The Changing and the Constant in the Reform Rabbinate

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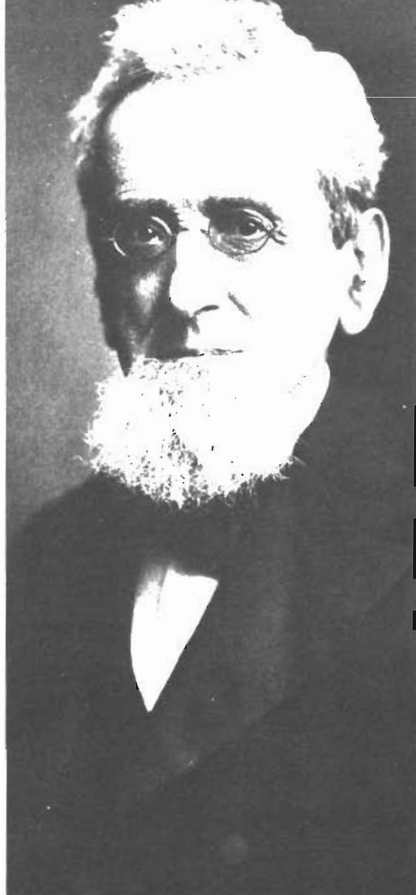
The Reform rabbinate is such an all-encompassing topic that it cannot be treated thoroughly within the scope of a single article. Since ideas and ideology are central elements in the development of a religious denomination, the essay that follows will focus mainly on certain fundamental ideas that have engaged Reform rabbis since the very beginnings of the Reform movement. By following the evolution and application of these ideas from the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 to the present day, it will be shown that some of the principles formulated by the early Reform rabbinate, however fixed they appeared at the time, and however much they seemed to govern the Reform stance in regard to various issues, were never accepted by all Reform rabbis. Indeed, contrary to the widespread general impression then and now, the movement's formative principles were not monolithic and instead represented a dialectic between a clearly dominant majority and an articulate minority or, at times, between balanced ideological adversaries.

This process of dialectic, which has shaped Reform and enabled it to grow, is of vital significance. Because of it, Reform has developed as a cohesive movement even though it now differs in many important respects from what the founders created. Today's Reform rabbis are, and see themselves as, the legitimate heirs of the movement's founders, yet the most cherished tenets of the early Reform rabbinate have been almost totally reversed. These tenets were the original basis of Reform, yet the movement has held together and flourished even though its rabbis have embraced much of what was originally opposed. While there still may be a political consensus, since the Reform rabbinate has converted from anti-Zionist to Zionist uniformity, the former religious consensus has been replaced by pluralism in the areas of liturgy, practice, and belief. Ironically, as shown by the deliberations attend-

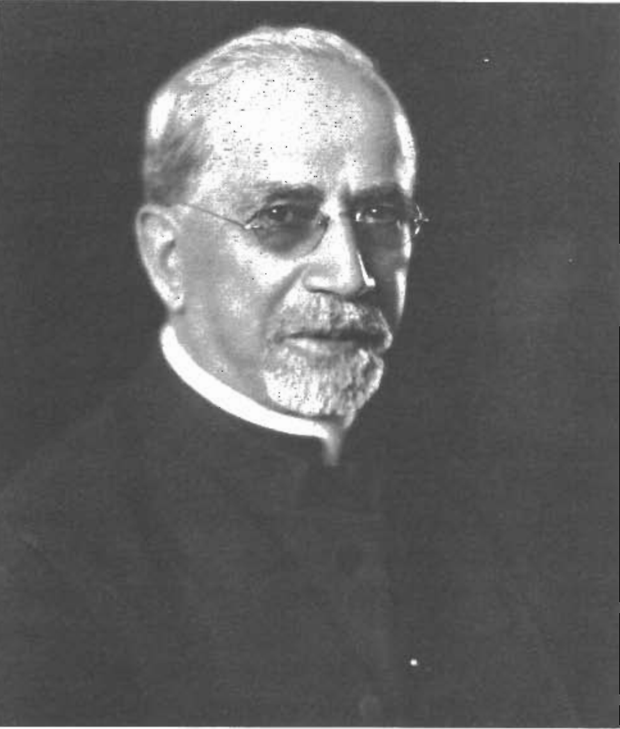
Rabbi David Einhorn
(1809-1879)



Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal
(1822-1908)

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise
(1819-1900)

Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler
(1843-1926)



Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf
(1858-1923)

Rabbi Max Heller
(1860-1929)

Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch
(1852-1923)

Rabbi David Philipson
(1862-1949)

Rabbi Edward L. Israel
(1896-1941)

Rabbi James G. Heller
(1892-1976)

Rabbi Elmer Berger
(born 1900)

Rabbi Morris Lazaron
(1888-1979)

Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk
(born 1930)
president, Hebrew Union College–
Jewish Institute of Religion

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
(1893-1963)

Rabbi Judah L. Magnes
(1877-1948)

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise
(1874-1949)

ing the establishment of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the national Reform rabbinical organization, the beginning of these transformations was implicit even at the beginning of the Reform movement itself.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, today numbering about fourteen hundred members, has been one of the Reform movement's main arenas for dialectical confrontation. Founded in 1889, four years after the Pittsburgh Platform was drafted, it held its first annual convention in Cleveland in July 1890. Twenty-nine members were recorded as present. Among them were four who were listed as "Rabbis," fourteen as "Reverend Doctor," and eleven as "Reverend." (At the organizational meeting of the CCAR in Detroit on July 9 and 10, 1889, it was stipulated that among those eligible to join were "all autodidactic preachers and teachers of religion who have been for at least three successive years discharging those duties in any one Congregation.")[1] Six had come from the South (Atlanta, Memphis, Little Rock, Paducah, Nashville, Baltimore). The rest came largely from the Midwest (Peoria, Cincinnati, Detroit, Youngstown, Fort Wayne, Cleveland, Titusville, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Grand Rapids, St. Joseph, Missouri; St. Louis, Portsmouth, Ohio; Dayton, Ohio). The East was represented by Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh. Small towns and big towns were about evenly divided. The delegates to the convention included seven men who had attended the conference where the Pittsburgh Platform was drafted—Israel Aaron of Fort Wayne, A. Hahn of Cleveland, M. Machol of Cleveland, L. Mayer of Pittsburgh, David Philipson of Cincinnati, S. Sonneschein of St. Louis, and Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati—but three important shapers of the Pittsburgh Platform—Kaufmann Kohler, Emil G. Hirsch, and Joseph Krauskopf—were absent. Of the twenty-nine who came to Cleveland, seven had been ordained since 1883, when the first class was graduated from the Hebrew Union College (HUC), founded eight years earlier. They were Philipson (1883), Grossman (1884), Schanfarber (1886), Calisch (1887), Guttmacher and Levi (1889), and Geismar (1890). Nine of those present in Cleveland were not to continue their membership in the CCAR.[2]

At the convention, the ideological foundations of the CCAR were established, presumably for the indeterminate future, by linking the body's future deliberations to prior rabbinical proceedings dating

from 1844. At the preliminary organizing meeting in Detroit (July 9–10, 1889), it had been resolved "that the proceedings in all the modern Rabbinical Conferences from that held in Braunschweig in 1844, and including all like assemblages held since, shall be taken as a basis for the work of this Conference in an endeavor to maintain in unbroken historic succession the formulated expression of Jewish thought and life of each era."[3] In Cleveland, after a disagreement over "reasserting and publishing the Pittsburgh Platform in the Year Book," it was formally decided to "collect all the declarations of Reform that have been adopted by various Conferences, and record them in the Year Book."[4] Apparently as a compromise, it was decided to publish (but not reassert) all prior pronouncements. Nevertheless, a preamble to the pronouncements that appear in Volume 1 of the *CCAR Yearbook* reads, "In accordance with the motion passed at the Cleveland meeting the resolutions of past Reform Conferences, upon which as a basis this Conference builds, are herewith published as compiled, translated and abstracted by the Committee to whom the work was referred."[5]

This appears to have reinforced the Preamble to the Constitution of the CCAR, presented by David Philipson and adopted on July 14. The Preamble is, with minor changes, identical to the resolution passed in Detroit in 1889,[6] but the conference exceeded its own mandate by including "The Responses of the French Sanhedrin, 1807."[7] Following these, there appear the "Resolutions Adopted by the Braunschweig Conference, 1844"; "The Frankfort Rabbinical Convention, 1845"; "The Breslau Conference, 1846"; "Resolutions of the First Synod at Leipzig, 1869"; "The Second Synod of Augsburg, 1871"; "The Philadelphia Conference, November 3–6, 1869"; and "The Pittsburgh Conference, November 16–18, 1885."

The resolutions of the Braunschweig Conference, as compiled by L. Grossman and published in the *CCAR Yearbook*, are of special interest because most of the material refers to the Paris Sanhedrin, convened by Napoleon in March 1807. The responses of the French Jewish notables "are indorsed as in perfect keeping with the spirit and the precepts of the Israelitish faith." This includes the sanction of marriage between a Jew and a Christian woman, "if the State law permits that the children from such a marriage may be raised in the Jewish faith."[8]

It would appear that the founders of the CCAR regarded the Paris

Sanhedrin as a prototype of Reform if not explicitly Reform. But while the conference established prior Reform pronouncements as "a basis" for its future work, dissent in at least one area is recorded. While M. Faber and E. Schreiber wanted the principles of the Pittsburgh Platform to be "reasserted," M. Machol did not want them even "inserted." He then made the revealing comment that "at the time of their adoption I was opposed to some of them and am still opposed to them, and . . . there are members of this Conference who are likewise opposed to them."[9]

The immediate ideological precursor of the Pittsburgh Platform was the Philadelphia Conference, held in 1869. Among the thirteen in attendance were Kaufmann Kohler, L. Mayer, S. H. Sonneschein, M. Schlesinger, Isaac Mayer Wise, David Einhorn, and Bernhard Felsenthal. The first five were later to help write the Pittsburgh Platform. At Philadelphia, the following positions were taken: opposition to Jewish nationalism, support of the mission of Israel, abrogation of distinctive priestly rites and the idea of immortality, downgrading the use of Hebrew, equalizing the status of the woman at a marriage service, declaring divorce and the determination of the death of a missing spouse to be civil matters, and recognition of the Jewishness of the uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother. The first two statements in the Philadelphia Principles read:

1. The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all the children of God in confession of the unity of God, so as to realize the unity of all rational creatures and their call to moral sanctification.
2. We look upon the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth not as a punishment for the sinfulness of Israel, but as a result of the divine purpose revealed to Abraham, which, as has become ever clearer in the course of the world's history, consists in the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth, for the realization of their high-priestly mission, to lead the nations to the true knowledge and worship of God.

At Pittsburgh, nineteen men were present, including the five from the Philadelphia Conference, as well as Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Krauskopf, David Philipson, and Michael Machol, but not including

Einhorn and Felsenthal. The platform they adopted is clearly linked to the Philadelphia pronouncement by the introductory passage, "In continuation of the work begun in Philadelphia, in 1869, [we] unite upon the following principles." The platform is an evocation of both the "consciousness of the indwelling God in man in all religions, and also the special mission of the Jewish people bearing "the Bible as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction." It seeks to extract the moral essence of Judaism, the "spirit of priestly holiness," from outmoded biblical and rabbinic rites and practices. It affirms Judaism as a "progressive religion" committed to the "postulates of reason." It envisions "the realization of the great Messianic hope for the establishment of the Kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men," and therefore rejects Jewish nationalistic aspirations. It is committed "to solve . . . the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society." A dominant theme holding the platform together is the stress on modernity, as contrasted with the "primitive" past. The terms "modern," "modern times," "today," "our age," and "progressive" appear frequently in the text.

In addition to the principles, additional issues were addressed at Pittsburgh. Sunday services were declared compatible with "the spirit of Judaism"; a special mission to the Jewish poor was advocated in order "to bring these under the influence of moral and religious teaching"; and the question of brit milah was to be referred to the president of the conference, "since" the most competent rabbis no longer considered it "indispensable."

The reference to the "President of the Conference" refers to the Pittsburgh Conference and strongly suggests that it was envisioned as a continuing body, although this did not materialize.

As the Central Conference affirmed, the chain of Reform tradition, beginning with the Paris Sanhedrin and continuing beyond the Pittsburgh Platform, was incorporated into the newly created rabbinical body as the heir of the past. Yet it would appear that this was not achieved easily or unanimously, certainly as far as the Pittsburgh principles were concerned. The resolution brought in by M. Faber and E. Schreiber for reassertion and publication of the principles spoke for "a majority of your committee," which meant Faber and Schreiber. Michael Machol registered a minority report. It would seem that the sentiment against reaffirmation was sufficiently strong, at least at this

session, to warrant an amendment that permitted publication only.[10] This would also appear to be at variance with a decision made on July 14, declaring all proceedings of prior conferences as "a basis" for the work of the Central Conference.[11] The action of July 14 apparently prevailed.

We do not know whether Machol represented others in his opposition, although he did make such a claim. In any case, his opposition is given added weight by his presence at the Pittsburgh Conference. We do not know precisely what he opposed at Pittsburgh, nor do we know whether others there joined him in his opposition. But we do know that Machol's rabbinical career at Anshe Chesed in Cleveland was marked by a conservative bent. In a congregation where the second days of festivals were discontinued, where an organ was installed and only a single Jew sang in the choir, he attempted, in 1891, to deflect the trend toward worship with uncovered heads.[12] Moreover, he once stated that it was "rather difficult to impress our age with the necessity of prayer, since we have commenced to reason in regard to its value ... with the object in view to discard an obligation.... All our improved prayer books and all of our changes of the service will be of little avail,"[13] while on another occasion he wrote that: "for the man who clings to and represents the conservative party, religion is not merely a matter of mind and reason but also ... an object of the heart. Conservatism ... means not to ridicule the Bible, not to sneer at faith, not to destroy every ceremony, not to annihilate every Jewish peculiarity, not to dwell exclusively on the negative but to uphold the positive side of Judaism."[14]

The Issue of Jewish Nationalism

The Zionist issue is a paradigm of the process by which the CCAR was radically transformed. While the battle over Jewish nationalism represents only one component of the varied agenda of Reform, the issue was so pronounced, and exerted so compelling an influence on the movement, that hardly any other component has remained untouched.

The roots of anti-Zionism as a cardinal principle of Reform are to

be found in Germany. In 1840, Rabbi Samuel Holdheim had said, "only if the Jew surrenders all particularistic national conceptions . . . can he be truly attached to his fatherland." David Philipson added, "From its very inception the new movement in Judaism has made a cardinal doctrine of this elimination of the nationalistic aspect."[15]

Certainly Reform Judaism was far more than a response to Jewish nationalism, but the importance of this factor cannot be denied. In this respect the seal adopted by the CCAR in 1889 is of great symbolic significance. Seven years earlier, as the delegates to the Cleveland Convention undoubtedly were aware, Russian Jews had founded BILU, the proto-Zionist organization that began the modern resettlement of Palestine. The group's name was an acronym for the first four words of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 2:5, *Bet Yaakov lechu v'nelcha* ("O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk"), omitting the final words of the verse, *b'or Adonay* ("in the light of the Lord"). Seemingly as an answer to BILU's nationalism, the CCAR seal also utilizes Isaiah 2:5, but it says *Lechu v'nelcha b'or Adonay* ("Come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord"), omitting the words *bet Yaakov* ("House of Jacob").

The origins of Reform anti-Zionism lay deep in the ensuing gatherings of the German rabbis. At the Frankfort Conference (July 15, 1845), a lengthy discussion took place during which a number of leading rabbis all agreed in varying idioms that the messianic aspirations for return to the Land of Israel were obsolete. "A longing for a separate Jewish State was born of oppression in the past. Such sentiment agrees no more with our modern state." It was therefore agreed that "the prayer for the return to the land of our forefathers and the restoration of a Jewish State shall be eliminated from our ritual."[16] At the Leipzig Conference (June 29–July 4, 1869), it was declared that

> the great historical mission of Israel as the banner bearer of truth and light must be strongly accentuated. Hence the national side of Israel has to be pushed into the background. The hope of the unification of the whole human family in truth, justice and peace should be emphasized. The hope that a Jewish monarchy in Palestine . . . will be re-established and all Israelites . . . return to the Promised Land has vanished entirely from our consciousness. The expression of such a hope in prayer would be a naked untruth.[17]

It would not be long before the waves of East European immigra-

tion to the United States would reverse major aspects of the Reform rabbinate's ideology. Indeed, internal ethnic tensions informed the early struggles of Reform. Xenophobia was not confined to late-nineteenth-century American Protestantism. In 1897, Kaufmann Kohler obliquely suggested that by espousing Zionism, East European Jewry had become an instrument and a collaborator of anti-Semitism. Philipson derided the "Orientalism" of Russian Jews. Four years later, Bernhard Felsenthal counterattacked. "Beware, . . . you with your reform notions will be swamped . . . in times approaching, when the immigration from Russia will swell still more. . . . Many others will . . . come ultimately to your Conference and vote there."[18] On this ethnic battleground, the currents of early Reform were to begin to change course.

The anti-Zionist position of German Reform, transmitted to the American Reform rabbinate, became part of the "basis" upon which American Reform was established. Yet an incident that occurred midway through the first convention of the CCAR suggests that even this issue was overtaken by controversy early on. On the evening of July 14, 1890, Dr. S. H. Sonneschein of St. Louis presented a paper on "Judaism in Its Relation to the Republic." Following the paper, the following resolution was presented by David Philipson, Max Landsberg, and I. S. Moses:

> Although it has been stated time and again that the Jews are no longer a nation, and they form a religious community only, yet has this thought not been thoroughly appreciated by the community at large; we still hear of the "Jewish nation" and the "Hebrew people," and therefore this Conference feels called upon to declare once more that there is no Jewish nation now, only a Jewish religious body, and in accordance with this fact neither the name Hebrew nor Israelite, but the universal appellation Jew is applicable to the adherents of Judaism today.[19]

After extensive debate on the paper and the resolution, requiring that discussion be cut off, the resolution lost by a vote of 13 to 12. A motion for reconsideration carried, and "The question was then laid on the table till the next morning's session."[20] (According to the *American Israelite*, July 24, 1890, the vote was 14 to 11, with Philipson voting with the majority.) Neither the Sonneschein paper nor the disposition of the disputed resolution is further alluded to in the *Year-*

book. The *American Israelite* recorded that "the motion was not called up again."[21]

It is noteworthy that at the next convention, held in Baltimore in 1891, Philipson delivered a paper on "Judaism and the Republican Form of Government," in which he said,

> There is no such thing as a Jewish nation or a Hebrew people; the Jewish nation ceased to exist eighteen hundred years ago. There is no Jewish nation now; we are Jews in religion only. Jew therefore is the proper name to be applied to us; Israelite is a misnomer because that is the name of an ancient nation that exists no more; so also is Hebrew a wrong appellation, for if it is the name of the people speaking the Hebrew language, it certainly can not be applied to the Jews, because the least of them understand, much less speak Hebrew.[22]

Despite the anti-Zionist chain of tradition and the sharp reminder in the Philipson resolution that "this Conference feels itself called upon to declare once more that there is no Jewish nation now," the anti-Zionist dogma apparently did not go unchallenged. After all, Bernhard Felsenthal and Max Heller (HUC, 1884) were avowed Zionists. This appears to be reflected also in an earlier gathering of the "First Conference of Southern Rabbis" (April 14, 1885), where reference was made to "the many false impressions" concerning the Pittsburgh principles, which the southern rabbis then reaffirmed.[23] Another clue to the very early controversial nature of anti-Zionism is the abandonment by Bernhard Felsenthal of his anti-Zionist position. It has been noted that he had participated in the Philadelphia Conference, which began: "The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state . . . but the union of all men."[24] Felsenthal was absent at Pittsburgh. His turn to Zionism could have occurred before 1885.

The only first-hand report of what transpired at the Pittsburgh Conference is by David Philipson. Yet while he describes the preparations for the meeting and its stormy aftereffects within the non-Reform opposition, we are informed only that the sessions were "a love feast."[25] He also treats as quite incidental the two resolutions which were adopted after the platform—the desirability of Sunday services and the acceptability of noncircumcision for the son of a Jewish mother. These ostensibly minor matters were to become issues of conse-

quence. But as for the Pittsburgh principles, we are left with the impression that their adoption came easily and by consensus. Nevertheless, internal evidence would indicate that a controversy took place, not only outside the Reform environs but within. The absence of a report on Philipson's lost and then tabled resolution, the clueless absence of Sonneschein's paper, and Philipson's reiteration of his resolution a year later raise intriguing questions. Had his resolution passed at its second reading, would he have repeated it so urgently without calling attention to the fact? All we know is that at the first convention of the CCAR, an antinationist resolution had lost.

Bernhard Felsenthal, Max Heller, and Professor Caspar Levias represent the original Zionist presence within the Reform movement. Felsenthal was the most active and vocal as well as the most interesting, having come to Zionism by way of the Philadelphia Conference.[26] In a letter to Theodor Herzl from Stephen Wise, there is a reference to "Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, the father of the Professor, and dear old Dr. Felsenthal of Chicago, the two venerable and beloved leaders of our Movement in this country."[27]

On October 26, 1897, writing to "Dear friend," Felsenthal stated,

> I am heart and soul sharing your views concerning Zionism. . . . I shall be exceedingly glad to learn that your endeavors in behalf of this great cause are crowned by success. I hope especially that some ways and means may be found to organize the various Zion societies in America in one great and influential body. Yesterday I wrote more at length to your dear father about this matter, and I would refer you to my letter I sent to the gentleman.[28]

Presumably this letter was sent to Richard Gottheil, with whom Felsenthal had an extensive correspondence. Writing to Felsenthal on May 27, 1898, Gottheil stated,

> As regards the representation of American Zionists at Basle, that is just the point at which we are working at the present. . . . I only wish that it were possible to persuade you to go, as I know of no one who could represent us better or more worthily than you. Is it really out of the question? I am only a stripling and a newcomer at your side; and I should be so glad for the whole American delegation to be headed by one who is known so far and wide as you are.[29]

Writing to Professor Gottheil again three years later, Felsenthal said,

> First let me . . . congratulate you and all the friends of the great philanthropic, aye, more than philanthropic cause of Zionism, that the Zionistic Movement, to create a legally secured home again for the myriads of homeless Israel has made such a mighty and blessed step forward within the last few days! God bless Herzl and his able co-workers![30]

Hardly had the Pittsburgh Platform been incorporated into the proceedings of the Central Conference when the confrontation over Zionism began to take shape, with the guiding principles of Pittsburgh both the banner and the target of the controversy. On January 25, 1915, Stephen Wise, writing to Morris Lazaron, his friend, confidant, and fellow-Zionist at the time, denounced the Pittsburgh Platform for its antinationalism, and was already proposing that it be rescinded. He accused Kohler and his co-worker Philipson of using the Hebrew Union College and the Central Conference as instruments for suppressing Jewish nationalism and intimidating the student body.[31]

The administration of Kaufmann Kohler as president of HUC was marked by bitter polemics and intrigue over the issue of Zionism, as is shown, for instance, by the following passage from Wise's letter to Lazaron:

> It was not his [Horace Kallen's] imagined agnosticism that moved Dr. Kohler and Dr. Philipson to deny him the possibility of speaking at the College chapel but the fact that he is a Zionist. You know of the frenzied and fanatical antipathy to Zionism which obtains, explicably enough, in the mind of Dr. Kohler though I confess quite inexplicably in the mind of a younger man such as Dr. Philipson in point of years. . . . The serious thing about the matter, my dear Lazaron, is, as you know, that the present attitude of the College, as it is embodied in the personality and leadership of Dr. Kohler and Dr. Philipson, is certain to do one of two things—either tyrannize the men, in that despite the other convictions, into the acceptance of the anti-Zionist position, or else do that which is most damaging to the souls of men who are to be teachers of truth and righteousness,—namely, brow-beat them into sullen and outward acquiescence with all the spirit-marring hypocrisy which that attitude implies.[32]

Long before the incident referred to in this letter, Max Margolis, a professor of biblical exegesis at the Hebrew Union College, was involved in a dispute that led to his leaving the College. It has been

debated whether he left under pressure or was officially dismissed, but it is quite certain that the Zionist issue was at the heart of his ordeal. In 1916, writing to "my dear friend" (probably Max Heller) on College stationery, he stated,

> I . . . thank you most heartily . . . for your kind words in regard to my return to the College. I need not tell you that nothing but enthusiasm for the cause which the College stands for would have lured me away from a position of honor and I regret to say that my enthusiasm has been considerably chilled by the touch of reality as embodied in a head whose fitness for the position he occupies may seriously be doubted. I do not like on an occasion like this to go into details; at some future date, I shall gladly do so.[33]

In another letter to Max Heller, written several years earlier, Margolis stated,

> That your sympathies were with me in all this commotion I knew full well. . . . I am not so sure now that I shall consent to remain. With the present (mal)-administration there is no hope of a permanent peace. "Ayn adam dar in nachash b'kfifah achat" [One should not live together with a snake]. B[ernhard] B[ettmann] is supporting K[ohler] out of sheer fear of [Emil] Hirsch's big stick and I am preparing myself for leaving College. . . . I presume you know what is at the bottom of it all. The stand the College is taking against Zionism is dictated by a man who unable to secure the presidency for himself, is interested in keeping—you out of it. That is the sum and substance of the matter. . . . It is up to the alumni to decide whether the College should be handed over to the forces of radicalism–Hirsch et al.—or continue in the lines of I. M. Wise. . . . you are quite right that Radicalism must be fought. If Reform means what it meant up until now, denationalized Judaism and the dogma of the finality of the divinely ordained Diaspora, Zionism is incompatible therewith. According to [Prof. Gotthard] Deutsch the ultimate aim of Judaism is—absorption. It is this, taught by K. and the whole crowd that has forced me to declare myself. Beyond this I believe in Israel's mission myself. I furthermore know that at present we are all Diaspora Jews . . . but we Zionists recognized that though the Diaspora will still continue for a long while it cannot and must not be our ultimate aim. There must be created over against the Diaspora a Palestinian Jewry, a home for the Jewish people, not by any manner or means for all Jews—in other words the status ante seventy [i.e., the destruction of the Second Commonwealth] must be restored. This is the acharit v'tikvah [the ultimate hope; cf. Jer. 31:17].[34]

In still another letter, he wrote to Max Heller,

> I realize the difficulty of establishing any standard whatever for the Hebrew Union College.... the possibility is of course open to them to draw up a body of negative doctrine. . . . I suppose the basis of such negative doctrine might be "political Zionism." What children they do make of themselves in setting up the strawman "political" knocking them down again. . . . it seems to me that your present position and Hirsch's present position are the same in principle. Each of you makes a personality the standard of action. The Reverend Dr. Hirsch making the present President his standard [and Heller making Isaac Mayer Wise his standard. D.P.]. Either the College remains what it was, a liberal institution, devoted to Jewish learning and the training of men who might form independent convictions . . . or it is once for all known as the Theological School of a petty sect in Judaism.[35]

On May 4, 1907, Margolis wrote to Max Heller,

> It may interest you to know that of 42 returns from the alumni 28 were for me, 5 against me, the rest non-committal. Offenheimer and C. S. Levi stood out for me to the very last. But the Board was influenced by Philipson, and Bettmann played a dubious part. Two students have already withdrawn (Junior Class) and a third Junior contemplates withdrawing. He was told by Kohler that no sermon with Zionistic sentiments would be tolerated in the College chapel. The student body is in a commotion.[36]

Two months later, writing from Halle, Germany, Margolis told Heller,

> The American Jewish papers have just arrived and I notice with great satisfaction that you have made Vice-President of the Conference. This action alone is ample evidence that the Conference as a body has not committed itself to an anti-Zionistic campaign. . . . let me hope that the Radicals will be held at bay. Large interests are at stake, and the future of Judaism must not be lightly thrown away.[37]

There may have been other factors at play. Michael Meyer cites "an oral tradition [which] . . . suggest[s] that Margolis at one point harbored the ambition of displacing Kohler as President."[38]

In a letter to Max Heller dated April 30, 1907, written on the stationery of the Federation of American Zionists, Judah Magnes stated,

> Tonight is the meeting of the Board of Governors of the College, when

> Margolis' fate will be determined upon. I suppose there can be but one outcome, inasmuch . . . as the question is practically one of a choice of president or professor. . . . I am afraid that you will have to add a name to those which you mention as being responsible for the situation, namely that of the former Professor of Homiletics. I cannot understand why my letter to Charles Levi was in any way considered disloyal by anyone. Before making it public I asked the Cincinnati man whether a public statement on my part would be acceptable to them, and they replied in the affirmative. After all, what was best to do? To sit idly by and see violence done without moving a muscle?[39]

On January 4, 1908, Magnes informed Max Heller that he was "interested in the formation of a Kehillah here [i.e., New York, where he was rabbi at Temple Emanu-El], and a Vaad Ha-Chinuch."[40] On March 2, 1911, he told Rabbi Heller,

> As soon as you retire from the presidency of the Central Conference of Rabbis, it is my intention to send in my resignation. I shall, of course consider the matter further until I decide definitely to take this step but, judging from the way I look at matters now, I think that I shall be confirmed in my present contention. . . . I rejoice to hear from you that there are younger men who sympathize with our Jewish aspirations. . . . the fight must be made all along the line. . . . I have had enough of protesting, . . . and the time has come for me to achieve something positive.[41]

The continuing struggle over Zionism at the College is reflected in a March 1915 incident involving Max Heller, his son James, and Kaufmann Kohler. Young Heller had complained to his father that Kohler would not permit him to deliver a Zionist sermon in the College chapel, and Max Heller complained to Kohler. In his response to Heller, Kohler said that he had told James that the sermon "was not in good taste at this time," although this did not mean that he was refusing. Moreover, said Kohler, the text James had chosen, "Nahamu ami" ("Comfort ye, my people"—Isaiah 40:1), "was not appropriate except for the Sabbath after the Ninth of Ab." By way of showing that the anti-Zionist policy of his administration was backed by the board, "which sought to define the measure of academic liberty which is to obtain at the HUC with regard to the advocacy of Zionism," Kohler included the following extract from the board's minutes:

> Political Zionism may be championed at the HUC by competent speakers who have not been guilty of insulting hostility to the institution or its officers and who may be trusted to speak in a spirit consonant with genuine religiousness. . . . a student who is to occupy the chapel pulpit as part of his homiletic training shall be permitted in his sermon to advocate political Zionism if the manner and temper of his advocacy are not in conflict with the sincerely religious note which is indispensable in the Jewish sermon.

Kohler concluded,

> if you will re-read the resolutions passed by the Board as a result of the Conference on February 15, you will find that I acted in accordance with the tenor and spirit of the same. You will, I trust, recognize that those who have the welfare of the College and the students at heart, should endeavor to curb the spirit of defiance and disrespect toward the authorities of the College, rather than encourage the same.[42]

Many years later, during a defense of the College against charges that it was breeding Zionists, President Julian Morgenstern made the following corroborating observation:

> I mention Dr. Kohler . . . because in his day . . . there was a definite, aggressive anti-Zionist policy governing the administration of the College and an attempt to control the students. I do not mention Dr. Wise's regime because there was not Zionism in that day.—(Louis Wolsey interjects, "That isn't so.") Zionism was just the beginning. . . . In Dr. Wise's day, toward the end, Levias began to find out that he was a Zionist. I was a student in those days, and I remember when Levias came and told us he was a Zionist. The issue came in Dr. Kohler's day, with Margolis.[43]

K'lal Yisroel (World Jewry)

Its antinationalism notwithstanding, the Reform movement was from the first committed to religious unity, and frequently sought to cooperate with other bodies in efforts in behalf of K'lal Yisroel. In his inaugural statement as president of the Central Conference, Isaac Mayer Wise cited various efforts in which he had been involved that had been made to create a united American Jewry. "In 1849 leading men . . . proposed—and did considerable work to realize the project—

to convene a meeting of delegates from the various congregations to devise means for concerted action, especially to erect hospitals, asylums, schools, etc. They failed." In 1855, he continued, there was another attempt to unite Reform and non-Reform Jews who agreed "to establish a permanent synod on strictly democratic principles, to establish and govern all necessary public institutions, and to direct all synagogal reforms. . . . By the most violent opposition of Rabbis who had not appeared in that Conference . . . the whole piece of work proved a sad failure." In 1867–68, another effort was made, but again the "projected union" was frustrated.[44]

Following these aborted efforts, the CCAR pursued a solitary course on the American scene. Nevertheless, in his President's Message of 1917, William Rosenau appealed for the support of a national fund for Jewish war relief. The convention delegates "heartily concurred . . . and urged that the Executive Board request the members of the Conference to speak on this theme during the High Holy Day season, and that they organize their communities for effective work along relief lines."[45]

In 1917, the Central Conference was giving serious consideration to joining the call for participation in the creation of the American Jewish Congress, which was then envisioned by Stephen Wise as an umbrella organization for American Jewry. A committee of four had already been designated to represent the Conference. However, a quarrel erupted between the CCAR and the Congress leadership over the inclusion of the issue of Zionism on the agenda. CCAR members felt that an agreement had been reached to delete it and that the agreement had been broken. Nevertheless, Max Heller presented a resolution urging that the CCAR's participation go forward, since "the Conference took part in the organization of the Congress by having representatives on the administrative and other committees." Samuel Schulman argued that "if the pact has been broken the place to say it is not here, but before the Congress." A motion to unconditionally stay out of the AJC won by a vote of 40 to 36.[46]

With the onset of World War I, the CCAR's attitude toward Zionism began to relent. At the 1921 convention, Max and James Heller together with Horace J. Wolf introduced the following resolution:

Inasmuch as our Conference has, at several conventions, declared its willing-

ness to aid in building Palestine . . . ,

Inasmuch as the British mandate for Palestine (as published in the press and officially acknowledged in answer to an interpellation in Parliament), recognizes the Zionist organization as the representative of the Jewish effort for Palestinian reconstruction,

Inasmuch as Jewish leaders in the Western World, who, like the large majority of our Conference, do not approve of the nationalist aims of the Zionist organization, have felt it their duty to co-operate with that organization for such Palestinian work as has no connection with political aspirations or nationalist propaganda,

Be it Resolved, that this Conference, through its Committee on Cooperation with National Organizations, endeavor to arrive at some practical and expedient method of co-operation with the Zionist organization towards the rebuilding of Palestine.[47]

The Zionist reaction to the resolution is indicated by the denouement:

> The Resolutions Committee referred this to the Executive Board "for such favorable action as is in keeping with the declaration of its attitude on Palestinian reconstruction which the Conference made in Rochester, in 1920." During the brief discussion, Leo Franklin, President, commented that during the prior year he had been instructed by the Executive Board to write to the Zionist Organization and to offer the cooperation of the Conference "for work of reconstruction in Palestine." The only response which Franklin received was, "I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter to the Zionist Organization of America." Franklin then informed the Convention that when his letter had been read at the Zionist gathering in Buffalo it "was greeted with silence; no action was taken upon said letter, although a definite offer of cooperation was made."[48]

The CCAR attempted, not always consistently, to differentiate between anti-Zionism and concern for the well-being of the Jewish people in Palestine and elsewhere. Sometimes this took on the form of supporting Jewish nationalism, as long as it was not concentrated in the land of Israel. Thus the 1906 convention passed a resolution endorsing the work of the Jewish Territorial Association,[49] and the 1921 convention, having agreed that the CCAR would unite with the Palestinian Development Council for the economic rehabilitation of Palestine, resolved to "invite all other Jewish organizations of national scope to associate themselves with the Conference and the Council in

this work, to the end that an organization of united Jewry may be developed for the upbuilding of Palestine and cooperation with a Mandatory Power."[50] Moreover, in 1924, the convention resolved to heartily endorse the United Jewish Campaign "for $14,000,000 under the Joint Distribution Committee and calls upon the members of the Conference to aid the Campaign in their respective communities."[51]

In 1924, the president of the CCAR, Abram Simon, declared that "the official statement of our Conference remains as its repudiation of nationalistic Zionism. The march of events, however, often leaves finely woven theories behind. . . . Whatever we may say to the contrary, Palestine is a more impressive responsibility, and calls us as insistently as the condemnation of political Zionism."[52] He urged the delegates, and they concurred, to work toward the creation of "a Jewish Agency of equal Zionist and non-Zionist representations to carry into effect the expectation of the Balfour Declaration."[53] In 1928, the following resolution was passed without debate: "The Central Conference of American Rabbis views with satisfaction the productive labors of the Jewish Agency Commissioners, and felicitates them upon the program projected. We recommend that the members of this Conference give their sympathetic cooperation toward the realization of the aims which this program encompasses."[54] Serving on the committee which presented the resolution were non-Zionists Abram Simon and Solomon Freehof, and Zionists Morris Lazaron and Abba Hillel Silver.

In 1927, however, the CCAR rejected a resolution calling for "the formation of a Jewish Assembly democratically elected that will speak for American Jewry when and as occasion demands."[55] Similarly, when the American Jewish Congress , in 1939, invited the CCAR to appoint two delegates to serve on its Governing Body, the Executive Board declined on the ground that it had "no authority to appoint such representatives."[56]

The foregoing would indicate that early trends within Reform gravitated toward a more comprehensive, people-oriented view of Judaism rather than a purely theological one. The transition began to occur before the promulgation of the Pittsburgh Platform.

The Columbus Platform of 1937 has been regarded as being greatly influenced by Mordecai Kaplan's conception of Judaism as a civilization. Without minimizing the great impact of the founder of Recon-

structionism on all branches of Jewish life in America, it is highly significant that on the first page of his *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), he cites a questionnaire submitted to the members of the Central Conference in 1925, and a quotation by Bernhard Felsenthal. Among the questions asked was, "Is the trend toward placing less emphasis on Judaism as a cult and more emphasis on Judaism as a civilization, i.e., identifying it with all the activities and relations of life?" Those who replied "cult" number fifteen, while fifty responded "civilization."[57] This was well before the full impact of Kaplan on Jewish thought had been felt. The quotation from Bernhard Felsenthal reads,

> "Judaism" and "Jewish Religion" are not synonymous terms. "Judaism" is more comprehensive than "Jewish religion," for "Jewish religion" is only a part of "Judaism." Judaism is the composite of the collected thoughts, sentiments and efforts of the Jewish people. In other words, Judaism is the sum total of all the manifestations of the distinctively Jewish national spirit.
>
> The Jewish religion is, then, only a part of Judaism, though by far its most important part. Among no other people on earth has religion occupied so large, so significant a place in the spiritual life as it has among the Jews. But besides religion there were, and still are, other elements in Judaism.[58]

The placing of both of these items at the very beginning of *Judaism as a Civilization* indicates quite convincingly that Kaplan recognized early strains in Reform Judaism (in the case of Felsenthal, a very early strain indeed) which were compatible with the idea of a Judaism that transcends religion alone.

In 1972, after a period of "observing" executive sessions of the World Jewish Congress, and after tabling a recommendation to seek affiliation, the CCAR voted to apply for membership, and was accepted. In 1971 and 1972, members of the CCAR, American and Israeli, met in Oranim and at the Leo Baeck School in Haifa with representatives of the kibbutz movement, and out of the discussions, conducted in Hebrew, arrived at the conclusion that the time had come to create a Reform kibbutz. In 1972, the CCAR initiated a series of conversations (under the auspices of the Synagogue Council of America) with the National Council of Jewish Federations seeking to define areas of possible conflict and accord.

The most significant development involving the rabbinate and the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion was the decision,

in 1970, to require rabbinical candidates to spend their first year of study at the Jerusalem School, founded in 1963. The primary objective was to enable students to acquire proficiency in the Hebrew language and rabbinic texts, but this has been accompanied by immersion in the life of Israelis and the Jewish people. It was Judah Magnes, of the class of 1900, who best defined the objectives of the program when he presciently proposed, from the Chancellor's Office at the Hebrew University,

> that the College helps [*sic*] the students of the graduating class to spend an extra year at the Hebrew University. There are all facilities for advanced instruction in Hebrew and other Semitic subjects. Jerusalem is an inspiration to all who look upon it. A year in Palestine will give you something of the rhythm and color and depths of the biblical background you would otherwise not acquire. It will deepen your Jewish consciousness and help formulate the problem of Jewish religion. The personalities of the Hebrew Prophets will become clear and will live for you.[59]

The total immersion in K'lal Yisroel came with the efforts by Reform rabbis, together with their Jewish colleagues of other denominations, to rescue victims of the Holocaust. Ephraim Dekel, one of the officials directing the Jewish exodus from Europe, writes concerning Chaplain Abraham Klausner, who served under General George S. Patton:

> The Holocaust and the condition of the survivors affected him deeply and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to aid and rescue. There was nothing in which the activity of the "Bricha" was not helped by his organizational ability. He provided documents for the transfer of refugees. . . . He appeared among them . . . encouraged them. . . . More than once he arranged transports . . . not heeding formal procedures. . . . His official vehicle was used . . . as a "transit visa" for many refugees. . . . Many devout refugees whom we cared for, referred to Rabbis Klausner, [William] Braude, [Eugene] Lipman, and others . . . as "Lamed Vovniks," tzadikim garbed in American uniforms, through whose merit the Messiah will come.[60]

The American Council for Judaism

The American Council for Judaism[61] emerged out of the resistance of non-Zionist and anti-Zionist members of the CCAR to what they perceived as the growing and steady expansion of Zionist ideology within

Reform Judaism. Its effort to create a counterforce outside the Central Conference initially threatened a schism, but the organization went into an early decline. Nevertheless, the intensity of the struggle over the emergence of the Council represented a watershed in the record of the Reform rabbinate, for in its aftermath the diminishing anti-Zionist faction within the CCAR collapsed and Zionist thought as well as Zionist action dominated thereafter.

During the formation of the American Council for Judaism, the anti-Zionists themselves acknowledged two matters—first, that opposition to Jewish nationalism was indeed a central issue which consistently animated Reform and out of which the other issues proliferated; and second, that the Reform movement, especially the CCAR and the College, had lost its grip on the control of this issue.

On March 17, 1941, Stephen Wise, chairman of the American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, sent a wire to American rabbis urging their support for the establishment of a "Jewish army under own insignia and allied command defending homeland as self respecting people."[62] When the Central Conference assembled in June 1942, a resolution calling for the endorsement of "a Jewish army, based in Palestine" was presented and passed after long and intense debate. It is significant that the fourteen-man resolutions committee, bringing in the army resolution, contained a minority of Zionists, and only one who was actively involved in Zionist affairs, Max Nussbaum.

The resolution read:

> Your committee recommends that this resolution be reworded as follows:
>
> Whereas, the free peoples of the world are now engaged in a war for decency, justice and good faith in international relations, and for the defense of their homes and their freedoms against oppression and slavery,
>
> And whereas, the Jewish population of Palestine is eager to defend its soil and its home to the last man,
>
> Therefore, be it resolved, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis is in complete sympathy with the demand of the Jews of Palestine that they be given the opportunity to fight in defense of their homeland on the side of the democracies under allied command to the end that the victory of democracy may be hastened everywhere.[63]

It passed by a vote of 64 for and 38 against, despite the argument by the opposition that the very discussion of the issue represented a viola-

tion of a 1935 resolution declaring that the issue of Zionism was a matter of personal conscience for CCAR members and not to be the subject of further debate. Known as the neutrality resolution it read: "We are persuaded that the acceptance or rejection of the Zionist program should be left to the determination of the individual members of the Conference themselves. Therefore, be it resolved, that the CCAR takes no official stand on the subject of Zionism."[64]

With this issue as the immediate rallying point, and under the leadership of Louis Wolsey, meetings were held for the purpose of organizing a body of "non-Zionist" rabbis who would attempt to counteract the influence of the Zionist movement and of Zionism, especially in the Central Conference. As Wolsey later noted, "The American Council for Judaism was born in Cincinnati in February, 1942, following the passage of the Jewish army resolution."[65] The leadership of the Central Conference, alarmed at the early growth of the anti-Zionist body, began to fear the possibility of a split within the CCAR. Rabbi James Heller attempted to head off this development by offering to make a statement of regret over the passage of the army resolution, inasmuch as he had been accused of violating the 1935 agreement and had neglected to call the resolution out of order when it was first called to the floor. In addition he was prepared to reaffirm the 1935 resolution. He also undertook a special session of the CCAR at which, in executive session, all the vexing issues leading to the confrontation would be aired. Morris Lazaron was eager that such a solution of the problem should be arrived at, and in a letter to James Heller, he expressed the hope that "you will be able to keep the extremists in hand."[66] Lazaron had assumed that Heller wanted the army resolution expunged, but in fact he was only prepared to say that "the passing of the resolution on a Jewish army was a mistake."[67] On the strength of this, he hoped to persuade the opposition to call off the impending meeting. Solomon Freehof was most supportive of Heller's conciliatory gesture and may even have stimulated it. Writing to Wolsey, he said, "We four [Wolsey, Goldenson, Freehof, Heller] represent the great preponderance of Conference members and we want to reestablish the Conference on solid foundations of brotherhood and friendship."[68] The sticking point, however, was whether the army resolution should be "regretted" or "expunged." An initial vote of the anti-Zionists favored calling off the meeting temporarily by a vote of 17 to 2 (one of

the two was Elmer Berger, who seemed to be spoiling for a fight), but this was quickly reversed, and plans for the meeting, scheduled for Atlantic City in June, went forward. Heller was reminded that Zionist Reform rabbis were not being called upon to leave the Zionist Organization of America. A call was issued for a meeting in Atlantic City for June 1 and 2, 1942. It was addressed to 160 men, one-half of whom "responded one way or another."[69]

Early on, it became evident that the Jewish army issue was only the triggering device, not the central problem. The confrontation had been gestating since 1890. At a meeting of fourteen rabbis, presided over by Louis Wolsey, Dr. Jonah Wise said, "we ought not to discuss the Jewish army question at all, because it was only a symptom rather than a basic cause for our problems."[70]

On Monday, March 30, 1942 (four weeks after the CCAR convention in Cincinnati), a meeting was held at the Hotel Warwick in Philadelphia. The issue of the Jewish army was disposed of at the outset of the deliberations. William Fineshriber indicated that the "immediate cause" for the meeting was the Jewish army resolution and asked "whether or not we should call a meeting of Reform Rabbis opposed to Jewish Nationalism, to organize in opposition to this Jewish army." Norman Gerstenfeld called for a meeting to discuss the deeper implications of the issue, which involved "Nationalism versus Jewish Religion." Goldenson also argued that the question was not the Jewish army but nationalism and secularism, of which the army was the most recent expression. In other words, the issue was Judaism as a universal religion.[71]

The issue, as Philipson had put it long before, was the incompatibility, as asserted from the beginning, of Reform and Zionism. This explains the curious and clumsy phrasing of the debate in June 1942, which was entitled "Are Zionism and Reform Incompatible?" suggesting, correctly, that the burden of proof was on the Zionists. The anti-Zionists were arguing ideologically. The Zionists, while presenting ideological and theological arguments, were essentially applying them to the realities of the Nazi period, in which the Holocaust was becoming increasingly and terrifyingly evident. The anti-Zionists were playing by the rules of a game that had already, not to their satisfaction, been trampled into the mud of a chaotic world—universalism, the inevitable advance of reason and goodwill. Men like La-

zaron and Goldenson, who were doing all they could to restrain the determination of others to have a showdown, and who pressed for the Heller formula, were true believers. Others in their camp affirmed their support of Palestine as a nonpolitical haven for persecuted Jews whom Jewish philanthropy would sustain. Their arguments, framed within the realities of the forties, were not evil but out of context.

The ground which the anti-Zionists were defending was nevertheless, for better or worse, authentic Reform ground, and they realized that they were about to lose it. Reform, as they had inherited it, did not (at least until the Columbus Platform of 1937) reconcile universalism with particularism, but proclaimed the unambiguous victory of the former over the latter. Thus they were fighting against what they considered the usurpation of Reform by the particularists. The Jewish army issue was the last straw, and they saw quite accurately that Reform stood "in danger" of becoming transformed into something altogether different from what it had been called into being to represent. Yet this process had been going on for a long time. The theoretical groundwork for it had been laid by Caspar Levias and Bernhard Felsenthal in 1899, and the foundations had been solidly established in 1935 by Abba Hillel Silver in his enduring paper "Israel," in which he attacked the opposition as Paulinists.[72] Thus, Silver and others did not attempt to convince their opponents that the radical formulation of the Zionists was authentically Reform, but rather that classical Reform was not compatible with the spirit of Judaism. The anti-Zionists understood the issue: It was Reform versus transform.

In the early, preparatory stages there was considerable anguish among the anti-Zionists over whether or not to form a separate organization. Jonah Wise expressed the fear that "a minority group . . . would achieve nothing but discord and embittered feeling."[73] Goldenson still entertained doubts as to the wisdom of holding the Atlantic City meeting—first, because it could be assumed that no more than seventy rabbis would attend, and second, because he was fearful of creating a schism in the Reform rabbinate. Both men stressed the importance of emphasizing Reform universalism rather than an attack on Zionism.

On April 6 in Philadelphia, Jonah Wise urged that a "modus vivendi" be worked out with the CCAR leadership and indicated that he was not ready to issue a call for the creation of a "non-Zionist" body.

The existence of the Central Conference was at stake, and the UAHC was facing enormous problems of its own. On the other hand, Rosenau, who had at first feared a cleavage within Reform, felt that a definite organized stand must be taken against Jewish nationalism. Wolsey declared that if an organization was not brought into being, "we may just as well say Kaddish for Reform Judaism. The moment has come for fighting."[74]

In a letter dated April 30, 1942, James Heller urged the members of the CCAR "not to go through with this action, to envisage before it is too late what will result from their persistence in it."[75] None of this served to reduce tensions, and instead increased them. "I do not believe that ever, in the history of Judaism in America has there been such a campaign of vilification and abuse as has been hurled against the so-called minority."[76] The issue was Zionism, but it brought to a head many other latent resentments among the non-Zionists. "There has been a tendency to revive, in the Reform Temple, the Orthodox modes which had once been abandoned—more Hebrew than less, more of the old rituals and not fewer, more of the European importations rather than the usages uniquely American. Some of our colleagues are even proposing a restoration of the *Talith* and the *Yarmulke*."[77]

The Atlantic City meeting, attended by thirty-six men, dealt in large measure with the alleged dilution of the Reform nature of the Hebrew Union College by students from Zionist backgrounds. The delegates readily acknowledged the persistent suspicion that the College, which as a matter of policy had formerly repressed Zionist ideology, had at last lost control of the situation. Thus, at an organizational meeting of the yet unnamed American Council for Judaism, the role of the HUC in the problem was placed on the agenda: "The problem of the Hebrew Union College as an agency for education for Reform, was brought up by Dr. Wolsey."[78] While not categorically stated, the conjectures about the dismissal of Caspar Levias and later of Max Margolis from the College faculty because of their Zionism were treated as a given. Criticism of the College for letting the situation get out of hand and a proposal to cut off the source of the trouble by limiting the enrollment of students from suspect backgrounds were broached.

In defense of the College, Julian Morgenstern, its president, told the gathering: "The source of the trouble is the JIR (Jewish Institute of Religion) [which] has graduated 120. . . . at least 110 are very ardent

Zionists."[79] It was moved that "a committee be appointed to draw up resolutions expressing the sentiments expressed here tonight, with regard to the merger of the College [with Stephen Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion in New York], and such other matters as have been mentioned here tonight, which may be pertinent to that old problem, reference to the educational department of the Union."[80] The motion carried.

On November 23, the group unanimously adopted the name proposed by Lazaron: "The Council for American Judaism"; it was later changed to "American Council for Judaism." At the closing session, when a proposed Statement of Principles prepared by the Baltimore delegation was to be read, a debate broke out as to whether the statement could be conceived as signifying the formal creation of a separate rabbinical body. Since some of those present were also members of the CCAR Executive Board, which was to meet the next day, there was considerable anxiety as to how the statement would be construed, especially since the air was already charged with speculation about a possible schism. Morgenstern, Goldenson, and Wice pleaded for caution. The stenographic report quotes Goldenson:

> Among the first things that I read this morning was a headline in this morning's *Tribune* reciting the fact that 200,000 Jews have been killed in various parts of Central Europe. That has been in my mind ever since, and that sort of chastens me a little bit. It makes me more careful now than I would have been if I hadn't seen that article. For that reason any utterance about Jewish problems and Jewish troubles and Jewish hopes, I think we ought to take extra time and pause about any statement that we now make. It is not an academic matter. We are not dealing with abstract propositions.
>
> I read the original statement. I have listened very carefully to the reading of the Revised Statement, and I want to say that my general impression is—particularly since hearing the Revised Statement—that we are taking an all-out attitude of war, an all-out war attitude. I think that our Statement is a little too belligerent, too unrestrained, and we ought to be more careful about what we are saying and the way we are saying it. Another point is that to me it appears as though we are duplicating the entire conference program with the exception of some practical matters.
>
> I cannot feel that if we do all we are attempting to do that we are, in fact, becoming another conference, which was not in my mind certainly when I joined the men in discussing the program of our group in Philadelphia.[81]

The issue within the Council was whether it should be an anti-Zionist organization or a religious body stressing the universalistic

theology of Reform Judaism. How it could have done the latter without ignoring the former is problematical, but the former could certainly be pressed without engaging the latter. The election of Elmer Berger as the Council's professional head guaranteed the prosecution of the anti-Zionist policy.

The debate became increasingly chaotic and resulted in the drafting of a less aggressive statement which was to be circulated by mail for additional comments before being adopted. The defeat of those who wanted a confrontational resolution that could have irreparably widened the rift with the CCAR effectively canceled secessionist possibilities, even if that may not have been perceived at the time. With a membership of ninety-five adherents, the Council had attained its greatest strength, and although the road toward the showdown in June 1943 was to be alive with hostility, the caution of Goldenson and Morgenstern had ensured the unity of the CCAR. Had the minutes of the meeting then been available, the internal ambivalence of the newly founded group would have been apparent. Significantly, the minutes state: "Dr. Wolsey raised the question of the publication of the Atlantic City Proceedings. Requests have been received for these minutes. It was moved and seconded that only the papers read at the Atlantic City meeting be mimeographed."[82] In what might have been a telephone conversation, perhaps in August 1942, Goldenson told Lazaron: "Jonah Wise talked with two laymen—one of whom was Paul Baerwald. Mr. Baerwald said definitely this is no time for us to publish any statement which would involve us in internal controversy."[83] This did not prevent Baerwald from telling the lay-rabbinical session of the ACJ on December 7, 1943, that "we must do our part in making America safe for our Jewish boys when they return from the war. Contrary to Wolsey's pessimism we have accomplished much. We have stirred up Zionists to realization of opposition."[84]

By June 1942, Elmer Berger was coming more and more into the picture. Lazaron thought highly of Berger's leadership, as shown by his assertion that "you are contributing something rare and splendid and we older men are grateful,"[85] as well as by his promise: "I expect . . . to see Lewis Strauss after lunching with [Sumner] Welles. It is important that we get him with us. I shall keep you in intimate touch."[86]

The restraint of Goldenson and Jonah Wise, and the hesitancy of

others, is reflected in another letter from Lazaron to Berger,

> I received a telegram midnight yesterday as follows: "Owing to recent developments in the war and the grave threat to Palestine especially to our own people there, the publication of our statement now would be a sad mistake. We urge you most earnestly to withhold it for the present. Jonah Wise and Samuel Goldenson." I also have a letter from Fineberg who raises the same issue. Gerstenfeld, who suggested that we tie up our statement with a Jewish Army, is weakening.[87]

Several days later Berger responded to Lazaron,

> I do not know what we can do if Goldenson and Wise . . . if those men feel that the whole fabric of Zionism is a detriment to Jewish life then they ought to realize that in every crisis the Zionists capitalize upon panic, they fasten their grip tighter upon the victims. I somehow do not like their high and mighty concern . . . Goldenson has been halting from the first meeting in Wolsey's office last winter. . . . I am just a bit afraid that Wise does not know whether he ought to be a-foot or a-horseback because of the UJA.[88]

Lazaron was completely enamored of Berger. "It is a grand experience to have as comrade and collaborator a man like yourself."[89]

From September 1942 to January 1943, Lazaron tried to involve Judah Magnes in the Council's program without specifically saying so. He wrote, "We are trying to get across to the American Jewish community that one can work for Palestine without indulging in . . . political activity. . . . If there is any way you feel you can cooperate in your efforts from this end, please let me know."[90] In his response, Magnes enclosed material about Ihud ("Unity," a group he had helped found which supported the idea of a binational Jewish-Arab state in an undivided Palestine) and, referring to the statement of principles of the American Council for Judaism, said, "I also have a universalistic interpretation of Jewish history. But this for me is not in opposition to the national elements and hopes of the Jewish people."[91] The correspondence resulted in public controversy when Lazaron quoted a statement by Magnes that internal issues in Palestine could result in civil war. This caused Magnes much embarrassment, and Lazaron subsequently apologized: "I hope I have made you feel how unhappy I have been at a thoughtless act. . . . Please forgive me if I have caused any harm or hurt."[92] He attempted to link the ideology of Ihud with that of the American Council for Judaism, and at the same time en-

couraged Berger to carry on his antinationalist program.

From January 1943, in anticipation of the CCAR convention, to be held in New York on June 22–27, strenuous efforts were being made to head off a collision. A meeting between representatives of the ACJ and the CCAR, held in the study of Morris Lazaron on January 5, sought ways of arriving at a conciliatory position. Heller stated that in return for the dissolution of the Council, he would recommend that the Conference reaffirm the neutrality resolution and adopt it as a by-law. The meeting adjourned inconclusively, but early the next month Rabbi Wolsey, provisional chairman of the Council, wrote to Heller, "This is to inform you that a mail vote of the Rabbinical members of the American Council for Judaism quite overwhelmingly declares itself against liquidation of the Organization."[93] Thus, efforts to head off a confrontation and a possible break came to naught. The resolution by the executive board of the CCAR calling upon "dissident groups to desist from organizing outside of the Conference" foundered. As a result, the decision of the program committee, at the October meeting of the board, to devote two executive sessions of the convention to a discussion of the ideas and issues bound up with the controversy became fully operative. A third step was also recommended by Rabbi Heller—that conversations be initiated between representatives of the Zionist organization and the "erstwhile American Council for Judaism, looking toward the finding of a common ground in regard to Palestine, and the attempt to discover methods of cooperation."[94]

As the date of the convention drew nearer, the opposing forces maneuvered for advantage. A letter from Samuel Wohl, calling a caucus for June 21, was inadvertently sent to a Council member, prompting a similar call to "our 95" by five council leaders.[95] Defections from the Council began to take place even as early as the middle of January 1943. As Morris Lazaron recorded: "A few of our men are not stalwart enough to stand the strain of... misrepresentation and are withdrawing."[96] Three more members withdrew due to what Elmer Berger called "brow-beating."[97]

Despite the intense efforts to head off a clash, the executive board of the CCAR had already determined, in the fall of 1942, to schedule a formal debate for the June 1943 meeting. The participants were to be Felix Levy, William Fineshriber, Hyman Schachtel, and David Polish.

At its preconvention meeting on June 22, 1943, the executive board resolved that "when the Committee which is to prepare a resolution summing up the opinion of the Conference as a result of the discussion on Zionism and Reform Judaism shall present its report, the discussion should be held in executive session; that no stenographic report of the Executive session be made; that no report of the discussion appear in the Year Book, but that the final resolution adopted shall appear in the Year Book."[98]

Following the debate and the floor discussion, which continued till after 2:00 A.M., the convention passed the following resolutions:

> I
>
> Of late, some of our members have renewed the assertion that Zionism is not compatible with Reform Judaism. The attempt has been made to set in irreconcilable opposition "universalism" and "particularism." To the members of the Conference, this appears unreal and misleading. Without impugning the right of members of the Conference to be opposed to Zionism, for whatever reason they may choose, the Conference declares that it discerns no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism, no reason why those of its members who give allegiance to Zionism should not have the right to regard themselves as fully within the spirit and purpose of Reform Judaism.[99]
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> II
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> The American Council for Judaism was founded by members of the CCAR for the purpose of combatting Zionism. The Zionist Movement and masses of Jews everywhere, shocked by the rise of this organization at a time when Zionists and others are laboring hard to have the gates of Palestine reopened for the harassed Jews of Europe, could not avoid judging this event in the light of past controversies, or seeing in it an example of what they had come to consider the constant opposition of Reform Judaism to Zionist aspirations. This impression does grave injustice to the many devoted Zionists in the CCAR and to the Conference itself.
>
> Therefore, without impugning the right of Zionists or non-Zionists to express and to disseminate their convictions within and without the Conference, we, in the spirit of amity, urge our colleagues of the American Council for Judaism to terminate this organization.[100]

Louis Wolsey

According to Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern, the American Council for Judaism, "at its greatest," had "only about 60–70 colleagues." Even

some of those who attended the Atlantic City conference in 1942 did not join.[101] Moreover, there was something of an inverse ratio between age and support for the Council. The greatest number of Council members and sympathizers was found among the older members of the CCAR. Thus, an anti-Zionist statement that was circulated among graduates of HUC in the early stages of the Council was signed by 70 percent of the members of the classes from 1883 to 1893 and 50 percent of the graduates from 1894 to 1903, but only 28 percent from 1904 to 1914, 23 percent from 1915 to 1924, 18 percent from 1925 to 1934, and 17 percent from 1935 to 1942.[102]

Disillusion with the Council was not long in coming even within its highest rabbinic echelons. By the end of 1945 Louis Wolsey resigned as vice-president of the Council, and in a letter to the *American Israelite* he said in part, "I feel in justice to myself I have not become responsible for pronouncements and declarations of the American Council for Judaism and I am not privileged to participate in formulating them."[103] On April 2, 1946, he wrote to Lessing Rosenwald, the Council's key lay leader, "The American Council for Judaism has performed a good and necessary task in that it recalls to thinking people the fact that there are two sides to the controversy. . . . I favor very much the dissolution of the organization, and to that end I herewith hand you my resignation as a member of the ACJ."[104]

A few months later, in a letter he wrote to Hyman Schachtel, also sending a copy to Bernard Heller, Wolsey provided a deeper understanding of the reasons for his resignation. Condemning Lessing Rosenwald's "departures from the principles of the founders of the American Council for Judaism, and the alienation of the Rabbis from its activity and even some of its principles," he says that Rosenwald "made the organization a refuge for atheistic and unJewish Jews who joined because they looked upon the ACJ as an instrument for assimilation—meanwhile proclaiming that we were Americans of the Jewish faith. That phrase 'Jewish faith' . . . has been nothing short of hypocrisy. The Chairman of the Philadelphia chapter is a blatant anti-religionist, and the President's home is a gathering place for Jewish anti-Judaism—the policy of the triumvirate has been to snub Rabbis and religion."[105] Wolsey does not name the members of the triumvirate, but we know that he felt equally strongly against Elmer Berger and Wallach. In another letter to Hyman Schachtel, Wolsey adds, "Our leaders

have—entered into strife and controversy, and have emphasized the political note as much as those we condemn on the opposition."[106]

By October 13, 1947, Wolsey records that "only four or five especially selected Rabbis remain in the fold, most of them are inactive in the Council."[107] On May 3, 1948 Wolsey repeated his resignation, this time to the American Council for Judaism.[108] It was followed by a flood of congratulatory mail to Wolsey by laymen and rabbis, including former members of the Council. Among the rabbis who wrote was James Heller, who stated, "On behalf of those who feel that the new State of Israel deserves a chance of life and freedom, who are sure that our brothers there are filled with a genuine determination to take in the helpless Jews of Europe, I want to thank you."[109]

The rapid defections from the American Council for Judaism, climaxed by that of Louis Wolsey, represented both an acknowledgment of the realities of Jewish history and a recognition that the essential, unarticulated, but immanent premise of Pittsburgh that Judaism can be sustained by the power of an abstraction could not be supported. Wolsey's resignation, six years after the conception of the Council, sent shock waves through the organization and exultation among its opponents, since he was one of its founders and greatest ideological champions.

Morris Lazaron

The struggle to reconcile Zionism with universalism is embodied in the odyssey of Morris Lazaron, who oscillated from non-Zionism to political Zionism to radical anti-Zionism. Although Stephen Wise complimented Lazaron on April 15, 1915, for viewing "the question of Zionism admirably," and felt "so glad you feel as you do,"[110] Lazaron wrote to the Federation of American Zionists on October 13, 1916, as follows:

> I am not a Zionist because I am not a political nationalist Jew. If the Zionists would come out with a four square statement defining exactly what their claims and hopes are and repudiating the establishment of the Jewish political entity in Palestine or politico-nationalistic interpretation of Jewish history, and if they would declare that their sole intention is to encourage settlement in Palestine and further Jewish life there, they would probably have the cooperation of great numbers of American Jews who are at present their opponents.[111]

Despite this disclaimer, Lazaron soon changed his mind about Zionism, as is shown by another letter from Wise, less than a year later, expressing his surprise and joy "that you have recently come to see and feel the power of Zionism."[112] From that point on, and for many years to come, Lazaron was a devoted and enthusiastic Zionist and member of the Zionist Organization of America. His correspondence with Stephen Wise became very cordial, and he saluted him as "cousin Stephen"; Wise signed his letters in the same way. In October 1923, when Lazaron was selected as chairman of the Education Committee of the Baltimore Zionist District, Henrietta Szold congratulated him for "your devotion to the Cause,"[113] and in June of 1924, when he began a series of extensive trips in the South in behalf of the Zionist movement and the Keren Hayesod, Simon J. Levin, director of the Palestine Foundation Fund, wrote him, "Be assured that the Jewry of Richmond [Virginia] as well as the Keren Hayesod Committee will always remain indebted to you for the nobel [*sic*] services which you have rendered."[114] Toward the end of the year Lazaron wrote that he was "giving up about two weeks of my time from my work and I would not do this if I did not believe in this cause with all my heart and soul."[115] In another letter written around the same time, he said, "No effort is too great to put this thing across successfully and to warrant the effort I will make in the trip," adding that Louis Lipsky was scheduled to address his congregation.[116] Emanuel Neumann, secretary of the Keren Hayesod, thanked Lazaron for the "sacrifices you have made on behalf of the cause for the upbuilding of Palestine."[117]

When Louis Lipsky, chairman of the Zionist Organization of America, asked Lazaron for the names and addresses of the parents of the confirmants of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in behalf of the Hebrew University, Lazaron agreed.[118] During April of 1928 Lazaron strongly defended Chaim Weizmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization, against criticism by Stephen Wise, who "objects to Weizmann's policy in regard to Great Britain, is opposed to asking a loan from the League of Nations, and does not favor the establishment of the Jewish Agency as at present constituted."[119] Having failed in arranging for an arbitration between both Zionist sides of the dispute, Lazaron decided to stay away from the forthcoming Zionist convention in Pittsburgh "because I continue to maintain the position that I have held up to the present time—disassociation from the politics of

the fight."[120] This was in response to a stinging rebuke that he had received from Wise a week earlier. On May 29 he was rebuked again, this time by Lipsky, who criticized his "caustic references . . . [and] your reference to the controversy in terms of the schism between east and west. This feeling . . . can do our cause tremendous harm. . . . we must do nothing that will build up resentment."[121] Still later, on November 29, 1934, Lazaron strongly criticized Wise for accusing German Jews of "lying down disgracefully."[122]

Despite these unpleasant exchanges Lazaron was elected to the National Committee of the Zionist Organization of America and accepted, "with pleasure."[123] Yet in a November 1935 memorandum, Lazaron sharply differed with certain Zionist policies, indicating himself to be "wholly out of sympathy with most of the personalities that have assumed the leadership of the Movement." His turn away from Zionism began at approximately this time. He strenuously objected to the passage of a resolution by the World Zionist Organization endorsing the proposed World Jewish Congress. "We Zionists of America will have to determine whether we desire the ZOA to become an instrument of the American Jewish Congress." He also objected to the reduction of the non-Zionist representatives at the Jewish Agency from five, standing in an equal ratio to the Zionist representatives, to two, making for a Zionist/non-Zionist ratio of eight to two.

> The Zionists may be within their rights in desiring to control the Agency but the action was significant of the determination to accept non-Zionist participation in Palestine reconstruction only on Zionist terms. It was apparently forgotten or ignored that tremendous non-Zionist funds went into the Palestine Economic Corporation, the Rutenberg concession, the Jordan project, and are now going into the Huleh project. . . . In the face of these facts it is easily understandable that men who were altogether sympathetic with the practical constructive work in Palestine, who had testified to their interest in maintaining a united front through years of effort and despite much personal unpleasantness should feel the time had come to part company. . . . The issue is shall the ZOA membership permit the organization created for the purpose of upbuilding the land of our fathers . . . to become an instrument in the hands of certain American Jews to be used for the promotion of their own ends.[124]

It should therefore not be surprising that in a letter to Morris Rothenberg of the Zionist Organization of America he wrote, "I am not interested in Zionist politics."[125] And on May 18, 1939, he submitted his resignation to the ZOA "with profound regret but believing as I

do, there is no other course open to me."[126]

Now follows an episode with his brother-in-law, Abba Hillel Silver, over a projected visit to the United States by Weizmann. Lazaron objected to his coming because it will be "invested with political significance . . . the effects of which can only be harmful at this time. I know whereof I speak."[127] Silver responded that he himself had extended the invitation to Weizmann, and therefore he was declining Lazaron's invitation to speak at Lazaron's anniversary celebration. "You have made it quite impossible for me to accept it."[128]

Lazaron's alienation reached full bloom in 1940, when he wrote,

> There are two groups among us. One is represented by the Zionist Organization and the World Jewish Congress. This group . . . looks to the establishment in Palestine of an independent Jewish State. . . . They believe the Jews to be a people like any other people. . . . The second group is not interested in the political program of the Zionist-Congress group. It fears such a program as a departure from the Jewish culturo-religious tradition. . . . Responsible American Jewish leadership agrees today with Mr. Neville Laski when he says, "The idea of a Jewish state is no less distasteful now than it was 20 years ago."

Lazaron advocated that immigration to Palestine be "on the basis of the capacity and ability of the country to absorb it . . . to free such immigration from political implications and to allay the fears of the Arabs," and expressed the hope "that the ultimate constitution will establish a Palestine State in which Palestine Jews will *individually* possess the full rights of citizenship and at the same time have full *communal*, cultural and religious autonomy." He concluded his thesis with words clearly foreshadowing the yet unarticulated philosophy of the yet-to-be-created American Council for Judaism:

> American Jews must not elevate a political program to first place in Jewish concern. . . . American Jews must not introduce the Jewish people at this time into the maelstrom of international politics. American Jews must not . . . reduce in importance other places where the stricken may find homes. . . . American Jews must not isolate the Jewish situation from the problems of the world and attempt to solve it by Jewish effort alone.[129]

The debate on Zionism spurred the CCAR into intensified involvement in Jewish life. The call for an American Jewish Conference (also called the American Jewish Assembly) was issued for January 23–24, 1943, to be held in Pittsburgh on February 5. Its executive committee proposed to "consider and recommend action on problems relating to the rights and status of Jews in the post-war world; to consider and

recommend action upon all matters looking to the implementation of the rights of the Jewish people in respect to Palestine; to elect a delegation to carry out the program of the American Jewish Conference."[130] Among the thirty-two participating organizations was the CCAR, with Solomon Freehof sitting on the committee on guidance, and James Heller on the committee on proposals.[131] On August 29, the Jewish Conference convened in New York. Among the five hundred delegates, and in addition to Heller and Freehof as official representatives of the CCAR, were twenty-six Reform rabbis, including three former members of the American Council for Judaism, among them Louis Wolsey. Members of the executive committee were Heller and Silver. Addressing the conference were Heller, Silver, Max Nussbaum, Stephen Wise, Philip Bernstein, and Freehof. Serving on various committees were Barnett Brickner (general committee), Jerome Folkman, Leon Fram, Max Nussbaum, and Abraham Shaw (committee on rescue of European Jewry), Freehof, Julius Gordon, and David Pearlman (committee on Palestine), Solomon Basel, Bernstein, Benedict Glazer, Ira Sanders, and Louis Wolsey (committee on postwar problems of European Jewry), David Wice (organization committee), and Joshua Liebman, Max Macoby, and Joshua Trachtenberg (resolutions committee).[132]

On Tuesday, August 31, while the conference was in session, the American Council for Judaism issued in the *New York Times* a statement signed by thirty-two rabbis and eighty-two laymen, "Americans of Jewish Faith," on issues affecting American and world Jewish life. Heller rose to respond and stated in the course of his remarks, "The American Council for Judaism represents a comparatively small minority of the Reform Rabbinate. . . . I as a Reform Rabbi, as a Zionist and as an American Jew, denounce and describe it here as treachery to that cause . . . which our country and its allies are pledged to save and serve."[133] The American Jewish Conference demanded the collective and official as well as individual commitment of the Reform rabbinate to the totality of Jewish life. After June and August of 1943, the CCAR was not again to be challenged on that issue.

Social Justice

The Reform rabbinate has always regarded a commitment to social justice as the one unvarying constant in Reform Judaism. Thus, in

1918, the CCAR's committee on synagogue and industrial relations, under the chairmanship of Horace J. Wolf, stated that "the ideal of social justice has always been an integral part of Judaism,"[134] while in 1956 the Joint Commission on Social Action of the CCAR and the UAHC reaffirmed that "programs of social justice are at the heart of Judaism and particularly Reform Judaism.... Judaism is a way of life which was never intended to be easy.... [social justice] is the ingredient which preserves the prophetic character of our faith ... and which entitles us to wear the proud and ancient badge of 'Jew.' "[135]

Activism of Reform rabbis on behalf of social justice actually predates the formal establishment of the Reform movement. In 1861, for instance, Rabbi David Einhorn, who later exercised a decisive influence at the Philadelphia Rabbinical Conference in 1869, was forced to flee from Baltimore when his life was endangered because of his denunciations of slavery.

The classic formulation of Reform's concern with social justice is found in Article VIII of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885: "In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society."

Article VIII is important on the following counts: It appeals to "the spirit of Mosaic legislation" rather than to prophetic preachment; it unambiguously points to the "evils of the present organization of society," clearly confronting the prevailing economic system; it recognizes the need, rooted in "Mosaic legislation," to "regulate" economic and social relations; it undertakes for the first time in the history of a rabbinic body, to cope with injustices outside the Jewish community.

It is also noteworthy that while much of early American Reform has its origins in Germany, involvement in the socioeconomic issues of the host nation is distinctively American. This is underscored in item 5, whose first sentence reads, "We recognize in the modern era of universal culture . . . the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the Kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men." This is immediately followed by a renunciation of Jewish statehood and laws related to it. Justice and peace thus become surrogates for statehood and cult. Moreover, the renunciation of

Jewish law in Article IV follows logically with the universalist message of justice and the proclamation of a messianic "realization." This is in keeping with a rabbinic allusion to the dissipation of legal requirements in the messianic age.

Despite the ethical affirmations of the Pittsburgh Platform, it was not until 1910 that the CCAR approved its first socially conscious resolution, endorsing international action to halt "white slave" traffic.[136] Two years later, the CCAR endorsed the principle of "Woman's equal suffrage," but added that "this is a matter for the individual Rabbi and [that it is] inadvisable for the Conference as a body to take action."[137] In 1914, this resolution was reaffirmed almost word for word. In 1915, the CCAR wished "God speed" to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in its fund-raising in behalf of European war victims.[138] It also endorsed the principle of arbitration and accused the Ladies' Cloak and Suit Manufacturers of New York of disregarding that principle.[139] Concerning conscientious objection, it stated that "while the mission of Israel is peace . . . the individual Jew who claims this hope of Judaism as a ground of exemption from military service does so only as an individual, inasmuch as historic Judaism emphasizes patriotism as a duty, as well as the ideal of peace."[140] Among the opponents of this resolution was Professor Jacob Lauterbach of the Hebrew Union College. At the same convention, unambiguous endorsement of women's suffrage was finally adopted.[141] In 1918, the CCAR gave "fullest support" to "the establishment of a League of Nations" and proposed that it guarantee full religious and political freedom to "racial and religious minorities in all countries."[142] (Nothing was said specifically about Jewish minorities.)

The post–World War I America was beset by government-sanctioned attacks on suspected subversives. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer arrested "suspected persons wholesale, permitting the use of provocative agents to stir up 'seditious meetings,' insisting on the deportation of aliens rounded up by detectives from the Department of Justice."[143] During this period the CCAR made its first turn toward confronting major social issues, with varying degrees of assertiveness. In 1919, for instance, it made an appeal to the American government to release all political prisoners who "did not commit or counsel violence against the government."[144] It repeated this appeal in 1921 and also issued a call for the repeal of wartime alien and sedition acts. A

landmark position was taken by the conference in 1918 when it passed the following social justice program: endorsement of a minimum wage, an eight-hour day, safe working environments, especially for women, abolition of child labor, workman's compensation for accidents, health insurance, unemployment insurance, the right to organize and bargain collectively, proper housing for workers, mothers' pensions, "constructive care of dependants, defectives and criminals."[145]

In 1920, the CCAR wished "God speed" to the "New State of Lithuania ... in its present struggle for peace and independence."[146] In 1922, it called for American support of the Permanent Court of International Justice.[147] In 1924, the CCAR issued a call for the protection of monarchies![148] In 1926, it respectfully commended Governor Fuller of Massachusetts for his inquiry into the Sacco-Vanzetti case and expressed its full confidence that he would pursue "a full investigation." It also protested against the "militarization of our schools."[149] In 1927 "a forward looking" social justice program was adopted and commended for general distribution.[150]

In 1927, the CCAR called upon the American government to remove its troops from Nicaragua.[151] It also urged support of a fund for China famine relief. In 1928, it opposed peacetime military registration. It also opposed denying citizenship to applicants refusing to bear arms for the United States.[152]

The Great Depression accelerated the CCAR's involvement in social issues and produced an effort toward systematically assessing America's socioeconomic condition. The positions of the Reform rabbinate became more assertive, more extensive, more responsive to the liberal currents of the time, more secure in the deepening the American roots of the rabbis.

The CCAR was often embroiled in intense debate over social issues, with liberal positions prevailing by small margins. Individual members often maintained conservative and rightist positions. Samuel Schulman, president of the Synagogue Council, elicited from Edward Israel, chairman of its Commission on Social Justice, a commitment not to press for his own liberal agenda (December 26, 1935). Israel's assent was offset by a declaration of commitment to the New Deal in a letter to President Roosevelt.[153]

In the years since World War II and the Great Depression, perhaps

the most important instance of the concern for social justice among Reform rabbis was seen in the area of racial equality. In the 1960's, as the postwar civil rights movement developed, courageous southern rabbis like Emmett Frank of Arlington, Virginia, Perry Nussbaum of Jackson, Mississippi, Jacob Rothschild of Atlanta, and Charles Mantinband of Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, were ardent moral spokesmen for an end to segregation, undeterred by subtle pressures from other whites, sometimes including their own congregants, as well as personal threats against themselves and acts of violence against Jewish centers and synagogue buildings. Numerous other Reform rabbis from the North participated in freedom rides, mass demonstrations like the March on Washington in 1963, and other civil rights efforts. Standing together with liberal clergymen of many Christian denominations, they lent their stature as spiritual and moral leaders to the outstanding moral cause of the period.

Leonard Mervis offers a valid caution against overestimating the influence of Reform social action on the American scene. "The Central Conference was one of many working for a better American life, but it is to be regarded as one of the weaker sections of the phalanx." At the same time, Mervis provides a proper balance by adding, "But the true significance of the Central Conference is not understood unless its educational imprint upon its own members is noted. [It] inspired several generations of rabbis to accept the challenge of social justice. . . . A number of American communities are indebted to rabbis whose fearless words influenced thinking and action. . . . They have been forces of enlightenment in the land."[154]

We can also state that the Reform rabbinate, which was originally influenced in the direction of social *action* by one wing of American Protestantism, could have chosen (if it were merely the subject of outside influences) to follow the path of social and economic reaction, which was also rife within American religion toward the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. Although the course which the Reform rabbinate took, from its social justice pronouncement in the Pittsburgh Platform to this day, represented a novum in Jewish religious thought, the content of its position was authentically Jewish. (The novum was distinguished by the vigorous application of prophetic ethics to the non-Jewish society.) It stemmed from the prophets. Moreover, its advocates increasingly came from East European back-

grounds, where social activism, social consciousness, and advocacy in behalf of labor and trade unionism were part of the Jewish ethos. The influx of seminarians from East European homes not only contributed to the stress on peoplehood but gave contemporary relevance to the prophetic ideology which helped launch American Reform Judaism.

Socioeconomic Issues

In 1929, with the depression "just around the corner," the CCAR passed a lengthy resolution on the rights of labor. In summary, it stated,

> We hold that the right of labor is one of the fundamental rights of man. . . . a large number of men and women are always out of work and this number is increasing today. . . . It is the duty of . . . employers and leaders of our economical life so to reorganize agriculture, industry, commerce, and our financial system that every man and woman will be assured continuous employment. . . . Each city government . . . [should] grant relief to the unemployed. . . . Congress [should] pass and the President approve unimpaired the three bills introduced by Senator Wagner designed to . . . establish nationwide state employment service and to develop a constructive Government program of work during industrial depression. . . . City, State, and Federal Governments [should] prepare at once plans for the construction of public works. . . . Measures [should] be passed limiting the hours of labor to not more than 40 hours a week. . . . Legislation [should] be passed raising the working age of children to sixteen years. . . . Unemployment insurance is necessary to care for the unemployed until the reorganization of their uneconomic life has removed the evil of unemployment from our social system.[155]

As the depression deepened, the CCAR declared, in 1931, that "the ravages of unemployment continue to take their terrible toll of millions in our land disrupting not only the economic but also the social and ethical stability of our country. . . . the voice of social protest must challenge . . . a society in which private business is either consciously heartless, indifferent, or impotent, while millions starve amid plenty, as results of the inequitable distribution and wasteful exploitation."[156] The government was called upon to launch a public works program to be secured from higher taxation "in the higher brackets and an increase in inheritance taxes." "We regard it as a distressing comment on our present civilization that people who want work must be kept from starving by charity."[157] "Business must bring to bear intelligence and

decent forethought and consideration for the well being of the masses in the development of economic life by a searching modification of a profit motive which . . . exalts gain above all human consideration, or reckon in the not far distant future, with a more and more outraged social conscience."[158] The same report from the Commission on Social Justice called attention to discrimination against Jewish employees in large business.[159] This report was attacked by "some of our Conservative colleagues as well as some of our laymen."[160]

The 1933 convention of the CCAR praised the "courageous leadership and zeal for progressive ideals demonstrated by our President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt." It added the belief that a program "to secure adequate living wages, definite labor representation in the management of industry, and a proper social control of our present profit system places upon government a responsibility which cannot be delegated."[161]

The following year the Commission on Social Justice justified its position by stating that "our experience extends over a period of forty centuries and we have come into contact with every form of civilization, every system of law, and every scheme of salvation. In addition to this unique experience among the nations, it seems evident that Israel possesses a peculiar spiritual endowment that expresses itself in prophetic utterances and denunciations of social injustice."[162] The report referred to "the collapse of our economic system and the emergence of a new social order."[163] Among its recommendations was the "socialization of basic enterprises," which included "legislation that Congress has passed to create . . . a banking system to loan money to small industries that the bankers will not serve; . . . taking over of the transportation system by the Federal Government, as well as 'all power plants and sources of energy.' "[164] Once more, great admiration was expressed for the "socially minded leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt."[165] The conference proclaimed that "an economic organization, governed by the principle of competition and production for profit, must be entirely re-motivated in the interest of a finer ethical ideal. . . . This form of economic organization must yield to a new system and . . . the economic life of America must be completely reorganized in accordance with the principles of cooperation and production for service and advancement of the common welfare."[166] It further declared that America could escape the dangers of both communism

and fascism only by "establishing a thoroughly socialized democracy."[167]

In the 1960 report of the Commission on Justice and Peace, attention was called to the evils of poverty. "Two-thirds of the earth's population do not have adequate food, clothing and shelter. In an age when goods and food can be mass produced, we cannot accept such widespread poverty as inevitable... we believe that every willing worker is entitled to a minimum wage which bears some realistic relation to the cost of living.... individual states must provide more adequate unemployment compensation, to last through the full period of lay-off."[168] At the same convention, a resolution was passed calling for the abolition of the Committee on Un-American Activities.[169]

Peace

In 1931, the Central Conference of American Rabbis stated that "it is in accord with the highest interpretation of Judaism conscientiously to object to . . . personal participation [in warfare]."[170] In 1935, the committee on international peace, calling attention to the possibility of war as a result of "the persistent economic depression and brazen Nazi and Japanese ambitions," presented a resolution which had been approved in a mail ballot, 91–31, recommending to the members of the Conference "that they refuse to support any war in which this country or any country may engage on the ground that war is a denial of all for which religion stands."[171]

However, following America's entry into the war against Germany and Japan in December 1941, the CCAR convened from February 24 to March 1, 1942. In a lengthy statement on "The War and Our Peace Tradition," it stated, "If our country were engaged in a war of conquest . . . our faith would compel us to challenge its policies, but the cause of our country is a just one." In making proposals for a postwar world, this statement urged "the extension of democracy to all people, including those residing in colonial possessions; the creation of an international organization; . . . the establishment of an international police force to be used to restrain aggressor or outlaw nations; the

recognition that the resources of the world belong to all the children of men." The statement concluded with a call for the creation of a peace commission "for the purpose of preparing studies and of reiterating such moral axioms as will eventuate in a peace based on the principles of our faith. We invite our brethren in the Conservative and Orthodox branches to join with us in the formation of the work of such a peace commission."[172] Nowhere in the ensuing discussion nor in the statement is any reference made to the dangers confronting European Jewry.

In 1962 the CCAR voiced its opposition to nuclear testing by the United States and the Soviet Union.[173] This time the committee on justice and peace included the question of peace in the Middle East as an integral part of its social justice concerns:

> We are appalled by the unanimous vote of the Security Council of the U.N. condemning Israel for her military action against Syrian guns which had been firing on Israeli ships in the Sea of Galilee.... The Arab refugee problem cannot be resolved until the United Nations presses the Arab States to declare a cessation of hostilities and to indicate a willingness to sit down with the State of Israel at the Conference Table for peaceful negotiations.[174]

Likewise, in 1964 the committee on justice and peace issued a strong statement on the Middle East, calling upon the West German government to recall its scientists who were working in the Egyptian military apparatus. It also called attention to the CCAR's participation in a national gathering in behalf of Soviet Jewry.[175] In a section on "The Rabbi and the Political Process," the report reaffirmed the "Rabbi's right and obligation to exercise political responsibility as a citizen and as a moral teacher.... the Rabbi derives his authority to speak and act on public issues not from his Congregation but from the heritage of Judaism, the dictates of his conscience, and the conviction that religion must ever maintain a critical perspective of society."[176]

Race

At its 1933 Convention, the CCAR urged the abolition of economic and civil injustice against "the Negro" and called upon "Congregations of all faiths" to support their leaders "in their activities in behalf of a persecuted race."[177] At the same time the Conference reaffirmed

freedom of the pulpit, which "must not be made an echo of the comfortable prejudices and conventional bigotries of the day."[178]

In 1956, the Joint Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations strongly supported the need for developing a civil rights program within the Reform movement and countered those who claimed that segregation is not a moral and religious issue by stating, "this illustrates as nothing else can the over-riding need for our Social Action Program to bring home to every Reform Jew that our religious faith is related to life."[179] In reaffirming its antisegregationist position, the CCAR noted that "for the first time, segregationists struck violently and directly at Jewish communities with attempts to blow up synagogues and community centers," and issued a call against submitting to intimidation.[180] A similar expression was repeated in 1959.[181] A year later the Conference added the warning, "If racial inequalities are not removed voluntarily, the retribution may be violence."[182]

During the period of the Great Depression and into the early stages of World War II, the Reform rabbinate manifested three characteristics in its approach to social issues. First, it pursued a classical liberal ideology which was consistently expressed in matters of unemployment, war and peace, race relations, and the reordering of the social structure. Second, while the Reform rabbinate addressed itself on occasion to the issues of anti-Semitism, particularly its manifestation in Father Coughlin and others, there was an implicit assumption that the improvement of society would also redound to the benefit of the Jewish people. Third, the social justice platform of the Central Conference, while invoking prophetic Judaism and Jewish social consciousness, was devoid of a systematic identification and ratification of its position in authoritative Jewish sources. The Pittsburgh Platform's reference to "the spirit of Mosaic legislation" deliberately avoided anything more specific than that. Yet the need for something more than a liberal philosophy tinged with prophetic precedent began to be expressed. At the 1935 convention, Professor Zvi Diesendruck of the Hebrew Union College, during a debate on the floor, stated:

> I do not believe that we are justified in the somewhat blunt statements made in this resolution about the historical attitude of Judaism to war and peace. If we go on record with statements about the Jewish attitude in the past, they should be made on the basis of a scholarly study of the subject. . . .

> I do not believe sending out the resolution will be enough. I think a scholarly committee ought to clarify the standpoint of Judaism on the question of war and peace and this should serve as a basis for historical statements and may also be helpful in our arriving at an opinion.[183]

Nevertheless, the invocation of rabbinic authority was applied by the Reform rabbinate more consistently in areas of Jewish observance than of social concerns.

One notes a departure from early cautiousness to greater assertiveness in the pronouncements by the CCAR. The post–World War I period is marked by more outspoken positions. These become even more pronounced during the depression and after the Second World War. This was due not only to the growing sense of rootedness in America among the Reform rabbinate but to a rapidly changing perception about the nature of American society, reflected in both secular and Christian thought, to which the rabbinate was sensitive. There were not only changes, there were contradictions. In 1892, in his *Triumphant Democracy*, Andrew Carnegie wrote that "the blazing sun right over head casts no shadow. . . . One man's right is every man's right." Yet a year before, the Populist program had declared "that the fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few."[184] The immanentist theology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century placed God in the midst of society. Liberal religion applied this to validate the goodness of man and the possibilities of religious redemption within history. The social gospel emerged from this, together with belief in progress and social perfectibility. From the 1890's, the social gospel permeated liberal Christian thought and also typified the thought of Reform rabbis like Morris Newfield of Birmingham, Alabama, but "its leaders were not so much activists as they were preachers, proclaimers, educators."[185] In 1917, Walter Rauschenbusch was writing, "No social group or organization can claim to be clearly within the Kingdom of God which drains others for its own cause. . . . This involves the redemption of society in the natural resources of the earth, and from any condition in industry which makes monopoly profits possible."[186] In a similar spirit, the second volume of the *Union Prayer Book for the High Holy Days* (1922) included a long socioeconomic exhortation.

Individual rabbis were understandably more militant and activist than the CCAR. Two illustrations follow. Judah Leon Magnes was a fervent supporter of Scott Nearing, the radical theorist and activist of the far left during World War I. Dismissed as "a fanatic" by Max Eastman, and making Roger Baldwin uneasy with his "intransigence," Nearing was urged by the Jewish labor leader Morris Hillquit and Magnes to assume the chairmanship of the radically pacifist People's Council. The civil rights lawyer Louis Marshall "warned his brother-in-law, Magnes, to avoid associating with Nearing, Hillquit and the 'half-baked political economists and sociologists' of the People's Council. But Magnes and Hillquit remained Nearing's closest collaborators within the executive committee. Were the government to 'put Lochner and me in the coup [*sic*],' he wrote to them, 'we are counting on you' to prevent moderates from trying to 'wreck the whole machine.'"[187] In February 1918, when the People's Council sponsored a National Conference of Labor, Socialist and Radical Movements, Magnes, together with Hillquit and Amos Pinchot, was one of the chief speakers.[188] When Nearing was on trial for violation of the Espionage Act, of which he was acquitted, among those at his counsel table was Magnes.[189]

In Edward Israel, a product of Philipson's congregation, Bene Israel in Cincinnati, there is a polarity between personal militancy and organizational discipline. During the 1931 encampment of World War I veterans who had converged on Washington to protest against the government's disregard of their plight, he hired a taxi which he filled with food supplies and instructed the driver to enter the camp. Finding it guarded by army personnel, the driver refused to go on, but Israel took over and drove through the line.

Until they were drawn to the Zionist movement, men who had in no way been involved with it, or had only been marginally involved, had been deeply immersed in American social-economic issues. While rabbis like Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver had been virtually born into Zionism, their Jewish outlook impelled them likewise to take their places in the great social causes of their times. For others, however, Zionism and the plight of Jewry, which evoked Zionism, increasingly became a dominant social issue of their lives. When Maurice Eisendrath and Edward Israel, two of the four Reform rabbis at the first World Zionist Congress gathering in Geneva in 1936, encoun-

tered Wise and Nahum Goldmann in their intercession for a desperate East European Jewry, their way toward Jewish particularity was assured.

During the forties, fifties, and sixties, Reform rabbis found their social concerns and their devotion to the State of Israel to be compatible. They participated in civil rights demonstrations, in some cases went to jail, marched to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, were active in integrating public schools and housing. At the same time, their participation in Israel-oriented affairs was intense. They raised money, sold Israel Bonds, interceded politically in Israel's behalf, opened their congregations to Zionist exhortations and activities, and during the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, rallied their congregations and their communities behind Israel. The union of universalism and particularism was pronounced. During the Vietnam War many rabbis actively opposed the American government's prosecution of the war, counseled young men who were opposed to the draft, and in one case, six rabbis were prosecuted for trespassing on federal property in their opposition to the war. The apparent discrepancy between this posture and support for Israel was pointed out by President Lyndon Johnson, who cited a strong anti-Vietnam statement by a leading Reform rabbi when a Zionist delegation came to him in behalf of Israel. In another instance, Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin denounced Reform rabbis for jeopardizing Israel's position by their active opposition to the Vietnam War.

Toward the end of the sixties, the balance between universalism and particularism began to tilt, with growing pressures and disaffections resulting from the civil rights struggle. At the same time, increasing numbers of Reform rabbis became disenchanted with liberal activism. They had marched and demonstrated in behalf of numerous liberal causes, but in many cases, their non-Jewish liberal allies and the beneficiaries of their efforts had failed to rally in Israel's time of need before the Six-Day War. The increasing emergence of ethnicity as a new form of secular religion in America, and even more, the aftershock of the Holocaust, also contributed toward the increasing tilt in the direction of Jewish particularism. This became apparent in the CCAR, where Zionist and pro-Israel concerns occupied a growing share of rabbinic attention, while social action, although not disavowed, occupied a less prominent place. There was a drastic shift of position from

periphery to center, and vice versa.

With the final identification of Zionism with Reform Judaism, vast changes took place. First, issues affecting Jewish welfare as well as Israel began to take precedence over social issues. During the period from 1950 to 1970, there were about three times as many references to Israel and related issues in rabbinic resolutions as there were to social issues. Second, social action ceased to be identified exclusively with the universal impulses in Reform Judaism, and incorporated Jewish matters as legitimate areas of social concern. The assumption that the improvement of society will likewise improve the lot of the Jewish people ceased to be tenable.

HUC-JIR

Even after the Hebrew Union College ceased to be a Zionist battleground, it continued to reflect the ferment of approaching change within the Reform rabbinate. When the issue of the possible merger with the newly created Jewish Institute of Religion began to assert itself, Stephen Wise wrote to Morris Lazaron that

> I learned the other evening from Rosenau that you said you had made the proposition to tour the country with Morgenstern appealing for funds 80% of which were to go to the Hebrew Union College and 20% to the [Jewish Institute of Religion], and it was turned down flat. Did he understand you correctly? And may I ask who turned down the proposition? Was it brought up at an Executive Committee Meeting of the Union? I think the matter should be thoroughly understood.
>
> I still am greatly desirous to be of whatever service I can in bringing the two institutions together. As I told your brother-in-law, Mr. Davis, last summer, I do not see why some common basis of agreement cannot be reached whereby a part of the time can be spent by the student in Cincinnati and the concluding years in New York using the great Jewish Community there as a laboratory.[190]

In the twenties and thirties, the battle between theism and humanism was being joined in the College chapel. During the same time concern was being directed to the academic program of the College. In the early thirties faculty-student relations committees met to discuss the possible modification of the curriculum.

In 1968, the president of the CCAR, Levi Olan, appointed a committee on rabbinical training, later to be known as the committee on

the future of the rabbinate. The committee set for its goal a "study of the realities of Synagogue life as the Rabbi confronts them, the realities of Jewish life outside the Synagogue for which the Rabbi has responsibility, and the function of the Seminary in preparing him intellectually and practically to cope with those realities." To this end it was proposed that "we should learn authoritatively how Congregations, Jewish communities, Seminaries and Rabbis view the Rabbinic calling.... We should learn how our existing Rabbinical training program which has faced the challenge of the pre- and post-war world can best equip itself for the uncertainties of the remainder of this century, and the next."[191] On November 12, Olan reported that the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College had "responded very favorably to the final request for a very early meeting between our Rabbinic Training Committee and Laymen's Committee of the Board. Dr. Nelson Glueck, president of HUC-JIR, enthusiastically supported the idea of a study."[192] In the same letter, Olan refers to "a statement prepared by [present chairman of the Board of Governors of HUC-JIR] Richard Scheuer last April which was a memorandum to the Executive Committee of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors." This refers to a proposed plan for a JIR building program in New York.

The committee engaged Theodore H. Lenn, who was asked to prepare a study that would address itself to the following questions, among others. "What equipment does a Rabbi need for such times from his pre-student recruitment days to his Seminary years to his Rabbinic experience? Is his role the same as it was a generation ago? Are Congregations the same and do they have the same expectations of us? ... These and other questions could result in comprehensive self assessment within our Movement.... The most effective kind of study [should] be one in which the collaboration of the HUC-JIR with the Conference is enlisted."[193]

Since Lenn's findings have been published and are readily available,[194] we will not address ourselves to the contents of the study. One of the by-products of the committee on the future of the rabbinate was a recommendation that "subject to the approval of the Executive Board of the Conference [the committee] offer its cooperation to the HUC-JIR in helping to develop a program of third year studies in Israel."[195] In an undated memorandum it is recorded that HUC professor Dr. Fritz Bamberger told "of the deep interest of Dr. Glueck and the

possibility of a required year of study in Jerusalem by our Rabbinical students."[196] The hope was also expressed "that the prospects for training Rabbis for service throughout the world at the Jerusalem School will soon reach fruition." The same report asks, "should our centers of learning be Seminaries or should they become Universities of Jewish Studies to accommodate the training not only of Rabbis but of the proliferating categories of Jewish civil servants, with theological training a part of the entire enterprise?"[197] In another report, the following appears,

> We have twenty-six students currently attending our Jerusalem school from the HUC-JIR in the United States. A year in Jerusalem *should be made compulsory with credit* as soon as possible—and *it is possible to do it immediately!* It is not as expensive as the administration of the HUC-JIR always argues. There are professors at the Hebrew University. The notion that this should remain voluntary and lengthen studies to a period of six years and sometimes even seven years, doesn't encourage recruits for the Rabbinate and doesn't improve the "emotional mood of future students. . . . " Dr. Glueck mentioned that the February Board of Governors' meeting [dealt with] building up the regular school in Jerusalem with ordination. This school would supply manpower for Congregations in other "liberal" programs and activities in Israel and in various countries around the world outside of the United States. It might also become the source of a positive "liberal" ideology for Eretz Israel. . . . the liberal ideology in the nineteenth century in Central Europe or the USA cannot be the foundation for the "liberal Judaism" in the State of Israel in the second half of the twentieth century.[198]

The issue of the building priorities of the College-Institute was also raised in the course of the deliberations of the committee on the future of the rabbinate in an undated memorandum after March 1968 and in all probability later in 1968. The following proposal was made to the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, that

> Before the Capital Fund Program for necessary work in New York and Cincinnati is made final, some basic questions about the future Rabbinic training which concerns the CCAR be the subject of a meeting between the proper representatives and the Board of Governors. Such a meeting should occur very soon so as not to delay whatever plans need immediate attention. This, we believe, will help the Board of Governors to plan the financial requirements and allocations in relationship to a changing American Jewry.[199]

On December 21, 1972, the committee adopted a resolution that "the Committee expresses its strong conviction that the New York

school should be considerably expanded—academically and physically—and there should be no further expansion of the Cincinnati campus."[200] This was partly an affirmation of the master plan presented by Richard J. Scheur to the Board of Governors on May 8, 1968, recommending that the New York school "affiliate with a major university, move to the university campus, conduct an expanded program including the award of the Ph.D."[201]

The issue of the scholarly qualifications of rabbis was an early source of concern. Addressing the graduation exercises of the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York on May 27, 1934, David Philipson had said, "The Rabbi's first concern should be continuing study and scholarship. Unless he build upon this as a foundation he builds upon sand."[202]

When the committee on the future of the rabbinate undertook its studies, the theme of the academic preparedness of the rabbi continued to be a source of concern. In a critical analysis of the Lenn Report, Levi Olan made the following observation:

> The role of scholar is ranked lower by the Rabbis today than that of leadership in the Jewish community, Pastor, Priest, adult teacher and religious teacher. The younger men show this trend away from Jewish scholarship more than those rabbis who have been in the Rabbinate for ten years or more. The report says it is a "reflection of some rejection by the younger generation of intellectualism in terms of specific Jewish scholarship."[203]

Authority in Jewish Life

In 1871, at a conference of Reform rabbis in Cincinnati, the following resolution was passed.

> The members of the conference take upon themselves the duty to bring prominently before the congregations, to advocate and to support by their influence, the following project of co-operation of the American Hebrew Congregations:
>
> The congregations to unite themselves into a Hebrew Congregational Union with the object to preserve and advance the union of Israel; to take proper care of the development and promulgation of Judaism; to establish and support a scholastic institute, and the library appertaining thereto, for the education of rabbis, preachers, and teachers of religion; to provide cheap editions of the English Bible and text books for the schools of religious instruction; to give support to weak congregations, and to provide such other institutions which

> elevate, preserve, and promulgate Judaism.
>
> Resolved, that whenever twenty congregations, with no less than two thousand contributing male members, shall have declared, in accordance with the preceding resolution, their resolution to enter the H. C. U., the said committee shall envoke the synod to meet at such time and place as may be most satisfactory to the co-operating congregations.[204]

The Central Conference of American Rabbis was yet to come into being, but under the long and persistent urging of Isaac Mayer Wise, the rabbis' body issued the call for the creation of a union of congregations. Two years later, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations came into being.

It is noteworthy that the first organized body of Reform Judaism in the United States was an assembly of congregations, and that the impetus for it came from a rabbinical group. Even more noteworthy is the reference to the request that the organizing committee "shall envoke the synod."

Today the Reform movement, as represented in this study by the Reform rabbinate, finds itself vastly and globally enlarged, and radically altered programmatically, ideologically, and in its very identity. It is an overstatement but, nevertheless, suggestive to say that the entire movement retains little of its origins except its name.

Change generates far-ranging problems, and for Reform one of them involves the encounter with the halakhic tradition, which has been renewed, in large measure, by the Holocaust and the axial shift toward Israel. Yet the issue is not new. The issue is more acute than ever before. Its roots extend to mid-nineteenth-century Germany, and from there to the resolution calling for the creation of a union of congregations. Nowhere else in the resolution is there reference to a "synod," and we can be sure that the term was not a casual one. It had been inserted with full awareness that it was a fighting word in the debates within the Reform movement, and the resolution's framers indicated by its use that for them, at least, the proposed union was to go beyond the stated objectives outlined in the second paragraph of the resolution.

The conflict over whether a Reform synod should be convened had its genesis in Germany, where, in the mid-1840's, some rabbis were urging that a synod be called for the purpose of issuing a declaration of faith by rabbis and laymen. The synod issue was a consequence, per-

haps inevitable, of an ideological tension within the Reform movement in Germany. Although Reform had emerged, in part, as a revolt against the stringency of rabbinic authority, as well as a response to the promise of emancipation, a significant sector of the movement was not prepared to eradicate its traditional and rabbinic ties.

This ambivalence manifested itself in the radically different approaches of Abraham Geiger (1810–1874) and Samuel Holdheim (1806–1860). Geiger was concerned about the proliferation of impromptu reforms by a number of rabbis, and his primary concern, in his public and more guarded pronouncements, was the synthesis of the Jewish spirit with "a sound science." At the same time, he inveighed against "many overeducated and sensual ones that would willingly throw away all ancient treasures . . . and divest themselves of their own character and past as something useless."[205] Significantly, he scanned the horizon for "a new Hillel." Holdheim's extremism manifested itself in the position that, except for purely ecclesiastical matters, the autonomy of the rabbinate was superseded by that of the state in many Jewish areas, including marriage, which is a civil act. Jewish national identity had ended. "All laws and institutions which are based upon the election of a particular Jewish people . . . have lost all religious significance and obligation."[206]

As conceived within the Berlin Reform Society, the synod

> was to take into consideration the changes which had come upon Jewish life and thought in the new environment of the nineteenth century, re-interpret the truths of Judaism in the light of those changes and give authoritative expression to what constituted the fundamentals of Jewish thought and practice. . . . The individualism which followed in the train of breaking loose from the fetters of code observance threatened disaster in the view of many. In place of the fixed anchor—the ceremonial law—to which Jews had clung aforetime, there was now no support; reform went to greater or less lengths according to individual caprice. . . . The synod which was agitated for by the Berlin reformers . . . was to concern itself with determining the significance and the essence of Jewish belief and practice, to pronounce upon the relation of modern reform Judaism to the traditions, to interpret the present attitude upon all vital points, as the liturgy, marriage and divorce, the ceremonies, the position of woman, the dietary laws and the Sabbath.[207]

The intent of the synod was made unmistakable by the words of one of its protagonists, Ludwig Philippson, who declared in 1849 that it was as necessary for contemporary Judaism as was the Sanhedrin at

Tiberias after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The proposed synod did not come into being, but for the purposes of our discussion it is important to note the following: (a) The proposal recognized the danger of nihilism within Reform. (b) It addressed itself not only to Jewish ceremonies but to halakhic issues, such as marriage and divorce. (c) It contemplated procedures which would be binding upon its adherents. (d) Decisions would be made by joint action of rabbis and congregants. (e) It was a live issue which agitated the Reform community, and was not considered to be irrelevant to its concerns, or outside the scope of its deliberations. Two subsequent synods did take place in Leipzig and in Augsburg, but they "failed to realize the hopes of their projectors." The time was evidently not ripe for such a movement. There were too many differences among Jews.[208]

The issue was transplanted, however, from Germany to the United States. Evidently, the call for a synod in the Cincinnati resolution of 1871 was overlooked or side-stepped in the birth of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, because in 1881 Isaac Mayer Wise was still agitating for it. In the debate at the CCAR conventions in 1904, 1905, and 1906, the critical point at issue was the authority of the synod. If it was able to coerce compliance, the opposition feared, it might eventually become an ecclesiastical court with power to enforce its decrees. In 1906, the CCAR voted down the advisability of a synod after having approved it by a small margin in 1904, but this did not end the discussion. In fact, David Philipson, in his book on the development of Reform Judaism, concludes his chapter on the Leipzig and Augsburg synods as follows: "There can be little doubt that in the present unsettled state of Jewish opinion on many vital points, owing to the transition from the old to the new, there is a great need for a central organization of this kind composed of rabbinical and lay delegates, whose power shall be not to loose or to bind, but to pronounce judgments on controverted points of doctrine and practice."[209]

We will discuss the American Reform rabbinate within the context of the synod issue not only because it is implicit in the creation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, but because the issue is as germane today as it was a century ago, and has manifested itself in such apparently disparate issues as Jewish law and Zionism. The unresolved issue implicit in the synod controversy continues to nag, and the Reform movement is more heavily engaged in it than ever before,

and with the same ambivalence which agitated it in its origin, although there is the beginning of a shift of balance. There is no call today for a Reform synod, but the operative component of the synod approach, authority, is very much in evidence. We will momentarily forgo assessing the critical question of imposed versus internalized authority, but the source and the nature of authority are central to all discussions that are linked to halakhah. The intensity of the issue can be gauged by the mounting frequency of the very term "halakhah," as against former references to "ceremonies" and "customs." This is not to be construed as necessarily a general turn to halakhah but, rather, a recognition that the halakhah must be responsibly confronted even where it cannot be conscientiously accepted. If this does not differ substantively from the approach of the more traditional earlier reformers, there is a heightening of this sense of concern and responsibility in the Reform rabbinate.

Today it is not necessarily the merits of particularism that we should stress but, rather, the conditions out of which it is emerging in Reform. The catastrophic events of the twentieth century have compelled a reassessment not merely of the effectiveness of the emancipation but of its intrinsic motivation. If it was prompted by a desire to offer freedom to Jews, it was equally impelled to strip the collective identity of the Jewish people as its price.

About 1928, we note the beginnings of a new direction in the Reform rabbinate in which there is a conscious effort to uncover traditional elements for the enrichment of Jewish life. It is significant that the period in which this occurred coincides, roughly, with upheavals in our society and in Jewish life to which the Reform rabbinate responded in typical Toynbeean "challenge and response" fashion. Leaving aside the rising surge of Zionism, the growing despair over the unfulfilled promise of emancipation had a decisive effect on the attitude toward tradition within Reform (and from a Geigerian standpoint it could have been predicted). The Versailles Treaty, in which minority rights had been granted to Jews in Eastern Europe, was followed by a tidal wave of anti-Semitic excesses in the lands of greatest Jewish concentration. The rise of Nazism, even before its legalized triumph in Germany, shook the confidence of many Reform rabbis in the credibility of the emancipation, much less its durability. In America, the alarm over the dissemination of the *Protocols of the Elders of*

Zion by Henry Ford, the archetype of everything that was intriguing to middle-class Jews in industrialized America, undercut their confidence in the nation's immunity to anti-Semitism, as did the Father Coughlin era. All this was exacerbated by the depression, which shattered any lingering illusions about the deterministic messianic mystique of the American system. It is not coincidental that the Columbus Platform of 1937, affirming the need for intensified Jewish observance, was promulgated while the depression was at its nadir. In the realm of intellectual history, Freud had created a psychological revolution, shaking the dogmas of the liberal religious world, whose scientific rationalistic suppositions were overwhelmed by the eruption of the unconscious. For the Reform rabbinate this compelled a reexamination of the Jewish experience as an ideational construct alone, and required a confrontation with the irrepressible, nonrational, primordial components in Judaism.

It is legitimate to ask how these events resulted specifically in the turn by the Reform rabbinate toward a stronger encounter with Jewish tradition and with Jewish law. Why did they not produce a heightened commitment to pure universalism and total antinomianism as an act of defiance against historical aberrations which must be resisted in order to preserve the fruits of emancipation? This did, in fact, occur among a segment of the Reform community. But the overwhelming weight of conviction leaned toward heightened stress on particularism, and articulated it in Zionism and greater adherence to tradition. This is borne out by the Lenn study on the future of the rabbinate, published by the Central Conference in 1972. Thus, in one statistical table, 49 percent of strong or moderate particularists, as against 8 percent of strong universalists, insisted on the use of a *huppah* (canopy) at weddings, 49 percent of strong or moderate particularists, as against 6 percent of strong universalists, disapproved of rabbis officiating at intermarriages.[210]

When the Reform rabbinate began its turn toward greater stress on tradition, it did so largely in the context of customs and ceremonies. The Columbus Platform stated that Judaism, instead of being a religion only, was "a way of life" which "requires in addition to its moral and spiritual demands the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value."

The practical application of this view was increased stress on Hebrew in the services, Bar and Bat Mitzvah, and the cultivation of various rituals. The CCAR instituted a committee on ceremonies in 1938, and much of its work dealt with ritual in the narrower context of the term. Confrontation with issues of day-to-day mizvot and with the halakhah was yet to come, and it is doubtful whether it could have occurred as drastically without the rebirth of the State of Israel. Israel accentuated the sense of peoplehood, but peoplehood also compelled a confrontation with those halakhic issues which made peoplehood compelling. Toward the end of the 1950's, terms like "mizvah" and "halakhah" became increasingly normative, and this development is more significant than might appear, because the issue in Reform is no longer ceremonies but whether we are addressing ourselves to mizvot or to the halakhah, or perhaps in some cases to the former, and in others to the latter. In certain respects, Reform is experiencing a déjà vu in which the issues of Shabbat observance and authority are being resurrected after their earliest vitality about seventy years ago, when the CCAR had a Commission on the Sabbath.

At the heart of the issue is whether observance in Reform is to be required by fiat or by personal and collective internalization. Is a synodal approach to be decisive or persuasive? Antecedent to this, is Jewish observance to be the product of an official body or of individuals? In 1942, the committee on a code of practice, under the chairmanship of Professor Israel Bettan, referring to an earlier paper by Solomon Freehof on "A Code of Ceremonial and Ritual Practice," proposed that "in the field of marriage divorce and conversion, we must draw up a clear-cut code which shall have the effect of law for us . . . while the dietary laws may be ignored altogether." This was followed by a recommendation "that a Special Committee of the Conference be charged with the task of preparing a Manual of Jewish Religious Practices."[211] This was not pursued. In an effort to cope with both of these issues, the late Rabbi Frederic Doppelt and the author produced our *Guide for Reform Jews* in 1957. Note that we used the word "guide" in the title, not "code." This book was prompted by our conviction that Reform Judaism required sturdier observance of rituals, that this should be systematic rather than impromptu, that it could come about (at that juncture) through the efforts of individuals, that it was a hortatory not a mandatory device, and that it could not be presented

without a rationale. Basic to the entire effort was the desire to differentiate between mizvot and minhagim, and, as a consequence, each section of the *Guide* began with "It is a mizvah to . . . "

From its inception, Reform has been mindful of the claims of halakhah to its attention, if not to its obedience. As recently as 1982, plans were launched to include a mikvah ceremony in a new proposed *Rabbis' Manual (Netivot)* and also to include in it a document acknowledging the dissolution of a marriage with rabbinical involvement. The continuing work of the responsa committee of the CCAR reflects not merely a concern with issues of observance but a commitment to searching out halakhic precedent, employing halakhic dialectic and, where unable to submit to the halakhah, not to reject it capriciously. It is true that this approach has its shortcomings as an instrument of seeking affirmation when it is available and going on a deviant path when it is not, but even this procedure is not altogether alien to rabbinic law-making. In the latter case, the predilection is to find precedent suitable to a generally rigorous construction. In the former instance, the predilection is to find a more permissive precedent. In 1921, by a vote of 56 to 11, the CCAR declared that "women cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination."[212] This followed a long debate during which women participated and during which Jacob Lauterbach argued that the "law that women cannot be Rabbis was always taken for granted in the Talmud." David Neumark refuted Lauterbach's talmudic references point by point, and then concluded, "You cannot treat the Reform Rabbinate from the Orthodox point of view. Our good relations with our Orthodox brethren may still be improved upon by a clear and decided stand on this question. They want us either to be Reform or to return to the fold of real genuine Orthodox Judaism, whence we came."[213]

Solomon Freehof has contributed several volumes of responsa under the imprimatur of the Reform movement. Most recently, the CCAR, through its Shabbat committee under the chairmanship of its current president, Gunther Plaut, has produced a *Shabbat Manual (Tadrikh l'Shabbat)* in which the mizvot, the customs, the music, and the folkways of Shabbat are set forth.

In the more volatile public sector, the Reform rabbinate has come to grips with the issue of intermarriage, which crosses two highly sensitive boundaries—our relationship with Israel, and the autonomy of

the rabbi. The second issue, of necessity, deals with the problem of authority—is there an authority higher than the individual?

The autonomy of the rabbi and the congregation has been, in theory, a paramount principle of Reform, and has been invoked whenever critical issues have arisen. In the debates concerning a proposed synod, the issue of personal freedom and immunity from any form of coercion became central.

In 1905, the president of the CCAR made the following appeal: "It is in this wherein lies the strength of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the promise of its future. It is and will continue to be merely a deliberative and advisory assembly, not an ecumenical council, convened for the purpose of establishing creeds and dogmas, of fixing forms and ceremonies, and making compliance with them obligatory and difference from them heretical."[214]

The same argument was employed by Stephen Wise in 1917 during a debate on Zionism.

> If you pass this resolution, no matter how you water it or mitigate it, the moment you say that we who are Zionists are anti-religionists, that we are enemies of religious Judaism, that moment we must regretfully yet with absolute conviction say, "We can stay no longer within the Conference." I stand here today not as a Zionist, but as a reform rabbi. I would not have you say that a reform teacher or rabbi has forfeited the right to be a teacher of reform Judaism because he has subscribed to the Zionist platform. I appeal not for Zionism, but for the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of liberal Judaism.[215]

The CCAR has adhered to the principle of personal sovereignty, although at times it has been charged with flouting it.

No issue, however, has placed the encounter of personal freedom and authority in greater tension than the intermarriage question. In 1909, the Central Conference issued the following resolution: "The CCAR declares that mixed marriages are contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion and should, therefore, be discouraged by the American Rabbinate."[216] It has subsequently been suggested that the reason for not calling upon Reform rabbis to desist from officiating was that so few rabbis indulged in the practice at the time. It is more plausible to believe that the intense synod debates prior to 1909 had hardened the resistance to any kind of authoritarian statement—to such an extent, in fact, that the call to "discourage" intermarriage was issued not to

members of the Central Conference but to "the American Rabbinate." On a number of occasions, efforts were made to strengthen the resolution, but they failed by narrow margins. In 1962, at Minneapolis, there was an abortive effort to approve officiating at intermarriages. When the issue was joined in 1971 and resolved in June 1973, the following resolution was passed by a vote of 321 to 196.

> *Section I*
> The Central Conference of American Rabbis, recalling its stand adopted in 1909 "that mixed marriage is contrary to the Jewish tradition and should be discouraged" now declares its opposition to participation by its members in any ceremony which solemnizes a mixed marriage.
> *Section II*
> The Central Conference of American Rabbis recognizes that historically its members have held and continue to hold divergent interpretations of Jewish tradition.
> In order to keep open every channel to Judaism and K'lal Yisrael for those who have already entered into mixed marriage, the CCAR calls upon its members:
> 1. To assist fully in educating children of such mixed marriage as Jews;
> 2. To provide the opportunity for conversion of the non-Jewish spouse; and
> 3. To encourage a creative and consistent cultivation of involvement in the Jewish Community and the Synagogue.[217]

The resolution issues a request that Reform rabbis do a specified thing—i.e., not officiate at intermarriages,—something the Central Conference had never done in this specific context, although it did so in another setting, the request to leave the American Council for Judaism. It deliberately stops short of enforcement procedures, although it takes note of the fact that some rabbis will disregard the call to desist. At the same time, certain matters were referred to various committees for further inquiry. One is the ethics committee, which has enforcement capacity in matters of rabbinical violation. Nevertheless, the individual rabbi is urged, but not compelled, to abstain. The expectation is that the collective voice of the Conference will exert moral deterrence for many. The resolution is illustrative of an effort to reconcile various contradictions—disapproval without coercion, personal rights in encounter with the needs of K'lal Yisroel, inner direction in encounter with outer direction. It is not suggested that the reconciling process is altogether satisfactory in this case. It is indicated only that within the context of a movement which had been torn, from the very

beginning, in two directions—between antinomianism and receptivity to halakhah, between synodism and antisynodism—the Conference took a positive step toward voluntaristic responsiveness to the demands of Jewish law and the needs of the entire Jewish people.

It is significant that the major reconsiderations of the issue of intermarriage took place in the wake of the Holocaust/Shoah and the struggle for the State of Israel. It is questionable whether the acute sensitivity to K'lal Yisroel would have been so sharply manifested without the State of Israel. We are not here concerned with justifying the noncoercive policy of the CCAR but, rather, in pointing out that, in taking its new position on intermarriage, it has taken a stand on a critical halakhic issue in Jewish life and has also defined (not for the first time) the role of the individual in the setting of authority. It demonstrated that the individual cannot claim authority for himself in defining what is required of him as a Jew and as a rabbi. His freedom to differ and to deviate is not affected, but his claim to personal authority is. Thus, while the issue of the ultimate source of authority will continue to agitate all within Jewry to whom this is a problem, the ultimacy of the individual has certainly been dismissed. There is a higher (though not necessarily highest) authority, and that is the consensus of the accredited rabbinic leadership within the Reform community. There is also the implicit authority of the world Jewish community, which cannot be excluded. This authority deliberately is not administrative, but from a moral standpoint it is not thereby diminished. It may be asked how this authority differs from that of the 1909 resolution, which states that intermarriage should be discouraged. By altering the "discouraging" from an abstract judgment which declares its "opposition" and appeals to "the American Rabbinate" to a specific call directed to every individual Reform rabbi, the resolution takes on concreteness and personal relevance.

Certain aspects of Jewish life, primarily in the public sector of marriage, conversion, and divorce, will require confrontation with halakhah, whether affirmatively or negatively. The halakhic problems of divorce and conversion are now on the agenda of Reform, and some individual rabbis require mikvah and tevilah for conversion. The CCAR recently advised its colleagues that candidates for Reform conversion should be made aware of the option of mikvah and tevilah so that they can make a choice. In 1891, an intense debate on whether

male converts should be circumcised was fought by both sides with recourse to talmudic and responsa literature. There was great concern on the part of members of the opposition that they be supported by rabbinic authority. Thus, Dr. Sonneschein cited the Maharil in his *Nitzachon*, saying, "The faith is not dependent on milah . . . whoever believes properly is a Jew, even if uncircumcised."[218] Some Reform rabbis also advise divorced couples of the possibility of a get (rabbinic divorce), so that they will be aware of possible complications in the event of remarriage. As a body, the Reform rabbinate defends its right to perform its own conversions in its own way, and standards for conversion stress study of Judaism.

Unlike the public sector, the private sector (within Reform, at any rate) will not be governed by halakhah but by what can be referred to as a mizvah-system. One lives under the halakhah. One performs mizvot. From a Reform perspective, individual mizvot can be performed, altered, suspended, or created, but if the halakhah is dealt with similarly, it ceases to be The Halakhah. If it is retained substantially, Reform ceases to be. One does not accept halakhah selectively, any more than one picks and chooses in the civil law of his community. Mizvot (in the context in which they are here presented, not in the traditional context) are specific responses to existential situations in which the Jew answers to history, to his current situation, to the sacred, to the life-cycle, to the calendar, to the rites of passage. Through mizvot, the individual is capable of reliving the central elements of his people's history and of bringing history into the circumstances in which he and his people presently find themselves. The mizvah becomes an immediate response to a given moment. It is not bound to an absoluteness to which few can submit. In this setting, Reform is becoming increasingly mizvah-aware, and receptive to guidance in a mizvah-system in which the demands of the human spirit are more enforceable than any coercive device, human or divine.

In 1971 and 1972, the Reform rabbinate was engaged in an attempt to fulfill the hopes of some of the early synodists. Whether or not it will succeed is yet to be determined, but for a time an effort was made at defining the basic principles of Reform. Following, perhaps unconsciously, the lead of the German synodists, a group of rabbis, scholar-specialists, and laymen, under the leadership of the late Rabbi Dudley Weinberg, long deliberated on a series of theological and philosophi-

cal issues. Unlike the Pittsburgh and Columbus Platforms, this was an attempt to speak in behalf of the entire movement, not rabbis alone. Among the issues dealt with are: who is a Jew; marriage and divorce; the covenant; personal and social ethics; the synagogue; plural models within the halakhah; Israel, diaspora, and mission; Judaism and world religions.

Unlike the Pittsburgh and Columbus Platforms, which are cryptic and almost catechistic, the proposed guiding principles attempted to be more expository. In addition, the very effort was a recognition that, de jure as well as de facto, the Pittsburgh Platform had been supplanted and the Columbus Platform required extensive restructuring. For lack of consensus on any issue among the rabbis, however, the enterprise foundered and was abandoned. In place of this failed enterprise, the Central Conference, in June 1976, adopted the "Centenary Perspective," which frankly recognizes the difficulty at this time of adopting a platform and stresses, instead, the pluralism within Reform, as well as its achievements.

In at least two critical issues, the American Council for Judaism and intermarriage, the Central Conference chose not to interpret personal freedom as implying the inherent right to unlimited freedom of action. It is clear that, short of ethical or administrative (not halakhic) violations, the Conference has deliberately chosen not to impose discipline. It has placed its confidence in the slower, but far less catastrophic, processes of debate and suasion, always accompanied by the omnipresent guest of the Jewish people, history.

One can note, with some justification, that while formal structures are being worked out, there seems to be a de facto receptivity by Reform rabbis to the concept of, if not adherence to, a higher measure of a mizvah-system, both in their personal and their collective lives. To have attained to the degree of receptivity is itself a mizvah which points further. Thus, the development of a new prayerbook (*Shaaray Tefillah*) and a new mahzor (*Shaaray Teshuvah*), to be opened, in most cases, from right to left, is indicative. So is the publication of the *Shabbat Guide*. The growing number of Reform congregations which conduct *Slihot* services in an idiom which is open to both the traditional liturgy and new creativity is a clue. The declaration by the Central Conference that Yom Ha-Azmaut and Yom Ha-Shoah are official days on our calendar, to be observed with appropriate liturgies; the

decision by some rabbis to observe the second day of Rosh Ha-Shanah as a sign of our religious link with the Jews in Israel; above all, the affirmative response to the call for a mizvah-system, reflect a new perception of Reform in which the tradition-based impulse appears to assert itself over the antinomian impulse.

This does not mean simplistically that Reform is becoming Conservative, as one segment of folk-wisdom would have it. It means that an identity struggle is at work in which the full outcome is yet to be determined, and the intermarriage issue is the most volatile manifestation of that struggle. While one wing of the Reform rabbinate is turning toward the tradition, another is also deeply committed not to be undifferentiatingly subservient to it, and it is equally committed to creating its own way which would become part of the traditional continuum.

Retrospect and Prospect

One cannot assess the Reform rabbinate without considering its possible effectiveness. What has been its influence within the Reform movement? What has been the nature of its leadership—initiating or responding to outer initiatives? As with all rabbis and all movements in contemporary Judaism, the dual impact of the Holocaust/Shoah and Israel in radically transforming Jewish life is a given. Only within these parameters can we fairly judge the Reform rabbinate's influence. There are ample illustrations confirming the lead which the Central Conference of American Rabbis has provided to Reform. In June 1937, the Columbus Platform paved the way for the emergence of a similar ideology within the Union of American Hebrew Congregations at its biennial later that year in New Orleans. The CCAR has largely determined the liturgical forms and renewed practices of the movement. It has provided strong leadership in behalf of Israel. Where it has questioned Israeli policies, it has been more assertive than others, yet often circumspectly. It has set the pace in issues of social concern, including civil rights and the issues of peace.

Most recently, however, although the CCAR has asserted its traditional theological leadership, this time on the issue of patrilineal de-

scent, it has done so only by responding to a prior initiative from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. This is partly due to the fact that the Conference stands in a triune relationship with the Union and the HUC-JIR. Subtle controls and correctives have been exerted by each upon the others, resulting in self-restricting autonomy. Sometimes, shifts in balance or occasional institutional grid-locks are determined by charismatic leadership in one body or another. Despite this, it is to the credit of the movement that its physically weakest segment, the CCAR, has enjoyed as much freedom as it alone chooses to exercise. Ultimately, its freedom or the self-imposed limitation thereof is based on nothing more substantial than its moral strength or weakness. Ultimately, its influence and its leadership depend not only on its capacity but on its will to persuade and to take stands.

As Reform and American Judaism enter upon yet undefined transformations, the role of other Jewish religious movements in the development of the Reform rabbinate takes on significance. One of them is Reconstructionism. It is generally assumed that it was Mordecai Kaplan's thought which redirected Reform ideology, but this is too simplistic. It is more accurate to say that there have been mutually involved influences. As has already been indicated in this study, the influence of Felsenthal on Kaplan is acknowledged in *Judaism as a Civilization*, where Felsenthal offers a concise "Reconstructionist" definition of Judaism. In the same book, a 1925 survey of the Central Conference clearly indicates a turn toward "Judaism as a Civilization" at a time when Kaplan's philosophy had not yet made a strong impact. Reform students and rabbis were reaching their own "Reconstructionist" conclusions through the writings of Achad Ha-Am and the pages of *He-Atid*, containing a seminal symposium which paralleled Kaplan's philosophy. Equally important was the singular example of Reform, which "ran interference" for the rest of American Judaism in challenging old perceptions and practices, and charting new paths of belief and practice. No movement more assiduously built its own program on these bold principles than did Reconstructionism. At the same time, nevertheless, Kaplanism made obvious inroads into Reform thought by presenting a compelling critique of classical Reform as primarily a theology, and by stressing the principle of peoplehood. This made its way into the Columbus Platform. In addition, some of the leading early figures in the Reconstructionist camp were Reform

rabbis who acknowledged an abiding debt to Kaplan for shaping their Jewish outlooks. Thus, each movement has exerted a telling influence on the other.

The transformation of the Reform rabbinate may be traced in its garb and style—from Prince Albert cutaway, to striped trousers, to academic robe, often with narrow stole, to kipah and expansive tallit, at times covering a dress.

Are there constants in the highly transitional Reform rabbinate? There is a greatly developed sense of individualism, of personal autonomy, of deference but not unconditional obedience to Jewish law. Ultimately, changes seen as desirable are considered legitimate, even if they are not compatible with Jewish law. This represents a radical deviation from other rabbinical bodies.

In assessing the Reform rabbinate over an entire century, we realize that it has been less the product of ideology than of history. No more convincing testimony to this exists than the Pittsburgh principles themselves. Their repeated appeal is to historical forces which are referred to as modernism. Accordingly, Jewish religion developed "in accordance with . . . progress of . . . respective ages." Jewish observance must conform to ""modern civilization." Jewish nationalism is incompatible with "the modern era." The Jewish mission responds to "the broad humanity of our age." Judaism must address itself to "the present organization of society." This observation acknowledges that ideology is constantly interacting with history. Any ideology which is impervious to history becomes a Samaritan or Karaitic sect and suffers the consequences. Reform underwent cataclysmic changes of thought because it believed that events justified the changes. The massive transformation of the Reform rabbinate cannot be explained in terms of Reform definitions, except in the broadest possible sense. Today's Reform is neither universalist nor particularistic but Jewishly ecumenical. The rabbinate is the greatest embodiment of change. A number of primary factors account for this: the Jewish ecumenicity of Jewish chaplains during World War II; a similar phenomenon in Hillel Foundations; the Holocaust/Shoah with its shattering of Jewish denominational distinctions; and most recently and perhaps most compellingly, the first-year-in-Israel experience, by now encompassing about one-third of the active Reform rabbinate.

The foundations of this radical shift were laid by the Classical Re-

formers themselves, who proclaimed the legitimacy of change under the compulsion of changing times. The very emergence of Zionism, which had been anathema to early Reform rabbis, and which changed Reform almost beyond recognition, was by their own definition a normal development. Reform has changed so substantively that it might, except organizationally, be seen as another entity, just as the second Mrs. Sherman Stein is a different person from the first Mrs. Sherman Stein. The early Reform rabbis established the basis for a serious current predicament. If the spirit of the times is to be taken as a dominant factor in the shaping of Reform, then the revolutionary and dazzlingly rapid transformation of our world makes change and adaptation not only difficult but often premature and unfeasible. The process of adaptation becomes subject not to the inner demands of ancient tradition but to the compulsion of an external environment alone. Salvation is contingent on the age as much as on the past, but the founders of Reform could not have conceived how the age would betray both the Jews and universal humanity. The segment of Reform Judaism which was conceived on the premise, among others, that "the times" warranted radical departures from tradition misread history. It continued, even into the First World War, to see the world in messianic terms. Thus, in the year of America's entry into the war, the Central Conference declared, in justifying its opposition to joining the American Jewish Congress, "the Russian Revolution has radically altered the condition of our co-religionists in Russia, promising to secure the civil and religious rights of the Jews all the world over."[219] History itself should have persuaded us that the appeal to the age's validation alone is a weak reed. The abiding issue is whether, fully recognizing the adaptational demands of history, we can abide as Jews in conformity to a higher mandate than modernity.

Most recently, the Centennial Perspective (1976) of the Central Conference attempts to disengage itself from tribute to the "progress of the ages" by speaking of "our uncertain historical situation." Unlike the Pittsburgh Platform, which offers a religious monolith, the Perspective "does more than tolerate diversity; it engenders it. . . . we must expect to have far greater diversity than previous generations knew."[220] While Pittsburgh uses such terms as "reject," "foreign to," "no longer," the Perspective speaks of "tolerate," "stand open," "accept differences," "unity," "precious differences." Where Pittsburgh is

triumphal, the Perspective is reserved; where Pittsburgh is dogmatic, the Perspective is moderate; where Pittsburgh is confident, the Perspective is cautious; where Pittsburgh discards, the Perspective conserves. One of the conserving elements in contemporary Reform is the renewed concern with Jewish law. Yet this too has plunged Reform Judaism into a web of contradictions. A movement which is clearly returning to traditional values and practices while incapable of stemming the erosion of those values and practices, is torn indeed.

What can be more contradictory than a rabbinate which has taken an explosively mizvah-oriented direction while the number of rabbis who perform intermarriages increases? (David Philipson considered intermarriage a major danger for American Jewry.) Members of the CCAR overwhelmingly scorn the performance of "ecumenical marriages" with Christian clergy but will not legislate against it. Another, more constructive contradiction is the growing difference in style, content, and discipline between the Israeli Reform rabbinate, represented organizationally by MARAM (Mo'ezet ha-Rabbanim ha-Mitkaddenim—the Council of Progressive Rabbis), and the American Reform rabbinate. The former is committed to the full observance of the halakhah in matters concerning marriage, divorce, and conversion. The ultimate source of contradiction is the hitherto inviolate principle of freedom of individual conscience which, unlike in any other rabbinate, leaves rabbis virtually immune to any discipline except the opinion of their colleagues. This exacts a high collective price, but also safeguards against collective repression. It fosters both freedom and license. No proposals for resolving this dilemma have been advanced. If a request were to be made that gross violations should be subject to sanctions, it would be defeated.

Yet it should be recognized that the Reform rabbinate, like others, finds itself in a time of such Jewish upheaval that neat and orderly denominational structures are neither feasible nor desirable. The dislocations of the post-Holocaust/Shoah explosions still await rearranging. One of the dislocations is the imbalance between Jewish religion and Jewish ethnicity. Whenever that balance is disturbed, Jewish life is disturbed. When Reform arbitrarily excluded ethnicity, and when political Zionism excluded religion (except in a political context), a serious Jewish schism erupted. Taking into account the great religious contributions Reform has made in Israel—the Jerusalem School of

HUC-JIR, the Reform Kibbutz Yahel, and MARAM—the dominant perception is still that of a movement where ethnicity rivals religion. Reform is now challenged to exert its prophetic-religious influence in an increasingly politicized Jewish world. The synthesis of both is difficult to attain, but this must be a primary task of the Reform rabbinate.

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Notes

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10. July 15 proceedings, ibid., p. 31.
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13. *Jewish Review*, November 8, 1895, cited by Gartner, p. 152.
14. *Jewish Review and Observer*, March 22, 1912, cited by Gartner, p. 152.
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23. Ibid., p. 62.
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34. M. Margolis to M. Heller (?), April 26, 1907, MHP.
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41. J. Magnes to M. Heller, March 2, 1911, MHP.
42. Kaufmann Kohler to M. Heller, March 16, 1915, MHP.
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53. Ibid., p. 54. *CCAR Yearbook* 38 (1928): 140.
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57. Ibid. 36 (1926): 320.
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64. Ibid.
65. Address by Rabbi Louis Wolsey to the American Council for Judaism, Cincinnati, May 18, 1944, ACJP.
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67. Lazaron to Solomon Freehof, May 14, 1942, MLP.

68. Solomon Freehof to Louis Wolsey, May 14, 1942, MLP.
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73. (?) 1942 Minutes, ACJP.
74. April 6, 1942 Minutes, ACJP.
75. April 30, 1942 Minutes, ACJP.
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77. Abraham Cronbach, May 4, 1942 Minutes, ACJP.
78. Minutes of Atlantic City meeting, ACJP.
79. Julian Morgenstern, Minutes, Atlantic City meeting, ACJP.
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83. (Undated), ACJP.
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