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# From Denominationalism to Sectarianism: The Rise and Fall of the Synagogue Council of America

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Daniel Mosheh Bronstein
March, 1996

*Believing is alright,*
*Just so long you don't believe in the wrong thing.*

**"Rice" Miller**
**1958**

# INTRODUCTION

An old joke tells of a Jewish man stranded on a desert island for many years. After spending what seems to be an eternity, alone and completely cut off from civilization, he is finally discovered by a passing freighter. After the captain of the ship lands on the shore of the island with a rescue party, the stranded Jew takes his rescuers on a brief tour of the island. While he had been stranded, the Jew explains, he sought to build some semblance of order and normality by using palm-trees, coconuts and vines to fashion makeshift shelters. Reaching the center of the island, the captain notices two large, and comparatively speaking, beautiful huts. After the Jewish man explains that these huts serve as synagogues, the captain asks "If you have been alone all of these years, why did you build two synagogues?" Gesturing to one of the "synagogues," the Jew explains, "Oh, that's the one I don't go to."

Exaggerated as this joke may be, this tale and many others reveal and underline the lack of unity among Jews, if not endemic intra-communal strife and sectarianism. Conflicts, divisions and schisms have long been part of Jewish history, from antiquity to the present day. "There has never been a time in the long history of the spiritual life of the Jewish people," writes Joseph L. Blau, "when differing varieties of Judaism have not coexisted."[1] Insofar as coexistence implies mutual and peaceful acceptance of one interpretation of Judaism toward other variants, Blau probably overstates the case that diversity has always been indigenous to Judaism. It is fair to claim, however, that the Jewish people has always been conflicted on how to translate Judaism to their contemporary experiences. Therefore, in the sense that Judaism has experienced multiple interpretations, Blau is correct in describing differing varieties of Judaism coexisting with one another.

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[1]Joseph L. Blau, Judaism in America: From Curiosity to Third Faith. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 3.

Whether these conflicts over Judaism be based upon issues of religious practice, theology or, politics, ethnicity and class, the ancient and often beleaguered Jewish people has always been beset by internal strife, even when under threat from external forces. Indeed, one is hard-pressed in the search for any moment of time in history when the Jewish people in its entirety was united in religious practice, let alone in politics. Even the literature of the Tradition is laced with the perils of Jewish disunity, with of the one more prominent rabbinic parables tracing the destruction of the second Temple to the senseless hatred between two Jews.

Yet, Jews have never lost sight of becoming a people redeemed. Jews do not work only for the redemption of the world at large. Likewise, Jews dream of redeeming themselves, for themselves, uniting once and for all, each and everyone of them, until finally joining together as a unified community. Whether we speak of a unity of religious doctrine and practice or a unity in Jewish "Peoplehood," the search for unity has been as much of a constant in Jewish history as the reality of Jewish disunity. In regards to the Jews' early experience in the United States, the late dean of American-Jewish historians Jacob Rader Marcus wrote:

> American Jewry was undoubtedly influence by the tendency among Protestants to organize along national lines. This began during George Washington's first administration. Since then Jewry here had striven -- tentatively, sporadically, to be sure -- for national unity. All through the nineteenth and early twentieth century there were men who believed that one central national body would be good for the Jews; it would bring them security, strength. Ethnicity would cement them all. This centripetal drive, however, was halted by factors that were apparently contradictory. Jews were particularistic; they were kept apart by different ideologies; Orthodoxy, Reform, socialism were at war with one another; loyalties were parochial, limited to congregations and hometown societies. Yet there was at the same time a strong desire on the part of most immigrants to become an integral part of the American totality. This tension between

> particularism and regionalism, and Americanism did not tear Jews apart; the American pull always won out as long as one's Jewish identity was not threatened.[2]

Perhaps especially in the twentieth century, the lack of Jewish unity is so glaringly apparent for two reasons. First is the singularly horrific catastrophe and ongoing trauma of the Holocaust. Alternatively, the establishment of an independent Jewish polity in the Land of Israel has for the most part fostered Jewish unity, but in some instances has exacerbated intra-Jewish conflicts. Likewise, American Jews continue to be challenged by modernity in all of its riches and opportunities as much as by the ongoing challenges to Jewish identity and Tradition.

This particular study of Jewish disunity focuses upon American Jews in a period now viewed by some as the "Golden Age" of American Jewish life.[3] Roughly corresponding to the early, "Cold War" years, we will examine American Jewry's struggle for unity through the lens of the now defunct organization known as the Synagogue Council of America, (SCA). Precisely because the SCA story has a beginning, middle and an end, the institutional history of the Synagogue Council of America serves as a good case study of the tensions between unity and diversity on the Jewish--American scene. Created in 1926 to promote unity between the then mainline streams of American Jewish life --Reform, Conservative and "Americanized" Orthodoxy -- some point to the SCA's demise as a

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[2]Jacob Rader Marcus, United States Jewry, 1776-1985 Vol. IV. (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1989), 566.

[3]See Arthur A. Goren, "'A Golden Decade For American Jews: 1945-1955'" for an overview of this characterization in Peter Y. Medding, ed., A New Jewry? America since the Second World War: Studies in Contemporary Jewry -- An Annual, Vol., VIII, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-20.

relatively recent breakdown in the pluralistic system of American Judaism.[4]

Nevertheless, the contemporary schism among the various elements of religious, Jewish-Americans has been the reality, if not the norm, on a practical and ideological level, since the post-World War II era. Although this study is primarily an examination of the attitudes and ideologies of American Jewish "elites," and is by no means a "grass-roots," history of the "people," we would argue, nonetheless, that the conflicting visions for Judaism in America expressed here -- mostly by rabbis -- serve as an accurate description of the prevailing Jewish philosophies, and varied Jewish responses to modernity in this period.

These particular visions of Jewish unity were expressed by rabbis of almost every ideological shade, and as religious leaders they possessed influence over and access to a broad swath of the American Jewish community, cutting along theological, political and social lines. Still, one may legitimately question why focus on the SCA out of the vast alphabet of American Jewish organizations if the SCA existed only from 1927-1994 and since it never possessed a great deal of influence as an organization.

Indeed, the SCA was never very influential in the external, or non-Jewish world. In contrast, the organizations and even some of the leaders of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (or Presidents Conference), B'nai B'rith and Anti Defamation League -- to name just a few -- were far more known to non-Jews, including high government officials of the United States and the world. For example, the founder and leader of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise was an internationally known

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[4]For example, see "Modern Orthodoxy is 'Right' on Target: Redefines Mission Under pressure fro the Right," in the Jewish Sentinel, 1/20-26/95, pp. 11, 13.

figure, possessing access -- and sometimes influence -- with other heads of state. Likewise, since its inception in the 1950s, the Presidents Conference has acted as the de facto lobbying organization for mainline American Jews, working to influence US. foreign policies and other governments the world over.

The leaders of the SCA possessed neither the general recognition nor the political clout of those leaders or organizations. Still, despite its shortcomings as a representative of American Jewry to the non-Jewish world, the SCA at times found itself reproducing the work of the more significant organizations on specifically Jewish issues such as political support for Israel, antisemitism, and oppressed Jewry, as well as more universal issues such as civil rights and Church/State matters.

Similarly, throughout its history, the SCA lacked economic resources and fundraising power of other organizations. For mainline American Jews, the material resources and financial influence rested among intertwined institutions such as the Jewish Federations, United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). For a good part of the twentieth century, these organizations served at the financial core of a wide range of activities, services and fundraising, from suburban, American Jewish Community Centers, to massive, emergency fundraising appeals on behalf of the state of Israel and endangered Jewry in the Soviet Union. The SCA could neither raise nor administer such massive amounts of money. In fact, financially--based power was never an aspect of the SCA mission. Yet, while the members of the SCA never intended to replicate the UJA, the constituents of the Synagogue Council were themselves never quite clear about their own mission.

Indeed, while members of B'nai B'rith or the American Jewish Committee were consciously united out of an ethnically based view of Jewishness and out of the sense of obligation to the "Jewish people," and although the JDC existed specifically to administer funds to other Jews in distress, the SCA had no clearly defined mission.

Nevertheless, this lack of clarity in no way stemmed from lack of intellect or political instinct on the part of the American rabbinate. On the contrary, its mission and goals were quite intentionally murky. All the more so, the philosophical basis on which the SCA was created was necessarily submerged.

As we will see, although the SCA's mission was purposefully amorphous and, in the end, fatally so, the members of the SCA always possessed a clear sense of what it meant to be "Jewish." Of course, most of them shared the sense of ethnicity, "Peoplehood," and commitment to support Israel and other Jews worldwide. Likewise, most participants in the SCA were in genuine agreement with the policies of the more politically and financially significant segments of the established Jewish community. Yet, the constituents of the SCA were distinguished from the other organizations by their conscious, self-identification as *religiously* -- grounded Jews. At the heart of their Jewishness was Judaism rather than ethnicity or *noblesse oblige* toward their less secure brethren.

Admittedly, the SCA also lacked a significant measure of religious authority within the Jewish community. Whether we speak of theological issues or questions about religious practice, each Jew turned to the leaders of his particular denomination, be they officers of the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), or Orthodoxy's established authorities of Jewish law. Equally important, we should note that regardless of ideology, members of the Jewish religious community most likely turn first to local, community leaders rather than national organizations. Indeed, each community is "to all intents and purposes completely independent of every other congregation, a law unto itself," and usually "member controlled."[5] Likewise, even the separate denominations are "federations only; their powers are merely advisory, and their advice is not always accepted by their constituent synagogues."[6] But, in a very real sense,

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[5]Blau, Judaism in America, 16.
[6]Ibid. 53.

the members of the SCA hoped to serve as a council of Synagogues, rather than a council of federations, a committee, congress, or a conference of organizational presidents.

The members of the SCA were the religious leaders of the vast majority of religiously -- affiliated American Jews. And few of his Reform and Conservative colleagues would disagree with Orthodox Rabbi David de Sola Pool's contention that the Synagogue was the single most important and binding institution from the start of American Jewish history.[7] More than that, they were the religious leaders of probably the most powerful Diaspora Jewish community in Jewish history, and, to complicate matters even more, the most religiously diverse or pluralistic Jewish community ever to exist. All the more so, if Daniel J. Elazar is correct in portraying "conflict avoidance" (i.e., the "sheer prevention of clashes," even, if necessary, at the expense of "consensus"), as an essential aspect of the American-Jewish community's decision making process, the SCA was yet another mean of ordering the multi-faceted American-Jewish community.[8]

Finally, the SCA was, perhaps, more than any other organization in American Jewish life, *the* exemplar of broader American religious modalities, and was thus grounded both in modernity and in a radically distinct structure in the history of Judaism. But, the claim that the SCA was a typical example of Americanized religion should be preceded by a brief examination of American religion as a whole. For if the plural nature of American Judaism is confusing, all the more so American religion is

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[7]See David de Sola Pool's "Judaism and the Synagogue," Oscar I. Janowsky, ed., The American Jew: A Composite Portrait. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), 28.

[8]See Elazar's discussion in Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1976), 315-17.

characterized by what Martin E. Marty describes as a "bewildering pluralism."[9]

From the outset of American history, religious pluralism became a fundamental reality in the United States through a series of arrangements established to separate church from state. With no central coercive authority in the US, denominationalism became and remains the norm rather than exception for American religion. Indeed, just as the "state was composed of competing political parties and the economy of diverse business enterprises, so too religious life was made up of various denominations," yet the "denomination was more than merely a religious organization; it constituted a distinctively American contribution to religious taxonomy, a religious form that successfully accommodated traditional religious claims and affirmations to voluntarism and free association of a free society."[10]

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[9]Martin E. Marty, A Nation of Behavers, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 18.

[10]See editors Russell E. Richey and Robert Bruce Mullin's introduction to Reimagining Denominationalism: Interpretive Essays. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3. Other observers of American religion and culture understand denominationalized American religion as a process of secularizing and Americanizing Old World religion, through the prism of American "Civil Religion." Sociologist John Murray Cuddihy takes this one step further, explaining civil religion as the "religion of civility." That is, "Europe is the home of classical religious theology," so while the Old world is the "continent of believers," America is a "nation of behavers." What Cuddihy illuminates is the extent to which the Americanization of traditional, European religions entailed the modification of external religious modalities, such as ritual, prayer and behavior. In a word, European religion was "civilized" as a means of entering into mainline American society. Instilling a new sense of decorum into Judaism -- in regards to styles of prayer, behavior in the synagogue and outward appearance, to name just a few areas -- was an essential concern for the Reform, Conservative and "Modern Orthodox" movements in America. This study is neither the place to join in the debate over how to define civil religion, nor is this the context in which to fully consider the merits of Cuddihy's still-controversial ideas. Nevertheless, insofar as Americanizing religion was a primary

Winthrop S. Hudson correctly locates the origins of denominationalism with Protestant Christianity and the notions of "religious toleration and religious freedom" on the one hand. But on the other hand, denominationalism was a "response to problems created by the division of adherents of a single religious tradition into separate and competing ecclesiastical bodies. They shared a common faith but were divided by issues of Church government and worship." Yet, the denominational system "took toleration and, later, religious freedom for granted, accepted arguments put forward in their defense, and then moved beyond the goal of peace among competing groups to a quest for unity in the midst of acknowledged difference of those who shared a common faith." Therefore,

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component of the perennial struggle of immigrant communities to join mainline American society, Cuddihy's ideas are significant enough for us to at least note them. For if the denominationalization of religion was part of "civilizing" traditional religion, then Cuddihy's concept of "civility" offers one important framework for understanding American Judaism. For the previously cited quotations see John Murray Cuddihy, No Offense: Civil Religion and Protestant Taste. (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 3, 6-7. Cuddihy's essential work on civility, (which is more a study of ideology and culture than religion), is The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi -Straus, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1974). Nonetheless, Cuddihy would seem to agree with the formulator of the civil religion concept Robert N. Bellah who writes that there are "certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share." Yet whereas Cuddihy subverts Bellah's notion of American civil religion into a process of civilizing religion, he disputes Bellah's perspective that "civil religion at its best is a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in, or....as revealed through the experience of the American people." See Bellah's "Civil Religion in America," in Patrick H. McNamara, ed., Religion American Style. (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 73, 87. Perhaps the best bridge between Cuddihy's culture-based notion of civil religion and Bellah's religiously-based formulation is S. Daniel Breslauer's explanation that "civil religion compels the conventional religions assent to general ideals while granting them the right of applying those ideals in a specific way to their culture and tradition." See Breslauer's Judaism and Civil Religion. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 8.

denominationalism is distinguished from sectarianism in that each sect in the sectarian system claims exclusive authority in interpreting and governing the adherents of a particular religious faith, in contrast the denominational system's intrinsic standard of coexistence.[11]

Thus, American religion is characterized by multiple denominations, or variants of a particular religious system. Each differs to various degrees in terms of theology, ritual and practice, socio-economic traits of community membership, ethnicity, and, on occasion, political outlook. For example, while Methodists, Episcopalians and Baptists are all Protestants, each is a separate denomination of Protestantism, with differing interpretations and practice of Protestant Christianity. In fact, some Protestant denominations actually split into sub-denominations during the course of the American Civil War as a result of conflicting regional loyalties and ideologies.

These variants or denominations may not differ from another to a tremendous degree in terms of theology or practice. Nevertheless, the pluralistic grounding of American religion allows for and even encourages the denominationalization of various faiths,

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[11]See Hudson's article "Denominationalism," in Mircea Eliade, ed., Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 4, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), 292-8. An excellent example of Winthrop's description is the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America's "Confession of 1967." In one excerpt the authors state that "[d]ifferent orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A presbyterian [sic] polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition. Every church order must be open to such reformation as may be required to make it a more effective instrument of the mission of reconciliation." Quoted in John H. Leith, ed., Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), 594.

whereas European religion was characteristically centralized and far more authoritarian. That is, within the European milieu, the "mother church" possessed a centralized authority over its adherents, enforced by the State, becoming, (if they were not in conflict with one another), the State Church. Therefore, the lack of such coercive power within the realm of religion in the American experience encourages a profusion of religious denominations. Stated differently, denominationalism is predicated on the lack or weakness of a religious center. And, by "center" we mean an authoritative theology obligating a centralized religious practice and the enforcement of the church's "truth" through a centralized church administration. With the exception of the Catholic church, other religions in the United States such as Protestantism and Judaism are organized according to the denominational pattern.

In other words, unlike the traditional, centralized, systems of religious, social and political governance in "Old World" Jewish communities, the plurality of Jewish--American religious life became a hard fact, characterized by conflicting ideologies, practices, liturgies and attitudes toward the non-Jewish world and towards modernity. In America, Judaism became, in a word, denominationalized. And as Blau writes, the "people who have suffered, at least as much as any other people in the world, from the conditions of life created by totalitarian governments, especially in Central and in Eastern Europe, should clearly be the first to reject totalitarianism and to receive warmly the notion of a pluralistic, diversified, democratic model for Jewish life."[12]

Of course, this system, for non-Jews and Jews alike entails a strong measure of competition between denominations.
And as one observer of American religion wrote at mid-century, "American denominations....have stood in the relationship of 'fair competition' with one another. The competitiveness itself reflects one of the primary secular values of American life," even while the

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[12]Blau, Judaism in America, 6.

"very possibilities of expansion in the United States stimulated denominational growth, and the formal equality of religious movements....allowed sects to become denominations."[13] Nonetheless, the competitiveness which is an essential part of American religion points to an other basic element in the American religious experience, namely, "Voluntaryism."

Voluntaryism means that since there is no centralized state church compelling affiliation and a particular religious practice, an individual's religious affiliation, (or lack thereof), is made on a voluntary basis. Implicitly, since denominations lack the coercive authority to establish and enforce membership, denominations must compete with one another in recruiting and maintaining members. Stated in a more vulgar fashion, religious denominations mirror the world of business since they must "sell" one particular religious system over another. Fundamentally, then, Voluntarism is two-sided: on the one hand, religious affiliation is made on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, the various denominations must compete for membership. But just as American religion mirrors the business world, the American political structure also impacts upon American religion.

At he heart of this political structure is the philosophy known as "Federalism." The roots of Federalism stretch back to the early constitutional period of the American republic. Despite the general freedom of thought, despite the already established plurality of cultures and ethnicity's, and in spite of the attempt at a loose, political association through the Articles of confederation, it became abundantly clear that a far more centralized State structure was necessary if the burgeoning republic was to survive intact.

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[13]See Bryan Wilson's "Religion and Churches in Contemporary America," in William G. Mcloughlin and Robert N. Bellah, eds., Religion in America, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 77. For a good summary of denominationalism in America see also Edwin S. Gaustad, "America's Institutions of Faith, " in the same collection.

Federalism called for division of power between state and central government authorities, with the central or federal government regulating relations between states and with other countries on behalf of the states. Moreover, the federal system set national standards in various economic, political and social spheres. In other words, Federalism allows for different states to coexist under a central authority. Thus, Federalism offered a compromise between the centralized State found in the European experience and the anarchic, "states rights," system of the Articles of Confederation. Likewise, the federal system facilitated a balance between local and central political authorities. For our purposes, the very success of the federalist ideology guaranteed that the wider culture of America would attempt to absorb the general contours of federalism into non-governmental aspects of American life. This process was an example of cross-cultural interaction, or, described differently, as one component of the American scene mimicking the other.

A variety of religions, flourishing in an open and legal atmosphere, operated within and drew from the broader non-religious culture of the United States.[14] Although American Jews came to the United States under far different circumstances than their fellow Christian citizens, Judaism in America went through a similar process to Many Christian denominations. Just as Protestantism drew from secular culture, became denominationalized and operated within the context of Voluntaryism, the "bewildering" and fundamentally competitive landscape of American religion carried certain pitfalls.

Even while freedom of religion was a profound blessing for the many Americans, Christian and Jewish alike, because of their religious beliefs, denominationalism also institutionalized religious division and sectarianism among religious groups who should have

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[14]For more discussion on how the United States government in turn absorbs various religious ideas into state ideology, see discussion below, chapter 3.

been natural allies. That is, on the one hand, the American political system freed Americans from the burden and persecution found in the Old World. On the other hand, the denominational system was not always conducive to maintaining peace between different religious systems. All the more so, should particular religious groups wish to dialogue or even collaborate -- such as on the political level -- American denominations found cooperation almost impossible without some sort of "umbrella" organizational structure.[15] Federalism, even as it appeared antithetical to Denominationalism, became the antidote to possible sectarianism and by the twentieth century came to serve as a salve to the divisions caused by the freedom of religion.

American religion thus absorbed the federalist model from American civic culture, creating religious structures similar to the United States' federal structure. Just as Federalism maintained the correct balance between states' rights and the federal government's authority, American Protestants sought to rationalize the anarchic structure of American religion. Federalized American religion, usually termed as Ecumenicism, as initially developed by American Christians, claimed that the "community of all Christian churches despite their differences in conclusions."[16]

First through the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) and later through a revamped organization, the National Council of Churches (NCC), Protestants used the hermeneutic of federalism to address the

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[15]For example, a substantial motivation behind Protestant-American federalism was the contemporaneous social gospel and Progressive movements in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. See Sidney E. Ahlstrom's brief discussion of the interplay between federalism, Progressivism, and the social gospel movement into the Depression era in A Religious History of the American People. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 172), 802-4, 922. Likewise, Ahlstrom notes that American Protestants played key roles in the formation of international ecumenical organizations. Ibid. 908.

[16]Blau, Judaism in America, 9.

shortcomings and divisions generated by Christian-American denominationalism. All federal structures, be they multinational organizations, business organizations or the federal government itself, are composed of individual parts attempting a measure of cooperation and coexistence, even while preserving the particular concerns, ideology and freedom of each member.[17] Federalism thus offered the perfect conceptual basis for coexistence and joint-action for American religious denominations.

Jews, of course, came to the United States from the Old World with their own particular historical baggage, of which sectarianism was a major component. During the European experience, for example, Jews faced the perils of sectarianism in the conflict between *Hasidim* and the *Misnagdim, to* name but one of the more prominent examples. By the nineteenth century, those two groups would join together in opposition to radical new denomination of Reform Judaism by the *fin de siècle* confront the new secular religions of Marxism, Socialism, Bundism, and most threatening to Traditionalists,

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[17]Indeed, the very name, "Federal Council of Churches," demonstrates the influence of American Civic culture upon American religion. The appropriation of federalism by American Christians represents typical American cross-cultural interaction. Likewise, organizations such as the League of Nations, (inspired by the Wilsonian Weltanschauung), the United Nations, European Economic Community, and Organization of African Unity, just to name a few, bear the obvious imprint of Federalism. The federalist ideology offered the possibility for promoting a more "efficient" international system and the hope for maintaining peace between nations. Much like religious umbrella organizations, all of these structures attempt a forum for dialogue and cooperation, while preserving the political and ideological integrity of the member states. The NCC was organized in 1950 and made up of 25 Protestant and four Eastern Orthodox denominations. On an international scale, the World Council of Churches was organized in 1948 and made up of 147 denominations, of which 29 were American. For more discussion, see Paul A. Carter, Another Part of the Fifties. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1983), 135-8.

Zionism.[18] These profound conflicts necessarily followed the Jewish people into the New World.

The various waves of immigration and the consequent inequality of social and economic development, alongside the profound intellectual and theological turmoil carried over from nineteenth century Europe, led to the development of new denominations and institutions within the Jewish world.

Orthodoxy attempted to maintain the Tradition in America while concurrently new streams formulated new modes of religious practice and philosophies for responding to modernity. Necessarily, the various branches of Judaism in America required ideological self-definition in contrast to one another and in response to general American society. Yet, by early twentieth century, the burgeoning denominationalized system of American Judaism nonetheless conflicted with an equally fundamental Jewish struggle: to forge a unified system of American Judaism and to unify the Jewish people.

Stated differently, although on the one hand, Jewish--Americans fought fierce ideological battles to maintain religious independence from any central religious authority, on the other hand, the Jews of America -- especially in times of crisis -- also struggled to a create a modicum of unity between every segment of the Jewish community.[19]

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[18]These two streams of Judaism, although initially violent foes, banded together, first in Europe and later in the United States and Israel, against a variety of common foes. Although the Chasidim and Misnagdim had propounded diametrically opposed visions of Judaism, their common adversary was secularist/Enlightenment philosophies.

[19]While we will be dealing with the problems of religious unity among Jewish-Americans, good examples of attempts at political unity among Jews in America are, for example, the response to the Damascus Affair," and later, to the Holocaust. (Regarding the latter instance, see dissertation by Isaac Noy, "The Unending Task: Efforts

Faced with the reality -- or in the Traditionalists' view, the scourge -- of denominationalism and Voluntaryism in America, the mostly Americanized leadership of American Judaism faced the same issues as their Protestant counterparts had before them. By the post-World War I era, American Jews responded in a fashion similar to Christians, through the appropriation of Federalism. Accordingly, like the FCC, the SCA was meant to function as an umbrella organization for a denominations of American Judaism, and to facilitate intra-communal cooperation without neutralizing the particular ideologies or freedom of interpretation and practice of each denomination. These tensions were further exacerbated by the very success and flourishing of the multiple forms of American Judaism, especially by the conclusion of the second World War.

The post-World War II era is characterized by Jewish-American religious institutional growth, as greater numbers of American Jews formally affiliated with the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox streams of American Judaism.[20] Parallel to this trend was the movement within American Judaism toward a greater religious traditionalism, if not an explicit questioning of the value of modernity and the Americanization process, impelling the rabbinic leadership of all streams of American Judaism toward a more defined religious framework.[21] But equally complex was the continual drive toward a coherent intra-Jewish unity among the theologically conflicting streams of American Judaism.[22]

After examining the origins of the SCA and the broad outlines of the Reform Conservative and orthodox positions on unity and pluralism and the flawed attempts at unity during the second World

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to Unite American Jewry from the American Jewish Congress to American Jewish Conference." Brandeis university, 1976).

[20]Morris Fine, ed., American Jewish Yearbook (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), Vol. 55, 80-1.

[21]Ibid., 81-2.

[22]Ibid., pp. 82, American Jewish Yearbook, (Philadelphia: the Jewish Publication Society of America ,1955), Vol. 56, 232.

War, we will focus on a incident in the history of the SCA, which exposed the problematics of American Jewish denominationalism, namely the controversy surrounding the installation of Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman as president in 1955. The turmoil engendered by this episode, perhaps more than any other in the history of the SCA, is illustrative of the conflicting drives within American Judaism, of unity versus ideological self-determination.

The specific tensions surrounding the installation of a Reform rabbi as President of the SCA more broadly exposed the intrinsic conflict between the established fact of religious and ideological plurality within American Judaism on the one hand, and the ideal of religious unity on the other. The movement to end the *Halakhic* chaos which has indeed characterized the American Jewish landscape, only intensified the conflict. This study hopes to illuminate the ideologies of American Rabbis from the various denominations of American Judaism, and moreover, the intrinsic difficulties faced by an organization structured like the Synagogue Council. The controversial installation of Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman as SCA president provides an insight into intra-rabbinic relations, and illuminates the issues dividing American rabbis from one another -- and most importantly for this study -- reform rabbis from orthodox rabbis. We will deal with the events and ideological debates leading up to and following the installation after surveying religious life, conflicts and the struggle for unity in the first half of the twentieth century.

## Chapter One: The Origins of the SCA and the Ascent of Americanized Judaism

Inspired by the Reform movement's lay organization, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, (UAHC), the Synagogue Council of America was established in 1926. A resolution placed before the Reform leaders at the 1925 biennial meeting of the UAHC called for a "close religious fellowship and practical cooperation among the national Jewish congregational organizations," and for the "advancement of Judaism and Jewish education in the United States."[23] However, the call for greater "religious fellowship and practical cooperation" actually originated with the Reform rabbinical organization, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, (CCAR). In fact, calls for a religiously-based, national Jewish organization had been rising since the middle of the previous century. In order to understand the forces behind the establishment of the SCA, some constructive digression on nineteenth and early twentieth century American Judaism is called for.

In his history of the Reform movement, Response to Modernity, Michael A. Meyer explains that the immediate impetus for the creation of a Synagogue Council stemmed from the efforts of Rabbi Abram Simon in 1924, who was then president of the CCAR.[24] Simon's proposal for a national, Jewish *religious* organization was spurred on by two related concerns. The Reform leadership's first concern was that its own system for creating an authentic and authoritative American Judaism had been sidetracked by the increasingly powerful secular, Jewish "defense" organizations. In other words, Reformers feared communal marginalization via secular organizations, which by this time had grown in influence and

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[23] Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations: 11/1/23-1/25/25. (New York: UAHC, 1925), 9816.

[24] Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 304.

membership. The second, far more fundamental concern was a sense that the quality of religious Jewish life in the United States had deteriorated, and the primacy of Judaism, in terms of Jewish identity, was being overcome by secularism.

As to the first concern, the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights, the defense wing of the UAHC organizational apparatus, was soon to be dismantled. As Meyer explains, the Board "worked to protect the general interests of American Jews." Among other issues, the Board also combated "anti-semitism, laws prohibiting work on Sundays, Bible reading in public schools," anti-immigration, or, restrictionist sentiments, and worked toward alleviating the plight of Eastern-European Jews.[25] The Board had been Reform's primary way of projecting its position on Jewish defense concerns. With its disappearance, Reform Judaism would have to find new ways to compete with the secular Jewish organizations.

In fact, at its inception in 1859, the Board had been a separate organization formed in response to the "Mortara Affair" of the previous year.[26] Modeled after their fellow Anglo-Jews' self-defense organization, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the new Board of Delegates of American Israelites had at first hoped to "unite all Jewish congregations, all Jewish philanthropic, mutual-benefit, and fraternal organizations."[27] Yet, like many other Jews and Jewish organizations in later years, the Board soon realized the difficulties, if not impossibility, of creating such a unified body, and thus limited its purview to defending Jews at home and abroad.[28]

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[25] Ibid. 283.

[26] See Howard M. Sachar, A History of the Jews in America. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1992), 82, for a brief summary of this early American-Jewish effort toward self-defense and for details of the Mortara episode. See also Bertram W. Korn's The American Reaction to the Mortara Case: 1858-1859. (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1957).

[27] Ibid. 82.

[28] Ibid. 82-3.

After Reform founding-father Isaac Mayer Wise's seemingly successful attempt at creating a structurally and religiously unified American Jewish organization in 1873, the Board decided to join Wise's newly-created UAHC by becoming its "civil rights committee."[29] Nevertheless, this merger presaged the very issues leading to the formation of the Synagogue Council more than a half a century later: the question of how to unite organizationally all American Jews into a single structure, the competition and conflicts between "secular" and "religious" Jewish organizations, and the emergence of American Jewish denominationalism.

That is, even while American Orthodoxy struggled to organize itself, and although the forces which evolved into Conservative Judaism were emerging in the late nineteenth century, Reform leaders were not unduly disturbed by the other religious elements in America, whose practice of Judaism they considered passé, if not actually in the throes of death. Of course, in the mid nineteenth century, Isaac Wise and the proto-Conservative leader, Isaac Lesser, failed in their attempts to unify American Jews religiously. From 1841 through 1855, both leaders hoped to organize American Jews through a common liturgy, religious organization and system for Jewish education. Yet even as Wise was personally prepared to eschew various elements of radical Reform ideology, and although Lesser had -- from the traditionalist perspective -- the *chutzpah*, to even sit down at the same table with the Reformers, the two leaders' dreams were already obviated by the growing, and to be sure, bewildering reality of Jewish denominationalism in America.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Reformers, unwilling to rein in radical elements within the movement continued in a radical direction into the next century. Likewise, Traditionalists were still split between modernity-oriented and anti-modern forces. The fundamental disagreements between all of these approaches to

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[29]Ibid. 109. For more on Wise's efforts at uniting all of American Jewry, see below.

Judaism in the modern world therefore led to the transformative process of denominationalization at the expense of American Jewish unity.[30] Nonetheless, Wise, backed by lay-peoples' calls for unity attempted to realize his dreams again through the establishment of the UAHC and the Hebrew Union College, a seminary which he intended to serve as the practical and ideological training center for the whole of American Jewry. Since the Union financially supported HUC, Wise reasoned that American Jews could be united under the auspices of a non-denominational seminary. But rather than formalizing these plans, Wise, in Meyer's words, decided to "allow the laity to act on their own."[31]

Nonetheless, "[p]ropagation of Reform Judaism was neither an overt nor a covert purpose of the UAHC. Not only would the discussion of doctrinal and ritual issues have threatened to break up the still fragile union, but it appeared that with greater or lesser rapidity nearly all of American Jewry was in any case moving at least toward moderate Reform."[32] HUC was thus an attempt at creating a place in which the already diverse elements of American Jewry could meet and hopefully cohere. In fact, the traditionalists, or more specifically, proto-Conservatives on the HUC board of examiners, such as Sabato Morais and Marcus Jastrow were ever-present reminders of the fragile fabric of the College's unity. Thus, when the disparate segments of the Union gathered for the first annual ordination of HUC students in 1883, and the laypeople responsible for catering the event "carelessly ordered," a dinner featuring a "variety of shellfish," the whole of religious, American Jewry was inevitably torn asunder by significant ritual disagreements at the "high[est] point of Jewish religious unity in America."[33] As with the case of so many other phenomena, this

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[30]See Meyer, Response to Modernity, 243-4, for more discussion of these matters.

[31]Ibid. 260-3.

[32]Ibid. 262.

[33]Ibid. 263.

"high point of unity" was the preface to its descent and an exacerbation of denominational differences.

"[T]his scandalizing 'Trefa Banquet' was only symbolic of fundamental tensions already apparent," writes Meyer, and the "[r]egional, religious, ethnic, and social differences would make this newborn unity ephemeral."[34] Indeed, like previous unification attempts, hopes that the Union, as lay-lead organization could unify American Jews, and the ideal of a non-denominational seminary for training all American rabbis did not seriously consider the reality of a divided American Jewry.

Moreover, the lifeless shellfish served at the Trefa Banquet was a blessing in disguise for the proto-Conservatives. Long concerned over the increasingly radical nature of Reform Judaism, they had waited for the correct moment to part from their Reforming brethren. Likewise, the radical reformers, like other ideological revolutionaries, were far more concerned about maintaining the purity of their revolution than in forging a modicum of unity which they understood both as intellectually facile and inimical to their long-term goals for Judaism. In the end of this chapter of American Jewish history, it was all but inevitable that the "Conservatives soon went their own way," even as the Reformers "for the next generation, became preeminently radical."[35]

Indeed, to quote Meyer again, the "last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth witnessed the widest swing of the Reform pendulum away from traditional Jewish belief and practice....as it distinguished itself more sharply from Orthodoxy and from an emergent Conservative Judaism." These distinctions simply strengthened the process of denominationalization.[36]

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[34]Ibid.
[35]Ibid.
[36]Ibid. 264.

The source of Reform's redefinition was the CCAR's 1885 declaration known as the "Pittsburgh Platform." To be sure, this statement contrasted Reform ideology from "wholly nonsectarian universals," as well as from the "more traditional expressions of Judaism."[37] The Reform mission, proclaimed Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, a preeminent leader of radical Reform, was 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."[38] The Reformers' increasing emphasis on social justice, their continuing and whole-hearted effort to Americanize Jews and the relegation of traditional ritual and practice to secondary importance even caused anxiety within the UAHC and HUC. Nonetheless, the Pittsburgh Platform also birthed the breakaway Conservative movement and forced further soul-searching among the submerged and splintered Orthodoxy of the United States.

At the same time, various segments of traditional (and Reform!) American Jewry congealed around the effort to create the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in 1896. One segment included modernized traditionalists, whose intellectual lineage is traceable to the "Positive Historical" school of Judaism of nineteenth century Germany. Grounded both in the Tradition and in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* , this intellectually formidable group had earlier aligned itself with the Reform movement, sharing a similar response toward modernity and utilizing modern scholarship as a hermeneutic for confronting the problems of post-emancipation Jewry.

Yet, in the aftermath of the Trefa banquet, and, more fundamentally, the Reform movement's Pittsburgh platform of 1885, the Positive Historical Jews broke with Reform to establish the

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[37]Ibid. 265.
[38]Ibid.

Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Likewise, another segment of the traditionalists, far more Orthodox in ideology and in terms of studying the Tradition genuinely hoped that the Seminary would produce Americanized but Orthodox rabbis, in spite of its emphasis on modern scholarship.[39] However, while the pro-modern, or Americanizing Orthodox used and amended some elements of the modern world to defend the Tradition against Modernity, the intellectuals behind JTS approached Judaism from the opposite direction, as they sought to modernize and Americanize the Tradition itself. As early as the 1870s, Conservative leaders such as Morais, "expounding a centrist position was attacked from both sides. Reform leaders criticized his meekness, the Orthodox his deviation from tradition."[40] But neither group could continue indefinitely to ignore their serious ideological and theological disagreements. Finally, JTS was conceptually, and equally important, financially supported by Reform Jews like Marshall, who believed that traditional Judaism had run its course and was anxious over the

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[39]For example, Bernard Drachman, an American-born, Western-European trained rabbi, was among the first faculty members of the Seminary. Neither a Conservative nor anti-modern, Drachman's reminisces of his Seminary work encapsulate the experience of like-minded Orthodox Jews in this period. See his autobiography, The Unfailing Light: Memoirs of an American Rabbi. (New York: the Rabbinical Council of America, 1948). Exemplifying this ideological position, Drachman writes of family-life in his youth that "...we were able to adjust ourselves harmoniously to both great aspects of our lives and of the lives of Jews in America, Americanism and Judaism; we became real American Jews, or, if you prefer the term, Jewish Americans." Ibid. 21 It is also noteworthy that in his youth -- probably sometime in the 1870s -- Drachman studied at Reform Temple Emanu-El's "Hebrew Preparatory" school under the tutelage of such major Reformers as Gustav Gottheil, Samuel Adler and Kaufmann Kohler. Of this preparation in Jewish studies, Drachman writes that "I must state that the instruction which I received there gave me a very substantial foundation of Hebrew [i.e., Jewish] scholarship." Ibid. 40.

[40] Ibid. 106.

massive task of Americanizing the masses of traditional *Ostjuden* entering the United States.

These Reform Jews saw the new Seminary as a vehicle for Americanizing East European immigrants, and as a means for Americanizing the Tradition. But the Seminary's Reform patrons also hoped to neutralize the remnants of traditional, Eastern-European Judaism in America. In fact, the Reform and Conservatives were far closer, intellectually, than either group at the turn of the century would have liked to admit. For if they differed in ritual, liturgy and religious practice, neither believed in the Divine origin of halakhah, and both groups were committed to modernity and the modern study of Judaism. In contrast, the Orthodox desirous of Americanization were twice alienated; separated from the Old Country-Orthodox, who stubbornly maintained the traditional conceptions of Judaism, and alienated from the Conservatives, who were traditional in practice, but modern in ideology.

But, the new Conservatives had no intention of serving as the tools for neutralizing Orthodoxy. On the contrary, they hoped to ultimately bring Reform as well as Orthodox Jews into the Conservative camp. As Karp explains, the new Conservative "coalition was based on a dissociation from both Radical Reform and East European Orthodoxy. The former," believed the founders, "was dangerous to Judaism, and the latter inimical to America."[41] As Morais himself stated, "[w]ell-meaning, but unwise orthodoxy, tells us that by keeping altogether aloof from 'Reformers'...we will guard our children from the effects of teaching subversive of the Holy Writ....Isolation is an impossibility. It would be inadvisable if it were possible..."[42]

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[41]See Abraham J. Karp's essay, "The Conservative Rabbi -- 'Dissatisfied but not Unhappy," in Marcus and Peck, eds., The American Rabbinate, 110.

[42]Ibid.

However, the Seminary did not fully take shape until the arrival of the scholar Solomon Schechter in 1902. "I would consider my work...a complete failure," he proclaimed in his inaugural address, "if this institution would not in the future produce such extremes as on the one side a roving mystic who would denounce me as a sober Philistine; on the other side, an advanced critic, who would rail at me as a narrow minded fanatic, while a third devotee of strict orthodoxy would raise protest against any critical views I may entertain."[43]

Thus, it was Schechter, explains Karp, who "drew what became the hallmark of the Conservative rabbinate, commitment to the disciplines of Judaism and wide latitude for one's theological beliefs and ideological stance."[44] Equally significant, Schechter invested Conservatism with a specific mission: K'lal Yisrael, or to use his term, "catholic Israel." In other words, by way of the burgeoning Conservative movement, modern Judaism could remain tied to the Tradition, but as a full participant in modernity. Moreover, the Conservatives hoped to unite all American Jews under the banner of a scientized -- and sanitized --Tradition.

By the inter-war period the image of the melting pot had been transformed into one of cultural pluralism.[45] "Within the American rabbinate," Karp explains, "the Conservative rabbis became its most pronounced adherents, and Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan its most influential ideologist."[46] Influential far beyond the Conservative movement, the impact of Kaplanian thought and Reconstructionism has been dealt elsewhere.[47] Nonetheless, it is important to note that

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[43]Ibid. 115.
[44]Ibid.
[45]Ibid. 121.
[46]Ibid.
[47]See Mel Scult's definitive biography Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), and the anthology of writings on Kaplan,

Kaplan's ideology was crucial to Conservative Judaism's growing success because it provided a rationale for retaining traditional practices and liturgy, while simultaneously absorbing secular American mores and culture, and secular Jewish culture, particularly Zionism. As each general group of Judaism became more defined against one another, denominationalism became the next logical stage of American Judaism.

Yet, even if the Reformers were temporarily triumphant, they had also become increasingly threatened by the national, secular Jewish organizations. We should recall that the history of such organizations stretched back to the establishment of B'nai B'rith in 1843. Absorbing the functions of smaller and localized Jewish charitable organizations, both religious and secular, Howard Sachar explains that "by 1861," "B'nai B'rith lodges were operating in every major Jewish community in America."[48] Moreover, by this time, B'nai B'rith had moved beyond mimicking the Masons' social and networking functions, and was even "transcending its initial, limited role as a benevolent fund, or even as a vehicle for status-satisfaction. It was becoming an instrument of acculturation."[49] Thus, taking the cultural, social, and charitable roles previously associated with the Synagogue and rabbinic leadership in the Old Country, B'nai B'rith also began to function as an instrument for Americanizing the already settled Jews and the masses of *Ostjuden* soon to arrive on American shores.

Especially at the turn of the century, as Jews streamed into the US from Europe, all of the American-Jewish leadership, whether secular or religious, struggled to absorb new immigrants, recontextualize their traditional culture and religious practices for the realities of American life, while at the same time bond with

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Emmanuel S. Goldsmith, Scult, and Robert M. Seltzer, The American Judaism of Mordecai M. Kaplan, (New York: NYU Press, 1990).

48 Sachar, A History of Jews in America, 70-1.

49 Ibid. 71.

American cultural modalities. Stated differently, the native, American Jewish leadership needed to restructure the mores and mindset of European Jews along the lines of the majority American culture. The Americanization process was far easier for the Reformers and other modernized American Jewries, who, viewing Modernity in almost a messianic light, were ideologically impelled to restructure, amend, or, if need be, jettison the elements of European Judaism they viewed as problematic. The Traditionalists, in contrast, were faced with two options; hold fast to Old World Judaism or negotiate a new fusion between Americanism and the Tradition.

Neither option was particularly appealing. The first response, which failed or was unable to deal with the realities of American life, appeared to threaten the Tradition with extinction, while the latter response of absorbing some aspects of modernity was as risky for the traditionalist as being a test-pilot for experimental aircraft. Either response, entrenchment from, or détente with modernity, threatened the very survival of traditional Judaism. Both options menaced traditional Jews with being swallowed up by the land already declared trefa by the traditional authorities of Europe, the first by allowing Judaism to become irrelevant to the mass majority of Jews who intensely wanted to participate in the American experience. The second option risked further dilution of the Tradition, being "melt down," into the pot of the majority culture, and finally disappearing into the New World, as their ancestors had vanished into the Babylon of antiquity.

"Life in Europe was geared to meet the needs and requirements of Judaism," explains Aaron Rothkoff, the "rabbis, scholars, and sextons were ever present to guide the faithful Jewish masses. In turn of the century America, however, the new arrival was immediately caught up in a strange world where he no longer could consult the rabbis and scholars he knew so well back home."[50] In

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[50]Aaron Rothkoff, Bernard Revel: Builder of American Jewish Orthodoxy. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1972), 3.

America an "elite Reform Judaism held sway over the few chosen Americanized Jews," while more problematically for the traditional religious leadership, "most of the Orthodox community was in feeble disarray and confusion."[51]

Indeed, the natural orthodox constituency, composed of the "faithful Jewish masses," also came to perceive "higher secular education as the stepping-stone to [material] success and culture," in stark opposition to the traditional religious instruction which held sway in the Old Country.[52] Thus, the "vague commitment to an Orthodoxy which they barely understood was soon swept away by the critical spirit engendered by a," highly desired, "liberal arts education."[53] Those attempting to replicate of the traditional educational system were faced with inferior instruction at the expense of necessary secular education.[54] Nevertheless, education was ultimately symptomatic of the larger problem confronting traditionalists: the need to Americanize the orthodox rabbinate and the synagogue on a vast scale.

"The few established Americanized Orthodox synagogues were of little aid to the newcomer, since they were not located in the immigrant areas and were not geared to meet immigrant needs."[55] The successfully Americanized orthodox synagogues, whether of German, Central European, or Sephardic background, could not meet all the needs of the newly-arrived Ostjuden, nor could they "guide" them since their "backgrounds, culture, and weltanschauung were vastly different from those of the East European immigrants."[56] But in addition to these serious logistical problems was the enormous

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid. 5.
[53] Ibid. 6.
[54] Ibid. 8.
[55] Ibid. 7.
[56] Ibid.

conceptual problem of how to reconfigure traditional rabbinic authority for the American context.

Although Orthodoxy is an oversimplified term for a broad spectrum of groups, Jeffery Gurock explains that "with certain notable exceptions or important subtle variations, training, institutional affiliations, and personal attitudes toward both emerging events and outside organizations have polarized the American Orthodox rabbinate into two camps: resisters and accommodaters. The former have attempted to reject acculturation and disdained cooperation with other American Jewish elements, fearing that alliances would work to dilute traditional faith and practice. The latter have accepted the seeming inevitability of Americanization and have joined arms with less-traditional elements in the community so as to perpetuate the essence of the ancestral faith."[57]

In Europe, rabbinic authority influenced almost every conceivable aspect of Jewish life. In the United States where rabbinic authority had greatly dissipated, traditional religious authorities still held sway in traditional communities over such matters as kashrut, ritual practice, synagogal practice, and the sacralizing of life-cycle events. Of course, these areas govern key elements in traditional Jewish life, from birth to death. Yet, Orthodox authorities in America lacked both a centralized and authoritative ecclesiastical apparatus as well as the reassurance of localized religious mores which had endured for centuries. Indeed, America was as much of a melting pot for the varieties of orthodoxy

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[57]See Gurock's brilliant road-map of the American Orthodox rabbinate, "Resistors and Accommodaters: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983," in Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck, eds., The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change; 1883-1983. (Hoboken: KTAV, 1985, 19. Also, see his parallel essay, "The Orthodox Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 38.

immigrating to the United States as it was for the myriad of ethnicities who went through the cauldron of Americanization. Not only were traditional rabbis challenged in attempts to reestablish their authority in the New World; they likewise had to wend their way through a myriad of orthodoxies. But equally if not more difficult was establishing a framework and hierarchy of authority in America. After all, as Drachman states, "Dr. Isaac M. Wise...had conquered almost the entire field of Jewish life and had been accepted by practically all the congregations of standing and importance."[58]

At the turn of the century, rabbinic authority in New York itself, was split into numerous and often conflicting fiefdoms of rabbinic turf, with one traditional rabbi often nullifying the ruling of another, who in turn rejected other rabbis' level of kashrut or rulings on schechitah. As one traditional European rabbi related the American scene in 1887 "[t]here are only three of four competent rabbis, who can decide ritual questions in this great city [New York] which has over one hundred thousand Jews, and one hundred and thirty Orthodox congregations." One attempt to organize American Orthodoxy the following year centered around instituting an office of an American "Chief Rabbi," for Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Vilna. But, the attempt to establish a centralized orthodox authority and system around Rabbi Joseph soon collapsed as other Traditionalist rebelled against the imposition of any authority and he became embroiled in "bitter controversy."[59] If Orthodox, rabbinical authority was balkanized in New York city, the status of traditional authority was anarchic on a national level. Nevertheless, despite the fundamental split over the relationship both to modernity and to modernized religious Jewries, Orthodox leaders attempted to centralize their community in 1902 with the establishment of the Agudat

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[58]Drachman, The Unfailing Light, 167.

[59]Gurock, "Resistors and Accommodaters," 13.

Harabbanim (AH), or Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United State and Canada.[60]

Rothkoff, emphasizes that the "greatest hindrance to the immigrant rabbi's success in the United States was his inability to become Americanized."[61] Therefore, on a systemic level, the establishment of the AH represents Orthodoxy's first attempt at re-inventing itself for the American context. It is also noteworthy that this union emerged out of the efforts of midwestern Orthodox rabbis, who undoubtedly felt besieged in the regional stronghold of Reform Judaism.[62] Perhaps more than the New Yorkers, the midwestern group viewed Orthodox unity as a sacred imperative, proclaiming that the non-Orthodox Jews' "constant desecration of the Torah," impelled the "obligation to unite."[63]

Nevertheless, the pro-Americanization, or accommodationist segments of Orthodoxy were confronted with a wide range of other difficulties, preeminent among them, producing English-speaking rabbis, capable of preaching American-type sermons on relevant topics, and rabbis able to conduct themselves -- in terms of manner and clothing -- in a "modern" and American fashion. One source of this tension was regional. Thus, from Drachman's perspective, Western Europeans had "assimilated themselves thoroughly to their non-Jewish environment," at the expense of Judaism, while the pious Easterners were mostly uncultured.[64] Indeed, Drachman's early rabbinical endeavors with the Ostjuden were difficult: "they were Yiddish-speaking and wanted rabbis of that type. They were strange to me, and I was even stranger to them."[65] In fact, Drachman's German Orthodox training was premised on the belief that "there is

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[60]Rothkoff, Bernard Revel, 14.
[61]Ibid. 15.
[62]Gurock, Resistors and Accommodaters, 20.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Drachman, The Unfailing Light, 279.
[65]Ibid. 167.

nothing in the ancient faith of Israel which requires that be carried out in the rude and uncouth manner [i.e., in the typical Eastern European fashion] brought about by the conditions of the Ghetto...on the contrary, it is worthy of being presented with all the accompaniments of beauty and splendor and impressiveness...without...departing in the slightest from the rules and ordinances our religious code."[66] But, in addition to his notion of westernizing the newcomers, Drachman was also prepared to deal "gently" with excessively-Americanized Orthodox.[67]

In contrast, members of the resistance bloc assembled for the first meeting of the Agudat Harabbanim desperately needed to find the "means of recalling back to Judaism immigrants and their children who were daily drifting form the faith and practices of the past."[68] Most significantly, the Agudat Harabbanim, disqualified a number of "rabbinic types," from its membership, most pointedly the "American Orthodox Rabbi."[69] And the AH's opposition extended to the Orthodox lay-organization, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (UOJCA).

Created in 1898 by accommodaters primarily Western European in origin for the defense of "Orthodox Judaism whenever occasions arise in civic and social matters...and to protest against declarations of Reform rabbis not in accord with the teachings of our Torah," the Eastern Europe-grounded AH, nevertheless, viewed the UOJCA as a "poorly disguised agent of Americanization which preached a synthesis of Jewish and American methods and values which threatened the continuity of the faith."[70] Thus, while the Agudat Harabbanim attempted to maintain their conception of Judaism "by approximating in America the internal conditions which

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[66]Ibid. 168-9.
[67]Ibid. 170
[68]Gurock, "Resistors and Accommodaters," 20.
[69]Ibid. 21.
[70]Ibid. 22.

sustained the great East European yeshivas they had left behind," the accommodaters believed that the cause of American Jews' disaffection and alienation from Orthodoxy in fact stemmed from their discomfort with the "noisy and undignified," not to mention un-Americanized synagogues which the AH was attempting to maintain.[71] Although the Agudat Harabbanim may have been repelled by the accommodaters attempts to reform the "aesthetics" of Orthodox synagogues, liturgy and outward behavior, they were ultimately "less concerned that American law respect the immigrant Jew and more interested that the new American continue to respect Jewish law."[72]

What remained an essential concern for the resistance bloc, however, was the accommodationists' cooperation and inter-communal participation with non-Orthodox Judaism. Thus, from the perspective of the Agudat Harabbanim at the turn of the century, accommodationists who worked alongside Reform and Conservative Jews were "at best lending unfortunate recognition to deviationist Jewish movements and at worst threatening the continuity of the faith through cooperation with the liberals."[73] Similarly, while "cooperation with the rich [non-Orthodox] philanthropists would bring significant sums to the impoverished field of Jewish education," such contact might also "lead to co-option, as Reform Jews forced both American and assimilatory ideologies upon the consciousness of Jewish youth."[74]

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[71] Ibid. 24-5.

[72] Ibid. 24-7.

[73] Ibid. 25-6. In this instance, Gurock seems to be using "liberals" as a term for the non-Orthodox movements.

[74] The short-lived New York Kehillah is a superb example of an initially successful unification project in part dissolving over intra-Orthodox conflict over cooperation with non-Orthodox community groups. Although the Kehillah might be viewed as a localized antecedent for interdenominational cooperation, our focus must remain on the SCA. For further analysis, see Arthur Goren's important study, New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The

Indeed, the intra-Orthodox schism between resistance and accommodation is best exemplified by the history of Yeshivah University. Organized in 1896 as the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), the Yeshivah still "continued the tradition of the European yeshivot in teaching *Torah lishmah* , [author's italics]," since the "distinction between the vocation of the rabbinate and avocation of Torah study was not emphasized or even clearly delineated in the European yeshiva system of [traditional] education."[75] However, accommodaters and resistors alike were disturbed by the tendency of RIETS students to use their traditional education as merely a "stepping-stone, since they soon left to engage in such Americanized endeavors as attending college or entering into commercial activity," instead of serving the needs of the Orthodox community.[76] More problematically for Orthodoxy were growing demands from the student body that "secular" studies be added to the Yeshiva's curriculum. Although some modifications were made in 1906, RIETS, nevertheless, "remained primarily a transplanted European institution, little known outside of New York's East Side and wielding no influence on the greater American Jewish community."[77] The redemption of accommodationist Orthodoxy went unrealized until the arrival of Bernard Revel, who is viewed by some, with great justification, as the "builder of American Orthodoxy."

A *Litvak* by birth, committed traditionalist, and Mussar-oriented, Revel, nonetheless defies facile labels. Although quite sympathetic to the philosophy of resistance, he was, nevertheless, prepared to employ accommodationist methods in the cause of preserving Orthodoxy in America. A brilliant student in his youth, Revel was, unsurprisingly, also exposed to the radical ideologies of

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Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922. (New York: Columbia University press, 1970).

[75]Rothkoff, Bernard Revel, 23.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid. 24-5.

Zionism and Marxism as a witness to the turbulent politics and upheaval in early twentieth century Russia. Perhaps stemming from his grounding in Mussar thought, Revel apparently worked and was jailed for Bundist activities during the aborted Russian revolution of 1905.[78] However, upon arriving in the United States, Revel wasted little time in initiating his own *bildung*, studying American law, economics and Hindu philosophy, to name just a few of his intellectual endeavors, culminating in a Ph.D. from the newly-founded Dropsie College -- a prototype of *the* "secular" Jewish university, Brandeis -- in 1912.[79] Yet, even as Revel himself became Americanized, he remained connected to the European, traditionalist bloc, the Agudat Yisrael.[80]

Revel was all-too aware of the fine line he needed to tread if he was to retain the support of resisters and accommodaters. Indeed, Rothkoff's superb biography of Revel reads like a primer on the profound difficulties of trying to please both resisters and accommodationists. Rothkoff relates one incident after another as Revel brilliantly mediated between the conflicting demands of the time, although at great personal expense.

But, for immigrants seeking to join the in the American dream, the traditionalist synagogue was all the more so "incomprehensible to the immigrants' children born in America, who were imbued early on with the quest for economic mobility and social acceptance."[81] As Gurock describes the state of affairs within Orthodox Jewry, "...frequently, the acculturating immigrant in his quest for greater mobility and social acceptance perceived the synagogue as antiquated embarrassment and chose to break completely with the

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[78]Ibid. 27-33.
[79]Ibid. 36-9.
[80]Ibid. 39. Revel also encountered -- and excelled -- in the secular world through his partnership with his father-in-law in the petroleum industry. Ibid. 41.
[81]Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," 52.

Synagogue. He either assimilated or expressed his Jewishness through continued geographical propinquity to other Jews or through identification with any one of the myriad of modern Jewish ideological movements that made up ghetto civilization."[82]

Generally speaking, students, accommodationist rabbis, and Orthodox communities wanting to accelerate the Americanization process stood on one side, while from the other perspective stood the firm resistance and ever-present vigilance of the Agudat Harabbanim and other traditionalist elements, who confronted every conceivable advance of Americanization. Revel seems to have been cognizant of the confounding ideological and practical difficulties he faced from the outset of his leadership. Early in his tenure Revel explained that the creation of an authentically Orthodox *and* American seminary would entail negotiating a "road of snow and the road of fire."[83] Similarly, upon the ordination of the first graduates

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[82]Ibid. 50.

[83]Ibid. 48. For example, the introduction of studies founded upon modern scholarship and taught with modern methodologies, such as separate Bible classes, Jewish history, and the study of such non-Jewish -- if not potentially heretical -- subjects such as Greek mythology and modern science, entailed persistent monitoring and challenges from the traditionalists, obligating Revel to spend a great deal of time defending the YU curriculum. Ibid. 60. We might also note the modicum of confusion over the extent of Revel's accomodationist tendencies versus his commitment to resistance. Rothkoff contrasts Revel with Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, who might be described as both a German Orthodox accomodationist and a model for Americanizing Orthodoxy of the early twentieth century. Rothkoff argues that "Hirsch emphatically denied that secular education of the Jew was a concession made by him under pressure to the fashion of the day. On the contrary, the combination of Jewish and general knowledge was not a compromise but an integral part of the Jewish world concept," while "Revel would have been content with solely building the Yeshiva. This was America, however, and he was convinced that the Yeshiva would not retain its students unless it offered them a college education." Ibid. 72. This distinction may not be as great as Rothkoff claims, since both rabbis accepted non-

Jewish culture and knowledge as basic facts of life, and moreover, the end results of both Hirsch and Revel's efforts are quite similar. Indeed, Hirsch would most likely have been quite comfortable with YU's later slogan "Torah U'Maddah." Additionally, one might gather from Rothkoff's study that Revel also appreciated aspects of Western culture, such as poetry and philosophy, and, at least at one point of his life, viewed the American Republic and American civil religion as one of God's gifts to humanity. A remarkable example of Revel's incorporation of Americanism into Judaism is his 1909 essay "Lincoln and the Jewish Spirit," which is worth quoting at length. "[I]n Lincoln himself were fused all the essential elements of Judaism," declares Revel, "[if] he can justly be called the first typical American he can more justly be said to represent the summation of all the noblest qualities of Judaism." Revel also argues that highest moral qualities of Americanism stem from Judaism itself: "These qualities, which are the brightest gems in the diadem of the greatest American, are they not of Jewish origin? If much of the best that is in the thought and tendencies of *progressive* life [writer's italics] is due to Jewish inspiration, and if all the great social reformers in history have drawn their inspiration from the Jewish prophets, if the Bible is the vade mecum of the Pilgrim fathers from which they received their strength, their hopes and their sustenance, Lincoln was the realization of the true spirit of Judaism. Israel was the first democracy, its religion the first proclamation of freedom." Moreover, Revel compares George Washington and Lincoln to Moses, and seems to portray Lincoln himself as the classic down-trodden Jew: "Born in poverty, trained in obscurity, without the surrounding of noble friends, he rose slowly and surely to one of the earth's proudest positions...[g]rown up among the lowly and the ignorant, he never ceased to remember the good which he found among them...[h]is mind so larger than theirs, thoroughly comprehended them, knew how they felt, how they reasoned and how they could be moved. He comprehended human motives and human limitations." Finally, in this synthesis of universalism and particularism, Revel relates Lincoln's Americanism to Jewish messianism: "It was Judaism that first proclaimed human brotherhood. 'Love ye the stranger.' It was Jewish prophet, who...cried out 'Have we not all one father...' These were the principles for which Lincoln lived and died. And when the day will come and the American nation following its great prophet, Lincoln will become a model of justice, and through justice a pattern of peace to the world; when the American nation, led by the spirit of its great saviour and preserver, will add its share to the realization of

of YU's new rabbinical program, Revel warned his students to be vigilant, lest they be seduced by "strange fires," apparently warning against excessive Americanization standing outside the pale of the Tradition.[84]

At the dedication of the new site for YU in 1927, Revel expressed the Yeshiva's difficult mission, stating that "in union with the creative cultural and humanizing forces of the time, with unshaken loyalty to our beloved country...the Yeshiva will bring to ever-increasing numbers of American Jewish youth the true perspective of historic Judaism in the complex organization of modern life, combining with the learning of the world today those values and ideals which have been the strength of the sustaining faith of our fathers, for the enrichment of the lives of the Jewish community and of America."[85] Such a complex posture did not leave

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the day which the Jewish prophet's inward vision foresaw thousands of years ago; when there will be universal peace growing out of universal justice and the American nation will show itself worthy of this...then the birthday of Lincoln will be the greatest holiday of a happy, progressive humanity and will represent a milestone in a new era of mankind's history." Couched in the rhetoric typical of early twentieth century American progressives, this document is, nevertheless, illustrative of the extent to which Orthodoxy of this period could at once embrace authentic traditionalism and still be Americanized. In fact, any number of Reform rabbis and secular Jews, could have, and did, voice identical beliefs, and likewise equated Americanism with Judaism. Indeed, this essay is found alongside several work on Lincoln written by Reform rabbis, including Abram Simon and Abraham J. Feldman! Of course, Louis Brandeis formulated a similar model which equated American-Jewish Zionism with Americanism. For Revel's essay see Emanuel Hertz, ed., Abraham Lincoln: The Tribute of the Synagogue. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1927), 360-4. Thus, even while Reformer Simon and Traditionalist Revel may have passionately disagreed over how best to preserve the Tradition in America, in a broader sense, both shared a weltanschauung grounded in American civil religion.

[84]Rothkoff, Bernard Revel,. 51, 53.

[85]Ibid. 90-1.

Revel and his school unmolested. Series of arguments ensued over political and religious controversies between Americanizers and the Agudat Harabbanim. These conflicts were political in the sense that traditionalist rabbis feared, with some justification, being supplanted by the young, Americanized ordainees of YU.[86] More difficult were the practical and ideological challenges faced by YU rabbis who attempted to serve at congregations who were debating whether, or already had, instituted mixed-seating, to name but the most prominent challenge. Not only were YU rabbis confronted with the cognitive dissonance between the American Jewish realities and the Old World ideal; each and every action taken by YU rabbis was scrutinized by traditionalists, and therefore impacted upon the Yeshiva's reputation.[87]

The conflict between AH and YU rabbis was only partially solved in 1935 when the Yeshiva Alumni Organization merged with the UOJCA's Rabbinical Council, creating the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). Even as accommodationist rabbis were emboldened and coming into their own as both authentically Orthodox and American rabbis, the establishment of the RCA in distinction to the AH only demonstrated the increasingly serious rift between resisters and accommodaters, which persisted and were exacerbated over cooperation with non-Orthodox rabbis. But most immediately, the RCA "set as its dual mandate the bureaucratization and standardization of kashruth and the promotion of its own brand of American traditional Judaism above and beyond the power of the Conservative movement."[88]

Yet, the multi-faceted ideology at the foundation of Revel's Yeshiva was met with a variety of responses, including those who attacked the new YU as a "Trojan Horse" for the re-ghettoizaton of American Judaism, as well as welcoming responses from all

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[86]Ibid. 168-9.
[87]Ibid. 166-7.
[88]Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodaters," 46.

perspectives in the American Jewish spectrum.[89] The inability to intellectually reduce YU to a well-defined ideology also inspired some suggestion of a merger between the Yeshiva and the Conservative, Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS). From the vantage point of Reform Jewish leaders like Louis Marshall, both schools shared the same mission: refining and Americanizing immigrant traditionalists through the creation of an Americanized, traditional rabbinate. Thus, from this perspective, YU had simply duplicated the efforts of JTS and, moreover, was a, inefficient drain upon American Jewry's resources. The Seminary, concerned about its financial resources, and led by Americanized traditionalist, also pressed for such a merger. But here, Revel drew the line; no matter how Americanized he and his students were, these "traditionalists," the Conservatives, had consorted with Reform, whole-heartedly embraced modern scholarship, and served at congregations permitting practices forbidden to Orthodoxy, such as mixed seating, were clearly beyond the pale, and were thus entirely unacceptable to the AH.[90]

However, unlike the rabbis of the Agudat Harabbanim, the RCA rabbis "staunchly believed that they could compete effectively against the Conservative rabbinate for spiritual leadership in the next generation. Through a tripartite policy of simulation, inclusion, and cooperation, they sought to prove that the American Orthodox rabbinate and its laity could be as attuned to American mores as

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[89]For more discussion, see Rothkoff, Bernard Revel, 94-8.

[90]Ibid. 97-114. By the 1920s, explains Gurock, the Orthodox Union and the RCA tacitly and formally accepted these congregations [permitting mixed seating] as bona fide Orthodox synagogues. to do otherwise would have been be to drive their rabbinic colleagues and lay constituents into the arms of the USA [ the United Synagogue of America, the Conservative lay-organization] and the RA [i.e., the RAA, or Conservative Rabbinical Assembly of America]. See Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," 62.

their more liberal brethren without doing violence to the tenets of the ancestral faith."[91]

Still, by the second decade of the century, most religiously affiliated Jews, as well as those affiliated with the secular organizations, be they Reform, Conservative, or accommodating, modern Orthodox, had been successfully Americanized. More than that, without quite being aware of the fact, Religious, American Jews were finally denominationalized. Indeed, the Americanization "package" included denominationalization, as had been the case with the Jews' Protestant neighbors. After so many hopes and aborted attempts at unification, American Jews were now denominationalized, although at times they had to be dragged through this process kicking and screaming.

Likewise, as each segment of American Jewry gained further measures of self-definition, gained awareness of a particular "mission," and differentiated themselves from one another, they were further impelled toward the denominational system. In a fascinating chain reaction of denominationalization, Reform had distinguished itself from Orthodoxy, Conservative from Reform, and Americanized Orthodoxy had distinguished itself from conservatism. While the early twentieth century split between Orthodox resisters and accommodaters might not have yet divided them into different denominations or sects, the seed of intra-Orthodox sectarianism had, nonetheless, been planted, and the irritant of accommodationist dealings with non-Orthodox Jews later threatened a full-blown schism.

In a parallel development, the struggle for leadership of American Jewry had grown into a full-blown rivalry in the early years of if twentieth century, especially between organizations like B'nai B'rith and the preeminent religious organization of American Jewry, the UAHC. But equally disturbing to Reform leaders was the

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[91]Gurock, "Resistors and Accommodaters," 47.

creation of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), in 1906, formed by the "German elite of New York to speak for American Jewry," (the same German elite serving at the upper levels of the Union), which was "perceived as a revolt form within" by Reform leaders.[92]

Like the Board of Delegates before them, the founders of the AJC were motivated by a deep and genuine concerns for persecuted Jews abroad, primarily in Eastern Europe The AJC initially functioned as a defense agency, like the Board but would come to possess far greater access to the highest levels of American government. Indeed, the Committee was established and led by such luminaries as lawyer-activist Louis Marshall and Oscar Straus. The latter, a major player in the New York and national Republican party, a longtime advisor and associate of statesman par excellence Henry L. Stimson and cabinet member in Theodore Roosevelt's presidential administrations, was well-known by Gentiles as well as by Jewish Americans. Although Straus and Marshall served in major leadership positions in the Reform movement -- Marshall being a powerful member of the board of Reform's flagship congregation, Temple Emanu -El -- unlike the rabbinical leadership, the AJC leaders actually participated and belonged to the exclusive world of the nation's political and business elite.

By the early years of the twentieth century, Reform rabbis openly expressed fears that religious leadership in American-Jewish life was being marginalized by a new class of leaders who would later be unflatteringly termed "professional Jews." For example, at a 1907 UAHC meeting, Rabbi Henry Berkowitz argued that Judaism was still the essential and primary bond among American Jews. Reading between the lines, we suspect that Berkowitz was also arguing the primacy of religious over secular leadership of American Jewry.[93] Likewise, "[t]he historic right to leadership is with the Union," proclaimed Rabbi Moses Gries to the assembled delegates.

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[92]Meyer, Response to Modernity, 283.
[93]Ibid. 283-4.

Explicitly stating that the "duty of leadership is still upon us," Gries argued that the Union's "life springs from the synagogue and the temple, the very heart of Jewish life and power."[94] Meyer relates that these anxieties lessened as the AJC and the UAHC soon cooperated on a variety of issues. Moreover, at the close of the first world war the American Jewish Congress (AJCON) was established by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, arguably the preeminent Reform rabbi of the era, thus, further diffusing the power of secular Jewish organizations.[95] Nonetheless, if religious Jews were to lead American Jewry, then they would have to address the issues that the secular organizations had made their own.

Yet, there was another concern impelling the creation of the SCA in the mid-twenties: the quality and centrality of Judaism American-Jewish life. As "classically" Reform as Gries , in 1907, and his colleagues may have been, the Reformers, like their traditional counterparts, still believed that *Judaism* was the pillar and core of what it meant to be Jewish, and that Jewish defense projects, philanthropy, and the like, were simply jewels in the crown of Judaism. Thus, while the religious organizations may have been in political conflict with the secular organizations, religious Jews were more significantly battling for the soul of American Jewry. Thus, for Gries and other rabbis, it was imperative that *both* the Synagogue and the Temple remained the "heart of Jewish life and power. Even as the Jews of Eastern Europe were slowly and successfully Americanized in the inter-war period, and even while Jews were rising to new social and economic levels, there was grave concern, across the entire spectrum of American Judaism, and among all of its leaders, that while their people were being acculturated, Judaism was suffering.

Indeed, in some respects the Reform commitment to Americanization had worked all too well, and at the expense of

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[94]Ibid. 284.
[95]Ibid.

religious, Jewish expression. Ironically, in the eyes of most observers in early twentieth century America, Reform was at the pinnacle of power and was flushed with triumphalism. By then, the Hebrew Union College had successfully modeled itself after theologically liberal Protestant seminaries, incorporating modern scholarly methodologies, biblical criticism into its curriculum and, under HUC president Kaufmann Kohler, forbade the wearing of kippot and talaism.[96] "Not by Romanticism or Ritualism or Legalism," Kaufmann stated in 1904, "but by the accentuation of the eternal principles of our eternal truths can our faith be revitalized."[97] And, if Sachar is correct in characterizing the rabbis of this era as "Tribunes," perhaps best exemplified by Stephen S. Wise, Reform deserved to feel triumphant.[98] Nevertheless, a strong commitment to social justice and to modern scholarship did not require an individual, let alone a rabbi, to be a religious Jew.

Thus, at the height of its triumph, Reform was to engage in some soul-searching of its own. Indeed, hand in hand with the ascent of *fin de siècle* Reform Judaism was the overwhelming rise of secular Jewish ideologies and identity. Through the 1935 CCAR declaration, the "Columbus Platform," the Reform rabbinate began its return to a more traditional sense of thinking and to traditional categories of Judaism -- God, Torah and Israel.[99] While maintaining its emphasis on universalistic concerns, Reform rabbis, clearly concerned over the secularization of its laity, also returned to issues of liturgy, religious practice, and, finally acknowledged the significance of Zionism. This Re-traditionalization of Reform also stemmed from the need to confront the changing demographic realities of American Jews. By the 1930s, it was all too clear that the formerly downtrodden Ostjuden, and not the more acculturated and wealthier *Yekes* , represented the future of American Jewry. Thus,

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[96]Sachar, A History of Jews in America, 390-1.
[97]Ibid. 390.
[98]Ibid. 393.
[99]Meyer, Response to Modernity, 319.

out of a basic sense of survival as a movement, Reform Jews also re-traditionalized themselves in order to accommodate the growing group of acculturated but more traditional Eastern European Jew.[100]

But whatever the denomination, the American rabbinate in its entirety was facing the powerful forces of secularism. Considering American religious freedom, the dumbfounding variety of Jewish practice brought by European Jews to the New World, and the practical and ideological power of post-emancipation Jewish ideologies, it is unsurprising that American rabbis ranging from radical-Reformers to ultra-Traditionalists would agree that American Judaism was in crisis. Given the variety of expressions of Judaism brought to America, the persistence of Old World religious controversies, the popularity of such new secular "religions" as Zionism and Marxism, religiosity could no longer be guaranteed in a context mandating freedom of religion and compelling Voluntaryism. Additionally, the powerful culture of American secularism could not simply be wished away. Therefore, the denominationalization of Judaism should be understood as an inevitable and necessary process. Nonetheless, for America's Jewish religious leaders, the process was messy if not chaotic.

Even as Reform Judaism was still triumphant in America, even as Conservative Judaism would become a formidable force in the inter-war period, and even as Americanized Orthodoxy would begin to come into its own, all three groups were faced with the problem confronting all of American religion in the post- World War One period: a widespread apathy toward religion.

In the heady, early years of the "American Century," as the United States became a global economic and diplomatic dynamo, Americanism actually rivaled religion as a general philosophy for life. "Second-generation Jews were strongly drawn to American

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[100]For more discussion on internal changes in Reform Judaism of this period see above 319-25.

ideals and values," writes one political historian of American Jewry, "[t]heirs was a headlong rush to Americanize....including the commitment to universalist political ideologies and devotion to new [American] religions like Christian Science and Ethical Culture."[101] Even an "Orthodox" Americanizer like Louis Marshall would by the mid-1920s, publicly lament that any other "ism" seemed preferable to American Jews over Judaism.[102] "The decline of attendance at religious services," writes Feingold, "was merely the most visible part of the general decline in religious observance. Between 1914 and 1924, consumption of kosher meat, usually the last thing to be abandoned by secularizing Jews, declined by 30 percent." Likewise, the "picture for religious education was even gloomier....poor in quality and usually stopped after confirmation for boys.... [r]eligious observance became increasingly symbolic."[103]

While rabbis of every stripe worried about the post-war "crisis of faith," the particular religious expression of Jewishness, or "Faith," had, arguably, "become a separate component of American Jewish identity, and for a growing number it played little role in their lives."[104] Yet, from a broader perspective, the inter-war period in the United States is in part characterized as a period of general religious decline, especially among mainline Protestant churches. One observer of American religious noted the "marked religious slump" of this era, while another historian explains that an American "religious depression preceded the economic depression in the United States."[105] In other words, considering the larger picture of

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[101] See Henry L. Feingold, The Jewish People in America: A Time for Searching -- Entering the Mainstream, 1920-1945. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 36.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid. 93.

[104] Ibid. 90.

[105] Both quoted in Feingold, 96. Also, mainline Protestant churches, so supportive of the American war effort in the first World War, were also impacted by the widespread disaffection and cynicism

American Religion in the early decades, Americanized religious Jews of each denomination, had also productively continued their genuine and intellectually complex efforts to grapple with both Tradition and American culture. Structurally, they had successfully reorganized themselves into a variety of religious organizations, seminaries and associations, largely intact as American Jews approach the second millennium. Indeed, "Jews and Catholics were actually doing better than the Protestant denominations."[106]

Whether the American rabbinate realized it or not, the varied instruments of Americanizing Judaism were by this time, well-ensconced, as during the twenties the Jewish religious establishment appeared to be alive and well. The Reform Hebrew Union College, (HUC), JTS, RIETS, and the "non-denominational," Reform-aligned Jewish Institute of Religion, and Americanized Orthodox Hebrew Theological College, were well-established and ordaining rabbis catering to Americanized Jews of every denomination.[107] Unlike the nineteenth century, what was now missing was not so much the organizational implement of American Judaism, but committed constituency of religious, American Jews. Beset by competing ideologies of modernity and in competition with a vital new breed of secular Jewish organizations, the religious leadership of America, Reform, Conservative and Americanized Orthodoxy alike, ultimately found common cause in combating the forces of secularism. Thus Feingold's contention that "on religious matters Jews could no longer speak with coherence," still concedes that "[n]one of the branches seemed to be able to cope with erosion."[108]

Whether Reform triumphalists or Americanized Orthodox liked it or not, America's Jews were now denominationalized and the

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toward war, government and establishment society in the inter-war period.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Ibid. 91.

[108]Ibid. 95.

existence of well-structured denominations was a reality. While previous attempts at unity had been fleeting, denominationalism offered certain blessings in disguise. "Influenced strongly by the Protestant model of religious pluralism and by sharp economic as well as social divisions within the Jewish community, the differentiation of the Jewish 'church' into three branches became irreversible by the end of the twenties."[109] However, because each movement of Americanized Judaism recognized Jewish denominationalism as a fait accompli, and since denominationalism mandates mutual acceptance and co-existence, the opportunity for jointly combating the common enemy of secularism presented itself with the system of Federalism.

The Jewish federal structure became the SCA, through which the religious leaders of America hoped to confront the secular Jewish organizations encroachment on the Synagogue's purview, and, more importantly, to roll back the excesses of the Americanization campaign and thus reinvigorate American Jews with Judaism, away from the predominating culture of "Jewishness." And, structurally and ideologically, American Christians provided an excellent model for facing these issues.

As supporters of the first World War, or the "Great Crusade," as Ahlstrom terms it, mainline, religious, Christian America had, in some respects, been reinvigorated. For example, in May of 1917, the Federal Council of Churches organized the "General Wartime Commission," which coordinated FCC activities alongside 35 other religious organizations. Emerging from the Commission was the "Committee of One Hundred" as a "liaison between the government and the churches....and the military chaplaincy. Because morale was high and the need for cooperation great, the committee demonstrated the social potentialities of organized Protestantism in an

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[109]Ibid. 98.

unprecedented way."[110] An additional outgrowth was the "unprecedented cooperation of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish organizations."[111]

Moreover, "Protestant churchman who had experienced the wartime triumphs of cooperative action resolved to find means for maintaining its momentum," especially since the "Great War" created expectations of the "advent of new era of world order, democracy and peace."[112] Because the churches supported the war out of these expectations, their sentiments were also predicated on Wilsonian notions for an "international agency to outlaw war," in which they hoped to play a significant role.[113] Of course, the United States Senate ultimately blocked US entry into the League of Nations, which was the grandest federalist system yet proposed. Nonetheless, American churches, maintained and nurtured their commitment to federalism by way of increased ecumenical activities. Still, on one hand, Christians may have tapped into federalism more out of concern for external matters than out of hopes for unifying all of Christendom. On the other hand, unity was a necessity for those imbued with a missionary zeal.

Thus, the post-war Interchurch World Movement, was termed the "religious counterpart to the League of Nations," by one of its members, Dr. William Adams Brown. "[T]hey had seen a vision," Brown writes, explaining that the board members at a 1918 meeting

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[110]See Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 877-889.

[111]Ibid. 891. World War intra-religous cooperation most likely set the stage for the post World War II activities as well, which Herberg framed in his "Protestant, Catholic, Jew" paradigm. For more on the American religious establishment and Herberg's paradigm, see below, chapter III.

[112]Ibid. 892-3.

[113]Ibid.

possessed "the vision of a united church uniting a divided world; and under the spell of they saw all things seemed possible."[114]

As Ahlstrom frames these events, participants in the Interchurch World Movement "attempted a grand peacetime crusade which would unite all the benevolent and missionary agencies of American Protestantism into a single campaign for money, men, and spiritual revival. Included in its scope were every phase of church work, domestic and foreign."[115] Like Jewish attempts at federalization, the grandiose ideal did not mesh with reality. Nevertheless, at least on the domestic level, American Protestantism remained denominationalized and federalized, and directed its efforts towards a revival of the Social Gospel movement and fought for the prohibition of alcohol.[116] Thus, Protestant-American "interdenominational cooperation continued to expand along lines laid down before the war, as the Federal Council of Churches....gained steadily in membership." Serving as a blueprint for American Jewish interdenominationalism, the FCC thus served as both a model for unification and as a symbol of a progressive and Americanized religiosity which Jews hoped to emulate. And a further testament to cross-cultural influence is that the SCA's birth coincided with the ecumenical Stockholm Conference of 1925,. through which the FCC brought together church leaders from 37 countries, including the long-alienated Eastern Orthodox Christians. This Christian Ecumenism was repeated at the Lausanne conference of 1927.[117]

Equally significant, many of the clichéd stereotypes for each denomination of American Judaism-- already developed after a rather brief history -- began to crumble in the face of new ideological currents, hopes and concerns within each denomination's rabbinate.

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[114] Ibid. 896-7.
[115] Ibid. 897.
[116] Ibid. 902.
[117] Ibid. 908.

For example, the successful absorption of Eastern-European Jews into the Reform movement altered Reform orientation at the leadership and lay level of the movement. By the second decade of the century, the Reform rabbinate included many easterners in its ranks, who, along with some German rabbis, began to tear down Classical Reform's opposition to Zionism.[118] More significantly, on the religious level, Reform began its slow return to the more traditional rituals of Shabbat and High Holy Day observance -- such as the Kol Nidre service -- and facilitated the "restoration" of such holidays as Purim and Hanukkah.[119] And as secular Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish federations, continued to grow in influence, the "persistent question addressed by rabbis and laity in this period was therefore how to stem the synagogue's continuing drift toward the periphery."[120] Indeed, so concerned were Reformers, that some applied a Kaplanian methodology to community life. Building Synagogue-Centers, de-emphasizing religion, and straining Judaism through the sieve of Culture and Civilization, some Reform rabbis shift their emphasis to "Peoplehood" from being a "Nation of Priests," (which probably caused some physical movement in the graves of deceased Classical Reformers).[121]

Likewise, Leon Jick argues that "[p]erhaps even more significant than the diversification of ethnic origin," in the Reform movement, was the "transformation of political and economic circumstances and the drastic alteration of expectations that came to pass in the 1930s."[122] Here, Jick alludes to the downfall of the idea of Modernity which had always occupied a high place in the Reform

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[118]Ibid. 100

[119]Ibid.

[120]Meyer, Response To Modernity, 303-4.

[121]Ibid.

[122]See Leon A. Jick, "The Reform Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987),99.

ideology. For almost a century, Modernity was viewed by Reformers as an actual and prime ideational agent for bringing about the messianic kingdom. In a broad sense, Reformers were no different in this respect from Conservatives, Modern Orthodox, not to mention modern Christians, or a great variety of non-Western peoples. The West, had, after all, ostensibly emerged from a long and dark age. Over the entire globe, the West was on the move, working through both technology and culture, economics and Christianity to enlighten all non-Westerners, including all Jews, with the true civilization. Reformers pointed to the twinned events of Emancipation and Enlightenment, allowing for their economic, cultural, and, to an extent, social entry into real civilization. It appeared that a new era of universal brotherhood was just around the corner, and this modernized idea of the kingdom of God would come about through all the modern tools of technology, culture and politics.

Yet, by the 1930s the entire world had been torn asunder, by global economic deprivation, the rise of Fascism and Stalinism, democracy was in a free-fall, and the rise of the nazis in heart of Western civilization began to obviate all previous assumptions about modernity and the West. Even American Jews, sheltered as they were from the growing nazi assault, experienced perhaps the most rabid, home-grown antisemitism in the nation's history, which only added to the sense of being unwelcome first experience through the antisemitic immigration quotas of the twenties. But, if modernity had been fleeting, Judaism had proven itself quite resilient through centuries of history. If modernity was being de-emphasized, Reformers were seriously re-appraising the Tradition.

Thus, Sachar is correct in terming the CCAR's 1937 "Columbus Platform," leading to new calls for the reinvigoration of Shabbat, Festival and Holiday observance, the revival of the Hebrew language and such traditional accouterments as the kippah and tallis, and the

primacy of the Bar Mitzvah over the Christianity-inspired confirmation ceremony, as a "tentative" "revival of traditionalism."[123]

However, if Reform "needed to reformulate its basic principles, the Conservative branch suffered from the absence of any founding principles. Aspiring to unite American Judaism and never intending to be merely another branch of it, Conservatism became instead a protest against the extremes of classical Reform and a critique of an overly rigid Orthodoxy."[124] Nevertheless, by the thirties, Reform was returning to the Tradition, however tentatively, Conservatism had apparently become the "center," of American Judaism, but had not yet fulfilled its central mission of unify Jews. Finally, Americanized Orthodoxy had become a main-line denomination still seeking to mediate a position between the modernized world and that of the Tradition. As its constituency began the flight from the ghetto, Orthodox Jews became Americanized and became wealthier.[125] Yet each movement shared many of the same influences and faced some of the same questions.

Reform, Conservative and Americanized Orthodoxy were each profoundly influenced by the ascendance of the Americanized, East-European Jew. All were shocked by the broad economic decline, the rise of totalitarianism and the vulnerability of the Jewish people, and already in the twenties, the leadership of the Jewish denominations, particularly the rabbinate, were concerned that American Judaism was being supplanted by American "Jewishness.[126]" No longer were Jews simply becoming part of American culture; along with African-

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123Sachar, A History of Jews in America, 397.

124Feingold, A Time for Searching, 103.

125See Sachar, A History of the Jews in America, 340-3.

126For example, during post-World War I allied negotiations on the status of European Jews and other oppressed peoples, it was the secular Jewish organizations and leaders -- perhaps with the exception of Stephen S. Wise, who straddled both realms -- and not the American rabbinate.

Americans, American Jews were creating American culture, on the Stage, in Film, music, dance and literature.[127]

We should also remember that Jewish Federalism in the United States trailed the Christian Federalism which began shortly before the World War I, as did new attempts at improved inter-religious relations, through the development of the "goodwill" movement. If Jews were to promote goodwill with their neighbors, they first had to create goodwill among co-religionists. [128] For all of these reasons, the time was ripe for the establishment of the Synagogue Council of America.

Into the breach of secularism stepped Reform rabbi Abram Simon and colleagues from the other denominations. Like his Protestant counterparts, Simon's call for intra-Jewish cooperation was, at the surface level, based upon social justice concerns. "Society's challenge to the Church and Synagog is to realize the social vision which appears on the horizon," declared Simon at the 1924 CCAR conference, "[r]eligion to be socially minded must be socially dynamic."[129] In other words, Simon argued that if religion was to regain its societal primacy it had to be relevant to contemporary needs. As Simon stated:

> I cannot interpret the controversies in the Church or the alienation of the masses from its authority as signs of disintegration. To me they are symptoms of a quickening sense to reclaim organized religion. The disaffections, the aspirations and the visions of the youth may be the welling up of religious emotions trying to be articulate and expend themselves in idealistic ventures....They ought to find their sanity, their practical outlet, their fervid interpretation in the sanction and within the *sanctum* of Religion.

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[127]For a brief summary of this chapter in American Jewish history, see Sachar, A History of Jews in America, 366-73.
[128]Sachar, A History of Jews in America, 122.
[129]CCAR Yearbook, 152.

> Thousands of high-spirited Jewish young men and women are waiting for the Synagog to bid them welcome, and offer them food for the soul, and ennobling services for humanity to perform! They want to serve, even though they have forgotten how to pray to the God of their fathers....[yet] The Prophetic office of the Synagog languishes.[130]

Additionally, Simon argued that there "are problems in American Israel that need for their solution a united Israel." Moreover, by maintaining that "[w]e need a unity based on religion. Orthodox, and Reform Seminaries ought not to be kept apart by theological barriers," Simon had implicitly accepted that American Judaism was denominationalized, but also recognized the need for a collective religious front against the secular peril.[131] Thus, if the Synagogue was the "authoritative unit in our Jewish life," then, Simon averred, there was absolutely nothing to prevent interdenominational cooperation on matters of "Marriage and Divorce, Jewish Student Welfare at Universities, Prohibition, Social Justice, the Sabbath, Religious Education and our American loyalties."[132]

Although these issues fell under the purview of both the Sacred and the profane, what Simon had proposed was, nevertheless, radical in scope and quite ambitious. Indeed, the denominations had conflicted over how best to observe the Sabbath, as well as how to conduct rituals such as marriage and divorce. In fact the very divisions over ritual and observance had been an essential factor leading to the denominationalization of American Judaism. Still, Simon's pleas to the Conference and to other leaders of religious, American Jewry had not fallen upon deaf ears.

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130 Ibid. 152-3.
131 Ibid. 154.
132 Ibid.

The CCAR Yearbook of the following year reported that Simon's call was "extended" to the UAHC, the Conservative's lay-organization, the United Synagogue of America (USA), the UOJCA, the RA and Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada[133] who met at the aptly titled Harmonie Club of New York city in June of 1925.[134] A resolution presented by Arch-Reformer David Philipson, Rabbi David de Sola Pool, a veteran, Americanized, Sephardic-Orthodox rabbi, and Rabbi Jacob Kohen of the Conservative movement proclaimed that:

> ...recognizing the fundamental spiritual unity which binds us as Jews, believing that the Synagog is the basic and essential unit of our Jewish life, and believing in the desirability of taking counsel together for the sacred purpose of preserving and fostering Judaism in America, recommend....for the purpose of enabling them [the religious organizations] to speak and act unitedly in furthering such religious interests as all these constituent national organizations share in common, it being clearly provided that such a proposed Conference in no way interfere with the religious administrative autonomy of any of the constituent organizations.[135]

There are several important components in this statement which became the constitution of the Synagogue Council of America. First is its open acceptance that American Judaism had been

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[133]The Union of Orthodox Rabbis was apparently the euphemism for the AH, whose place was later taken in the Council by the RCA after the latter's founding in 1935. In other words, it seems that both resisters, through the AH, and accommodaters, probably through the UOJCA's rabbinical council were represented in the early days of the SCA, which offers further evidence of the resisters' weakness since they would most likely have wanted to prevent such interdenominational cooperation.

[134]1925 CCAR Yearbook, 226.

[135]Ibid. 226. See also, The Synagogue Council of America. The Synagogue Council of America: Its Origins and Activities. (New York: 1931), 1.

denominationalized. Demonstrating the shift from single-movement triumphalism, Reform, Conservative and accommodater Orthodox leaders had finally recognized the reality of a diverse American Judaism and chose to formally recognize one anothers'" validity. Secondly, in place of locating the threat to American Jews and Judaism in each other's religious approach, the three movements had decided to paper over theological and ritual differences to unite against the common enemy of secularism. Thirdly, in characterizing this proposal as one requiring "patience, goodwill and consecration," Simon had actually appropriated Christian ecumenical language and applied the language of "goodwill" to the intra-Jewish communal context. This point is important in that it reveals how the denominationalization of American Judaism had made intra-Jewish relations analogous to Jewish-Christian relations.

Moreover, this statement demonstrates the anxiety felt by religious organizations that they would be marginalized by the secular organizations. Once again, the pledge of "non-interference" in one anothers" affairs is important from two angles. One the on hand, this commitment shows how deeply Wilsonian ideology had penetrated into the psyche of American majority culture.[136] That is, the non-interference pledge sounds like it had been lifted directly from a League of Nations' statement. On the other hand, despite genuine hopes that American Judaism might someday be unified, the non-interference pledge showed that each movement was also unwilling to forgo denominational autonomy, now that it had been achieved and that each branch wanted unification on its own terms. Last, but certainly not least, the SCA's constitutional preamble offered no definition of "Synagogue," "Judaism" or which "religious interests" the different streams held "in common." Indeed, the constituents could not have achieved unanimity on what constituted

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136We should note here that Woodrow Wilson's political ideology emanated from his Calvinist upbringing. In other words, his political worldview was grounded in his religious beliefs, and in turn, the Wilsonian ideology in part re-shaped American religion. This is another remarkable example of cross-cultural interaction.

Judaism or "religion." That they felt marginalized by secular organizations and ideologies is clear, but finding common *religious* ground between the three movements was not as simple as it sounded. Nonetheless, despite the reality of denominationalized Judaism, the SCA set out to speak "unitedly," and equally ambitious, to become representative and to "interpret the voice" of "religious Israel."[137]

The 1926 CCAR Yearbook reported that for the "first time in the history of American Judaism this activity represents the union of all our religious bodies -- Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform -- for the high and holy purpose of laboring together in a cause that is sacred to all us, as well as an evidence to humanity that through and through and above all our differences, we are one people," although it was "not the desire of any one to create a super-government, or to deny to any constituent body its liberty or its autonomy. Where we may work together and make announcement together, it seems both expedient, practical and wise that we speak through this Synagog Council of America, which seems to augur the coming of an Elijah who shall turn the hearts of Jewish brethren to one another."[138] Such was the conflicted basis of the SCA at its birth; enshrining the tension between unity and autonomy, the founders of the SCA also saw this effort as a harbinger, or a means to the messianic age.

Judging from the Reform SCA delegates report to CCAR conventions from the twenties into the thirties, SCA activities touched "religious" questions as well as issues which had been typically viewed as "secular." For example, Rabbi Simon Foster reported in 1927 the SCA's: sponsorship of an exhibit on "Jewish life in America for the Sesqui-Centennial exposition in Philadelphia;" a resolution supporting the five day work week; a statement of concern over continued Christian proselytism of Jews; discussion on issuing a joint-religious calendar; an appeal on behalf of flood

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[137] SCA, SCA: Its Origins and Activities. 2-3.
[138] 1926 CCAR Yearbook, 148.

victims; a congratulatory statement on Louis Marshal's seventieth birthday; cooperation with the "United States Flag Association;" "a message of good will....to the Orthodox group on the dedication of the [new building of] the Yeshivah in New York; and an endorsement of "National Child Health Day."[139]

Reported by Rabbi Simon Foster, the most religiously noteworthy, and apparently unsuccessful, of these measures, was the call for a joint religious calendar, since some elements of Reform Judaism had parted from the traditional calendar.[140] However, by 1928, the "Joint Calendar was ordered printed and distributed," and in addition to the "dates of the principle holidays, a brief explanation ....[was] added to inform the public of the meaning of each festival."[141]

The delegates to the SCA could also point to progress on taking united stands on such religious issues as confronting the "threatened attack on Shechitah in New York....to take all necessary steps to protect Orthodox interests."[142] Indeed, SCA members from each denomination composed a joint statement proclaiming that the SCA "representing all shades of Jewish Religious opinion and compromising many hundreds of Synagogs and other Jewish organizations in the United States....urges [state authorities] not introduce the Bill against Jewish Ritual Slaughtering....[which] interferes with the constitutionally guaranteed religious liberty..."[143] Nevertheless, in terms of the piece-meal nature of Synagogue Council activities, the delegates were unable to draw up a plan for future

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[139] 1927 CCAR Yearbook, 108-12.

[140] It should be remembered that large segments of Reform Jewry had parted from traditional practice of observing two days of some holidays and, likewise, had shifted Shabbat observance to Sunday from Saturdays.

[141] 1928 CCAR Yearbook, 52.

[142] Ibid. 54-5.

[143] Ibid. 55.

activities.[144] In other words, the SCA had demonstrated its ability to act in concert on some religious issues, albeit on a case-by-case basis.

The 1929 report reiterated many of the same issues, albeit with the introduction of one element fairly new to Jewish communal life: Eretz Yisrael. "The Synagog Council....deplores the interference with Jewish worship which took place at the *kotel Masravi*...on the Day of Atonement."[145]

On the other hand, the SCA was stymied in its effort to proclaim the primacy of Saturday Shabbat observance. Although delegate Abram Simon argued that "whatever might be our [the Reform rabbinate] attitude in regard to the sanctity of the Sabbath, the question of a United Israel was, from a moral and religious point of view, infinitely more valuable than any other consideration," Reform rabbi Frisch stated that "..our committee [CCAR delegates to the SCA]....ought not to have entered into an agreement on that proposition; they simply should have permitted our Orthodox brethren to agitate for their point of view. I think we ought to dissociate ourselves from that attitude and action."[146] In other words, Frisch and others were protesting SCA religious agreements both on theological grounds and in regards to the Council's potential threat against Reform's autonomy of action.

The 1930 report praised the five years of SCA activity and is notable for its statement protesting Soviet, anti-religious measures; once again, American Jews were able to respond unitedly on issue affecting persecuted foreign Jews.[147] Ultimately, the CCAR delegates could argue convincingly that the "difficulties encountered in the

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[144] Ibid. 53-4.

[145] 1929 CCAR Yearbook, 63-4. We should note here our present inability to find parallel discussions within Conservative and Orthodox organizations.

[146] Ibid. 65-7.

[147] 1930 CCAR Yearbook, 54-8.

deliberations of the delegates as they jealously guard their respective fundamental points of view and at the same time maintain utmost friendliness of attitude and frankness of utterance in their relationships....might well form the norm in our Jewish life."[148] Now that denominationalized American Judaism had been formally accepted, Orthodox Jews had made "no concealment of their recognition of the Reform group in America."[149] Once again ending on a redemptive hope, the delegates compared religious American Jewry to the "separate tribes in ancient Israel, achieving unity when assembled at Mount Sinai, the representatives of our modern Jewish group find it possible, desirable, and necessary to unite our forces when responding to the challenge of our common duties and common hopes as children of the One God."[150]

Theological divisions inevitably arose over an SCA resolution for all Jewish communal events to adhere to the laws of Kashrut. Rejected by CCAR delegates to the SCA and causing considerable dissension among the members of the CCAR, delegate to the SCA Rabbi Simon Foster acknowledged the "generally negative results" of Synagogue Council activities while imploring that these events not be "interpreted as the play of destructive tendencies, or disintegrating influences in this very important national organization."[151] But in 1932, the SCA could point to some success in discussions of how best to stem the proliferation of pseudo-rabbis and cantors, as well as issue a joint protest over the exclusion of formal religious representation at the secularist-organized World Jewish Conference of 1932.[152] While the non-Reform members of the SCA seemed not to frame SCA activities in such a prominent manner, the following year, the RAA resolution committee approved further efforts to

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[148] Ibid. 58.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid. 63.
[152] 1932 CCAR Yearbook, 60-2.

"unify" Social Justice work between Conservative, Reform and "other representative bodies."[153]

But, even in spite of "numerous setbacks, the movement for interdenominationalism reached its zenith as World War II approached. Conservative and Orthodox leaders now joined the Reform vanguard in speaking of religious pluralism as an integral part of democracy."[154] Nevertheless, despite the desire of religious leaders within each denomination to further the cause of religious unity -- however one chose to define what that meant -- American Jews were now facing the incomprehensible and diabolical events in Germany which would explode into the Shoah. Questions of unity would now necessarily be concerned with how to effectuate rescuing world Jewry from the nazi onslaught. For the time being, all of American Jewry, religious and secular, Zionist and anti-Zionist, modern and traditional, would be embroiled over how to confront genocide.

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[153] 1933 Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, 175.
[154] Feingold, A Time for Searching, 124.

## Chapter Two: From Holocaust to Revival

The post-war era is characterized by Jewish-American religious institutional growth, as greater numbers of American Jews formally affiliated with the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox streams of American Judaism.[155] Parallel to increased affiliation was the pre-war trend toward re-traditionalization within some segments of American Judaism. This process continued after the war and had the further effect of impelling the rabbinic leadership of all streams of American Judaism toward a more defined religious framework.[156] Yet even while each denomination continued the effort towards greater self-definition, the movement for creating a coherent and unified system of intra-Jewish religious unity had also increased.[157] Thus, in the post-war era, interdenominational relations were conflicted over the desire to unify and the ongoing need to differentiate one movement from another. Jews were also being suburbanized, joining the ranks of the middle class, and "arriving," so to speak, into the world of "real" Americans. On the one hand, since the process of Americanization resulted in further homogenizing American Jews, prospects for unity seemed more hopeful.[158] On the other hand, if all Jews were basically the "same," what need was there for preserving the denominational structure?

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[155] Morris Fine, ed., American Jewish Yearbook. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1954), Vol. 55, 80-1.

[156] Ibid. 81-2.

[157] Ibid. 82, American Jewish Yearbook, (Philadelphia: JPS, 1955), Vol. 56, 232.

[158] A large factor contributing to further American Jewish homogeneity was the mass cultural exodus alongside Jews' physical exodus to Suburbia. Indeed, post-war suburbia may have been more of a melting-pot than earlier urban settlements. Alongside an ever-growing group of various ethnicities and religions, Jews and others melted into a general culture of suburbia, whereas urban life carried more cultural and physical demarcations, separating one ethnic neighborhood from another.

For all intents and purposes, the Americanization process had succeeded and Orthodox resistance seemed to be a thing of the past. Likewise, the impact of the state of Israel on American Jewry cannot be understated. Jews now finally had a country like all other nations, and Israel was a country with an army that fought and won. Zionists had succeeded in converting most segments of organized American Jewry to the cause of the new state, permitting cooperation between religious and secular, eastern and western European Jews, and rabbis and secular leaders. Even ethnically Jewish Gangster Bugsy Siegel marveled over "fighting Jews," contributing an estimated $50,000 to the Haganah for procuring arms during Israel's war of independence.[159]

Nevertheless, at the very moment of successful Americanization, denominationalized Judaism were confronted with fundamental and existential challenges spurred on by the Shoah. The practitioners of Americanized Judaism had, at the very least seen what seemed to be the dark aspects of the very civilization it had championed and wanted to join. Since Americanized Judaism was to come into question, the SCA itself, the penultimate expression of denominationalized Judaism would also come under attack. Indeed, the Shoah would call into question all of modernity, above and beyond modernized religion. Modernity, thus far, had been characterized by a type of general decentralization. Within the realm of religion, what had once been sectarianism had been transformed into denominationalism. Whereas single-sect societies of the European type were grounded in a common worldview and moral code, modernity legitimized a diffusion of ideologies and religious expressions if not relativism itself.

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[159]For a fascinating study see Robert A. Rockaway's "Hoodlum Hero: The Jewish Gangster as Defender of His People," in Marc Lee Raphael, ed., American Jewish History, vol. 82:1-4, p. 23. Rockaway relates the following dialogue between Siegel and a Haganah emissary: "You mean to tell me Jews are fighting?" "Yes." "You mean fighting, as in killing?" "Yes." "I'm with you."

After the Shoah, American Jews could legitimately question why they had not been able to do more for their European brethren, and inevitably a great deal of self-criticism revolved around American Jewish disunity during the war. If American Jewish pluralism was itself a product of modernity than modernity itself needed to be questioned, and according to some, overthrown both to reforge Jewish unity and, moreover, in order to reestablish what would later be termed as "Torah-True" Judaism.. Thus, the events of the Holocaust coupled with the ideal of unity impelled a deep level of soul-searching in the Jewish community.

Nevertheless, despite the self-directed anger over American-Jewish disunity, Walter Laqeuer writes that when World War Two "broke out the Jewish communities," world-wide, "were no more united than they had been in the past."[160] Given that Jews have never been completely united and that the idea of Jewish unity was, at best a romanticized memory of the "good old days," if not a mythological construct, how exactly had religious American Jews responded to the Holocaust? Had the intrinsic conflicts and competition between the Americanized denominations fatally crippled their responses to the Shoah? More broadly, could the process of Americanization and denominationalization of American Jewry be held responsible for community-wide failures during the Holocaust?

First we need to distinguish between the religious and secular American Jewish organizations and leadership during the War. A second distinction should be made between the Zionist and, for lack of a better term, non-Zionist response to the Shoah. However, we would concede for the outset that given the parameters of this discussion, these distinctions are over-generalized, in that Reform, Conservative and accommodating Orthodox rabbis worked outside of

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160Walter Laqeuer, The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's "Final Solution." (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 157.

their movements -- both for and against Zionism -- and that no simple, clean lines can be drawn. Nonetheless, although our focus remains on religious Jewry and the SCA, a discussion of the general Jewish response to the Holocaust is important.[161]

Arguably, the Holocaust began with Hitler's rise to power in the early thirties. Through political lobbying and demonstrations, American Jews attempted to assist their German brethren. David Wyman's work, among other studies, demonstrated American-Jewish ineffectuality in dealing with the Shoah. Nevertheless, Wyman's most important contribution was to show the US government's and the wider American public's profound indifference and avoidance in confronting the Nazi regime, even after American entry into the war, when America still did not view the Nazi policies of genocide as a "Jewish issue" per se, but rather as one component of the war.[162]

The Allies' standard response to the Shoah was that genocide could be halted only through victory in war. While some lives were saved by means of the War Refugee board (WRB), these important efforts, "too little and too late" for millions of others, emerged only after tremendous public and internal pressure was applied to President Roosevelt, who -- despite his exalted status among American Jewry -- appears to have made every attempt to avoid dealing with the "Jewish Question" until public knowledge of the scope of the Nazi's genocide program compelled him to take some

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[161]For more on America's response to the Shoah and the conduct of the secular Jewish organizations, see David S. Wyman's standard work, The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). Aaron Berman's Nazism the Jews and American Zionism: 1933-1948, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), as the title indicates, is a critical examination of the Zionist response.

[162]The "American" response includes, except for some individuals, the Roosevelt administration, much of the media and the churches (see citations above and discussion below). We would also note that the thirties entailed the most virulent antisemitism in American history.

action.[163] With the exception of the Zionist program -- which focused on the realization of Jewish Statehood rather than rescue -- American Jews primary expressions of anguish included civil demonstrations, lobbying and articles in the Jewish press. Likewise, their were a variety of attempts at establishing a unified Jewish program of action.[164] But even after confirmation of the "worst" in 1942, some Jewish organizations still reacted, understandably, with disbelief over the scope of Hitler's plans. For example, the October 1942 issue of B'nai B'rith's Jewish Monthly, illustrated Jews' incapability of comprehending why the nazis would resort to "wholesale slaughter, preferring to kill all Jews rather than use their labor."[165]

Indeed, most leaders of the mainline Jewish organizations took the same stance as Stephen S. Wise who had stated that the "salvation of our people and all peoples who would be free can only come under God through a victory speedy and complete of the United Nations."[166] In other words, the catastrophe facing the Jewish people was one and the same as the catastrophe facing the entire world; the Jewish crisis was no different from the world crisis. In hindsight, we can point to other groupings of people who faced genocide and genocidal policies alongside Jews, such as Gypsies, Homosexuals and Slavic peoples. Nonetheless, the threat of the total "extermination" of the Jews was, to understate the case, radically different from the war

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[163]See Wyman, 183-7, 203-5, 285-7.

[164]See Berman and Wyman, 24.

[165]Wyman, Abandonment, 48.

[166]Wyman, 25. This is not to somehow argue that Wise was callous or was unaffected -- as some historical revisionists have suggested -- by the Holocaust. For further discussion see Melvin I. Urofsky's A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise. (Albany: State of New York University Press, 1982). If one were to engage in psycho-history, it is quite arguable that Wise and other Jewish leaders were emotionally unable to deal with the Shoah. As Wise wrote to one friend in 1942, "I am almost demented over my people's grief." Wyman, Abandonment, 46.

experience of the vast majority of allied and axis nations.[167] Outside of the vocal and sometimes radical tactics of the Revisionist-Zionist "Bergson Group," the mainline secular organizations basically followed the Roosevelt administration's request to be "team players." In fact, Wise and Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter -- who admittedly may have been more of a leader who was Jewish, rather than a Jewish leader -- even agreed to Roosevelt administration and State Department requests to suppress information, contained in the Riegner telegram, which had confirmed the extent of the Shoah.[168]

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167This is not to attribute a greater, or morally superior victim status to Jews, but rather reflects differing nazi policies toward Jews, in contrast to the French, British, or Norwegians, for example. For more on the particularity of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust see Steven T. Katz, The Holocaust in Historical Context. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Along with previous citations, for other basic studies of the Holocaust see Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945, (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1975), Raul Hilberg's The Destruction of European Jews, (Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1961), and Leni Yahil's The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

168Wyman, The Abandonment, 54-5. Wise was engaged both as the leader of the American Jewish Congress and as a preeminent Zionist leader. Yet Wyman also defends, at least in part, Wise's decision to delay publicizing the extent of the Holocaust after release of Riegner's report since "there was strategic advantage in awaiting State Department confirmation....[as it] might have been discounted if based on Jewish authorities." Ibid. 54. Likewise, if Wise had "contravened [Under Secretary of State Sumner ] Welles' request [for suppression] he would have alienated the department of government whose cooperation was essential in the effort to help the Jew European Jews." Ibid. Finally, along with criticizing Wise and Frankfurter's decision-making, we should not forget the responsibility of the British section of the World Jewish Congress, alongside such prominent, gentiles of the Roosevelt administration and the State Department, such as Myron C. Taylor, Dean Achenson, Henry Wallace, Harold Ickes, or other extremely "prominent Americans," who, unlike the American Jews of this period, possessed the political clout -- not to mention the "credibility" within Gentile America -- and who "could have called a

As for the particular Zionist response, Berman explains that "American Zionist shared in the despair and anguish of the entire American Jewish community. However, they discovered that the ideology of Jewish nationalism allowed them to understand events almost defying comprehension and provided them with a means of responding to Hitler's death camps....the holocaust proved [for them] that national homelessness caused anti-Semitism and that only through the creation of a nation of their own could Jewry achieve salvation."[169] Thus, at a 1943 meeting christened the "American Jewish Conference," Reform rabbi and Zionist leader Abba Hillel Silver, argued that "the immemorial problem of our national homelessness," was the cause of ongoing Jewish suffering.[170] Stating the mainline Zionist argument, Silver proclaimed that :

> We cannot truly rescue the Jews of Europe unless we have free immigration to Palestine. We cannot have free immigration to Palestine unless our political rights are recognized there. Our political rights cannot be recognized there unless our historic connection with the country is acknowledged and our right to rebuild our national home is reaffirmed.[171]

Some begged to differ with this approach, arguing that rescuing Jews rather than campaigning for Jewish statehood should be the primary focus of Jewish energy and resources. Nevertheless, two years before the conclusion of the Shoah, Silver declared that the Jewish people "are on the eve of a messianic era for our people. We

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press conference and broken the news" about Hitler's plan for total genocide. Ibid. 54-55.

[169]Berman, Nazism, 14. See also Sachar's discussion, A History of the Jews, 568-73.

[170]Ibid. 113. Quite typical of classical Zionist ideology, Silver frames Jewish suffering as a result of Jewish otherness within the paradigm of nineteenth century, European, nationalist ideology. In other words, Jews suffer because they are an abnormal nation. As a result, Jewish suffering stems not from the irrational, the barbaric or the evil of other nations, but rather, from Jewish abnormality.

[171]Ibid. 114.

have hone through the purging, the cleansing, the terror, the apocalyptic dread...."[172] "Ironically and tragically," writes Berman, the "Zionists' decision to give first priority to the creation of a Jewish commonwealth weakened American Jewish rescue efforts....[t]he creation of a Jewish state, Zionists religiously believed, would save future generations of Jews from other Auschwitzes and Treblinkas."[173] Thus, even while the Zionists developed "one of the most efficient political lobbies in America...[w]hile this work progressed, the Nazi crematoriums continued to dispose of the corpses of slaughtered Jews."[174]

Yet perhaps the Zionists and even more broadly based rabbinic leaders such as Wise had simply played according to the rules of American modernity in their reliance upon civil, political pressure and peaceful demonstrations. "Jews simply expect," argues Feingold, that "governments will behave humanely. It is characteristic of a people capable of extraordinary faith or remarkable innocence."[175] Yet it is impossible "know" what "would have been enough," to save more Jews during the Holocaust, and thus contemporary Jews "risk creating the conditions for endless self-flagellation." Moreover, "at the very heart of our problem is the question of Jewish power and influence in the thirties."[176] More important than unfocused self-flagellation, both for our study and perhaps for contemporary Jews, is the examination of Jewish disunity during the Holocaust. Feingold reiterates that there "was no single Jewish community on the American scene during that period. Instead there were several separate Jewish communities, each with its own ideology and agenda," and which "shared few of the values of a common

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[172]Ibid. 116.
[173]Ibid. 119.
[174]Ibid. 123.
[175]Feingold, "Did American Jewry Do Enough during the Holocaust?" in Alan L. Berger, ed., Judaism in the Modern World. (New York: NYU Press, 1994), 145.
[176]Ibid. 145, 149.

culture....nor did there exist a single leadership or organization that possessed the power to impose its will on all."[177]

Alternatively, we have argued that by the early decades of the century large swaths of American Jewry did in fact share a culture of Americanism. Be that as it may, as Feingold points out, the faith in American civil culture was not in itself helpful for rescuing European Jews. Where Jews differed among themselves was how, and to what extent they should respond to this unique modern crisis. Thus, at the American Jewish Conference in 1943, at perhaps the height of the Shoah, "all attempts at achieving some modicum of American Jewish unity broke down," as radically differing organizations such as the AJC, Agudat Yisrael and the Jewish Labor Committee parted ways with the Conference over the Zionist agenda.[178] In fact, the enormity of the Shoah only exacerbated intra-Jewish disunity.[179]

In some instances it seems obvious that greater unity would have facilitated more successful attempts at rescue. Nonetheless, if the ineffectuality of American Jews can be understood within the context of their powerlessness to affect US policy toward the Jews, no such explanation exists for US policy-makers or Christian religious leaders.

In fact, greater Jewish unity could not have stopped or significantly altered the fundamentals of the Shoah considering the Gentile world's indifference or inability deal with the Holocaust. In spite of centuries-long antisemitic canards about an octopus-like Jewish conspiracy to control the world, all evidence demonstrates that Allied leaders did as little as possible to alleviate Jewish suffering. After all, how can a historian from an ostensibly dispassionate perspective, let alone a theologian, explain the

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[177] Ibid. 150
[178] Ibid. 151.
[179] Ibid. 153.

mentality of a government more concerned with rescuing animals than human beings?[180]

Similarly, America's progressive Christian clergy's conduct during the Holocaust left earlier expressions of goodwill in question. Despite the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America's

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180"...near the end of the war, an American Army tank unit went out of its way to rescue a herd of valuable Lipizzaner horses...The US. Senate later cited the unit for its 'heroic efforts' in saving the horses." See Wyman, Abandonment, 95. As Wyman and others demonstrate, the same government denied request after request to attack the Nazi infrastructures of genocide, such as the railroad tracks to Auschwitz. Denying such requests often fell to Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy. A protégé of Oscar Straus' friend Henry L. Stimson, McCloy, was also famous in his own right as one of the original "Wise Men," an elite and informal group of US. policy-makers. See Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made: Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, McCloy. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986). McCloy and others from the State and War departments persistently and falsely refused requests to attack the Nazi genocide infrastructure citing a lack of resources and claiming that such actions would weaken the Allied war effort. For instance, in the summer of 1944, McCloy rejected a proposal for bombing the Auschwitz gas chambers and crematoria, arguing that "...such an operation could be executed only by the diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations and would in any case be of such doubtful efficacy that it would not warrant the use of our resources," although in actuality Auschwitz fell under the accepted group of targets in the Air Force's Operational Plans. Wyman, Abandonment, 295-7. So deep was American disbelief or inability to comprehend the events of the Holocaust that in one episode McCloy apparently wondered out loud whether "...all those horrible things happened?" Ibid. 323. Nevertheless, in the Spring of 1945 as the US. tremendously escalated the bombing of targets throughout Japan, Stimson asked McCloy to exempt the city of Kyoto, the "ancient capital of Japan and a center of culture and art," from targeted bombings. Secretary of War Stimson who had vacationed in Japan before the War had asked: "Would you consider me a sentimental old man if I removed Kyoto from the target cities for our bombers?" Ibid. 305. McCloy likewise spared the beautiful medieval architecture of the German town of Rothenburg from bombings. Ibid.

expression of sympathy following publication of the Nazis' genocide program in 1942, the FCC dallied into the following year before inaugurating its consciousness-raising programs.[181] Ultimately, "most American Christian institutions took little or no notice of the extermination disclosures of late 1942..."[182] In fact, the nondenominational periodical Christian Century questioned the extent of such "horror stories," and even after many of these "stories" had been confirmed blandly argued for a "calm tone" rather than expending "one unit of emotional energy which can be better employed in bringing the war to such conclusion that this gigantic crime can be stopped and the criminals punished."[183] As suggested above, "most active in the campaign for rescue," was the FCC, although "it did not do much."[184] More glaringly, the American Roman Catholic Church was "virtually silent. Neither did its bishops nor other prominent church leaders," pursue Holocaust issues with their laity or with the United States government.[185] A notable exception was esteemed Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.[186] Indeed, he noted at the time that modern and liberal Jews would now have to grapple with the with the apparent presence of an evil profound enough to "undermine the characteristic credos of the democratic world."[187]

But we also need to ask whether the conduct of religious American Jews had been different from that of the secular organizations. Although we have henceforth distinguished between Zionists and other secular Jewish organizations, and between secular and religious Jewish response to the Holocaust, we have also seen that there was tremendous overlap among all of these groups. In

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[181] Ibid. 65.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid. 66.
[184] Ibid. 101.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid. 320.
[187] Quoted in Feingold, A Time For Searching, 261.

terms of examining Jewish disunity during the Shoah, what may be more important is distinguishing between Americanized religious Jews and the resisters' response to the Shoah, using the SCA as a lens for this study.

A 1933 report on Synagogue Council activities to the CCAR, was prefaced with the now typical disclaimer that the "delegates....always assuming the basic factor of unity, were exploring the paths over which co-ordinate work and the related plans might march without destroying the integrity and independence of any member of the Council."[188] In other words, the SCA still struggled over how carry out unified actions without interfering with internal affairs or obstructing the theological integrity of each denomination. Most of this report discussed how best to distinguish SCA work from that of the secular organizations and which issues facing American Jewry demanded the "voice of the Synagog."[189] Likewise, the CCAR delegate to the SCA, Rabbi Samuel Schulman discussed proposal for expanding the SCA's work on the nation-wide level into localized synagogue councils, or as Schulman framed this proposal, a "general plan to unite the Jewish communities of America."[190] Most notable, however, were two letters sent to President Roosevelt concerning the growing crisis of Jews in Germany. The first sent by Schulman, explaining the function of the SCA, the second was signed by a veritable "who's who," of Americanized Judaism, including the Americanized Orthodox rabbis Bernard Drachman and David De Sola Pool, then Conservative leader and later founder of Reconstructionism, Mordecai Kaplan, and Reform founder of the SCA, Abram Simon.[191]

"Our organization is exclusively religious," explained Schulman in the first letter, writing that the SCA "...represents the unity of the

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[188] 1933 CCAR Yearbook, 73.
[189] Ibid. 73-7.
[190] Ibid. 75-7
[191] Ibid. 78-9.

Synagog in America."[192] Apparently ignoring the ongoing presence of Orthodox resisters in the US, Schulman continued that "...all shades of [Jewish] religious thought are represented in it," but that "[w]e have not spoken till now, because in humility we were awaiting some deed which would hearten us."[193] From the tone of this introductory letter, it appears that Americanized, religious Jewish leaders, individually and through the Synagogue Council, approached the US government during the Holocaust in the same manner as the secular organizations:

> We are all deeply distressed. We are suffering great anguish of soul. And, therefore, we determined to speak on behalf of the whole religious community of Israel in this our beloved land. If you could receive us, two or three of us, we would be glad to come when you called. ....we hope that you will do what you can. We love and revere you, not merely as the head of our American nation, but as a great spirit who is doing much from his place of world leadership for humanity.[194]

The second letter mirrored Schulman's tone:

> ...Proud of our beloved county, rejoicing in the spontaneous expression of indignation against wrong and of good will for the oppressed and persecuted Jew on the part of many outstanding Christian men and women in this country, and other noble men and women in this country, and other noble men and women of liberal thought, irrespective of ecclesiastic affiliation; confident of the earnest desire of the Administration to help ameliorate the condition of our afflicted brethren in faith in Germany, we ask you....heed the cry of our hearts and the prayer of every Jew in the land, and to do in an impressive way whatever you think wise and effective in order to bring home to the imagination of the German government and the German people the great wrong

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[192]Ibid. 78.
[193]Ibid.
[194]Ibid.

> which is being done in the endeavor to disenfranchise, to exclude from citizenship, from equality of political and economic rights, from normal participation in the opportunities of living, of six hundred thousand Germans of Jewish ancestry....that has done so much in the past for its [Germany's] welfare, for its glory as a great country which has been in many respects in the vanguard of Western culture.[195]

Although representing the Americanized Jewish religious community of America, the SCA leaders, like their secular counterparts, evidently approached the "Administration" from the same place of respect, if not awe, for Roosevelt, whom Arthur Hertzberg with purposeful irony termed the "benevolent king of the Jews."[196] Both letters are genuine expressions of profound American Jewish anxiety over worsening conditions in Germany. Nevertheless, they also illustrate the Americanized religious leaders' ongoing faith in Americanism and in universalistic American religion. Indeed, that same report announced plans for a special celebration of the bicentennial of George Washington's birth.[197] This message also exudes a persisting faith and hope in Western culture. In a response which would become all-too familiar half-way into the next decade, an Undersecretary of State assured SCA leaders of its "most careful and attentive consideration," to the "entire situation."[198]

Nonetheless, the CCAR President's message of the year more bluntly underlined the threat to German Jewry's "physical and spiritual annihilation," stating that the events "transpiring in the boasted land of Kultur has shocked the moral sense of the civilized world."[199] Indeed, it was "difficult to believe," for religious Jews who

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[195]Ibid. 78-9.

[196]See Hertzberg's essay, "FDR: The Benevolent King of the Jews," in The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter. (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1989), 282-300.

[197]1933 CCAR Yearbook, 80.

[198]Ibid.

[199]Ibid. 128.

had heretofore placed such hope in the Western project of modernity that such a "nightmare of recrudescent barbarism and of ruthless disregard of humanity can occur in Western Europe of the Twentieth Century."[200] Had these events taken place in Eastern Europe they might have been more believable for the assembled rabbis. Still, in regards to the growing Nazi menace, President...called for greater cooperation with secular organizations such as the AJC and B'nai B'rith since the "lack of unity has bred bitter controversies between these national organizations, the effect of which is to impair the power of each to lend adequate help."[201] Alternatively, in the same message, he criticized what he saw as an attempt by then-SCA president and Conservative Rabbi Israel Goldstein's attempt to supersede Synagogue Council authority. Of issue was Goldstein's suggestion that the SCA work directly with FCC on social action issues with the possibility of bypassing constituent organizations like the CCAR.[202] Although he had called for unified action on the plight of Jews, President....was still as unwilling to forfeit the autonomy of his particular constituency as any other denominational leader.

Into the thirties, the SCA struggled with many of the same issues. Unity was possible in matters relating to the external world, as, for example, in 1934 the SCA lobbied congress for assistance in ameliorating the Jewish crisis in Germany.[203] But internal religious differences among American Jews still prevented the Council from taking a unified stand. Although the accomodationist Orthodox rabbi Leo Jung had requested that the laws of kashrut be observed at communal meals attended by Conservative and Orthodox Jews, some members of the CCAR saw this proposal as interference, if not a de-legitimizing of Reform ideology.[204] Likewise, 1935 saw the SCA continuing to engage in activities overlapping with the secular Jewish

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[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid. 128-30.
[202] Ibid. 133-5.
[203] 1934 CCAR Yearbook, 51-2.
[204] Ibid. 52-4.

organizations while also continuing the campaign against secularism. One SCA statement urged "our people to a more faithful observance of our Sabbaths and holidays, a more sustained study of our principles and ideas....because implied in such spiritual experiences and imbedded in such religious usage's is the dynamic urge to gear ideal aims to the machinery of life."[205] A similar SCA resolution called for the cessation of "Jewish Communal business meetings" on Shabbat, since, at the bare minimum, the "importance of the Sabbath for the maintenance of the whole structure of Jewish life is so fundamental that responsible Jewish organizations should be most scrupulous in avoiding arranging meetings for the Sabbath Day, with their inevitable tendency to secularize the Sabbath."[206]

Likewise, in a fascinating message to the 1935 CCAR meeting, then-President, Rabbi Samuel H. Goldenson, echoed classical Reform beliefs that Judaism, i.e., the Jewish religion, was still the essential component of being Jewish. More than that, Goldenson argued that there was a "time when the differences among Jews upon the meaning and claims of Judaism dealt largely with varying attitude to the question of religious authority," or the halakhah. "The important thing to note," was nevertheless, that "behind the earlier differences, there was a common acceptance of Judaism as a religion and as the controlling way of life. The only point upon which our fathers were divided was the question of the extent to which law a practice should be binding. The centrality and primacy of Judaism in the life of the Jew were as unquestioned by the reformer as they were by the orthodox."[207] A good portion of Goldenson's message obliquely criticized Mordecai Kaplan's emerging Reconstructionist ideology as secularism in "religious" clothing.[208] In the very same message,

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[205]Ibid. 56.

[206]Ibid. 57.

[207]Ibid. 134-5. For Goldenson's entire message see above, pages 133-153.

[208]Goldenson states "It is thought that by regarding Judaism as a civilization instead of a religion, it will be easier for the Jew cope with the disintegrating forces of modern life and meet the

Goldenson contrasted the "resistance to Hitlerism offered by the religious groups in Germany....with resistance offered by art and science. No one will doubt that Hitlerism is inimical to genuine culture as it is to religion and yet the only groups that have thus far found strength and courage to take some stand against the new regime have been the religious bodies."[209] Goldenson's message, coupling an attack on Kaplan with discussion of the Nazis is important on several levels.

First, Goldenson's talk demonstrated that even in the midst of a catastrophe growing to incomprehensible proportions, religious, American Jewry concerned itself with the struggle against secular forces. In fairness to Goldenson, his message was one of a many in a vast chorus of rabbis, spanning all denominations, who, undoubtedly resistant to the emergence of yet another denomination of American Judaism, also correctly perceived the profound radicality of Kaplan's ideology. Indeed, as Goldenson implied, Reconstructionism substituted Culture for religion, at the center or as the essence of Judaism. Kaplanian thought first naturalized the spiritual. Later as a separate denomination in its own right, Reconstructionism ethnicized what were fundamentally religious rituals and prayers. Stated differently, Kaplan, a lapsed Orthodox Jew and atypical Conservative

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requirements of the twentieth century. But the incidental result is to demote the religion of Israel from the high and exalted place that it has always occupied in the life of the Jew....One cannot be supremely loyal to a secondary value." Ibid. 136. Parenthetically, while Reconstructionism was still functioning as more of a "wing" of Conservative Judaism and did not become a separate denomination until after the War, Kaplan's central manifesto of Reconstructionism, Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of Jewish-American Life, was published in 1934.

[209] 1935 CCAR Yearbook, 145. Goldenson's statement is over-generalized to the point of being inaccurate. In fact, while some German Christians resisted nazism and perished on account of their actions, the conduct of religious Germany was from exemplary during the Holocaust, to put it delicately. Likewise, many artists heroically resisted the Nazi regime. For one important study on this subject see Stephanie Barron, ed., "Degenerate Art:" The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany. (Los Angeles: LA. County Museum of Art, 1991).

rabbi and scholar, responded to modernity and agitated for Jewish survival in the US by attempting to make the Sacred profane. Or as Nathan Glazer observed, "Kaplan abrogated the divine law, just as the Reform rabbis of the nineteenth century had done. but they had abrogated it so that the Jews could be a denomination; Kaplan abrogated it so that the Jews could be a people."[210]

Thus, as an illustration of the diversity and American-Jewish intellectual turmoil during the thirties, Goldenson and other Reformers, Conservatives, accommodating and resisting Orthodox, and secularists, argued for the hearts and souls of Judaism and the Jewish people. Ironically, Goldenson was as strident as any Orthodox resister in fighting for preserving what he considered to be the soul of Jewishness; Judaism. However, neither Goldenson's defense of what he considered to be the essence of Judaism, nor Kaplan's radical reshaping of Judaism as European Judaism was withering away were exceptional events for this period. Even in the midst of tremendous upheaval in the Old World, creative experimentation with American Judaism was flourishing across the Atlantic. To be sure, the unfolding Shoah and war were necessarily the central and definitive events of the era. And yet, in the comparatively speaking American calm, various expressions of Judaism were blossoming, intellectual and religious discourse and study was on the rise and the seminaries, yeshivot, and despite quotas, universities were producing native American Jewish religious and secular intellectuals and thinkers. Much of the new ideas conflicted. For Example, in 1935, Kaplan began to publish the Reconstructionist magazine and Orthodox accommodaters organized the Rabbinical Council of America. And five years later, the CCAR issues a revised and more traditional Union Prayer Book around the same time the Lubavitcher Rebbe arrives in America. Only a religiously and intellectually wealthy community could produce and contain such creative ferment. In other words, the religious -- be they resister or Reconstructionist, and the secular

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[210]Nathan Glazer, American Judaism. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 96.

intellectuals, be they Marxist or cultural pluralist were not, as some historians imply, simply sitting on their hands waiting to not respond to the Holocaust. They were engaged with the religious and intellectual problems of the day, and quite often, they were conflicting with one another.

However, we should be clear that in his dispute, Goldenson was not calling Kaplan a Nazi. However, in a radical break from radical Reform, Goldenson did seem to be locating Kaplan's "Civilization" in the same continuum as Kultur. In other words, while religion was necessarily moral, Culture -- considering the unfolding events in the citadel of civilization, Germany -- perhaps proved itself to be utterly amoral. Goldenson's talk suggested that a profound change had begun within some elements of Americanized, religious Jewry. Given that Goldenson, an exemplar of classical Reform Judaism which had initially viewed Western Modernity in quasi-messianic terms was now questioning the West and modern culture, his talk indicates that Holocaust had already inspired fundamental changes in American Jewish life.

Nevertheless, the SCA's issues of concern into the last years of the decade were understandably torn between combating secularism within the Jewish community, American antisemitism and Nazism abroad. On the one hand, each of these issues was deserving of separate attention. On the other hand, for Jews fighting for their physical and spiritual survival, each one of these crisis was inextricably connected. Thus, one Reform rabbi's warning to colleagues to be "on our guard against 'de-religionization' and 'de-Judaiziation,'" seems less a parochial and short-sighted cry for maintaining political turf, than a poignant and tragically ineffectual plea for Judaism and for preserving a moral center in a world becoming *judenrein* and descending into "total war."[211]

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211 1936 CCAR Yearbook, 51. Nonetheless, considering Western leaders such as Stimson and McCloy's apparently greater concern for architecture and art over human beings, Goldenson's comments also appear to be prophetic.

To a great extent, the agenda of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly of America mirrored that of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. At the 1933 RAA meeting, Conservative leaders lauded joint social action projects with the CCAR and hoped to further "unify" such efforts.[212] In the following year, then-president of the RAA, Rabbi Elias Margolis conceded that while "no one believes that uniformity of American Jewish opinion can be achieved by fiat or resolution....united action in spite of diversity of opinion is in the realm of possibility."[213] Renewing Schechter's call for a united, albeit coalition-based "Catholic Israel," Margolis' statement nonetheless recognized the reality of a denominationalized Judaism. But like the Reform rabbinate, Conservative leaders were also anxious to "restore the rabbinate to its erstwhile position of honor and respect in the laity," and were likewise willing to utilize the SCA towards combating secularism and uniting American Jews.[214]

Once again in 1936, then-president of the RAA, Rabbi Eugene Kohn also decried the "splitting up of 'catholic Israel'," into what he punned as a "number of protestant Jewish religious parties and groups."[215] But even while attacking the denominationalization of American Judaism, he also conceded fears that the "surrender of congregational autonomy," may in fact "jeopardize the Jewish values that we cherish...that unity may be effected at a cost of regimentation; an that, in making the lowest common denominator of Jewish interest the basis of inclusion in the Jewish community, we tend to reduce all Jewish interests to that lowest common denominator."[216] In other words, Conservative Jews of the thirties, although inspired in their mission of establishing "catholic Israel" were, like their Reform counterparts, unwilling to forgo denominational autonomy.

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212 1933 Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, 175.
213 1934 Proceedings of the RAA, 65.
214 Ibid.
215 1936 Proceedings of the RAA, 255,
216 Ibid. 255-56.

However, the 1937 RAA meeting was treated to an address and greetings from Julian Morganstern, a pillar of classical Reform and then the president of the Hebrew Union College. "I think we have very much in common," Morganstern told the assembled Conservative rabbis, "more perhaps than you realize."[217] Ending with a plea for unity, Morganstern, in the spirit of the times, spoke for a "common effort and a common achievement for the glory of God and of Israel and of the Torah."[218] And the following year, President of the RAA Simon Greenberg praised SCA action for religious Jewry's inclusion on community policy-making in the areas of "human rights." Citing the SCA's success in persuading the AJC, AJCON, B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee to consult with religious American Jews. Greenberg noted that no Jewish leadership "can be truly representative of the American Jewish community which does not include within it, representatives of the organized religious life of our people."[219] Moreover, using American constitutional language, Greenberg framed religious Jewish participation in communal affairs as a "check on the dangerous tendency to secularize Jewish life and to remove from the councils guiding Jewish destiny the voice of the only factor which gives meaning and content to the Jewish struggle for survival, the voice of the Jewish religion as expressed in its visible and organized aspect."[220] Like Morganstern the year before, Greenberg, the nominal leader of one American denomination nonetheless praised religious, American Jewry's trend toward "developing a greater homogeneity which should in the comparatively near future make possible a more unified and more comprehensive organization of our communities."[221]

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217 1937 Proceedings of the RAA, 355.
218 Ibid. 357.
219 1938 Proceedings of the RAA, 428-9.
220 Ibid. 429.
221 Ibid.

This was echoed in a special address to the RAA by Dr. Samuel M. Blumenfield. Dr. Blumenfield was a Reform rabbi, married and ordained by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise at the Jewish Institute of Religion before its merger with the Hebrew Union College. Fascinatingly enough, Blumenfield emerged from a traditionalist East-European background, was nurtured in the Haskalah and was quietly Kaplanian in outlook.[222] In his address, Blumenfield, himself a product of the denominationalization of Eastern-European Jews in America, nevertheless argued for the need to "avoid denominationalism" in regards to Jewish education. Blumenfield's talk stands as a superb metaphor for American Jewry's conflicted feelings over American Jewish denominationalism; Americanized Jews, although befitting socially, culturally and religiously from denominationalism, were, nonetheless, left feeling broken. Thus, although Conservative Jews retained their mission for realizing catholic Israel and viewed denominationalism as a problem, they, like their Reform colleagues, were unwilling to forgo the freedom gained from participating in a denominational system.

Like their Reform counterparts, Conservative Jews had temporarily resolved the conflict between denominational freedom and their mission of unity by utilizing federalism. Thus, in 1938 the RAA called upon their Reform and Orthodox counterparts to work through the SCA to bring an end to "Rabbinical Fakers."[223] The issue of concern was the apparent profusion of "free lance," "lodge," "funeral parlor rabbis" and "ordinary citizens," who were then serving in rabbinic capacities without formal training or ethical responsibilities incumbent upon formally ordained rabbis.[224] The RAA was deeply concerned about maintaining the integrity of the office of the rabbinate but was also probably attempting to protect the ritual turf of formally trained rabbis. Moreover, this report

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[222]As Blumenfield was the writer's maternal Grandfather, this biographical information is from personal, albeit, biased knowledge.
[223]1938 Proceedings of the RAA, 487-91.
[224]Ibid. 488.

noted that the unethical and criminal dealings of these "fakers" was soiling the reputation of the entire American rabbinate.

Thus, the RAA proposed that the SCA create a special commission to "disseminate information on the subject of ordained and unordained rabbis to local communities," publish the names of officially ordained rabbis and "maintain a complete up-to-date registry of pulpited and unpulpited rabbis," in order to "make the synagogue Jews conscious of the advisability of contacting the Synagogue Council directly....especially where the local synagogue has not been in communication with any of the Seminaries or their Placement Committees."[225] Moreover, this recommendation proposed that the "Synagogue Council pass upon their [candidates for rabbinic office] fitness and worthiness to be presented for recommendation into the membership of one of the national Rabbinic bodies."

This proposal was an extraordinary sign of Conservative acceptance of denominationalism and a recognition of the integrity of each seminary and rabbinic body. But even while accepting the legitimacy of each denomination, Conservatives nonetheless pursued the mission of catholic Israel in this instance by proposing that the SCA serve as national Beit Din for examining the fitness of all American rabbis. Speculation about what may have happened had the past been different is usually a frustrating exercise. Yet one might still wonder what American Judaism might have looked like had Jews not been necessarily focused upon the Shoah. Had this proposal been carried out, Americanized Jews might have succeeded in establishing a system in which the Americanized rabbinate would have retained its pluralistic nature while at the same time being religiously authoritative. And like some CCAR delegates to the Synagogue Council, Conservative rabbis proposed that the SCA

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[225] Ibid. 488-89.

apparatus also be localized.[226] But ironically, a year before the official beginnings of the Second World War, some Americanized Jewish religious leaders also felt somewhat confident about Jewish life. Using military imagery, a 1938 RAA declaration proclaimed that:

> American Israel has come of age at last. True it is now confronted with problems on a hundred fronts....Quite as important as our desperate struggle to ward off the blows of the anti-Semite who attacks us from without, is the imperative duty of eliminating the internal evils, particularly those within our religious and educational organisms, to the end that we may have both the healthy body and the clear mind with which to meet the enemy at the gates and repel him....Israel, whatever else it is or is considered to be, is a *religious community*. [their italics]....if we have any hope of finally silencing the monotonously recurrent plaint of "disharmony and

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226Ibid. 489-90. It seems that in this period there was some progress in localizing SCA activities. In Philadelphia, for example, and interdenominational group of rabbis, the "Philadelphia Board of Jewish Ministers," spoke out against "rabbinic fakers." Apparently, Americanized rabbis of each denomination in the Philadelphia community were so cooperative as to collectively proclaim that "[s]uch men [the fakers] are a liability to the morale of our Jewish community because they are not accountable to any of the recognize authorities and scholastic standards set for the Rabbinate," while congregations utilizing the fakers' services were in part "responsible for anarchy on our religious life." Ibid. 490. Likewise, and editorial in the Jewish Exponent went as far to argue that while the "names of the rabbis serving the Yiddish speaking, strictly orthodox element [ i.e., resistors] within the community are not among the signers [of the Philadelphia Board statement] these doubtless are in full accord with the intent of and spirit animating the membership of the Board of Jewish Ministers." Ibid. 491. Of course, two statements cannot express the total reality of this context. However, these declarations do off a taste of a religious, American Jewish community, divided by denomination but in concord over general religious standards. Likewise, other "mixed bodies," or rabbinical councils which included rabbis from each Americanized denomination were established throughout North America.

> disorganization", if we have any prospect of ultimately evoking in its stead a triumphant paean of enduring unity in our ranks on all fronts, we must first bring order out of chaos in our religious life...[227]

But at the same time, Bernard Revel sounded a more somber note. At the 1938 Yeshivah University commencement he stated that:

> ...mankind is once more at the crossroads....[y]ou my dear young friends, are beginning your active lives at a time of great upheaval, when the ghosts of the darkest ages are casting their shadows. Mankind, divided against itself--half free and half slave. Everywhere false prophets appear whose message of salvation, whose lure to the economically depressed and spiritually perplexed, is the enslavement of the free inquiring and aspiring human spirit. A new paganism has arisen to plague mankind, one of blood and race, of soil and state and the blind worship of brute force, repudiating human culture and idealism, denying mankind's solidarity and freedom and destroying the very foundations of humanity's cooperation and hope.... Scientific paganism, pseudo-scientific mechanistic interpretation of life....has for almost a century retarded spiritual life and progress....Be your approach to the tremendous problems this age has forced upon us that of the heart....or that of the intellect....[the] creative synthesis of the two that is Judaism, there must remain, as the corner-stone of your lives, an abiding of the dignity and the sanctity of the free inquiring spirit of man.[228]

What might be viewed as a defense of the finer aspects of the modern experience, Revel's talk was, nevertheless, a blunt assessment of the time, and an attack on the prevailing amoral ideologies of the period including economic determinism, Fascism and

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[227]Ibid. 490.

[228]Rothkoff, Revel, 297-301.

racism; all masked in scientific garb. Not cited here was Revel's continued defense of liberal Americanism. But what is no doubt evident from these excerpts is Revel's ongoing faith in a Judaism cognizant of and drawing from modernity. Unlike some other religious leaders, Revel had earlier warned of the coming-catastrophe which would culminate in the Holocaust.

At the re-formed Yeshivah University's first commencement in 1932, Revel charged graduate with spreading Judaism's mission of light to the "bewildered and despairing" people of the time.[229] And in the following year, Revel proclaimed that never "has mankind been in greater need of....its vital values, spiritual certainties, and moral verities, in its ultimate destiny. We are coming to recognize that the root of mankind's tragedy is moral."[230] "[B]lind darkness, rooted in the repudiation of civilization, the denial of human freedom and fellowship, in fanatic and militant nationalism" Revel warned in 1937 would result in the "destruction of the cherished values of mankind, of the very foundations of human cooperation and hope," unless confronted by the ancient Jewish vision of "sacrifice and aspiration toward God...the essential unity of mankind [and]...in the sacredness of the human personality," could halt the expanding destruction.[231]

Yet even stretching back to World War One, Revel had critiqued modernity. Shortly after the 1919 armistice Revel explained that he and his contemporaries had seen "for the last five years, the destruction of almost all of our great sanctuaries of Torah and Jewish learning in Europe and Palestine. *Civilized barbarism*, [my italics] run amuck, has wiped out the great centers of Torah and homes of the Jewish spirit, which had taken Judaism centuries to build."[232] As partisan Americanizers, like Samuel Goldenson would argue more

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[229]Ibid. 280
[230]Ibid. 281.
[231]Ibid. 293.
[232]Ibid. 52.

than a decade later, civilization and barbarism could apparently coexist. But Revel died in 1940, and as Rothkoff argues, an entire era had indeed "ended with his death....The historic European Jewish community which nurtured Bernard Revel was now ended. Its Torah centers, rabbis, and scholars were soon to be decimated by Nazi hordes. American Jewry was to face a host of complex problems and responsibilities in the postwar era."[233] Revel's death had removed on of the unique figures of American Jewish history from Jewish life; an Orthodox Traditionalist fluent in the modern world and able to bridge the worlds of accommodation and resistance. Few others with Revel's skills or credibility would emerge following his death. However, equally true, "American Orthodoxy, in particular,, was to undergo rapid challenge and change, rejuvenation and revitalization, at the conclusion of the global conflict."[234] Paradoxically, after the centers of Orthodoxy in Europe was decimated in he Shoah Orthodoxy experienced revival in the *trefa medinah*. In large part the answer lies with American Orthodox resisters, and more significantly, with traditionalists, who having escaped from Europe became leaders of American Orthodoxy and radically transformed the religious and cultural landscape both of American Judaism and American Jewish culture.

We would recall that some elements of American Jewry responded to the Holocaust far differently from either the secular or religious American Jewish mainstream. In the secular, or more specifically Zionist community, the Bergonsites played the maverick role. But among religious American Jews, it was Orthodox resisters, especially the Agudat Yisrael and its rescue agency the Vaad Hahatzala (VH), which took a radical approach to the Holocaust.

Despite its status as the chief party of resistance in America, the Agudah and its rabbinical organization the Agudat Harabbanim, had, in spite of all previous history, did at times join both with

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[233] Ibid. 223.
[234] Ibid.

secular and Americanized, Jewish religious groups, in trying to establish a unified Jewish response to the Shoah.[235] We would also recall that by the mid thirties the AH was no longer a constituent of the SCA and was apparently fighting a losing battle with the accommodationists for the heart and soul of American Orthodoxy. As such, the Agudat Harabbanim was neither interested in any Reform rabbi's federalist schemes, nor take seriously the Conservative notion of catholic Israel. But most importantly, unlike their Reform, Conservative or many of their Americanized Orthodox counterparts, this group of resisters was willing and actually did break American laws to save Jews

In one notable instance, the VH agreed to pay a ransom for hundred of thousands of Hungarian Jews for tractors.[236] The WRB learned of this plan, and despite misgivings about ransoming and breaking American and Allied laws on trafficking with the enemy, nevertheless agreed to look the other way.[237] We should note that the JDC and other elements of the mainline, American Jewish community helped to finance the purchasing of the tractors.[238] However, these were unique exceptions to the organized American Jewish community's agreed upon rules of engagement during the Holocaust.[239] Indeed, the Vaad's admitted to a "Stop-at-Nothing"

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[235] See, for example, Wyman, Abandonment, 93-4.

[236] Ibid. See discussion 247-254.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Of course, we would reiterate that many other mainline Jewish organizations had rescued some Jews during the Holocaust, but did so within the legal and constraining framework mandated by the US government. HUC, for example, was able to rescue some German rabbis and scholars. Also, in some cases, private, Jewish individuals lobbied their congressmen to intercede with the State Department, and with some success rescued friends and relatives. For example, then-Senator Harry S Truman took such action on behalf of several constituents, and succeeded in saving the lives of some refugees.

policy -- including illegal acts -- for the sake of rescuing Jews.[240] Like others in the Jewish community, they pleaded for Allied military actions against the Nazis genocide infrastructure.[241] However, unlike, almost all other elements of American Jewry, the resistors, and those who they rescued, especially the Hungarians, had very few conflicts with the modern world; they saw modernity and all that flowed from it as fundamentally evil.

In response to American entry into the war, the SCA continued to combat home-grown antisemitism, and contribute to America's general war effort. For instance, the Synagogue Council convinced the War Production Board to consider particular Jewish observances, and if necessary, grant time off to Jews working in the defense industry.[242] Likewise, as team players in the general war effort, the SCA worked to attend the religious needs both of soldiers and the Jews of liberated countries and worked to provide kosher food, chaplains, and also broadcasted radio addresses during the holidays for Jewish servicemen and displaced Jews.[243] On other occasions, especially after release of the Riegner memo, SCA leaders, along with other national Jewish organizations, instructed their constituents to engage in nation-wide days of mourning, fasting and prayer.[244]

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[240]Ibid. 251. For more on VH activities see Rothkoff's The Silver Era in American Jewish Orthodoxy: Rabbi Eliezer Silver and his Generation. (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1981).

[241]See, for instance, Wyman, Abandonment, 290-7.

[242]See Conservative Rabbi Israel Goldstein's My World as a Jew: The Memoir of Israel Goldstein, vol. 1. (New York: Herzl Press, 1984), 104. Goldstein served as SCA president from 1942-1944. When a British Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church asked Goldstein what it meant to be president of the SCA he joked that he was a "sort of Jewish archbishop with a tenure limited to two years." Ibid. 137. Given that humor always contains some measure of truth, it is interesting to note the level of importance Goldstein placed in his presidency of the Synagogue Council.

[243]Ibid. 104-11.

[244]Ibid. See also Wyman, Abandonment, 25, 93.

Likewise, the SCA, without a great deal of success, sought help from its Christian counterparts.[245]

Playing by the rules, as we have seen, reaped limited results in terms of actual rescue. As then SCA president, Israel Goldstein characterized 1942's "Bermuda Conference" on refugees, the role of the conference "apparently was not to rescue victims of Nazi terror, but to rescue our State Department and the British Foreign Office" from the responsibility of taking genuine and substantial action on behalf of the Jews.[246] Likewise, Goldstein did not pull punches in regards to the SCA's Christian counterparts baffling lethargy about the Shoah. "How can an organization whose program is brotherhood," he asked Dr. Everett R. Clinchy, a Presbyterian minister and president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, " exclude from its sphere of concern...the dying gasp of European Jewry?"[247] This question could not really be answered. Yet after war and Holocaust, the SCA would also seem to be confronted with a revival.

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[245]Goldstein, Memoirs, 104--11. For more on SCA activities from 1941 to 1945 see CCAR Yearbooks and RAA Proceedings.
[246]Wyman, Abandonment, 122.
[247]Ibid. 101.

## Chapter Three: Religious Revival or Revival of Religion?

"[T]here is every sign," Will Herberg wrote in 1955, "of a notable 'turn to religion' among the American people today."[248] Or, so is seemed, judging by increased affiliation across the American religious spectrum, a building-boom for houses of worship and the increased use of religious language in the national political culture. "I don't care whether you're Baptists, whether you be Jews, whether you be Catholics or Protestants or whatever," lapsed secularist President "Ike" Eisenhower exhorted, "[t]here must be a feeling that man is made in the image of his Maker."[249]

Fusing post-War Americanism with the traditionally universalistic attitude of American religious denominationalism, Ike told the American people that "[w]hatever our individual church, whatever our personal creed, in our fundamental belief we are all one. Together we thank the Power that has made and preserved the nation."[250] But was he describing religious fervor, or was Eisenhower simply co-opting religion for political purposes? Whatever the case, in a country mandating separation of church and state, the borders between secular American culture and American religion had become quite blurry.

Indeed, as Herberg understood the cultural context of the early Cold-War years, "[e]very aspect of contemporary religious life reflects this paradox -- pervasive secularism amid mounting

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248 Will Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology. (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 1.

249 Quoted from New York Times, 12/23/52. Eisenhower actually expressed concern over his secular background to Billy Graham while campaigning for the presidency: "I don't believe the American people are going to follow anybody who's not a member of a church." Quoted from Stephen J. Whitfield, The Culture of the Cold War. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 88.

250 New York Times, 2/8/54.

religiosity, 'the strengthening of the religious structure in spite of increasing secularization."[251] Moreover, it seemed to him that "Americans think, feel, and act in terms quite obviously secularist at the very time that they exhibit every sign of a widespread religious revival," but a revival that is actually a type of, "secularism of a religious people," or "religiousness in a secularist framework..."[252] It is next to impossible to determine whether American secularism stems from a religious base or American religion is based upon a secular culture: "American religion and American society would seem to be so closely interrelated as to make it virtually impossible to understand either without reference to the other."[253]

What is clear, however is that during the early post-War years one component of American secular culture, Consumerism, experienced a renaissance. "After nearly two decades of depression and war the much unsatisfied need for things could be supplied."[254] Americans, now locked in a Cold War, nevertheless had the where with all to channel their new-found buying power into a new exo-skeleton of religion. Indeed, "basic for the United States which alone among the Western nations would experience a resurgence of religion during these years, was the dawn of an 'age of affluence."[255] Reflecting the ties between affluence and religion, post-War suburban culture maintained that the "American thing to do," although not necessarily the pious thing, was to be "religious," which at the minimal level meant denominational affiliation. In the early Atomic era, to be a good citizen was to be "religious," or to affiliate. "Being a church member and speaking favorably of religion," Ahlstrom explains, "became a means of affirming the 'American away of life."[256] Perhaps Martin E. Marty, a preeminent historian of

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[251] Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew, 2.
[252] Ibid. 3.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ahlstrom, A Religious History, 950.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid. 951.

American religion is more on the mark when he classifies religious America as a "nation of behavers."[257] But this does not mitigate the Siamese relationship between God and Culture in America.

In these years when Billy Graham preached that the US was "created for a spiritual mission among the nations,"[258] he was drawing upon older traditions but readapting them to new realities of the secular world. The Jewish Biblical doctrine of chosenness was utilized by Christian Americans as early the era of the Pilgrims. But still later, American Christians viewed Christian chosenness as a the mission to convert "primitive" peoples. Graham, in part, based American chosenness upon America's preeminent economic and military power; America was chosen for possession and mastery over nuclear weapons. It was thus America's mission to convert the new primitives -- be they non-aligned or "wavering" non-Communist states -- and, most of all, to fight the new antichrist based in Moscow.[259] Alternatively, Graham's choice of American chosenness stemmed for the fact that America was a Christian country, while Communists, especially the Russians, were godless. Was this religion being used for secular purposes or was it the other way around? "America must move forward with the atomic bomb in one hand," Representative Edward Martin exclaimed in 1950, "and the cross in the other."[260] Although American Jews eschewed crosses and, unlike their neighbors concerned themselves with the welfare of the new state of Israel, Judaism, and religious doctrines had not disappeared but, rather, were suburbanized.

Evidence for the authenticity of the 1950's American religious revival is usually based upon increased affiliation with houses of worship alongside surveys indicating that the majority of Americans

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257See discussion of Marty's work in introduction to this study.
258Whitfield, Culture, 82.
259Ibid. 77-82.
260Ibid. 87.

possessed religious faith and believed in God.[261] Also significant was the profusion of tracts exhorting a 1950's-specific popular American religion, one of the most prominent being Norman Vincent Peale's The Power of Positive Thinking.[262] Much of the historiography of this period argues that the religious revival of the fifties was simply an outer shell for various aspects of secular culture. For example, in his excellent book on Cold War culture, Stephen Whitfield writes that what was "revived was not so much religious belief as belief in the *value* of religion."[263] In other words, American religion was simply one hermeneutic used to accomplish non-transcendent aims. "The benefits of devotion were not seen as mystical and metaphysical, nor existential, and less psychological or ethical than political and social....The theology of the fifties was based far less on, say, Aquinas's proofs for the existence of God than on the conviction that religion was virtually synonymous with American nationalism."[264]

Whitfield is undoubtedly correct in locating some aspects of the fifties revival in Cold War Americanism; it wasn't the first or the last time in American or world history that religion had been used to further patriotic aims. However, American religion and religious belief -- primarily Americanized Protestantism -- had rarely, if ever, been based, let alone concerned with Saint Thomas Aquinas' proofs. For many Americans, especially new suburbanites, religious affiliation with a mainline American denomination, whether Jewish or Christian, was intertwined with good citizenship.

But regardless of what people say to sociologists or to pollsters, we cannot deny that social alienation and existential despair rose as Americans encountered the new post-War culture: suburbanization, affluence and heightened "social" standing were insufficient in off themselves to provide a meaningful life. And we should recall the

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261 Whitfield, Culture, 83.
262 Ibid. 84.
263 Ibid. 86.
264 **Ibid.**

slaughter and destruction which war had wreaked upon the world. America's physical infrastructure was intact after the War, but the nation as a whole had changed. Only a few years separated placid suburbs from the carnage at Iwo Jima. And only a decade, perhaps, separated nuclear destruction in Japan from mass consumption of television. And not many years passed between Jews being burned in their ancient synagogues in Europe and the building of modernistic synagogues in American suburbia. A period that is typified by Alan Ginsburg *and* John Foster Dulles cannot be described in simple terms.

That American religion and nationalism were inextricably tied together in the fifties cannot be disputed. However, in some quarters a genuine and anti-modern religious revival was blossoming on the fringes of American society. Likewise, inside the loop of American religion, clergy and theologians, even in the midst of new wealth, confronted new existential challenges and fundamental questions on the nature of humanity. After all, humanity now possessed the power to unleash incomprehensibly destructive nuclear weapons. And, during the Second World War, the human capacity to commit unspeakable evil against others had been confirmed. What, asked some modern religionists, does it now mean to be created in the image of the Divine?

But even at the surface level of society, vast socio-economic changes swept over the United States. Suburbs expanded at a far greater rate than established cities. Further, geographical mobility, spurred on by new industries and business, resulted in the dispersion of long-established urban social and economic networks. All of these inter-connected factors left Americans with a new set of anxieties. In turn, America's religious institutions were suddenly "confronted with vast new responsibilities for 'home missions.'"[265] As Ahlstrom writes:

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[265]Ahlstrom, A Religious History, 951.

> In a rapidly changing intellectual and spiritual environment, there also arose an urgent need for the consolations of religion that was quite independent of prudential considerations. Grave international uncertainties became more oppressive in the dawning age of nuclear fission. New scientific views forced adjustments of older conceptions of the natural world. A profoundly altered social system brought changes in moral values that robbed old habitudes of their comfort....Against this background of rapid change American religious communities of nearly every type (Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish; churches, sects, and cults) were favored during the postwar decade and a half by an increase of commitment and a remarkable popular desire for institutional participation.[266]

Postwar American Jews confronted many of the same issues as other Americans; extensive socio-economic change, suburbanization, and the "dawning of the age of nuclear fission." "Problems of adjustment and anxieties over status and "acceptance" were issues universally experienced, regardless of denomination, and as such, synagogues, like churches were "the sort of family institution that the social situation required."[267] American Jews could feel an anxious sense of accomplishment over their social and economic rise in America. Unlike their neighbors, however, American Jews faced both a sense of triumph after the birth of Israel even while containing the sense of horror, usually unspoken, over their own brush with genocide just years earlier.

For example, Salo Baron notes a sense of "despair" in the postwar years, based upon the sense that "rational and humanistic solutions" to the world's problems had failed.[268] "[K]een disappointment," he writes, "with the millennial promises held out either by nineteenth-century liberals or by twentieth-century

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[266]Ibid. 952.
[267]Ibid. 951.
[268]Salo W. Baron, Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1971), 418.

Communism, Fascism, or Nazism," left Western-oriented modernists bereft of hope or intellectual and spiritual grounding.[269] "[O]bviously, religion was not altogether the 'private affair of the individual' which many liberals and Socialists had long thought it to be."[270]

At the very least, the "overwhelming majority of Jews of East European background ascended to white-collar status by the 1950s and early 1960s," writes Sachar, and American Jewish "upward mobility far surpass[ed] that of any other immigrant group....as early as 1953 they were exceeded in earning power only by Episcopalian and Presbyterian Old Americans."[271]

Like the church, the American Synagogue absorbed and reflected the massive postwar changes in American life. Two more clear expressions of the revived Synagogue was the quickened pace of new synagogue building and the vast numbers of Jews formally affiliating with the mainline Americanized denominations.[272] Nonetheless, for Jewish clergy questions remained over the tenor and quality of American Judaism, and they also questioned whether the religious revival was authentic.

Rabbis in the Synagogue Council saw this moment in American Jewish history as the ideal time to accelerate their program They hoped to gain preeminence over their secular counterparts in community affairs, fortify the federalistic system of unity, and reinvigorate American Jewish religious life. As always, however, the Synagogue Council of America's self-defined sphere of influence and sense of unity was, in part, purposely ill-defined. An SCA "Fact Sheet" from the 1950's states that:

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[269] Ibid. 418-19.
[270] Ibid. 419.
[271] Sachar, A History of Jews, 647.
[272] Ibid. 680-83.

> The major purpose of the Synagogue Council is the carrying out of a program for strengthening of Jewish religious life in America by promoting a coordinated effort among the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements without imposing on the religious practices of any group; by fostering the spiritual influence of the Synagogue; by encouraging Synagogue affiliation and attendance....among other religious services....[the SCA is the] major instrumentality through which American Jewry can be heard on a parallel basis with the Protestant and Catholic groups...[273]

Thus, into the 1950's the SCA, at least on the rhetorical level, presented itself as a religious organization, operating on a similar basis as umbrella organizations in the Christian world. Nonetheless, considering the divergent ideological paths of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism, the leadership of these streams could not have actually viewed the SCA as an organization vested with a religious authority above and beyond the individual constituents themselves. Further, the SCA agenda engaged in efforts parallel to those of secular Jewish agencies, such as civil rights advocacy, military disarmament, support of the girl and boy scouts, and engagement in Church/State issues.[274] Still, the SCA could feasibly claim the mantle of a unitary Jewish religious voice. For example, the Synagogue Council lobbied Congress on legislation touching on *shechitah*. In addition, it participated alongside Christian, trans-denominational organizations (including the National Council of Churches) in such ventures as "National Family Week."[275]

At the same time, the postwar period is characterized by Sachar as time of secular "Jewish Federalism in the Ascendant."[276] Perhaps benefiting the most from postwar Jewish growth was the

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[273]Fact Sheet on the Synagogue Council of America, 1955-1959. Waltham, MA. American Jewish Historical Society, SCA Papers, 1935-1972.

[274]Highlights of Recent SCA Activities, 1955-1957, SCA Papers.

[275]Ibid.

[276]Sachar, A History of the Jewish People, 672-80.

Jewish Federation movement, which grew enormously in the fifties. Jewish philanthropy, an almost universal American Jewish Civil religious practice was in large part directed and centralized under Federation direction. But, in the early fifties, the Federation leaders became concerned with the intrinsic "inefficiency" of the American Jewish organizational world, and was particularly disturbed by the overlap of interests and activities among secular organizations such as the AJC, B'nai B'rith and AJCON. Like the religious organizations, the secular Jewish organizational world had reaped benefits but also suffered on account of voluntaryism.

As we have seen, the secular organizations competed for membership although in some cases their differences in program or ideology were minimal. The Federations hoped to maximize community philanthropy and sought to remedy the situation.[277]

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[277]For a good presentation of the classic Federation worldview see Daniel J. Elazar, "The Federation Movement in Three Contexts: American Jewry, the Jewish Political Tradition, and Modernity," in Jewish Political Studies Review, Vol. 7:3-4, Fall 1995. For instance, Elazar writes that "while the particular demands place upon Jewish life by the American environment have caused American Jews to adopt the protective coloring of religion as a point of departure as a community, it is in fact as a body politic that American Jewry has *functioned best* [ my italics]. It is no accident that 'philanthropy' -- the pseudonym used for this kind of political existence -- is a greater point of Jewish identification than worship, despite various religious 'revivals' in American Jewish history." Ibid. 11. According to this weltanschauung, Jews are a "polity" and not a religious people. It is unclear why Elazar reduces American Judaism to a matter of "protective coloring" since Jews have been religious, wherever they have lived even while adapting to other cultures. Viewing every component of Jewish identity either in cultural terms, or in regards to political organization, Elazar's sense of Judaism is one evacuated of any sense of the transcendent, not to mention Jewish cultural or religious history. Additionally, Elazar also uses the language of efficiency, which he traces to American technocratic Progressives of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, but which we also understand as a concept which emerged from American business and industry ethics in the same period. See Elazar's "The Federations

Moreover, American Jews remembered how the secular Jewish organizations were unable to unite during the Holocaust. In response, a study was commissioned by communal leaders, which, named after the author, was called the MacIver Report. Unsurprisingly, MacIver offered a federalistic solution for streamlining the balkanized Jewish communal world in which different agencies were to forfeit their autonomy for the sake of the united whole. In a system akin to the checks and balances of the federal government, each agency was concentrate on a single area of concern. Not only would this plan eliminate the inter-organizational overlap in many areas of Jewish life, but likewise, MacIver's report attempted to bond "efficiency" a non-Jewish, American business concept-- with a united communal structure.

The plan was ultimately rejected since some of the secular organizations, like their religious counterparts, were unwilling to for go total autonomy in Jewish affairs. This episode is interesting in that it demonstrates that the secular community was facing the same tension between autonomy and unity as their religious counterparts. But unlike the Americanized denominations, they could not agree on the Federal solution.[278]

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Step Forward," in same collection, p.17. And, for a good example of one type of secularist triumphalism see his "A Noncentralized Religioethnic Community," in which he frames the Federation as a democratic response to the "oligarchy" of both the AJC and "congregations and countrywide institutions of Reform Judaism." In terms of early-twentieth century history, one might strongly argue that the AJC and the Reform leadership operated in an oligarchic fashion, although one wonders what made Reform synagogues more oligarchical than others. Nevertheless, another aspect of the classic Federation philosophy is to portray the Federation as Democratic, and religious structures as oligarchical, particularly in regards to rabbinical leadership. Nonetheless, we would frame the Federation system as a synthesis between oligarchy, in terms of actual decision-making, and as plutocratic, because of the direct connections between money and power within this system. Ibid. 45-6.

[278]MacIver's program actually included some religious participation with the inclusion of the UAHC. For more on the MacIver Report see

In a sense, the mainline Jewish denominations in America could boast of some success in establishing a degree of unity. During the 1954 tercentenary of Jews in America, the intellectual leader of accommodating Orthodoxy, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik devised a system for dealing with non-Orthodox Jews. The RCA, always under pressure from resistors not to recognize -- and thus legitimize -- non-Orthodox Judaism, were vexed by the issue of inter-communal cooperation since both the secular organizations and the mainline denominations were participating in the tercentenary celebration.[279]

As the halakhic arbiter of centrist Orthodoxy, including accommodaters and some resistors, Soloveitchik, was the best

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above, and Marc Lee Raphael, ed., Jewish and Judaism in the United States: A Documentary History. (New York: Behrman House, 1983), 163-83. In 1956, secular and religious Jewish organizations did organize one structure which was ostensibly an expression of a united American Jewish community, namely the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. As the name implies, this system of unification is oligarchical rather than federal in nature. Led by an executive director and a rotating president of presidents, the President's Conference is also limited to what the present membership considers as "major organizations." Borne of the crisis in American-Israeli relations during the Sinai War, its mission was "exclusively to find appropriate ways of defending Israel's cause." (Sachar, A History of the Jewish People, 726-27). However, it should be noted that the suggestion for creating the Conference emerged from external sources rather than from within American Jewry. That is, the Conference was created in response to suggestions from the Eisenhower administration who wanted to hear a single Jewish voice on Israel. Insofar as the Presidents Conference stemmed from external factors as much as internal concerns, such as unifying American Judaism, the Conference, like the Jewish Welfare Board for Jews serving in the US military falls outside of our analysis.

[279]For an excellent overview of this period and a discussion of the tercentenary celebrations, see Arthur A. Goren, "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews: 1945-1955," in Medding, ed., A New Jewry, 3-20.

"prepared to assist the setting of authoritative parameters."[280] Ultimately, he struck the balance between the centrist resisters who sought Orthodox unity, and the accommodationists, who believed that it was critical to work with non-Orthodox leaders in the SCA and other such organizations. Defining the boundaries of such contact , Soloveitchik wrote in 1954 that:

> When representations of Jews and Jewish interest klapei chutz (vis-a-vis the non-Jewish world) are involved all groups and movements must be united. There can be no divisiveness in this area for any division in the Jewish camp can endanger its entirety....when the unity must be manifested in a spiritual-ideological meaning as a Torah community, it seems to me that Orthodoxy can and should not join with such groups that deny the foundations of our Weltanschauung.[281]

In other words, in terms of "external" issues, American Jews were obligated to cooperate with one another, but in regards to internal issues, such as religious practice, theology and religious authority, there could be no cooperation. Yet in addition to Soloveitchik's superior scholarship his position may also have reflected what had become a more solid reservoir of goodwill between Americanized Orthodox rabbis and Reform and Conservative leadership.

For example, in 1951, the SCA celebrated its 25th anniversary, with many of the key actors of the Feldman installation controversy in attendance. In the introduction to a commemorative booklet, then-President elect (and RCA-affiliated rabbi) Simon G. Kramer wrote:

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[280]See Louis Bernstein, Challenge and Mission: The Emergence of the English Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate. (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1981), 34-5, and Gurock "Resistors and Accommodaters," 55-6.

[281]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 59.

> After a quarter of a century of quietly effective work.... The twenty-five years of the existence of the Synagogue Council is eloquent testimony to the possibility of unity within the Jewish community despite divergence of opinion and practice. It remained for the Synagogue, as the oldest and most honorable institution in Jewish life, to lead the way in bringing about what has always been greatly desired and only infrequently achieved--namely, harmony and cooperation in community effort, unity in diversity.[282]

As a positive and hopeful note of unity, Kramer still acknowledged the "diversity" or plural nature of the religious American Jewish community. Kramer also averred that the mere existence of the SCA had "far reaching implications for a spiritually stronger basis of the Jewish community living in the United States"[283] Alarmed, lest Orthodoxy recognize Reform and Conservative heterodoxy, those resistant to cooperation under the auspices of umbrella organizations could point to Kramer's implication that the SCA was a supra-religious body. Moreover, the forces of resistance within centrist Orthodoxy would also dispute Kramer's tacit acceptance of pluralism within American Judaism. Another issue raised by Kramer's statement, was whether the SCA's role was predicated merely on representing religious American Jews to the external world, or if the SCA was an instrument for enhancing American Jewish "spirituality"? For many within the RCA and UOJCA, spiritual unity, not to mention cooperation with non-Orthodox Jews, was an intolerable concept. Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman's installation four years later would force a confrontation over this issue.

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282 The American Synagogue: Proceedings of the 25th Anniversary and Installation of Officers of the Synagogue Council of America, December 12, 1951. SCA Papers, 3. Kramer later represented the RCA at the tercentenary celebration. See also Bernstein's discussion, Challenge and Mission, 54-6.

283 Proceedings of the 25th Anniversary, 3.

Others attending the 25th anniversary celebration also sang platitudes to unity, although their own interpretations of the extent of unity were attached to the praise. Albert Wald, past president of the SCA and UOJCA delegate, relied upon a typical argument employed by orthodox "accommodationists"[284]: Orthodox participation in the SCA will pull Reform and Conservative Jews closer to Orthodoxy. Wald's "example of unity in action," was the Reform and Conservative delegate's support of Kashrut at public functions.[285] Conversely, the outgoing president and Reform Rabbi, Dr. Bernard J Bamberger, emphasized the SCA's dealings with the external world, alongside the notion that the SCA was the representative of American Jewry, and that the SCA "represents Jews religiously, which represents all the groups in American Jewry, Orthodox, Reform, Conservative - on a basis of equal dignity and representation..."[286]

Conservative attendees of the celebration were also careful to stress their self-perceived role as centrists and as the bridge between Reform and Conservative Judaism. Rabbi Max Davidson, then president of the RAA stated that the RAA "has never placed obstacles in the way of the development of an over-all Synagogue organization. It has fought the arrogant fiction that any one of the groups....may give to itself the title of sole spokesman for American Judaism....The conception of K'lal Yisrael is intrinsic to Conservative Judaism.[287]

Reform, Conservative and centrist Orthodox leaders all felt strongly about an amorphous concept of unity, but some intimated more strongly than others, an actual desire for religious unity. Still,

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[284]Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodaters," 10-69/

[285]Proceedings of the 25th Anniversary, 23.

[286]Ibid. 9-10.

[287]Ibid. 18. For further discussion on Conservative Judaism in this period, see Jack Wertheimer's essay, "The Conservative Synagogue" in Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue, 123-32.

it is equally clear that none of these leaders were willing to create a unified American Judaism at the expense of religious pluralism. Ultimately, confusion remained over the extent and boundaries of the SCA's religious activities.

Reform, Conservative and Orthodox leaders all believed in some variation of Jewish unity, but some intimated more than others, an actual desire for religious. Still, it is equally clear that non of these leaders were willing to create a unified American Judaism at the expense of religious pluralism. Ultimately, confusion remained over the extent and boundaries of the SCA's religious activities.

Yet the need for greater self-definition alongside the drive toward unity was felt within each movement. The tension between ideological and theological integrity and the ideal of K'lal Yisrael (or the unity of Israel) was a far greater concern for the Reform Rabbinate after the Holocaust, and despite opposition a generation earlier, broad-based support for the State of Israel.. Benefiting from the migration of Jews to suburbia the Reform movement absorbed many of the newly-affiliated American Jews.[288] In the 1950's, an increasing number of Reform Rabbis worked to create a newly defined theological framework for religious practice. This led to the publishing of a series of "Guide Books" explicating religious practices for Reform Jews.[289] One such manual was written by Feldman himself in 1953, entitled A Guide For Reform Jews: Reform Judaism.[290] Based in part on the Reform Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) 1937 Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism, (known as the "Columbus Platform"), Feldman's guide book was also designed to distinguish Reform from Orthodox Judaism.[291] It is

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[288]Meyer, Response, 353-54.

[289]Ibid. 376.

[290]Abraham J. Feldman, Reform Judaism: A Guide for Reform Jews. (Hartford CT: Temple Beth Israel, 1953).

[291]Ibid. 5-6. In the section titled "Tallis" Feldman writes that it is "not customary in Reform Synagogues to wear the TALLIS or prayer shawl. The Tallis is an oriental garb coming from a time when people

interesting to note that Feldman, a forceful advocate for Reform Judaism actually came from an Orthodox background, studying traditional Jewish learning as a boy in Czarist Russia.[292]

But while Feldman may have maintained a more "Classical" position, the dichotomy between ideological integrity and the hope of greater religious unity can be documented early in the 1950's. At the June 1951 convention of the CCAR, Conservative and Reform rabbis discussed but ultimately dismissed a proposed merger between Reform and Conservative Judaism because of ongoing ideological differences. One prominent Conservative Rabbi attending the conference referred to the plural nature of American Judaism as a "healthy system" made up of "checks and balances,"[293] while a Reform Rabbi expressed his fear that an imposed system of unity, and a merger between the Reform and Conservative movements would result in the unfortunate loss of "the present flexible arrangement of religion [sic] pluralism."[294] Nonetheless, by the conclusion of the 1951 CCAR convention, the two parties had agreed to establish a "joint consultative committee to work out further areas for combined activity."[295] One year later then-President of the CCAR

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going to formal functions would wear this outer garment. It served the same function as did in New England communities the 'Sunday-go-to-meetin'; clothes.' When our people were exiled form Judea to Western lands, and the outer cloak was no longer the form of garb worn on formal occasions, there was no reason for perpetuating it in the form of a prayer shawl. Hence, Reform discontinued the use of the Tallis, even as in Orthodox and Conservative Synagogues the Tallis has shrunk to proportion of a mere scarf."

[292]Lawrence P. Karol, "Rabbinic Leadership in the Reform Movement as Reflected in the life and Writings of Rabbi Abraham Jehiel Feldman" (rabbinic thesis, American Jews Archives, HUC-JIR. Cincinnati, OH, 1981), 22.

[293]New York Times, 6/22/1951. It is interesting to note that his rhetoric is based upon American constitutional language rather than traditional Jewish terminology.

[294]Ibid.

[295]Ibid. 6/25/1951.

Joseph L. Fink stated that he "welcomed the increasing manifestations of unity and cooperation on matters of mutual interest among Reform, Orthodox and Conservative Rabbis."[296] Still, despite the expressed interest within the leadership of the Reform Rabbinate for greater unity, the practical consideration of ideological autonomy transcended the ideal of unity.

At least by 1954, other faultlines appeared within the Reform Rabbinate's quest for greater unity. Reform Rabbis perceived themselves as a beleaguered center, beset by attacks from extremism on either side. The competition between Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism had spread beyond the confines of American suburbia. The 1954 CCAR proceedings contain protests against the unequal footing between Orthodox and Reform Judaism in the new state of Israel. Fink criticized Orthodox Jews of an "extreme character" who sought to prevent religious access for non-Orthodox Jews in the Holyland.[297] But on the other side, Fink attacked the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism (ACFJ), accusing the organization of throwing "bricks at the fragile structure of Israel's house..." He took the view that "The promoters of this new line of thinking may come uninvited into a community, and foment strong antagonisms. Without creating a new congregation, they [the ACFJ] split the existing Reform Jewish congregation by a new rival religious school."[298] While Fink, looking to one side, was protesting the refusal of the Orthodox Rabbinate to accept Reform movement's presence in Israel, looking to the other side, he leveled a mainline Reform attack against the ACFJ as a dangerous heterodox movement.

Yet other participants at the CCAR convention of 1954 sounded a less certain note on the efficacy of Reform Judaism as the exclusive ideological force within American Judaism. Addressing the questions

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296 Ibid. 6/16/1952.
297 1954 CCAR Yearbook, 9.
298 Ibid. 11.

surrounding the future of Reform Judaism, Rabbi James G. Heller, another prominent Reform Rabbi stated:

> by correlating ourselves with our time and also our desire to remain close to K'lal Yisra'el, by endless concern over the balancing of authority and freedom: only thus can we justify our claims to be the exponents of a living marching Judaism.[299]

Surveying the changes and new ideological conceptions within Reform Judaism, Heller remarked that alongside the "conviction that Reform had gone too far in the direction of rationalism," there was a desire to affect the "strengthening of bonds between Reform Judaism and K'lal Yisra'el." Additionally, while Heller felt that Orthodoxy was still excessively "weighted down," by tradition, he stated that :

> It is still my conviction that we ought to try to move closer to the Conservative wing of Judaism in the United States. The time is not yet ripe for a merger....For a long time leaders of both groups have agreed that we are not very far apart in our points of view, and that many opportunities for mutual conference and joint labor already exists. Both of us are seeking to strengthen our cause, and we can do this better together than apart in a host of ways....We can and should present an example of our mutual ability to put aside minor differences for the sake of major agreements and major common interests. I cannot here pause to enumerate the specific directions in which such cooperation should be initiated, but they should not be at all difficult to discern or to indicate.[300]

But, in the mid-1950's the CCAR remained conflicted in its quest for unity and its own ideological and theological self-preservation. At the 1954 convention Feldman, in his lecture "America and the Jew" sounded a triumphant note:

> I am convinced that our American Reform Judaism

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[299]Ibid. 167.
[300]Ibid. 167-72.

> which, despite some of its youthful sins of omission and commission had, nevertheless developed a rational and defensible position vis-a-vis traditional Judaism, this Judaism will serve and be strengthened on its destined mission to be truly American Judaism only as it continues to be positive and identifiable. It is my considered judgment that Reform Judaism must not become so "liberal".... that no one knows what it stands for or where it stands.[301]

Although Feldman did feel the need to further define the Reform theology of his day, he was still bound to the "Classical Reform" ideal of the "Mission of Israel. " He perceived this notion as a crucial factor which separated Reform Judaism from the other streams, and established Reform as the superior form of religious expression. Feldman, was able to maintain good relations with non-Reform colleagues within his own community of Hartford, Connecticut. He was by no means "anti-Orthodox." But once while discussing his own career, he contended that although some of his happiest experiences came during encounters with Orthodox Judaism, he advised Reform rabbis that "[y]ou need never to surrender your Reform autonomy of action. There may come a time when you may have to insist on your point of view."[302] Nonetheless, it is possible that Feldman perceived relations between Reform and non-Reform religious Jews, in much the same light as he saw Jewish Christian relations.[303] Fundamentally, however, Feldman -- like Isaac Mayer Wise long before him -- considered Reform Judaism to be *the* American Judaism.

By this time, three trends had become defined within the leadership of the Reform Rabbinate. There were those like Joseph Fink, who felt that Reform occupied the ideological center, attacked both by a stubbornly segregationist Orthodox rabbinate, and by the

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[301] Ibid. 146.
[302] Karol, "Rabbinic Leadership," 124-25.
[303] Ibid. 125.

American Council for Judaism which was splintering the Reform movement. Others, like Feldman, believed that Reform Judaism would become synonymous with American Judaism. Still, he felt that the Reform movement had to further define itself, and to continue to stake out its proper ideological position between archaic traditionalism on one side, and vague moral and religious anarchy on the other. Finally, there were those like Heller, who explicitly questioned long-held classical Reform ideological tenets, and stressed closer cooperation with Conservative Judaism, while leaving open the possible future unification of non-Orthodox American Jewry.[304]

Questions over ideological self-definition as well as the religious unification of American Jewry persisted into 1955, the year of Feldman's ascendance to the Presidency of the SCA. Within the context of a discussion at the 1955 CCAR convention of "Developments in Reform Judaism" the inherent conflict of the Reform movement's ideological emphasis on "reason and rationality" versus "chaos" and the "present anarchistic individualism" became a hotly debated issue.[305] Also, a drive persisted for publishing a formal "Guide of Practice" for Reform Jews.[306] In later years Feldman played an important role in formulating a movement-wide guidebook although he would argue that the text should forego the use of words such as "required" and "forbidden." Clearly, Feldman was seeking to preserve individual religious autonomy for Reform Jews. Nevertheless, he agreed that "Reform Judaism has developed through the years a unique character and a recognizable pattern of observance, and that these ought to be made known to our congregants by means of an unofficial guide."[307]

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[304]Leon Jick writes that by this time, distinctions between Reform and Conservative synagogues had "virtually disappeared." See his essay "The Reform Synagogue," in Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue, 103.

[305]1955 CCAR Yearbook, 178-96.

[306]Ibid. 124.

[307]Ibid. 126.

Alongside the benefits of clearly delineated religious practice and observance for Reform Judaism, an authoritative set of specific guidelines carried a number of potential risks. First, how could a movement based upon both reason and an autonomous response to religious needs ideologically reconcile itself to an authoritative "guide?" Moreover, although a more traditional guide could impel Reform and Conservative Judaism to move closer together, a clearer definition of Reform theology could also cause further division between Reform Judaism and the traditionalist segments of American Judaism.

A far more controversial question impacting on the Reform movement's relations with the other streams of American Judaism surfaced in 1955. At issue was whether the Reform seminary, Hebrew Union College should ordain women as rabbis. The president of the CCAR, Rabbi Barnett Brickner supported the ordination of women by urging a "break with tradition" based upon developments within American Protestantism as well as debate on this subject within the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly of America (RAA).[308] Nonetheless, Brickner confronted what the New York Times called "vigorous opposition" from those rabbis who believed that "the ordination of women would constitute a 'decisive' schism within American Judaism."[309] Rabbi Solomon B. Freehoff, a major formulator of Reform religious practices, counseled caution before "brushing aside 2,000 years of Jewish practice."[310] Ultimately, the CCAR decided to postpone a resolution of the issue in the interest of further study.[311]

Nonetheless, in his 1955 presidential address, Brickner still raised the issues which would influence the Reform rabbinate's relationship with the other streams of American Judaism. "What," he

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308 New York Times, 6/21/1955.
309 Ibid. 6/22/1955.
310 Ibid. 6/24/1955.
311 Ibid.

asked, " are the minimum standards for being a Reform Jew?"[312] However, despite vast differences in religious practice and observance among American Jews, Brickner maintained that "Since the Jewish community of America is becoming more homogeneous and stabilized....we must continue a process which the founding fathers of Reform invented; that is, shaping Judaism for the Western world into a living faith."[313]

Ultimately, the rabbinic leadership of the Reform movement was unable in the mid-1950's to formulate a precise and authoritative religious code for all Reform Jews. Since the Reform rabbinate itself was unable to devise a unified ideological stand, it could hardly, in this respect, offer a coherently articulated response to the call for unity with the other streams of American Judaism. Still, in his report as chief delegate to the SCA, Feldman stated that "it is heartening to find that the delegates of the six constituents [of the SCA] continue to meet in amity and unity and a very precious and meaningful comradeship is developing."[314]

Precise ideological self-definition that was lacking within the Reform rabbinic leadership confused the extent to which it could unify, or even cooperate, with the leaders of Conservative and Orthodox Jewry under the rubric of the SCA. Likewise, parallels existed within the other streams of American Judaism concerning ideological self-definition, and how to achieve the oft-stated goal of religious unification for American Jewry.

For example, on the grass-roots level, one popular Anglo-Jewish newspaper editorialized in 1955 that American Jews "Must Join Hands," stating:

> Now the job is to weld a real US. Jewish community out of the Reform, the Conservative, the Orthodox, the

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312 1955 CCAR Yearbook, 12.
313 Ibid. 11.
314 Ibid. 103.

> Zionists, the anti-Zionists, the United Jewish Appeal Jews, the Anti-Defamation Jews, the Israel bond Jews, the old home Jews, the Yeshiva university Jews, the Brandeis University Jews, and so on.[315]

But this was not as simple as it seemed. Even as some on the grass-roots level called for greater American-Jewish unity, each Americanized denomination was fighting for the soul of their movement. In these years, the Conservative movement grew dramatically, in part by offering a sort of "bipartisan" Judaism -- a modern-American traditionalistic Judaism which was not Orthodox -- and likewise grew in popularity by riding on the coattails of suburbanization.[316] Nevertheless, it became increasingly apparent for the religious and lay leaders of Conservatism that no common agreement existed over what they were supposed to stand for.

Indeed, there was a gap between the scholarly and observant rabbinic leadership and the more Reform-prone laypeople. Conservative rabbis were torn over whether to liberalize religious practice and their mission of fostering greater observance among the laity. As Glazer writes, how could Conservative rabbis "abandon God's law? And how could they bring a recalcitrant laity to observe it? In Conservatism which was growing more rapidly than either of the other two tendencies in American Judaism [Reform and Americanized, or Modern Orthodox] the dilemma of Judaism as a whole presented itself most sharply."[317]

Nonetheless, for contemporary observers of Jewish life such as Glazer and Marshall Sklare, whose study of Conservative Judaism

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315 Editorial, National Jewish Post, 4/29/1955.

316 See Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," 123-32.

317 Glazer, American Judaism, 98. An earlier attempt to define Conservative Judaism was Louis Finkelstein's 1927 statement, "The Things That Unite Us." As Finkelstein points out, the most common ground among Conservative Jews was the Jewish Theological Seminary. See Raphael, Jews and Judaism, 213-24, for text of this document.

appeared in 1955, Conservatism represented the wave of the future. Both thinkers were, like most of the contemporaries, unaware of the tremendous changes occurring within Orthodoxy and of the revival of tradition.[318] For example, even while acknowledging Orthodoxy's success in establishing an extensive day-school system, Glazer also believed that the "medieval world is gone and Orthodox Judaism is only a survival....as far as the majority of American Jews is concerned."[319] To be fair to Glazer, the majority of American Jews were and are still not Orthodox. Nevertheless, number were irrelevant to the increasingly widespread ideological influence which had started to emerge from the "medieval" resistance camp of Orthodoxy.

The successful survival both of accommodationists and resisters engendered a new, and in the wake of the Shoah, difficult conflict within the Orthodox world. The tension between unity and self-definition took on a different flavor within Cold War Orthodoxy. For Orthodox Jews, the process of self-definition was part and parcel of the attempt to unify the diverse and divergent groups within Orthodoxy itself. That is, unlike Reform and Conservative Jews who sought greater unity with the other mainline denominations, vocal elements within Orthodoxy sought to unify Orthodoxy and to separate themselves form non-Orthodox Jews. For example, in 1951, an editorial of the UOJCA magazine, Jewish Life, entitled "Toward A United Orthodoxy," argued:

> No fact is more apparent to the observer of the AmericanJewish scene then the inchoate character of its religious life, while American life in general takes on ever more clearly integrated form and centrally

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318 In recent years, their oversight generated a great deal of criticism of their scholarship. See, for instance, American Jewish History; December 1987, Vol. LXXVII:2. Likewise, Sklare later revised some of his original conclusions in later editions. See his Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement. (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955).

319 Glazer, American Judaism, 109-10, 139.

> organized character. One is vividly impressed with the diverse abundance of institutions and organizations within the Orthodox sphere....But for lack of the common framework which could give this wealth of material coherent organization....energies are dissipated, strength is wasted and the whole aggregate, for all its inherent weight, fails of stature as a major force. If this problem is solved, there is little doubt that Orthodoxy will rank as the dominant influence in American Jewish life....If Orthodox energies are organized and channeled, of force of immeasurable potency and durability will result....Unity, it must be stressed again and again is the key to the future of Orthodoxy.[320]

Striking in the extent of its hopes, this call for unity within Orthodoxy, this statement emphasizes internal Orthodox cohesion as opposed to intra-Jewish unity, since it called for Orthodoxy to take up the leadership of American Jewry. By the early 1950's, what has become known as "modern" or "centrist" orthodoxy perceived itself as having come of age. As battle-tested veteran, it had fought against the forces of secularism and apathy in America. Noting what had become apparent by the 1960's, one commentator on American Orthodoxy wrote "Earlier predictions of the demise of Orthodox Judaism in the United States have been premature, to say the least."[321]

Glazer was not entirely unaware that something was different about postwar Orthodoxy, and even reported a small "revival of an Orthodoxy of the most extreme sort that won over many of the children of the less extreme Orthodox -- and even beyond them."[322] In fact, the bulk of the religious leadership of the new-most-extreme-Orthodox had started to immigrate to the United States at

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320Editorial, Jewish Life, September-October, 1951.
321Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," AJYB, Vol. 66:21-2.
322Glazer, American Judaism, 143.

the outset of the Holocaust in the thirties, and continued to arrive into the mid-fifties.

But alongside the newly-felt inner strength of Orthodoxy, conflicts arose between those accommodating to modernity and the Americanization process, versus those resistant to change.[323] In a development parallel to the surface American religious revival, was and Evangelical Christian revival. "Popular evangelicalism had been making a slow retreat for a century," Ahlstrom explains, "but it still flourished in all parts of the country, especially among those who were least affected by modern intellectual currents."[324] Indeed, even during the War, some Evangelicals had begun to attack Christian Federal organizations such as the Federal Council of Churches, and likewise criticized postwar bodies such as National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches (WCC).[325] Perhaps unlike the Evangelicals, Jews had been most affected by modernity, but regardless, many of the new Orthodox immigrants, refugees of the Shoah, believed that the Holocaust offered sufficient reason to reject modernity in its entirety.

One contemporary observer, sociologist George Kranzler, did document the changes occurring within Orthodoxy in study of the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg.[326] Kranzler demonstrates how the Orthodox Holocaust immigrants, especially Hungarian Hasidim, were far more traditional then the natives in terms of religious practice, theology and attitude toward modernity.[327] Before the War, the Orthodox of Williamsburg were Americanizing and

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[323]See Gurock, "Resistors and Accommodaters," and "The Orthodox Synagogue," in The American Synagogue, 39, in which he points out that internal differences within the Orthodox community had long preceded the rise of Reform and Conservative Judaism.
[324]Ahlstrom, A Religious History, 956.
[325]Ibid. 958-59.
[326]George Kranzler, Williamsburg: A Jewish Community in Transition. (New York: Feldheim, 1961).
[327]Ibid. 38-42.

ascending the socio-economic ladder. Particularly after the postwar Hungarian immigration, this community was re-traditionalized and "[m]any more people wore the foreign, Chassidic garb, and spoke Yiddish, or even Hungarian in the streets. The stores had multi-lingual signs, and new owners had taken over the local business."[328] As to the religious impact of the newcomers:

> More important then the sheer number of the Hungarian newcomers, was the ability of their famous leaders to impress the character of their intense Orthodoxy on most phases of the communal life. Not only did they attract followers from other parts of New York, and from the steady stream of newcomers....their overwhelming personality and stature as some of the greatest figures in world Jewry gave them a standing that could not be ignored....the presence of these famous figures, and the kind of religious experience they represented, had a strong emotional appeal for all elements not openly negative and unwilling to share this experience.[329]

Another study, William Helmreich's The World of the Yeshivah, deals with the enormously influential group of Lithuanian Roshei Yeshivot who came to America during and after the Holocaust.[330] In comparison to the pre-Holocaust years, by the eighties "advanced "Lithuanian-style' yeshivas....[were] solidly entrenched in America."[331] More fundamentally, the "brought with them not only knowledge, memories, and experiences, but a Weltanschauung that challenged and ultimately overcame the prevailing trend toward

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[328]Ibid. 42.

[329]Ibid. 103-4. See also Glazer's discussion, American Judaism, 144-49.

[330]William B. Helmreich, The World of the Yeshivah: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[331]Ibid. xi. Due to the parameters of this study we cannot go into fuller detail about the various Roshei Yeshivot, or the internal workings in each of the communities. For good summaries, see above 34-51, and Sachar, A History of the Jews, 692-705.

compromise with secular American values that existed in the Orthodox camp. Although their uncompromising positions often polarized the community, they succeeded in raising the level of debate concerning the future to one that had not been present before."[332] One might argue with Helmreich's last point. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the postwar refugees, be they Hungarian Hasidim or Litvak Misnagdim, radically altered the Americanizing and accommodating orientation within Orthodox had seemed to be on the rise. Although centuries earlier they had been enemies, in Europe and now the United States, Hasidim and Misnagdim banded together against modernity, in all of its forms, and after the Holocaust became even more convinced that modernity was evil.

Rabbi Oscar Fasman of the Hebrew Theological Seminary (HTS)[333] describes how first modernity, and finally the Shoah fundamentally changed the Yeshiva world:

> A radical change occurred in the Yeshivot after World War I. The bloody experiences of the Jewish communities in Europe during and after those years of slaughter and pogrom made all values associated with the gentile world intolerable, so that the young students of the Talmud avoided every manifestation of general culture [in Europe] ....The climate of the [American] Orthodox rabbinical seminaries became transformed with the arrival [to America] of the Talmudists who suffered through the Hitler catastrophe and lost both their nearest of kin and their Jewish world. The indifference to general culture and opposition to all forms of non-Torah learning that characterized the post-World War I period turned into an intensive hatred after World War II. What could be more natural than to despise the whole

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[332]Helmreich, Yeshivah, 46.

[333]In most respects, HTS, a Yeshiva in Chicago, possessed the same mission and outlook as YU. Like Yeshiva's RIETS, HTS ordained Americanizing and generally accommodating Orthodox rabbis, many of them belonging to the RCA.

> system of norms and social procedures of governments that murdered defenseless people...or that observed such barbarian slaughter without a word of protest? As the spokesmen of this new wave of Roshei Yeshiva were brought into the classrooms of the American institutions, they introduced a violent spirit of negativism towards every manifestation of modern civilization.... it was clearly spelled out that only the [secular] skills should be pursued, but the values should be expunged forever....the impression was strongly circulated among the students that *anything* "goyim" do must never be imitated by Torah-guided people.[334]

Unlike their Americanized, or for that matter, American-resister counterparts, the immigrants had survived the Holocaust and had experienced what they considered to be the true face of modernity's evil. And, unlike other Jews in history, they had a second chance to rebuild their communities in the most religiously-free, safe, and powerful county in the world.

As essential part of their program for resistance involved the total de-legitimize of the other denominations, including the "modern" Orthodox who cooperated with the other streams of American Judaism. This meant directed attacks on the other denominations such as the burning of Kaplan's Reconstructionist prayerbook in 1945.[335] But equally important was the resisters' program for eliminating interdenominational activities and establishing Orthodox unity under their own leadership. This meant that all interdenominational activities had to end, including Orthodox participation in the SCA. Accommodaters realized that the resistors, now led by immigrants also wanted to neutralize Americanized

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[334]Oscar Z. Fasman, "Trends in the American Yeshiva Today," in Reuven P. Bulka, ed., Dimensions of Orthodox Judaism. (New York: KTAV, 1983). This is an extremely important anthology of writings which superbly illustrate the basic conflicts within Orthodoxy for the last-half century.

[335]Sachar, A History of the Jews, 701-2.

Orthodoxy and reestablish the *ancien regime*. These conflict over the soul and leadership played out over the issue of contact and cooperation with non-Orthodox Jews in umbrella organizations such as the SCA. The Feldman installation controversy of 1955/1956 was the spark, finally igniting these tensions.

Centrist Orthodoxy -- consisting of the Rabbinical Council of America, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, and Yeshiva University, had since its inception as a bloc within Orthodoxy, fought a constant battle against the more traditional, European-oriented elements. The traditionalists sought to bring the centrists under their own political and halakhic authority. Centrists often found themselves in conflict over the ideal of unity with the remainder of American Orthodoxy. In part, the centrists fought to preserve their own religious authority and independence when cooperating with non-Orthodox Jewry. And frequently, the RCA and YU clashed with the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (the Agudat Harabbanim) over control of YU's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), whose mission was to ordain "Americanized" Orthodox rabbis.[336] In the 1950's another segment of resistors which clashed with the centrists, and particularly with the RCA, was the Rabbinical Alliance of America (Iggud Harabbanim).[337] Although some of its members held RCA Membership, the Iggud Harabbanim consented neither to the authority of the RCA or the Agudat Harabbanim. Instead it pledged allegiance to several Roshei Yeshivot -- the heads of the schools of traditional Jewish learning. As was the case with the Agudat Harabbanim, the Iggud Harabbanim was adamantly opposed to Orthodox membership in umbrella bodies such as the SCA, which entailed cooperation with Reform and Conservative leaders.

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336For more on this conflict, see Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, Liebman's "Orthodoxy," Helmreich's Yeshivah, and Rothkoff's Bernard Revel , as well as his study The Silver Era in American Jewish Orthodoxy: Rabbi Eliezer Silver and his Generation. (New York: YU Press, 1981).

337Liebman, "Orthodoxy," 75-7.

Characterized by abundant ideological diversity, one observer of American Orthodoxy has noted that the basic problem of accommodation versus resistance, "Orthodoxy is confronted with two mutually exclusive mandates -- to promote faith and observance among non-Orthodox Jews, while giving no recognition and comfort to the only existing institutions which can reach those Jews. In practice, different groups within Orthodoxy have emphasized one mandate or the other, and most of the divisions within Orthodoxy, in practice, reflect this division." Nevertheless, "all Orthodox groups consider both mandates binding."[338]

After the Shoah, this conflict was heightened as the accommodaters, almost entirely modern Orthodox, were attacked as part of the backlash against modernity. Attempting to retain their status as the American Orthodoxy, accommodaters chose to defend themselves particularly in conflicts over interdenominational activity. As such, the SCA became one of the major battlegrounds for the long-standing tension between Orthodoxy's two mandates: inclusiveness and "missionizing" among non-Orthodox Jews, and, "defending" the integrity and purity of the Tradition through separatism. In this sense, the conflict between accommodation and resistance was played out through the Synagogue Council.

European-born and ordained, Rabbi Samuel Belkin was nevertheless a major proponent of Americanized and accommodating Orthodox Judaism. Awarded a Ph.D. in Classics, Belkin became Rosh Yeshiva of YU after Bernard Revel's death. In a 1956 essay, Belkin explained his position:

> Our philosophy is one of integration and we firmly deny that our integration in the American community in any way implies the abrogation of even one iota of our sacred tradition. More than two generations of our people [in the US] have been lost to us because of the

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[338]Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodaters," 39.

> erroneous belief that there exists a serious conflict between our spiritual heritage and the American way of life, which is in itself deeply rooted in Hebraic spiritual values.[339]

Like his predecessor Bernard Revel, Belkin, a firm traditionalist, did not view modernity in and of itself as evil. Likewise, Belkin was able to speak the language of America. Similarly, Emanuel Rackman, another prominent spokesperson for accommodation, wrote in a 1952 article, "the Orthodox view does not exclude Halakhic creativity or changes, flexibility and growth in concept and method in order to meet the most perplexing of the problems that trouble the religious minds of today. But it insists that such evolution must be organic...."[340]

While Rackman was an important partisan for accommodation, and cooperation with non-Orthodox Jews, the intellectual leader of centrist Orthodoxy was, nevertheless, Rabbi Joseph Dov Baer Soloveitchik, known as the Rav by his students and followers. A Litvak like Revel, he also belonged to a category of rabbis whose superior scholarly capacity was evident in Western philosophy as well as in Traditional Talmudic learning.[341] And like Revel, the ease with which he seemed to live in the gentile and Orthodox world masked, what we would argue, a deep sense of inner conflict. In fact, Soloveitchik's existent works in English center around humanity's internal conflicts and Jews' inner "confrontation" between the Sacred and the profane.[342]

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339Quoted in Raphael, ed., Jews and Judaism in the United States, 236.

340Emanuel Rackman, "Orthodox Judaism Moves with the Times: The Creativity of Tradition," in Commentary, Vol. 13, 1952, p. 550.

341Indeed, Soloveitchik, who was awarded a Ph.D. in philosophy also came from a long line of rabbinical scholars.

342As of yet, no wide-reaching and definitive intellectual biography has not been written. For more discussion, See Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodaters," Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, and Zvi Kolitz,

However, by the time of Feldman's installation as president of the SCA in 1955, Soloveitchik's distinction between "internal" and "external" Jewish issues had become difficult for him and other accommodationists to maintain. They now faced a growing movement within the RCA and UOJCA for withdrawal from the SCA and other umbrella bodies. Coupled with this internal pressure, were the unrelenting calls from other resistance segments within American Orthodoxy, for the RCA completely to disassociate itself from Reform and Conservative Jews. A testament to the resonance of this issue for the resisters and the continuing divisiveness this problem engendered -- even a decade after Feldman's installation -- is a 1966 editorial in The Jewish Observer entirely on the side of resistance. Terming Reform and Conservative Jews "Spiritual Cancer":

> officials of RCA have argued that their collective membership in SCA, and their individual membership in mixed-rabbinic groups does not constitute recognition of these men as authentic Jewish religious authorities....The bulk of organized Orthodoxy has....consistently pressed for RCA and UOJCA to leave SCA and to stand together independently....In drawing sharply and clearly the line of Havdala [separation] between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, we serve not only the interests of Orthodoxy, but of Klal Yisroel as well....So long as the myth of the "three branches of Judaism" is fostered by RCA and the Union, the non-Orthodox Jew remains unaware that he has rejected his heritage...."[343]

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Confrontation: The Existential Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. (Hoboken: KTAV, 1993).

[343]Yaakov Jacobs, "Orthodoxy and Synagogue Council," The Jewish Observer, November, 1966, pp. 4-5. In one segment of the article, Jacobs writes that "[spiritual] cancerous processes [non-Orthodox Judaism]...affecting the soul of our people," are "burrowing beneath our skins, threatening to invade the major blood vessels of our people, seeding their death-dealing cancerous cells to the most distant organs and organizations." Racialist ideology of nineteenth and twentieth centuries has also equated Jewish with disease --

But the call for Orthodox unity could be heard clearly within centrist Orthodoxy as well. A 1953 Jewish Life editorial calling for the unification of the Iggud Harabbanim, Agudat Harabbanim and the RCA stated:

> There undoubtedly are many excellent reasons for each of these bodies to function apart from the others. The blunt truth must be faced, however, that none of these reasons are as weighty as those opposed to apartheid[344]....The unspoken" demand of the religious American religious Jewish public for unified expression of Torah authority nowadays no longer unspoken....In the diversity of rabbinic voices, he [the American Jew] finds only bewilderment and confusion....And so he tells our rabbinic organizations: speak to me with one voice!"[345]

The convergence of voices calling for unity within American Orthodoxy necessitated a reevaluation within centrist Orthodoxy over what types of contact with Reform and Conservative Jews, if any, was permissible. The campaign for Orthodox unity brought into question the RCA's and UOJCA membership in the SCA, after two decades of involvement. This reevaluation, would ultimately lead to the Feldman installation controversy.

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symbolically and literally (and this imagery may be traceable to late antiquity). These views were most forcefully carried into this century via national socialism. For further discussion, see Sander L. Gilman's The Jew's Body. (New York: Routledge Press, 1991). However, Gilman also demonstrates how Jews themselves tapped into this language for use against ethnically or ideologically, opposing segments of Jewry. For example, some classical Zionist thinkers used this lexicon of disease as a critique of Diaspora life, (e.g., Nordau and Pinsker), and in the same period, some Western Jews employed this language against Ostjuden.

[344]It is unclear what connotations are meant by "apartheid" in this editorial, written by Saul Bernstein.

[345]Editorial, Jewish Life, July-August 1953.

In June of 1955, Feldman was elected as president of the SCA, along with accommodater and RCA-affiliated Rabbi Theodore L. Adams, as first vice president.[346] Both men were also former presidents of their rabbinical associations.[347] Echoing the oft-stated conception of unity, Feldman declared in his acceptance speech:

> The Synagogue Council of America represents both the totality of Jewry and the supreme unifying element of Jewry which is our spiritual heritage....and whilst we differ amongst ourselves in some definitions and emphases, we are all committed as religious Jews....the Synagogue Council of America represents the unity (albeit not the uniformity), of the American Synagogue.[348]

Preaching a message of religious unity, Feldman also emphasized that his conception of unity did not imply "uniform" religious practices. Nor was Feldman able to reconcile religious unity with religious pluralism. Feldman and other leaders of the Reform movement -- as was the case with some of their Orthodox counterparts -- viewed the SCA as a meeting ground, which might be vested periodically with the authority to engage in mildly "religious" activity. It was still inconceivable, that these leaders would ever agree on uniform religious practices. Only the rabbinical leadership of Conservative Judaism, sought to create order out of chaos, albeit at the price of a measure of uniformity. Conservatives unsuccessfully proposed a new intra-movement Beth Din, and the RAA had actually negotiated with the CCAR and the RCA over the possibility of merging.[349] But regardless of good intentions throughout the

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[346] SCA News Release, 6/9/1955, SCA Papers; New York Times, 6/9/1955.

[347] Feldman was president of the CCAR from 1947 to 1949. See Karol, "Rabbinic Leadership," 146. Adams was RCA president from 1952 to 1954. See Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 30.

[348] SCA News Release 6/9/55, SCA Papers.

[349] At the same time, the RAA and RCA were competing for the loyalties of "Traditional" synagogues throughout the US, which in many respects were Orthodox, but whose member conflicted over the

American denominations, in the mid-1950's Orthodox resistors seriously disrupted the status-quo through their actions toward Abe Feldman's installation as president of the Synagogue Council of America.

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issue of mixed seating. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," 363-94, Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," 62-4, and Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," 123-32, in Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue.

## Chapter Four: A Divided Show of Unity: The Flawed Installation of Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman

By the fall of 1955, Feldman's forthcoming installation as SCA president had engendered -- at least as a surface cause -- considerable public dissension, in spite of the earlier surface expressions of "religious unity." The initial conflict stemmed from the consultation of Moses L. Feuerstein (then president of the UOJCA), with Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, and Rabbi Aharon Kottler.[350] Their discussion focused upon whether or not it was permissible for an Orthodox Jew to attend Feldman's installation since it was to take place at the Reform Temple Emanuel in New York City. Soloveitchik and Kottler answered that they themselves would not attend such a ceremony.[351] Rabbi David B. Hollander, a member of the resistance camp and, at that time near the end of his presidency of the RCA was in fact an opponent of Centrist Orthodox membership in the SCA and other umbrella bodies. He was also a strong advocate of pan-Orthodox unity.

Taking the initiative in the matter of attendance at the installation, Hollander attempted to pursue a new and authoritative policy for the RCA. He received no answer on the question of attending the installation from either the Executive Committee of the RCA or Rabbi Soloveitchik, the premier halakhic authority for centrist Orthodoxy.[352] Nonetheless, Hollander, at least out of personal convictions, decided to use non-attendance at the installation as the means for removing the RCA, (and with it the

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[350]Kottler was, perhaps, the preeminent Rosh Yeshiva of the resistance camp. The founder of the Lakewood Yeshiva, Kottler was, along with Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, were also deeply respected as halakhic authorities among RCA rabbis. See Helmreich, Yeshivah, 301-5.

[351]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 144. Acting on behalf of the UOJCA, Feuerstein formally requested that the SCA move the installation ceremony to the Waldorf Astoria. See Special Executive Committee Meeting Minutes. 9/27/55, SCA Papers.

[352]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 144.

UOJCA), from affiliation with all "religious" umbrella bodies, especially the SCA and the New York Board of Rabbis.

In September of 1955 a "special" Executive Committee meeting of the SCA was held in order to resolve the surface issue of the venue of the installation. However, the debate concerning the relative merits of the Waldorf Astoria and Temple Emanu El was merely the husk, concealing the deeper issue of pluralism versus unity.

The minutes of the special meeting began with an explanation that the Executive Committee had previously decided that insofar as Feldman was a Reform Rabbi, the installation should be held at Temple Emanuel. However, after receiving Feuerstein's request to hold it at the Waldorf Astoria, the SCA committee charged with arranging the installation, was itself divided over how best to proceed, and requested the assistance of the Executive committee in resolving this conflict.[353] Although two Reform rabbis sought to take an immediately vote on holding the installation at Emanuel, Feldman himself suggested further discussion among the members of the committee. Opening the discussion was Rabbi Bernard J. Bamberger, who attempted to wrest an explicit answer from the Orthodox members of the committee as to whether Feuerstein's request actually meant a change in the RCA UOJCA's policies.[354] Summarizing the essential problem posed by Feuerstein's request, Bamberger stated:

> Had this matter remained a purely personal request [Feuerstein's proposal to move the installation to the Waldorf Astoria], as I was eager that it would, the request would have been granted. How or why was it necessary that there should be an official expression from the UOJCA I don't know, but an official letter has come....it seems that their [UOJCA] representatives

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353 Special Executive Minutes. 9/27/55. SCA Papers.

354 According to one participant and RCA observer, relations between the SCA and RCA were "correct," during the RCA presidencies of Samuel Berliant (1950-1952) and Theodore Adams (1952-1954). See Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 144.

> will have to be forthright with us and give us their reasons and on that basis we will have to judge the matter....It is a question that may involve issues of principle.[355]

Reflecting the division within Orthodoxy between resistance and accommodation, Adams attempted to disassociate the RCA from the UOJCA's request, and additionally to deny that this was an issue of principle. It was apparent that Adams himself was "out of the loop," in terms of the intent of Feuerstein, Hollander, and others in centrist Orthodoxy's resistance camp. Adams attributed the request to an "internal problem" within the UOJCA, and to a lesser extent the RCA, stating that:

> there was no formal expression as far as the RCA was concerned.... the RCA is not making a policy issue of holding the meeting at Emanuel....A person can be President of an organization and have certain personal feelings beyond the organization. The fact remains that there's an internal evolution today going on within the RCA and the UOJCA. Many of us weren't aware of it ....This does not represent any policy question at the present time....I plead don't make this a policy question because it isn't the ground on which to make it...[356]

Clearly alarmed, Adams sensed that the unfolding controversy over the installation ceremony could actually cause a stark schism between centrist Orthodoxy and Reform and Conservative Jews. Understanding the implications of this issue, Adams maintained that while an "internal evolution" was occurring within centrist Orthodoxy, the issue had still not been "formally clarified" within the RCA. Moreover, as an accommodationist fighting a rear-guard action against resistance, Adams also hoped that the Reform and Conservative leaders would compromise on changing the installation to the Waldorf Astoria.[357]

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[355] Special Executive Minutes. 9/27/55, SCA Papers.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.

Nevertheless, at least for the Reform rabbis present at the meeting, compromise over the venue of the installation was an intolerable notion. To them, compromise meant an insult to their sense of religious authority and self-worth, and Emanu El had become the symbol of a principle which could not be sacrificed for the sake of surface unity. At this point in the meeting the Reform delegation actually split over tactics. Rabbi Albert S. Goldstein called for approval of holding the installation at Emanu El, (seconded by Rabbi Wolfe Kelman of the RAA), while Bamberger attempted to postpone the meeting, so as not to further embarrass the delegation. Reform Rabbi Julius Mark emphasized that the precedent for the SCA was to hold such installations at the Synagogues of the incoming president's Jewish orientation.[358]

However, the gaps within the Orthodox delegation were also widening. Hollander finally spoke out and contradicted Adams, stating that Orthodox attendance at the installation was "definitely" a matter of principle propounded by a "certain religious rabbinic authority" (i.e. Soloveitchik).[359] Hollander continued by saying:

> It is true morally speaking - I am speaking for the RCA - we are at fault somewhat because this objection should have been raised....at the time the committee was making the decision....in my own personal view point - I am not a dictator of the organization nor are my views shared by the entire organization - for myself and some other colleagues, we are of the opinion about belonging to a religious society such as this with people, with rabbis and Synagogues, whose religious philosophy is diametrically opposed to ours and from a consistent standpoint if I were on the other side of the fence I would say that if you don't come to my temple for the installation I don't see how we can work together. But consistency is a rare virtue. The installation is not an integral part of the Synagogue Council. It can continue

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[358]Ibid.
[359]Ibid.

> all its proper functions without having an installation at all.[360]

Seeking to clarify the extent to which centrist Orthodoxy would cooperate with non-Orthodox Jews, (and remarking that his own views were backed up by others within the RCA, in addition to Soloveitchik), Hollander drew the borders on the basis of "outside" dealings stating:

> If the organization [the SCA] deals with the non-Jewish community then it is alright for such cooperation to exist....we are anxious the Synagogue Council activities shall not go beyond the proper area delineated by the phrase of outside. There is an issue of religious principle involved in attending this particular installation at the locale chosen - it is not informal - we are bound by it is a matter of Jewish law.[361]

In essence, Hollander felt three principles were involved in the conflict over the installation. First, he as an Orthodox Jew was forbidden to attend events, such as the Feldman installation, which were held at Reform temples. Secondly, that the SCA's scope of activity should not go beyond relations with the non-Jewish community. Finally, that if the SCA continued to move beyond these boundaries, the Orthodox centrists should simply withdraw from the organization. Yet on the subterranean level Hollander was most likely looking for any reason to withdraw from the SCA and other umbrella organizations.

In response to Hollander's statement, Kelman, although disputing his contention that a matter of halakhic principle was involved, moved that the installation be postponed. Goldstein, reflecting the Reform stance on intra-Jewish relations, counterattacked, noting that Hollander's position not only violated the SCA's "halakhah," but additionally the concept of "derekh eretz."

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[360]Ibid.
[361]Ibid.

Clearly fazed by this exchange, Adams continued to dispute that an official policy change had occurred within the RCA, with Hollander explicitly invoking the authority of Soloveitchik in order to stress the formality of the principle involved.[362]

Yet another split was to develop among the Orthodox delegates. Saul Bernstein of the UOJCA contradicted Hollander, saying, "The letter [from Feuerstein to the SCA] was written in good faith and not presented with any nuances which ought not to be read into it. This would not contribute to the well being as far as what the Synagogue council should read into it any more then is apparent on the surface."[363] In the face of the confusion within the Orthodox delegation, between resistance and accommodation, Bamberger wondered out loud, whether this controversy would lead to the end of the SCA, and therefore, a possible end to all forums for official contact and cooperation between Orthodox, and non-Orthodox Jews. Meanwhile Mark asked sarcastically, "Is the Waldorf Astoria less treif then the Assembly Hall of Emanu El?"[364]

Because centrist Orthodoxy had failed to resolve the issues of Orthodox unity versus American Jewish diversity, the confusion within centrist Orthodoxy was now also influencing personal relations with non-Orthodox Rabbis, and lay-leaders. Feldman finally took this moment to speak for himself :

> I want to make a personal statement now....All my life I have been one of those who, while being a convinced and ardent Reform rabbi....always had a feeling of responsibility for K'lal Yisrael, and having due regards for the sensibilities of others, reserving the right to differ but dealing with the others on the basis of derech [sic]

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[362]Ibid. Hollander stated that "[t]he fact still remains that Rabbi Soloveitchik told me that he would not attend [the installation] if invited.

[363]Ibid.

[364]Ibid.

eretz.[365]

While Feldman sensed Adams' difficult position, after reading Feuerstein's letter he decided that this was an "internal problem" with no one out for the "last drop of blood."[366] Feldman continued:

> At present, in view of the perfectly frank statement made by the President of the Rabbinical Council [Hollander] - and incidentally I might say this in his presence, he was invited to participate in the in-installation, as all presidents of the six constituent bodies were, and under date of September 15th he wrote that he could not come because of his schedule. The reason for not coming which he stated before was an altogether different one....this thing has touched something very vital and very precious and sacred to me....But I don't think I want to be president at the cost of self-respect or at the cost of accepting a stigma for the religious convictions....which I have tried to serve....It hurts me deeply to find myself in a situation where, on the basis of your [Hollander's] halakhah, if I were to accept it -- not the Jewish halakhah, but yours -- that I should be precluded from ever entering an Orthodox Synagogue; that I should be precluded from having comradeship with and work for what all of us call the Jewish course....I wanted to accept the face of this letter and I hoped that this is where the issue would be. Rabbi Hollander has made it impossible for me to personally act on this letter. I can't say this is the issue because the President of the RCA says that it isn't. Rabbi Soloveitchik has spoken....It may mean of course that there will only be a few people there to attend the installation....who at least will have some respect for me as a human being; will respect me at least as a Jew; and respect me as a rabbi....Rabbi Hollander challenges that

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[365] Ibid. Feldman reiterated this theme later in his life. On one occasion he editorialized that "Bad Manners are not Halakhic!" This was written in response to the Israeli Minister of Religious Affairs' deliberate refusal -- under pressure from Israeli Orthodoxy -- not to attend the dedication of HUC's Jerusalem campus in 1963. See karol, "The American Rabbinate," 115-16.

[366] Special Executive Minutes. 9/27/55.

> by his definition....where-ever issues come where my Orthodox colleagues were concerned - I always have supported them....it is going to be difficult for me, being human, to continue along the same considered good will way.[367]

Once Hollander had fully enunciated his principles, Feldman found it impossible to compromise. Feldman's personal pain had been exposed. The other Reform rabbis at the meeting considered the Orthodox request to move the installation as an intolerable attempt at coercion. Such a move would challenge their ideological and personal integrity. When the committee voted, the majority supported holding the installation at Emanuel, with Adams, Bernstein and Wald voting in opposition, and Hollander and Joseph Schlang, (the other UOJCA delegate), abstaining.

Following the vote Hollander, while denying any intent to hurt Feldman or question his rabbinic credentials, attempted to retreat from his earlier stance concerning Soloveitchik's ruling. Meanwhile, Bernstein and Adams continued to dispute that a formal decision had been taken by the UOJCA and the RCA. Bamberger countered that "It was a question of principle. It could not have been anything else," although Hollander maintained that:

> I have no intention to destroy the Synagogue Council. I merely said that there are certain areas in which the Synagogue Council had entered which have given rise to these problems for us....I also have a conscience and I also something [sic] about derech eretz, but there is a conflict of laws and when the higher principle of the law is involved, it cannot be outweighed. I had no intentions nor do I think that my words hurt anyone....and I do not represent tonight the collective view of the RCA...[368]

Hollander thus found himself trapped between two contradictory positions. On one side, he wished to protect the RCA by his sudden denial that it had changed its policy. Simultaneously, he

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[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.

sought to satisfy his own religious convictions, as well as to comply with Soloveitchik's ruling. But Hollander's vacillations nevertheless alienated both Orthodox and Reform rabbis at the meeting. Meanwhile, Adams continued to maintain that the RCA had still not formally decided this issue. Bernstein, (who as the editor of Jewish Life was a proponent of Orthodox unity), stated that even the UOJCA was not making a policy statement through their request to move the installation to the Waldorf Astoria. No closer to the goal of Orthodoxy unity, Hollander and others in the resistance camp had created a potentially serious rift between centrist Orthodoxy and non-Orthodox Jews.

As to the perspective of the Reform leaders, Bamberger initially favored compromise, (as did Feldman, according to this text), in order to stave off a confrontation. Nonetheless, once the principles involved in this debate became further defined, the Reform delegation refused to compromise on the basis of defending personal and ideological integrity. A confrontation therefore became inevitable. It is noteworthy that the Conservative delegation was virtually silent and did not seek to fill the vacuum of reconciliation and advancement toward K'lal Yisrael as in line with its stated mission of establishing catholic Israel.

Indeed, the debate over Emanu El and the Waldorf Astoria had exposed the fragility of ventures such as the SCA, and the inability to move beyond rhetorical platitudes toward unity and to actually achieve a significant measure of mutual-understanding, respect, and genuine cooperation on religious issues within the Jewish community. Adams closed the meeting with the lamentation that "It would have hurt no-one to have held the meeting at the Waldorf Astoria. However, you gentlemen have voted and I certainly wouldn't want to overrule the personal feeling of Dr. Feldman."[369] Ultimately, it was "derekh eretz," which itself had been elevated to a religious

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[369]Ibid.

principle within American Judaism, that had been upset as the controversy moved from the public to the private realm.

Still, the installation did take place at Temple Emanuel in October of 1955, with Adams in attendance,[370] although the RCA did not send an official representative to the ceremony.[371] Hollander wrote a letter of congratulation to Feldman on his installation as president of the SCA, to which Feldman responded.[372]

In his installation address, Feldman appeared to refer to the controversy, even while reiterating the conflicting goals of the SCA:

> This office is potentially the most exalted office in the American Synagogue....Repeatedly have I been impressed by....the respect and reverence demonstrated in the face of differences....I have been repeatedly stirred by the evidenced will for unity without uniformity, for cooperation without dominance, for loyalty to our own respective interpretation of Judaism....I have been repeatedly cheered by the eager quest for and demonstration of the shared elements of our common religious heritage...It became obvious....that in the blessed de-ghettoization of Jewish life in America and in the democratization of American life in which all of us share, no one could speak for the total Synagogue. Then as now, diversity exists. That is a fact of history and no leaders of organized Orthodoxy, or organized reform or organized Conservative Judaism, then or now, can alter the fact of diversity....it is obvious that only through unity ....could we create the possibility of serving the total American Synagogue...[373]

Referring also to the role the SCA had played vis-a-vis Christian umbrella organizations, the UN and the United States

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370 New York Times, 10/13/1955.

371 Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 144.

372 Ibid.

373 Address of the President: the Rev. Dr. Abraham J. Feldman. 10/12/1955, SCA Papers.

government, Feldman spoke of the important theme of unity without uniformity. Feldman was explicit in emphasizing the fact of pluralism within American Judaism. This was also an attack against the resistance camp within centrist Orthodox whom he perceived to be inverted ghettoizers, working to destroy the American miracle of the "de-ghettoization" of Jewish life. Still, Feldman repeated the ambiguous fiction that the SCA was the "effective spokesman" for all segments of American Jewry, and this, in the face of the doubts that had now been openly displayed to Feldman by leaders of centrist Orthodoxy about the efficacy of the SCA. Neither did the Orthodox affiliates of the SCA share the same conception of the "Synagogue" with the Reform, or Conservative counterparts. What alone was irrefutable was that the SCA had played a role as a representative organization to the non-Jewish world.

The conflict between the resistance and accommodation camps of centrist Orthodoxy resulted in an open debate at the RCA's mid-winter conference in February of 1956.[374] The chief advocate for the accommodationist wing was Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, then serving as vice-president of the RCA and president of the New York Board of Rabbis,(NYBR), an umbrella body for rabbis in the New York city region. Rackman contended that RCA affiliation with interdenominational organizations such as the SCA and the NYBR did not mean Orthodox acceptance of Reform or Conservative Judaism. Rather, this was a stance based on "mutual respect." Such cooperation, he said, had actually led to gains in leading non-Orthodox Jews toward further traditionalism in areas such as Kashrut.[375] Hollander countered that through participation in inter-denominational organizations, the Orthodox had, in effect, granted religious and political legitimacy to the non-Orthodox streams of Judaism. Not only was this position unacceptable, but it also poisoned centrist Orthodoxy's relationship with the other segments of American Orthodoxy and impeded Orthodox unity. On these grounds,

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[374]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 144.
[375]Ibid. 144-45.

Hollander proposed that the RCA withdraw from umbrella organizations.[376]

The most powerful response to this proposal came from Feldman himself, who as editor of Hartford's, Jewish Ledger wrote a scathing rebuke to Hollander entitled "Orthodox Rabbi Outlaws Conservative and Reform Judaism."[377] He wrote that:

> At last the matter has come out into the open. It has been brewing for some time and has been causing considerable heart-searching within Orthodox Jewish ranks in America....the lid was blown off or was removed deliberately by the President of the RCA....Distinguished Orthodox rabbis and laymen protested against that dangerous stand, dangerous to Orthodox Jewry in this country....realizing that this isolationist position is one that constitutes a threat to Jewish community life and that it might lead to a dangerous cleavage in the American Jewish community at large....earnest efforts were being made both by Orthodox leaders as well as Conservative and Reform leaders to prevent this from becoming a public scandal.... [Hollander] urged the withdrawal of the Orthodox constituency from the SCA which for thirty years has been the wholesome and necessary meeting point of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews.... the position which he take is that any Jew who is not Orthodox cannot be considered religiously a Jew; that Conservative and Reform Synagogues are not Synagogues at all....and [he] would rather have Jews remain unaffiliated with any religious institutions than in their failure to be Orthodox....We repeat, this is not the universal position of Orthodoxy...but it is the position of a highly vocal and very aggressive group of isolationists who seek deliberately to ghettoize Jewish religious life in America....these isolationists and would-be ghettoizers of Jewish religious life in America, have no

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[376]Ibid. 144. The title of Hollander's talk was "Integration versus Isolation." See also SCA News Release, 2/14/56, SCA Papers/

[377]SCA News Release, 2/14/56, SCA Papers.

> scruples and no troubled consciences about attempting and demanding support for their programs and institutions from those whom they would outlaw and exclude form the camp of Israel....we hope very sincerely....that this disturbance will pass over without too serious damage to the Jewish cause and Jewish life in America.[378]

Reported in other Anglo-Jewish periodicals,[379] the impact of this controversy was felt throughout the religious leadership of American Jewry. The response was no less vehement at the June 1956 CCAR convention. In his message to the conference, then-president of the CCAR Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner stated that "It is regrettable, yea tragic, that now at long last, when there are signs making for cooperation and unity in the Jewish community, extremist groups among rabbis and laymen are seeking to destroy this unity and to fractionalize Jewish life in America." Continuing his critique, Brickner declared:

> I believe that the misrepresentations of the American Council for Judaism and the intransigence of the Orthodox extremists represent the thinking of only a minute, though vociferous, section of our community ....those who consistently malign and impugn the integrity of colleagues....and cause promoting the welfare of K'lal Yisroel, whether they be Orthodox or Reform, are guilty of fomenting divisiveness and are doing a gross disservice to our people...[380]

In equating the resistance camp of Orthodoxy with the American Council For Judaism, Brickner again was clearly placing mainstream Reform as a centrist movement, and rhetorically positioning the CCAR in support of K'lal Yisrael.

In the 1956 report of the CCAR's Committee on The President's Message, the members stated that "we still believe in K'lal Yisroel

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[378] Ibid.

[379] Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 145.

[380] 1957 CCAR Yearbook, 6.

and in the maximum of cooperation and furtherance of our common religious principles," without defining what comprised those principles.[381] Moreover, many within the intellectual leadership of the CCAR continued to reiterate the long-standing message of Reform triumphalism, with one workshop leader subtly denouncing Jewish traditionalists for their "mind block," and for resisting "present change with every ounce of strength and every rationalization....a persistent impediment, which, as we shall see, still afflicts Jewish leadership today."[382]

In his report on the SCA, Feldman, along with listing the achievements vis-a-vis the external world, reiterated his protest against the "highly vocal minority" attempting to "ghettoize" Orthodox Jews, while praising "responsible" Orthodox leaders for preventing the outright "secession" of Orthodoxy from the wider Jewish community.[383]

Likewise, at the 1956 RAA convention, much of the discussion was focused on the problem of unity. Rabbi Harry Halpern, president of the RAA stated that "We, who will not surrender our right to minister to and lead the Jewish religious community, are undeterred by the attacks upon us. We say to any group, which seeks exclusive authority in religious matters....our right to rabbinic leadership does not depend upon your utterances."[384] Although Halpern did refer obliquely to those within Orthodoxy declaring it "contrary to Jewish law for Orthodox rabbis to have any dealing with the Reform group or with us," and listed Conservative movement's own gestures toward unity which had been rebuffed.[385]

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381 Ibid. 133.

382 Ibid. 241.

383 Ibid. 123-24.

384 1957 RAA Proceedings, 73.

385 Ibid. Halpern focused on a parallel scandal involving the New Conservative *Ketubah*, and the attempts to form a unified Beit Din.

Contrary to his aims, Hollander's proposal to remove the RCA from mixed umbrella organizations, set off a series of conflicting ideological reactions within American Orthodoxy. In the aftermath of Feldman's installation, Saul Bernstein supported Hollander's stance in a triumphalistic editorial in the winter issue of Jewish Life . Reiterating the basic question of the circumstances Orthodox Jews may join with non-Orthodox Jews in religious bodies Bernstein wrote:

> The Union's decision [not to participate in the installation] is indicative of a tendency on the part of the Orthodox Jewish community to think through more definitively the principle of its relationship with the non-Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities. This process, an aspect of the maturing of American Orthodoxy, is likely to prove fruitful. At the very least, it may serve to eliminate prevailing confusions which to date have granted to the advantage of non-Orthodox forces....A factor in this confusion has been a misinterpretation of the role of the SCA and of the participation therein of Orthodox with non-Orthodox religious groups....Foremost in its [the SCA] purview was the need to bespeak collectively the interests of the Jewish community in relationships with non-Jews....The conditions of the liaison were limited and strictly controlled by right of veto; all questions of religious compromise were to be eschewed....there was no question of....de jure recognition of the Reform and Conservative creeds on the part of the Orthodox constituents....The Synagogue Council's problems have arisen from attempts to change it....to a self-contained organization, a super-religious body with its own religious projects....Orthodox Jewry cannot join with heterodox bodies in addressing a religious message to the Jewish community....There can be no religious unity between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy--except at the cost of the absorption of one by the other.[386]

Nonetheless, this position was not shared universally within centrist Orthodoxy. Although the resistance camp within the RCA and UOJCA longed for unity with the Agudat Harabbanim, the Iggud

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[386]Editorial, Jewish Life, November-December, 1955.

Harabbanim, several RCA rabbis living outside of the New York city region, contested Hollander's proposition. Since they constituted a minority, they needed to have contact and cooperation with non-Orthodox Jews.[387] In the spring of 1956, Hollander pursued his separatist agenda, formally submitting the question to the Halakhah a commission of the RCA, which was headed by Soloveitchik.[388] Although the commission failed to answer Hollander's query, within the same week the Iggud Harabbanim ruled that Jewish law prohibited Orthodox Jews from membership in the SCA and other interdenominational groups such as the NYBR, and issued a formal issur against any participation. This decision, endorsed by such well-respected scholars as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Aharon Kottler, compounded the existing tension within centrist Orthodoxy.[389] The pressure from other wings of Orthodoxy forced the RCA, (in the face of the halakhah commission's silence), to expedite their decision making process. This in turn pitted accommodationists such as Rackman and Joseph Lookstein[390] against Hollander, still President of the RCA. As the national convention of the RCA approached, open conflict ensued among the various wings of American Orthodoxy, and leading resisters from other rabbinical organizations supported Hollander.

The Agudat Harabbanim and the Hasidic Lubavitcher Rebbe added ammunition to Hollander's crusade, while voices among the Satmar Hasidim took the occasion to attack all of Americanized Orthodoxy, as a way-station to non-Orthodox Judaism.[391]

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[387]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 146.

[388]Ibid.

[389]Ibid.

[390]Lookstein was one of the preeminent accommodationists rabbis. For more on his important role in Americanizing Orthodoxy, see Jenna Weissman Joselit's New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

[391]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 148.

Finally the real meaning of the Feldman installation ceremony became apparent. At that moment American Orthodoxy stood at a crossroads: it faced the question of whether or not completely to divorce itself from the other streams of American Judaism in order to achieve its own unity. The essence of the problem for centrist Orthodoxy was whether or not the reality of plurality in the American Jewish world or any notion of pluralism should be rejected.

The RCA began to splinter as several members of its New York regional organization sought, in sharp opposition to much of the RCA's leadership, to implement the *issur* and Hollander's position. Finally in late March of 1956, the conflict subsided as the RCA executive committee received a letter from Rabbis Samuel Belkin (President of YU) and Soloveitchik. It stated:

> the question submitted to us by the President [Hollander] ....was temporarily taken off the agenda of the Halakhah commission. Our decision not to take action at the present time is motivated by the fact that under the circumstance that now prevail and for which we bear no responsibility, it is humanly impossible to discuss impartially this most serious matter and to render an opinion meeting high standards of Halakhic objectivity and truthfulness....we wish to add this delay....reflects in no way our opinion concerning the advisability or inadvisability of associating with non-conforming groups within the Jewish community.[392]

While refusing to answer this halakhic question, Belkin and Soloveitchik's statement also provided the accommodationists a clear mandate for maintaining RCA and UOJCA membership in umbrella organizations. The RCA executive committee, proceeded to rule that for the time being, the RCA "status quo should prevail" on this question until the RCA formally decided otherwise.[393] Thus, the

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[392]Ibid. 149.
[393]Ibid. 150.

relationship between centrist Orthodoxy and non-Orthodox Judaism in America survived in a highly ambiguous form.

Nevertheless, Soloveitchik perceived that such conflicts would actually cause a schism within the organization. By removing this issue from the agenda of the RCA's upcoming convention, Soloveitchik had also removed the problem of interdenominational relations from the public domain, at least temporarily, and thereby prevented an implosion within his own branch of Orthodoxy.[394]

Hollander and other resistors continued to press for formal RCA withdrawal from the SCA and like-minded umbrella organizations, but to no avail. The silence and ambiguity imposed on the RCA by Soloveitchik's non-ruling ultimately served the accommodationists' view. As a point in fact, Rackman was re-elected as president of the NYBR,[395] and in 1957 Adams was elected president of the SCA with the executive committee of the RCA declaring its support.[396] Ultimately, fear of further schisms within American Orthodoxy -- as well as the continuing worries of the centrists that their own autonomy as an independent wing of American Orthodoxy might be neutralized by the more traditional wing -- allowed the accommodationists to prevail. Consequently, a unified Orthodoxy remained an unfulfilled ideal.

While factionalized American Orthodoxy failed to unite into a new American super-Orthodoxy, the centrists' unstated role and position as a bridge between non-orthodoxy on the one side, and resistance oriented Orthodoxy on the other, had been secured. It now stood alongside pluralistic American Judaism, without any loss of ideological autonomy to other segments of American Judaism. It is more then ironic then, to consider a resolution offered at the 1956

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[394]Ibid. 153.
[395]New York Times, 6/26/56.
[396]Bernstein, Challenge and Mission, 154.

RCA convention calling for "greater unity and cooperation of all segments of American Jewish life to aid Israel."[397]

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397 New York Times, 6/6/5.

## Conclusion: Back to the Future; From Denominationalism to Sectarianism

While still in existence, the SCA was the embodiment of surface "unity" in American Jewish religious life. However, the SCA's real importance lay in its role as a representative to the non-Jewish community, and most importantly, as a common meeting ground for Reform, Conservative and centrist Orthodox leaders, in behalf of cooperation . Surely, Reform and centrist Orthodox leaders stood far apart on matters of Jewish law, observance, and theological outlook. Nonetheless, in spite of their competing triumphalistic "missions," the leadership of both groups, understood the essential need for cooperation and coexistence. They recognized that religious pluralism was still a basic fact of life for American Judaism in the fifties, and that cooperation was necessary to protect the interests of a non-unified community.

Yet, as the preeminent and most pluralistic Jewish community in the Diaspora in the post-war era, new spheres of competition arose over newly affiliated Jews in suburbia, as well as over access to the new state of Israel. The fundamental conflict over the denominationalization of Judaism in the United States of America generated a variety of sub-conflicts within American Jewry. Even Conservative and accomodationist Orthodox rabbis, so similar in outlook and practice, fought intensely for the allegiance of "Traditional," mixed-seating synagogues, and over the Conservative ketubah. Less an argument over ideology, the Conservative-accommodater conflict was most certainly a result of the competitive aspect of denominationalism.

Moreover, although Centrist Orthodoxy had "come of age," modern, Americanized Orthodoxy was also under attack by the "new immigrant Orthodoxy" even as Reform Judaism still attempted to maintain its self-perceived role as the American Judaism. Still, after the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the ever apparent disunity within American Jewry in the 1930's and 1940's, genuine unity among

American Jews became an ideal of profound, and even spiritual importance for Jewish-Americans. On the general level of American religious culture, it is also likely that American Jews were mirroring the umbrella organizations which emerged in the late 1940's.[398]

Admittedly, we have dealt with a modest piece of the narrative of Judaism in America. We have attempted to show how American Judaism underwent the universal process of Americanization. A basic aspect of the Americanization of religion entails the process of denominationalization. This study frames the Americanization of Judaism as process parallel to the Americanization of Christianity, and, as we approach the next millennium it seem as if Islam, has been Americanized as well. Stemming from the Western "Enlightenment," denominationalism facilitated peace between long-warring sects of Christianity. In contrast to sectarianism, the denominational model was grounded in notions of mutual respect, tolerance, and the understanding that no single denomination possessed the complete truth about the Divine.

Within the American milieu of separation of church and state, arose the construct of voluntaryism. Voluntaryism is the means of describing each citizen's freedom to choose, or to reject, a particular religious practice. But mirroring American business ethics, the onus for recruiting adherents fell upon the varied religions of America who were not supported by the State. As a means for keeping the competition between American religions friendly, American religion employed the political hermeneutic of Federalism. Federalism, a secular concept, nonetheless reinforced America's denominationalized religious fabric, by facilitating a type of "unity through diversity." In other words, federalism institutionalized the right to be different. While religious differences were to be respected, each denomination was united through a common, albeit general and amorphous, modern, religious worldview.

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[398]See Paul A. Carter, Another Side of the Fifties. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 134-40.

American Christians pioneered the fundamentals of this system. However, by the concluding decades of the nineteenth century, the interactions and relationships of Old World Jewish sects in America had become so complex as to generate competing missions for each segment of religious, American Jewry. On the one hand, all Jews desired a unified Jewish people. On the other hand, each sect of religious Jewry wanted to establish itself as the embodiment of American Judaism; including Eastern European traditionalists. Just as nineteenth century efforts to unify American Judaism fail, so too did any one segment of American Judaism fail to establish total dominance over American Jews' religious beliefs and practices.

But of equal concern to all American Jewish religionist was the powerful and perhaps fatal force of secularism. Even as their religious efforts failed, the American rabbinate at the turn of the century could hardly ignore the fierce competition for Jewish loyalties engendered by the rapidly multiplying world of secular Jewish organizations. Drawing upon American Christianity's success in the federal model, the Americanized rabbinate -- Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, along with some traditionalists -- created their own federal structure; the Synagogue Council of America.

Before the Shoah, the members of the SCA were united and firm believers in the modern ideology of Americanism. Likewise, each denomination was facing an ongoing struggle with the secularist forces. The rabbinic and lay-supporters of the Synagogue Council experiment hoped to reestablish Judaism as the preeminent component of Jewish life and identity. Whether we speak of Judaism in its classical-Reform, scientific-Conservative or Americanizing and accomodationist-Orthodox manifestations, these religious leaders hoped combat the secular competition and, moreover, attempted to prove that Judaism could be modern, American and civil.

As an interdenominational Jewish organization, the SCA was an organization we believe to be unique in Jewish history. In a small way, this study has tried to illuminate some of basic problems facing the Synagogue Council throughout its history. Additionally, we have attempted to relate the trials and tribulations of the Council within the context of American religious history, general Jewish history, while also trying to frame the changing ideological currents in every sector of the American rabbinate.

In many respects, the Synagogue Council of America was the penultimate expression of Americanized Judaism in its entirety. But, as we have seen, each modernized segment of American Jewry, whether secular or religious, was unable to cope with the monumental, and we would argue, quintessentially modern catastrophe of the Holocaust. In the wake of this modern Jewish disaster, every facet of the modern weltanschauung would slowly come into question.

But it was especially the surviving segment of Eastern European traditionalists, whom we would now term *Hareidim*, who with increasing aggressiveness propounded their particular anti-modern stance. Each and every aspect, structure and ideology of modernity, which after the Holocaust included modernized Jewish modalities, was viewed as fundamentally tainted with evil of the Shoah. Thus, according to the Haredi weltanschauung, modernized, or Americanized Judaism was a manifestation of the evil of modernity. As such, the SCA and other intra-Jewish organizations were to be shunned and eliminated. As we have noted, the SCA faced criticism, and attempts at marginalization from America's loyal pre-Holocaust traditionalists. However, after the Shoah, America's native resisters were reinvigorated and even overtaken by the new Haredi immigrants from the Old World. Moreover, the Haredi influence expanded into all segments of Orthodoxy and American Judaism, including the Synagogue Council.

The result of the Feldman installation was a victory of sorts for Americanized Judaism in general, and the Americanized, accomodationist-Orthodox in particular. Nonetheless, this was only one battle in a long ideological war about modernity. A perennial aspect of this battle was the intra-Orthodox debate over intra-Jewish and interdenominational cooperation. That is, according to resisters, accommodaters could not be "Torah-true" if they maintained collegial relationships with non-Orthodox American Jews. The deeper debate was over the denominationalization of American Judaism. The post-Holocaust currents within Orthodoxy challenged the very legitimacy of denominationalism, and thus the Haredi critique challenged the very fundaments of American Judaism itself. In this sense, the Haredi critique of modernity has touched all of American Jewry.

To say that a great deal has happened within American Judaism and American Jewish life since the 1950's would be an egregious understatement. This study concludes with what seemed to be the beginning of the long, and drawn out battle over "who is a Jew," and over modernity.[399]

Certainly K'lal Yisrael is an ancient concept, predating any Jewish settlement in North America by many centuries. The controversy surrounding Rabbi Feldman's installation illustrated that religious unity devoid of some measure of religious "uniformity" was incompatible with the maintenance of a religiously pluralistic system. This was especially the case after the Shoah had shattered the prevailing consensus over modernity. The attempt to transform the SCA into a supra-religious body was as clearly incompatible with the reality of American Judaism, as was the movement for a total *havdala* between Orthodox and non-Orthodox American Jews. Still, if the aftermath of the Feldman installation did prove the impossibility

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[399]The most thorough and by far interesting account dealing with postwar American Judaism, and with most of the issues we have touched upon here is Jack Wertheimer's A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America. (New York: Basic books, 1993).

of total religious unity among American Jews in the mid-1950's, it also proved that pluralism and cooperation were the norms in American Jewish religious life at mid-century. Nevertheless, given that Judaism in America is arguably more splintered than it was a century ago, the denominational structure of American Judaism may have collapsed into a neo-sectarian model of Jewish life. Whether American Jewry will become even more polarized or return to a mentality more accepting of denominationalism, still remains to be seen.

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