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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In gathering the relevant source materials for this study, I am grateful to the entire staff of the American Jewish Archives. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Abraham Peck, the Associate Director, and Kevin Proffitt, Chief Archivist, for their interest and assistance.

In every endeavor leading up to Ordination, my family has been my greatest source of support. I especially wish to thank my mother and father for their love and guidance, and for instilling in me a passion for learning. My father, whose rabbinic sensitivities, intellect, and humility, never cease to amaze me, read this entire manuscript, and I am grateful for his comments and suggestions.

During my studies at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, I have been exposed to a number of brilliant minds and stimulating personalities. No individual, however, has taught me more than Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus. His evening seminar sparked my interest in American Jewish History, and our subsequent walks and talks inspired me to explore the subject of Classical Reform Judaism. Dr. Marcus knew Rabbis Rosenau and Gries, and has guided my reading, research, and writing, every step of the way. His mentorship has been the highlight of my rabbinical school experience, and a treasure that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Finally, and above all else, I am indebted to my wife, Sheril, for her patience, encouragement, and understanding. Her support and love is behind everything I do. For giving me perspective, helping me persevere, and just being herself, I dedicate this effort to her.

DIGEST

Moses J. Gries (1865-1918) and William Rosenau (1868-1943) were among the most prominent Rabbis during the heyday of "Classical" Reform Judaism. They entered the Hebrew Union College in 1881 and were ordained in 1889, just four years after the adoption of the Pittsburgh Platform. In 1892, Gries and Rosenau became the spiritual leaders of two leading Reform Congregations, Gries at Cleveland's Tifereth Israel and Rosenau at Baltimore's Oheb Shalom. They also held successive terms as Presidents of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1913-1915 and 1916-1918, respectively. Though their parallel careers and activities embody many of the Reform principles of the day, Gries and Rosenau were definitely not cut from the same cloth! Gries's radical innovations, including his advocacy of the Sunday Sabbath and refusal to read from the Torah scroll itself, provide a startling contrast with Rosenau's conservatism. Their similarities and differences raise important questions about the nature and parameters of Classical Reform.

This thesis is a comparative analysis of the rabbinic careers and religious thought of Moses J. Gries and William Rosenau. Chapter One describes the major tenets and principles of Classical Reform Judaism. This chapter also reviews some of the prevailing social, institutional, and political realities in America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which dictated the character of American Reform. Chapters Two and Three present

biographical sketches of Gries and Rosenau, and focus on their respective rabbinic careers.

The remainder of this study is thematically arranged. Chapter Four explains Rosenau and Gries's God-concept and their belief in the mission of Israel. Chapter Five details Gries and Rosenau's views on the place of ritual in liberal Judaism and each rabbi's justification for Reform. Chapters Six and Seven probe the centrality of Americanism in their Jewish identities, and their aversion to political Zionism. Chapter Eight explores Gries and Rosenau's kinship with Jews in other lands and their particular concern for the welfare of the East European immigrants. Chapter Nine provides a glimpse into the social action work of Gries and Rosenau in Cleveland and Baltimore, and Chapter Ten chronicles the interfaith activity of each rabbi. In the concluding chapter, I evaluate the salient aspects of Gries and Rosenau's rabbinates, and attempt to show how their views shed light on both the nature of Classicity and the future of the Reform Movement.

The Classical Reform Context

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, a mood of unbridled optimism prevailed in America. Peace and goodwill seemed secure, and the nation experienced unprecedented economic growth. The railroad system tripled in size, new inventions were introduced, and America's oil, coal, and steel industries prospered. Even in the face of growing social crisis and rising poverty in America's farms and cities, it was widely believed that the control of preventable diseases, the abolition of poverty, and the raising of the general standard of living would all come about.¹

By 1881, most of the approximately two hundred eighty thousand Jews living in the United States were upwardly mobile second and third generation immigrants from Germany and Central Europe.² They identified most strongly with the Reform Movement, which originated in Germany and perceived Judaism in light of eighteenth-century enlightenment and nineteenth-century emancipation. The liberal optimism and confidence of Reform resonated with the German immigrants' hopes for a better life in the United States. During the "Classical" period of American Reform Judaism, which essentially spanned the years 1869 to 1937,³

¹Free Synagogue Pulpit (1) 1908: 62-63.

²A nationwide demographic survey of 1890, cited in Nathan Glazer's American Judaism, p.44, found that forty percent of the German-Jewish population employed one servant, twenty percent had two, and ten percent employed three or more servants.

³The landmark meeting of Reform Rabbis in Philadelphia in 1869 and the passage of the Columbus Platform sixty-eight years later account for this periodization of Classical Reform.

Reform became the movement of choice for Americanized Jews of German descent and made its greatest separation from traditional Judaism.

The Progress of American Reform Judaism

Prior to 1869, American Reform Judaism operated almost entirely on the congregational level. The very first effort at reforms in America occurred in 1824 in Charleston, South Carolina. Charleston was America's largest Jewish community at the time, and members of the Sephardic Beth Elohim congregation petitioned their leaders for changes in ritual, which included the introduction of English prayers, a weekly sermon in English, and an abbreviated service.⁴ When these and other requests were rebuffed, a small group led by Isaac Harby (1788-1828) seceded and formed the short-lived "Reformed Society of Israelites."⁵ By the late 1830's, Beth Elohim had adopted some of the Society's reforms and was moving in the direction of Reform. The first congregation organized as a Reform congregation, Har Sinai of Baltimore, was founded by a group of young immigrants who had been influenced by the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book in Germany.⁶ Three years later, in 1845, New York's Emanuel congregation was founded, and Reform-minded congregations soon appeared in other Eastern and Midwestern cities. They included Albany's Anshe Emeth (1850), Cincinnati's Bene

⁴The forty-seven signatories of the petition were influenced by the stirrings of German Reform. See David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, pp.329-331.

⁵For an extensive discussion of the Society's history, membership, and religious reforms, see Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity, pp.228-235.

⁶David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, p.335.

Yeshurun (1854) and Bene Israel (1855), Philadelphia's Keneseth Israel (1856), and Chicago's Temple Sinai (1861).⁷

The greatest impetus to the growth of American Reform in the mid-nineteenth century was the arrival of German-trained rabbis, many of whom were influenced by Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), the ideological and spiritual leader of European Reform Judaism. Max Lillienthal (1814-1882), who arrived in New York in 1845, was active in the spreading of the teachings of the Reform Movement and led the Bene Israel Congregation in Cincinnati for twenty-seven years. Samuel Adler (1809-1891), a scholar and active participant in the German Reform rabbinical conferences, succeeded Dr. Leo Merzbacher as Rabbi of Temple Emanuel in New York. Bernard Felsenthal (1822-1908) activated Reform Jewish life in Chicago with his 1859 *Kol Kore Bamidbar* pamphlet, and Samuel Hirsch (1815-1889), a prolific German writer and philosopher of Reform, assumed the Philadelphia Keneseth Israel pulpit in 1866.

It was a Bohemian immigrant from Radnitz, however, who shaped the history and development of Reform Jewish life in America more than any other individual. Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) served as a rabbi in Albany before becoming spiritual leader of Temple Bene Jeshurun of Cincinnati. He sought to establish a congregational assembly representing all sectors of American Jewry, as well as a rabbinical seminary for the training of American rabbis. He partially succeeded in both undertakings when the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) was established in 1873.

⁷Marc L. Raphael, Profiles in American Judaism, p.11.

The Hebrew Union College (HUC) was founded two years later. The UAHC eventually grew to include all Reform congregations, but never won the affiliation of the traditional synagogues. HUC also prospered, but did not fulfill Wise's initial goal of serving all sectors of the American community. Wise's support of the radical 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, coupled with the massive immigration of Eastern Europeans who were conditioned by the *yeshivah* model of rabbinic education, limited HUC's appeal to mostly liberal reformers.

The moderate tendencies of Isaac Mayer Wise were not only unacceptable to the religious right, but led to contentious battles with the radical wing of the American Reform Movement. The radicals were led by David Einhorn (1809-1879), a seasoned German Reformer who had engaged in controversies with the Orthodox in Birkenfeld, Hoppstadten, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and Budapest, before coming to America in 1855 to serve as rabbi of Baltimore's Har Sinai congregation. Einhorn stressed the moral mission of Israel and the universalist essence of Judaism throughout his rabbinate and was infuriated by Wise's capitulation to the Orthodox at the 1855 Cleveland Rabbinical Conference. Wise and his Reform colleagues, in an attempt to forge a compromise statement acceptable to the entire American rabbinate, voted in favor of a clause which endorsed the binding authority of the Talmud. Einhorn and his Eastern colleagues, including Samuel Adler of New York and Samuel Hirsch of Philadelphia, considered acceptance of this principle by any Reform rabbi to be an act of treachery. A schism ensued for fourteen years between the predominantly Eastern "radicals," led by Einhorn, and Wise's Western "moderates."

Wise publicized his more conciliatory and conservative approach to Reform Judaism in his *Israelite* and *Die Deborah* weeklies, and was countered in 1856 with the publication of Einhorn's *Sinai*, a German language monthly. Two years later, Einhorn published a prayerbook, *Olath Tamid*, in response to Wise's more traditional *Minhag America*. Its "abbreviated services, German translations, many original prayers, and crucial deletions, not only made it much more radical than Wise's *Minhag America*, but also probably gave it more enduring value."⁸ The legacy of Einhorn's *Olath Tamid* is evident to a degree in the *Union Prayer Book*, the first standard liturgy published by the Reform Movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).

In 1869, the fourteen-year rift between Einhorn's Eastern radicals and Wise's Western moderates was healed when both sides agreed to meet in Philadelphia. The thirteen rabbis who attended the conference reached agreement on a variety of issues. They voted to oppose Jewish nationalism, support the mission of Israel, abrogate priestly distinctions and rites, equalize the status of the woman at a marriage service, de-emphasize the importance of Hebrew in liturgy, and recognize the Jewishness of the uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother.⁹ More importantly, the Philadelphia Conference marked the beginning of American Reform's "Classical" phase. The seven principles adopted in Philadelphia served as the basis for the

⁸Ibid., p.15.

⁹David Polish, "The Changing and the Constant," in The American Jewish Archives, 35 (1983): p.270.

landmark Pittsburgh Conference of 1885, which became the centerpiece of Classical Reform.

The Pittsburgh Platform

Only fifteen rabbis were present when Kaufmann Kohler called the Pittsburgh Conference to order on November 16, 1885. Two days later, a set of principles were adopted which would shape the agenda of American Reform for the next fifty years. No previous conference, German or American, had as profound an effect on the development of Reform Judaism as this gathering in Pittsburgh.¹⁰ According to David Philipson, Secretary of the conference, it was "the most succinct expression of the theology of the Reform Movement that had ever been published to the world."¹¹ It may even be said that the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 articulated a set of beliefs to which many contemporary Reform Jews still subscribe. The platform emphasized a scientific, rational approach to religion, rejected the national existence of Israel, promoted universal brotherhood and the "mission" of Israel, and sought to distinguish between those ceremonies, rituals, and customs, which were compatible with the times, and those which were deemed unworthy of retention.

The conference opened with a call for unity by Kohler. Whereas Wise had convened the 1855 Cleveland Conference to develop a unifying program for all sectors of American Jewry, Kohler

¹⁰W. Gunther Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism, p.31.

¹¹David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, p.333.

concerned himself with the consolidation of Reform Jewish thought and practice.

"Looking at the various standpoints of progressive Jews individually or as represented in congregations, people only see that we have broken away from the old land-marks, but they fail to discern a common platform. Hence the confusion, the perplexity and the scare...It is high time to rally our forces to consolidate, to build."¹²

Isaac Mayer Wise was elected to serve as Chairman of the conference, though his influence was negligible when compared with the "commanding spirit" of David Einhorn.¹³ Einhorn had died in 1879, however, through the persuasive powers of his two sons-in-law, Kaufmann Kohler and Emil G. Hirsch, his philosophy of Reform prevailed over Wise's more moderate leanings. In a paper presented on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the Pittsburgh Platform and the Proceedings of 1885, Gunther Plaut labels Einhorn as the authentic "father" of Reform Judaism instead of Wise, as commonly assumed.¹⁴ Wise was unquestionably the institutional architect of American Reform by virtue of his role in founding the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1873), the Hebrew Union College (1875), and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1889). However, the theology and ideology of the Platform were more reflective of Einhorn, and it was his chief disciple, Kohler, who shaped the tenor and substance of the Pittsburgh proceedings.¹⁵

¹²Walter Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, p.93.

¹³Plaut, op. cit., p.17.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵W. Gunther Plaut, "The Pittsburgh Platform in the Light of European Antecedents," in Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, p.22.

Utilizing the ten propositions laid out by Kohler in his opening paper, a committee consisting of Rabbis Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Krauskopf, David Philipson, Solomon Sonneschein, and Kohler, reduced them to eight, in what became known as the Pittsburgh Platform.¹⁶ The Platform begins with a universalistic statement, "We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source, or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system, the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man."¹⁷ It is no accident that the Platform begins with an emphasis on the God-idea, especially in light of nineteenth-century rationalism and the threat posed by the Ethical Culture Movement. This New York-based movement, begun by Felix Adler in 1876, emphasized ethics and morality at the expense of theology. This first plank, therefore, is an unequivocal affirmation of Reform's dedication to the God-idea and excludes Adler's group from the outset.

The second plank says, in essence, that God did not write the Torah. In stating that the Bible is "the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as priest of the one God," the literal authority of the Torah was effectively dismissed. Instead, the Bible was revered for its use "as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction." Kohler later proposed to amend this section by including the words, "Divine Revelation." His motion, however, was defeated. The phrase "Divine Revelation" was simply

¹⁶While these statements incorporated most of the issues addressed in Kohler's remarks, a number of subjects, such as equality for women and home ritual, were not specifically mentioned in the final document.

¹⁷See appendix for full text of the Pittsburgh Platform.

too strong for most of the rabbis at Pittsburgh and did not comport with their scientific approach to Scripture. For them, the Bible was an historical record and reflected "the primitive ideas of its own age." Clearly, Darwin's On The Origin of Species in 1859, and the emerging field of Biblical criticism, had had an impact on the rabbis. By denying God's literal authorship of the Torah, the rabbis were able to see no conflict between the "doctrines of Judaism" and scientific discovery. The fundamental value of the Bible therefore lay in its moral and ethical teachings, and not in its scientific plausibility.

In an age when Christian Science, Ethical Culture, and intermarriage were attracting Jews away from their faith, this second plank also provided an answer to why Jews should remain Jewish. The architects of the Pittsburgh Platform took the notion of a Jewish mission very seriously. In their view, Jews were "heirs to, and custodians of, a most valid understanding of God, of God's relation to the world, and of God's goal for creation."¹⁸ Jewish survival therefore became a matter of transcendent significance, since God and the world needed Jewish witnesses to proclaim Judaism's message of ethical monotheism.

Paragraph three asserts that only those religious ceremonies which "elevate and sanctify" the lives of modern men should be maintained. Those which are not adaptable "to the views and habits of modern civilization" are to be rejected. One of the main principles of Reform Judaism, from its earliest beginnings in

¹⁸Samuel E. Karff, "The Theology of the Pittsburgh Platform," in Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, p.76.

Germany, was to evaluate the past and distinguish the fundamental and eternal characteristics in Judaism from the temporal and changing.¹⁹ David Philipson (1862-1949), one of the first graduates of the Hebrew Union College and an historian of the Reform Movement, emphasizes this point:

"...[Reform] discriminates between separate traditions as these have become actualized in forms, ceremonies, customs, and beliefs, accepting or rejecting them in accordance with the modern religious need and outlook, while rabbinical Judaism makes no such discrimination."²⁰

The third plank of the Pittsburgh Platform therefore reflects the Reformers' longstanding attempt to separate the binding moral law from the more transitory ceremonials.

The fourth plank is the only section stated completely in the negative. All laws governing "diet, priestly purity, and dress," are held to be influenced by ideas "altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state." This paragraph is an extension of the fourth resolution of the Philadelphia Conference in which the rabbis abolished all religious distinctions between priests, Levites, and Israelites. At Pittsburgh, however, it was added that the dietary laws and dress restrictions also failed "to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness." While the basis for the dismissal of these laws was that they were apt to "obstruct [rather] than to further" spirituality, even this negative pronouncement left open the

¹⁹Julian Mogernstern, "The Achievements of Reform Judaism," CCAR Yearbook, 34 (1924): 260.

²⁰Philipson, op. cit., p.9.

possibility of observing such practices when they were found to be spiritually enhancing.²¹

Paragraph five links the universal spirit of the modern era to "the realization of Israel's great messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men." It resembles the principles adopted at the Philadelphia and Frankfort Conferences in its affirmation of a Messianic age instead of a personal Messiah. The sense of imminence in the Pittsburgh statement, however, distinguishes the new formulation from earlier assemblies. This statement, more than any other, reveals the Pittsburgh rabbis' belief that the Messianic era was virtually within reach. The "modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect" suggested its arrival. The plank continues with the Pittsburgh Reformers' consideration of themselves as Jews in religion only. Consequently, all laws, prayers, and practices relating to a national return to Palestine were no longer relevant.

In the next paragraph, Judaism is said to be a "progressive" religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason." In many ways, this statement underscores the philosophy behind the entire document. Reason implied that religion, like every other human enterprise, was a consequence of gradual evolution. Judaism was not a static commodity fixed for all eternity but was rather a product of continuous growth and change. The Pittsburgh rabbis acknowledged the importance of preserving a historical identity with Judaism's great past. However, a progressive and reasonable

²¹See Philip Sigal, "Halakhic Reflections on the Pittsburgh Platform," in Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, pp.41-54.

Judaism meant that the test of truth had to depend on the laws of logic and rationality as well as Torah. With the postulates of reason as their inheritance, these Reformers felt impelled to re-examine traditional assumptions and to accept only those ideas that were compatible with the spirit of the times. One area in which traditional Jewish views were considered antiquated was in its deprecation of other monotheistic faiths. Kohler, in his opening address, had suggested that the times demanded a more positive theological appreciation of the "Gentile" world. His proposal is reflected in the second half of the sixth principle, which expresses appreciation to Christianity and Islam for their "providential mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth."

At Philadelphia, the rabbis had affirmed their belief in the immortality of the soul and denied the notion of a physical resurrection. The seventh plank of the Pittsburgh Platform reasserts this view and adds an additional rejection of the idea of punishment in the life after death. Rabbis Wise and Falk voiced their objection to the wording of this paragraph and expressed their wish to have reward and punishment accentuated as a Reform Jewish dogma. However, the counter-arguments of Kohler and Hirsch eventually prevailed. Hirsch noted the Parsee origin of burning in Gehenna and said, "We cannot urge too strongly that righteousness is its own reward, and wrong-doing carries with it its own punishment."²²

²²Jacob (ed.), op. cit., p.111.

The final paragraph introduces the notion that a Jew has a religious responsibility to participate in solving issues of social justice. "In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation...we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society." This statement was a unique contribution of Reform to American Jewish life. The Prophets' emphasis on social justice and ethical behavior was reclaimed by the Pittsburgh Reformers and was considered to be of paramount importance. Though this statement was influenced by the American Progressive movement and the Christian Social Gospel,²³ the Reformers viewed the impulse for social action as Jewish in origin, and they even commended their Christian colleagues for "enlisting under the banner of prophetic Judaism."²⁴ In addition to the social action plank of the Pittsburgh Platform, the issue of a special mission to the Jewish poor was advocated during the proceedings "to bring these under the influence of moral and religious teaching."

The Pittsburgh Platform is generally considered to be the statement of Classical Reform Judaism in America. Its pronouncements bear a striking resemblance to the Philadelphia principles. Both cast aside Talmudic authority, both assert a

²³Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity, pp.287-288.

²⁴Rabbi Horace J. Wolf, reviewing Graham Taylor's Religion in Social Action, quoted in Meyer, Response to Modernity, p.288. The social action plank is not the only shared feature of Classical Reform and liberal Protestant Christianity. The liberal Protestant agenda that emerged after 1870, had counterparts with virtually every plank of the Pittsburgh Platform. See Robert W. Ross, "The Pittsburgh-Platform of 1885 One Hundred Years Old," in Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, pp.64-66.

positive view of the diaspora and reject a national homeland in Palestine, and both affirm belief in spiritual immortality while denying bodily resurrection. Aside from the new social action plank, the only noticeable differences are the Pittsburgh Platform's omission of the use of Hebrew in liturgy²⁵ and the term "chosen" found in the Philadelphia document. In the latter case, the Pittsburgh Platform declares the theological superiority of Judaism's God-idea but does not elevate the Jewish people per se to a higher plane. Instead, all who "operate with [Jews] in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men" are acknowledged to be interconnected and chosen to aid in Israel's mission. At the three German Reform Rabbinical Conferences and Synods,²⁶ the rabbis also affirmed the concepts of "historical evolution" and the obligation of Jews, in the words of Samuel Holdheim (1800-1860), to fulfill their mission "to make the pure knowledge of God, and the pure law of morality of Judaism, the common possession and blessing of all the people of the earth."²⁷

What set the Pittsburgh meeting apart from its ideological precursors at Philadelphia and in Germany, was the platform's undaunted willingness to break with tradition. The tone of the Pittsburgh proceedings is almost triumphant, ancient ideas are called "primitive," and the dawning of a new era is anticipated. Even the moderate Isaac Mayer Wise, on the occasion of his eightieth

²⁵It may have been the case that by 1885, Hebrew had become so insignificant that it did not even warrant separate attention.

²⁶Three rabbinical conferences were held at Brunswick (1844), Frankfurt-on-the-Main (1845), and Breslau (1846). Two synods took place in Leipzig (1869) and Augsburg (1871). See Meyer, Response to Modernity, pp.132-140.

²⁷W. Gunther Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism, pp.93-94, 138.

birthday, voiced his belief that Reform Judaism would become the religion of most enlightened Americans within twenty five years! The new reformers were intoxicated with the "spirit of broad humanity of [their] age," as demonstrated by the appreciation they extended to their Christian and Muslim co-religionists.

Reaction to the Pittsburgh Platform confirmed that it was a lightening rod for Reform support and opposition. The Southern rabbinical conference endorsed it immediately,²⁸ and the rift between Eastern and Western Reformers, dating back to Einhorn's 1855 attack on Wise for bowing to Talmudic legalists at the Cleveland Rabbinical Conference, healed quickly. Wise took great pride in the near unanimous approval of the Platform by all sectors of the American Reform rabbinate and reprinted the full text of the Platform in his *American Israelite* weekly. In the East, a new periodical entitled the *Jewish Reformer* was founded by Kohler, Hirsch, and Rabbi Adolph Moses of Louisville, which promulgated the "inner consolidation" of the Reform Movement represented by the proceedings at Pittsburgh.²⁹

The platform aroused a storm of opposition both from within and without the Reform camp. Felix Adler, who founded the universalist Ethical Culture Movement a decade earlier, wondered why the Pittsburgh rabbis did not go further and declare themselves to be Unitarians. Adler, the son of the distinguished German Reform

²⁸The conference of Southern Rabbis met in New Orleans in early 1866. James K. Gutheim presided over the assembly, which adopted the Pittsburgh Platform, but declared itself against Sunday Services. See James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, pp.466-467.

²⁹Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp.269-270.

rabbi, Samuel Adler, had lost all interest in Jewish ritual and theology, and invited the Pittsburgh Reformers to join his movement.³⁰ The platform aroused even greater opposition among the Orthodox and conservatives. Dr. Benjamin Szold, who had originally supported the Hebrew Union College and the UAHC, delivered a blistering denunciation of the Pittsburgh gathering. Dr. David Philipson, Szold's younger Baltimore colleague, records in his memoirs that Szold likened the rabbis assembled at Pittsburgh to pygmies attempting to pull down the Washington Monument!³¹ Neither HUC nor the UAHC officially endorsed the Pittsburgh Platform. Wise opened the 1886 academic year at HUC by asserting that the spirit of the College remained unchanged in spite of the passage of the Platform. He maintained that HUC stood firmly upon a belief in the revealed law and did not sanction an evolutionary approach to Judaism.³² Bowing to pressure from conservative member congregations of the UAHC, Bernhard Bettmann, President of the HUC Board of Governors, issued a letter rejecting any linkage between the tenets of the Pittsburgh Platform and the course of study taught at HUC.³³ Despite these public denunciations by Wise and others, moderates such as Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia and Alexander Kohut of New York, joined Szold in severing their affiliation with the Reform Movement. They lent their support instead to the establishment of a rival to Wise's Hebrew Union

³⁰Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, p. 24. Meyer, op. cit., p.265-266, 271.

³¹Philipson, My Life As An American Jew, p.51.

³²Proceedings of the UAHC, 3 (1886-1891): 2053.

³³Ibid., pp.2005-2006.

College. In 1886, the Jewish Theological Seminary Association of America was founded in New York, marking the beginning of a new Conservative Jewish Movement in America.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, the last of the three national institutions founded by Wise, was organized on July 9, 1889, in the city of Detroit. Although the third article of the CCAR constitution extends membership to "all active and retired rabbis of congregations, and professors of rabbinical seminaries," most of its members were liberals from the start.³⁴ It declared itself to be the historical successor of all modern rabbinical conferences and appended a summary of the resolutions made at various nineteenth-century rabbinical conferences and synods, from "The Responses of the French Sanhedrin, 1807," to the proceedings of the Pittsburgh Conference.³⁵

Isaac Mayer Wise became the first President of the Conference, a position he held until his death in 1900.³⁶ At the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the CCAR, Wise listed some of the notable achievements of the Conference during its first decade of activity. These included the CCAR's representation of Judaism at

³⁴Meyer, *op. cit.*, p.276. See also Sidney L. Regner, "The History of the Conference," in *Retrospect and Prospect*, Bertram W. Korn (ed.), p.12.

³⁵An 1889 proposal to reassert the Pittsburgh Platform as the official expression of the Conference was defeated. However, the adoption of Maurice Faber's proposal to include it in the CCAR Yearbook together with the declarations of previous conferences, suggests its *de facto* acceptance and legitimate link in the historical chain of Reform Judaism.

³⁶Samuel Adler, sole survivor of the German conferences of the 1840's, was elected Honorary President of the Conference. See Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, pp.42-43.

the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, the publication of a standard prayerbook, the *Union Prayer-Book for Jewish Worship* (UPB) in 1892, and the unification of Reform leaders of North America.³⁷ At its fourth annual convention in Chicago, the Conference discussed questions of personal status, and resolved to relax the Halakhic requirements for conversion. Circumcision and immersion were no longer mandatory for adult converts, who were now to be welcomed into the Jewish covenant on the basis of knowledge and commitment alone.³⁸ At the July, 1895, meeting in Rochester, Wise posed the question of Reform's relation "in all religious matters" to post-biblical literature.³⁹ A committee report the following year, which declared Talmudic and post-Talmudic Halakhic literature to be non-authoritative, was unanimously adopted. Political Zionism was officially rejected by the Conference at its first Canadian convention in Montreal in 1897, and anti-Zionist statements promoting the purely religious mission of Israel were reaffirmed at the 1906 and 1917 annual meetings.

The Sunday Service question had been introduced at the 1846 Breslau Conference. A statement made at the Pittsburgh Conference, however, which declared Sunday Services as compatible with "the spirit of Judaism," caused a storm of controversy and dominated the annual conventions of the CCAR between 1902 and 1905. Those in favor of Sunday services argued on pragmatic grounds, noting that a large number of Jews had to work on Saturday and that a Sunday

³⁷David Philipson, *the Reform Movement in Judaism*, p.358.

³⁸Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p.280.

³⁹*CCAR Yearbook*, (5) 1895: 63

service would greatly increase synagogue attendance. Some rabbis even went so far as to advocate the transfer of the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday. On the other side of the controversy were rabbis who bitterly opposed the idea of Sunday observance for fear that it might lead to Christian conversion and would diminish the significance of the divinely-ordained traditional Sabbath. Opponents pointed out that the institution of late Friday evening services made it possible for those who worked on Saturday to still worship on the historical Sabbath day. The Conference decided to recognize Sunday services on the same level as any other weekday service advocated by the Movement. However, with very few exceptions, members of the CCAR condemned any attempt to transfer the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday.⁴⁰

The Sunday Sabbath controversy was emblematic of a larger trend within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Reform Judaism known as "Radical" Reform. The Radicals were provoked by the intellectual challenges of Darwinian theory and biblical criticism, and went further than the liberal tenets of the Pittsburgh Platform. The Radicals' principal spokesman was Emil G. Hirsch (1851-1923), an active member of the CCAR, Rabbi of Temple Sinai in Chicago, and editor of a journal entitled *Reform Advocate*.⁴¹ Hirsch was the rabbi responsible for the social action plank of the Pittsburgh Platform, and like other radicals, stressed the ethical teachings of the prophets to the near exclusion of ritual and

⁴⁰Raphael, *op. cit.*, pp.32-34. For a complete discussion of the Sunday Sabbath controversy in Reform Judaism, see, Kerry M. Olitzky, "The Sunday Sabbath Controversy in Judaism" (HUC-JIR rabbinic thesis), 1983, pp.45-101.

⁴¹Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp.271-273.

ceremony.⁴² He was one of the few Reformers who advocated the transfer of the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday, and was influenced by the "religion of humanity" which "emerged in nearly every Protestant denomination in the late nineteenth century."⁴³ The Radical reformers often utilized non-Jewish authors as sources of inspiration and encouraged the participation of Gentiles in worship. At least one of them, Boston's Rabbi Charles Fleischer (1871-1942), left Judaism completely to "establish a nonsectarian religious congregation."⁴⁴

The CCAR expanded its role in standardizing the liturgy and ritual of Reform congregations with the publication of the *Union Hymnal* and *Union Haggadah* in 1897 and 1907, respectively. The *Union Prayer-Book* was still regarded by the CCAR as its chief accomplishment in unifying liberal Judaism in America. The first volume of the UPB was revised in 1918 and was used in over three hundred Reform congregations.⁴⁵ The social consciousness of the generation was recognized in the prayer for social vision in the afternoon service of the Day of Atonement, which was published in the second volume of the UPB in 1922.⁴⁶

The CCAR was surprisingly quiet on matters of social justice during its first eighteen years and issued only two statements of

⁴²Meyer compares and contrasts the life and thought of Emil G. Hirsch and Kaufmann Kohler in his text, Response to Modernity, pp.270-276.

⁴³Raphael, op. cit., p.35.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp.36-37.

⁴⁵Philipson, op. cit., p.369; Meyer, op. cit., p.277.

⁴⁶David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, p.369.

social concern in 1901 and 1908.⁴⁷ Since many of the CCAR's primary supporters were conservative businessmen and wealthy beneficiaries of the capitalist system, it is not surprising that there was a paucity of aggressive social action taken by the CCAR.⁴⁸ Despite the reticence of the Conference, individual rabbis, most notably Emil G. Hirsch, championed the cause of social justice in their local communities. Hirsch represented many of his colleagues when he intoned that "religion must be in all things or it is nothing...It must touch life at every point or it does not touch it at any point."⁴⁹ The cautious and conservative approach of the Conference was broken in 1918 when the CCAR's Committee on Synagogue and Industrial Relations, together with the Commission on Social Justice, submitted the first official platform on social justice. This bold proclamation called for an equitable distribution of profit, a minimum wage, the protection of women in industry and the elimination of child labor, workman's compensation, health insurance, and much more.⁵⁰

The increasing role of Protestant and Catholic religious organizations in matters of social justice, as well as the deteriorating condition of America's cities in the early decades of the twentieth century, were two additional factors which motivated

⁴⁷In 1901, the Conference agreed to cooperate with the Golden Rule Brotherhood, a peace organization, and in 1908 it issued its first call for the abolition of child labor. See Roland B. Gittelsohn, "The Conference Stance on Social Justice and Civil Rights," in Retrospect and Prospect, Betram W. Korn (ed.), pp.87-89.

⁴⁸Meyer, Response to Modernity, p.288.

⁴⁹Emil G. Hirsch, My Religion, p.131.

⁵⁰Gittelsohn, op. cit., p.88. Gittelsohn points out that the matter of Negro and minority rights was conspicuously absent from the 1918 Declaration of Principles.

the Conference to extend its involvement in programs of social justice.⁵¹ In the 1920's, the CCAR joined Catholic and Protestant religious bodies in repudiating the twelve-hour work day and other labor grievances. The Conference also committed itself to a defense of civil liberties and civil rights, and would later become the first national religious body to speak out for birth control.⁵² The prophetic faith and teachings of Israel underlaid much of the CCAR's efforts to correct societal inequity and injustice. As Hyman G. Enelow pointed out in 1916, "the synthesis of religion and human service is what Amos and Isaiah stood for."⁵³ The Union of American Hebrew Congregations established its own Committee of Social Justice in 1925. This lay committee was more reluctant to take controversial stands on specific economic, political, and financial issues. However, it did take vigorous positions on such domestic issues as child labor legislation, registration of aliens, release of political prisoners, and lynchings, as well as on "issues affecting the beleaguered Jews in Europe."⁵⁴

Another major concern of the CCAR was the separation of religion and state. As early as 1892, a resolution was passed which stated that CCAR members "do emphatically protest against all religious legislation as subversive of religious liberty."⁵⁵ A

⁵¹For a detailed discussion of the historical factors accounting for the rise of a genuine social program in the CCAR, see Leonard J. Mervis, "The Social Justice Movement and the American Reform Rabbi," in American Jewish Archives, (7) 1955: 171-178

⁵²Ibid., pp.98-102.

⁵³Hyman G. Enelow, Selected Works, vol. 3, pp.34, 127-128, cited in Raphael, Profiles in American Judaism, p.51.

⁵⁴Raphael, p.47.

⁵⁵CCAR Yearbook, (3) 1892: 42.

standing committee on Church-State relations was established and in 1906, the Conference was the "only national body which concerned itself with this problem."⁵⁶ The church-state issue remained high on the Conference's priority of concerns in the early decades of the twentieth century as shown by Conference papers and presidential addresses dealing with the issue in 1911, 1916, and 1924.⁵⁷

During the Classical period of American Reform, the make-up of American Jewry changed dramatically. Between 1870 and the outbreak of World War I alone, nearly two million Jews immigrated to America. The persecution of Jews in Russia by the Czar in the 1880's led to the mass emigration of East European Jews to America's shores. Many of the immigrants brought their traditionalism with them and did not share the ambivalence of most Reformers toward ritual and ceremony. During this period, the CCAR had to contend also with the paternalistic attitude of many German Reformers and find new ways to reach the East European immigrants. A 1904 Conference paper entitled "Reform Judaism and the Recent Immigrant" spoke of the "inundation of Russian Jews." The speaker's disparaging remarks toward the new immigrants irritated many of his colleagues. David Philipson expressed the sentiment of many CCAR members when he said in response to Hirschberg, "We can never come to a proper understanding of the problems of the ghetto until we remove entirely from ourselves the feeling that we are

⁵⁶Eugene Lipman, "The Conference Considers Relations Between Religion and the State," in Retrospect and Prospect, p.116.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp.117-119.

better than the Russian Jews."⁵⁸ Still, while the Reformers lent financial, moral, and organizational support to the Americanization of the East Europeans, the hierarchical structure and Protestant worship style typical of Reform temples during this era did not suit the religious preference of the East European immigrants.

David Philipson and Classical Reform

Any attempt to capture the spirit of American Reform during its Classical phase must take into account the life and thought of David Philipson. Philipson was one of the first of the American-born Reformers and a member of HUC's first ordination class. At the young age of twenty-three, he acted as Secretary of the Pittsburgh Conference and served on its Revising Committee. He defended the Pittsburgh platform against the attack of his Baltimore colleagues from his Har Sinai pulpit, utilizing each article as a basis for a separate sermon. He accepted a call from Cincinnati's Bene Israel congregation, then known as the "Mound Street Temple," taught homiletics and semitics at Hebrew Union College for forty-three years, and was appointed to the Board of Governors of the HUC. Philipson wielded enormous power over the affairs of HUC:

"...The most powerful influence on the Board of Governors seems to have been the rabbi of Bene Israel...David Philipson. He was the force behind Kohler, and according to one recollection, 'the uncrowned king of the college.'"⁵⁹

⁵⁸CCAR Yearbook, (14) 1904: 179, cited in Retrospect and Prospect, Bertram J. Korn (ed.), p.145

⁵⁹Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: At One Hundred Years, Samuel E. Karff (ed.), p.82.

The death of Isaac Mayer Wise in 1900, and the ascendancy of Kaufmann Kohler to the presidency of HUC three years later, effectively made Philipson Cincinnati's senior rabbi. He worked diligently for the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and was elected its President from 1907 to 1909. His sixty-six years in the rabbinate earned him the title, "Dean of American Reform Rabbis," and his writings on Reform Judaism, especially his text, The Reform Movement in Judaism (1907), made him the premier historian of the Movement during its "Classical" period.

Philipson credits Wise and Einhorn as the two dominant and contrasting influences in his early professional life. Philipson had the unusual distinction of following in the footsteps of Einhorn at Baltimore's Har Sinai congregation after receiving ordination from Wise's Hebrew Union College. For four years, he was the only graduate of the Hebrew Union College to serve a pulpit in the East. Philipson was first exposed to Einhorn's teachings at Har Sinai when a congregant offered to sell him his complete collection of Sinai, the magazine edited by Einhorn.⁶⁰ This periodical was Einhorn's answer to Wise's *American Israelite*, and it presented Philipson with an entirely new way of thinking about Reform. Einhorn, whose motto was "fidelity to principle," was never willing to compromise. Wise, while no less dominant a personality, was much more pragmatic. Philipson would later reminisce that he had been "reared" in the Wise school, but had had his first graduate training in the "Einhorn environment."⁶¹

⁶⁰Philipson, My Life As An American Jew, p.55.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

The cornerstone of Philipson's message may be best summed up by the phrase, "American in nationality, Jewish in religion." He stressed both elements throughout his career:

"The two main articles of my life's creed have been liberal Judaism and Americanism. I have constantly defined myself as an American of the Jewish faith. I have given myself wholeheartedly to the carrying out of the fundamental principles of Americanism as subsumed in the Bill of Rights: free speech, free press, separation of Church and State, and the right of assembly. From this line I have never consciously departed."⁶²

Philipson's Americanism was manifest in the worship and activities of the pulpits he served. When he was at Bene Israel in Cincinnati, an American flag stood on his pulpit, patriotic themes were frequent sermon topics, and the temple's facilities were opened for patriotic organizations to hold their meetings.⁶³ His staunch Americanism reached a fever pitch during World War One. In an address before a Cincinnati businessman's club entitled, "Are the Germans the Chosen People?", Philipson proclaimed that history had revealed America as God's chosen nation.⁶⁴

Philipson's anti-Zionism was a corollary to his Americanism. "To my mind," he wrote in his autobiography, "political Zionism and true Americanism have always seemed mutually exclusive. No man can be a member of two nationalities, a Jewish and an American. *Aut-aut*. There is no middle way."⁶⁵ Philipson also felt that

⁶²Ibid., p.70.

⁶³Karla Goldman, "A History of K.K. Bene Israel Congregation" (mimeographed material), p.40., American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁴For full text of the speech, see Philipson *op. cit.*, pp.270-275. Two hundred thousand copies of this lecture were printed and distributed nationwide.

⁶⁵Ibid., p.72.

Zionism would weaken the national standing of America's Jews. "This latter-day nationalist movement," he wrote, "is fraught with danger to the welfare of Jews in this country."⁶⁶

Philipson's liberal religious outlook, which reflected the broad universalist conception of Reform Judaism during its Classical phase, could not tolerate Jewish nationalism in any form. "The mission of Judaism," he once wrote, "is spiritual, not political. Its aim is not to establish a State, but to spread the truths of religion and humanity throughout the world."⁶⁷ Zionism therefore violated the universal mission of Israel, which could only be achieved in the Diaspora. It also replaced the spiritual mission of Israel with a political objective, an idea anathema to Classical Reform ideology and to its conception of history. By declaring that Jews would always be homeless in the Diaspora, political Zionism contradicted Israel's prophetic summons to spread justice throughout the world. For Philipson and Classical Reformers like him, America provided the Jew with a sacred opportunity to achieve Israel's mission. The anti-Zionist sentiment among Reform Jewish leaders remained so strong in the early decades of the twentieth century that Philipson appeared before the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on April 22, 1922, to argue against congressional support for the Balfour Declaration.⁶⁸ In his testimony, Philipson referred to the 1917 anti-Zionist resolution passed by the CCAR,

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p.277.

⁶⁷Philipson, *op. cit.*, p.137.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp.299-304.

which reaffirmed the fundamental principle of Reform as religious and non-political.

Despite their patriotic fervor and firm opposition to political Zionism, the proponents of Classical Reform still felt a religious kinship with Jews in other lands. Philipson expressed this in a 1909 address before the Union of American Hebrew Congregations:

"...We are an historic community, molded by historic forces. If solidarity there be among us, it is a religious solidarity, not a national or a racial. Nationally, I feel attached to my American brother of whatever faith or non-faith. Religiously I am bound to my Jewish brother, whether now he lives in the United States, in the pampas of South America, in Russian Pale, in Moroccan mellah, in Indian jungle, or in South African veldt."⁶⁹

The Classical Reformers viewed their Movement as an extension of Prophetic Judaism and stressed that their prophetic ancestors were the first protagonists of social justice. For Philipson and his Classical colleagues, the prophets were begging to be heard.

"It was an Amos who preached that unexampled bitter tirade against the unscrupulous profiteers who trampled upon the poor and sold the needy for a pair of shoes...It was an Isaiah who piled up the great series of woes upon the heartless speculators of his day...If we are indeed the spiritual sons of these prophets, we must help along where we can in every effort to improve the condition of those who have been the underdogs of the social order."⁷⁰

In a series of sermons preached in December 1885 and early 1886, Philipson defended the Pittsburgh Platform against its

⁶⁹Ibid., pp.203-204.

⁷⁰"The Labor Problem," a sermon delivered on March 6, 1937. David Philipson Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

critics. He denied the traditional view which held that Moses was the author of the Torah, and in the spirit of the Pittsburgh Platform, treated the sacred text as a composite work. He argued that much of the "Mosaic legislation" was contextual and only binding upon the Jews when they lived as a nation in Palestine. Philipson had great respect for consistently observant Jews but labeled those who selectively choose which laws to observe and which to ignore as "would be reformers" and "half-hearted hypocrites."⁷¹ Like Kohler, Philipson viewed Reform as a positive constructive attempt to rescue the eternal and non-temporal truths of Judaism.

"Its name designates that it must reform not that it destroys; it must clothe the eternal truths of Judaism in a garb not imported from ancient and medieval times with a must smell and seeming strange and out of place, but in one adapted to the views of modern civilization."⁷²

Many of the classical Reformers associated traditional Judaism with the mass migration of East European Jews to the United States during the years 1881-1914. Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger, a contemporary of Philipson and a leading classical Reformer, preached that the rituals of Orthodoxy and Conservatism were "senseless," "irrational," and to be discarded.⁷³ Philipson was less radical and held that forms, ceremonies and customs must pass away only "when they are no longer expressive of the needs of its worshippers."⁷⁴ It is fair to say for all the Classical Reformers,

⁷¹Robert W. Ross, "The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885," in Jacob (ed.), The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect, p.68.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Marc L. Raphael, Profiles in American Judaism, p.26.

⁷⁴Ibid.

though, that the ultimate tests of truth were logic and rationality and not the dictates of Rabbinism. Many rituals and customs, such as the laying of phylacteries and the covering of heads in the synagogue, were dismissed as retrogressive vestiges of medievalism.

For the Classical Reformers, Judaism could no longer rely on a set of unexamined assumptions. It could rely only on a set of reasonable ideas that were compatible with the spirit of the new age. The mood of the times was forward and optimistic, and outmoded orthodox rituals were inimical to such a spirit.⁷⁵ Individualism, optimism, universalism, Americanism, and progress, characterized Philipson's Judaism, and led Classical Reformers like him to conclude that Judaism had "passed through various stages of growth and development to reach today's highest plane."⁷⁶ The principles of the Pittsburgh Platform had prevailed as the major voice of Reform, even if they did not command universal acceptance in the Movement. Nowhere was this more manifest than in the rabbinic careers of Moses J. Gries and William Rosenau.

⁷⁵The distancing of Classical Reform from many traditional ceremonies and customs did not mean the negation of all ritual. The age-old custom of circumcision and the ban on intermarriage with non-Jews, for instance, were overwhelmingly maintained by the American Reform Rabbinate.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p.24.

Moses J. Gries: A Conscience For The Congregation

Moses J. Gries, the son of Jacob and Katharina Frances Gries, was born in Newark, New Jersey, on January 25, 1868. Gries was orphaned at age seven and was placed in the Newark Hebrew Orphan Asylum. He was also cared for by Rabbis Joseph Leucht and Joseph Hahn of the same city. Gries applied to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati (HUC) at the tender age of eleven, since he already was homeless with no ties elsewhere. He was refused admission until three years later because of his age. In 1882, Gries began his studies at Hebrew Union College in conjunction with classes at Hughes High School and McMicken College (now the University of Cincinnati).¹ Seven years later, Gries received a Bachelor of Letters degree from the University of Cincinnati and was ordained a rabbi at the Hebrew Union College. The nine graduates of the HUC Class of 1889 constituted, at that time, the largest group ever ordained by Dr. Isaac M. Wise.² Gries and his classmates were named charter members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the professional association of Rabbis founded by Wise in the same year.

¹ American Hebrew, October 6, 1916, p.793.

² In addition to Gries, the ordinees of the Class of 1889 included Heiman J. Elkin, William S. Friedman, Rudolph Grossman, Charles Levi, William Rosenau, Isaac L. Rypins, Max Wertheimer, and Adolph Guttmacher.

Gries began his rabbinical career as the first spiritual leader of Mizpah Congregation in Chattanooga, Tennessee.³ Soon after his arrival at Mizpah, it became evident that the facility built in 1882 was too small and inadequate to accommodate the increasing activities of the congregation's growing membership.⁴ Gries therefore undertook a twenty-thousand dollar fund-raising campaign for a new building, which was dedicated two years after he had left the congregation.⁵

During his ministry in Chattanooga, Gries won the love and esteem of Jews and non-Jews alike. He established good relations with his Christian colleagues and made it a custom at Yizkor services to read the names of deceased local and national Gentile leaders along with the names of deceased members of the Mizpah Congregation. In 1890, for instance, Gries offered a fervent prayer for Cardinal Manning, Rev. Chas. Spurgeon, Walt Whitman, and other prominent Gentiles, who helped humanity through their service and example:

"Ye friends of our beloved who lived and struggled for the salvation of mankind, who as messengers of Providence assisted humanity, you are as dear to our souls as dear you are to the God of humanity."⁶

³Gries's initial contract, found among his personal papers, called for the salary of "one thousand and eight hundred dollars per annum." Document, Box 2, File 6, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴An 1890 Chattanooga newspaper clipping reports that there were approximately five hundred Jews living in the city. B'nai Zion, a traditional synagogue, was also in existence, though its membership was much smaller than Gries' Mizpah Congregation. Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

⁵On September 14, 1894, Rabbi Gries and Dr. Isaac M. Wise returned to Chattanooga at the invitation of Mizpah's Rabbi Isidore Lewinthal to conduct the rededication exercises.

⁶*Ibid.*

In addition to his congregational work, Gries became identified with all of the larger charitable institutions of the city and served for a year as President of the Humane Society.⁷ Gries also came to the defense of German Jewish immigrants who were ostracized in the Chattanooga workplace. An 1890 article in the local newspaper records the story of a number of newly arrived German Jewish workers of the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad Company. These men were subjected to such brutal treatment that guards had to be placed upon them at night to prevent them from running away. They managed to escape and report the abuse they had suffered to Rabbi Gries, who quickly took the matter in hand. Gries paid a personal visit to the company office, sent in a complaint, and vowed that he would take every precaution to prevent them from further outrages.⁸

In his Chattanooga sermons, Gries addressed a variety of Jewish concerns, including intermarriage, the Sunday Sabbath movement, and the persecution of Russian Jewry. He opposed intermarriage on the grounds of self-preservation and told his congregants that such unions constituted a "hollow mockery" of the sacred ordinances of Judaism. He also spoke out against attempts by some Reformers to transfer the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday.

"The Sunday Sabbath should not be accepted by the Jews. Let them observe truly the Sabbath of their fathers not by empty words but by actual practice in life. There can be no half way

⁷Newsclipping, 1892, Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

⁸Ibid.

in this vital matter--either the Sabbath is observed religiously or it is violated."⁹

Gries's traditional stand on the Sabbath issue is noteworthy, especially in light of the outspoken support he would give the Sunday Sabbath Movement later in his career.

While the young Rabbi Gries impressed upon his Chattanooga congregation the importance of observing the traditional Sabbath, he did not believe in maintaining other customs and historical institutions which, in his opinion, served no useful purpose. In Gries's view, modern Judaism meant a primary concern with the moral law and no "turning back" to ancient authority and custom. In a sermon entitled, "A Modern Philosophy of Judaism," Gries emphasizes this point:

"...Those of Israel who today are crying: 'Turn Back,' who today emphasize most strongly traditions and historical institutions, fail truly to interpret the signs of the times; they misunderstand the spirit of this age and this generation. Not backwards to the past, but ever forward with eye and heart and soul to the future..."¹⁰

Gries's unbridled optimism was tempered by news of the persecution of Jews in Russia. It was difficult for Gries to comprehend how civilization could allow such an outrage in the "enlightened" nineteenth century. He berated politicians who sought to limit immigration to the United States, and he expressed great disappointment in the American people.

"We call this country the blessed land of liberty and yet we refuse shelter to a persecuted and tortured race, who vainly appeal to us for protection. There is room among us here for

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰"A Philosophy of Modern Judaism," n.d., Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

the persecuted ones...It is a glorious opportunity for the Christians to show their brotherly love and rise as one and say this disgrace to an enlightened civilization shall not exist.¹¹

On November 1, 1892, after three years at the Mizpah Congregation, Rabbi Gries submitted a letter of resignation to the Temple's Board of Directors. Gries had received a call from Cleveland's prestigious Tifereth Israel Congregation and found the offer irresistible. He could not turn down this grand opportunity to lead an influential congregation of significant size in a metropolitan community. In his letter of resignation to the Board, Gries expressed regret at the impending separation but stated that his heart had "long hoped for an appointment such as this."¹² After the Board granted him an honorable release, they praised him as a "learned divine, a man of purest principles, and an earnest and sincere worker in the cause of progressive Judaism."¹³ Gries's mixed emotions upon leaving Chattanooga are conveyed most touchingly in the following excerpt from his farewell address :

"...Somewhere I have seen a picture, or read a description, or perhaps it may have been but a dream. Anyway, in my mind's eye, I see a beautiful valley surrounded on all sides by precipitous hills. In this valley all is sunshine, happiness, and peace. On the outside of the hills is the fighting, impetuous, strong ambitious world. It is the custom of this people, living in what I will call 'Happy Valley,' upon a certain day in each year, to permit one of their members to cross over the hills and enter into the strife and turmoil of the outside world.

The one traveler leaves the home where he has known peace and happiness with a mixed feeling of sorrow and

¹¹Newsclipping, n.d., Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

¹²A newspaper clipping reported that Dr. Gries had turned down an offer earlier in the year from a Pittsburgh Temple to remain in Chattanooga. Ibid.

¹³Resolution, Mizpah Congregation Board of Directors to Moses J. Gries, November 8, 1892. Gries Papers.

pleasure. He feels that he will never know the same happiness he has experienced, but fueled by ambition, he is anxious to enter the great world without, and fight his way upward to be honored and to be a power in the great world. For the past three years, I have been a dweller in 'Happy Valley'-I feel that I will not again know the peace and happiness I have experienced here-but I am ambitious. I wish to enter the great world without and do my part in the restless world..."¹⁴

The Tifereth Israel Congregation in Cleveland was founded by German American Reformers who seceded in 1850 from the more traditional Israelitic Anshe Chesed Society.¹⁵ Dr. Isidor Kalisch, a liberal and scholarly rabbi, accepted the offer to be Tifereth Israel's spiritual leader, but only after the forty-seven charter members agreed to his condition that they always attend services on Friday evening and Saturday morning!¹⁶ Dr. Kalisch was released three years later for budgetary reasons and it was not until 1867 that Tifereth Israel found another rabbi, Dr. Jacob Mayer, of B'nai Jeshurun Congregation in Cincinnati. Rabbi Mayer preached in German and English and introduced many reforms, including the abolition of *aliyyot* and second-day festival observance, and the replacement of the shofar with the coronet.¹⁷ The wearing of hats was kept optional until 1875, when a resolution was unanimously passed requiring all worshippers to remove their hats in the temple. When Dr. Mayer resigned in 1874 to go to Baltimore's Har Sinai pulpit,¹⁸ he was succeeded by Dr. Aaron Hahn. Dr. Hahn led Tifereth

¹⁴"Farewell Address," Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

¹⁵Bing and Haas, The Temple: 1850-1950, pp.10-11.

¹⁶Ibid., p.13.

¹⁷Ibid., p.21.

¹⁸Shortly after Mayer's arrival in Baltimore, Dr. Benjamin Szold, among others, revealed that Mayer had converted to Christianity and served as a missionary in London before coming to the United States. When the accusations could no longer be denied,

Israel for eighteen years before leaving the pulpit and the rabbinate for a second career in law.

In 1892, Rabbi Gries became the first graduate of the Hebrew Union College to occupy the pulpit of Cleveland's Tifereth Israel. Gries had very clear ideas about his role as rabbi. In his inaugural sermon at Tifereth Israel, he portrayed the modern rabbi as a prophet and not merely a lifecycle officiant:

"I do not believe the minister to be a mere functionary to pray, to preach and to make the blessings upon births, marriages and deaths. [The rabbi] stands in the place of the prophet of old. He is the leading, speaking, seeing, and judging conscience unto men. He is the living prophet of righteousness...His is the mission to fulfill human ideals, to lead man to God and to bring God into human lives."¹⁹

Gries was immediately accepted by his congregation and quickly overcame any sympathetic feelings prevalent among the membership for Dr. Hahn. Nine months into his ministry, Gries laid the cornerstone of the magnificent new Temple at East 55th and Central. His initial three-year contract was extended by five more at the 1894 annual meeting of the congregation, at which time the young rabbi received the following evaluation from Temple President Martin A. Marks:

"He has so closely attached himself to our hearts that I believe he has the support of every man woman and child connected with our Congregation. His purity of life and rectitude of

Mayer resigned in 1876, and was no longer heard from until his death in St. Louis in 1890. Lloyd P. Gartner, History of the Jews of Cleveland, p.148. See also Isaac M. Fein, The Making of an American Jewish Community, pp.111-112.

¹⁹"An Ideal Ministry," n.d., Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

conduct have endeared him to our people, as well as to the entire community. He needs no words of praise."²⁰

Rabbi Gries's popularity soared throughout the region, and due to the high demand for his services, a pay scale had to be introduced for non-members and non-residents.²¹ He was honored again by Tifereth Israel at its November 10, 1899 annual meeting, with the following laudatory proclamation:

"Within the last seven years, the membership of the Temple has nearly trebled in numbers; the enrollment in the Sabbath School has increased sevenfold. Stalking indifference has given way to an awakened religious sentiment. Jewish thought has been revived and Jewish life uplifted. To no one individual is the Jewish community more indebted for this improved moral, intellectual, and social condition than to our honored Rabbi Moses J. Gries."²²

The resolution concluded with a five-year contract at five thousand dollars per year. By 1907, it was calculated that over eighty percent of the Temple's membership had joined since Rabbi Gries took charge of affairs, with an annual average increase of forty members.²³

The 55th Street Temple edifice, which was dedicated during Gries's ministry, was described in the press as "probably the finest church building in Cleveland, and among the finest Jewish Temples in the country."²⁴ The seats were theater chairs, and high over the pulpit were the pipes of a magnificent organ and a loft from which a

²⁰Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 21, 1894.

²¹Ibid., March 6, 1899.

²²Ibid., November 10, 1899.

²³"President Lewenthal's Annual Address," in Tenth Annual of The Temple, 1907, pp.14-15.

²⁴Bing and Haas, The Temple: 1850-1950, p.26.

quartet sang. A Gentile visitor commented that, "to the eye there were but two distinctions between this place and the place of worship of any progressive Protestant congregation. One was the 'Hear, O Israel' motto engrossed on the arch. The other was the everlasting light, flickering redly from a great lamp over the rabbi's head."²⁵ The same Gentile observer left Gries's Sabbath Service with the conviction that if his home had been more conveniently located, he would have worshipped more often at the Temple!²⁶

Gries served as rabbi during a period of peace, when confidence in human progress, and enthusiasm for universalism ran high. In order to make Judaism a true world religion, Gries felt it important for traditional liturgy to divest itself of "Orientalism" in form and language. Hebrew was therefore de-emphasized, and with the exception of the Kaddish doxology, the liturgy was read entirely in English.²⁷ The absence of Hebrew and uniquely Jewish symbols in the sanctuary were also in keeping with Gries's philosophy that American Jewish congregations remain Jewish in spirit, and American in form and purpose. Orderliness and passivity among the laity were additional characteristics of the Temple service. President Martin A. Marks praised the "excellent deportment within

²⁵"Little Journeys to Cleveland Churches," n.d., Box 4, File 5, Gries Papers.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷The Union Prayerbook was first introduced during the 1894 high holiday services. The ritual committee chairman considered it to be a great improvement over any previous ritual used by The Temple with the following caveat: "...When there is added to it the choral portion, so that the responses by the choir will be in English in place of Hebrew, I am satisfied it will give great pleasure to our worshippers." Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 21, 1894. Hebrew language instruction was later dropped from the Sabbath School curriculum one year after the move to the new building, as the money was deemed better spent on Bible History classes. See Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 4, 1895.

[The] Temple in marked contrast to the noisy and disorderly conduct in some of our sister congregations."²⁸ Worship at the Temple was also "rabbinocentric," with the focus always on the eloquent and inspiring preaching of Rabbi Gries.²⁹ One writer in attendance at services had the following to say about Gries's preaching:

"It wasn't so much a sermon as an oration. Ready of gesture and rejoicing in a strong, flexible voice, his eloquence is irrepressible. His pulpit mannerisms are few. His habitual attitude is peculiarly erect. Much of the time he speaks with his earnest countenance upturned, his eyes half closed. He refers frequently to his manuscript, though apparently without need and entirely without interruption of his flowing sentences..."³⁰

Although the service centered around the rabbi and choir, it still had a powerful and magnetic effect on the laity. Even the children looked forward to Gries's service as reflected in the following letter from a former Sabbath School student:

"The influence you had on me when I was a mere child is still with me. When I was particularly bad, my chief punishment was not to be allowed to attend Sunday Services and Sabbath School. This is indicative of the influence you unconsciously exerted over thousands."³¹

For Gries, the temple had to be more than a place of worship and religious instruction. He envisioned the temple as a complement to the home, a center of social and cultural, as well as spiritual activity. By serving as the life-center and supporting influence of

²⁸Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 14, 1895.

²⁹Gries was well known for his fervent oratory and was a featured speaker on the Lyceum Bureau of Jewish Lectures.

³⁰"Little Journeys to Cleveland Churches," n.d., Box 4, File 5, Gries Papers.

³¹Letter, E.J. Peefer to Rabbi Moses J. Gries, October 24, 1916. Gries Papers. Mr. Peefer was the son-in-law of Rabbi Henry Berkowitz.

the community, Gries hoped that Tifereth Israel could serve a leading role in the moral advancement of home and city life:

"The living Temple must be open, open to every child that needs religious instruction, open for school, open as a social center, open to every influence that leads to the nobler development of life, open for the brotherhood of the rich and poor, open for the fellowship of Jew and non-Jew."³²

Gries's successful advocacy of the Open Temple established Tifereth Israel as the first institutional synagogue in the United States.³³

Central to the "Open Temple" was the idea that Judaism had to express itself in ways other than worship.³⁴ "The activities of the Temple should be larger than worship and religious school, as life is larger than Sabbath and Sunday."³⁵ Despite much criticism and skepticism from colleagues, Gries instituted a diverse and active program of clubs, forums, and other activities on Temple grounds. He insisted that these organizations would not desanctify the sanctuary. Gries suggested, to the contrary, that conflicts between amusements and public worship might even cease and result in an increased reverence for worship.³⁶

Gries found the practice of some Christian churches to open their Sabbath schools to the unaffiliated worthy of emulation.³⁷ He detested the commercialization of the synagogue, the selling of worship privileges, and the retailing of religious instruction. Gries sensed a widening spirit, which was at odds with the hierarchical

³²CCAR Yearbook, 21 (1911): 143.

³³Bing and Haas, The Temple: 1850-1950, p.24.

³⁴This point is emphasized in his Presidential Message, CCARY, 24 (1914): 179.

³⁵"Rabbi Gries and The Open Temple," Box 4, File 10, n.d., Gries Papers.

³⁶CCAR Yearbook, 11(1901): 146-47.

³⁷"The Sabbath School and the Unaffiliated," n.d., Box 4, File 10, Gries Papers.

system of most synagogues and temples, and he sought to democratize the congregation for rich and poor alike. He had a particular interest in children and devoted an inordinate amount of time to their welfare. His interest in Sabbath School education began with kindergarten and continued through post-Confirmation classes. He also formed a Temple Alumni Association for young adults.

Just as Gries's Sabbath School was opened to the children of those unable to afford dues, so too were Tifereth Israel's sanctuary doors open for everyone. In his inaugural speech on the Open Temple idea, Gries remarked:

"...Never again be the question necessary in portal of temple and house of learning--how much does it cost to worship with you on the great holidays and to learn the teachings of Judaism?"³⁸

The spirit of equality, inclusivity, and brotherhood, characteristic of Gries's Open Temple, in many ways anticipated the later establishment of the Free Synagogue Pulpit by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise in 1907. Both Gries and Wise sought to make sanctuary ritual subsidiary to an emphasis upon righteousness, or as Wise would later say, "not the rite but the right."³⁹ In a sermon entitled, "What is the Free Synagogue?," Wise explained the purpose of his enterprise in terms similar to Gries's Open Temple philosophy:

"What is essential to the Jewish Church, even if it be not differentiating? I answer--its ethical teachings, its impulse to moral conduct, its constraint to rightness of living.

³⁸"Rabbi Gries and the Open Temple," n.d., Box 4, File 10, Gries Papers.

³⁹Stephen S. Wise, "The Free Synagogue Pulpit," in Sermons and Addresses, 1 (1908): 1.

The inexorable moral imperative is the essential of the synagogue and this essential will be the core of the teaching of the Free Synagogue..."⁴⁰

The Open Temple was not without its elitist elements. In 1894, the Temple Society was formed for the cultured and well-educated. This group conducted popular lectures and extension courses on a variety of secular subjects and developed a twelve year tradition known as the Temple Course. In the 1907-1908 calendar, the Temple Course program featured violin and piano recitals, and lectures on such topics as "The Empire of Japan," "Shakespeare and His Plays," and "Education for the Art of Life."⁴¹ While non-sectarian, the Temple Society explained its relevance to the work of the Temple in the following way:

"Whatever enriches the mind and soul, whatever makes us have broader ideas and promotes general allegiance into which the genius of the age evokes us, will make us better men, better women, and better children-this is the work of the Temple Society. Every Jew that partakes of its works will benefit himself...every non-Jew who associates himself with the Temple Society becomes more liberal in his ideas and broader in his view of our people. I am glad to say that over one-half of the membership are non-Jews and represent the best elements in our community."⁴²

In addition to the Temple Society and Temple Course, Gries had organized a Temple Kindergarten, a Junior Temple Society for teenagers, a public library and reading room, and a gymnasium. The feedback Gries received from colleagues and friends about these activities was overwhelmingly negative. Rabbi Max Heller of Temple

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁴¹"Temple Course," in Tenth Annual of The Temple, 1907, p.55.

⁴²Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 14, 1895.

Sinai in New Orleans, a dear friend of Rabbi Gries, expressed his serious misgivings about the Temple's wide array of activities upon receiving the 1894 Open Temple brochure. His remarks are typical of many of the criticisms directed at Gries:

"...You Northern ministers are amazingly consistent in the effort to secularize your synagogues into literal 'temples'...you proceeded to put kitchens into the basement and now you are turning your pulpit into a 'platform stage' and your whole auditorium into a concert hall to resound with laughter, applause, perhaps to display dances-it will be hard to draw a limit...

I am far, my friend, from putting myself up as your mentor. But I cannot help pointing out what I consider a gross error against the religious sentiment which undermines reverence by depriving it of religious symbols first, and of the religious atmosphere last.

You strip your religious thoughts into bald philosophemes because your Unitarian colleague loves the dry mountain air of refined religious abstractions. But Judaism is a flesh-and-blood religion tied down to a living race, a race the most markedly typical and orientally intense that exists. It is this airy food of de-typified ideologies that makes our people hungry after mystic spiritualisms, occultism, Christian science, anything that has color, body, poetry, character."⁴³

Eventually, Heller's criticism of the so-called Open Temple became publicly adopted by the *American Hebrew*, a conservative weekly. In a blistering editorial, the *American Hebrew* attacked the reasoning behind the Open Temple idea. The editor essentially argued that while Judaism is concerned with life and all its interests, the synagogue cannot be all things to all people. It cannot, for example, manage a gymnasium on the grounds that a healthy body provides a healthy mind, which in turn, fosters a

⁴³Letter, Rabbi Max H. Heller to Rabbi M.J. Gries, September 30, 1895: Box 2, File 22, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

religious spirit. While all the activities of humankind are interlaced and inseparable, the synagogue, according to Gries's detractors, had to remain a special institution for expressly religious purposes. *The American Hebrew* concluded its remarks with the following indictment of Gries:

"The trouble with Rabbi Gries is that he mistakes Esau for Jacob. So impressed is he with the work which is foreign to the synagogue that he sees about everything emanating from his temple a halo of sanctity and religion, whether it be a boxing match or in a debate of juveniles on the Monroe Doctrine."⁴⁴

Gries also had his supporters, and with the passage of time, won admiration from many colleagues for his bold efforts. Upon his retirement from the active ministry in 1917, Rabbi Leo Franklin paid Gries the following tribute:

"Among the material results of his works the institutional Temple stands preeminent. At a time when to do so invited ridicule and slander, when it brought to his door the charge of un-Jewishness and disloyalty to tradition, Rabbi Gries had the courage to start upon paths before untrodden and to build this Temple...He realized that if religion was to be more than an abstraction, it must touch life at all its angles..."⁴⁵

Under Gries's leadership, Tifereth Israel became known as "The Temple" and grew from a membership of 125 families in 1892 to over 700 in 1917, an increase of over five hundred percent.⁴⁶ During the same time span, the number of children enrolled in the Sabbath School rose from eighty to nearly nine hundred, making The Temple's

⁴⁴*American Hebrew*, January 23, 1903, p.327.

⁴⁵"Tribute by Rabbi Leo Franklin," June, 1917, Box 4, File 4, Gries Papers.

⁴⁶Letter, Moses J. Gries to the Executive Board and Members of The Temple, n.d., Box 4, File 9, Gries Papers.

Sabbath School the largest in the world.⁴⁷ In addition to the Open Temple, Gries introduced other radical innovations. Bowing to congregational pressure and a perceived need for change, Sunday Sabbath Services were instituted in 1893, and the Torah ceased being read in the sanctuary. Instead, a section of the weekly Torah portion was read in English translation. The congregation also became the first in America to invite women to attend congregational meetings and serve on its Board of Trustees.⁴⁸

Gries helped found and served as President of a number of local and state Jewish organizations, including the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women (1893-1896), the Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio (1906-1908), the Ohio Rabbinical Association (1904), and the Cleveland Council Educational Alliance (1904). Gries was also a national leader in American Reform Judaism, serving as assistant secretary, treasurer, vice-president, and eventually president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis from 1913 to 1915.

In his 1915 CCAR Presidential Address, Gries emphasized the importance of religious education:

"Progress and deepening interest in Religious Education have characterized this year. New state and interstate Teacher's Associations continue to be organized. Perhaps the time is near when the Conference with other national organizations interested in Jewish Religious Education should attempt a more definite union of the various State Associations. To train, to educate, and to inspire our body of teachers is a work

⁴⁷Bing and Haas, The Temple: 1850-1950, p.24. In 1901, Gries reported that one-half of the students in his Sabbath School were children of non-members (CCAR Yearbook, 11(1901): 5).

⁴⁸The Temple Annual (1912-1913), p.42.

of the highest necessity, but it is equally important that our congregations, individually and collectively, be convinced of the need for stronger city, state, and national organization to reach our unaffiliated children. Ours is the duty to awaken fathers and mothers to the necessity of religious education and to the importance of a genuine religious life for themselves and their children."⁴⁹

Prior to his election as CCAR President, Gries organized the Jewish Religious Teachers' Association of Ohio in 1908 to improve the quality and character of Sunday School instruction. He also chaired the CCAR Committee on Religious Education and advocated the free admittance of children of non-members into Temple religious schools.⁵⁰ Gries's unusual attention and sensitivity to the welfare and education of young children may have been explained by his own orphan experience. The Educational League of Cleveland, for instance, which Gries helped found, devoted a large sum of its funds to financial aid for the higher education of orphans. In a memorial tribute to Gries, the leader of the Educational League said of him: "He was always ready to help the fatherless and motherless boy and girl."⁵¹

Rabbi Gries's quarter century at The Temple coincided with the transformation of Cleveland from a small city of 262,000 to America's sixth largest city of more than 600,000.⁵² Gries not only witnessed Cleveland's remarkable growth, he was also among those

⁴⁹CCAR Yearbook, 25 (1915): 22.

⁵⁰CCAR Yearbook, 11 (1901): 73. Gries was also instrumental in the solicitation and acquisition of a fifty-thousand-dollar gift from Jacob Schiff for the establishment of a small Teacher's Institute at HUC in 1909.

⁵¹Tribute book from Cleveland Council of Educational Alliance, 1917, Box 3, File 2, Gries Papers. When Gries died, his widow Fannie contributed two hundred dollars to the Jewish Orphan Asylum in his memory. See Document, Box 2, File 6, Gries Papers.

⁵²"Remarkable Demonstrations," n.d., Box 3, File 4, Gries Papers.

who helped transform the city into a great metropolis. Municipal matters occupied a great deal of Gries's time outside The Temple. Newton D. Baker, who served as Mayor of Cleveland and later became the United States Secretary of War, had the following to say about Gries's importance to the city:

"When I first went to Cleveland, Rabbi Gries was in the full greatness of his universal powers. He was then an already established influence for good doing and high thinking in the city. I learned at first to admire him and then frankly to lean upon him in many kinds of problems which were presented to me in connection with city affairs. Surely the heart of Cleveland bears the marks of his having lived and worked in and for the city."⁵³

Gries served as a Trustee of the Cleveland School of Art and was a member of the Committee on Municipal Art and Architecture.⁵⁴ He also served on a select committee appointed by Mayor Newton Baker, which brought about the consolidation of the city's educational facilities into Cleveland State University.⁵⁵ As Chairman of the Cleveland Peace Society, Gries was also appointed to a commission that recommended a memorial site for fallen soldiers and sailors from the First World War.⁵⁶ Charles Olmery, a member of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, wrote that "few men saw more clearly the dangers that beset local, state, and

⁵³Letter, Newton D. Baker to Abba Hillel Silver, November 14, 1918, Box 2, File 2, Gries Papers.

⁵⁴Gries was an active member of the art board. Henry Turner Bailey, Dean of the Cleveland School of Art, remarked in his condolences that "in his [Gries'] death, the Art School has lost a staunch and potent friend." Letter, Henry Turner Bailey to the Gries Family, October 31, 1918, Box 2, File 2, Gries Papers.

⁵⁵Letter, Newton D. Baker to Moses J. Gries, March 17, 1914, Box 1, File 6, Gries Papers.

⁵⁶Letter, Harry L. Davis to Moses J. Gries, September 30, 1918, Box 1, File 6, Gries Papers.

national government [than Gries]."⁵⁷ Some of Gries's own congregants, as the following letter from Julius Kahn indicates, seemed to appreciate his contributions to the civic life of Cleveland as much, if not more, than his service to The Temple:

"Whenever I have had occasion, it has been a pride to me to point out that of all modern men in the pulpit, you were one of the most modern with a true understanding of the changing requirements in the twentieth century of a true leader of his people. Your participation in the civic life of your city and your state has conferred honor not only upon you but greater honor upon the people whom you represent, and this has ended in dispelling the centuries-old misunderstanding of our character, our aims, our purposes, and our mundane worth."⁵⁸

Gries developed close ties between The Temple and the larger community, was an active participant in the Chamber of Commerce, and was considered by many to be the leading spokesman for the Cleveland Jewish Community. He was an outstanding civic leader, and his counsel was frequently sought by mayors and other municipal leaders. In 1916, at the age of forty-eight, Gries shocked his congregation by announcing his plans to retire. Not only Cleveland, but the entire American Jewish ministry mourned his resignation from the rabbinical profession. There was widespread speculation that Gries's abrupt retirement was due to accumulated burnout. However, personal correspondence with Julian Morgenstern, a close friend and colleague of Gries, reveals that a more serious factor accounted for his decision:

"My retirement at the end of my twenty-five years' ministry with the Temple, though a complete surprise to almost

⁵⁷Letter, Charles F. Olmery to Moses J. Gries, May 9, 1899, Gries Papers.

⁵⁸Letter, Julius Kahn to Moses J. Gries, January 14, 1913, Gries Papers.

everyone in Cleveland, and to all my friends everywhere has been under very careful consideration for several years. For four years now, I have been compelled to carry my heavy burdens in spite of constant ill-health and intermittent intense suffering."⁵⁹

Gries delivered his final sermon at the Confirmation Service in June of 1917, and died less than a year and a half later, on October 31, 1918. He was survived by his wife of twenty years, Frances Hays Gries, and by his two sons, Robert and Lincoln. *The New York Times* named Gries "one of the strongest men in the Jewish ministry in America and one of Cleveland's most esteemed citizens."⁶⁰ Perhaps the most eloquent tribute came from the Cleveland Federation of Jewish Charities, which Gries helped found in 1902: "Rabbi Gries requires no memorial tablet. Progressive in outlook, broad in his sympathies, practical in wisdom, independent in thought, indomitable in will, energetic in action, an earnest Jew, an intense American, he enriched the life of his generation."⁶¹ He was, in every significant way, a spiritual giant in the formative stages of American Reform Judaism.

⁵⁹Letter, Moses J. Gries to Julian Morgenstern, November 23, 1916. Julian Morgenstern Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁰Newspaper clipping, New York Times, November 2, 1898. Box 4, File 4, Gries Papers.

⁶¹Resolution on the Death of Rabbi Gries Adopted by Trustees of the Federation of Jewish Charities, Box 3, File 7, Gries Papers.

William Rosenau: A Teacher and Scholar

In contrast to the reverence for reason espoused by Moses Gries, the significance which William Rosenau attached to the role of tradition and ritual emphasizes the diversity of American Reform even in its infancy.

William Rosenau, the oldest child of Nathan and Johanna Braun Rosenau, was born in Wolstein, Germany on May 30, 1865. William spent his early childhood in Silesia and was eleven years old when his family emigrated to America. The Rosenau family settled in Philadelphia, where Nathan was hired as spiritual leader of Anshe Emeth Congregation, a strictly orthodox pulpit established by German immigrants.¹ As a child, William was deeply influenced by Sabato Morais, Rabbi of Congregation Mikveh Israel. He also received Hebrew instruction from Samuel Hirsch and Marcus M. Jastrow.² Raised in a rabbinic home and inspired by some of America's greatest Jewish scholars, Rosenau's decision to enter the rabbinate came as no surprise. His choice of seminary, however, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati (HUC), greatly disappointed his teachers. His father tried to dissuade the young Rosenau from attending HUC and urged him instead to apply for the Rodef Shalom Scholarship at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary. Another teacher told William that

¹Nathan, a knowledgeable Jew, did not have a university degree or rabbinical diploma but had served as a *hazzan* in Posen and Silesia. This information was obtained from an unpublished biographical study written by William Rosenau's great-granddaughter, Ms. Sally Korkin, in 1982. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²Bernard Bamberger and Samuel Wolk, "William Rosenau: A Memoir," (Mimeographed), American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1953. p.4.

he "would not amount to very much if he stayed at the Hebrew Union College until ordination."³ Rosenau ignored these protests and came to HUC in 1882 because he sensed that America was in need of American-trained rabbis.⁴

Rosenau described his years at the Hebrew Union College as "relatively harmonious," and noted that none of the faculty interfered with his particular religious outlook.⁵ Rosenau was close to President Isaac Mayer Wise, but was most deeply attached to Dr. Moses Mielziner.⁶ Among the student body, Joseph Krauskopf and Henry Berkowitz were his closest companions. The three of them remained such good friends over the years that Rosenau would later comment, "...so close are Berkowitz, Krauskopf, and I, that our respective family reunions are not complete unless the three of us participate in one another's joyous occasions."⁷ Of the nine members of the HUC Class of 1889, it appears that Rosenau achieved the highest marks in scholarship, as he was given the honor of delivering the ordination address on behalf of his class.⁸

From 1889 to 1892, Rosenau served as Rabbi of Temple Israel in Omaha, Nebraska. Omaha was a frontier town when Dr. Rosenau graduated rabbinical school, and he would later describe it in terms of the wild west. "You couldn't walk down the street at night

³William Rosenau, "Reminiscences," June 20, 1922, Box 12, File 1, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Rosenau had a hearty appetite for Talmud and would study advanced material with Dr. Mielziner at his home on Sunday afternoons.

⁷William Rosenau, "Reminiscences," June 20, 1922, Box 12, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁸The address was entitled "Prophet and Prophecy," and was delivered at the ordination exercises on Friday evening, June 28, 1889.

without a gun. Even then, you had to walk down the middle of the street."⁹ As a young rabbi, Rosenau was the only Jewish minister within a radius of five hundred miles. He travelled frequently to communities requesting his services in Missouri, Minnesota, Kansas, Colorado, and Iowa. He also prepared a number of lectures, the most popular of which, "Who Are the Jews?," was delivered fifty or sixty times to those who had never met a Jew before.¹⁰ Rosenau was the first ordained Rabbi to occupy the Temple Israel pulpit and effected many changes during his ministry. When Rosenau announced his plans to leave Omaha, the Temple's Board of Trustees expressed their appreciation for his services with glowing praise and tribute.

"...Rabbi Rosenau has increased our congregational membership to its fullest capacity and has always through his oratory filled our house of worship. He has elevated our Sabbath School to a height that none can surpass in the country...he has also won a high standing among the clergy and community at-large, among whom he is considered an able scholar and exemplary preacher..."¹¹

Certainly the greatest joy of all during Rosenau's years in Omaha was meeting Miss Mabel Hellman, the daughter of prominent citizens Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Hellman. They were married in 1893 and had two children, Margueritte and William H. Rosenau.¹²

In 1892, the Oheb Shalom Congregation of Baltimore was searching for a successor to Dr. Benjamin Szold, one of America's

⁹American Hebrew, July 21, 1939. p.5.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Omaha newspaper clipping, March 20, 1892, Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

¹²Mabel Rosenau died in 1923, and two years later William married Miss Myra Kraus of Baltimore. Miss Kraus was one of the pioneer case workers of the Hebrew Benevolent Society. This information is found in Louis F. Cahn, History of Oheb Shalom: 1853-1953, pp.38-39.

most renowned and gifted rabbis. Szold was born in Hungary, educated at the Pressburg Yeshivah, and subsequently trained at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary. He was asked to become the Rabbi of Stockholm before turning down the call and coming to Baltimore in 1859.¹³ When Szold arrived at Oheb Shalom, he found the congregation using Wise's *Minhag America* prayerbook during the year and the *Roedelheim Tefillah* for the holidays. Szold found the use of these two incompatible rituals unacceptable and, in 1861, quickly published his own prayerbook entitled *Avodath Yisroel*.¹⁴ Despite his conservative tendencies, Szold introduced a number of reforms at Oheb Shalom. In 1869, *aliyot* were discontinued, the wearing of *tallesim* by members of the congregation was abolished, minor fasts were not kept, and festivals were observed for one day instead of two. Szold introduced monthly English sermons in 1882¹⁵ and also convinced his congregation "to omit from reading in the Torah verses concerning sacrifices...[which are of] no significance to us today."¹⁶ Despite these reforms and the liberal theology reflected in his prayerbook, Szold was no radical reformer. The same man who was invited to speak at the first ordination of the Hebrew Union College in 1883 became so incensed by the adoption of the Pittsburgh Platform two years later that he implored his congregation to withdraw its membership from the Union of

¹³Newsclipping on Szold by Rosenau, August 14, 1902, Box 5, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁴In 1866, Marcus Jastrow revised and translated Szold's work into English and the prayerbook thereafter became known as the Szold-Jastrow prayerbook.

¹⁵Louis F. Cahn, History of Oheb Shalom: 1853-1953, p.34.

¹⁶Isaac M. Fein, The Making of an American Jewish Community, p.117.

American Hebrew Congregations.¹⁷ The board rejected Szold's request and remained affiliated with the UAHC, though, for many years, the congregation also paid dues to the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary.¹⁸

Rosenau spoke of his opportunity to succeed Dr. Szold at Oheb Shalom as a dream come true. In his farewell letter to Temple Israel, he wrote:

"I have been called to the pulpit of one of the largest and most influential Jewish congregations of this land. To be permitted to occupy such a pulpit as teacher and guide at some time was always the dream for whose realization I anxiously watched."¹⁹

When Rosenau assumed the leadership of Oheb Shalom on Hanover Street, congregational loyalties in Baltimore were very strong. Tensions were especially high between "the Temple people" of David Einhorn's Har Sinai Congregation, and members of Benjamin Szold's "Hanover Street *Shul*," as it was called.²⁰ Strangely enough, Szold and Einhorn had never met during their parallel ministries at these two congregations. Rosenau tried to improve the strained relations among Baltimore's liberal and traditional synagogues and helped foster a new era of inter-congregational cooperation.

Rosenau's first sermon, delivered on September 3, 1892, was entitled, "American Judaism," and in it he took a stand which characterized much of his fifty years as Rabbi of Oheb Shalom.

¹⁷Ibid., p.183.

¹⁸Cahn, History of Oheb Shalom: 1853-1953, p.37.

¹⁹Farewell letter from William Rosenau to Congregation Israel, August 19, 1892. Box 4, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

²⁰Fein, The Making of an American Jewish Community, p.180.

Rosenau advocated constructive reform and progress, but assailed the movement for radical reforms, because it "tears down indiscriminately, having no regard for that which has proven itself elevating and ennobling."²¹ This sermon must have gone a long way to allay any fears that Rosenau would undermine the "conservative progressivism" of his predecessor, Dr. Szold. With the passage of time, Rosenau introduced his own reforms, including the introduction of the late Sabbath Eve Service, and the abolition of the compulsory wearing of hats during services. On September 8 and 9, 1893, a magnificent new Temple was dedicated at the corner of Eutaw Place and Lanvale Street. It was so huge that it was able to accommodate the congregation's eventual rise in membership from 267 families to over 1100 families in 1943.²² When the congregation faced a \$30,000 mortgage in 1910, Rosenau made a plea from the pulpit for members to lift the financial burden. He mentioned the practice of many Christians, who bequeath part of their fortunes to the cause of religion, as worthy of emulation. Rosenau's words struck a responsive chord, for immediately following the service at which he spoke, three businessmen offered to pay off the entire mortgage.²³ In 1922, Rosenau oversaw the construction of a recreation center addition which featured a roof garden, assembly rooms, reading rooms, and a gymnasium.²⁴

²¹"American Judaism," September 3, 1892, p.8. Box 4, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

²²Cahn, History of Oheb Shalom: 1853-1953, p.39.

²³Newsclipping; n.d., Box 11, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

²⁴Plans for the addition had begun in 1916 (see American Hebrew, April 20, 1916, p.8), but were abandoned during the war years. The Temple Center was remodelled in 1948 and renamed the William Rosenau Memorial Building.

Rosenau took great pride in Oheb Shalom's tradition of outstanding cantors. During Rosenau's ministry, the singing of Alois Kaiser and Jacob Schuman enhanced the synagogue service. Kaiser, who served Oheb Shalom from 1866-1907, was not only a *hazzan* but a composer as well. In 1897, he edited the Union Hymnal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and composed twenty-one of the volume's 117 hymns. In recognition of his contribution, Kaiser was elected an honorary member of the Conference.²⁵ He created the musical score for Rosenau's Seder Haggadah in 1905 and shared the pulpit with Rosenau at Oheb Shalom for sixteen years.

For Rosenau, the title of rabbi denoted the scholar as well as the religious teacher and leader. He matriculated in the Semitic Department of Johns Hopkins University and was appointed Instructor in Rabbinics in 1896. Dr. Paul Haupt was head of the department and guided Rosenau to the completion of his Ph.D. degree in 1900. His dissertation topic, "Hebraisms in the Authorized Version of the Bible," dealt with the influence of the Hebrew language on the idioms of the English Bible and how they modified English usage. It was published subsequently by The Friedenwald Company in 1901. When Rosenau was named an Associate Professor of post-Biblical Hebrew in 1902, he became the first minister, Jewish or Christian to serve on the Hopkins faculty.²⁶ Upon his academic retirement in 1932, Rosenau was elected Professor

²⁵Address, William Rosenau to the Board of American Hazzan-Ministers, June 21, 1940, Box 6, File 7, Rosenau Papers.

²⁶When Rosenau received this honor, the American Israelite wrote, "His promotion to this position is a deserved rebuke to those rabbis and Jewish papers who are forever levelling their attacks against the students of the Hebrew Union College claiming that they do not study." Newsclipping, n.d., Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

Emeritus in post-Biblical Hebrew, the highest honor bestowed upon a retiring faculty member. Rosenau was later eulogized as one of the best known Hebrew scholars in the country and was praised for being instrumental in bringing celebrated Hebrew scholars to America when they were driven out from Germany by the Nazis.²⁷

In addition to printed sermons, numerous articles in periodicals, and the publication of his thesis, Rosenau published six other books. In Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs, Rosenau explains and analyzes the customs and ceremonies of traditional Judaism, and suggests judicious reform in their adoption. This book, published in 1903 and revised in 1925, was based on a series of lectures at Hopkins, and was translated into German and the Marati language of India. In 1904, Rosenau wrote Jewish Biblical Commentators, which was reportedly the first attempt to present an historical account of Scriptural interpretation by medieval and modern Jewish scholars.²⁸ A year later, Rosenau's Seder Haggadah went through its first of thirteen printings. Rosenau's Jewish Education appeared in 1910, and his Book of Consolation was published in 1914. In 1917, Rosenau collaborated with Dr. Cyrus Adler and Bernard Drachman and produced their Abridged Prayer Book for Jews in the Army and Navy of the United States.²⁹ Rosenau's last book, The Rabbi in Action, was published in

²⁷Obituary material, n.d., Box 12, File 9, Rosenau Papers.

²⁸Interview, William Rosenau to Hyman Levin, October 23, 1931. Box 12, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

²⁹In 1916, at the time of his presidency of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rosenau also prepared, in conjunction with CCAR secretary, Rabbi Isaac Landman, A Ritual for Jewish Soldiers. This ritual was utilized by Jewish soldiers in the United

1937 and treats the rabbi from the pulpit, communal, religious, and educational points of view. Dr. Samuel S. Cohon of the Hebrew Union College was so impressed with this book that he made it required reading for his course on "Practical Problems of the Ministry."³⁰ Rosenau also contributed a number of articles to the Jewish Encyclopedia, translated Esther for the Jewish Publication Society of America, and was instrumental in the formulation and preparation of CCAR publications.³¹ He died before completing his final literary effort, Rabbinical Portraits from an American Gallery, which was to be a sketch of America's most notable rabbis.³²

Rosenau's colleagues and teachers in the American Reform Rabbinate recognized his ability in a number of ways. He was elected second vice-president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1896-97, corresponding secretary in 1903, and in 1916, he succeeded Moses Gries as president. He served on the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College from 1917-1943, and in 1923 was the first graduate of HUC to have the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Law conferred upon him while still serving in the pulpit. No rabbi trained more disciples to enter the rabbinate than Rosenau. At the dedication of a stained glass window in memory of Dr. Rosenau

States Army who were mobilized in and near Mexico. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 2: 56.

³⁰Letter, Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon to William Rosenau, January 13, 1938. Box 1, File 10, Rosenau Papers.

³¹Rosenau was a co-editor of the CCAR Yearbook, Chairman of the Minister's Handbook Committee in 1903-04, and was involved with the 1942 revised edition of the Union Prayer Book.

³²Bernard Bamberger and Samuel Wolk, "William Rosenau: A Memoir," (Mimeographed), American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1953, p.27.

at the HUC chapel, Rabbi William F. Rosenblum paid tribute to this aspect of Rosenau's career:

"Over and above everything else, Dr. Rosenau was a 'one-man recruiting bureau for the army of the Lord,' always alert to bring some promising young man into the Jewish ministry."³³

Rosenau sent a total of thirty-three boys to the Hebrew Union College and prepared a handful of others for the Jewish Theological Seminary. His trainees included Dr. Solomon Freehof and Michael Aaronsohn. Aaronsohn was an undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College when he enlisted in the United States Army during World War I. He was blinded overseas as a result of wounds received in action and returned to America convinced that he could never fulfill his dream of becoming a rabbi. Dr. Rosenau encouraged Aaronsohn not to despair and made several trips each week to the hospital to teach him how to learn by ear instead of by sight.³⁴ Aaronsohn persevered and was ordained in 1923. Rosenau also aided colleagues in the field with securing jobs. When Rabbi Harry N. Caplan of Allentown, Pennsylvania, was searching for a new pulpit, he wrote Rosenau for help:

"I know that the South Street Temple pulpit in Lincoln, Nebraska is vacant, and I am certain that you can be of great help to me in procuring that vacancy for me. You promised to communicate with individuals in Omaha, and I deeply appreciate your help and aid."³⁵

³³Cahn, History of Oheb Shalom: 1853-1953, pp.47-48.

³⁴Sally Korkin, "Biographical Study of William Rosenau by His Great-Granddaughter, 1982. p.19. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁵Letter, Dr. Harry N. Caplan to William Rosenau, April-5, 1943, Box 1, File 10, Rosenau Papers.

Rosenau took an active interest in Jewish education. He built an impressive religious school at Oheb Shalom and hired a cadre of professional teachers. No less a figure than Dr. David E. Weglein, the Superintendent of the Baltimore Public School system, headed the Religious School Board. Rosenau's Jewish educational interests extended far beyond the bounds of his Oheb Shalom Congregation. Together with Dr. Henry Berkowitz, Rosenau built the Jewish Chautauqua Society (JCS) into a leading national organization for Jewish education. The JCS was launched by Berkowitz on April 18, 1893, as a popular educational movement and correspondence resource for sparsely settled Jewish communities. Rosenau joined Berkowitz two years into the project and published home reading course books with him in areas such as Bible, Jewish History, and Jewish Ethics. The "Chautauqua Duo" travelled throughout North America conducting conferences and special institutes on Jewish education. Rosenau became a member of the Chautauqua Society's Board of Directors in 1907 and served as Vice Chancellor from 1911 until Berkowitz's death in 1924. He then succeeded Berkowitz as Chancellor of the JCS until Dr. Louis Wolsey assumed the mantle of leadership in 1926 and moved the Society to a more permanent home in Philadelphia.³⁶

In addition to the recognized need for satisfactory religious school textbooks, a Correspondence School was established by the JCS to train Jewish teachers in hundreds of communities scattered

³⁶This history of the Jewish Chautauqua Society was extracted from Rosenau's address at the Thirty-second Assembly of the JCS, December 23, 1923, Box 6, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

across the United States and Canada. Founded in January, 1912, the Correspondence School boasted an enrollment of 163 students in 17 states by 1917.³⁷ Rosenau served as Dean of the Correspondence School, and in that capacity, helped re-organize the curricula of many religious schools. In his attempt to establish a broad platform of systematic Jewish education, Rosenau viewed the JCS as a unique organizational enterprise:

"The Jewish Chautauqua Society aims to reach young and old; people in the large cities and small towns; the educated and the illiterate; the leisure class and the toilers; the Reformers and the Orthodox; the Zionists and the non-Zionists. Of all national educational institutions, it is the most democratic."³⁸

Rosenau's belief that the JCS was representative of all sectors of American Jewry, irrespective of divisions among Orthodox and Reform Jews, appears to have been more wish than reality.

Virtually all of the rabbis who published materials and helped administer the JCS were affiliated with the Reform Movement. This suggests that while Rosenau may have envisioned the JCS as an umbrella organization, traditionalists still perceived the Society as a Reform operation. Another aim of the JCS, the popularization and teaching of Jewish subjects to non-Jews, was clearly in line with Reform principles. By the summer of 1920, nineteen colleges and universities were supplied with Chautauqua lectureships for this purpose.³⁹

³⁷"The Jewish Chautauqua Society and the Religious School," 1915, Box 5, File 7, Rosenau Papers.

³⁸"Abstract of Address Delivered at the Twenty-Ninth Assembly of the Jewish Chautauqua Society," December 26, 1920, Box 6, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

³⁹Ibid.

Rosenau played an important part in the civic and educational life of Baltimore. In a letter marking Rosenau's fiftieth year at Oheb Shalom, Governor Herbert O'Connor congratulated Baltimore's Senior Rabbi, not only for his untiring efforts in religion, but also for his educational and philosophical activities, which O'Connor labelled "a milestone in our history."⁴⁰ Rosenau participated in the inaugurations of mayors and governors, spoke at school and church openings, and at the installations of Christian clergy. As further evidence of his civic prominence, Rosenau and his wife were invited to attend a reception at the White House on the occasion of President and Mrs. Taft's silver wedding anniversary.⁴¹ He was also an active Mason and a member of Rotary International.⁴²

Rosenau's proudest achievement in civic affairs was his appointment to the first Baltimore City School Board by Mayor Hayes in 1900. He was reappointed by Mayor McClure, and, when his third term expired ten years later, Mayor Machol recommended his second reappointment to the City Council for an unprecedented fourth term. To the surprise of everyone, the Council declined to confirm him.

⁴⁰Letter, Governor Herbert O'Connor to William Rosenau, September 4, 1942, Box 1, File 27, Rosenau Papers.

⁴¹Letter, President and Mrs. Taft to Rabbi and Mrs. William Rosenau, June 19, 1911, Box 2, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

⁴²Rosenau preached a sermon on his reasons for joining Masonry. Not only did he hallow the democratic nature of the society, its ethical influence, and its attempt to eradicate religious prejudice and social immorality, but Rosenau also admired the secretive rituals practiced by the society. One gets the impression from Rosenau's writings that he viewed Masonry as an ally of liberal religion, since Masonry instilled in individuals who may never have entered the doors of a church or synagogue, a better sense of moral and ethical behavior. See "Why I Am A Mason," January 17, 1909, Box 5, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

"Since explanations are in order," said Mr. Warfield, a Council member, "I will say that I voted against Dr. Rosenau because he is a Rabbi. I would vote against a Catholic priest or a Methodist minister or any teacher of religion. They are not eligible to membership on that board or any other."⁴³

Baltimore's Afro-American community was particularly incensed by the Council's refusal to reappoint Rosenau. In the view of the black community, the Council had lost one of its fairest minds and staunchest advocates. Rosenau was so personally devastated by his removal from the school board that he reportedly suffered a serious psychological breakdown following his termination.⁴⁴ While this reaction may sound a bit extreme, Rosenau regarded his appointment to the school board as a sacred trust and was heartbroken by the fact that he would no longer be able to contribute to the success of Baltimore's public education system in a leadership capacity. In fact, when Rosenau had declined a 1908 offer to succeed Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger at San Francisco's large and wealthy Temple Emanuel, he had cited his involvement with the Baltimore School Board as a determining factor in his decision to stay.⁴⁵ While on the School Board, Rosenau took a special interest in the education of Afro-Americans and was appointed by Governor Nice to the Maryland Commission for the Higher Education of Negroes. He also served on the Boards of the Maryland Society for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis and the Maryland Prisoner's Aid Association.

⁴³Newsclipping, "Rosenau and Smith Lose," February 15, 1910, Box 11, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

⁴⁴Newsclipping, "While The Children Suffer," February 18, 1910, Box 11, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

⁴⁵Newsclipping, "Rosenau to Stay at Eutaw Place," n.d., Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

Rosenau established unprecedented relations with Baltimore's Christian clergy and was particularly close to the Archbishop of Baltimore, James Cardinal Gibbons, and to his successor, Michael J. Curley. However, Rosenau's interest in the religious and civic life of Baltimore, and in the larger American Jewish community, was secondary to his love for his congregation. He worked day and night for Oheb Shalom and was indefatigable. In 1904, in addition to his teaching at Johns Hopkins and supervising the congregational school, Rosenau delivered 56 sermons, attended 36 funerals, performed 34 marriages, and made 637 calls with Mrs. Rosenau and 1122 calls by himself.⁴⁶ In 1924, Dr. Rosenau was appointed Rabbi for life at Oheb Shalom. He retired in 1939 and served as Rabbi Emeritus until his death in 1943. In completing his fiftieth year as Rabbi of Oheb Shalom, Rosenau served one of the longest terms in the history of the American rabbinate.

Charles H. Joseph, a reporter for the Baltimore *Jewish Times*, once wrote, "...When we think of Dr. Rosenau, we think of the Golden Age of Reform Judaism in this country."⁴⁷ Few rabbis of any persuasion were as prolific and revered as was William Rosenau. While his conservatism set him apart from the more radical tendencies of Moses Gries, both he and Gries remained within the Reform camp. An analysis of their conceptual framework of Judaism and their stands on a variety of issues will provide a better understanding of how these two very different leaders were fitting

⁴⁶Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community*, p.185.

⁴⁷Newsclipping, *Baltimore Jewish Times*, September, 1932. Box 12, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

spokesmen for Reform Judaism, and how their views comport with the major tenets of "Classicality."

"One God, One Humanity"

For William Rosenau, cosmological, ontological, and moral arguments for the existence of God were not persuasive. Belief in God was a matter of intuition. God could not be demonstrated like a proposition. God had to be felt. Rosenau once compared religious faith with love, courage, and righteousness. "The moment people consider the reasons on account of which they should love, be courageous, and righteous", said Rosenau, "at that moment love, moral courage, and righteousness lose their genuineness."¹ Faith in God could not be reasoned. For Rosenau, spiritual matters required spiritual discernment.

In six brief statements, Rosenau articulated what he considered to be the fundamental principles of Judaism:

1. God is One. He is the All-Pervading Spirit of the Universe and Life. He is perfect in all the highest qualities of mind and heart.
2. Man is created in the image of God. It is his duty to become as much as possible like God. He is free to develop or neglect his godliness. As he develops it, he becomes responsible for his happiness. As he neglects it, he proves himself responsible for his misery.
3. Israel is to be, in the present and the future, as it was in the past, the world's leader and teacher in religion and morality.
4. Humanity is destined to become one brotherhood with its acceptance of the Fatherhood of the One God. This brotherhood is to be established, not through the coming of a personal

¹"The True Nature of All Faith," n.d., Box 5, File 1, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Messiah, but through the combined efforts of all men for righteousness and peace.

5. The Bible is the most valuable book ever written. The study of it will help man to fulfill his duty, Israel to carry out its mission, and Humanity to attain its destiny.

6. Whereas the body returns to earth, the soul lives on and is immortal."²

Gries never formulated a Jewish creed, however, he expressed complete faith in God and in the divine presence within man throughout his writings. According to Gries, the opening thought of the Bible, "In the beginning God...", is the fundamental declaration of Jewish faith. These words demonstrate Judaism's insistence upon a theistic interpretation of the universe. He had little patience for the religion of humanity which was popular at the turn of the century in a significant segment of the Jewish community. "To my mind," Gries said, "it [humanism] rests upon nothing. It is built in the air on fine-spun theories of all-inspiring goodness, universal happiness, and of the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers." Judaism, unlike secular humanism, provided a moral Rock upon which all else rests. Religious faith was so fundamental to Gries's understanding of Judaism and Jewish identity that he once said, "if a man believes in one God, in ethical monotheism, and nothing more, he would yet be a Jew."³

Principles take priority over rites and institutions in the writings of Gries and Rosenau, and one theological principle which both rabbis emphasize is the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This universal idea is derived from the unity of God. The

²"Jewish Articles of Faith," n.d., Box 9, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

³"What Jews Believe About God and Man," October 17, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

unity of God implies the unity of mankind, for if One God rules all the world, then logically, and of necessity, all human beings are His creation. Rosenau underscores this point in his fourth article of faith where he states that humanity is destined "to become one brotherhood with its acceptance of the Fatherhood of the One God." In sermons and addresses, Rosenau urged his listeners to recognize the equality of all humanity in the eyes of God.

"Jews and Christians should remember that theirs is a common humanity. They may be different from one another in the eyes of man, but they are equal in the eyes of God. We must realize that the several religions are only various roads to the same end, -- and this end is the establishment of world-betterment guaranteeing universal peace."⁴

Gries, whose enthusiasm for universalism and human brotherhood ran high, shared these sentiments:

"Whatever we may choose to call ourselves, whatever badge we may wear upon our persons, whether we call ourselves Catholic or Protestant, Jewish or unbeliever, believe me, God, from the heights of heaven, looks upon us and knows us all as His children."⁵

While Gries believed that the fulfillment of prophetic teachings was near, Rosenau was less sanguine about the realization of an ideal social order. He believed that the prophets themselves did not think that a universal brotherhood was attainable and that they held up this idea only as a compelling ideal.⁶ Gries, on the other hand, believed in the perfectibility of all human beings and

⁴"How May Jews and Christians Cooperate for World Betterment," January 19, 1914, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

⁵Newsclipping, July 20, 1896, Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers

⁶Newsclipping, n.d., Box 11, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

was optimistic about the formation of a world brotherhood of religions, races, and nations.⁷

Another concept emphasized in the writings of Gries and Rosenau is the notion of the mission of Israel. Rosenau's third and fifth articles of faith, for example, affirm Israel's mission to be the world's leader and teacher in religion and morality. Gries, in a CCAR sermon entitled, The Opportunity of Liberal Judaism in America, added his own perspective on the mission idea:

"I believe in the mission of the Jew, and I believe that mission to be in the world and to the world. Ours is the duty to proclaim our Jewish thought to the world in which we live; not to convert the world, but to teach mankind the Jewish view of life and of history."⁸

Nine years earlier, in a sermon entitled, "Shall We Remain Jews?," Gries stated that the mission of the Jew was to spread the moral law of the prophets. "Judaism is the religion of the prophets. Let the world hear that it must stand for justice, and that this is Jewish."⁹ Gries even proposed that the CCAR establish outreach programs to the Japanese, the Chinese, and the people of the republics of South America. "Why should not the Jew be missionary," Gries asked, "in an age when the ideals of the prophets of Israel are nearer fulfillment than ever before in human history?"¹⁰

From the liberal perspective of Gries and Rosenau, ritual laws were non-binding, and rabbinical interpretation did not serve as a final authority for Jewish practice. This did not mean, however,

⁷"Elk's Memorial Address," December 3, 1905, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

⁸CCAR Yearbook, (21) 1911: 146.

⁹"Shall We Remain Jews?" November 2, 1902, Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

¹⁰CCAR Yearbook, (21) 1911: 146. CCAR Yearbook, (24) 1914: p.177.

that the moral law had been abolished. "The counsel of the Law-giver," said Gries, "and the preachments of the Prophets, have lost none of their inherent truth. Isaiah still commands obedience with his injunction, 'Cease to do evil and learn to do well, seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, and plead for the widow.'"¹¹

Rosenau also invoked the prophets in his prescription for the improvement of modern Jewish life:

"Let Israel make its Judaism prophetic in character, and there will be no occasion for the sound of joy and the sound of gladness to be silenced in our midst. Judaism will become a living faith...a faith whose worth and influence lie in the molding of the higher life and not in the development of a dead ritualism."¹²

At times, the missionary emphasis in Gries and Rosenau's writings bordered on the triumphal. In an 1890 Chattanooga sermon, Gries anticipated the "changing of the tides," in which other faiths "lost at sea" would "move swiftly" to Judaism. "The allegiance of thinking men," said Gries, "is being won to Judaism."¹³ In a later message, Gries predicted that when the men and women of other faiths hear the proclamations of "our religion, our doctrines, and our principles," they will be compelled to recognize that Judaism "is wide enough to enfold the nations."¹⁴ Rabbi Leo Franklin, in a posthumous tribute, suggested that Gries felt "it was the destiny of Judaism, grounded in the eternal principles of monotheism and human brotherhood, to lead the van of civilization

¹¹"The Crisis in Religion," February 14, 1908, Gries Papers.

¹²"Judaism Declared A Living Faith," Newsclipping, n.d., Box 11, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

¹³"Philosophy of Modern Judaism," 1890, Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

¹⁴"A Jewish Message," n.d., Box 4, File 10, Gries Papers.

and eventually convert the world, not to its name, but to its ideals."¹⁵

While less strident in his triumphalism than Gries, Rosenau shared his colleague's view that Judaism espoused a superior God-idea and was all-sufficing. Early in his rabbinical career, Rosenau stated that "only when this faith will form the creed of every human being, no matter where his home, will humanity be raised to the highest conceivable condition."¹⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century, Rosenau perceived the trend of modern thought to be moving in the direction of Judaism. Liberal Christian theologians, as demonstrated by the drift of Unitarianism, were gradually becoming Jews by conviction, if not by affiliation.

"As long as humanity's high ideal, which is the formation of mankind into a universal brotherhood, under the universal Fatherhood of God, is not realized, so long is there need for Judaism. Christianity, with its Trinity and inherited sin can never take Judaism's place. Nor can Mohammedanism, with its Absolute Will as God and its fatalism. Nor can any other faith...As Moses was picked up by Pharaoh's most distinguished daughter, so Judaism is now being gradually adopted by Unitarianism-Christianity's most noble child...As Moses, the insignificant boy, became the immortal lawgiver of humanity, so Judaism, the denied and persecuted, has the native genius to become the indispensable teacher of mankind."¹⁷

Twenty years later, in the midst of the Great Depression and after Gries had died, Rosenau continued his preachments about the world's need for a Jewish theory of life. As guest speaker at Baltimore's Har Sinai Temple, Rosenau expressed dissatisfaction with the

¹⁵Tribute by Rabbi Leo Franklin, December 1, 1919, Box 2, File 3, Gries Papers.

¹⁶Newsclipping, n.d., Box 10, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁷"Has Judaism Power?" n.d., Box 5, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

proposed political, economic, and social solutions for the national disaster, and insisted that what was needed instead was a Jewish theory of life.¹⁸

The Judaism espoused by Gries and Rosenau shared a strong universalist and inclusive element. Its spirit may be summed up tersely by the phrase, "One God, One Humanity." Rosenau and Gries were convinced that Judaism, as every other belief system in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, was evolving and becoming ever purer, higher, and closer to the divine. Never before had such universal interest been displayed in Judaism until now. The optimism of the age undoubtedly influenced Gries and Rosenau, and enabled them to perceive all the nations as one extended brotherhood. The perpetuation of this universal ideal was, in their view, a religious responsibility. So long as Rosenau and Gries were kindled by the flame of the prophets' passion, they could accentuate the universal spirit of Judaism over and above its particularistic elements.

¹⁸"Wanted-A Jewish Theory of Life," February 5, 1933, Box 8, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

Ritual and Its Relevance

When Moses J. Gries was a student at the Hebrew Union College, there were few indications of the radical attitude he would later adopt with regard to ritual and ceremony. In a paper he presented during his senior year, Gries defended the use of ceremony against those who argued for its abolition on the basis of an uniformed laity:

"...Shall the ignorance of the worshippers be a cause for changing a religion or its beliefs and customs? Rather let it be an incentive for renewed activity in educating the ignorant masses. Religious ceremonies which possess a meaning, which have a purpose, which have been invested by ancient traditions and long usage with a sacred character, can these be so lightly dispensed with?"¹

Ceremonies possessed value for the young Gries. At the same time, he refused a blanket acceptance of ceremony and ritual. "None dare shield themselves behind the terms 'liberal-minded men' or 'advanced thinkers,'" Gries said, "and seek to escape the responsibility of a thoughtful consideration of all ceremonies and proposed changes."² According to Gries, ceremonial abrogations were to be made on responsible grounds, but not on the basis of public opinion.

During his ministry in Chattanooga, Gries maintained his respect for ritual and ceremonial observance. Though he did not

¹"A Defense of Religion," n.d., Box 4, File 10, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²Ibid.

consider signs and forms to be essentials of Jewish faith, Gries did emphasize how symbolic acts like the Passover ritual could serve to preserve the historical memory of the Jewish people:

"We need not the unleaven and the bitter herb of this Passover feast, men have been righteous without them. Men can yet be upright and not eat thereof. Why then does the law command them? They speak to us forcibly and directly of events to be remembered. They are the symbols of the oppression that was and the freedom that is...They speak of centuries of danger and persecution. They are vivid symbols of Israel's life...Shall we forget them?"³

In his early years, Gries even defended Orthodox customs which he did not personally observe, such as the tradition of wearing death shrouds on Yom Kippur. He respected the shroud as an outward symbol of humility and told his Reform congregants not to consider such observances as foolish or a cause for laughter.⁴

It seems that Gries's promotion to Cleveland's prestigious Tifereth Israel congregation drastically altered his attitude toward ceremony and ritual observance. Shortly after his arrival, Gries began protesting against every interpretation of Judaism which would lead the modern Jew back to "Orientalism" and "the ghetto." The adoption of ceremonials was tantamount to a religious retrogression, and Gries unabashedly denounced any ritual he considered to be obsolete and out of harmony with the thought and ideals of the Western World. The same rabbi who had earlier dismissed public opinion as a consideration in the dropping of ceremonials soon made the viewpoint and practice of his

³Newsclipping, 1891, Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

⁴"A Jewish Message," n.d., Box 4, File 10, Gries Papers.

congregants a determining factor in deciding matters of ritual observance.

Perhaps the best example of Gries's turnaround came in the discussion over abandoning the reading of the Torah at Tifereth Israel. The approaching completion of the new Wilson Avenue building in 1894 caused this matter to be raised. The building committee, in completing its plans for the interior, needed to know whether or not to include an ark in the sanctuary.⁵ If the reading of the Torah was to be discontinued, then no ark would be necessary and the congregation could save the additional expense. In a passionate sermon, Gries argued in favor of abandoning the Torah reading on the basis of the presumed ignorance of his congregation. According to Gries, the Torah reading had lost its beauty and meaning as a symbol for the members of his congregation, and therefore should be dropped:

"One year ago, I would have opposed this proposed change...I have always felt that the lifting of the scrolls was a blessing to me. I hope the time shall never come when I can lift these Hebrew scrolls without feeling the awe and thrill of old-time inspiration pass through me...But to you this ceremony has lost its meaning. The old ceremony inspires you not. Therefore, I have changed my mind. Therefore, I say the time has come for this congregation, when the Torah reading has become a symbol without a meaning, to be cast aside."⁶

The itinerant Orthodox preacher Zvi Hirsch Masliansky records in his memoirs an 1895 incident in which Gries commanded that the Torah scroll be removed from the ark and replaced with a copy of the

⁵It is unclear why the question of excluding the ark occurred to them. Gries was probably the source, though this is only conjecture.

⁶"The Reading of the Torah," n.d., Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

English Bible. Masliansky reports that "the holy Torah scroll was hidden in the basement, and a non-Jewish English Bible was placed in the ark."⁷ He also portrays Gries as compelling his congregants to abide by his decision against their will. Masliansky records Gries as saying, "I am the spiritual pastor here, and you are my flock. It is your duty to heed my voice."⁸ The minutes of Tifereth Israel do not support this provocative story. On March 2, 1894, a board-appointed committee of five decided that an ark would be built in the new Temple with the scrolls placed inside.⁹ The committee also stated, however, that "when we occupy the New Temple, the Scriptures [will] be read in English only."¹⁰ Gries, who had initially preached against the installation of an ark in the new Temple, served on this special committee which unanimously endorsed the inclusion of an ark and Torah scrolls in the new building. Apparently, Gries was swayed by the sentiments of his congregants and was not the victorious authoritarian as presented by Masliansky.

Despite the mythic quality of the Masliansky story, Gries became a self-proclaimed radical almost overnight in Cleveland. His either/or conception of religion led him to believe that a religious person had one of two choices, to be orthodox or radical. The radical, as Gries defined the term, believed that religions are strictly human developments and that all laws, worship, and

⁷Gary P. Zola, "The People's Preacher: A Study of the Life and Writings of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky (1856-1943)," Rabbinic Thesis, 1982, p.155.

⁸Ibid., pp.154-156.

⁹There are indications that Gries opposed the presence of the ark in the synagogue, despite the ruling of the committee. See oral interview with Rabbi Melbourne Harris cited in Marc L. Raphael, Abba Hillel Silver, p.227.

¹⁰Tifereth Israel Minutes, March 11, 1894.

institutions are fallible and subject to change. The orthodox person, on the other hand, defined religion as God given. Therefore, its laws, worship, and institutions are immutable, eternal, and obligatory. Gries saw no reasonable middle ground between these two options. Either one accepts or rejects the radical premise that religion is "man-born, man-made, and man-developed." Though he found Orthodoxy to be unreasonable and untrue, Gries respected traditional Jews who followed halakhah in a consistent manner. It was the conservatives, progressives, and moderate reformers, whom Gries considered hypocritical and lacking in integrity. Their willingness to modify and discard what was purported to be divine legislation, demonstrated to Gries that many of the radical's harshest critics were themselves practitioners and adherents of the basic principle of radicalism:.

"You must be either for or against [radicalism]. You cannot profess orthodox faith and live a radical life. That were hypocrisy...Do not with orthodox lip profess that God fixed a seventh day Sabbath for man and then with impious hand and irreligious heart disobey the law of God and desecrate the Sabbath. That is false orthodoxy. Your faith and your life ought to correspond."¹¹

In Gries' view, the time had come for the Jew to free himself from all the "impure accumulations of the centuries." The essentials of Judaism were its truths, its principles, and its faith, and not its code of laws, rituals, and ceremonies. Gries endeavored to promote a Judaism freed from what he perceived to be remnants of ancient orientalism and medieval symbolism. A rational Judaism, one which

¹¹"The Justification of the Radical," December 17, 1893, Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

modern Jews could live and honestly believe without any reservations, necessitated a de-emphasis of what Gries labelled the "peculiar, ancient, and Oriental." Gries made no apologies for breaking with tradition and established authority. He did not want modern Judaism to be practiced as "a religion of pots and pans, of rites and ritual," and he proclaimed that "neither internal dietetics nor external genuflections will save the modern Jew."¹² The modern world, in Gries's view, needed the awakening of conscience, and the Jewish ethical interpretation of life offered humanity the best chance for a rebirth of moral passion and righteousness.¹³

A controversy arose in late 1909 and early 1910 between Gries and his Reform rabbinic colleague Louis Wolsey of the Anshe Chesed synagogue in Cleveland. The catalyst for debate was a sermon which Wolsey delivered entitled, "The Failure of Reform Judaism." In the sermon, Wolsey came out in favor of the restoration of a number of old rites that had been abolished by Gries and other Reformers. He also criticized what he perceived to be the assimilationist tendencies of early twentieth-century Reform:

"Modern Reform, whether consciously or not, attempted to equate Judaism with all universal religions, and by thus destroying the uniqueness of the Jew and the Jewish religion, has prepared the way for the assimilation of the Jew...As it strove to accentuate the universal, it subordinated the particular out of existence--and my contention is that to follow this philosophy any further, is to prepare the way for the extinction of the Jew. We have talked about fundamental

¹²Ibid.

¹³CCAR Yearbook, (21) 1911: p.143.

principles long enough, the time has come to emphasize the specifically Jewish aspect of our religion."¹⁴

Gries took issue with Wolsey in a series of open letters published in the Cleveland Jewish press. He repeated his conviction that the principles and spiritual impact of Reform were the best hope for the religious life of the American Jew and, in a patronizing aside, advised the misguided Wolsey to re-read David Philipson's renowned book on the history of Reform Judaism. In a second letter, Gries implied that Wolsey did not personally observe the dietary laws whose retention he had advocated. For Gries, the eternal principles of Judaism could not be clothed in old forms. Consequently, he stripped most ritual, custom, ceremony, and Hebrew, from the celebration of the Sabbath, including the Kiddush over wine on Friday evening.¹⁵

The liberal religious outlook of the seven hundred plus families who were members of Gries' Temple is a crucial factor in explaining why Gries de-emphasized the "specifically Jewish aspect" of his religion. The Temple had a reputation of being a "goyish" congregation, and there is no evidence that the radical reforms advanced by Gries, with the exception of the ark issue, were ever challenged seriously by his congregants.¹⁶ The congregants may even have encouraged them. Therefore, when Gries proclaimed as early as 1894 that medieval laws and customs had become antiquated, his sentiment was already shared by the vast majority of The Temple's assimilated and aristocratic membership. An

¹⁴Jewish Review and Observer, December 24, 1909.

¹⁵Lloyd P. Gartner, History of the Jews of Cleveland, p.160.

¹⁶Marc L. Raphael, Abba Hillel Silver, pp.21-23.

excerpt from the annual address of President Martin A. Marks twenty years later supports this hypothesis:

"...I firmly believe that the principles for which this Temple stands, appeal to the more intelligent who desire to be identified with a progressive, advanced reform congregation, rather than to remain outside of the fold, and who would not affiliate with congregations still using rituals and advocating principles out of accord with a true liberalism and with Twentieth Century culture and civilization...Week after week are taught the noble lessons of morality, charity and fraternity which our members carry into practical effect in their relations with each other and with the world at large."¹⁷

Clearly, Gries' earlier suggestions in Chattanooga and at HUC for the reshaping and restructuring of many of Judaism's revered ancient customs and rituals would not have met the approval of the wealthiest, most cultured, and most assimilated elements of Cleveland Jewry.¹⁸

Moses Gries's position on the relationship of Reform to authority and tradition, had evolved from a thoughtful consideration of ceremonials to an almost complete rejection of them. The Jewish customs and ceremonials handed down from ancient time were deemed "foreign" and "unsuited" to the modern age. "Our liberal Judaism," said Gries, "is best and most truly expressed, not in forms and ceremonies of worship, but in life. It is revealed in individual character, in right endeavor, and in social responsibility."¹⁹ For Gries, Judaism was the truest, purest, and most noble faith. If it was to survive, though, it had to adapt itself

¹⁷Sixteenth Annual of The Temple, 1913-1914, p.20.

¹⁸Raphael, op. cit., p.22.

¹⁹"The Place of the Jew in the Modern World," September 29, 1911, Gries Papers.

to the twentieth century and rid itself of all foreign customs and rituals.

In no area did the views of Moses Gries and William Rosenau differ more strongly than in their attitude toward authority, ceremony and custom. Unlike Gries, Rosenau could not conceive of Judaism without rituals and ceremonies. A system of principles was not enough to sustain Judaism. Signs and symbols were necessary, in Rosenau's view, to demonstrate concretely what Jewish principles sought to express in abstract form.²⁰ While Israel, in the course of its history, had abolished a significant part of its customs and ceremonies, Rosenau wished to emphasize that Judaism had not outgrown custom and ceremony altogether. "Even the most radical wing of the synagogue," he stressed, "has retained and expects to retain many of its Mosaic institutions."²¹

Rosenau was an anomaly in the Reform Rabbinate of his time. He was one of the few who quoted freely from the Talmud in his sermons and addresses, and he made the study of traditional Hebrew texts a part of his daily regimen. One of his innovations as CCAR President was the introduction of study sessions, or *Shiurim*, on the Saturday afternoon of the annual CCAR conventions. Rosenau's radical Reform colleagues, who sought to distance themselves from Jewish tradition, disappointed him greatly. For Rosenau, Reform Rabbis had a duty to emphasize their Jewishness and not only their liberalism. Too many Reformers, in Rosenau's view made the

²⁰"Some Old Symbols in a New Light," September 24, 1904, Box 4, File 1, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹"The Atonement Universal," October 6, 1897, Box 3, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

pretense of equating their ordination with an unwarranted liberalism. One such rabbi was J. Leonard Levy of Philadelphia. When Levy was extended an invitation by a liberal Christian organization in Scotland to serve as its spiritual leader, Rosenau had had enough:

"A rabbi who can occupy a Christian pulpit as well as a Jewish pulpit can certainly not preach that which is characteristically Jewish...unless a check is put on much which goes by the name "Reform" every day will bring new and startling surprises. Under existing conditions, we may justly ask, "What Next?"²²

Hebrew language, which many Reformers sought to discontinue teaching in their religious schools, was considered essential to Rosenau, if for no other reason than to enable the Jewish child to follow the standard Jewish prayers. He feared the day might come when the Shema, the central confession of Jewish faith, would become strange to Reform Jews.²³ Rosenau considered Hebrew to be so important that when students corresponded with him informally, he requested that they do so in Hebrew. This prompted Bernard J. Bamberger, a disciple of Rosenau, to comment in a letter, "I hope you won't put me in *cherem* if for once I write in English!"²⁴

Rosenau recommended to all of his HUC students who had never experienced Orthodoxy in their childhood, that they live with an orthodox Jewish family upon entering the College. He recommended this step not because he believed in conforming to the Orthodox laws

²²Newsclipping, September 3, 1897, Box 10, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

²³"Religious Education Standards," December 13, 1925, Box 6, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

²⁴Letter, Bernard J. Bamberger to William Rosenau, September 24, 1942. Box 1, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

of the Shulkhan Arukh, but because he was of the opinion that every Reform rabbi, even a radical, could not pass judgement on the worth of ceremonials and customs without knowledge of those institutions considered sacred and essential "by the other side of the house."²⁵

On occasion, Rosenau's emotional attachment to tradition led to a condemnation of certain resolutions passed by the CCAR. One such resolution, adopted at the 1895 Rochester convention, denied that the rabbinical writings were divinely inspired and thus authoritative. Rosenau responded to the adoption of this resolution with the following comment:

"Everybody knows that the Jew no longer conforms to the prescriptions of Talmudism, and that he does not view the Talmud in light of a supreme authority. But why single out all the rabbinical writings? Are they of greater or less importance than the Bible?...In my humble opinion, the rabbinical writings and the Bible stand on an equal basis."²⁶

This editorial comment reveals a great deal about Rosenau's attitude towards Reform and tradition. Ideologically, he agreed with the Reform Movement in its rejection of Talmudic authority. At the same time, he wished to emphasize that every Jewish writing deemed sacred over the centuries formed a link in the chain of Jewish tradition and could not be dismissed capriciously.

Rosenau was no longer the Orthodox Jew of his childhood, but his emotional attachment to ceremony and ritual remained strong throughout his life. He seemed most surprised by the hostile

²⁵Communication to the Editor of the Hebrew Union College Journal, n.d., Box 10, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

²⁶"Dr. Rosenau on the Rochester Resolution," Newsclipping, July, 1895, Box 10, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

attitude many loyal Reform Jews adopted toward religious ceremony, when ceremonies were called for in virtually every other facet of life.

"Ceremony determines the opening, conduct, and closing of courts...Ceremony defines the apparel of soldiers in the army...[it] solemnizes secular holidays like Independence Day, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving Day...Ceremony attends in the personal life the observance of important occasions, like a birthday, graduation from school... Ceremony regulates even the way food should be served and eaten."²⁷

Rosenau pointed out that the same Jews who were most opposed to religious ceremony were often the most enthusiastic proponents of the elaborate rituals carried out by the Masonic Lodges, the Elks, B'nai Brith, and other fraternal organizations. Therefore, before judging religious ceremonies as undesirable, Rosenau urged his Reform colleagues to carefully consider the positive and edifying influence of ceremonies in realms other than religious.

Apart from the general benefit accruing to every faith from ceremonies, Rosenau suggested that they serve a variety of specifically Jewish interests:

"...They keep intact historical continuity. They preserve religious character. They maintain Jewish identity. They promote the solidarity of Israel, as contended by Moses Mendelssohn in his "Jerusalem." They insure discipline...They express an idealism in accordance with the place and purpose of faith in the divine economy of life."²⁸

While Rosenau never ceased advocating the need for ceremonies in the work of religion, he emphasized that at no time in

²⁷"The Present Significance of Religious Ceremony for Jews," May 5, 1913, pp.13-14. Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

²⁸Ibid., p.5.

Israel's history was any phase of Israel's ceremonialism declared final. A ceremony found helpful in the promotion of Judaism in one age was not necessarily believed to be helpful in every other age. He therefore differentiated between "dead" ceremonies and "living" ones. The offering of animals is an illustration of the former. This ancient form of worship is "dead" since it no longer inspires or speaks to the Jew of the twentieth century. Rosenau similarly called for the abolition of the minor fast-days.²⁹ In Rosenau's view, ceremonies were always subject to change when they proved lacking in inspirational influence or value. The antiquity of a ceremony was not deemed sufficient grounds for the discontinuance of a ceremony. Older ceremonies remained alive whenever their teachings and/or commemoration of Jewish experience still furthered the interests of Israel and its mission.

Rosenau divided "living" ceremonies into three component parts.³⁰ The first group includes those ceremonies which sanctify special times and occasions in one's life, such as *brit milah*, the naming of a new-born girl in the synagogue, Bar-Mitzvah,³¹ Confirmation, marriage, and the recitation of Kaddish on the anniversary of a loved one's death. The second group includes those home observances and ceremonies which promote the family life and family spirit of the Jew. This category includes preparation for the Jewish festivals and holidays, Kiddush on Sabbath Eve, a Seder on

²⁹"Adjusting Ceremonials," September 20, 1937, p.2. Box 6, File 8, Rosenau Papers.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp.10-11.

³¹While Confirmation had replaced the Bar-Mitzvah ceremony in most Reform congregations at this time, Rosenau promoted its Reform acceptance, "provided the celebrant, after careful instruction, knows his faith." See *Ibid.*, p.10.

Passover Eve, and kindling the Hannukah lights. Rosenau also considered it essential for Jewish homes to have pictures of Jewish scenes and portraits of Jewish characters.³² The third group of "living" ceremonies consists of the institutions by which Israel makes public declarations of its specific thought and character. In this category, Rosenau emphasized the religious practice of the synagogue and its interior design. He advocated a sanctuary full of Jewish symbols and an oriental design, which in his view, represented a truer reflection of Israel's distinctive character than the stark Gothic model adopted by Gries.

Rosenau adopted a prudent and discriminating attitude towards the dropping of ceremonies and ritual. According to Rosenau, this approach was not in conflict with the Reform Movement, since Reform never predicated itself on the elimination of ceremony. In Rosenau's view, Reform had to continually reckon with the past, avail itself of the wisdom of the ages, and build upon tradition.³³ As an aesthetic measure, Rosenau viewed ceremonies as a way to keep the synagogue service from becoming cold and uninviting. The discipline involved in ceremony and ritual may also help explain Rosenau's interest in their preservation. Rosenau valued discipline so strongly that he preached its constant application in all spheres of life. Not only did he express great concern about the absence of discipline among liberal Jews, he also attributed the suffering of educational interests in the public schools to a lack of insistence on

³²Sermon Abstract, December 31, 1932, Box 8, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

³³"The Present Significance of Religious Ceremony for Jews," May 5, 1913, p.16. Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

discipline. Reform Judaism, in Rosenau's view, had become too abstract and needed to accentuate distinctive Jewish practices in the home, school, and temple. "Living" ceremonies and rituals were an effective means to this end.

While Rosenau appealed for a more conservative approach to the abrogation of ritual and ceremony, he never held this issue to be a decisive factor in the determination of one's Jewishness. As early as 1894, Rosenau expressed regret over the fact that many Jews had attached primary importance to an "obsolete ceremonialism" and still hallowed superstitions as divine inspirations.³⁴ In meriting the title "Jew," Rosenau maintained that

"...there is no difference whether your service is conducted with an organ or without one, with mixed choir or without such, whether your synagogue is built for family pews or with a woman's gallery, whether you read from one prayerbook or another, whether your prayers are in Hebrew or in the vernacular, whether you worship with a hat or without hat, whether you lay tefillin or simply pray without phylacteries, whether you recite a long grace after meals or a short one. Judaism stands above such insignificant details."³⁵

When asked how and when he became a Reform Jew, Rosenau could not give a precise answer. He said that "it was a gradual process of which he had not been fully conscious. Liberal tendencies were at large in the land, both within and without the Jewish community," and from a general sympathy with these tendencies,

³⁴"Judaism and Religious Ceremony," 1894, Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

³⁵"Art Thou A Jew?" September 10, 1904, p.4. Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

Rosenau "gradually moved to a conscious and convinced identification with them."³⁶

Rosenau's great-granddaughter wrote that "the Boss," as he liked to be called, was always successful in overcoming the extreme conservatism of some of his members at Oheb Shalom.³⁷ He initiated the Reform custom of worshipping bare-headed, introduced the late Friday evening service, and instituted reforms for greater decorum which "bleached away the traditional flavor of services at Oheb Shalom."³⁸ Two years after Dr. Szold's death in 1902, Rosenau urged the congregation to discontinue using the Szold-Jastrow prayerbook, arguing that the authors' English was "filled with Germanisms and Hebrew literalisms."³⁹ On April 19, 1906, the congregation voted to adopt the Union Prayerbook in place of *Avodath Yisroel*, thereby making Oheb Shalom a thoroughly Reform congregation.⁴⁰

On the national scene, Rosenau sometimes surprised his CCAR colleagues with liberal suggestions for liturgical reform. He considered it "morally wrong," for example, for any rabbi to take the traditional siddur, leave out certain portions, retain others verbatim, and then ascribe authorship to the title page of the

³⁶Rabbis Bernard J. Bamberger and Samuel Wolk, "William Rosenau: A Memoir," American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, p.3.

³⁷Sally Korkin, "Biographical Study Written by Rosenau's Great-granddaughter," American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, p.8.

³⁸Marsha L. Rozenblit, "Choosing A Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *The American Synagogue*, p.340..

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Oheb Shalom Minute Book 1905-1913, pp.56-57, cited in Marsha L. Rozenblit, "Choosing A Synagogue," p.341.

prayerbook.⁴¹ For Rosenau, true Reform meant launching along independent lines and not merely revising the old. His concern that the Yom Kippur services in the proposed revision of the Union Prayerbook were not sufficiently varied, elicited the following remark from Rabbi Isaac E. Marcuson, Secretary of the Conference:

"Strangely enough, I agree with you completely in what you say about repetition in the prayerbook, but unfortunately, the committee is divided between ritualists and radical reformers. The last term is Morgenstern's label for me. But you surprise me as I thought you were one of the ritualists..."⁴²

Rosenau was determined to organize a Jewish ritual with appeal to the modern worshipper. Hymns at his services ranged from the traditional *Ein Keloheinu* and *Adon Olam* melodies to "God is in His Holy Temple" and "My Country 'Tis of Thee."⁴³

Rosenau's greatest liturgical accomplishment, his Seder Haggadah, provides perhaps the best illustration of Rosenau's tendency to recast and reshape the traditional liturgy. At first glance, Rosenau's Haggadah appears identical with the Orthodox version, as the Hebrew follows the traditional Haggadah in toto. The English translations, however, are non-literal and figurative, and, in some instances, Rosenau takes great liberty in revising the Hebrew text. Two significant examples of Rosenau's Reform anti-nationalist modifications are his translations of the *Ya-aleh Veyavo*, in which Rosenau deletes the traditional reference to the Messiah, and the closing *Leshanah Haba-ah* phrase, which Rosenau renders,

⁴¹"Our Prayerbook," July 1, 1898. Box 10, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

⁴²Letter, Isaac E. Marcuson to William Rosenau, September 25, 1942, Box 1, File 25, Rosenau Papers.

⁴³"Harvest Festival Service," October, 1920, Box 6, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

"Grant O God that a year hence, Israel's glory may be more resplendent than it is today."⁴⁴ It is also interesting that Rosenau renders the "Four Sons" as the "Four Children." By not restricting *banim* to "sons," Rosenau may have wished to emphasize the education of girls as well as boys.

Conversion was another area where Rosenau adopted a Reform approach. Unlike Orthodox practice, he did not require circumcision for adult males. Similarly, women who sought to become Jews were not required to visit the *mikveh*.⁴⁵ Instead, the prospective convert had to pass an examination on the history, principles, and ceremonials of Jewish faith, and pledge to live a Jewish life. There is scant material available on Rosenau's personal ritualistic practice, however, his statement concerning the recitation of a short grace after meals as opposed to a long one,⁴⁶ indicates that Rosenau did recite some prayer of thanksgiving upon the completion of a meal. Rosenau's great-granddaughter also makes an interesting comment concerning his halakhic flexibility with regard to *kashrut*. She records that Rosenau's first wife used to circumvent his demand that no pork be allowed in the house by eating ham sandwiches with her head hanging out the window.⁴⁷

All this is not meant to suggest that Rosenau was a radical Reformer. He did not seek to destroy old forms in wanton fashion,

⁴⁴William Rosenau, Seder Haggadah, pp.63, 115.

⁴⁵Letter, William Rosenau to Roland B. Gittelsohn, July 7, 1941, Box 1, File 19, Rosenau Papers. Rosenau did, however, expect his conversion students to subject any future male children of theirs to the rite of circumcision.

⁴⁶See footnote 33.

⁴⁷Sally Korkin, "Biographical Study Written by Rosenau's Great-granddaughter," American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. p.9.

but sought instead to modify traditional practices in a constructive manner. It could not be otherwise, given the intense instruction in rabbinical disciplines he had obtained since early childhood. Nonetheless, Rosenau made no qualms about questioning the authority of the Shulkhan Arukh and rejecting those beliefs, which, in his own words, "crept into our religion during dark ages and medieval times."⁴⁸ In an address delivered at Johns Hopkins, Rosenau declared that the Biblical account of Jonah is an allegory and not historical fact. He stated further that the story of Elijah is "only a folk-tale," and he maintained that the Book of Daniel is "a bit of fiction written to encourage the Jews."⁴⁹ Of the rabbinical law codes, Rosenau said that "while they may have had a purpose in the Ghetto, their purpose ceased when the Ghetto walls were broken down."⁵⁰

Rosenau's attraction to Reform Judaism seems related to Reform's attempt to make Judaism a modern and rational faith. He considered much of Orthodoxy to be antiquated, mystical, and superstitious, and this did not comport with his understanding of Judaism as being "perfectly rational."⁵¹ Rosenau had little patience for traditionalists who either ignored or discounted the scientific findings of nineteenth-century rational inquiry, and he challenged them openly:

⁴⁸"The Destiny of Truth," November 13, 1892. Box 3, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

⁴⁹Newsclipping, "Jonah Fish Story Again Discussed," n.d., Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

⁵⁰"The New Exodus," April 24, 1910, Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁵¹"Religion and Progress," September 3, 1904, Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

"They imagine religion to have been so strongly constructed in grey antiquity, that not one of the discoveries of higher criticism can endanger the safety of its old time doctrines. But how lamentable a delusion under which to labor! In this century, in which freedom of thought is the precious boon of all men and education is within reach of the humblest, it is a tremendous risk for religion to give undue importance to customs or doctrines, which serious reflection will prove entirely devoid of all reasonableness and inspiration...Judaism cannot afford to close its ears to the thoughts of the present hour. It too must throw off the weights that have hampered it in soaring to ideal heights."⁵²

During the course of his fifty-four years in the Reform rabbinate, Rosenau became a staunch defender of Reform Jewish institutions. At the dedication of the new Oheb Shalom facility in 1893, the twenty-eight-year-old successor to the conservative Dr. Szold delivered an impassioned oration in defense of Reform. He responded to the gloomy and unfavorable portrayal of Reform by the Orthodox with his own appraisal of the movement:

"Reform is not sensationalism. Reform is not ridicule of everything old. Reform is not indiscriminate annihilation. Were Reform's purpose such, it would be justly dreaded. Reform, true Reform, has loftier objects in view. It emphasizes and exalts that which is true and inspiring, and indicates and denounces that which is false and degrading. It bestows praise where praise is due, and takes the privilege to correct, where correction is deserved. Reform, as such, is therefore honest, scientific, and philosophical. Reform, as such, is therefore conservative and constructive. Reform, as such, furthers therefore, the purpose of existence, the mission of Israel, and the hope of humanity."⁵³

⁵²"Anniversary Address delivered before Congregation Ohabei Shalom," February 26, 1893, Box 3, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

⁵³"Oration delivered at Temple Oheb Shalom," September 8, 1893, p.3. Box 3, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

Rosenau rejected the claim that Reform had deprived Israel of all sentiment by "overfeeding" the mind and "starving" the heart. What Reform had done, according to Rosenau, was to accentuate the comparative importance of principle and ceremony:

"It [Reform] showed that the fundamental teachings of Judaism, like those of every other faith, are its essentials; it proved that Judaism is not a system of ceremonies, and proclaimed that ceremonies which exist serve merely as vehicles of Judaism's teachings. It is in consequence of its repeated emphasis of the distinction between principle and ceremony that our ideas of God and man are more widely comprehended to-day, not only among those not of our faith, but also among those who are..."⁵⁴

According to Rosenau, Reform did not attack existing institutions and ritual without thorough consideration, and its removal of ceremonies that were devoid of inspiration served only to strengthen, rather than weaken, the Jewish cause.

Rosenau remained loyal to the Reform leanings of the Hebrew Union College even after the 1886 establishment of the more conservative Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. In 1902, when the *Jewish Exponent* published an article which spoke disparagingly of HUC's narrowness, Rosenau responded that the Hebrew Union College, "teaches the literature and history of Israel objectively, and allows every student to expound the phase of Judaism he chooses when he leaves his alma mater."⁵⁵ A week later, Rosenau attempted to set the record straight with regard to the College's position on "fixed articles of creed." The *Exponent* had

⁵⁴Ibid., p.5.

⁵⁵"Letter to the Editor of the *Jewish Exponent*," August 11, 1902, Box 5, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

given the impression that all Reform rabbis subscribed to the principles enumerated in the Pittsburgh Platform. Rosenau wished to underscore that not all graduates of the College had endorsed the Pittsburgh Platform. He pointed out that only eight ordinees of the College who were then serving in pulpits had finished their courses at HUC by 1885, and of these eight, not all had attended the Pittsburgh conference or adopted its principles.⁵⁶ Rosenau did not discuss his own view of the merits of the Pittsburgh statement, however, in response to an attempt by the editors of the *Exponent* to distance Rosenau's predecessor, Benjamin Szold, from the Reform Movement, Rosenau replied that "the [Pittsburgh] platform condemned by him [Szold] was nothing more than an elaboration of the principles basic to his prayerbook."⁵⁷

Rosenau also lashed out at the conservative *American Hebrew* for intimating the superiority of the Theological Seminary of New York over his Reform alma mater. The situation concerned the invitation of the Seminary's Dr. Joseph Hertz to Johannesburg, South Africa. The *American Hebrew* article implied that the heightened prestige of the Theological Seminary in foreign countries was responsible for Hertz's trip abroad. Rosenau responded with a blistering indictment of the periodical:

"Great as is the wrong which the *American Hebrew* has done the College, its graduates will forgive the journal its offence, as it has now shown them its true feelings toward their "alma

⁵⁶"Letter to the Editor of the *Jewish Exponent*," August 18, 1902, Box 5, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

mater"-feelings of animosity, which the *American Hebrew* has in the past so adroitly concealed."⁵⁸

Curriculum reform at HUC was also a matter of concern to Rosenau, and in one letter he recommended that all new students be required to take a course in the history of the Reform movement.⁵⁹ Another suggestion of his was that Reform's "creedal platform" be taught to students so that upon ordination, "they will be one hundred percent in sympathy with the theology and ethics of Reform and not waiver between one interpretation of our faith and another."⁶⁰ He states further in a letter to Rabbi Leo Franklin that "every man who matriculates at the Hebrew Union College should be told that this is an institution for Reform Judaism, and should be asked whether he subscribes to Reform Judaism. If he doesn't subscribe to it, then he should be told that he should not have come to the Hebrew Union College and that the Hebrew Union College is not all things to all people."⁶¹

In promoting the cause of Reform, Rosenau urged his colleagues not to lose heart because of denunciations heaped upon them by fellow-Jews:

"..Surely the prophets did not sacrifice their revelations because the crowd did not wish to listen to them...Mendelssohn did not sacrifice his rationalism because other Jews declared it leading to the annihilation of Judaism. The early Jewish Reformers did not sacrifice their proposed adjustment of Judaism to the cultural spirit of the times because the

⁵⁸"Letter to the Editor of the *American Hebrew*," August 26, 1898, Box 4, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

⁵⁹Letter, William Rosenau to Dr. Leo Franklin, May 11, 1942, Box 1, File 14, Rosenau Papers.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

Orthodox Jewish element branded them heretics...We will join with heart and soul in making the Reform Movement persevere and persist in the heralding of its timely message."⁶²

In a message before the Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis, Rosenau expressed the need for the rabbis of the Atlantic seaboard to unite and assert themselves against "that neo-Orthodoxy which we [Reformers] here in the East have allowed to attack us most bitterly."⁶³

Rosenau not only rallied his Reform colleagues against their Orthodox critics, but also put the traditionalists on the defensive by pointing out hypocrisies and inconsistencies within their own camp. In his weekly column in the Baltimore's *Jewish Comment* periodical, Rosenau expressed disbelief at the fact that an orthodox synagogue in Syracuse had allowed family pews in the sanctuary without even one word of disapproval from the rabbi.

"What else but a wonder is it for a rabbi hailing from an orthodox seminary and supposed to minister to the spiritual wants of an orthodox congregation to permit the introduction of family pews in the synagogue? How he can reconcile this innovation with the Shulchan Aruch and his well-known anti-Reform professions is hard to tell...If silence gives consent, there is certainly a 'Cheth in the Kehillah.' But our Jewish publications of pretended Orthodoxy, the self-empowered watchmen and guardians of Judaism, have not chronicled this heresy."⁶⁴

When Rosenau explained the meaning and purpose of Reform Judaism to Christian audiences, he spoke in glowing terms about the

⁶²"A Message to the Rabbinate, Students, and Laity of the American Reform Jewry," n.d., Box 4, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

⁶³Newsclipping, "Reform Rabbis Council," n.d., Box 11, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

⁶⁴"Incredible, But True," *Jewish Comment*, July 22, 1898, Box 10, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

movement. In an address before the Congress of the National Federation of Religious Liberals, he credited Reform for "reckoning with tradition rather than traditions" and for emphasizing universalism rather than nationalism.⁶⁵ He also disarmed critics of Reform's attempt to adapt Judaism to the needs of modern life:

"That Reform Judaism has helped to save Israel, and also, through Israel, much that is vital in the life of humanity, must be conceded by Reform Judaism's severest critics. It has not only modernized and beautified the service of the synagogue, but it has also-and this needs more particularly to be noted-subjected the stupendous Jewish heritage to careful scrutiny and judgement. It has sought to distinguish between the eternal and the temporal. In the degree in which Reform Judaism did this, it discovered the truth and separated the truth from error. The truth in turn made for God-intoxication, personal uplift, and human betterment.⁶⁶

In other addresses, Rosenau credited Reform with the organization of an orderly and inspiring worship service, the use of the vernacular, and its attempt to make Jewish worship intelligible to Jews and non-Jews alike.⁶⁷ Ironically, the most stirring remarks Rosenau made on behalf of Reform came at the farewell testimonial tendered to Rabbi Moses J. Gries. Rosenau, then President of the CCAR, noted in his remarks that ordination exercises had been held the day before the tribute to Gries at both the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary. He asserted that "if there is any message, which, for the sake of the larger good, should have been delivered to the Rabbis yesterday enrolled and to be enrolled in the

⁶⁵"The Mutual Relations between Reform Judaism and Liberal Christianity Today," March 6, 1917, p.3. Box 6, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷See note 57.

years to come, it is the message of Reform."⁶⁸ Rosenau denied the claim made by some that Reform was an "*ueberwundener Standpunkt*- a settled problem," and he attributed the failure of Reform to win recruits among the East European immigrants to a lack of self-assertion. He reminded Gries' congregants that the laissez faire attitude characteristic of American Reform in the first two decades of the twentieth century was not in keeping with the assertive posture of the early Reformers. Had Holdheim, Geiger, Einhorn, Hirsch, and Wise lacked self-assertion, Rosenau held that there would have been no re-adaptation of Jewish teaching to the demands of the life of their time.⁶⁹ What American Reform needed, in Rosenau's view, was a Jewishly-assertive and Jewishly-intelligent laity. Rosenau underscored that lay leaders had been the strongest assets of Reform since its earliest days, and warned that the knowledgeable involvement of temple members was imperative to ensure the future success of the movement.

The question of Sabbath reform provides an excellent illustration of the differing attitudes of Rosenau and Gries with regard to ritual and ceremony. Few issues divided the Central Conference of American Rabbis more than the Sabbath question. At the 1902-1905 CCAR conventions, a great deal of time was devoted to discussion on the issues of Sunday services and the more radical idea of transferring the Jewish Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. At the 1904 convention, a compromise resolution was passed which

⁶⁸"Wanted-A Self-Assertive Reform," June 3, 1917, p.2. Box 6, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁶⁹Ibid., p.3.

affirmed the historical Saturday Sabbath while still allowing for Sunday services:

"We recommend the principle expressed in the resolution adopted at the Pittsburgh Conference, November 1885, presenting it in the following form:

Whereas, We recognize the importance of maintaining the historical Sabbath as a bond with our great past and a symbol of the unity of Israel and the world over; and

Whereas, On the other hand, it cannot be denied that there is a very large number of Jews, who, owing to economic and industrial conditions, are not able to attend services on our sacred day of rest; be it

Resolved, That in the judgement of this Conference, there is nothing in the spirit of Judaism to prevent the holding of Divine service on Sunday or any other week day wherever the necessity of such services is felt.⁷⁰

Gries and Rosenau were diametrically opposed on the issue of Sabbath reform and were outspoken advocates of their respective positions. Gries saw the Sunday Sabbath as a remedy to the dishonor and disregard of the traditional Shabbat by most of his congregants. His predecessor, Dr. Hahn, had been delivering Sunday morning lectures without any formal worship since 1886.⁷¹ Seven years later, Gries instituted Sunday services and won overwhelming approval from his Temple Board:

"One of the most pleasant features introduced by our new Rabbi is having a Sunday service...recognizing the fact that no matter what the attraction may be on Saturday, business cares have and will interfere with our attendance which has gradually drifted so that our Saturday Service only attracts a

⁷⁰CCAR Yearbook, (14) 1904: 117.

⁷¹Tifereth Israel Minutes, April 25, 1886. Lloyd P. Gartner claims in his History of the Jews of Cleveland, that Dr. Hahn's Sunday lecture hours included "some worship" which supplemented Saturday's services. The minutes make no mention of this, and suggest that worship played a negligible role in the Sunday gatherings until Gries arrived.

few of the regulars and those desiring to say Kaddish. Our Sunday service has drawn large crowds, which I hope will continue to increase.⁷²

Statistics from annual publications of The Temple confirm the increase in attendance at Sunday services. In 1898, an average of 21 people attended worship on Saturday morning versus 408 on Sunday.⁷³ The percentage of male attendants also tripled during the same year from fourteen to forty-six percent!⁷⁴

The huge increases on Sunday mornings were due largely to the attendance of non-Jews and non-members, and the absence of many Tifereth Israel members became a source of great embarrassment to the leadership of The Temple. A committee was formed in 1896, whose purpose was to find ways to "induce merchants to abstain from going to their places of business on Sunday" and attend services with their families.⁷⁵ Sunday services had succeeded in drawing large crowds, though the attendance of Temple members remained a problem even after their institution.

In Gries's view, the holding of Sunday services was rendered necessary by modern commercial considerations. The additional justifications he gave for the holding of Sunday Services and the transfer of the traditional Sabbath day are reminiscent of the reasons he offered for the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in

⁷²Ibid., October 1, 1893.

⁷³First Annual of The Temple, 1897-1898, p.9. Lloyd P. Gartner, in his History of the Jews of Cleveland, reports that "Saturday services were abandoned [at Tifereth Israel] in 1898," however, a review of the Temple annuals contradicts this claim and lists the holding of Saturday services as late as 1914. See Fifteenth Annual of The Temple, "Program for the Year 1913-1914," p.3.

⁷⁴First Annual of The Temple, 1897-1898, p.37.

⁷⁵Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 19, 1896, cited in Gartner, History of the Jews of Cleveland, pp.155-156.

English translation only. "I would rather, speak, pray, and worship on the ancient Sabbath," Gries said, "but the peace and joy of the day is vanishing [for others]."⁷⁶ As was the case in Gries's decision to cease reading from the Torah in Hebrew, congregational behavior served as the basis for his abandonment of the Saturday Sabbath. In the presence of his Reform colleagues at the 1906 CCAR convention, Gries stated the problem he faced at Tifereth Israel:

"There never was much of a genuine observance of the Saturday Sabbath in our congregation even before the introduction of the Sunday Service. The Sunday Service was introduced because the Saturday was not observed as the Sabbath...Although I am quite aware that practically no one accepts the Sunday as the Sabbath in the old fashion, for many families of our congregation Sunday is the Sabbath and has the Sabbath spirit. I am definitely convinced that there will never be a restoration of the Saturday Sabbath, and the only possibility for the Jews to have a real Sabbath will be on Sunday."⁷⁷

Gries came to believe that the Jew should remember and keep a Sabbath, if not the Sabbath. "If they can and will observe the old historical Sabbath," he said, then "let them keep it sacred and holy. If they cannot, they need a Sabbath on some [other] day of the week..."⁷⁸ As radical and outspoken as he was, Gries did not urge the introduction of Sunday Services where Friday evening services existed or where many families observed Saturday as the Sabbath. However, he did encourage the introduction of Sunday Services in

⁷⁶"What Jews Believe About Sabbath and Sunday," December 11, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

⁷⁷CCAR Yearbook, 16 (1906): 98, 100. This statement by Gries seems inconsistent with his earlier viewpoint on modifying rituals and ceremonials. Before, he had complained about change based on lay ignorance, yet here he supports change on that basis.

⁷⁸Remarks, April 29, 1917, Box 4, File 9, Gries Papers.

communities where the keeping of the Saturday Sabbath was a mere pretense.⁷⁹

Gries saw enormous benefits in the holding of Sunday Services for both Jew and non-Jew. "Were it not for the Sunday Services," Gries declared, "many of our Jewish men and women would never see the inside of the Temple from Holy days to Holy days." Sunday Services were therefore viewed by Gries as a way to attract multitudes of Jews and teach them the same principles heard on the traditional Sabbath. After fourteen years' experience with Sunday Services, Gries claimed that they had given many unaffiliated and uneducated Jews new respect for Judaism and the Bible, and had infused them with what he termed "a genuine Jewish religious spirit." However, the greatest value of Sunday Services to the Jew, according to Gries, was that they corrected misconceptions among non-Jews concerning Jews and Judaism. He noted that Sunday Services provided an alternative mode of worship for non-Jews who had "outgrown the ordinary Christian church."⁸⁰ The popularity of Rabbi Gries among Cleveland's Christian community is related in a story in the *American Israelite* concerning a prominent non-Jewish citizen who expressed his great delight in having the opportunity to listen to Rabbi Gries on Sundays. "You ought to pass around the plate, though, as is being done in many of our churches," said the gentleman, "for I should like to evidence my appreciation!"⁸¹

⁷⁹Ibid., p.103.

⁸⁰Ibid., p.94, 96, 109.

⁸¹*American Israelite*, November 3, 1918, p.3.

Although Gries had initially preached against the idea of Sunday Services in his Chattanooga pulpit, he quickly became an important spokesman for the Sunday Service movement. He was the keynote speaker at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the institution of Sunday Services at Chicago's Temple Sinai,⁸² and was invited by Rabbi David Marx to preach the inaugural Sunday Service sermon in Atlanta.⁸³ Gries also lobbied with Dr. Joseph Krauskopf in 1904 for the publication of a CCAR Sunday Service prayerbook. Their plea was initially neglected by the CCAR Executive Board; however, a Sunday service pamphlet was finally put together four years later and was used by Rabbis Gries, Hyman Enelow, Leo Franklin, and Stephen S. Wise.⁸⁴ Gries's early activism on behalf of the Sunday Service movement incensed his mentor and friend, Isaac Mayer Wise. Wise made it clear in the *American Israelite* that Gries' opinion on transferring the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday was at odds with the viewpoint of the College, and that HUC could not and would not "shoulder the responsibility" for Gries's deviation.⁸⁵ Wise's article concludes with an even harsher condemnation of Gries's radical pronouncements:

"A Rabbi in Israel takes upon himself the solemn duty to teach, expound, promulgate, and preserve Judaism intact as taught by Abraham, Moses, and Prophets, as the history and literature of Israel presents and reflects it. If he can't do that, it becomes his duty as an honest man to step down and out."⁸⁶

⁸²Tifereth Israel Minutes, February 13, 1899.

⁸³Ibid., October 30, 1904.

⁸⁴Letter, Moses Gries to Leon Harrison, December 10, 1908, Box 4, File 12, Central Conference of American Rabbis Records, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸⁵American Israelite, December 30, 1897.

⁸⁶Ibid.

Rosenau concurred with Wise in his opposition to Sunday Services and the idea of a Sunday Sabbath. In 1897, Rosenau delivered a sermon entitled, "The Sabbath Question," which won high praise in the columns of the *Israelite* for its defense of the historical Sabbath.⁸⁷ Oheb Shalom had already earned a reputation of being the largest Saturday-worshipping body in the United States, and Rosenau's congregants responded to his defense of the traditional Sabbath with a standing ovation. In "The Sabbath Question," Rosenau acknowledged that there was nothing objectionable about worshipping on Sunday, since Jews were allowed and encouraged to pray to God every day of the week. The wrong of the Sunday Service, in his view, lay in the consequences to which it might lead—namely, the abandonment of Saturday worship and the "disintegration" of Judaism into a theism.⁸⁸

Rosenau did not want to be counted among the conservatives, however, he had little patience for Reform Sunday Service advocates. In a pointed remark at proponents such as Gries, Rosenau said that, "had the radicals fought as heroically for the maintenance of the historical Sabbath as they did for the institution of the Sunday service, there would to-day be no Sabbath question."⁸⁹ He also likened the exultation of the radicals over the seeming success of the Sunday Service to "a man who would exult at the demise of his

⁸⁷In the June 24, 1897 issue of the *American Israelite*, Wise wrote (p.4) that Rosenau "deserves special recognition for this piece of work, especially as being the first that discussed the question before the congregation and, in spite of all cowardly hypocrites, who lack the moral courage to have a decisive opinion and announce it publicly and solemnly."

⁸⁸"The Sabbath Question," June, 1897, pp.1-14. Box 3, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

⁸⁹Newsclipping, "The Sabbath Discussed by Rev. Dr. Rosenau," n.d., Box 10, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

natural parents."⁹⁰ In presenting his anti-Sunday Service position, Rosenau drew upon the attitudes of early Reformers. He reminded his audience that Einhorn had never endorsed the modern Sunday Service movement and that even the arch-radical Holdheim, of whom Rosenau spoke in blessed memory, ultimately saw the folly of the pro-Sunday position his congregation in Berlin had taken.⁹¹

Nonetheless, Rosenau expressed his reservations about the introduction of Sunday services in a respectable manner. When Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber of Chicago instituted Sunday Services in his congregation, Rosenau shared his personal belief that Schanfarber had made a big mistake. He immediately added, however, that he did not question Schanfarber's ability to determine what was best to do, and he even wished him success with his Sunday Service venture.⁹²

The diametrically opposed views of Moses Gries and William Rosenau with regard to Sabbath reform, is emblematic of their disagreement over the place of ritual and ceremonials in Reform Jewish life. Early in his rabbinate, Gries declared ceremonials unnecessary and undesirable. He seemed ashamed of Jewish ritual because of its alleged "oriental" character. With the modification and abrogation of ceremonials and rituals, Gries felt that modern Jews would show a greater desire to attend public worship. For Rosenau, rituals and ceremonials were essential and lamentably lacking in Reform synagogue life. In his desire to make Reform

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Newsclipping, "An Explanation," n.d., Box 10, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

⁹²Letter, William Rosenau to Tobias Schanfarber, December 15, 1905, Box 3, File 2, Central Conference of American Rabbis Records, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Judaism less abstract and more practical, Rosenau accentuated the importance of ceremonialism as a means to this end. Left to his discretion, Rosenau would have had the CCAR devote itself to judging the vitality of every inherited custom and ritual, and determine which ones were worthy of continuance. Gries, on the other hand, would have eliminated virtually all ritual and ceremonial institutions from Reform Jewish life. In spite of their differences, Gries and Rosenau would probably still have acknowledged each other's honest motives and declared each other's viewpoint on the relevance of ritual to be "words of the living God."

"I Am America, Thy Country..."

An undercurrent of strong patriotism pervades the writings of William Rosenau and Moses Gries. Even Rosenau, who traditionally preached on specifically Jewish themes, delivered sermons on the virtues of great American leaders, such as Washington, Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson. He lauded Washington as "an unconscious benefactor" of the Jewish people, and compared him with Moses, noting that both were born in atmospheres of subjection and sought freedom for their respective peoples.¹ Rosenau's staunch Americanism is probably linked to his immigrant status. Having left Germany as a youngster, just after the final unification of Germany in 1871, he embraced his American citizenship immediately. To the chagrin of his parents and teachers, who wanted him to return to Germany for his rabbinical training, Rosenau chose to study at Isaac Mayer Wise's American rabbinical seminary instead. In his writings, Rosenau preferred the term "American Judaism" instead of "Reform Judaism," and he repeatedly emphasized his dedication to the development of a Judaism that applied specifically to Jews of American upbringing.²

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Rosenau was quick to respond to charges of dual loyalty and claims that Jews were "parasites" of the countries in which they lived. He extolled

¹Newsclipping, "Like Israel's Great Leader," February 22, 1908, Box 11, File 1, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²Address at the Max Lilienthal Centenary Celebration, October 16, 1915, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

the noble patriotism and service of Jews in European countries affected by the First World War:

"In England, his Majesty, the King, has expressed his appreciation of the Jew's loyalty to a father of four Jewish boys now serving in British ranks...In Germany, Jews, like non-Jews, have, to the tune of 'Deutschland, Deutschland, ueber alles,' marched to the battlefield. And even in Russia, the land of Jewish oppression, 350,000 Jews, like non-Jews, have taken up arms upon command of the Czar."³

Rosenau frowned upon the formation of particularistic patriotic organizations, such as Samuel Untermeyer's "Jewish League of American Patriots." He considered the Jewish League to be "as un-American as a Jewish battalion or Jewish regiment." Rosenau believed that Jews should not be distinguished from other Americans in any American cause, on the premise that American Jews would be perceived as different and inferior in the eyes of the larger American community. Fearful that Untermeyer's organization would bring only harm to the Jews, Rosenau encouraged efforts to disband it.⁴ He exhorted his congregants to "be Americans first, last, and all the time," and to dedicate themselves "to the furtherance of every movement making for Americanism." "Thus," said Rosenau, "shall 'My Country 'Tis of Thee' be not merely a song, but a conviction."⁵

Few rabbis stressed patriotism in their rabbinates to the extent evinced by Moses Gries. Patriotism was central to his

³"The Jew and the European War," November 6, 1914, Box 4, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

⁴Newsclipping, Jewish Comment, n.d., Box 10, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁵"The Need of A United American Nation," November 25, 1915, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

religion, and, by his own admission, "the very breath" of his life.⁶ In celebration of Gries's twentieth anniversary at Tifereth Israel, more than seven hundred children of the Sabbath School sang a tribute entitled, "Our Rabbi," to the tune of "My Country 'Tis of Thee."⁷ In his 1917 farewell address, Gries enunciated his American pride as his second greatest treasure:

"We of the twentieth century are enjoying three great privileges. The first is the privilege of being born and educated in Judaism, no religion having a nobler destiny; the second, to be born here on American soil and blessed with the opportunity of living here in America; and the third is the privilege of living in the twentieth century, the most wonderful of all times."⁸

Gries, as Rosenau, felt that America was the land of the Jews' destiny and that no matter what opportunities might come to Jews in other lands, it was only in America that freedom and justice for the Jew could be fully realized. According to Rabbi Leo Franklin, a colleague and good friend of Gries, his Americanism was a passion of his soul. "It was not an outward formal creed, but an attitude of mind, a subjective spiritual thing."⁹

Patriotic topics were a hallmark of Gries's preaching. The birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, in Gries's view, were intended not only to strengthen the moral fiber and purpose of the nation, but

⁶Newsclipping, "Patriotism Marks Rabbi's Farewell," June, 1917, Box 3, File 4, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷Fifteenth Annual of The Temple: 1912-1913, pp.7-9. The words were arranged by Edna Goldsmith and included patriotic lyrics such as, "Throughout this land so wide, Thy praises ring," and "Urging for all the right, To live in freedom's light," etc.

⁸op. cit., "Patriotism Marks Rabbi's Farewell," June, 1917, Box 3, File 4, Gries Papers.

⁹"Tribute of Rabbi Leo Franklin at Memorial Service in Honor of Rabbi Moses J. Gries," December 1, 1919, Box 4, File 4, p.6. Gries Papers.

also to bring personal inspiration to every "true American."¹⁰ Gries referred to national holidays as "holy days" and decried the "desecration" of Independence Day and Memorial Day by the vast majority of Americans. He even objected to the patriotic laxity of the CCAR. When the Conference mailed out a tentative program for its 1905 summer convention, Gries responded with criticism:

"I do not like the program for the fourth of July-that a national organization should meet on the fourth of July and there be not the least reference to the day itself! I suggest that some brief service be arranged for the morning of the Fourth,-perhaps the reading of the Declaration of Independence or some brief address along patriotic lines and the singing of 'America.'"¹¹

One of Gries's first initiatives as Rabbi of Tifereth Israel which won him commendation from the Temple Board, was the holding of a memorial service for then ex-President Rutherford B. Hayes. The Board praised him for "recognizing as a duty that which is often neglected by minds less noble and hearts less earnest."¹² Gries and his congregants apparently both embraced Jewish patriotism reverentially.

In the larger community, Gries made repeated calls for American unity among Cleveland's polyglot population. According to the 1910 census, Cleveland's citizens had come from fifty countries and spoke forty-seven different languages. In his public addresses, Gries frowned upon the idea of separate Italian, Russian, and Hungarian enclaves. Instead, he emphasized the things which united

¹⁰"Washington and Lincoln," February 17, 1906. Box 4, File 8, Gries Papers.

¹¹Letter, Moses J. Gries to William Rosenau, Corresponding Secretary of the CCAR, Box 2, File 20, Central Conference of American Rabbis Records, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²Tifereth Israel Minutes, Annual Meeting, October 8, 1893.

Cleveland's diverse citizenry and not the things which divided the city's various religious and ethnic groups from one another.¹³ Gries did not belong to any Jewish patriotic organizations, though he was a member of the Lincoln Farm Association, a group formed by American citizens for the purpose of turning the farm on which Lincoln was born into a national park.¹⁴

In all their writings, Rosenau and Gries strove to harmonize the common hopes and ideals of Americanism with Judaism. In a sermon devoted specifically to this theme, Rosenau stressed that the Jewish aim has always been democratic and progressive in nature:

"Like Americanism, Judaism accentuates regard for another's rights, emphasizes humanity, stresses the opportunity of every man to work out his own happiness, and would witness the establishment of universal peace by the cessation of hatred, war, oppression, bigotry, falsehood, and persecution."¹⁵

He also attributed the enviable status of American Jewry to the spirit of American democracy:

"Our country is true to the democratic form of government, which is a government 'of the people, for the people, and by the people,' a government offering an education to all of its subjects; a government consecrating liberty in its wildest sense...Let the American Jew rise to the appointment before him, so that his country may, by way of contrast with all others, prove itself for Israel, 'the land flowing with milk and honey.'"¹⁶

¹³"The Ideal City," February 25, 1913, Box 4, File 9, Gries Papers.

¹⁴Gries' certificate of membership, dated May 21, 1906, is found in Box 2, File 6, Gries Papers.

¹⁵"Americanism and Judaism," July 8, 1920, Box 6, File 1, Gries Papers.

¹⁶"What of American Jewry?" December 27, 1914, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

Rosenau viewed America's democratic ideals as an implicit recognition of the dignity of man's divine descent, and he interpreted the success of American Judaism in Providential terms. "God shapes the destinies of individuals and of nations," said Rosenau, "...and America proves the continuance of the evolution of the Jew."¹⁷ He added that "here, more than anywhere else, can Judaism thrive."¹⁸

Gries was even more optimistic than Rosenau. He believed that America was destined to realize the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic ideal.¹⁹ The nation needed an awakening of conscience, however, and Gries felt it was the duty of the synagogue and church to arouse the masses:

"America needs a new proclamation of the old prophecy...The moral leadership of the nation belongs neither to statesmen nor to the press. The synagogue and the church hold the historical appointment to human service."²⁰

Both rabbis emphasized the freedom which America offered Judaism in thought, speech, and worship. However, the sanctity of liberty was threatened in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by efforts to introduce the reading of the Bible in public schools. While neither Gries nor Rosenau identified themselves with any political party, both rabbis singled out the separation of church and state as a vital issue for Jews to uphold:

"...If there has ever been anything that has brought untold misery, indescribable wounds, unutterable executions, and

¹⁷"The Jewish Aim and The American Environment," October 15, 1910, Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁸"The Evolution of the Jew," March 14, 1902, Box 5, File 1, Gries Papers.

¹⁹See "America and Zion," October 30, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

²⁰"The Service of Synagogue and Church to the World," February 26, 1911, Box 4, File 8, Gries Papers.

inexpressible crimes upon humanity, it has been the injudicious marriage between Church and State. No one is more capable to testify to the truthfulness of this fact than the Jew. In those countries where anti-Semitism rages, there without a single exception, exists a state religion. Here, in this, our land, it is our duty to prevent the undesirable union."²¹

In Baltimore, Rosenau was a leading opponent of a resolution to teach Bible in the secondary schools, but he shrewdly avoided crafting his opposition as purely a Jewish issue. He secured a statement of support from Baltimore's eminent Catholic spokesman, Cardinal Gibbons, which expressed in no unmistakable terms, Gibbons' objection to the reading of the Bible in the public schools, as well as his personal concern over the abuse to which bible legislation might lead. In a letter of protest to the Baltimore School Board, Rosenau dismissed the promises of impartiality made by proponents of Bible reading measures by pointing out the biases of the English translations of the Bible. He noted that the standard Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish renderings reflected distinctive theological tendencies "and would thus be expressive of only a part and not the whole student body of a class or school."²²

The separation of Church and State also became a burning issue for Gries during his presidency of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. During his first year in office, he re-organized the Conference's Committee on Sectarianism with a representative in every state. In his Presidential Address of 1915, Gries warned his colleagues of the need for better preparation against the arguments

²¹"The New Administration," March 4, 1893, Rosenau Papers.

²²Letter, William Rosenau to the Committee on Rules, Baltimore Board of School Commissioners, May 23, 1916, Box 1, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

made by those in favor of introducing Bible reading in the public schools. He urged all Reform rabbis to study the problem and "be eternally vigilant" in safeguarding the sectarian character of the public school.²³

The greatness of America for Rosenau and Gries lay not only in its offering of liberty and equal opportunity for all, but also in its role as a haven for the persecuted and oppressed. America, in Gries's view, had the potential of becoming the world's great influence for human rights and human freedom, with its offering of asylum to the oppressed of all lands. Unfortunately, Gries died three years before he could join Rosenau and other colleagues in protest against the restrictive Johnson-Dillingham immigration bill passed by Congress in 1921.

The Thanksgiving of 1918 was truly a thanksgiving of thanksgivings for America. The United States had engaged in war for a year and a half and emerged victorious. When the fateful clash between England, France and Russia, against Germany, Austria, and Hungary had begun in August 1914, Rosenau expressed grave concern over the war's implications for Jews in these lands. The densely populated Jewish settlements along the Western border of Russia suffered indescribably from the early stages of the war, and Rosenau identified with their anguish:

"No one can picture himself the misery among Jews...deafening must be the wail issuing from the lips of the starving, the fatherless, and the widowed..."²⁴

²³CCAR Yearbook, 25 (1915): 147-48.

²⁴"The Jew and the European War," November 6, 1914, Box 4, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

Rosenau's position on the war took many interesting turns. Initially, he believed that the policy of the Jew should be one of complete neutrality, especially by Jews of neutral countries. He seemed especially concerned that immigrant Jews in the United States might side with one nation and violate the neutral stance requested of all citizens by President Wilson.²⁵ Two years later, in his CCAR Presidential Address, Rosenau maintained his neutrality but expressed pleasure at the fact that Jews in different European countries had been able to achieve honor for themselves and their nations:

"We are delighted that Jews fighting under the national colors of belligerent countries, have evinced exemplary patriotism, winning for themselves decorations, even though we lament the precipitation and continuance of the most horrible war in the history of mankind."²⁶

When America entered the war in April, 1917, Jewish participation, in Rosenau's view, became a patriotic duty. He often met groups of American soldiers before they were sent to the front, and delivered inspiring orations which demonstrated his indomitable American pride. In one such address, he presented a group of young Jewish officers with an additional set of the ten commandments to bring with them on their way to the battlefield:

"...The first commandment of the Army decalogue is: I am America thy country, which brought thee out of bondage to liberty. Thou shalt have no other country besides me. Thou

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶CCAR Yearbook, 26 (1916): 187.

shalt not take the name of America, thy country in vain.
Observe the Declaration of Independence and keep it holy..."²⁷

At the end of the war, Rosenau was hopeful that America's influence in the safeguarding of peace and democracy would be felt not only with other nations and between other countries, but also at home in the United States. "Here, within its own boundaries, America shall bring careful legislation and in its conscientious application, guard against wrong, might, and disturbance of every kind."²⁸ Rosenau's optimism waned over the years, as evident in an address he delivered eight months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

"Consider 1918, the end of the World War. What was then predicted in the light of the claim that we went into the War to make the world safe for democracy? An ideal humanity with nothing but blessings to be enjoyed by us. Was this prediction realized? No. Fascism, Communism, and Nazism have come into the fore and aim to annihilate democracy."²⁹

As Rosenau became less sanguine about the prospects for world peace, his attachments to the United States intensified. At Passover services in 1939, as the warclouds began to hover over Nazi Germany, Rosenau reinterpreted "*Dayenu*" in light of the American Jewish experience. "Were God to have bestowed upon you naught but the privilege of having been born in or having adopted America as your country," he told his congregants, "you could indeed say '*Dayenu* .' It would have been sufficient to thank God for this privilege."³⁰

²⁷"Address Before Jewish Soldiers at Camp Meade," January 27, 1918, Box 6, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

²⁸"The New America," November 28, 1918, Box 6, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

²⁹"These Times," January 22, 1939, Box 6, File 7, Rosenau Papers.

³⁰"It Would Have Been Sufficient," April 8, 1939, Box 6, File 8, Rosenau Papers.

The patriotic remarks of Gries and Rosenau may sound melodramatic, trite, and even fatuous, to the late twentieth-century American Jew. However, they represent a prevailing motif of Reform Judaism during its Classical phase. America had become Reform Judaism's land of promise and security, and it became increasingly felt among many Reform Rabbis that the success of the American Movement pointed towards the fulfillment of Judaism's prophetic mission in the United States.

The Land of Israel: "Holy, But Not A Nation"

The anti-Zionist position of Classical Reform was vigorously supported by Moses Gries and William Rosenau. Historic as the land of Palestine was to both rabbis, neither Gries nor Rosenau could applaud a Jewish nationalistic movement calling for the creation of a political state. When Gries first spoke out against Zionism in Chattanooga, he considered the idea of a return to Palestine to be a personal attack on his American nationality:

"The home of our birth is our home, and to those who have wandered to our shores, the home of their adoption is their home. No sermons hoping for the return [to Palestine] are preached from Jewish pulpits. The thought of the people is here: upon their life, here with their hearts clinging to freedom and peace."¹

For Gries, the people of Israel were a religious community and did not constitute a race or nation. Gries was particularly disturbed by the phrase "our people" and asked his congregants not to use this idiom, because for him it implied Jewish nationhood.² As one who saw himself as a Jew in religion and an American in nationality, Gries clearly sought to minimize any non-religious differences between Jews and non-Jews. Gries acknowledged that his view might seem strange, and even dangerous, to some congregants when he told them, "We are a religious congregation and nothing more."³

¹Newsclipping, "Passover Sermon," 1890, Box 4, File 1, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²"As We See Ourselves," November 5, 1893, Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

³Ibid.

Clearly, political Zionism clashed with Gries's attempt to destroy all non-religious barriers between American Jews and their fellow citizens.

Gries aired his grievances with the Zionist viewpoint at the early CCAR conventions. Following an anti-Zionist address by Rabbi Samuel Sale at the 1899 conference, Wise extended an invitation to anyone wishing to defend the Zionist position. Caspar Levias, a Professor of Semitics at the Hebrew Union College, stated that he had not been invited to speak on Zionism but would have done so had he been asked. When Dr. Moses Mielziner then moved that Professor Levias be invited to write a paper on Zionism to be published in the Yearbook, Rabbis Gries and Philipson objected on the grounds that only papers which had been formally read to the CCAR were acceptable for publication in the CCAR annual.⁴ The attempt by Gries and Philipson to block Levias' pro-Zionist paper proved unsuccessful, and a piece entitled, "The Justification of Zionism," was published along with Sale's attack on Zionism.⁵ Two years later, when the subject was raised again at the 1901 CCAR Convention in Philadelphia, Gries labeled Zionism as "infelicitous." He recommended that Jewish colonization projects be investigated and studied at future Conferences, but not the question of Zionism itself.⁶

The two fundamental evils of political Zionism, according to Gries, were its insistence upon Jewish nationality and its

⁴CCAR Yearbook, 9 (1899): 112-13.

⁵Ibid., pp. 179-181.

⁶CCAR Yearbook, 11 (1901): 81.

implication that Jews were alien in the land of their birth or adoption.

"A new movement-Zionism-has been borne in Israel, proclaiming to all the world that the Jews are a nation, that they desire to live in their own country as a united people. With all emphasis we declare, the Jews are not a nation. Jews born in America are not born members of any Jewish nation. They are born Americans."⁷

Gries affirmed Israel's unity against the persecuted of the world, particularly its defense of Israel's own kin. However, he denied the attempts by Zionist advocates to establish a national unity of Israel. At the installation of his Cleveland colleague, Rabbi Louis Wolsey, Gries spoke forcefully against the Zionist cause:

"We must live for Judaism and our Jewish cause, and Judaism will live in and through us. The opportunity is in America. We need not Zion-Palestine is unnecessary. Judaism and the Jew in America are free to fulfill their highest hopes and to realize the loftiest ideals."⁸

Rosenau shared Gries' positive view of the Diaspora and was even more articulate in his anti-Zionist pronouncements. While his liberalism would not allow for the exclusion of Zionists from the Reform movement,⁹ he believed very strongly that Reform Rabbis should not associate themselves with a movement in which Jews banded together on racial or national grounds for the establishment of a political state. His concern over the sacrifice of Israel's

⁷"America and Zion," October 30, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

⁸"Remarks at the Installation of Rabbi Louis Wolsey," August 30, 1907, Box 4, File 8, Gries Papers.

⁹At the Fifteenth Annual CCAR Conference in Louisville, Rosenau stated his belief that "one can be a good Reform Jew and still be a Zionist." See CCAR Yearbook, 14 (1904): 68.

religious identity to a political definition was a central theme in his opening Presidential Message at the 1917 CCAR Convention:

"The time has come for this conference to publish the statement that it stands for an Israel whose mission is religious and that, in the light of this mission, it looks with disfavour upon any movement the purpose of which is other than religious.¹⁰

Perhaps Rosenau would have voiced less opposition to the Zionist idea had its nature not been so overwhelmingly secular. For him, Zionism was synonymous with nationalism, and Rosenau saw no good in the national segregation of a religious people. The national interpretation of Jewish history advanced by the Zionists also undermined the two central aims of Reform; namely, the accentuation of the religious note in Jewish life, and the common ethical goals of all peoples.

Rosenau's positive view of the Diaspora, a trademark of Classical Reform, was another factor accounting for his anti-Zionist position:

"If Palestine is indeed to be rehabilitated on the ground of national aspiration, then let Jews, taking up their residence in Palestine, declare themselves Jews of Palestinian nationality, without insisting that such Palestinian nationality be shared by the Jews in the Diaspora."¹¹

Rosenau resented the notion that Israel's religious influence had been impeded by its dispersion. For him, the Diaspora was a living

¹⁰CCAR Yearbook, 27 (1917): 202.

¹¹Newsclipping, "Reform Judaism and Jewish Nationalism," 1931, Box 12, File 6, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

positive historical development through which "the leaven of Jewish thought has the chance to do its work."¹²

Though he was not a Zionist, the land of Zion was still very dear to Rosenau. "Why should I not be concerned about the rehabilitation of Palestine," asked Rosenau, "especially when I consider what Palestine has been to my ancestors and may become to oppressed modern Jewry?"¹³ Zion, to Rosenau, was a sacred recollection and not a secular aim. He looked upon Zion as the cradle of Israel's religious influence rather than as a seat of modern political power or national aspiration.¹⁴

Organizationally, Rosenau played an instrumental role in the formation of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism (ACJ). The passage of a 1942 CCAR Resolution favoring the formation of a Jewish army in Palestine was the decisive issue which generated the birth of the ACJ. Rosenau attended the Philadelphia meeting of non-Zionist rabbis at the Hotel Warwick in March of 1942 as well as the Atlantic City convocation three months later. He favored the convening of non-Zionist Rabbis in order to "accentuate the principles of Reform."¹⁵ Initially, Rosenau proposed the name, "The Jewish Religionists," for the group, instead of the "American Council for Judaism." He advocated this name because it emphasized Israel's

¹²ibid.

¹³"Position on Palestine Reconstruction," Box 6, File 8, n.d., Rosenau Papers.

¹⁴"Zionism from the Standpoint of a Non-Zionist," February 27, 1916, Box 3, File 7, Rosenau Papers. In an earlier sermon entitled "Israel and Palestine," March 30, 1907, Rosenau stressed that the biblical promise concerning the time when every Israelite will reside in Palestine and sit under his fig tree applied only to the times in which the prophets who spoke these words lived.

¹⁵Minutes of the Meeting of Rabbis at Hotel Warwick, Philadelphia, April 6, 1942, Box 1, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

distinctive religious mission while declaring, by implication, Reform's opposition to Zionism having a Jewish Commonwealth as its aim.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Rosenau was a founding member of what became known as the American Council for Judaism, and he became an important and influential source of support for its director, Rabbi Elmer Berger of Flint, Michigan. When Berger received requests from CCAR members calling for the abolition of the ACJ, Rosenau reaffirmed his solidarity with Berger's cause:

"...Of course, the [Central] Conference would like to see the liquidation of the American Council. Parenthetically, let me say to you that those of us who have been well trained in the school of Reform will not accede to any proposition of liquidation."¹⁷

When further entreaties were made by CCAR members to liquidate the Council, Rosenau questioned why the Conference singled out that body for rebuke and no others:

"...Insofar as the liquidation of the [American] Council is concerned, I think even the request to do so was unfair. The Council is not a Conference matter and I fail to see how the Conference presumes to pass judgement on it anymore than it passes judgement on the Z.O.A. [Zionist Organization of America]. To ask us to give up membership in it should be countered by asking the Zionist Rabbis to resign from the Z.O.A. And to ask us to liquidate it should be countered by the proposal to liquidate the Z.O.A."¹⁸

Rosenau's affiliation with the American Council was based solely on his objection to the political aims of the Zionist

¹⁶Letter, William Rosenau to Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron, December 6, 1942, Box 1, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁷Letter, William Rosenau to Rabbi Elmer Berger, January 6, 1943, Box 1, File 8, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁸Letter, William Rosenau to Dr. Ephraim Frisch, January 9, 1943, Box 1, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

movement. He never expressed objection to making Palestine liveable, by way of reconstruction, for all Jews and others wishing to make Palestine their home. He saw no reason why American Jews should not be pro-Palestine. However, as he told his colleagues in the ACJ, "America, not Palestine, should be the focal point of our interest; Judaism, not Zionism, God, not Palestine, should have primacy in our thinking."¹⁹

With the exception of Stephen S. Wise, Rosenau managed to maintain cordial relations with his Zionists colleagues.²⁰ On the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary as a Rabbi, he received congratulations from Judah Magnes of Hebrew University, as well as the following accolade from the Executive Director of the Seaboard Zionist Region:

"Although not having espoused the Zionist cause, you have nonetheless been a source of encouragement to all of us who have labored in the redemption of the Jewish homeland."²¹

Rosenau clearly wished to see Palestine made liveable, in the broadest sense of the term, for Jews and non-Jews. However, while he was in favor of the Jews finding a homeland in Palestine, Rosenau

¹⁹"Statement of Principle," American Council of Judaism, June 2, 1942, Box 1, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

²⁰Rosenau offended Wise with his remarks against Wise's German boycott proposal in 1933. Rosenau had said in April, 1933, that, "if the boycott of Germany and the protest against present Germany in the spirit in which it is carried on under Dr. Wise's direction should be continued, Dr. Wise will kill the Jews of Germany." While Rosenau's intent was an economic killing, Wise was so offended that he wrote to Rosenau, "I can nevermore have any word with you nor see you again." Wise asked Rosenau to withdraw his statement publicly and apologize in the Baltimore Jewish Weekly. Rosenau refused and their friendship ended in their April, 1933, correspondence. See Box 2, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

²¹Letter, Simon J. Levin to Rabbi William Rosenau, June 19, 1939, Box 2, File 12, Rosenau Papers.

homeland for the Jews. Just before his death in October 1943, Rosenau stated that "every country where Jews live and enjoy rights of citizenship is justly to be regarded as a homeland for our people."²² This succinct statement became one of Rosenau's unshakeable convictions, as he remained a non-Zionist until the day of his death.

²²Sally Korkin, "Biographical Study Written by Rosenau's Great-granddaughter," American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. p.12.

"All Jews Are Responsible One For Another"

Widespread attacks on the Jews of Russia began in 1881 with the assassination of Czar Alexander II. Mob violence went unchecked and the pogroms of 1881 and 1882 traumatized over two hundred Jewish communities. The infamous May Laws of 1882 led to the expulsion of Jews from outlying rural areas and severely restricted Jewish livelihood in the cities. Jewish misery intensified with more pogroms, and culminated in the mass emigration of over two million East European Jews to America's shores between the years 1881 and 1917.¹ The reaction of Moses Gries to the plight of East European Jewry demonstrates a sensitivity and concern uncharacteristic of an "aristocratic" Reform Jew. The brutalization of Russian Jewry by the Czarist regime was a popular subject for Jewish discourse and Gries preached many sermons on this theme. On every occasion, Gries emphasized that Jewish misery under the tyranny of the Czar compelled the attention of every Jew throughout the world.

At Passover services in 1904, Gries drew an analogy between the treatment of Jews in biblical Egypt and modern-day Russia.

"Jews are still in Egypt. Egypt of today is spelt Russia, and the pale of settlement is the land of Goshen. It is difficult to imagine that Egypt and Pharaoh and the task-masters and the hard-labor were worse than is Russia today. There are more millions of Jews in Russia than there were Hebrews in Egypt.

¹ Arthur A. Goren, The American Jews, pp.37-41.

The world waits for a new Passover of freedom."²

Gries spoke at fund-raising events for immigrant aid, and on one occasion, he asked the wealthy American Jews in attendance to feel the pain of their Russian brethren and practice self-denial. He appealed as much to their hearts as to their minds when he declared,

"We cannot fully comprehend all the misery of our brethren, - we, who live in ease, and comfort, and security. We know not what suffering is. I would that every heart be stirred. I would that every man, woman, and child feel keenly the pain of the Jewish massacre. I would that everyone give to his fullest capacity...deny yourselves some pleasure, some luxury; make a sacrifice, if sacrifice be needed. But let men, women, and children give."³

Gries's preparation for a report on settlement work among Jews in May 1902 convinced him that Russia's crimes against its Jews amounted to the most inhuman savagery the world had ever known.⁴ In recounting the massacres at Kishineff in 1903, and later in Odessa on Thanksgiving Day, 1905, he excoriated Russia from the pulpit of the Unity Church:

"The Jews of America planned to make this Thanksgiving Day a special season of rejoicing: to commemorate the landing of their Pilgrims two hundred and fifty years ago. Once again as so many times, the joy of Israel is made solemn, consecrated by the tragedy of Jewish history. Russia...laid a bloody hand upon [its] Jews. There can be no true friendship between Russia of the Romanoffs and free America."⁵

Gries was shocked by the callousness and indifference of the world

²"In Darkest Ghetto," April 3, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³"Jews and Russia," November 19, 1905, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

⁴"Settlement Work Among Jews," May, 1902, Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

⁵"Thanksgiving Day Address-Unity Church Citizens Service," November 30, 1905, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

to the horrors perpetrated by the Russian government against its Jews. He implicated America, especially, for shutting its gate to freedom. He was sorely disappointed in the failure of the freest nation to oppose the oppression of others.

"Israel in Russia lies bruised and broken and bleeding under the heel of the persecutor and no human arm is outstretched to save. The great nations of the civilized world speak words of diplomatic courtesy to Russia, the Infamous, guilty of words and thought and deeds which would have disgraced the brutal barbarian in an age of savagery...And America urged to bar the highway to escape...Will America thus intensify the cruelty of the Russian oppressor? Are we, the United States and England and France and Germany, altogether guiltless, if Russia crushes her impoverished millions?"⁶

Noting that half the world's Jewish population lived in Eastern Europe, Gries declared that all the troubling questions confronting Jewish life in America "sink into nothingness" when compared with the threat against the lives of Eastern Europe's Jews. The only positive outcome of their oppression, according to Gries, was the lesson in Jewish loyalty and Jewish idealism which their resistance was conveying to the Jews of America. It was Gries's hope that the stubborn refusal of Russian Jewry to renounce their faith, even in exchange for safety and peace, would inspire a higher level of commitment among America's Jews.

Gries was particularly moved during a visit to Ellis Island, when he saw how immigrants were received, inspected, cross-examined, and finally permitted to enter the United States. The severe ordeal endured by the immigrants, as well as the tearful

⁶"The Service of Synagogue and Church to the World," February 26, 1911, Box 4, File 8, Gries Papers.

reunion of families long separated, were undoubtedly factors that influenced Gries's sense of Jewish responsibility. Rarely did Gries embrace the power of Jewish peoplehood as when he declared,

"Am I my brother's keeper? The answer should be an unhesitatingly and unqualified: 'Yes.' Yes. You are your brother's keeper...especially every Jew in distress needing a brother's help. Jew must be for Jew, as long as any nation is against the Jew...If every family cared for its own the world would be far healthier and far happier...the Jew has a natural interest in his unfortunate brothers. Like brothers let us welcome them with help and the hand of fellowship."⁷

Initially, Gries favored emancipation over emigration as a remedy to the plight of Russian Jewry. He did not believe that the Russian government would exterminate its Jews because he naively assumed that the world would not permit such a massacre. He also did not believe that the solution for the Russian Jewish masses lay in Palestine or any country other than their homeland.⁸ By 1905, however, Gries saw emigration as the only viable option for the relief of East European Jewry, and he appealed to Americans everywhere to facilitate that prospect:

"Let America open wide the door of welcome to the wanderers, who escaped, driven, and hunted, will flee across the continent and sea. Let the mighty voice of public opinion speak from the heart of America, which believes in liberty and justice to all men."⁹

The apathetic attitude of American Jews toward the desperate plight of the East Europeans greatly distressed Gries. In his 1915 CCAR Presidential Message, he questioned the abdication of Jewish

⁷"Charity," June 5, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

⁸"In Darkest Ghetto and the Way Out," April 10, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

⁹"Russia and Her Jews," November 121, 1905, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

responsibility by a large segment of the American Jewish community and exhorted his Reform colleagues to do a better job in providing relief aid. He based his challenge on the conviction that few could witness actual human suffering and refuse to help. Gries was unwilling to believe that American Jewry did not care about the persecution of their Jewish brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe. In his hopeful view, the Jews of America would do their full duty when they realized the magnitude of Jewish misery in Russia. Gries noted that America was the only Jewish community in the world able to send relief, and he urged his CCAR colleagues to make known the need for immediate sacrifice and aid on behalf of Russian Jewry.¹⁰

When the Bolshevik Revolution began in March, 1917, Gries spoke of it as the most important event in Jewish history since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. For Gries, it marked not only the end of Jewish persecution, but also the beginning of a new era of human freedom. Nonetheless, the American Jew still had an obligation to help the Russian immigrant acclimate to American life and culture. While Gries never spoke Yiddish, and his radical Reform did not fit the religious practice of the East European Jewish immigrants, Gries never gave up the fight for the emancipation of all Jews, including those foreign to him. He died believing that no Jew should be compelled to surrender his religious convictions or sacrifice his Jewish principles.

Whereas Gries likened the Russian government to Pharaoh's

¹⁰CCAR Yearbook, 25 (1915): 143.

Egypt, Rosenau renamed the Czarist regime "Amalek." He also extended the personage of Mordecai to the Russian Jew, praising him for his refusal to bow down to a civilization which he could not endorse.¹¹ Rosenau was the keynote speaker at a ten thousand dollar fundraiser for the relief of Russian Jewry in Baltimore. In his address, Rosenau emphasized the common ancestry of Russian and American Jews, despite their differing nationalities and disagreements over religious practice.¹² In January, 1900, Rosenau spent two days in New York's Jewish quarter and concluded from his visit that the Jewish ghetto should be eradicated. He spoke highly of the East Europeans' attributes but suggested that the new immigrants be scattered to the West and South, so that they may not "sacrifice their intellectual, moral and religious health, as they do the physical."¹³ At a time when many of his Reform colleagues spoke in paternalistic tones about the absorption of East Europeans into their upper-class Temples, Rosenau told the CCCAR that

"...the duty we owe to the immigrant Jew arises more from what the immigrant Jew can give to us than from what we can give to the immigrant Jew. Hundreds of the immigrants come not from the lower classes or from the ghetto, but from the universities; and I believe, therefore, that what these people can give us is infinitely greater in value than what we give to them."¹⁴

Rosenau's pleadings for the freedom and acceptance of the East Europeans went hand in hand with his call for Jewish unity. Israel's

¹¹"What Shall Israel Remember?" March 17, 1911, Box 5, File 3, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²Newsclipping, January, 1906, Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

¹³"Ghetto Should Be Eradicated," January 24, 1900, Box 5, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁴CCAR Yearbook, 14 (1904): 68.

togetherness manifested itself in the readiness with which some of the most radical Reformers interceded and aided their suffering Russian Orthodox brethren. Rescuing the East Europeans was a priority for Rosenau if for no other reason than the fact that they belonged to Catholic Israel. In addition, the East Europeans had an earnest appreciation of the traditional drift of Judaism and had distinctive contributions to make toward the strengthening of the Jew's historical position.

When the immigrants arrived en masse, uppermost in Rosenau's mind seemed to be a hope and prayer for American Jewish unity:

"If the Union of American [Hebrew] Congregations could launch and maintain a theological seminary for years-if an American committee could arouse all America in the time of Israel's recent persecutions-if a Jewish Chautauqua could stimulate Jewish educational endeavor-if the Alliance Israelite of France could bring about the uplift of Oriental Jewry-if the Hilfsverein of German Israelites could solve the political status of Jews in foreign lands-if Zionism could awaken idealism in otherwise indifferent Jews-how much can not all Israel accomplish if it were only united?"¹⁵

Rosenau was keenly aware of the existing differences between Jewish organizations in America. However, one common purpose he saw among them was the rescue of the Jewish people from threatened destruction in Eastern Europe, and later, in Germany. For Rosenau, the unity which characterized Baltimore Jewry in its relief efforts was the community's proudest feature. At the installation of Morris Lazon as Rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Rosenau avered that "nowhere is less known factions created by theological and national differences than here among us [in

¹⁵"A United Israel," February 24, 1911, Box 5, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

Baltimore]."¹⁶

Rosenau felt that union was necessary in American Jewish life for the securing of Jewish rights and the alleviation of Jewish misery around the world. His call for union came at a time when American Jewry was sequestered into German and Polish, American and European, Zionist and anti-Zionist, and Reform and Orthodox groups. Nonetheless, his appeal to Jews of all persuasions became, "united alone we can stand-divided we shall be sure to fall." In his New Year wishes for the Jewish calendar 5676, he said,

"For the nonce let us forget that we are either Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform Jews; immigrant or native Jews; Jews of West European or East European descent; Zionists or non-Zionists. The old battle-cries must be replaced by a new one. I should word it, 'An United Israel!'"¹⁷

In order to effect the union which Rosenau sought, the ever-growing heterogeneity of America's Jewish population had to be transformed into a homogeneity. "America's melting pot," said Rosenau, "must steadily do its work." Unfortunately, the larger American Jewish community remained a house divided against itself, and the frequent contention that Jews were closely bound to each other was more a hope than a reality. Still, Rosenau did everything possible to welcome the Russian immigrants to his home congregation, and a few became active at Oheb Shalom. Rosenau's fluency in Yiddish helped him overcome the language barrier which separated the German and East European immigrant communities,

¹⁶"The Significance of the Occasion," September 3, 1915, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁷"A Thought for 5676," September 3, 1915, Box 5, File 7, Rosenau Papers.

and, despite great resistance, he was instrumental in introducing English into the curriculum of the East European's Talmud Torah school.¹⁸ By the mid-twenties, Rosenau's hopes for the end of two separate Jewish cultures in Baltimore had been largely achieved. However, a united Jewish front for Israel-at-large would still remain a distant wish.

¹⁸Cahn, The History of Oheb Shalom, pp.45-47.

"Justice, Justice Shalt Thou Pursue"

Although the American Reform Rabbinat did not adopt its first social justice platform until 1918,¹ Moses Gries and William Rosenau strongly supported and participated in programs for civic and social betterment at a much earlier date. Both rabbis were deeply aware of the inequities present in early twentieth century America, and considered it part of their Jewish responsibility to improve the social and economic organization of society.

Gries's concern for social justice was rooted in his theology. The unity of God, which was the cornerstone of Gries's faith, had as its corollary, the unity and equality of humankind. Gries therefore considered justice for the weak, poor, and unfortunate, a religious obligation.² As early as 1893, Gries lamented the decline of public service as a religious emphasis among Jews. Service to God meant service to humanity, and religious institutions provided the best forum for stimulating and furthering social service. Gries promoted this ideal not only through the Temple, but also through the creation of the Council Educational Alliance, the forerunner of Cleveland's Jewish Community Center. As the keynote speaker at the annual banquet of the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities, Gries told the donors present that it was within their power to destroy the

¹In 1918, the CCAR adopted a Declaration of Principles which constituted the first social justice platform of Reform Judaism. See CCAR Yearbook, 28 (1918): 101-103.

²So obligatory to Gries was the giving of charity, that he recommended social ostracism as a punishment for delinquent contributors to the Jewish Relief Society. See "Tsedakah," n.d., Box 4, File 7, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

tenements and slums of their city if they applied the same amount of energy to the problems of the poor as they devoted to commerce and industry.³ He also chided his Reform colleagues at the Twenty-sixth Annual Convention of the CCAR in 1915 for failing to produce a strong declaration of principle with regard to social justice:

"The previous committees and commissions on Social Justice have never brought in the reports desired, as they never seemed to grasp the fundamentals the Conference wanted. It is my own firm conviction that what we are striving for is to know what is the attitude of the synagogue with reference to the great social problems, and what moral obligation is upon us, as teachers and leaders."⁴

When some of his colleagues began to express reservations about speaking out against the social order, Gries answered with a statement of belief in the appropriateness of rabbis to voice their objections publicly:

"We can place ourselves as believers in the rights of the child and the abolition of poverty, and express our views strongly from the moral standpoint."⁵

Gries's views on a wide array of social, economic, and political problems, were heard not only in The Temple and the CCAR, but in virtually every local movement for municipal reform. In a Sunday morning discourse on "Cleveland's Duty in the New Year," Gries questioned the integrity of the city's management:

"The schools are overcrowded, the toiler is discontented, and the poor live in hovels. I doubt not that the money expended in

³"Annual Banquet of the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities," n.d., Box 4, File 10, Gries Papers.

⁴Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Conference of the CCAR, Box 32, File 4, Central Conference of American Rabbis Records, pp.186-187.

⁵Ibid.

the last fifty years, if judiciously used, would have given us public departments well-administered, charity rightly distributed, houses for the poor to live in and not die, a clean healthy city, and all conditions to make life happy and blessed."⁶

Gries was mortified by the vivid contrasts on city streets in a country which called itself "enlightened." In a speech before the Cleveland City Council, he scolded business and government leaders for turning their backs on the housing conditions of the less fortunate in the inner city:

"...Oh, if I could take you for an hour's trip, not through the beautiful streets of Cleveland, not through the palatial residence districts, but through the heart of the city, that you might see how the poor of this city live! You would discover that even in Cleveland, boasting that we have no slum districts and no tenements-that here in Cleveland human beings are living in hovels so filthy as to be almost unbelievable... Cleveland is not the ideal city and cannot be until we have no slums and no tenements, the breeders of physical disease and of moral plague and pestilence."⁷

In the same address, Gries pleaded for clean air and water for all of Cleveland's citizens, and not only for the well-to do who lived under favorable conditions. The slums and poverty, the vice and immorality of the cities, the wrongs and abuses of the weak and the helpless, were all topics which Gries addressed in his sermons at The Temple. He told the wealthy members of his congregation that their lives would not be made "right" with God until the rights of the poor became a vital concern to them.⁸ On one occasion, he even

⁶"Cleveland's Duty in the New Year," January 4, 1897, Box 4, File 1, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷"Cleveland-The Ideal City?" February 25, 1913, Box 4, File 9, Gries Papers.

⁸"Right Living," October 5, 1908, Box 4, File 8, Gries Papers.

pleaded with his congregants to take it upon themselves to correct Cleveland's desperate housing situation:

"Do any of you rent any houses to the poor? Go, look at them this week-remember, men, women, and children live in them, and act. Who are the pious Jews and the pious Christians, and the good citizens who own the wretched tenements of the poor? We have heard the story of the tenements of New York and we shall hear the story of the tenements and hovels and cellars, the tumble-down homes of Cleveland...Will not someone lead in building homes for human beings though poor?"⁹

Gries also protested against the "blood sacrifices" of modern day, referring to the thousands of workers whose lives were imperiled in miserable factories, filthy shops, and dangerous mines. He deplored the wretched working conditions in which men, women, and children were forced to labor. Gries told his congregants to look at their own factories and shops and reevaluate whether or not they were providing their employers with decent and healthy working conditions. "Love your neighbor, not in China," he told them, "but your neighbor in your own factory and your own store."¹⁰

True social service for Gries meant giving the poor a chance to help themselves. This explains his creation of the Council Educational Alliance, which assisted with job placement, as well as his involvement with the Hebrew Relief Society of Cleveland. Gries was greatly disturbed by the fact that people who wanted to help themselves and were willing to work were not earning a decent living. Using the pulpit as his platform, Gries called for shorter working-hours, higher wages, the abolition of the sweatshop, and

⁹"How To Love Thy Neighbor," November 22, 1903, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

¹⁰Ibid.

the prohibition of all forms of child labor. These sermons read more like lectures and were undoubtedly intended to stir the wealthy employers of his congregation to reassess their management practices.

Women's rights was another area of interest and activity for Gries. He literally transformed the woman's place in the synagogue. With the arrival of Gries, women were accorded full membership in The Temple. Five years later, Gries organized the Temple Women's Association, which was officially recognized by the Temple Board. According to Edna Goldsmith, one of the Association's early Presidents, "this was the first women's organization in the country to receive such recognition from a Jewish congregation and the first to have representation on the Executive Board [of a Temple]." Gries was therefore the first Reform Rabbi to have a woman serve on a Temple Board of Trustees.¹¹ Gries also organized the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women on November 20, 1894, and served as its first President. The Council was a merger of several smaller philanthropic societies, and its purpose was to devise and improve methods for the care of the sick, the needy, and the large number of immigrants who were coming to America at that time.

When the National Council of Jewish Women met in Cleveland on March 7, 1900, Gries told the delegates, "In many respects, I am the original Council woman in the City of Cleveland!"¹² In his remarks, Gries complimented the women of Cleveland for running

¹¹"In Memoriam Book From the Cleveland Council Educational Alliance and the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women," Box 3, File 9, Gries Papers.

¹²"Address to the Delegates of the National Council of Jewish Women," March 7, 1900, Box 4, File 10, Gries Papers.

their convention so efficiently, and suggested that their male counterparts learn from their example. He also expressed regret over the failure of previous generations to recognize the strengths and potential contributions of women in the working professions. In an earlier sermon entitled, "Women in Israel," Gries stressed the "determining influence" of the wives of the patriarchs and the decisive impact of other distinguished "mothers of Israel," such as Miriam and Deborah.¹³ In the same sermon, he said that he would gladly give to women larger responsibilities and activities in the work of the Temple and have them study and solve important problems together with the men.

Some of the views expressed by Gries concerning women may seem narrow-minded and chauvinistic to the modern reader. While he openly welcomed those women who wished to enter the professions, he also said that the woman's "natural place" is in the home and that her "true destiny," as the chosen teacher and protector of the child, is motherhood.¹⁴ These comments notwithstanding, the general thrust of Gries's pronouncements was to open up new possibilities for women outside the home. Women possessed an untapped reservoir of knowledge, according to Gries, and were not to be treated as household drudges. Women had important contributions to make in religion, education, politics, and philanthropy, and through them, Gries used to say, men may "aspire to nobler deeds and purposes."¹⁵ He insisted on applying the same moral standard for

¹³"Women in Israel," November 9, 1902, Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

¹⁴Newsclipping, "Sermons for Women," n.d., Box 3, File 5, Gries Papers.

¹⁵"Women in Israel," op. cit.

both sexes and, to the chagrin of many male chauvinists in his day, claimed that neither sex was morally superior.¹⁶ Clearly, the advancement of women's rights was important to Gries and was a high priority on his social action agenda.

Rosenau, like Gries, advocated the active participation of the clergy in the cure of social ills. His sermons demonstrate a marked concern for social justice and include a defense of the pulpit as a platform for rousing public conscience:

"...Why, for example, should not the pulpit indulge in thoughts and give expression to its thoughts on the the policy of our government toward immigration, racial differences, Woman's Suffrage, vice, crime, labor, wages, public and private instruction in lower and higher schools, poverty and its alleviation, and the care of all sorts of dependents?...The pulpit should regard it not only its right, but also its duty to take part in the readjustment of social conditions."¹⁷

The preacher, in Rosenau's view, was obligated to serve in capacity similar to the prophets of old. Rabbis who refused to address controversial social reform issues for fear of falling out of favor with their congregants were therefore abdicating their responsibility to be modern prophets.

On one Sabbath eve, Rosenau chose as his sermon topic the popular movie, The Birth of A Nation, and denounced it for its racial prejudice. On other occasions, he reminded his congregants of their duty to the underprivileged and the weak, decried the evils of child

¹⁶In a sermon entitled, "Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery," Gries wrote: "Society should set its face [sic] against the man as well as the woman. Thou shalt be pure is a law for man and for woman. There is one moral standard for both." January 17, 1904, Box 4, File 7, Gries Papers.

¹⁷Newsclipping, "Wider Field for Churches," March 21, 1914, Box 11, File 5, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

labor, stressed the need for improving public education, called for the reform of the criminal justice system, and preached vigorously against America's restrictive immigration policy. Rosenau urged synagogues and churches to define their attitudes toward, and offer solutions for, the all-absorbing social problems confronting early twentieth-century America. "The synagogue and church," said Rosenau, "need once more to be the inspiration of social endeavor...and to direct the energies looking to social betterment."¹⁸ Nearly thirty years later, Rosenau would still maintain that America's greatest challenge was the "uniform experience of justice and equality; the sane settlement of the unemployment problem; the righting of social conditions; and the effectual help of the handicapped and the underprivileged."¹⁹

In encouraging his congregants to assume responsibility for solutions to ostensibly non-Jewish societal problems, Rosenau stressed that Jewish happiness is bound up with the happiness of the people-at-large.²⁰ He pleaded with his congregants to heed the call of the Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis as well as every other movement whose goal was the improvement of the physical, moral, and religious, health of society. In a sermon entitled, "The Religious Aspect of Hygiene," Rosenau argued that diseases were as much a matter of concern to the religionist as they

¹⁸"The Socialization of the Church," March 20, 1914, Box 4, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁹"America's Challenge," March 9, 1940, Box 9, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

²⁰"The Cooperation of the Masses," December 5, 1913, Box 4, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

were to the scientist. "Nothing human is foreign to religion," said Rosenau.²¹

Rosenau shared Gries's interest in women's rights. In an address to the Women's Medical College of Baltimore, he expressed his hope for the day when men and women would work equally for every phase of civilization. Recalling the slow emancipation of women in secular society, Rosenau emphasized that in Judaism too, the woman was greatly restricted:

"Not until recently would a proposition to bring her from the galleries of the synagogue to the main auditorium have been countenanced. Not until recently could she have hoped to have a voice in synagogue affairs."²²

He tells the story of the girl who had heard a great deal about women's suffrage, and who one day came home from church and remarked indignantly, "Why does the preacher always end his sermon with Amen and not once 'a woman?' Is it perhaps because women don't count in the churches?" He used this story to illustrate further the tardiness of the church and synagogue in granting equal rights to women in the religious sphere.²³

Rosenau was not satisfied with only the partial emancipation of the woman, and he promoted the idea of women entering the various trades and professions. He deemed the notion that women were not "mentally fit" to cope with the problems presented by the professions as patently absurd, pointing out that many women had proven themselves to be not only equal, but in many cases, superior

²¹"The Religious Aspect of Hygiene," December 25, 1904, Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

²²"Woman and Her Emancipation," February 23, 1895, Box 3, File 5; Rosenau Papers.

²³Ibid.

to men in the same line of work. Like Gries, Rosenau was not without his male prejudices. He recommended, for instance, that management be left entirely in the hands of men, since men were "by nature and experience better fitted" for business and financial concerns.²⁴ On the other hand, he believed that women were more spiritually-minded than men. "Hers is the fitness for spirituality," said Rosenau, "...within her the emotional exists in greater abundance." It is therefore fair to say, then, that for Rosenau, the religion of a people depend on the help and spiritual regenerative power it receives from the womanly in human nature.²⁵

Rosenau, as Gries, felt that the sin of child labor needed to be exposed by the pulpit as well as the press. In one sermon, he compared child labor to the darkest excesses of slavery:

"We are given to boasting a great deal about the progress humanity has made in its appreciation and its enjoyment of liberty since the dark days of Egyptian slavery. And yet, it must be confessed by all honest people, that there are those among us, who are no better than the Pharaoh of old, in that they would encourage a form of slavery among the young called child labor..."²⁶

Rosenau's interest in children also found expression in his praise for the work of the American Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality. In a sermon entitled, "Save the Child," Rosenau used the text of Lamentations 2:19, "Lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy infants who faint for hunger at every street corner," to magnify the work of the Association.

²⁴Newsclipping, January, 1896, Box 10, File 4, Rosenau Papers.

²⁵See "Woman's Help Is Needed," n.d., Box 5, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

²⁶"A Modern Form of Slavery-Child Labor," January 15, 1910, Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

Three additional areas of social concern championed by Rosenau were Negro rights, prison reform, and care for the elderly. Rosenau was fond of quoting Judaism's protection of and reverence for the aged. However, early in his career, he expressed disappointment in the way America treated its senior citizens :

"Never has there been a century when men and women thought as little of insulting and mistreating the aged as in our nineteenth century. America may enjoy an enviable name for its marvelous progress in mercantile, scientific, and government fields, yet it cannot be said that it has won renown for its consideration of the feelings of those who are obliged to retire from activity."²⁷

Towards the end of his life, when the Maryland legislature passed its mandatory Old Age Pension Bill, Rosenau was more positive about America's treatment of the elderly. With regard to the state measure, Rosenau commented, "Herein we again find a Jewish influence upon humanity."²⁸

Prison reform and penal procedure comprised another area of concern to Rosenau. He believed that prisons, when properly run, were capable of reforming criminals and rehabilitating offenders. Rosenau was understandably dejected, therefore, upon learning that many convicts were worse off after serving their prison terms than they were before going to jail. He blamed this reality on the authorities of the penal institutions as well as on the inmates. "Our prisons are still chambers of torture," Rosenau said, "whereas they ought to be asylums for the removal of soul maladies." In his speeches on prison reform, he therefore urged prison authorities to

²⁷"Old Age," November 18, 1893, Box 4, File 3, Rosenau Papers.

²⁸"The Joy and Sadness of Old Age," n.d., Box 9, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

treat even the lowliest criminal with humaneness, compassion, and patience.

Rosenau was even more outspoken in fighting racial and religious prejudice. In a sermon entitled, "United in Our Humanity," Rosenau assailed the attitude of bigoted whites toward Negroes. He begged his listeners to recognize their common humanity and practice tolerance toward people of different races and faiths.²⁹ On December 3, 1905, Rosenau made an exception to his self-imposed rule of not discussing politics from the pulpit when he denounced the re-election of William L. Orem to the Maryland legislature. Orem had introduced a bill which was designed to keep "Chinese, Negroes, and Hebrews" out of any section of the city in which their neighbors did not wish them to live. Rosenau said that Mr. Orem had "grossly insulted the dignity of the Jewish race," and that such statements attributed to him "cannot be made with impunity." Rosenau therefore took the occasion to talk politics from the pulpit and made it thoroughly understood that "the Jews of Baltimore were not to be attacked wantonly by certain political aspirants." He closed his sermon by urging every person present not to vote for Orem's re-election.³⁰

When Rosenau served on the Baltimore School Board from 1900-1910, one of his chief interests was correcting inequalities in curricula and facilities for Black students. Baltimore's colored community paid tribute to him on the editorial page of their

²⁹Newsclipping, "United In Our Humanity," October 3, 1910, Box 11, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

³⁰Newsclipping, December 3, 1905, Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

independent weekly, The Afro American, on the commemoration of Rosenau's fiftieth anniversary as a rabbi. The paper called Rosenau, "a courageous champion of human rights without regard to race or color," and listed him as the only white member of the Governor's commission on higher education who "voted consistently to give colored children a square deal in the University of Maryland."³¹ Rosenau also wrote the message on race relations issued by the Commission on Justice and Peace of the CCAR in observance of Race Relations Week in 1942. After affirming the equality of the races on the basis of religion, history and science, Rosenau recounted the many abuses carried out against Blacks:

"Negroes are victims of harsh discrimination and flagrant injustices, which cry aloud to God and to man for remedy and redress. They dwell, usually, in the worst slums, not by choice, but by the compulsion of law, public opinion, or threats of violence. The schools provided for their children out of public funds are usually the most poorly equipped. Their opportunities for earning a livelihood, are in many areas limited to the most menial tasks, irrespective of their character, their abilities, or their education. They are practically compelled to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water in our country."³²

The statement continues with an indictment of trade unions and the armed forces for discriminating against Negroes and it closes by summoning Americans of all faiths to eliminate injustice against people of color.

³¹Newsclipping, "Dr. Rosenau Stood Firm," The Afro American, n.d., Box 6, File 8, Rosenau Papers, p.14.

³²"Justice For the Negro-A Message on Race Relations," February 8, 1942, Box 6, File 8, Rosenau Papers.

Had he lived longer, there can be little doubt that Rosenau would have been among the leading Jewish activists in the ensuing struggle for civil rights. Had Gries lived longer, it may be asserted with confidence that he would have been in the front lines for aid to the poor and promoted liberal efforts to keep church and state independent and separate. Unfortunately, Gries died before social action emerged as a central issue within the CCAR and UAHC in the late twenties and thirties. Nonetheless, issues of social justice were clearly at the heart of Moses Gries and William Rosenau's missions.

"My House Shall Be Called A House of Prayer For All Peoples"

In a sermon delivered at the First Methodist Church in Ellicott City, Maryland, Rabbi William Rosenau told the following story:

"Three men, Jew, Christian, and Mohammedan, were standing at the gate of heaven seeking admittance into the realm of the celestial. The messenger of the Lord of Hosts was sent out to ascertain their fitness for the privilege they sought. The Jew when asked what he thought made him worthy of enjoying celestial bliss, proclaimed his support of the ritualism of the synagogue. The Christian when asked declared his interest in all the movements making for the success of Christianity. The Mohammedan when asked declared his readiness at all times to conform to the demands of the Mosque. Neither of these were admitted on their respective protestations. In their despair, unconsciously they broke forth in united chorus, falling upon their knees while doing so: 'Have we not all one Father; has not one God created us? Then why should one man deal treacherously against another?' Here was the cardinal principle of all religion. Immediately the doors of heaven open and ministering angels exclaimed: 'Open the gates of righteousness and let those who would now enter.'¹

Rosenau utilized this story to illustrate the common ground shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. While Rosenau acknowledged that the three faiths preached different theologies, held different traditions, and had different histories, his liberal religious outlook pointed to the possibility of fellowship and cooperation among exponents of mutually exclusive creeds. For Rosenau, certain undeniable facts were fundamental to all monotheistic religions.

¹"Common Ground," April 14, 1918, Box 6, File 1, William Rosenau Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. pp.4-5.

These included belief in a common Creator, accountability to God for one's actions and beliefs, the recognition that all human beings are equal, and a personal conviction that truth is not the possession of a single individual or group.² Throughout his interfaith addresses, Rosenau emphasized that every religious group can see only a portion of the truth. Not only was it inevitable, therefore, for religious groups to differ about their interpretations of the universe, but it was well that they did, since the process of reconciling differences in religious thought would lead to greater clarification of the ultimate Truth.

Rosenau's liberalism also emboldened him to emphasize the positive aspects of different religious faiths. He frowned upon Jewish sermons that denounced Christianity and vice versa. In response to a letter of appreciation from a bereaved son whose father's funeral was attended largely by Gentiles, Rosenau wrote,

"...Yes, you are right when you say that it matters not in what faith we are born or to what faith we belong by way of choice. After all, when Jews, Protestants, and Catholics have the opportunity of grasping one another's hands and looking into one another's eyes, they of necessity must feel that, after all, all of us are children of our Heavenly Father. Our religious differences are few. Our religious agreements are many."³

Even in the face of irreconcilable differences, Rosenau believed that Jews and Christians should respect each other's concerns and become better acquainted with one another's history, ideals, and beliefs. In a speech before clergy attending a Baptist and Disciples

²"The Larger Brotherhood," May 12, 1932, Box 8, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

³Letter, William Rosenau to C.H. Simon, October 28, 1942, Box 2, File 10, Rosenau Papers.

of Christ Ministers' Conference in Baltimore, Rosenau addressed his Christian colleagues in the first person:

"What do you know about me, or I about you? I have been in this community for twenty-two years and I have met but very few of the Evangelical Ministers. Perhaps the fault is as much mine as it is yours...but on the basis of lack of acquaintanceship with one another, we can expect naught else but ignorance on the part of the Christian laity with regard to Jews, and on the part of the Jewish laity with regard to Christians."⁴

The astounding ignorance in American society with regard to the theology, ideals, and mere existence of other faiths, deeply distressed Rosenau and accounts for his unwavering support of The Parliament of World Religions, The National Conference of Christians and Jews, and other organizations devoted to the dissemination of general knowledge about different faiths and creeds.

Rosenau acknowledged the asymmetry inherent in Jewish-Christian relations, and as a corrective, suggested a number of areas in which Christian experience could benefit the Jew. In organizational terms, Rosenau had great respect for the unity of the Catholic Church and felt that the fragmented Jewish community would do well to learn from its example.

Respect for authority was another church attribute that Rosenau found worthy of Jewish emulation. "The Jew surrounds the pulpit with dignity," he said, "but does not back that dignity with respect for its authority." Rosenau envied what he perceived to be

⁴"How May Jew and Christian Co-operate for World Betterment," January 19, 1914, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

lay acceptance of the priest and minister's word as law, and he expressed resentment over the fact that anybody in the Jewish pew, even a person with little knowledge, could put himself on the same level with the pulpit. The social accessories of church life, such as churchmen's clubs, parish dinners, and youth programming, was an additional area of interest to Rosenau. He noted with admiration the way in which Christian churches kept their members active in youth as well as adulthood. After observing the success of young people's organization's, such as "The Epworth League," "Christian Endeavor," and "The Young Men's Christian Association," Rosenau suggested that the Jewish community change its approach toward the young and work along parallel lines.⁵

Rosenau was also impressed with the fund-raising successes of the churches. He noted that over a half-million dollars had been raised for the Baltimore YMCA in one month, and he contrasted this effort with the Jewish community. "We give in dribblets," said Rosenau, "We give only when we see bodily suffering."⁶ Rosenau also thought that the Jew could benefit from the religious enthusiasm displayed by many Christians. "We can learn [from the Christian community] the proper spirit that should dominate us when at prayer, and the proper spirit that should dominate us when working for the congregation."⁷

Rosenau not only believed that the Jew and Christian should respect one another's convictions, learn from each other's

⁵"The Need of the Hour," September 12, 1893, Box 3, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

⁶"What Can The Jew Learn From The Christian?" February 2, 1907, Box 4, File 1, Rosenau Papers.

⁷Ibid.

organization, and be acquainted with each other's history, he also urged Jews and Christians to rush to one another's defense and provide protection whenever an occasion required such action. This seems to have been a subtle but important factor accounting for Rosenau's involvement in interfaith work.⁸

Rosenau was a well-respected figure among the non-Jewish clergy of Baltimore. James Cardinal Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore, was one of Rosenau's most ardent friends, and responded positively to his requests for Catholic statements against Bible teaching in the public schools. Rosenau's close relationship with Baltimore's Catholic clergy continued with Gibbon's successor, Michael J. Curley. Archbishop Curley said that Rosenau's rabbinic and personal qualities made him universally attractive to religious people of every denomination.⁹ At Curley's invitation, Rosenau addressed the priests of Baltimore on "The Persecution of the Jews of Germany," making him the only person who was not a priest to address a conference of Catholic clergy in Baltimore.¹⁰ Rosenau was popular among the Catholic laity as well as the priesthood. After he delivered a radio address in which he reproached the United States Government for its silence over Mexico's hostile attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church, the following sentence appeared in bold newsprint three days later: **DR. ROSENAU, IN THE NAME OF THE**

⁸See "How May Jew and Christian Co-operate for World Betterment," January 19, 1914, Box 5, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

⁹Newsclipping, "Communal Leaders Congratulate Rosenau on His Seventieth Birthday," Jewish Times, May 24, 1935, Box 12, File 5, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁰Newsclipping, The Catholic Review, June 19, 1939, Box 12, File 6, Rosenau Papers.

CATHOLICS OF THE UNITED STATES, WE THANK YOU.¹¹

Rosenau's impact on the Catholic community was summed up best by the Very Reverend Monsignor Harry A. Quinn, who, on the occasion of Rosenau's fiftieth anniversary in the rabbinate, said: "The good feeling that exists between Jews and Catholics of this city will be traced by the thinking man to the steadily-growing influence of your own good self."¹²

Rosenau had many friends in the leadership of the Protestant community too. At the 1894 invitation of Reverend Anthony Bilkovsky, minister of Baltimore's First Universalist Church, Rosenau became the first rabbi in the city to preach in a Christian church.¹³ Oddly enough, Rosenau consented to deliver an address at the "Empty-Stocking Children's Festival," which was designed to impress upon Protestant children the birth of the Christ. The festival benefited the poor children of Baltimore, which may explain why Rosenau participated in this Christological affair. Mrs. Leopold Strouse, a wealthy Baltimore Jewess, said that Rosenau's willingness to attend and be a part of this festival did more to remove religious prejudice in the community than "a century of sermons preached from the pulpits of different denominations."¹⁴ Ecumenical gestures like this demonstrate the extent to which

¹¹"Address Delivered Over Station WCAO Under the Auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews," February 22, 1935, Box 6, File 7, Rosenau Papers.

¹²Letter, Harry A. Quinn to William Rosenau, June 19, 1939, Box 1, File 28, Rosenau Papers.

¹³Newsclipping, n.d., Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

¹⁴"A Jewish Divine Assists In The Work Of Celebrating A Gentile Festival," n.d., Box 10, File 2, Rosenau Papers.

Baltimore's religious community. His leadership in interfaith work was no small matter.

Just as Rosenau was the leading Jewish interfaith participant in Baltimore, the same may be said for Moses Gries in Cleveland. During his third year at Tifereth Israel, Gries delivered at least twelve addresses at Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Universalist churches. President Martin A. Marks, in appreciation of Gries' interfaith services, wrote in The Temple minutes:

"No one is able to state the great benefit these addresses have been in correcting the very peculiar notions the outside world has about the Jews. It has been a source of great pride to me, as I know it has been to many of you, to note in what esteem and respect our Rabbi is held by our fellow-citizens regardless of sect or creed."¹⁵

Gries reciprocated the speaking invitations he received by inviting Christian clergy to address his own congregation. When Gries became ill on Sukkot in October, 1895, he invited Pastor Florence Buck of the Unity Church to preach the sermon.¹⁶ According to newspaper accounts, this constituted the first time in American Jewish history that a Christian minister had preached from a Jewish pulpit on the occasion of a major Jewish festival.¹⁷

¹⁵Tifereth Israel Minutes, October 14, 1895.

¹⁶Rabbi Gries and The Temple enjoyed a special relationship with the Unity Church. When a new temple facility was under construction 1894, Gries received an invitation from the trustees of the Unity Church to use their building for services. A letter had already been received, though, from Ansche Chesed, The Temple's sister synagogue, so Gries turned down the offer. In his appreciative reply to the Board of Trustees of the Unity Church, Gries declared his trust that the future would unite the religious institutions more closely in mutual effort "for the upliftment of men and for a truer understanding of the one God, Father of all." See Box 1, File 1, Moses J. Gries Papers, for the letters between Gries and the Board of Trustees of Unity Church.

¹⁷Newsclipping, October 2, 1895, Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

The occasion of Moses and Frances Gries's wedding also appears to have been an ecumenical event. When the couple was married by Rabbi Henry Berkowitz in June 1898, a brief newspaper account of this grand affair mentioned the conspicuous attendance of a large number of pastors from prominent local churches. Apparently, Gries's efforts and deep interest in interfaith work had made him widely and favorably known among Cleveland's liberal Protestant clergy in only five year's time.¹⁸ Ten years later, on the occasion of his fifteenth anniversary as Rabbi of The Temple, Gries received fraternal congratulations from his Christian clergy friends. It is noteworthy that of the nine individuals invited to make formal remarks at the program in Gries's honor, four were liberal Protestant ministers.¹⁹ The Methodist Reverend Worth M. Tippy declared that "three-fourths of what I say at Epworth [Church] are identical with what Rabbi Gries says at The Temple. Gradually we will find that the other fourth will be wiped out and we will find ourselves co-workers under the blessing of one heavenly Father."²⁰

When Gries was asked by Reverend Tippy to speak at the dedication exercises of his church, he sent congratulations from the entire Jewish community. Gries shared his interest and pleasure in the construction of the beautiful new building, and said that he personally rejoiced in the erection of every church which recognizes the brotherhood of all humanity as children of the one God. The

¹⁸Newsclipping, June, 1898, Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

¹⁹The Temple Annual, 10 (1906-1907): 44.

²⁰Jewish Independent, November 22, 1907, cited in Gartner, The History of the Jews of Cleveland, p.157.

article noted that Gries was interrupted by applause three times during the course of his remarks.²¹

Gries was aware that some Christians would interpret his liberal Jewish expression as approaching liberal Protestantism. From Gries's standpoint, however, it was liberal Christianity that was drawing nearer to Judaism! Gries believed that liberal Christianity was returning to its Jewish fundamentals and was furthering Judaism's mission by leading its adherents to the concept of the one God proclaimed by Jews. For Gries, the power of Christianity lay in its moral and ethical emphases, and these were completely Jewish in spirit, principle, and origin.²² This convergence of basic ideals between Judaism and other religions was characteristic of the Classical Reform represented by Gries.

In ecumenical settings, Gries accentuated areas of agreement between Judaism and other faiths. At The Temple, however, Gries preached a number of blatantly polemical sermons, which may have been intended to deter his congregants from considering seriously the merits of liberal Christianity. In one such sermon, Gries made sweeping generalizations to contrast the nobility of Jewish belief against the irrationality of Christian tenets:

"Jews believe that God is Father, and that man is son of God. We emphasize the sonship of every man. There is no humanizing of Deity, and no deification of humanity. Judaism emphasizes the nobility and dignity of man. No races are lost, no nations are doomed. We have no faith in a fallen humanity, but rather in a rising humankind."²³

²¹Newsclipping, n.d., Box 4, File 1, Gries Papers.

²²"Chanukah and Christmas," December 28, 1902, Box 4, File 6, Gries Papers.

²³"What Jews of Today Believe," April 1, 1906, Box 4, File 8, Gries Papers.

Ironically, Gries's proximity to liberal Christian espousals made him more defensive about Jewish-Christian boundaries. At times, it seems that Gries felt compelled to clarify his Jewish loyalties. He expressed his opposition to officiating at mixed marriages²⁴ and objected further to the fact that the funerals of certain Temple members were supervised by Masonic societies, whose rituals he found to be in conflict with Jewish belief and practice.²⁵

On occasion, Gries ran into trouble for naively assuming the mutual acceptance of his Christian colleagues. When he participated in a "judgeless" debate with the Reverend Charles A. Eaton of the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Gries was shocked by Eaton's assertion that Jews would ultimately have to convert to Christianity. Gries replied without attacking Eaton personally, but pointed out that Judaism, unlike Eaton's Christianity, never alluded to the possibility of Christians having to embrace Judaism at some distant time in the future.²⁶ Gries responded to other incidents of intolerance and anti-Semitism by labelling them as un-American. He chided the discrimination policy of the leading clubs of Cleveland against Jewish membership and urged his congregants not to visit these clubs, even when invited as guests. "I refuse to be tolerated for the hour of the occasion," said Gries, and "we should all refuse to go in self-respect."²⁷

²⁴CCAR Yearbook, 19 (1909): 184.

²⁵Tifereth Israel Minutes, April 1, 1901.

²⁶Newsclipping, Jewish Observer, April 17, 1908, Box 4, File 2, Gries Papers.

²⁷"Will Anti-Jewish Prejudice Ever Cease?" March 11, 1906, Gries Papers.

On at least one occasion, Gries indicted the national church community for its reluctance to speak out against Russia's brutal treatment of its Jews. This occurred in New York City, where, at the invitation of Stephen S. Wise, Gries delivered a vigorous appeal to the conscience of the churches for their silence over Russian anti-Semitism.²⁸

Despite his disheartening encounters with anti-Semitism, Gries maintained his view that the mission of the Jewish people was to be a light unto the Gentiles and a light-bringer to all humanity.²⁹ Letters of condolence to Mrs. Gries in the months following her husband's untimely death suggest that Gries had accomplished his ecumenical mission. "Surely you know," wrote a Gentile editor on the staff of *The Cleveland News*, "the pain all feel in the passing of Rabbi Gries, Rabbi of Christian as well as Jew."³⁰ Gries had become a Jewish apostle to the Gentiles and, by the time of his death, had widened the spiritual horizons of his community in ways comparable to the efforts of William Rosenau in Baltimore.

²⁸Tifereth Israel Minutes, March 10, 1911.

²⁹"Modern Jewish Problems," February 22, 1914, Box 4, File 9, Gries Papers.

³⁰Letter, Louise Grishom to Frances Gries, November 4, 1918, Box 2, File 2, Gries Papers.

11 Conclusions

The varying approaches of Rabbis Gries and Rosenau to Reform Jewish practice demonstrate the broad nature of American Reform during its Classical phase. Gries's radicalism and Rosenau's conservatism are indicative of the wide parameters of "Classicality." Their models suggest that Classical Reform meant neither a rejection of ritual nor the adoption of a minimalistic approach to living a Jewish life. Rosenau's consistent advocacy of ceremonials, and Gries's Open Temple, prove otherwise.

Curiously enough, the common denominator that emerges from the writings of Gries and Rosenau bears a strong resemblance to the major principles of the Pittsburgh Platform. The Pittsburgh pronouncements about God, the mission of Israel, the distinction between moral and ritual law, the imperative of social justice, the need for improved relations among Jews and people of other faiths, the elevation of reason, and the rejection of political Zionism, resonate strongly with the religious thought of Rosenau and Gries. It is more than coincidental, then, that Gries and Rosenau served as rabbis in the years following the Pittsburgh Platform; they also lived by its principles.

While Rosenau may have quarreled with the rejectionist tone of the platform's third plank toward ritual and ceremony, his manuscripts still reflect an acceptance of the platform in principle. Like Gries, Rosenau was dedicated first and foremost to the God-

idea in Judaism. Rosenau also affirmed the second plank of the Platform by denying the divine authorship of the Torah, and by stating, in other terms, that the Bible was indeed "the record of consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God." Rosenau's sermons and addresses indicate that he had little patience for the cavalier dismissal of ceremony and ritual exhibited by Gries and other radicals. At the same time, he held that Reform Jews had a fundamental obligation to distinguish between those inherited traditions which elevated and sanctified the lives of modern people, and those which did not.

In full accord with the fifth plank, Rosenau and Gries rejected any notion of a national return to Palestine, as well as the idea of a personal Messiah. Similarly, both rabbis sought to keep Reform in agreement with the postulates of reason, and called for a new theological appreciation of the gentile world.

In keeping with the seventh plank of the Pittsburgh Platform, neither Gries nor Rosenau endorsed the idea of bodily resurrection.¹ Furthermore, their outspoken remarks and efforts to correct societal inequities, often against the wishes of their principal benefactors, made Gries and Rosenau living embodiments of the social action plank of the Pittsburgh Platform.

In sum, the two Judaisms espoused by Rosenau and Gries differed in degree but not in kind. What kept both of their interpretations within the Classical Reform camp was their evolutionary approach to Judaism, their non-Zionist sentiments,

¹In fact, chief among their reasons for choosing the *Union Prayerbook* was its reform of such phrases as "I'chiyat hamelitim."

their shared attempt to destroy non-religious barriers between American Jews and their fellow citizens, and their dedication to the propagation of ethical monotheism, which was the central mission of Reform as formulated in the Pittsburgh Platform. In addition, their religious efforts were directed not only toward the Jewish people, but toward the larger world as well. They identified with the idealism of the prophets and decried the injustice they faced in their respective communities.

Rosenau's Orthodox upbringing, and Gries's absence of childhood attachments to tradition, are helpful elements in explaining their polar attitudes toward ritual and ceremony. It is also instructive to take into account the different localities in which each rabbi served. The Cleveland Jewish Community was always moving in the direction of religious reform.¹ As early as 1860, Cleveland's two oldest congregations, Anshe Chesed and Gries's Tifereth Israel, had introduced the organ and deleted certain prayers from the liturgy. By 1879, Tifereth Israel also had a choir, family pews, and bareheaded worship. Although Hungarian, Polish, and Lithuanian immigrants organized more traditional synagogues in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, it was Cleveland's Reform Temples that remained the city's foremost synagogues through the 1920's.² Cleveland's geographical location largely accounts for the predominance of its liberal Jewish community. The Midwest was the heartland of Reform Judaism, and Cleveland was situated virtually

²Cleveland's Hungarian Jewish population founded *Bene Jeshurun* in the mid-1860's, which later became the city's first Conservative congregation. Jews of Polish and Lithuanian descent founded the more traditional *Anshe Emeth Beth Tefilo Congregation* in 1869. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 5: 606-607.

at its center. This might also explain why Cleveland was the site chosen for the Rabbinical conference of 1855 and the first annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1890.³

Baltimore's Jewish Community, on the other hand, was oriented much more towards tradition. While it is true that by 1880, all shades of Judaism, including Radical Reform, had taken hold among Baltimore's predominantly Jewish population, Baltimore was the only American Jewish Community outside of New York City, where a significant percentage of the descendants of the older German immigrant families joined or remained members of Conservative and Orthodox congregations.⁴ By the time Rosenau arrived in 1892, the Baltimore Jewish community, with the exception of the Har Sinai Congregation, was traditionally-oriented. The Reform-affiliated Baltimore Hebrew Congregation did not abolish the wearing of hats by men at its worship services until 1894, and Oheb Shalom not until the first decade of the twentieth century.⁵ Therefore, while Rosenau's revival of the tradition of *hakafot*, the custom of carrying the Torah scrolls in procession through the synagogue on Simchat Torah, was welcomed by his Oheb Shalom Congregants, it would probably have been met with revulsion by Gries's more liberal Reform constituency. Gries's switch from a moderate Reform stance in Chattanooga, to his more radical approach in Cleveland, and Rosenau's conversion to the post-Szold reforms of Oheb Shalom, suggest that the communities in which

³Ibid.

⁴The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 2: 54-56.

⁵Ibid.

these rabbis served played a significant role in shaping who and what they were.

Gries and Rosenau were equally devoted to the Reform Movement, though they differed in the intensity of their partisanship. For Gries, Reform was the only logical interpretation of Judaism; for Rosenau, it was the most logical expression. Both rabbis considered Reform to be American Judaism's best hope for survival, since Reform was in harmony with the unfolding progress of intellectual and spiritual development. However, in Rosenau's view, Reform tended to overemphasize the intellectual and ethical aspects of Judaism at the expense of the emotional, mystical, and beautiful. In retrospect, Rosenau's criticism of Radical Reform seems valid. Gries, for example, removed all emotive and poetic aspects of the weekly Sabbath Service, as well as any manner of expression that was not consistent with his purely rational approach to Judaism.

Both rabbis labored hard to identify the Jewish mission to the world, and to instill Jewish principles in their forward-looking congregants. What was missing, though, was the infusion of the Jewish mission into the home and everyday life of the Reform Jew. Kaufmann Kohler, who was both the leading force behind the Pittsburgh Platform and Dr. Isaac Mayer Wise's successor at HUC, warned of this possibility as early as 1894. In order to spiritualize the everyday life of the Reform Jew, Kohler held that the Movement needed "to surround the life of the Jew from the cradle to the grave, both at home and in the synagogue, with symbols and signs expressive of Israel's great truth and holy mission." "We must,"

Kohler reiterated, "translate the past into the language of the present age, not in theory only, [but] also in practice."⁶

Not every Classical Reformer shunned ritual in toto. Rosenau's example demonstrates that among the Classical Reformers could be found rabbis who believed that ethnicity and custom actually enriched Jewish life and added poetry to the Jewish experience. Dr. Henry Berkowitz was another Classical Reformer who advocated ritual and ceremonial practice. In 1898, he published a pamphlet for home observance entitled Sabbath Sentiment. This booklet contains the Kiddush, Sabbath Songs, a glossary of Hebrew terms, and an explanation of Sabbath rituals for home observance.⁷ Like Rosenau, Berkowitz conveyed a sense that it was important for Reform to lay more stress on the emotional and practical side of Judaism.

Perhaps Gries's biggest mistake, in retrospect, was his displacement of the home as the center of Jewish consciousness and activity. Gries's stated intention was for Reform Judaism to permeate one's everyday life without becoming a Movement of "church-going" convenience. "Judaism," said Gries at the 1901 CCAR Conference, "is concerned with the whole of life...If religion is, as we believe and teach, the vital factor in the whole of life, it must have force always, seven days in the week and everywhere."⁸ While this statement lends itself to the infusion of ritual into the home

⁶Kaufmann Kohler, "Spiritual Forces of Judaism," CCAR Yearbook, 4 (1894): 131-142.

⁷Henry Berkowitz, Sabbath Sentiment, Philadelphia: 1898.

⁸CCAR Yearbook, 11 (1901): 146-147.

life of the Reform Jew, Gries's Open Temple achieved the opposite by cultivating the growth and development of Jewish life almost entirely around the Temple. Of course, the Open Temple did not preclude home observance, however, it seems that Gries became reconciled with his congregants' lack of it very early in his ministry. He simply gave up on making the home the center of Jewish activity for his congregants and made The Temple a substitute focal point of Jewish identity for them.

Despite Gries's minimization of home observance, he may have been the first American rabbi to transform the synagogue into a social and religious center. Gries helped establish university extension courses, a library, gym, and many other non-religious features. Although his pioneering "Open Temple" project drew intense criticism from Reform and Orthodox leaders, many liberal and traditional rabbis institutionalized their synagogues to a larger degree than Gries himself had advocated. Even Rosenau, who had earlier denounced Gries for his institutional model, copied his paradigm with plans for an Oheb Shalom Temple Center in 1917.⁹ Gries anticipated the need to enlarge temples and synagogues beyond their primary functions as places of worship and religious instruction. His idea of the synagogue as a total community center, which was probably adopted from the pattern of liberal Protestant churches in the late nineteenth century, would later become a central component in Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionist program.

⁹Louis F. Cahn, The History of Oheb Shalom: 1853-1953, p.51.

The writings of Gries and Rosenau also emphasize that the central core of Reform Jewish faith during its Classical era was the eternal covenant with God, and not with the emerging Jewish state in Palestine. Classical Reform Judaism, even in its most radical expression, perceived itself as existing to serve God, and it ascribed meaning and significance to the Jewish experience only as a consequence of this imperishable relationship. At the same time, it would be a mistake to characterize either Gries or Rosenau as "anti-Zionist." While both rabbis remained opposed to the creation of a sovereign Jewish state, their writings confirm that they were unequivocally supportive of Jewish development in Palestine. Ironically, history has validated what constituted Gries and Rosenau's greatest reservation about the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state--namely, that its secular and political nature would ultimately divert attention away from the moral mission of the Jewish people.

It is also clear from Gries's and Rosenau's writings that their staunch Americanism was not an attempt to reconcile liberal Judaism with liberal Christianity. Both men saw a perfect congruity between their Judaism and their Americanism and sought to harmonize American ideals with Jewish ones. Each rabbi assimilated and digested what he understood to be enhancing and joyous in his American surroundings. Of course, for Classical Reformers like Gries and Rosenau, Reform Judaism was the easiest expression of Judaism for the outside world to understand, since its spirit, language, and orientation comported with that of the vast majority of enlightened people. However, Rosenau and Gries's

attempt to destroy non-religious barriers between Jews and fellow citizens, should not be construed as either an abandonment of Judaism or an abdication of Jewish communal responsibility. Rosenau and Gries, as their writings indicate, never relinquished their spiritual attachments to the worldwide community of Israel.

Another characteristic common to the rabbimates of Gries and Rosenau was their emphasis on social action and applied prophetic ethics. Both rabbis preached about the readjustment of social conditions as a public duty and berated their wealthy congregants for neglecting the needs of the poor. The universal impulse of Classical Reform, as espoused by Gries and Rosenau, meant that the entire human race, rich and poor alike, Jew as well as non-Jew, had a share in Jewish ideals. Not even the rampant anti-semitism and negative feelings engendered toward Jews in the early twentieth century could change the basic equation for Rosenau and Gries. Universalism remained their ultimate Jewish goal. Even Rosenau, the product of an Orthodox Jewish home, demonstrated a marked⁶ progressivism in spirit and action. He saw it his religious duty to minister not only to the people of Israel, but also to the spiritual needs and hunger of all humanity. Like Gries, his aspiration for the amelioration of the pressing social, economic, and religious, problems of his day, transcended Jewish boundaries.

The success of Gries and Rosenau in early twentieth-century America is that much more remarkable when appreciating how unpropitious the national climate was to religion in general. Throughout their rabbimates, assimilation, skepticism, and materialism, were competing forces in the American environment.

At the height of their careers, the cataclysm of the First World War had erupted. Indeed, when Gries was ending his second term as CCAR President in 1915, and Rosenau stood ready to succeed him, the armies of the Entente and Central Powers had already dug in. Stories of carnage and horror began to trickle in through the newswires. Both rabbis faced a world in which "spiritual values were crushed, Israel's world security [was] uprooted, and the American Jew was befuddled and perplexed."¹⁰

Perhaps these historical realities help explain why most rabbis during the period of Classicity de-emphasized efforts to revitalize traditional Jewish observances and rituals. What was needed instead of more or less ritual was a more basic conversion of the Jew to his or her faith. This probably explains the conspicuous number of sermons which Gries and Rosenau devoted to the conversion of their already-Jewish congregants. Their challenge seemed to be rekindling the light of religion, faith, and hope, in the hearts of the Jews they served. Perhaps Rosenau, and especially Gries, failed to realize the power of ritual and ceremony as a remedy for the secularism and Godlessness of their day. Had Gries lived to his prime, I am confident he would have grown to appreciate the emotive and poetic power of ritual. Gries was clearly conditioned by the spirit of his day; thus, had he lived through the Second World War, he probably would have viewed the creation of new rituals, and the revivification of old ones, as yet another maturation step in the progress of Reform.

¹⁰CCAR Yearbook, 50 (1940): 192.

Gries and Rosenau studied together, graduated together, and worked together, in many phases of their calling. Still, they were very different rabbinic personalities. Rosenau was a reputable Hebrew scholar and the second choice behind Julian Morgenstern to succeed Kaufmann Kohler as President of the Hebrew Union College. Gries did not emphasize scholarship in his rabbinate, but was held in high esteem by colleagues for his administrative abilities and oratorical skills.¹¹ Rabbi Samuel Schulman, who opposed Gries's radical stance on ritual, still asserted that Gries was "the ideal of what an American minister ought to be."¹² The more radical Rabbi David Marx of Atlanta insisted that no HUC graduate stood higher than Gries in the affection of his colleagues,¹³ while Rosenau likened Gries to a prophet of old "who made righteousness the keynote of his message and his life."¹⁴

In many ways, it was Rosenau and not Gries, who was prophetic in his vision for Reform. Few Reform temples today would concur with Gries's early proclamation that Reform synagogues are religious congregations and nothing more! Gries even contradicted himself when he established the Open Temple. Instead of limiting

¹¹Although Gries was not a scholar, he had deep respect for his learned colleagues. In his memorial tribute to Gries, Rosenau relates the story of Gries's near acceptance of a pulpit early in his career. However, when Gries learned that an older man of "profound learning" was interested in the position, Gries withdrew his name from the competition, "unwilling to see erudition humiliated in defeat." See CCAR Yearbook, 29 (1919): 161.

¹²Letter, Samuel Schulman to Moses J. Gries, October 15, 1916, Box 1, File 6, Moses J. Gries Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹³Letter, David Marx to Gries Family, November 6, 1918, Box 2, File 2, Gries Papers.

¹⁴Condolence Letter, William Rosenau to Gries Family, November 1, 1918, Box 2, File 2, Gries Papers.

the scope of the synagogue exclusively to religious services, he expanded The Temple into a social and cultural center. Rosenau, on the other hand, consistently called for the reclamation of selected traditions and customs, and his method typifies the course of American Reform since the Second World War.

Perhaps the greatest mistake made by Gries, Rosenau, and the majority of the Classical Reformers, was their supreme confidence in the authority of reason.¹⁵ Of course, the shortcomings of reason were not completely apparent until well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the legacy of Classical Reform remains evident more than one hundred years after the historic Pittsburgh Conference. While the particulars of contemporary Reform ritual expression remain as varied as were the religious practices of Gries and Rosenau, the principles which ground the Reform Movement have not changed all that much. Indeed, yesterday's radical and today's neo-traditional Reformer still stand on the philosophical and theological shoulders of men like William Rosenau and Moses J. Gries.

¹⁵Towards the end of his life, Rosenau stopped referring to Judaism as a perfectly rational and reasonable faith, perhaps because he came to realize, in the shadow of Auschwitz, that reason was not as salvific as once believed.

Appendix: The Pittsburgh Platform (1885)

In view of the wide divergence of opinion and of the conflicting ideas prevailing in Judaism today, we, as representatives of Reform Judaism in America in continuation of the work begun at Philadelphia in 1869, unite upon the following principles:

First - We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite One, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system, the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended amid continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

Second - We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as priest of the One god, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domains of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive idea of its own age and at times clothing its conception of divine providence and justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.

Third - We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only the moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

Fourth - We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our day is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

Fifth - We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approach of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a

return to Palestine, or a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

Sixth - We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam being daughter-religions of Judaism, we appreciate their mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore, we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

Seventh - We assert the doctrine of Judaism, that the soul of man is immortal, grounding this belief on the divine nature of the human spirit, which forever finds bliss in the righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism the belief both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (hell and paradise), as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

Eighth - In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor, deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.

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