . . Our women are always ready to help our Rabbi in all his undertakings.⁵²

Most rabbis found that most of their time and energy had to be given to the management of struggling synagogues rather than to intellectual creativity. And this is what the board of the Seminary seems to have expected of them. The appointment in 1924 of Dr. Cyrus Adler as president of the Seminary, rather than a leading Jewish scholar, seems to have signaled this. Much as the Seminary graduates might have disliked the managerial role, they recognized its need. No long-established, well-endowed, socially prestigious congregations were their lot. They had to create or recreate young, frail, struggling synagogues,

fill their membership rolls, establish their schools, create their activities, secure their budgets, build their buildings, and worry lest the leaders of the congregation decide that a new building needed a new rabbi.

Rabbi Ralph Simon described his five-year tenure at Rodef Sholom, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, his first congregation:

This congregation was a traditional Orthodox synagogue which was founded by East European immigrants about the year 1885. I was the first Seminary rabbi to serve them. . . . the decision to invite a Conservative rabbi came as a result of the insistence of a younger group who correctly believed that the next generation would join the Reform temple unless the synagogue was modernized. The older generation was suspicious of innovations. . . . The rabbi had to walk a narrow line in order to remain on good terms with the elders as well as to satisfy the rebellious young people. . . . Very few changes [were made] in the Sabbath and holidays Synagogue service. It was only in Friday evening late service that changes could be made, since the leaders of the older group did not attend and did not recognize it as an authentic service. The major changes were sermons in English, insistence on decorum and interpretation of the liturgy. One activity which won the elders over to a trust in the new rabbi was the formation of a Talmud study group.

The major area of change was in the cultural and social program. All the activities envisioned in the synagogue-center program of Dr. Kaplan were introduced. Adult education classes were organized. A good Hebrew school was conducted. There was an active Men's Club, Sisterhood and Youth Group. There were frequent programs of music, a new choir, dramatic presentations and guest speakers.

The unique aspect of the new Conservative rabbi was his multifaceted role. He was the preacher, pastor, teacher, executive and communal figure. . . . One activity of the rabbi was received with great approval by practically the entire Jewish community. He began to appear before church and civic groups who welcomed an erudite Jewish spokesman. As the rabbi became popular with the non-Jewish community, his popularity increased with the Jewish community.⁵³

Rabbi Jacob Kraft spoke of his duties as rabbi in the Beth Shalom Congregation, Wilmington, Delaware, in the 1930's:

This rabbi acted as a *kol bo* [all-purpose functionary], taking charge of the services, preaching weekly, explaining Torah portion on Sabbath morning. He supervised the school, taught, took care of assemblies, visited the sick several times a week, the hospitals, visited the home during *shivah* period and conducted services, taught some converts to Judaism (about 3 or so during the 30's) etc., etc.⁵⁴

What kept rabbinic morale alive was the recognition that "manag-

ing” a synagogue called for a high order of creativity. What they were fashioning was something that had not been, and whatever they added to the institution they served was an act of creativity. They also knew that what they were engaged in was of signal importance. The future of the Jewish community, American Israel, was in their trust. For many, Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan provided an ideology which was for the moment satisfying and for the future promising. And more, he set the example, when he created the Jewish Center, his own congregation, of what a modern American synagogue should be.

Others, attracted to the Seminary by a faculty unequaled in the realm of Jewish learning, found spiritual support for their traditionalist tendencies in the towering scholarship of Professor Louis Ginzberg, who served as a living example of the salutary results of the wedding of traditionalist commitments to Western critical modes of scholarship. To the Seminary student, Ginzberg was the “absolute fullest embodiment of the totality of Jewish learning in all history,”⁵⁵ while Kaplan provided the challenge and stimulation of discovering (to use his own favored phrase) a new “universe of discourse.” Rabbi Eli Bohnen recalled: “His influence was great; I came from an orthodox background and he opened a new world for me.”⁵⁶ Rabbi Elias Charry concurs: “He taught us not to be afraid to think, to question, and to reconsider. He was a hard taskmaster and we responded by opening up a new area of concern. Dr. Kaplan was indeed a crusader, an activist, an innovator.”⁵⁷

Ginzberg provided his students, the rabbis, with solid roots; Kaplan gave them wings. The roots provided mooring in an uncertain and sometimes hostile environment; the wings permitted them to soar above the ordinary, the commonplace, the everyday managerial routine.

The majority of Seminary graduates during this period were European-born, but almost all were graduates of American universities. Of the three graduates in 1923, one was American-born, a graduate of Columbia. The others were born in Russia and Hungary, came to America at an early age, and received their degrees from New York University and CCNY. In 1925, the graduates numbered seventeen, of whom four were American-born. Seven had received their degrees at CCNY, two at Columbia, two at Penn, the others at Rutgers, NYU, Chicago, Haverford, Boston, and Wurttemberg universities; and they

set forth to serve congregations in Houston, Lincoln, Fall River, Philadelphia, Allentown, Wilmington, Staten Island, Binghamton, Stamford, the Bronx, Sioux City, Waterbury, and Toronto. One "returned to Germany to enter the rabbinate there." The number of graduates in 1928 fell to eight, of whom three were American-born, and six had received their degrees at CCNY.⁵⁸

By that year membership in the Rabbinical Assembly had grown to 203. Its membership was a diverse group of rabbis. Herbert S. Goldstein served the Orthodox Institutional Synagogue, while his Manhattan neighbor, Israel Goldstein, served Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, at that time just this side of Reform; in Philadelphia, Leon H. Elmaleh, serving Mikveh Israel, which clung to its full Sefardi tradition, was colleague to Max D. Klein, whose Adath Jeshurun had long since departed from traditionalism in liturgy and congregational ritual; and in Chicago RA member Morris Teller served the fully traditional B'nai Bezael, while RA member Gerson B. Levi was rabbi of a Reform congregation, Temple Isaiah-Israel.

Such was the ideological division within the Rabbinical Assembly that Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, president-elect, felt impelled to present a paper on "The Things That Unite Us," citing the conception of God and attitudes toward Torah, changes in ceremonial, Israel, Palestine, the Hebrew language, and the Seminary. The discussion which followed indicated that some of the "things" suggested as unifying actually divided, the Rabbinical Assembly retaining the dual components of traditionalists and progressives in the Conservative rabbinate. But there were, of course, basic "similarities and likenesses" in the members of the Conservative rabbinate, the most pronounced of which was that, in the words of Rabbi Finkelstein, "Through [the Seminary] we became not only comrades in arms, but also brothers . . . we are all of us Seminary men."⁵⁹ The tie that bound was not so much ideological as institutional, which is what Dr. Schechter had anticipated when he took the helm of the Seminary and the movement.

As the 1920's came to an end, the Rabbinical Assembly's concerns included Jewish life in America and in other parts of the world, challenges facing Conservative Judaism, and problems plaguing the Conservative rabbi.⁶⁰ The more candid discussions, those between friends and colleagues touching on a rabbi's concerns, fears, hopes, aspirations, frustrations, rarely get recorded. It is to the credit of Rabbi

Philip R. Alstat that he spoke publicly at the 1929 conference what most rabbis would state only in private conversations. It is worth quoting at length.

Of what avail is it to discuss the relationship of "Traditional Judaism and Modern Life . . ." or to analyze the "Spiritual Elements in Judaism," or to ascertain the "Abiding value of the Belief in Resurrection" unless the exponents of Judaism are invested with dignity and armed with authority? The rich "all-right-nickes" inwardly despise the rabbi because he is poor in worldly goods and economic security. . . . How much respect can they have for the authority of their spiritual leader whose position is precarious, whose bread and butter they control, whose brief tenure of office and fear of the annual re-election make him the football of contending factions, an impotent creature whom they can bully, intimidate and abuse with impunity? The Jewish intellectuals . . . despise the rabbi because, they charge, he is poor intellectually and spiritually, that he has no message for them . . . no solution for any of our vexing problems . . . that he is not a thinker or spiritual leader, but a maker of empty phrases. . . .

The Yiddish-speaking orthodoxy also despises the modern rabbi . . . because in their opinion, he is poor in Jewish scholarship and is poor in unquestioning loyalty to the letter of the Shulchan Aruch. All of them together agree that he is poor in sincerity of principle and constancy of policy, except in his coarse opportunism . . . and in his unsatiable hunger and vulgar striving for publicity. . . .

The rabbi's advice is rarely listened to in the councils of the congregation. . . . His views are not sought by lay leaders of Jewish education and philanthropy. . . . When I tried to persuade the promising sons of wealthy traditional Jews to enter the Jewish ministry, I was rewarded for my efforts with polite scorn. The parents, remembering how they regarded and treated their own rabbi, resented the suggestion that their sons voluntarily condemn themselves to lifelong martyrdom.⁶¹

Rabbi Alstat's views stemmed, as he states, from his experiences and observations in New York City. The situation was better outside the metropolis. Rabbis Herman Abramowitz in Montreal, C. E. Hillel Kauvar in Denver, Charles I. Hoffman in Newark, Herman H. Rubenovitz and Louis Epstein in Boston, Abraham Hershman in Detroit, Abraham A. Neuman and Simon Greenberg in Philadelphia, Solomon Goldman in Chicago, Abraham E. Halpern in St. Louis, Louis Feinberg in Cincinnati, David Aronson in Minneapolis, Gershon Hadas in Kansas City, Max Arzt in Scranton, Louis Levitsky in Wilkes-Barre, and Morris Silverman in Hartford were men of prominence and influence in their communities. And in New York City itself Rabbis Mordecai M. Kaplan, Israel Levinthal, Elias L. Solomon, Israel Goldstein,

and Louis Finkelstein were rabbinic personalities whose advice was listened to and whose views were sought by lay leaders.

When the Rabbinical Assembly⁶² met for its fortieth annual convention, held in Detroit in June 1940, its membership had grown to 282, an increase of about 40 percent during the preceding decade. Its placement committee reported that forty placements had been made during the year, that the committee was in negotiation with thirty-three other positions, but that thirty-three members were without positions, six of whom "are this year's graduates." The committee on Jewish law had considered such questions as the legality of the use of an organ at Sabbath and festival services; whether it is permissible to eat cooked vegetables and broiled fish in nonkosher restaurants; the Jewish attitude toward autopsies; the validity of civil marriages; the attitude toward birth control; the legality of burying a person in a crypt or mausoleum; whether a physician may act as a *mohel*; and the question of relief for the *agunah* (a woman whose husband has disappeared or abandoned her without having granted her a Jewish divorce), a problem which has agitated the assembly throughout its existence. There were also reports by the committees on adult education, elementary education, social justice, and the Seminary campaign; and statements on chaplaincy, interrabbinical cooperation, Jewish students, activities, Palestine, and the pension fund.⁶³

The Rabbinical Assembly had become a functioning professional organization, operating on the volunteer labors of its members, on a total annual budget of \$4,430. For the first time it had ventured beyond the eastern seaboard to dispel, in the words of its president, Rabbi Max Arzt, "the mistaken impression that Conservative Judaism is, in the main, an Eastern movement limiting its influence to the Hudson River Valley."⁶⁴

The convention's theme was the rabbinate itself, and introspective self-examination. Rabbi Morris Adler of host Congregation Shaare Zedek reminded his colleagues:

As our teacher, the late Professor Davidson, once pointed out, whereas in our day of specialization every profession has contracted the area of its intensive study and operation, the office of the rabbi has, on the contrary, assumed new and multiple duties. . . . He is, or is expected to be, at once scholar, teacher, priest, pastor, preacher, administrator, communal-leader, social worker and ambassador of good-will. To him come many and diverse appeals for assist-

ance, for counsel, for . . . leadership. . . . In the brief span of a fortnight a rabbi, to give a concrete example, has been approached on behalf of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, the Zionist Organization, the publication of a Biblical encyclopedia, a B'nai B'rith project, the Federation of Polish Jews and the Agudath Israel. Nor is the appeal exclusively for financial aid. The rabbi is urged to take part in the leadership of these numerous causes.⁶⁵

Adler argued that the rabbi cannot remain aloof from “the multitudinous manifestations of Jewish life in the community” nor “from the social and cultural movements of American society. . . . In the desire to preserve the character and strength of the synagogue [the rabbi] must seek to guide, to channel and inform with something of his spirit, the streams of Jewish life that course outside of the synagogue.”⁶⁶

A discussion of “The Rabbi and the Inter-faith Movement” discloses differing views on the value and effectiveness of specific facets of the enterprise, but there is full agreement that a rabbi is not free to desist from participation in it. Papers and discussions on the relationship between synagogues and Jewish community centers, the conflicts between them, and “the function of the rabbi in such institutions,” “Preaching Modern Religion,” “Vitalizing Public Worship,” “Religion and the Home”—all elaborate on Morris Adler’s description of the gamut of rabbinic duties. Dr. Mordecai Kaplan urged a broadening of the functional definition of the modern American rabbi.

It will not be possible for the rabbi, whose official duties bind him to the synagogue, to keep up with the growing needs of Jewish life. . . . The principle of division of labor would have to be applied to the function of the rabbi. Some rabbis would serve congregations, others would specialize in educational work, and still others in the various types of communal endeavor. . . . It will be necessary for men with a rabbinic training and outlook to serve in administrative capacities in every phase of Jewish activity. . . . *When Jewish institutions come to prefer as administrators those who have had an intensive Jewish training, the entire trend of Jewish life will be transformed from one of decline to one of ascent.*⁶⁷

The convention was met in a world at war. As American Jewish spiritual leaders, its members unanimously adopted a statement, which they had printed and widely circulated.

These are days when all thoughtful minds and sensitive hearts are burdened by the overwhelming present tragedy and its terrifying implications for the

future. . . . Millions of men, women, and children have lost either life, sanity, or home. . . . We . . . avoid the sinful error of disassociating ourselves from any share in the responsibility for our present woes. . . . We were all too willing to compromise with evil and to benefit from the spoils which its deprivations could put at our disposal. . . . We condemned only with our lips the rape of Ethiopia, China, Austria and Czechoslovakia and the cold-blooded, systematic annihilation of almost a million Jews in Central Europe. . . . We believe that every necessary measure should at once be taken to defend our country from its enemies both within and without. . . .

The greatest tragedy of all would be if we, in our hysterical haste to resist the enemy, would use his weapons of persecution, injustice, oppression, and group hatreds. . . . The extent and depth of the calamity which has overtaken all of our brethren on the European continent cannot be exaggerated. . . . Thank God that we in this land are a numerous community enjoying the blessings of freedom and equality. . . . American Israel is today the "head of the household" of Israel . . . to save what can be saved . . . and to protect what can be protected. . . . The community in Palestine must be given increasing support. . . . Those who can be saved . . . from the hate surrounding them on the European continent must be saved.⁶⁸

As Jews, as Americans, as sensitive spiritual leaders, the rabbis returned to their communities fired by these words of contrition, concern, and resolve. As Conservative rabbis to whom congregation after congregation had turned because of the implied promise that it was they and the Judaism they espoused which would secure the coming generation for the ancestral faith, the words which disturbed and challenged them most were these by Rabbi Louis Katzoff:

A survey was made by the American Council on Education in 1938 on the activities and attitudes of the youth of America. In this volume called "Youth Tell Their Story" a chapter is devoted to the religious attitudes of youth, and it was amazing to discover the strong attachment of Christian youth to the church in contrast to our Jewish youth. Whereas 85% of the Catholic youth and 65% of the Protestant youth attend their church services at least once a month, only 15% of our Jewish youth come to the synagogue that often.⁶⁹

In "The Land of the Three Great Faiths"

In his address at the first postwar commencement exercises of the Jewish Theological Seminary,⁷⁰ Judge Simon H. Rifkind observed that, whereas in Europe the rabbis were the products of the communi-

ty they served, in America the community is shaped by the rabbis who serve it. The newly ordained rabbis accepted the judge's observation as issuing a challenge and pointing to an opportunity.⁷¹ A new American Jewish community would be fashioned in the decades ahead, and the rabbis would be its architects. As *Conservative* rabbis their anticipation was even more pronounced, because Conservative Judaism seemed uniquely positioned to avail itself of the cultural and religious climate of postwar America.

Its definition of Judaism as "the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people"⁷² fit in well with culturally pluralistic America turning toward "ethnic assimilation and religious differentiation." The emphasis on "civilization" pleased those (mainly of the older generation) still clinging to cultural pluralism; the underscoring of "religious" as the core feature of the civilization attracted those (mainly of the younger generation) who preferred an imaging of America as "The Land of the Three Great Faiths,"⁷³ for it lifted America's Jews from minority status to one-third of America.

The Conservative synagogue, which by the late 1930's had become a "synagogue center" offering religious, cultural, and social programming "for every member of every family," was the institution most appropriate for the rapidly growing suburban communities. Its mode of worship was the one which the returning serviceman had experienced in the armed forces, and it was most readily acceptable to young families coming from a wide variety of religious (or nonreligious) backgrounds. As the religious movement which had had the longest and strongest identification with Zionism,⁷⁴ the movement and its congregations benefited most from American Jewry's turning toward Zionism and its identification with the State of Israel.

Almost the entire generation of young Conservative rabbis served as chaplains in the armed forces. They returned from the wars with heightened knowledge of the spiritual and existential needs of the young Jews they had served, who would form the bulk of the membership of their synagogues, and they looked forward to a continued relationship in civilian life not unlike the officer-enlisted man relationship they had enjoyed in the army. For the veterans and their wives, new immigrants to suburbia, the synagogue served the function which it had a century earlier performed for the West European Jewish immigrants to America, as the institution which would aid their inte-

gration into their new environment. It was to be their tie to the old and portal to the new. But unlike the synagogue of the second half of the nineteenth century, which responded to the real or imagined demands of melting-pot America—ethnic and cultural assimilation—the synagogue of mid-twentieth-century America responded to the mandate of cultural pluralism to retain, maintain, and expand ethnic and cultural distinctiveness. The suburban synagogue saw as its role to provide a “total Jewish experience” to its members, while relating itself to its neighboring churches as partners in concern for the spiritual, moral, and ethical life of the community and the nation.

At the first postwar convention of the Rabbinical Assembly, the rabbis turned their attention to Conservative Judaism and Zionism: “The Rabbinical Assembly reaffirms its support of the ideal of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine . . . a democratic state in which the Jews, by virtue of their numbers, will never be in danger of losing their political or social rights”;⁷⁵ to personal guidance by the rabbi: “I would like to underscore the function of counseling as one of the most essential in the rabbinate. Unfortunately, neither the Seminary nor the Rabbinical Assembly . . . have given any real treatment to the entire field”;⁷⁶ to the rabbi as preacher: “The synagogue was primarily a schoolhouse, where the congregants received instruction”;⁷⁷ to the rabbi in education: “Our schools will be failures if we do not produce God-fearing human beings, God-fearing Jews”;⁷⁸ to “the manner in which the rabbi can fortify the democratic way of life through inter-faith activity”;⁷⁹ and to the rabbi as administrator: “the Rabbi today is more than scholar and teacher, pastor and preacher, communal worker and civic leader. . . . All the congregational activities such as Sisterhood, the Brotherhood, the Alumni, the Youth Groups, the School, the Parents-Teachers Association, the Study Courses, the discussion groups, the literary and dramatic units, the lecture and Forum Programs, are all placed, and rightly so, under his general charge and direction. He has to organize and inspire them, guide them, regulate them and manage them.”⁸⁰

There was little hesitation about what the rabbi’s work would be, and little apprehension about any untoward difficulties. The Conservative rabbi felt himself in a situation of great promise for the movement and his rabbinic career. The membership of the Rabbinical Assembly had risen to 389, and the Seminary was able to choose its

students from a large pool of applicants.

The sharing of rabbinic experiences at the 1949 convention provides us with a view of the rabbinate in the small and large communities—their labors, achievements, and problems. Thus Rabbi Louis Levitsky of Wilkes-Barre and Newark reports:

When I was in a smaller community, I was an integral part of every Jewish agency. I served on every board, attended every meeting, and exercised very directly whatever influence I possessed on every activity: fund raising, policy, Talmud Torah, women's organizations, etc. . . . In this large community . . . I soon learned to restrict my active participation to the Jewish Education Association and to the Jewish Community Center. . . . In this large community, I find it possible to make of the synagogue the center of genuine spiritual fellowship. . . . A large community affords the rabbi the opportunity of influencing and directing a large number of people to serve the great variety of causes—local, national, and overseas.⁸¹

Rabbi Elliot Burstein, on his experience in San Francisco:

In the larger community one could easily expend all his energies on outside activities . . . but the results are not worth it. To keep our own congregations going and growing is a full-time job in itself. . . . To assure a consistently large Friday evening attendance, we have discovered that all that is necessary is to invite a different local organization or group to sponsor the service.⁸²

Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen of Providence, Rhode Island:

Our sermons must be planned in such a way that we shall always be a channel through which the wisdom of our sages may reach the congregation. . . . the burden of what I was saying had most meaning when it was not I, but the sages of Israel, who were really speaking. . . .

I have found no satisfaction to equal that which comes through teaching adults. . . .

If the rabbi can . . . appear not only as a friend, but as a *Jewish* friend, he will feel that the time and effort expended on pastoral visiting are indeed worth while. . . . I have found that the person consulting me accepts what I have to offer with greater confidence when I can point out that what I am saying comes from the vast experience of Judaism.⁸³

Rabbi S. Gershon Levi argues that “a direct, personal relationship to the school of his synagogue is the duty, rather than the option, of every rabbi. . . . He should observe classroom teaching . . . make a practice of having pupils visit his study for short chats.”⁸⁴

“The rabbi in the small community can be as busy as in the larger

community," Rabbi Reuben J. Magil of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a community of 3,500 Jews, maintains, "and his activities are far more fruitful in terms of Jewish spiritual achievement." His congregation, Temple Beth El, holds services daily, morning and evening, Sabbaths and holidays, conducts Hebrew and Sunday schools, and has the usual gamut of congregational activities. The rabbi has had to be innovative and creative in maintaining and fostering all. Thus, to help assure a minyan each morning, breakfast is served after the service, but still members need to be drafted by the brotherhood's minyan committee. The Saturday morning service has an abridged *musaf*; the introduction of the triennial cycle for the Torah reading is being considered; and the junior congregation is brought in for the *musaf* service. The Confirmation service was moved to Sunday or Friday evening because "businessmen would not leave their business on Shavuot morning." Simhat Torah was revived by the introduction of a consecration service for children beginning their Hebrew studies. To assure a respectable attendance at the Megillah reading, a "sort of supper and carnival, the Annual Family party," is to be introduced. And, again, for an increase in attendance, the Hebrew school graduation has been moved from Sunday to the final "Friday evening sermon service."

The raising of the Confirmation age from thirteen and one-half to fourteen and one-half was accomplished only after a "gruelling battle," and the same seems to be in store for the phasing out of the Sunday school in favor of the three-day Hebrew school. Rabbi Eliezer A. Levi reported that in his Youngstown, Ohio, congregation, when all children aged eight and up had to attend weekday Hebrew school rather than Sunday school, "in the first two years of operation of this system, we had about 90 resignations from the congregation who joined the Reform congregation up the street whose rabbi campaigned on the platform, 'Come one day a week to us, and they will be just as good Jews.'"⁸⁵

Rabbi Magil further reports that he greets each member as he leaves the Friday evening services, that the rabbi is expected to remain at weddings and other *simchas* "to participate in the festivities as an honored member of the family," that the small-town rabbi must be a member of at least one service club and "he must be ready to speak in and out of season at community functions."⁸⁶

And there is a soul-searching uneasiness in the discussion, suggest-

ing that some rabbis suspect that their great busyness and their creative innovations to bolster attendance—breakfasts after services, Oneg Shabbat collations, and the rest—keep them from addressing the question whether all of this is advancing Judaism, fashioning the “God-fearing Jews” Simon Greenberg seeks. Rabbi Hyman Rabino-witz, who fashioned an exemplary Jewish community in Sioux City, Iowa, commented with humor on the “creative innovations,” and questioned in seriousness, “In Sioux City, we found that the best attendance we have is on Yom Kippur. . . . I don’t know what you call good attendance or bad attendance, but after you get the people into the synagogue, how do you get them to pray? . . . Even the English readings are so mechanical and so dull . . . there is no emotional response at all. . . . How can you make them pray?”⁸⁷

The area of greatest congregational growth was in the suburbs of the major cities. Rabbi Max Gelb of White Plains, New York, saw his congregation grow fourfold. “I have had to adjust myself to a new congregation . . . every few years.”⁸⁸ What is more disturbing to him is the impress of the suburban environment. “The pull of the Christian environment is very powerful. Every Christmas presents a crisis in our school. There are scores of homes in which children experience a Christmas tree and parent arguing with the rabbi whether it is a national or religious holiday.”

No less a problem are the secular forces which “tend to secularize your activities even within the congregation—the emphasis on the social.”⁸⁹ For many years the congregation was housed in a very small building which limited its activities. Now a section of a new building has been completed, “costing to date about a half million dollars. That took years of effort, and the rabbi was very much involved in it . . . neglecting some very important duties.” Now that the new building is completed, making possible the extension of the program of congregational activities “to introduce the many aspects of a cultural and religious nature which I find essential,” Rabbi Gelb finds that the solution of the old problem has created a new one. “The leadership thinks . . . of the new building fund . . . and it is difficult to get them to accept the budget for personnel.”⁹⁰ This was a complaint heard again and again in the 1950’s and 1960’s, the period in which American Jewry was smitten, as a wit had it, with an “edifice complex.” This particularly was heard from Conservative rabbis, since the great majority of congregations

organized in the suburbs were Conservative. Many reported that the same people who labored with devotion and contributed with great generosity to the building of the synagogue facilities suddenly became depleted of time, energy, and interest when it came to use them. It was far easier to build a synagogue than to fill it with worshippers.

A survey on synagogue attendance in Conservative congregations in 1950⁹¹ disclosed that of two hundred congregations queried, 95 percent scheduled late Friday night services, and that in the great majority of congregations it was considered the main Sabbath service; over half the services were attended by less than one hundred worshippers, and only 10 percent had an attendance of over three hundred.⁹² As for Sabbath morning services, only 11 percent claimed two hundred or more worshippers, 57 percent reporting only fifty. Only 20 percent of the members of congregational boards, i.e., the lay leaders of the congregations, attended services regularly.⁹³ The survey's evaluation of Friday night services: "The Friday night service is in the majority of our congregations the main service of the week. Attendance at this main service is at an appalling disproportion with the congregational membership."⁹⁴ Of the Sabbath morning service: "It appears that a Saturday morning service has fallen into widespread neglect or even has been given up as a lost cause—except of course in those congregations where the main service is held on Saturday morning."⁹⁵

One can readily imagine what such lack of response did to the morale of rabbis who declared the synagogue central to Judaism and the Sabbath service central to the synagogue. What may have been even more devastating to rabbinic morale was the survey's disclosure that, in the opinion of congregational lay leaders, the "interest in religion which is manifested by young people" was: great, 8 percent; moderate, 30 percent; small, 48 percent; none, 2 percent; no answer, 12 percent. But most rabbis must have agreed with the survey's comment: "It is a highly optimistic indication that only 2% are reported as having no interest whatever. It is obvious the interest is there in varying degrees and remains to be intensified and cultivated."⁹⁶

"Must have agreed" because there was remarkably little defection from the Conservative rabbinate to other pursuits. But there was constant self-criticism and complaints against others: either a lashing out against the laity or an agonizing critique of one's own failure to live up to the highest mandates of the calling, or both. Rabbi Sidney Riback

turns on both laity and rabbinate in criticism and warning: "The tendency of the laity nowadays is to distort the rabbi into their own image . . . whether he is a 'swell or regular guy.' . . . The deplorable part of it is . . . that the rabbi often succumbs."⁹⁷

Rabbi Max Davidson in his president's message at the 1952 RA convention pleaded for his constituency:

I have referred on several other occasions to the helplessness and dependence of many of our rabbis. . . .

We minister to people most of whom fully believe that they are wiser than we, better than we, certainly richer than we.

When rabbis have attempted, e.g. to promote Sabbath observances, or to campaign for Friday night closings, they were not fully supported by the laymen. . . . When rabbis attempted to protect Jewish self interest and dignity, or their rights as American citizens in communities and schools with Christmas and Easter celebrations, they were not wholeheartedly supported by their congregations . . . community councils . . . defence agencies.⁹⁸

The criticism was generally self-targeted. They called upon themselves and their colleagues to remain true to the mandate imposed by their ordination as "Rabbi, Teacher and Preacher,"⁹⁹ with the last two words as descriptive of the functions of the office, and the function of the preacher understood to be not to exhort but to educate. Robert Gordis reminded his colleagues in 1947, "I cannot conceive of any more drastic decline than for the rabbi to cease being a teacher and to become an ecclesiastical functionary. . . . Nor is it much better for the rabbi to be a mere spellbinder."¹⁰⁰ But as we have noted, the cited descriptions of the rabbi's activities pointed to his role as a functionary. No rabbi missed the opportunity to proclaim his love of teaching and the importance of the enterprise, but most also complained that the call of other duties left little time and energy for the scholarship and preparation that effective teaching demanded.

The rabbis would rather be in the prophetic tradition than in the priestly, but Rabbi Nathan Barack outlined the dilemma: "On the one hand, tremendous responsibility and opportunity to inspire faith in God and His way of life, but with hardship and even loss of bread as a possible price; on the other hand, retention of our comforts, but with failure to come to grips with the moral crisis facing us, and thus failing in our leadership."¹⁰¹

Sociologist Marshall Sklare and theologian Arthur Cohen pointed

to factors in the training and role expectations of the Conservative rabbi which are at the root of much of the unease with self and disaffection with the calling. Sklare observes that the Seminary's curriculum, "centered about the study of the Jewish legalistic system," would be appropriate for the training of rabbis who would be serving congregations made up of observant Jews, but is not relevant to the actual situation in most Conservative congregations, as illustrated by the following comment by a typical Conservative rabbi: "I receive practically no inquiries about ritual or legal problems. Only on one holiday do people ask me a few questions—that's Passover. A death in the family may also provoke a query or two."¹⁰² Moreover, Sklare notes, such a course of study is deficient in preparing the student for the multifaceted demands of his rabbinic office. It will leave him forever dissatisfied with those rabbinic functions which are not in the realm of halachah, and disdainful of congregants whose attachment to Judaism is an amalgam of culture, folkways, sentiments, ethnicity—the majority of his congregation. The emphasis on halachah in his rabbinic training apotheosizes a rabbinate of authority. How can a rabbi respect himself as a rabbi in a world in which, as Sklare puts it, "The sanction of a rabbi is no longer required for the correct practice of Judaism"?¹⁰³

Rabbi Morris Adler spoke of the problem to his colleagues at the 1948 convention:

I need not tell you how untypical is the attitude of the professors toward American Jewish life . . . and, I am sorry to say, towards the graduates of the Seminary. How much of a gap there is between the way in which we approach our problems and speak as if we possess authority, and the kind of feeling that prevails among the revered scholars who were and are our teachers.¹⁰⁴

The fact that the Seminary professors were truly revered—most admired, some loved—by the graduates exacerbated the situation. It made the rabbis ask more seriously, "For whom and for what do I labor?"

Arthur Cohen speaks of "the desperate situation of the American rabbinate."¹⁰⁵ He does so with sympathy and offers "understanding and counsel." The seminaries offer "little formal assistance to rabbinical students in search of spiritual direction." The Jewish Theological Seminary has never resolved the paradox of being an "academy for higher Jewish learning . . . which must therefore encourage indepen-

dence of inquiry and freedom of research," and a rabbinical school, which "needs, therefore, to be committed to a definite point of view." It is then left to the rabbis to work out the "issue of ideology and commitment." But the rabbis' "efforts to create an authentic community of responsive and serious Jews is handicapped when the rabbi is burdened with enormous congregations, an insufficiency of staff, a tremendous physical plant to manage, frequently uncooperative boards . . . and when the rabbi is to be lecturer, book reviewer, ambassador of good will . . . pastor on call, educator . . . and lastly . . . to be what he has chosen to be: a student and teacher of Torah."¹⁰⁶

What the rabbi *must* do and what he has *chosen* to be stand in wide divergence. In fact, the former militates against the latter. The rabbi needs the reassurance by colleagues and observers that he labors under this "handicap." His spirits would be bolstered, his morale uplifted if his revered teachers would indicate their sympathetic understanding.

Sympathy and understanding bring but a temporary respite. The underlying unease persists. Now and again it was brought to the surface, and it hurt most when this was done by thoughtful, sympathetic friends. In 1955 it was Marshall Sklare's *Conservative Judaism*, a sociological study "which showed that what the rabbis think and say does not matter much to their congregation; the rabbis had known this all along, but to see it in print, documented and established, was chilling."¹⁰⁷ This was recalled by Milton Himmelfarb three years later, and he asked in exasperation:

How are we to explain the Conservative rabbis' readiness to put up with the inconsistencies, contradictions, and ambiguities they have to live with? These things hurt. One of the ways in which the rabbis try to soothe the hurt, unavailing but revealing, is to change congregations; the Conservative rabbinate is a restless body of men. . . . The average Conservative rabbi dislikes his job and dislikes the intellectual muddle.¹⁰⁸

His characterization of the rabbis as restless men is documented and underscored by Sklare, who wrote: "It is highly significant that during one year 40% of the rabbis who held Conservative pulpits applied to the placement commission of the RA for recommendations for new positions."¹⁰⁹

Restlessness in the rabbinate is not confined to the Conservative rabbinate or to twentieth-century America. While many European

rabbis in previous centuries held one or two rabbinic positions during their lifetime, a goodly number, through personal preference or due to conditions beyond their control, were “restless,” as were some leading American rabbis of the nineteenth century, e.g., Bernard Illowy, who served six congregations, and Isidor Kalisch, who from 1850 to 1875 served in eight communities.

The “restlessness” of the European rabbis was due in large measure to political upheavals and communal strife, and the moving about of the American rabbis was often occasioned by the rapidly expanding and changing American Jewish community and the confrontations within the community between traditionalist and Reform elements. Similar circumstances made for the high mobility in the postwar Conservative rabbinate. The generation of younger rabbis had been uprooted by the war, taken from their pulpits into the chaplaincy. When they returned to their congregations, both had changed. Though sometimes the adjustment was smooth and easy, often it presented problems, and the rabbi sought relocation. Many new congregations being organized in the suburbs sought rabbis, and their newness offered the challenge and opportunity that young men sought. Established congregations underwent a change in membership and leadership as young war veterans affiliated, and thus at times made either the rabbi or the congregation or both uneasy and desirous of change. It was a time of flux in the American social and economic structure, a time when change seemed right and good. By 1960, as Rabbi Albert Gordon reminded his colleagues at the Rabbinical Assembly convention, “three million of America’s Jews now live in the suburbs.”¹¹⁰ America’s Conservative rabbis were following America’s Jews to the greener grass of the suburbs. In that year, though Brooklyn’s one million Jews made it by far the largest Jewish community, only thirty of the RA’s 750 members were there, while the new communities of Long Island had already attracted sixty-eight. It is not at all surprising that a decade earlier, as the transition from urban to suburban life was taking place, two-fifths of the Conservative rabbis were seeking relocation. It should also be noted that a significant number of Conservative rabbis have served in but one or two congregations during their entire ministry.

What is more significant than the “internal, inner movement” of the Conservative rabbinate has been its stability as a profession. Professor

Eli Ginzberg of Columbia University, a leading authority on manpower, reported at the same convention on a series of studies he had conducted on the manpower problems of Conservative Judaism. By 1957, the Seminary had produced 615 rabbis, of whom only 6 percent were in fields unrelated to the rabbinate. "I know of no other profession, save medicine," said Ginzberg, "where the losses to other fields are so low. If you graduate from the Seminary you remain a rabbi."¹¹¹

Milton Himmelfarb had asked "Why?" Why enter the rabbinate, why remain in it? The first and simplest answer was the socioeconomic one. Shortly before the war, in a study of applicants for the rabbinate, ministry, and priesthood in New York City, Ginzberg found that applicants for rabbinical training at the Seminary "came overwhelmingly from the lower economic groups, primarily from the more recent immigrant groups."¹¹² Men may have been entering the Conservative rabbinate for social mobility and economic opportunity. The rabbi, upon assuming office, entered the social class of the lay leaders of the congregation, and was accorded a position in the Jewish community which was reserved for the wealthy and distinguished. The income of a rabbi was generally higher than that of salaried professionals in education or social service, and though tenure in an individual congregation was not secure, the abundance of available positions in Conservative congregations (except during the Depression years) offered a high degree of job security within the profession. It was the rare Conservative rabbi who was without a job. Some may have been attracted to the Conservative rabbinate because of a prevalent perception in the Orthodox immigrant community of the economic well-being of Reform and Conservative rabbis, a perception bolstered by the accusations leveled by Orthodox rabbis that their heterodox colleagues had been "seduced by the Golden Calf."

The motivation to enter and the decision to remain in the rabbinate went beyond that. Beyond the desire to make a living and to gain social status and a measure of power was the drive to fashion a significant life. The rabbinate offered the opportunity to serve the Jewish people, not so much individual Jews as the *Jewish people*, and American Jewry, which was destined to become the leading Jewish community in the world. This prospect had lured Schechter to America, and it was this which attracted many students to his Seminary.

Motivations are hard to discern. What weight can be given to the

public claims of spiritual motivation by one who knows that spirituality is expected, even demanded, of him? Look then to the lives of the rabbis, to the careers of those who were not touched by fame or good fortune, but who eked out a meager livelihood as rabbis in small congregations in small towns almost devoid of Jewishness, in positions lacking security, fair game for congregational petty politicians, lacking the communal stature of Reform colleagues or the respect accorded the Orthodox *rov*, measuring accomplishment by a daily minyan co-opted, a Bar Mitzvah Haftarah well-read by a young man they would rarely later see, and all the many "inconsistencies, contradictions and ambiguities." Yet they persisted, going from job to job, hopeful but realistic.

At a Seminary-sponsored conference on the moral implications of the rabbinate, in September 1962,¹¹³ rabbis examined with creditable candor the ethical problems which the rabbinate imposes, and the spiritual dangers¹¹⁴ which inhere in the office.¹¹⁵ Rabbi Stephen Schwartzschild spoke of the anguish and the glory of a calling which is incompatible with its worldly environment, and as if in answer to Himmelfarb's query, he said:

We know of ourselves that we are steeped in sin, beset by doubts and frustrations, and mired in fruitless gropings. We know that the Jewish people is more "hard-necked and narrow of spirit" than ever. We know that we have taken on the fight against an entire world which is profoundly pagan. . . . Why then do you want to be a rabbi? You don't, but for the life of you, "here I stand, I can do no other."¹¹⁶

Simon Greenberg proclaimed a more direct and functionally useful answer—a justification of the calling.

Despite all of the shortcomings of the rabbinate, however, it stands today . . . between the hope for a possible renaissance of Judaism in America and the certainty of its utter deterioration. . . . Within world Jewry today the rabbinate is the only group in a position of leadership which treats the masses of our people, not primarily as donors or recipients of philanthropy, but as bearers of a great tradition. . . . The rabbi must be ready to talk with them, not only from the pulpit or from behind the teacher's desk, but at weddings and funerals, at Bar Mitzvah parties and at the sick bed, at Israel Bond rallies and at Federation dinners. And let him not be ashamed to admit and even announce . . . that he is a thousandfold more anxious to talk to them than they are to listen to him.

Greenberg knew full well that the role the rabbi is most satisfied

with, indeed glories in, is that of teacher. Very well, he argued, wherever one who wants to instruct and one who needs instruction meet, that place can be a classroom. To make it so is “both his glory and his burden.”¹¹⁷ He continued:

A rabbi should be dissatisfied but not unhappy. He dare not ever be satisfied with his achievements. . . . Unhappiness . . . reflects a lack of appreciation of the blessings of devoting his life to the teaching of Torah and the service of God.¹¹⁸

Dissatisfaction in the Conservative rabbinate was not so much with self and career as with the “inconsistencies, contradictions, and ambiguities” in Conservative Judaism. Defining Judaism as “the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people” provides a felicitous characterization, but it cannot serve as the unifying ideology which the movement has seemingly been seeking from its inception. Already in 1911 Dr. Friedlaender wrote of “the difficulty in regard to formulating the definite theological credo of Conservative Judaism in distinction from Orthodox Judaism . . . and in distinction from Reform.” He suggested that “at the present time . . . a general agreement as to practical work”¹¹⁹ would be wisdom. And the Conservative rabbi in 1960 knew that what united the movement now as then was not a definite theological credo, but “a general agreement as to practical work.”

In 1927, when Finkelstein put forth his “The Things That Unite Us,” Eugene Kohn responded that “we should not delude ourselves into imagining a consensus of opinion if none exists.”¹²⁰ Two years later Dr. Kaplan commented on three position papers presented to the Rabbinical Assembly:

The mere fact that there can be three such different views as expressed by Doctor Finkelstein, Rabbi Drob, and Rabbi Eugene Kohn, and that we can still work together is evidence of the greatness of Shalom. . . . Doctor Finkelstein is equidistant between Rabbi Drob and Rabbi Eugene Kohn.¹²¹

The old two-pronged ideological coalition within the movement had now become three, and Kaplan seemed to welcome it. This tripartite division was accepted and institutionalized in the 1950's, when the presidency of the Rabbinical Assembly, by common agreement, went seriatim to a leftist, a centrist, and a rightist, until the far more numerous centrists realized that undue weight of influence was being accor-

ded to the right and to the left. But the legitimacy of diversity continued to be held sacred and useful. At the 1980 convention, both a leftist, Reconstructionist Rabbi Alan W. Miller, and a rightist, Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, presented papers on "Toward a Philosophy of Conservative Judaism."¹²²

The "contradictions" and "ambiguities" which hurt were in the realm of the functional life within the movement. It had posited its commitment to halachah, to the observance of the Sabbath and kashrut, but all Conservative rabbis knew that in their congregations, the observant Jew was the exception—in many congregations, the rare lonely exception. The rabbi may also have felt apprehensive at the gap which had developed within the Conservative rabbinate on the question of halachah, which had come to a head at the 1958 convention, and in the frustrations experienced by law committees in confronting Jewish law from a Conservative stance, described by Rabbi Max J. Routtenberg at the 1960 convention.

Rabbis Jack Cohen, Jacob Agus, and Isaac Klein presented papers on "Theoretical Evolution of Jewish Law," from the left, centrist, and rightist positions respectively. Rabbi Cohen recommended that the Rabbinical Assembly "declare publicly that ritual can no longer be a matter of law" and that synagogue members be "encouraged to participate in an effort to develop standards for the entire congregation."¹²³ He thus advocated that "standards" replace laws, and that laymen, learned or unlearned, committed or uncommitted to ritual observance, have a hand in the formulation of the standards. Rabbi Klein reacted: "Rabbi Cohen's paper is a philosophy of *halachah* to do away with *halachah*. . . . I cannot react to Rabbi Cohen, we do not stand on the same ground. We have no common platform."¹²⁴

On the question of Jewish law, the Rabbinical Assembly had become divided between adherents to a halachic Judaism and espousers of a nonhalachic Judaism. Rabbi Agus attempted to weld both viewpoints—halachah and standards—into an integrated whole, and Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser argued that "there is a greater measure of agreement among us," and the differences are a matter of emphasis; but the basic divergence on the question of the authoritative nature of halachah, which had long existed, had now openly and sharply been delineated.

Conservative Judaism had been committed to Jewish law, and to the

proposition that within the legal system itself there exists the mechanism for adjustment, change, and development of the law. A Committee on the Interpretation of Jewish Law, established by the United Synagogue in 1917, was presided over by Professor Louis Ginzberg, who was recognized as the one and sole authority. Its decisions were few and cautious. By 1927, the Rabbinical Assembly felt secure enough to exert its rabbinic authority by establishing its own Committee on Jewish Law, which replaced the former but was little more venturesome than its predecessor. Both committees adhered to the principle of dealing with the law solely through the instrumentalities provided by the law.

With the expansion of the movement and in response to a growing segment of the assembly urging a liberalization of the process to afford greater freedom to adjust and develop, the Rabbinical Assembly, at its 1948 convention, defeated a motion that the committee "hold itself bound by the authority of Jewish law and within the frame of Jewish law," and formed a new Committee on Jewish Law and Standards whose membership would represent the "varied and varying points of view of the Rabbinical Assembly."¹²⁵ Its first chairman, Rabbi Morris Adler, explained its purpose to the 1948 convention of the United Synagogue:

We must face the truth that we have been halting between fear and danger; fear of the Orthodox and the danger of Reform. We have set our watches by their timepieces. The time has come for our emergence from the valley of indecision. We must move forward to a stage in which Conservative Judaism revolves about an axis of positive and unambiguous affirmations. This will require a measure of boldness and vision on our part which, as a movement, I am sorry to say, we have not thus far manifested.¹²⁶

In 1960 most Conservative rabbis felt that a good measure of boldness had been manifested in the dozen years past and that more and greater was in store for the future. Not too many felt the "hurt" discerned by Milton Himmelfarb, not in the late fifties and early sixties, when Conservative Judaism was thought by its rabbis to be the religious movement most vital, most creative, and if not yet the most numerous, soon to become so.

The Sixties and the Seventies

Most Conservative rabbis were far too busy to spare the time needed to turn dissatisfaction into unhappiness. Consider the schedule of one serving a large congregation in the Northeast in the year 1962.

Preacher. Two sermons weekly at the late Friday evening and the Sabbath morning services, as well as at all holiday services.

Teacher. Mondays: men's club downtown study group, at noon. Subject: "The Living Talmud."

Tuesdays: Confirmation class and post-Confirmation class. Subjects: "Conservative Judaism"; "History of Religions."

Wednesdays: Three six-week semesters of Adult Education Institute, two courses each session. Subjects: "The Legacy of Solomon Schechter—Conservative Judaism"; "The Wisdom Literature of the Bible."

Saturdays: Talmud study group, the tractate *Berakhot*. Monthly young-marrieds discussion group; Jewish current events discussion groups at Sunday morning postminyán breakfasts; biweekly Sabbath-afternoon LTF study group.

Administrator. The congregation dedicated its new synagogue building in June 1962 after four years of planning, fund raising, and building, in all of which the rabbi participated. Attended meetings of congregational board, ritual committee, school committee, adult education committee. Conducted weekly staff meetings. Wrote weekly column for congregational bulletin.

Ecclesiastical functionary. Officiated at forty-two weddings and thirty-nine funerals, all in the congregational family. Premarital interviews; attendance at wedding receptions; visited with bereaved families before funeral; officiated at one or more services at mourners' home conducting a study session. Attended daily morning services on Sunday, Monday, and Thursday mornings. Officiated at unveilings, *Brit Milah*, and *mezuzah* ceremonies in new homes.

Jewish community activities. On boards of Jewish Community Federation, Jewish Family Service, Israel Bonds, Day School, Vaad Ha-kashrut.

Community activities. Member, Mayor's Advisory Board; Committee on Religion and Race; boards of Association for the United Na-

tions, Friends of the Public Library.

National activities. Member Executive Council, Rabbinical Assembly; Editorial Board, *Conservative Judaism*; Rabbinic Cabinet, Jewish Theological Seminary; Executive Council, American Jewish Historical Society; Publications Committee, Jewish Publication Society.

Lecturer. Weekly radio program, *From a Rabbi's Study*. Lectured to ten local Jewish and Christian groups; and in three Florida and two New England communities for the Jewish Theological Seminary. Delivered one scholarly paper at annual meeting of a scholarly society.

Pastor. In answer to the question, "When you were at the Seminary what did you think you would be doing as a rabbi, and how has it actually worked out?" the rabbi wrote in the congregational bulletin:

In most areas I anticipated the demands of the calling. True, Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan, Professor of Homiletics, warned us that one sermon every two weeks is as much as any man can properly do, yet I preach four times as many. I knew that I would be devoting my time to teaching, congregational planning, community activities and too little time to study and writing. That was all expected.

What was unexpected was the time and emotional energy that a rabbi today is called upon to give to counselling. There are weeks when half the time is spent with people who have problems. One cannot help but become emotionally involved, and when you see your rabbi with a sad burdened look, or seemingly distracted, or even impatient, know that there are heavy problems on his frail shoulders.

Problems there are of every kind: intermarriage, divorce, separation, children who do not behave and parents who are bewildered; a man needing employment, and a woman who doesn't know what to do with her time and herself; a family beset by a serious illness and a couple who are "eating each other up."

Often, all that is needed is a sympathetic ear, or a bit of compassionate advice; sometimes the problems are rooted in deep psychological disorientation. Too often, the rabbi seems to hear the implied challenge, "Solve my problem or you have failed as our rabbi."

I expect this, for what is more fraught with danger and personal pain than counselling. I expect it, and I accept it for the compensations are very many. What greater reward can life offer than the privilege to serve. To ease the pain of one heart, to straighten out one youngster, to keep one family together.¹²⁷

The American rabbi had become an extraordinarily "busy man," particularly the Conservative rabbi, who felt impelled to match the activities of his colleagues, Orthodox and Reform. The Orthodox rabbi preached on Saturday morning, the Reform on Friday, the Conservative on both, for only in his congregation were both "major" serv-

ices. The Orthodox rabbi dealt with *B'nai Mitzvah*, the Reform with Confirmands, the Conservative with both. The Conservative rabbi would meet his Orthodox colleague at meetings of the day school and the Vaad ha-kashrut, but not the Reform, whom he would see at meetings of the ministerial association and the committee on religion and race, both of which were outside the realm of interest of the Orthodox. The Conservative rabbi needed to work all the harder to retain his status in the institutions serving the most "parochial" Jewish interests, where the credibility of his Orthodox colleague was not in question, and had to strive all the harder for his acceptance as a significant participant in interfaith activities, in which his Reform colleague had long been the recognized spokesman for the Jewish community. He strove harder to invite counseling opportunities, for he found in these the vocational satisfaction which the Orthodox rabbi found in his self-appointed role of "defender of the faith," and the Reform rabbi experienced in his role as "ambassador to the community."

The 1950's and 1960's were the "glory days" of the American rabbinate. Religion was esteemed in America as a significant force whose influence was growing,¹²⁸ and the Jews, as Maurice Samuel observed, were "like everyone else, except more so." The synagogue was universally recognized as the preeminent institution of the Jewish community, and rabbis were accorded respect and exerted influence. Particularly impressive during these decades was the growth of Conservative Judaism. Marshall Sklare, who wrote the classic study of the movement in the early 1950's,¹²⁹ took another look in the early 1970's and reported:¹³⁰

Conservative Judaism has flourished during the past two decades. . . . The trend to Conservatism is particularly evident in the cities of substantial Jewish population . . . a noticeable increase in the number of Conservative synagogues, as well as a sharp rise in membership of those synagogues. . . . Reform and Orthodoxy have come to look to Conservative models in fashioning their own religious institutions.¹³¹

He noted that Conservative Judaism had become the "favored religious self-designation of the American Jew" and that the movement had achieved "primacy on the American Jewish religious scene"; its synagogues have become, particularly in suburban areas in the East, "the leading congregations in their communities," and there has

emerged “a sense of constituting a movement—a sense of a shared Conservatism on the part of the Conservative laity.”

Sklare concluded that “these developments appear to portend a brilliant future for Conservatism.” But, he noted, “Despite brilliant achievements and excellent prospects for future growth, the morale of the Conservative movement is on the decline. . . . Doubts about the movement are most frequently expressed by the rabbis.”

He cited an excerpt from Rabbi Max J. Routtenberg’s Presidential Address at the 1965 convention of the Rabbinical Assembly:

During these past decades we have grown, we have prospered, we have become a powerful religious establishment. I am, however, haunted by the fear that somewhere along the way we have become lost; our direction is not clear, and the many promises we made to ourselves and our people have not been fulfilled. We are in danger of not having anything significant to say to our congregants, to the best of our youth, to all those who are seeking a dynamic adventurous faith that can elicit sacrifice and that can transform lives.¹³²

One cause for the crisis of morale in the Conservative rabbinate, Sklare suggested, was its misreading of the future of Orthodoxy in America. Routtenberg spoke of why he and friends at the yeshivah “decided to make the break and become Conservative.” It was because they despaired that Orthodoxy could hold the next generation of Jews to Judaism. “We loved the Jewish people and its heritage,” and seeing “both threatened we set out to save them,” through Conservative Judaism, the wave of the future. But the unanticipated resurgence of Orthodoxy—the growth in the number of yeshivot, the establishment of Orthodox congregations in middle- and upper-class areas, the attractiveness of Orthodoxy to a small but significant number of serious, cultured Jews of Conservative and Reform background, and its triumphalist elan—brought into question the old self-justification for turning to Conservatism: to secure the future generations for Judaism. “The ground was prepared,” Sklare wrote, “for the development of a kind of Conservative *anomie*.”

The problem was particularly aggravated in the case of one segment of the Conservative elite—the rabbis. Many rabbis had deep sympathy with Jewish traditionalism. Thus on the one hand they admired and identified with the Orthodox advance. But on the other hand they were filled with dismay and hostility toward this totally unexpected development.¹³³

Another cause for the crisis in morale, especially among the rabbis, was what Sklare termed “Conservatism’s defeat on the ritual front which can be demonstrated in almost every area of Jewish observance.” For documentation he cited that in “Conservative-dominated Providence, Rhode Island, only 12% of those who designate themselves as Conservative attend services once a week or more,” and the attendance declined with every generation: 21 percent in the first, only 2 percent in the third. The same generational decline obtained in the observance of the Sabbath and kashrut. What was even more disturbing was to find that in the Har Zion Congregation, Philadelphia, which had long been considered the model Conservative congregation in the nation, Sabbath candles were lit in only 52 percent of the households, only 41 percent bought kosher meat, and only 33 percent used kosher dishes.¹³⁴ There was little confidence among Conservative rabbis that this erosion of observance among Conservative Jews was reversible. They remembered the great campaign for the revitalization of the Sabbath in the early 1950’s with embarrassment. Hopes had been high, the cause noble, the campaign imaginative and painstaking, the results nil.

Conservatism, Sklare further noted, “has lost its older confidence of being in possession of a formula that can win the support of younger Jews. . . . Many Conservative young people not only lack Jewish culture, but they have been influenced by youth culture—some are card-carrying members of the Woodstock Nation, others are fellow travelers, and still others have inchoate sympathies with the counter-culture.” We need add that the rabbis were accorded no small measure of blame for the “loss of our youth.” When they implored their congregants to give them their children three days a week instead of one for religious instruction, did this not carry the promise of a generation of Jews loyal to their faith and to the Jewish community? Where was that promised generation now, what had become of it?

Four rabbis and an educator offered “Reactions to a Critique of the Conservative Movement,” which the editor of *Conservative Judaism* titled “Morale and Commitment.”¹³⁵

There is general agreement with Sklare’s critique, and agreement too that his critique is not general enough, that his strictures apply to Orthodoxy and Reform as well as to Conservative Judaism. Rabbi Stuart Rosenberg asks Sklare to view with favor the growth of Conser-

vative membership, as it provides a larger number of Jews with “Jewish associationalism,” which Sklare himself spoke of in positive terms, for it gives “the survivalist the time which he needs and the public which he requires in his attempt to change associational Jews to ideological Jews.” What Rosenberg is saying, not so much to Sklare as to his colleagues in the Conservative rabbinate, is that they have been granted an historic opportunity. For reasons historical or sociological they have before them in their congregations Jews who have affiliated because they need the company of fellow Jews. Theirs is now the challenge to make such Jews feel the need for Judaism.

Gilbert Rosenthal’s statement is both a confession of failure and a call to the convinced to “rally round the flag.”

We have been hardest hit . . . because of the inherent problems of our movement and the innate flaws in our ideology. . . .

Despite our movement’s official espousal of *mitzvot* . . . the pattern of personal observance among the bulk of our congregants is barely distinguishable from that of their Reform neighbors. . . . We have missed the boat in not making demands of our people. . . . Ideologically, we have followed the outmoded and naive view of Schechter . . . that we must make a virtue of nonpartisanship. . . . In the process, we have so blurred the borders [between Conservatism and the other wings of Jewry] that we may have undermined our *raison d’etre*. . . . He who seeks to be all things to all men, ends up being nothing to too many. . . .

The Conservative movement has done wonders. I believe it is the right approach to meaningful Jewish living and creative Jewish survival. Those of us who have committed our lives and talents to the movement must help it move forward into the future cognizant of its failings, but confident of its virtues, and convinced that we are serving God, Torah and Israel.¹³⁶

Jordan S. Ofseyer delineates the special problem of a centrist position.

Many of our people have joined our synagogues . . . have become Conservative for reasons of compromise rather than conviction. Can we reasonably expect them to evince excitement or enthusiasm? . . . Shall we then be surprised that there exists a crisis of morale? . . . Should we expect anything but a decline in the level of observance when congregants are not asked to make any *a priori* commitment to *mitzvot* upon joining the Conservative Congregation? . . . We desperately require a comprehensive Conservative guide to *halachah*.¹³⁷

Mordecai Waxman argues that what Sklare observed is not a “failure of morale, but a heightening of discontent.” No small cause for

discontent is the common occurrence that after long years of laboring with his congregation, building its facilities, establishing and developing its school, the rabbi is suddenly faced with a changing neighborhood, a declining birthrate, a mobile population which may denude or radically change the composition of the congregation, so that he is left with the feeling "that he has been plowing water." This, which is but a minor point in Waxman's essay, is an insightful grasp of a major cause for discontent among rabbis, particularly Conservative rabbis of the post-World War II era. Because they had literally "built" their congregations, they became so identified with them that they would judge their vocational success by the current well-being of their particular institution, rather than by what they had been able to contribute to the furtherance of Judaism and the psychic and spiritual welfare of individual Jews—wherever they might now reside.

But the discontent was far deeper, the special discontent of the Conservative rabbi. In preparation for a paper delivered at a Seminary and Rabbinical Assembly conference on the rabbinate in 1970,¹³⁸ I solicited the views of a number of highly respected rabbis, specifically about their discontents as Conservative rabbis. A leading rabbi wrote:

Worship services which consist of a repetition of words which most of the congregation cannot translate, and which are not in keeping any more with the modern rabbi's idea of God, raise serious questions in the mind of those of us who want to be honest. Part of the problem of the modern rabbi is that he has to push aside, continually, the disturbing self-questioning concerning the validity of prayers which border on magical incantations when their content is not understood, and which for him, who does understand them, have next to no relevance to his theology.¹³⁹

Another wrote:

We [the Conservative rabbis] alone stand for sanity, for a genuinely consistent combination of what is authentic and ancient on the one hand, and what today demands of us intellectually and practically.

Now having saluted the flag, let me turn to the sadder side of the story. Both the Orthodox and the Reform have a significant following. We don't. How come? Simple enough. The Orthodox rabbi leads a congregation that substantially subscribes to Orthodoxy; lives by its laws or at least feels guilty for breaking them. On the Reform side, inasmuch as ritual and symbolic behavior is optional, theory and practice are again dovetailed; non-observance wedded to non-expectation. Ethical sensitivity is practiced, or at least courteously recognized as deserving to be practiced, by rabbi and layman alike. But with our-

selves? Whatever we say, there is a vast gap. We preach to congregants about *kashrut*, *Shabbat*, *halakhah* in general, knowing that the vast majority neither keeps them nor feel any compunctions over ignoring these rules. The fraud is open, mutually recognized, with all the implicit contempt and self-contempt it engenders. Sorry about the rough words, but they are true, I think. The frustration, with Jewry and oneself, is therefore sharper in our own guild than in the others.¹⁴⁰

The year 1975, the seventy-fifth-anniversary year of the Rabbinical Assembly, was utilized by the Conservative rabbinate for self-appraisal. Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, who had served for almost a quarter of a century as the assembly's chief executive officer, urged an end to the unwarranted self-flagellation which had characterized such undertakings in the past. "I know of no other group in Jewish life," he told his colleagues in convention assembled, "which has developed such a tendency to believe the best about others and the worst about themselves." He was particularly exasperated by the "internal and external chorus of anxiety and despair"¹⁴¹ which strangely had accompanied the spectacular growth and rich achievements of the movement. In but the past thirty years, the Rabbinical Assembly had grown from "approximately 300 rabbis serving primarily in Metropolitan synagogues to a membership of over one thousand, more than sixty percent of whom serve in Conservative synagogues . . . half [of which] had been founded during these thirty years."¹⁴² And, he claimed, "no other group of committed Jewish professionals in recent Jewish history has been more successful in achieving those goals to which it has been *unequivocally* committed, such as the cause of Israel, the plight of Soviet Jewry, the civil rights movement (particularly when it was less ambiguous), the cause of Jewish education."¹⁴³ Kelman is, of course, aware of the lingering problems in the area of *halakhah*, in which "we have not as yet resolved all the ambiguities and contradictions," but "unlike other groups, we have at least grappled with them. . . . [But] the task of reconciling *halakhah* and a tradition which was shaped in the pre-technological civilization, cannot be resolved even by a generation as gifted as ours at problem-solving."¹⁴⁴ But it was specifically to resolve this problem that Conservative Judaism had called itself into being, and the Conservative rabbinate had promised to accomplish it.

Kelman's insistent call "to dwell on what we have achieved" and not constantly to proclaim what the Conservative rabbinate has failed to

achieve or what “we are still trying to accomplish” has helped restore some balance to an account which had become distorted by an almost self-righteous publicly pronounced humility. His suggestion that the incessant self-criticism may be the result of “a depression which can afflict a person or a group, not when they are struggling but when they have achieved the goal” may be right on target. But “the agony and the anguish and the loneliness of the rabbis are very real,” and affect even those most visibly successful, serving the movement’s leading congregations. Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz, the leading rabbinic personality in our nation’s capital, president of the RA, spoke of “The Changing Rabbinate.”¹⁴⁵

The expectations of the rabbi have changed. The rabbinic calling has been trivialized. A massive horde of ribbon-cutting ceremonies. . . . The image of the rabbi has changed. The pre-modern Jewish world defined the rabbi as a civil servant, who was a teacher and a sage. The contemporary synagogue defines him as an employee, who is a preacher and a pastor.¹⁴⁶ . . . The rabbi’s authority in the synagogue today is only as strong as his hold on the people’s affection.¹⁴⁷

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, rabbi of Canada’s leading congregation, elaborated on the theme.¹⁴⁸

The rabbi can be most popular with the masses of congregational members, but if he fails with the elite group (President, Officers and Board) he is ineffective in the congregation. Much of the rabbi’s efforts [and sometimes those of his family] have to be oriented into [a] kind of public relations with all its many stresses. . . . He receives his entire salary from the congregation. . . .

Many rabbis [most] receive an additional income from . . . weddings, funerals, etc. Very often this creates a customer-client relationship.

The irony of the situation is that the higher salaried a man is, the greater his stake in these relationships and the deeper the tensions.¹⁴⁹

What makes for even deeper tensions is not so much that he often has to cater to the elite group (other professions make similar demands), or that he is financially dependent on the congregation (it does, after all, pay his salary), but that “in many respects he is owned by them, their possession. A member of a congregation will say, ‘he is *my* rabbi.’ Very often unusual demands will be made by members because, ‘he is *my* rabbi.’”¹⁵⁰

Simon Greenberg’s claim that the Conservative rabbi is dissatisfied but not unhappy was borne out by the contents of a symposium titled

"The Congregational Rabbi and the Conservative Synagogue," published in the Winter 1975 issue of *Conservative Judaism*.¹⁵¹ Of the ten questions posed, the first two and the last two touch upon our subject.

1. How have your religious observance and your attitudes towards God, revelation and Jewish law altered since you were ordained?
2. What has given you most satisfaction in the congregational rabbinate? What has given you least?
9. How satisfactory are your relationships with other Jewish religious leaders and with the philanthropic and defense organizations functioning in your community?
10. Have you found that your position as a congregational rabbi has posed special problems with regard to your wife, your children and your home life?

The conductor of the symposium, Rabbi Stephen C. Lerner, sums up the responses to the first query.

A significant number of participants averred that they had become more liberal both in attitude and in pattern of observance as a result of their contact with their congregants over a period of years. And many did not apologize for that admission but felt that they had developed a different kind of understanding that was unavailable to the schoolmen in the various seminaries at which they trained. . . . At the same time, another group of contributors moved to greater traditionalism, feeling that the real need was not for a rational faith but for the establishment of a more traditional pattern of living.¹⁵²

A few responses:

The critical point in my own pattern of observance came at the time the Responsum on the Sabbath was adopted by the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards in 1950. I favored the majority view [permitting riding to synagogue on the Sabbath] and since then I have been observing the Sabbath in keeping with the majority decision.¹⁵³

Since my ordination my religious observances have deepened. Once . . . I began to realize how few religious observances my congregants kept . . . [this] convinced me of the need to spend less time constructing super-sophisticated systems of Conservative Jewish thought and more time teaching my people Jewish behavioral skills.¹⁵⁴

When I was interviewed by the admissions committee of the Seminary, Dr. Kaplan asked me whether I was not worried that the *apikorsus* (non-belief) I

would learn at the Seminary would cause some problems. . . . I told him that all the *apikorsus* the Seminary could teach me I was already acquainted with. The difference was that in the yeshivah there was not a soul with whom I could discuss these problems.¹⁵⁵

I eat dairy foods in restaurants and in congregants' homes. I do not ride on the Sabbath, partly so that I have a sense of Sabbath (after all, I spend the morning conducting instead of *davening*) and partly to retain credibility in the eyes of my more traditionally-minded congregants. It makes my radical theological and liturgical suggestions more acceptable. . . . My theology has changed more than my observance. I have seen so much tragedy, officiated at so many funerals, held the hands of so many suffering people that I can no longer affirm that all that happens on earth is somehow part of God's plan.¹⁵⁶

I have moved toward a less rigid pattern of observance. . . . After leaving the Seminary I . . . began the process of selecting those aspects of Jewish tradition which have greater meaning for me. My attitude toward revelation has not altered, but my respect for Jewish law has considerably diminished.¹⁵⁷

My observance has become more traditional, mainly due to my children, who attend an Orthodox yeshivah.¹⁵⁸

In 1934 I came to a congregation determined to preach a doctrine of Judaism liberal about God, revelation, and Jewish law and observance because traditional Jews were unenlightened and would lose their children unless I enlightened them in these matters. During these forty years I have seen the American Jewish community become so secularized, assimilated, non-believing and non-practicing that I find myself pleading for an appreciation of and a return to Jewish values, faith in God, loyalty to tradition and the beauty and worth of observance for strengthening Jewish identity. I have turned around one hundred percent.¹⁵⁹

There is fullest agreement, by both the older and younger men responding, with Agus's statement: "My greatest satisfaction in the rabbinate derives from the many opportunities to teach that are open to me." It is shared by Benjamin Englander, ordained in 1934, and Azriel Fellner, ordained thirty-three years later. "In more recent years," Elias Charry reports, "counselling has taken second place only to teaching." For some of the younger men it is even a greater source of personal and vocational satisfaction. Preaching is enjoyed more by the older, while among the younger, the opportunity to introduce congregants to the joys and meaningfulness of Jewish living, to turn *rites de passage* into moving religious experiences, is an achievement rich in reward. David H. Lincoln writes:

The main satisfaction lies in the possibility of touching people's lives and influencing them to a greater observance of Judaism as well as a wider Jewish awareness. As an Orthodox rabbi in my native England I was certainly not able to influence people in the same way as it is possible to do here.¹⁶⁰

Among the chief sources for dissatisfaction are "my apparently ineffective efforts to make the congregation more observant"; "the feeling of emptiness and despair I experience when facing a congregation made up of the invited friends and relatives of the bar mitzvah family"; and "the traumatic experience of being hired and retained. I find it enormously difficult to face the prospect of a group of people voting on whether or not I have stroked them adequately."

The majority of men report that their relationship with colleagues Orthodox and Reform (with but rare exceptions) and with communal organizations are good. The word "excellent" is used often. But, as one rabbi reports, "major decision-making takes place in the councils of the Jewish Community Federation, where rabbis and synagogues are absent. The religious institutions are on the periphery."¹⁶¹ Jacob B. Agus reports that his relations with noncongregational institutions in the community are very good, "but my greatest feelings of frustration are in the realization that the ideals and values of our sacred tradition are rarely honored in the community as a whole. The fund-raising activities of our institutions belie at times the ideals that we represent."¹⁶²

The younger men complain about the deprivations members of a rabbinic family suffer. "My irregular hours require my wife and children's generous understanding."¹⁶³ "Shabbat is no Shabbat and the *hagim* are not *hagim* for me. . . . A rabbi's schedule raises havoc with my home life."¹⁶⁴ "It is difficult for the family of a rabbi."¹⁶⁵ Rabbi Albert L. Lewis, after twenty-seven years in the rabbinate, wrote:

It's the same problem that afflicts any professional who is not bound to a nine-to-five schedule. It affects physicians, attorneys, and men who are in top administrative positions in industry. . . . I do not regard the rabbinate as a job or a profession: I regard it as a calling. . . . I feel that when a congregant has a problem and calls upon me, I cannot refuse to listen. . . .

I'm always on duty on Shabbat. As a result, the congregation has become my children's surrogate family. This situation has great positive features but also negative ones. I am very fortunate that my wife. . . . shares my desire to help Jews become more Jewish. . . . She has taken care of the home front and has utilized our home as an adjunct to the synagogue. . . . Yet this is a problem that has to be resolved, for it is loaded with tension.¹⁶⁶

Isaac Klein spoke from more than forty years of rabbinic experience.

Of course we had special problems but we met them squarely and no one in my family has any scars. On the contrary, they show the advantages of living and growing up in a *beit harav* (rabbinic home). . . . Your wife plays a very important role as does your children's opinion of you as a rabbi. . . . I have been fortunate that it has been my *rebbetzin* who managed it so that no harm . . . touched my family because of my rabbinate.¹⁶⁷

Looking back at more than four decades in the same congregation, Armand E. Cohen sees the benefits which accrue through life in a rabbinic household.

My wife and children have enjoyed many benefits from my position as a congregational rabbi . . . high standard of Jewish home life and practice . . . doors of opportunity opened in forming friendships and pleasant social experiences. . . .

The need for my children to maintain a high standard of personal and Jewish conduct just because they are a rabbi's children has been an enrichment to their lives and not a penalty.¹⁶⁸

The general tone of the symposium is one of personal and vocational satisfaction. There is a sober sense of personal shortcomings, limited accomplishments, nor is the chafing at unrealistic expectations and pettiness on the part of congregations wanting. There is healthy complaint against congregants, the movement, and self. But one hears only echoes of the heretofore pervasive rabbinic questioning of the worthwhileness of dedicating one's life to a cause in which there is so little response and a calling which can record so few lasting accomplishments. What is heard loud and clear is that the work engaged in is eminently worthwhile, and that the achievements, which at the moment seem nebulous and tenuous, add up to a life well spent in service of a cause greater than any man ("No other person has priority. Only Judaism does," a rabbi approvingly quotes his wife) and worthy of all men.

Why the change? Why such a sense of unease and lack of accomplishment in earlier decades, and the apparent feeling of achievement and satisfaction in the 1970's? The answer may lie in the functional redefinition of the office of the rabbi. Teaching continued to be listed as the highest priority, but counseling replaced preaching as next in

order—and in time expended and gratification received it may well have risen to the top. This was particularly so for Conservative rabbis, the majority of whom served in relatively new, suburban congregations, which the high and constant mobility in the Jewish community filled with relocated nuclear families. In time of crisis, having no elder member of the family available, they turned to their rabbi for guidance or solace. For the rabbi such an occasion provided an opportunity for *imitatio dei* (God is described in midrashic literature as counseling the bereaved, etc.), vocational gratification, and service to the congregation. The focus of the rabbinic mandate was turning from preserving the faith to serving the person. The rabbinate was becoming less a religious calling and more a service profession. A calling must have dissatisfaction as a constant component; can its practitioner ever be satisfied that he has fulfilled even a discreet portion of its mandate? A profession is less demanding. It requires but high competence and serious devotion, and its achievements, dealing as it does with defined, hence limited, projects, can be noted and enjoyed. It may well be that rabbis turned from “preaching the faith” to counseling the individual because the former was fraught with frustration while the latter brought satisfaction.

Preservation of the faith had been both the promise and the program of Conservative Judaism. The Conservative rabbinate remained committed to it, but it had lost much of its earlier immediacy. The demands for a “coherent ideology” and a “ritual guide” became less insistent. Ad hoc decisions of the Committee on Law and Standards were deemed sufficient. The very lack of a Conservative creed and code made possible the change and growth in “attitudes to God and revelation,” as well as in ritual observance, that so many symposium participants endorsed. It enabled rabbis to engage in creative experimentation in the liturgy and in the ritual, which they found exciting, effective, and a source of great vocational satisfaction. Younger rabbis asked for a comprehensive philosophy and a code of law; older colleagues advised that freedom for creativity, disciplined by commitment to the preservation of the structure, the content, and the spirit of the tradition, was the more authentic and healthier way. Thus, for example, Rabbi Martin I. Sandberg, while yet a student, proposed in

a massive effort . . . by the Seminary, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue, to write out, in detail . . . a system . . . of laws and customs [which] would be mandatory throughout Conservative Judaism . . . and to *apply* it systematically to all areas of Jewish life.¹⁶⁹

The same issue of the *Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings* that published the young rabbi's proposal carried the "Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly." In summary conclusion it argues the value of the diversity which the absence of a creed and code permits.

The differences of opinion in our midst, whose waves are constantly surging beneath the surface and which sometimes erupt in dissension, may be the sign of a healthy movement, for we embrace many opposites. It is no small thing for a movement to have developed diverse approaches and cultural heroes as diverse in temperament and ideology as Ginzberg and Kaplan, Lieberman and Heschel, Finkelstein and Cohen. It is to the credit of the movement that we encourage religious creativity without threatening excommunication, and diversity without falling victim to anarchy.¹⁷⁰

The same Blue Ribbon report discloses that its survey found that "many rabbis are not happy with the role that congregations have assigned to them . . . feel overworked by a multitude of tasks which only minimally contribute to the realization of their personal and professional goals . . . [which] leaves meager time and energy for what was once regarded as the primary function of the rabbinate: teaching and studying."¹⁷¹ It speaks of "rabbinic burn out . . . a reversal of a process that begins with high enthusiasm and dedication, but which ends in depression and alienation."¹⁷² In response to the self-posed question of "what can the Rabbinical Assembly do to enhance the status of the rabbi?" it cites such suggestions as an RA-sponsored educational program to rekindle the "burned-out" rabbi; courses in arbitration and mediation, with congregations informed that their rabbis are qualified to act in arbitration situations; more seminars at conventions to deal with the problems of the rabbinate; "the RA should distribute short releases for use in synagogue bulletins which would be written in such a way as to strengthen the status of the rabbi . . . and issue certificates of recognition for achievements in various fields . . . to enhance the image of the individual rabbi."¹⁷³ It concludes that "there is no ready solution to enhancing the status of the rabbi." If there is no solution, there may, however, be guidance to the individual rabbi. It may be

found in the response of Immanuel Lubliner to the question in the above-mentioned symposium: "If you were given *carte blanche*, what changes would you want to see implemented in your synagogue's educational, religious, and youth programs?" Said Rabbi Lubliner, "Maybe all of us have *carte blanche* and we don't even know it."¹⁷⁴ If not *carte blanche*, then certainly wide opportunities to serve and to concentrate one's energies and talents on those aspects of the rabbinate which one considers most important and most vocationally and personally satisfying.

The Conservative rabbinate had, after all, truly remarkable achievements to its credit. It had in but eighty years grown from less than a minyan to twelve hundred in 1980, experiencing a fourfold increase in the last three decades. During those thirty years, over six hundred Orthodox and Reform rabbis applied for membership, while less than ten left the RA for other rabbinic associations.¹⁷⁵ Its attractiveness was apparent, its ability to win loyalty, impressive. It had become an international organization with ninety-four members in Israel, twenty-nine in Canada, eleven in Latin America, and seven in Europe. In the United States it had spread from border to border and sea to sea, counting one hundred members in California and fifty-one in Florida. (Only twenty-two now remained in Brooklyn and six in the Bronx.) It was serving the movement which had become the largest in numbers. Within the movement it had risen to a position of centrality.¹⁷⁶ It had given to American Jewish life some of its most gifted organizational and intellectual leaders, and within their respective communities Conservative rabbis left permanent monuments of communal, congregational, and educational achievements.

Yet discontent there was, due in the main to the twin tensions under which the Conservative rabbi lived: the Conservative tension of reconciling an ancient tradition and the modern world; and the rabbinic tension of his ministry as both a *calling* untempered by compromise and a *profession* demanding accommodation. He wanted to be the prophet, "to pull down and to uproot . . . to build, to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10); his congregation needed a priest to officiate at its rites, to celebrate and to console.

His conception of his office and its mandates was formed by the remembered roles and functions of his European predecessors: the East European *rov*, expert in the tradition, his office invested with

authority by his ordination, his influence commensurate with his scholarship; the Hassidic *rebbe*, guide and counselor of his flock, deriving his authority from personal or inherited charisma; the West European *rabbiner*, the man of wide Jewish and secular culture, bridge to the outside world, introducing the Jew to the world and the world to Judaism; and the American Protestant minister, pastor, preacher, organizer, and missionary. The Conservative rabbi had to be all and more, for in the free and open society which was America, he had to win to Judaism each generation anew.

Memory became mandate, and the expectation of office became a burden which was heavy on the spirit but apparently never crushed the resolve. Defections were far fewer than in the ministry or priesthood, and the Seminary did not lack for students.

It was a different kind of student who was entering the Seminary in the 1970's. Martin N. Levin of the class of 1969 reports that of a class of thirty, only one of four had attended a day school through high school, and he was the only one of the thirty to have attended a yeshiva while in college. He found that his classmates were products of the Ramah camps and "turn-ons from Hillel." They were "virtually unfamiliar with the intensity of Jewish tradition, its complex web of law and custom, its texts, its iconoclastic heroes, its intense tradition and demanding values, until [they] reached the Seminary."¹⁷⁷ The rabbi who emerged from the Seminary in the 1970's, Levin claims, is going in the opposite direction from his senior colleague.

His reach is toward tradition, his dream is to be immersed in Gemara. His fight is not with a parochial God challenged by higher, more universal ideals; it is with an anonymous purposeless modernity, carelessly strangling a cloudy God and a nearly forgotten tradition. And so instead of Rosenzweig, he reads the *Jewish Catalogue* and instead of a robe he is wrapped in a full-sized *tallis*. . . . He calls for *minyanim* and spontaneity. His adult education courses speak not of theology but of ritual, and he gives more "workshops" than lectures.¹⁷⁸

Whether this "new piety" will remain strong, or whether it will be tempered by the experiences of the rabbi as he confronts and serves his secularized congregants, and what effect this confrontation will have on his morale, a future observer will need to record and analyze. What is happening to this generation of young rabbis is what happened to their predecessors. They are responding to what they perceive to be the

Jewish needs of their time. They will experiment with considerable creativity in serving these needs in the context of the possibilities afforded by the social and cultural atmosphere in America. They will feel dissatisfaction, they will experience frustration, and they will adapt and persist as their senior colleagues have done before them.

It is appropriate that it was Louis Finkelstein, the acknowledged head of the movement during its period of greatest growth, who best expressed the basic sentiments of the Conservative rabbi, those which sustained him when frustrations shook his morale and those which drove him when opportunity beckoned. They were spoken in 1927, when the Conservative rabbinate was beginning its ascent as a force in Jewish life.

We are the only group in Israel who have a modern mind and a Jewish heart, prophetic passion and western science. It is because we have all these that we see Judaism so broadly. . . . And it is because we are alone in combining the two elements that we can make a rational religion, that we may rest convinced that, given due sacrifice and willingness on our part, the Judaism of the next generation will be saved by us. Certainly it can be saved by no other group. We have then before us both the highest of challenges and the greatest of opportunities.¹⁷⁹

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Notes

1. Peter Z. Adelstein, "The Rabbinical Selection Process" (typescript, 1976). The author is grateful to Dr. Adelstein for permitting him its use.

2. *Hebrew Leader*, vol. 8, June 29, 1866, p. 4.

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 9, February 8, 1867, p. 4.

4. James Parton, *Topics of the Times* (Boston, 1871), p. 311.

5. *Galaxie*, January 1872, p. 47.

6. *Jewish Times* 1, no. 34 (October 22, 1869): 5.

7. *Jewish Messenger*, vol. 38, November 12, 1875, p. 5; November 19, 1875, p. 4; November 26, 1875, p. 5; December 3, 1875, p. 5; December 10, 1875, p. 5. Quoted in Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (New York, 1963), pp. 163-165.

8. The article appears in Hebrew in his *Otzar Zichronotai* (New York, 1929), pp. 206-211. An English translation was published in *American Jewish Archives* 12, no. 2 (October 1960): 123-142.

9. See Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44, no. 3 (March 1955): 129-198.

10. *Proceedings of the First Biennial Convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association held in New York on Sunday, March 11, 5648 (1888)* (New York, 1888), p. 6.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 9. From the Preamble of the Constitution of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association, adopted at its founding convention, May 9, 1886

13. On the ideological orientation and identification of the rabbinic founders of the Jewish Theological Seminary, see Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*; Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in Nineteenth Century America" *Tradition* 6, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1968): 132–140; and Abraham J. Karp, "The Origins of Conservative Judaism" *Conservative Judaism* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1965): 33–48. See also the opening section of Jeffrey S. Gurock's "Resisters and Accommodators" in this volume.

14. On Beth Hamedrash Hagadol see Judah D. Eisenstein, "The History of the First Russian-American Jewish Congregation," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 9 (1901).

Although the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol is listed as one of the congregations entitled to representation at the first convention of the JTS Association, the listing of contributions (which entitled representation) does not include it. Its tie to the new Seminary was apparently through the person of Sender Jarmulowski, an East Side banker, who is listed as an incorporator of the JTSA (Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 386–387) as well as an incorporator of the Association of the American Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," p. 189). Rabbi H. Pereira Mendes, minister of the Shearith Israel congregation, co-founder with Sabato Morais of the Seminary, had looked forward to support for the new Seminary from the growing East European immigrant community in New York. When the community chose instead to channel its funds and energies to the importation of a "Chief Rabbi," Mendes publicly expressed his displeasure with the lack of support for the Seminary. He argued that the money spent on importing rabbis was largely wasted, for only graduates of an American seminary, speaking the language of the land, would be able to appeal to the younger generation. "Will he be able to take up the encroaching steps of Reform in America?" he asked about Rabbi Jacob Joseph, who was being brought. "Do not give away to false hopes," he warned, "Those who come after you will be Americans, full-blooded Americans like your brethren in faith uptown" (*American Israelite*, March 30, 1888).

15. Vol. I of the *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (Cincinnati, 1879) opens with:

On October 10, 1872, Mr. Moritz Loth, President of Congregation Bene Yeshurun, of Cincinnati, Ohio, at a general meeting thereof, submitted his annual report, wherein he used the following language: "... we must have Rabbis who possess the ability to preach and expound eloquently the true text of our belief. Such Rabbis we can only have by educating them, and to educate them we must have a 'Jewish Theological Faculty.'

"... I respectfully recommend ... the calling of a general conference ... with a view to form a union of congregations ... to establish a 'Jewish Theological Faculty.' ... to adopt a code of laws which are not to be invaded under the plausible phrase of reform, namely, that *Milah* shall never be abolished, that the Sabbath shall be observed on Saturday and never to be changed to any other day, that the Shechitah and the dietary laws shall not be disregarded. ..."

"And it shall be a fixed rule that any Rabbi who, by his preaching or acts, advised the abolishment of the *Milah*, or to observe our Sabbath on Sunday, etc., has forfeited his right to preach before a Jewish congregation."

16. Morais had served as an outside examiner in 1878. See *Proceedings of the UAHC* 1 (1879): 385, 524, 603, 605.

17. S. Morais to K. Kohler, "*American Hebrew* 32 (September 2, 1887).
18. *New York Herald*, July 21, 1888.
19. *Proceedings of the First Biennial Convention of the JTSA*, p. 11.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
21. *Students' Annual, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Schechter Memorial* (New York, 1916), p. 61.
22. Max J. Routtenberg, "The Rabbinical Assembly of America," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 24 (1960): 191.
23. Schechter to Mayer Sulzberger, May 9, 1897, Jewish Theological Seminary of America Library. For an account of Schechter's coming to America, see Abraham J. Karp, "Solomon Schechter Comes to America," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (September 1963).
24. Schechter to Sulzberger, June 26, 1898, JTSA Library.
25. Solomon Schechter, *Seminary Addresses* (Cincinnati, 1915), p. 19.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
28. For the radical nature of Rabbi Fleischer's religious views, see Arthur Mann, *Growth and Achievement: Temple Israel* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 63–83.
29. Herman H. Rubenovitz and Mignon L. Rubenovitz, *The Waking Heart* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 27–28.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Abraham J. Karp, "From Hevra to Congregation: The Americanization of the Beth Israel Synagogue, Rochester, New York, 1874–1912" (typescript), chap. IV, p. 18.
33. *Ibid.*, chap. VI, p. 40.
34. Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting, September 19, 1911. In the possession of the author.
35. Rabbi Chertoff's *Congregation Beth Israel Hebrew School and Sunday School* ledger records thirty students (27 boys and 3 girls) in the Hebrew school; and thirty in the religious school (i.e., Sunday school), of whom four were boys. The rabbi is listed as "Rabbi and Principal of the School," and he taught the most advanced classes. Among the subjects listed were "Hebrew Translation and Writing," "Abbreviated Humash," "Jewish Biblical History and Religion," and, of course, "Elementary Reading." The school ledger is in the possession of the author.
36. In the *Report of the Second Annual Meeting of the United Synagogue* (New York, 1914), Rabbi Chertoff is listed as representing Congregation Beth Israel, Rochester, N. Y.
37. Rubenovitz and Rubenovitz, *The Waking Heart*, p. 46.
38. For the founding of the United Synagogue, see *ibid.*, pp. 35–59, and Abraham J. Karp, *A History of the United Synagogue of America, 1913–1963* (New York, 1964).
39. Schechter, *Seminary Addresses*, p. 20.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 227–228.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 223–224.
47. This designation, or simply "Schechter's," was the popular name for the Jewish Theological Seminary in the East European immigrant community until World War II.

48. *United Synagogue Recorder* 6, no. 1 (January 1926): 12.

49. *Ibid.* 3, no. 2 (April 1923): 14.

50. *Ibid.* 5, no. 3 (July 1925): 20–22.

51. Mordecai M. Kaplan with unconcealed disdain stated that the chief motivation of the American Jewish financial elite (almost all members of Reform Temple Emanu-El) for supporting the Seminary in the first decades of the century was “to establish a training school for American trained rabbis who might stem the proliferation of gangsterism on the Jewish East Side.” Kaplan to Abraham J. Karp, April 12, 1963.

52. *United Synagogue Recorder* 3, no. 2 (April 1923): 13.

53. Ralph Simon to Gary Geller, February 1, 1978. The author is indebted to his student Gary Geller for permission to use material he gathered in preparation for an honors essay for the Religious Studies program at the University of Rochester, “The ‘Second Generation’ Seminary Rabbi—Fashioner of Conservative Judaism,” April 1978.

54. Jacob Kraft to Gary Geller, February 22, 1978.

55. Israel M. Goldman to Gary Geller, January 24, 1978.

56. Eli A. Bohnen to Gary Geller, January 28, 1978.

57. Elias Charry to Gary Geller, February 18, 1978.

58. *United Synagogue Recorder* 3, no. 3 (July 1923): 3, 7; 5, no. 3 (July 1925): 9, 10; 8, no. 3 (July 1928): 14.

59. *Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh Annual Conference of the Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary in America, Asbury Park, N.J., July 5, 6, 7, 1927*, pp. 42 ff.

60. At the 1928 conference, Dr. Cyrus Adler and Rabbis Israel Goldstein, Alter F. Landesman, and Norman Salit joined in a symposium, “The Synagogue Today.” Rabbis Solomon Grayzel, David Aronson, Jesse Bienenfeld, and Kurt Wilhelm reported “on the Status of Judaism in Leading Centers in Europe,” and Rabbis Louis Epstein, Louis Finkelstein, and Simon Greenberg presented learned papers on “Annulment of Marriage in Jewish Law,” “Can Maimonides Still Guide Us?” and “Aspects of Jewish Nationalism in the Bible.”

A year later Rabbi Elias Margolis spoke on “The Influence of the Conservative Movement on American Judaism,” Alexander J. Burnstein on “The Abiding Values of the Resurrection Belief,” and Rabbis Isidor B. Hoffman, Eliot M. Burstein, and Philip A. Langh presented reports on “Status of Our Movement Among College Students; On the Pacific Coast; In the Middle West.”

61. *Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth Annual Conference of the Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, July 8–10, 1929*, pp. 115–117.

62. The full name was now Rabbinical Assembly of America. “Of the Jewish Theological Seminary” was abandoned because of the increasing number of members who had received ordination from other institutions.

63. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, Fortieth Annual Convention at Detroit, Michigan, June 25–27, 1940*, 7 (n.p., n.d.).

64. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 90.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 92.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 288, 289.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–58.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

70. October 7, 1945.

71. So it seemed to the author and his classmates about to enter the American Conservative rabbinate.

72. The phrase is that of Mordecai M. Kaplan; the concept goes back to Rabbi Bernhard

Felsenthal and Dr. Israel Friedlaender.

73. Will Herberg's description of postwar America in his *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (New York, 1955).
74. See Abraham J. Karp, "Reactions to Zionism and the State of Israel in the American Jewish Religious Community," *Journal of Jewish Sociology* 8, no. 2 (December 1966): 150-174.
75. *Forty-sixth Annual Convention, the Rabbinical Assembly of America, June 24-27, 1946*, pp. 13-14. From Resolution adopted by the Rabbinical Assembly.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 22, Rabbi Leon S. Lang.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 85, Rabbi Louis Feinberg.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 124, Rabbi Simon Greenberg.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 121 ff.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 187, Rabbi Israel M. Goldman.
81. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, Forty-ninth Annual Convention, Kiamesha Lake, N.Y., June 20-23, 1949*, pp. 141, 149.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-162.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 172.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 203.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-180.
91. *National Survey United Synagogue of America, 1950*, conceived, planned, and directed by Dr. Emil Lehman, with the participation of the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University.
92. *Ibid.* "Charting Synagogue Attendance," pp. 8, 9. If anything, the figures, supplied by lay leaders or personnel of the congregation, tended to be overstated.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
96. *National Survey*, "Spotlight Youth Work," p. 18.
97. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Convention, 1949*, p. 167.
98. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Convention, 1952*, p. 111.
99. The formula of ordination of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
100. "The Role of the Rabbi Today," *Conservative Judaism* 3, no. 2 (February 1947): 21.
101. "Religious Leadership in Our Critical Age," *Conservative Judaism* 8, no. 4 (June 1952): 32.
102. Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, Ill., 1955), p. 177.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
105. "The Seminary and the Modern Rabbi," *Conservative Judaism* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1959): 1 ff.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
107. Milton Himmelfarb, "The Thought of Conservative Rabbis" (a review of Mordecai Waxman's *Tradition and Change*), *Commentary*, December 1958, p. 540.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 541.

109. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, p. 285, n. 50.
110. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Convention*, 1960, p. 49.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 21. 75 percent were in pulpits; 11 percent deceased; 8 percent in Jewish community work. A survey conducted by students in my seminar on the American rabbinate at the Jewish Theological Seminary, in 1971, disclosed that over 90 percent of the graduates of the 1960 decade were serving in the rabbinate or allied fields. During this time period Christian theological seminaries noted considerable lack of interest in the ministry or priesthood on the part of their students, and a serious defection from the vocation on the part of their graduates.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
113. *Conservative Judaism* 17, nos. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1963): 39 ff.
114. Ethical problems confront the rabbinate as a *profession*, as they confront other professions, e.g., medicine, law. Spiritual dangers arise from the rabbinate as a *calling*. In *The Making of Ministers* (1964), p. viii, the editors, Keith R. Bridston and Dwight W. Culver, make the distinction between *clergyman*, "a sociological definition relating to the role of a particular individual in society, a description of the function of a special member of a religious institution," and *minister*, one engaged in "a holy calling."
115. *Conservative Judaism* 27, nos. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1963). See "Character-Destroying Factors in the Rabbinate" by Robert Hammer, pp. 55 ff.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
119. Rubenovitz and Rubenovitz, *The Waking Heart*, p. 42.
120. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Conference*, 1927, p. 54.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
122. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Convention*, 1980, pp. 44-77, 78-93.
123. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Convention*, 1958, p. 100.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
125. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Convention*, 1960, p. 211.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
127. *Bulletin of Temple Beth El*, April 8, 1964, p. 2.
128. A Gallup Poll conducted in 1957 asked: At the present time do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing influence? The answers: increasing, 69 percent; losing, 14 percent; no difference, 10 percent; no opinion, 7 percent.
129. *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, Ill., 1955).
130. "Recent Developments in Conservative Judaism," *Midstream* 18, no. 1 (January 1972): 3-19.
131. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
132. *Ibid.*, p. 7. Quoted from *Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings* 29 (1965): 23.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
134. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.
135. *Conservative Judaism* 27, no. 1 (Fall 1972): 12-26.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
138. Abraham J. Karp, "Rabbi, Congregation and the World They Live In," *Conservative Judaism* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1971): 25-40.
139. Letter to the author, April 2, 1970.
140. Letter to the author, April 23, 1970.
141. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly Seventy-fifth Annual Convention*, April 20-24,

1975, p. 15.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

143. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

144. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

145. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–60.

146. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

148. *Ibid.*, “The Rabbi and His Family,” pp. 177–181.

149. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

150. *Ibid.*

151. The symposium, conducted by Rabbi Stephen C. Lerner, the editor of *Conservative Judaism*, records the responses to ten questions sent to a cross-section of the Rabbinical Assembly, congregational rabbis from the classes of 1934, 1941, 1948, 1954, 1960, 1967, and a few more-senior colleagues. Sixty questionnaires were distributed and twenty-eight responses were received. See *Conservative Judaism* 29, no. 2 (Winter 1975).

152. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

153. *Ibid.*, p. 9. Rabbi Jacob B. Agus, ordained 1935.

154. *Ibid.*, p. 17. Rabbi Azriel Fellner, ordained 1967.

155. *Ibid.*, p. 40. Rabbi Isaac Klein, ordained 1934.

156. *Ibid.*, p. 52. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, ordained 1960.

157. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77. Rabbi Fishel A. Pearlmuter, ordained 1960.

158. *Ibid.*, p. 94. Rabbi Morton J. Waldman, ordained 1967.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 14. Rabbi Armand Cohen, ordained 1934.

160. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

161. *Ibid.*, p. 37. The city thus described is Cleveland. A veteran rabbi of that community, who for over forty years headed one of its leading synagogues, confirms this situation. “My relationship with Federation,” he reports, “is cordial, pleasant and cooperative although the rabbinic influence in general has declined in Federation” (*ibid.*, p. 15).

162. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

163. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

164. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

165. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

166. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

167. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

168. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

169. *Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings*, 1980, pp. 396–397.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 286. The statement is taken almost verbatim from Harold M. Schulweis’s “Survey, Statistics and Sectarian Salvation” (*Conservative Judaism* 33, no. 2 [Winter 1980]: 68), a sharp critique of “A Survey of the Conservative Movement and Some of Its Religious Attitudes,” by Charles S. Liebman and Saul Shapiro.

171. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

172. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

173. *Ibid.*, pp. 279–280.

174. *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1975, p. 72.

175. *Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings*, 1980, p. 14.

176. During the first two decades of this century, the Conservative movement was dominated by the Seminary, because it was all the movement had. In the 1920’s, until the Great Depression, centrality was accorded formally to the United Synagogue, the lay organization, but it was

dominated by the faculty and alumni of the Seminary. During the incumbency of Louis Finkelstein, a charismatic and forceful leader, as president and chancellor of the Seminary (1940–1972), Seminary dominance was total. During the 1970's, the leadership of the movement was being assumed by the Rabbinical Assembly, which had experienced explosive growth, and which benefited from the strong leadership of Wolfe Kelman, who became the movement's spokesman to the media.

177. *Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings*, 1979, p. 115.

178. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

179. "The Things That Unite Us," *Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh Annual Conference of the Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary*, July 5–7, 1927, p. 53.