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AMERICAN JEWISH RELIGIOUS RADICALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPING REFORM AND CONTEMPORARY LEFT-WING NON-JEWISH RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS 1880-1937

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

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DIGEST

This thesis is a study of the Radical Reform movement in America and an examination of the extreme religious radicalism of Solomon Schindler, Charles Fleischer, and Felix Adler. The paper considers this radicalism in the context of the emerging Reform movement and also pays special attention to the impact which Protestant religious liberalism had on the Jewish radicals. Its terminus a quo is 1880, the beginning of the decade in which American Reform Judaism developed its universalistic Pittsburgh Platform and the period during which Protestant liberalism began to flourish. The terminus ad quem is 1937, the date of the Columbus Platform, marking the beginning of a more nationalistic, less cosmopolitan, and less universalistic Reform Jewish religious viewpoint. The thirties also witnessed the decline in Christian religious radicalism.

The thesis' opening section includes a definition of the word "radical" as it is used throughout the paper and its special meaning when applied to the extreme radicals. Also included is a more extensive explanation of the two termini dates.

Chapter two traces the beginnings of Protestant radicalism in America, with special attention to the growing Unitarian and Free Religionist groups. It

suggests the factors which brought about a liberal reaction in late nineteenth century American Protestantism.

The development of the American Reform movement and its ideology is discussed in the third section. The salient points of the Pittsburgh Platform are presented and the reasons why Radical Reform gave way to the Neo-Reform of post World War II America are presented.

The fourth chapter is the body of the paper. Utilizing material gleaned from the sermons, writings, and private papers of men such as Emil G. Hirsch, Adolph Moses, S. H. Sonneschein, Max Landsberg, and J. Leonard Levy, it examines the thought of the Radical Reformers, especially their attitudes towards Christianity, Jesus, Unitarianism, and Universalism. The extent of congregational support for the radicalism of the pulpit is also considered. The last half of the chapter deals with Solomon Schindler and Charles Fleischer, radical rabbis of Boston's Temple Israel, whose extreme universalistic viewpoint led them to the gate of assimilation, and Felix Adler, whose ethical humanism took him outside the Jewish community early in his career.

A review of the material presented in the preceding four chapters is offered in the final section. It also suggests that the humanism and social activism of Radical Reform Judaism was far more an influence of contemporary Christian liberalism than it was of inherently Jewish

values. In other words, much of Radical Reform was an attempt to Americanize its followers by having them identify with the social activist humanism of movements such as Unitarianism and the Christian Social Gospel.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Periodization and Definitions

The setting for this study is the American religious community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To be more specific, its terminus a quo is the year 1880 and its terminus ad quem is 1937. This is not a particularly unusual period to study. More than a few historians have recounted the revolutionary changes which took place in the United States from the ninth decade of the last century until the eve of World War Two. America dramatically passed from the childlike innocence of a young nation to the mature self-assuredness of a world power. Every part of American life experienced the change, and religion was no exception.

As far as organized Christianity and Judaism were concerned, this period saw the emergence of extremist elements within their camps. Radical voices had been heard in the respective groups before 1880. As early as 1865, at the first meeting of The National Conference of Unitarian Churches, two voices were conspicuously silent when they found that America's most liberal Christian denomination was not liberal or radical enough.[1] Radicalism had an early standard-bearer in the Jewish community in the person of David Einhorn. When Einhorn became rabbi of

Baltimore's Har Sinai Congregation in 1855, he paved the way for an entire group of men who would find a viable religion under the banner of "Radical Reform."

The year 1880 is nevertheless a satisfactory starting point. It was not until then that Christian religious radicalism began to gain any visible strength from those in the pulpit and in the pew.

The 1880's also witnessed the growth of radicalism in the Jewish camp, especially with the flowering of the American Reform movement. In November of 1885 fifteen rabbis gathered in Pittsburgh and in three days drew up and adopted a declaration of principles which, for the next five decades, would serve as the theological guidelines of liberal Judaism in the United States.[2]

In many ways, the Pittsburgh Platform, as the meeting's resolutions came to be known, was a triumph for the more radical wing of those present. It was uncompromisingly liberal in its outlook. Its acceptance of scientific biblical criticism; its rejection of large portions of Mosaic and Rabbinic legislation; its view of Judaism as a religion and only a religion, devoid of any national feeling; and its firm commitment to universalism was a clear victory for the most liberal. Many of these same principles became the "be-all and end-all" of the Jewish radicals discussed in this paper.

The year 1937 is used as a cutoff date merely for

convenience. The variety of Jewish religious radicalism discussed in this paper was in decline by that date and radical Christianity, of the type which influenced Jewish radicals, had already passed out of vogue. The year 1937 is used because, like 1885, it is a watershed year in American Reform Judaism. In Columbus, Ohio, at its annual meeting, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted a set of resolutions which are now known as the Columbus Platform. It voiced a new commitment to the concept of Jewish Peoplehood; a renewed interest in Jewish ritual; and an acknowledgment of the Jewish national longing, the obligations of each Jew toward the rebuilding of Palestine.[3] In other words, it was to replace the earlier Pittsburgh document as Reform's new guiding principles.

This thesis is an attempt to examine the nature of Jewish religious radicalism in the context of the broader Reform movement and the part which Christian religious radicalism played in influencing the Jewish radical. Radicalism has been defined as the holding of extreme views or principles. The radical, therefore, is one who advocates an extreme position by direct and often uncompromising methods.

In America, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Christianity and Judaism witnessed reform movements and liberal reactions within their groups. They were led by men who, because of social

change and intellectual enlightenment, wanted to bring to religion the light of the modern world. In the context of their individual religious communities, these men were radicals, or so they were viewed by the more conservative majority in their respective religious groups. If we look at these men in the total context of their time and place, I think that "reformers" is a better term for them.

There were also within the Christian and Jewish camps, religious leaders who carried the reforms and changes to new extremes. They became so commited to elements within the reforming movements that they often overlooked other, more fundamental, principles of the mother religion. An example of this can be seen in the hypothetical case of the Jewish reformer who becomes so infatuated with the Pittsburgh Platform's devotion to the ideal of universalism that he sees Reform Judaism as a way of becoming a "universal man," thereby freeing himself of any religious commitment, Judaism included. Such a man would be called a radical. These individuals were few in number but elements of their radicalism were also evident in others, men who were in the mainstream of nineteenth and early twentieth century Reform Judaism. This paper examines both groups of men, although there is an emphasis on the former.

NOTES

1. Stow Persons, Free Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 17.

   Those two young clergymen were Octavius Brooks Frothingham of Boston's Third Unitarian Society and Francis Ellingwood Abbot, minister of a parish in Dover, New Hampshire. Both men found substantial support for their radicalism when they returned to their churches following the meeting.

2. It should be noted here that the first conference of American Reform rabbis took place in Philadelphia in 1869. It too pressed some liberal theological resolutions but neither this earlier conference nor its adopted resolutions had the far-reaching influence of the 1885 platform.

3. The Columbus Platform was not passed with the easy majority which approved the Pittsburgh Platform half a century earlier. 162 members voted on a motion which approved the declaration as a whole.

   Bernard J. Bamberger, "Theological Development," in Retrospect and Prospect, ed. by Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965), p. 33.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a difficult period in the history of American Protestanism. Far-reaching economic, social, and intellectual changes had taken place in the secular world and it soon became evident that if the church was going to remain a viable institution, certain basic readjustments would be necessary.

Following the Civil War, America began to emerge as an industrial society. More and more people settled in the cities and, by the century's end, their numbers were substantially reinforced by the waves of European immigrants who came to these shores.[1]

In rural America the church represented the chief social organization. It was to this institutuion that people from different farms and villages came together and enjoyed each other's fellowship. When these same persons moved to the cities, they soon found that there were a variety of other institutions which competed for their social interests. The church was no longer a close-knit homogeneous group but, rather, a mobile and heterogeneous one.

With the rise of the city came the decline of Sabbath observance as Puritan America had known it. One historian

believes that much of this is due to the influence of the recent immigrant for whom the Sabbath was a day of recreation as well as one of worship. He also points out that the major reason for the decline of "the old-fashioned Sunday" is closely connected with America's industrial growth.

> What was chiefly responsible was the plain fact that the ordinary industrial and business worker after a routine and grinding toil craved excitement and amusement on Sunday. To provide this, commercial recreations became organized on an ever-larger scale. In response to these new patterns of life state laws enforcing strict Sabbath-day observances were gradually relaxed, especially in the urbanized parts of the country.[2]

Before 1880 American Protestantism was well-grounded in a theology which heavily relied on supernaturalism--"the doctrine that a divine Creator stands above the laws of nature and intervenes directly in natural events and the affairs of men through miracles and the granting of grace."[3] The growth of the city was a major factor in the decline of supernaturalistic thinking. With urbanization came a new interest in the natural sciences. The cities, with their slums and health problems, gave the scientists a fresh impetus to find scientific solutions to urban dilemmas. The scientific approach began to win wide acceptance.

Supernaturalism eventually gave way to naturalism.

The naturalistic reaction in religion took two forms. The first was the more extreme. It emphasized determinism, and materialism, even going so far as atheism or what came to be called anti-theistic humanism. This almost Marxian reaction never gained substantial strength in America. The other form, humanistic theism, won supporters to various Protestant denominations, in fact, Unitarianism became almost totally committed to it.

The most outstanding spokesman for humanistic theism was Octavius Brooks Frothingham, a sometime Unitarian minister who reorganized his parish into an independent Liberal Church. His was a radical approach. He was deeply rooted to a naturalism which saw mankind as having emerged, through a social evolutionary process, from savagery into advanced civilization. Crucial in this development was the emergency of reason. Frothingham said that man also needed something to curb his baser passions so that the passion for virtue would triumph in the end. This moral inspiration, he went on, only came with the development of religion. The Christ, with all its supernaturalism, had met the need for centuries but, with Protestantism's increasing emphasis on reason, more and more Christians found themselves uncomfortable with the supernatural Christ God-man image.

Frothingham combined both naturalistic evolutionism and romantic idealism into one religious system which he

came to call "the Religion of Humanity." He said that the spirit of God was the spirit of every age in history and he identified God with "the life of the mind in history."

The approach of Frothingham was a universalistic one. He believed that the lasting religious ideas such as God, Atonement, and Revelation were common to all the great world religions and that because philosophy and natural science would not cope with such things these would always remain the permanent subject matter of religion.

The Religion of Humanity was unfalteringly humanistic. It appealed to cultivated men and women who were disenchanted with the traditional approach of Christianity.

> A religion of humanity must be centered upon the noblest elements of humanity; not upon a God-man but upon human possibilities. Its orientation must be toward the future realization of the divine potentialities in humanity. These potentialities were prefigured in the moral ideals that even now bound society together, namely, justice, kindliness, truth, equity, and love. The hope of immortality that all men professed should be fully satisfied in the realization of the immortality of influence. Just as men were formed by the past, they themselves would shape the future by force of heredity, the power of ideals, and the influence of example.[4]

Frothingham's religion was essentially a non-Christian theism. Most Protestant liberals were not willing to adopt his extreme position. They took a somewhat more moderate

view.

We turn to those factors, other than urbanization, which brought about religious change among American Protestants. Certainly one of the most important events affecting religion was the publication, in 1860, of the first American edition of the Origin of Species. Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis played havoc with the beliefs of many for whom the Bible was the absolute, literal word of God. Others, between the years 1880 and 1900, accepted Darwin's position and found ways of making peace with it and their personal religious beliefs. They said that God was responsible for evolution but that He worked His evolutionary process a bit slower than had been formerly thought.[5] Science and faith were not enemies. A scientific knowledge of the natural order of the universe and an understanding of history were important for the man of religion. Evolutionary development showed the religious person that, if he looked closely, he could see the supernatural at work within the natural processes.

Darwin's theories had their impact, but fundamentalism's foundations were once again shaken by the introduction of the so-called "Higher Criticism." German universities and their critical professors were becoming an increasingly more important influence in American intellectual life. In the study of Bible, the German

scholars began to apply historical methods of interpretation to the biblical text. The critical study uncovered the human element as a factor in the development of the Bible and, in turn, was supposed to aid man in his search for the true meaning of the text. To the liberal, the Germans' approach was a great achievement in the study of religion. The Higher Criticism, for the fundamentalist, was nothing short of heresy.

With the growth of Protestant liberalism came a new interest in comparative religion. The student of religion who now studied his Bible with a critical and historical eye also examined the development of his religion. He found that Christianity had not just appeared on the stage of history by a process of spontaneous generation but that it had built on the foundations of both earlier and contemporary religious and cultural systems. Studies in comparative religion revealed not only the original and unique aspects of Christianity but also its commonality with other religious communities.

The growth of American urban centers and the new interest in religious liberalism led to the emergence of a variety of different groups. One of the most important liberal responses was the movement called "Social Gospel." A small group of Protestant ministers who lived in the large American cities of the 1880's became concerned with the housing of urban working class families. Since most

of their congregational lay leadership and financial support were made up of big businessmen, they had always been overtly sympathetic to the American economic system and they heartily concurred with their congregations in the belief that when a working class man is poor, he is so because of laziness and lack of foresight.

When these same clergymen began to preach Social Gospel, they pointed out to the same congregations that to be a Christian one must have more than a strict personal morality. Unethical practices in business and the mistreatment of labor stand firmly in the way of leading a sound Christian life.

The two most prominent exponents of the Social Gospel were Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch. The former was a founder of the Evangelical Alliance, established in 1887, which, five years later, became the Kingdom of Brotherhood, an extremely influencial force in American religious life. Gladden was especially outspoken with regard to the rights of labor. He pleaded for justice in business and economic life and promoted labor's right to organize and strike.

The proponents of Social Gospel were sympathetic to American capitalism, although they strongly believed that it should conform more closely to the Golden Rule than it had in the past. A few among their number became socialists. Rauschenbusch was one of those. He believed in the

collectivist society, although his approach was different than Marx's. For Rauschenbusch, collectivism could only come about through God's inspiration and man's love for one another.

> The social gospel can be understood as seeking to correct an irrelevant piety by upholding the necessity of proving the validity of Christian conviction through the search for social justice. It is clear that much of the power of Walter Rauschenbusch's writing lay in his ability to interpret the categories of sin and grace in relation to social issues.[6]

A striking characteristic of late nineteenth century American Protestantism is the growth of denominationalism. The United States was rapidly becoming a society which was made up of various regional, class and ethnic groups. America's tradition of religious freedom permitted individuals of various religious persuasions to form denominations which met their own particular needs. Those who belonged to one denominational group were expected to respect the adherents of other groups. This denominational pattern and the freedom to operate within whichever system one chose was a great boon to the tradition which supports the separation of the church from the state. Denominationalism is a democratic and individualistic system.

If any one denomination was dominated by the spirit of liberalism and radicalism, that movement was Unitarianism. Many of the radical rabbis discussed in this paper

found the Unitarian outlook to be a valid one. It was for them, except for its Christian attachments, a prototype of the true liberal faith, one which could become the universal religion of all humanity.

American Unitarianism grew out of the Trinitarian controversies in eighteenth century England. In 1785, under the ministry of James Freeman, the congregation of Boston's Episcopalian King's Chapel purged their Anglican liturgy of all references to the Trinity. When, in 1805, Harvard appointed Unitarian Henry Ware to a professorship in divinity, the Trinitarian Congregationalists reacted by opening their own seminary at Andover, Massachusetts. The Trinitarian controversy was brought to America and Unitarianism actively supported its liberal position.

Under the leadership of William Ellery Channing, Unitarianism grew and prospered. He gave it definition and direction. Channing spoke of the human soul and its divinity, of its self-forming power and its immortality. He said that man's rational nature is from God and that man's reason and conscience are central. The introduction of transcendentalism into Unitarian thinking prepared the movement for its more radical decades at the end of the nineteenth century. Under the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Unitarianism was defined as a universal, theistic and free religion, one which has a great deal in common

with and yet transcends all world religions.

Unitarians were steeped in rationalism. The deeper their commitment to reason, the more radical their spokesmen became.

> Unitarianism, spreading and becoming ever more radical throughout the 19th century, was a remarkably close parallel to a similar rising Jewish tendency... the emphasis on Judaism as the "religion of reason."[7]

The growing Unitarian movement was essentially a New England phenomenon. Efforts to bring it into the West were never extremely successful. It did attract a wide variety of peoples from various denominations and men of many different outlooks.

Throughout the nineteenth century radical and moderate factions within Unitarianism struggled for leadership. By century's end, the movement enjoyed some degree of unity.

> At Saratoga, N.Y., in 1894, the theist, world-religionist party and the conservative, Christian party within the denomination reached a compromise formula in a preamble that defined the denomination as composed of congregations which "accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."[8]

NOTES

1. In the year 1790 only 5.1% of the U.S. population lived in places with more than 2,500 inhabitants. By 1860 this percentage rose to 19.8% and by the year 1900 it had reached 39.7%.

2. Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 525.

3. Ibid., p. 517.

4. Stow Persons, "Religion and Modernity," in The Shaping of American Religion, Vol. I of Religion in American Life, ed. by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) p. 381.

5. There was an organized reaction against those who even thought of the possibility of reconciling Darwinism with traditional Christian theology. These conservatives became known as "Fundamentalists" because, following an 1895 conference held in Niagara Falls, they reaffirmed five "fundamental" Christian beliefs. Some who adopted the modernist position were tried and even convicted for heresy. It should be noted that by 1900, most of America's influential seminaries, e.g. Union in New York and Andover in Massachusetts, adopted the liberal position. Fundamentalism continued to flourish in the South.
   Henry Bamford Parkes, The United States of America--A History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960) p. 473.

6. Daniel D. Williams, "Tradition and Experience in American Theology," in The Shaping of American Religion, Vol. I of Religion in American Life, ed. by Smith and Jamison, p. 456.

7. Arthur Mann, "Charles Fleischer's Religion of Democracy," Commentary, XVII, 6 (June, 1954), 557.

8. George H. Williams, "Unitarianism," Encyclopedia Americana, 1965, XXVII, 434.

CHAPTER III

JEWISH BACKGROUND

To fully understand the nature of American Jewish religious radicalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one must see this radicalism in the context of general Jewish religious life, especially in relation to the developing Reform movement.

By 1880 the Jew had behind him over two hundred and twenty-five years of the American experience. Religious life, however, did not really begin to develop until the 1820s. Much of its impetus came from the new waves of European immigration which pushed the Jewish population from approximately three thousand before 1820 to an impressive figure somewhere approaching one half million by 1880.

The new immigrants were mostly from Germany. They came to an America which was undergoing rapid territorial, as well as economic, growth. The newcomer soon learned that he could best make a living as a merchant or shopkeeper in the older established communities and he found his greatest opportunity as peddler and general store owner in the new towns and villages which were opening up on the American frontier. In these communities he prospered and here, with a handful of fellow Jews, he acquired land for a burial ground and formed a mutual aid society which, eventually, became the beginnings of a congregation.

These early congregations were nominally orthodox. The ritual was directed by the membership which tried its best to live up to what it considered to be "traditional Judaism." There was a real paucity of rabbis and trained Jewish teachers in early nineteenth century America, especially in communities outside the Eastern Seaboard.

The immigrant Jew become pack peddler and successful entrepreneur was aware of the same religious intellectual challenges which faced his Protestant church-going neighbor.

> Against the developing scientific challenges to traditional faith, it was ever more difficult to maintain an unwavering orthodoxy. To the questions raised by the Deists and the rationalists of the eighteenth century, there were now joined the problems created by historical criticism of the authenticity of the sacred texts upon which the whole Jewish tradition rested. Geology upset the accepted Biblical chronology and ultimately the doctrines of evolution destroyed the orderly picture of a created universe. Buttressed by the prestige of science, these sources of doubt could not simply be rejected as external and Gentile. Like other Americans, the Jews were driven to reassess their inherited beliefs in the light of the new ideas.[1]

Unlike his Protestant lay counterpart, the new American Jew did not have a trained and active clergy who could cope with the current challenges to religion, perhaps by formulating liberal responses and viable new movements and, furthermore, the Jewish immigrant was too busy in his

struggle to earn a living to worry about making religious responses to New Geologies and Higher Criticisms. We can be certain, though, that the orthodoxy which was practiced was done so more out of habit than out of a genuine satisfaction with its ritual. In time Jews did begin to make responses. Some left the synagogue altogether and yet there were others who felt that Judaism was something very positive but they realized that if it was going to remain viable, it would have to take into consideration the new time and new place of the American Jew and also take into account the intellectual advances of the contemporary world.

The early "Reformers," as they came to be called, at first made changes primarily in the ritual and not so much in the theology of the liturgy. The service was shortened, a sermon in the vernacular was introduced, and the Protestant church service was used as a model in the modernization of the Jewish rite.

These scattered congregations began to feel very much at home in America. They were satisfied with their improvements and many felt that the United States offered the greatest possibility for Jewish religious realization. The, by now, famous words of Carolina Reformer, Gustav Poznanski, echo this sentiment when he speaks of his congregation in Charleston.

> This synagogue is our temple, this city our Jerusalem, this happy land our Palestine, and as our fathers defended with their lives that temple, that city and that land, so will their sons defend this temple, this city, and this land....[2]

Most of the rabbis who came to serve the early Reform congregations were trained in Germany. There they were exposed to modern religious outlooks and they found America's liberal spirit very inviting. Isaac Mayer Wise, the man most responsible for introducing organization into American Jewish religious life, was just such a rabbi. Through his journalistic abilities and his vibrant organizing spirit, Wise built the seminary and congregational union which were to serve all American Jewry.[3]

Theologically, Wise was a modern but, by no means, a radical. He had a commitment to the traditional Jewish legal approach and yet he left room for the individual's own rational interpretation of religion.

> Looking backward, from the earliest revelations, Wise interpreted history as the progressive unfolding of the divine spirit to man. The earliest act of revelation at Sinai had been direct and immanent; thereafter the process had been indirect. The instrument through which God made himself known to man was human reason. Man's understanding, growing ever more powerful with the improvement of society, was constantly arriving at a fuller knowledge of religious truth. Therefore it was ever necessary to keep adjusting ritual and forms of worship to the advance of knowledge.

> That was true of the Jews as of other people. Through the millenniums of their existence they had adjusted their ideas and practices to the conditions of time and place, and in doing so had arrived at ever higher syntheses. Continuity and progress were therefore related aspects of a single process. The cumulative power of reason and learning enabled each generation to improve upon what its predecessors handed on to it.[4]

Wise was a strong believer in the Mission of Israel. It was the Jew's obligation, as he saw it, to bring God's message of truth and social justice to the world, to all men. Only the Jew had this mission and only America offered the ideal stage for the carrying out of that mission. Wise's was an extremely optimistic outlook. He spoke often of an imminent Messianic era when universal brotherhood, under the Fatherhood of the One God, would reign. This outlook was warmly shared by large numbers of Wise's rabbinical colleagues.

Isaac Mayer Wise, however, did not feel completely at home with the scientific approach to religion as it had developed in the German intellectual centers. Men such as David Einhorn and his son-in-law, Kaufmann Kohler, brought, what came to be called, the Science of Judaism to American Reform Judaism. Their's was a far more radical Reform than was Wise's. Interestingly, it was the Einhorn-Kohler brand of Reform which came to dominate among the leadership of the developing Reform movement. Einhorn's more radical liturgy became the model for Reform's Union

Prayer Book, instead of Wise's far more traditional prayer-book, and Kohler's more radical theological system dominated, not Wise's liberal, yet scientifically naive, outlook. The Radical Reformers wanted to eliminate from Judaism all of the elements which were based on supernaturalism and sentimentality. What was important for men like Einhorn and Kohler were Judaism's enduring ethical values. Like Wise, they believed in the Mission of Israel whereby the Jew would impart his ethical system to the world.

The Pittsburgh Platform was very sympathetic to the ideals of Radical Reform. Men such as Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Krauskopf, Adolph Moses, and S. H. Sonneschein, personalities discussed in the following chapter, were among those fifteen rabbis who gathered in Pittsburgh, in November of 1885, to lay down the principles which would determine the outlook of Reform Judaism for the next fifty years. Their platform made the following major points:

1. that God is the central religious truth for humanity.
2. that higher biblical criticism is not antagonistic to Jewish doctrine, nor does it lessen the importance of Scripture.
3. that only parts of Mosaic legislation are meaningful for the modern Jew and only those must be maintained.

4. that the dietary rules and the laws pertaining to the Priesthood need no longer be observed.
5. that Jewish nationalism is inconsistent with the Jewish universal Messianic hope and that Judaism is a religion, not a peoplehood.
6. that the Mission of Israel is a universal mission and, therefore, brotherhood between Jew and Gentile must be promoted.
7. that resurrection of the dead, the belief in hell, and the belief in a temporal paradise after death are no longer meaningful Jewish doctrines.
8. that the Jew has a positive social commitment to solve the ills of modern society.

As stated above, these eight principles set the tone of American Judaism until the eve of World War II. The vast majority of radicals felt relatively comfortable with them and yet there were those who believed that Reform had not gone far enough. The radicalism of both the former and the latter is discussed in the following section of this paper.

As early as the 1890s there were men within the Reform camp who were satisfied with the liberalism of Reform and

yet who felt that it had abandoned too much of the spirit of the Jewish past. These rabbis often came from Eastern European backgrounds, from homes which had been warm to traditional observance. They felt emotional ties to old traditions, a new feeling for Jewish Peoplehood, and a romance with Jewish nationalism which now was taking the form of Zionism. Somehow these same men were still able to find religious answers in Radical Reform. This combination was clearly seen in rabbis such as Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver. It was these and other leaders in this small but highly vocal minority who eventually effected the changes which took place in American Reform Judaism during the 1930s. Their philosophy was reflected in the 1937 Columbus Platform of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, a document which calls for a renewed interest in Jewish observance, acknowledgment of Jewish Peoplehood, and a commitment to help in the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The 1930s witnessed economic illness both in America and abroad, the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, a massive threat to Jewish lives at the hand of Naziism and the prospect of another world armed confrontation. The optimism of Isaac Mayer Wise and the framers of the 1885 platform was sobered by the events of pre-World War II America. The Columbus Platform, although passed by a

bare majority, was destined to become the guiding principles for another several generations of American Reform Jews.

NOTES

1. Oscar Handlin, "Judaism in the United States," in The Shaping of American Religion, ed. by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, Vol. I of Religion in American Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) pp. 129-30.

2. W. Gunther Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1965), p. 9.

3. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, formed in 1873, and the Hebrew Union College, established in 1875, were intended to serve American Jews of every persuasion. The influx of large numbers of Eastern European Jews and the more observant Jews already living in the larger communities of the Eastern Seaboard found the Union and the College to be too liberal. The Union and the College became the educational and organizational arm of the growing Reform movement only, although Wise's models were later used by the new Conservative and Orthodox movements.

4. Handlin, "Judaism," p. 134.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN JEWISH RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

During the closing years of the nineteenth century, liberal Protestant ministers viewed Social Gospel as an ideal approach to progressive religion. Many reform rabbis, as well, agreed that its basic outlook was extremely relevant and spokesmen for radical social change were found in a variety of other camps. There were those, outside organized religion, who sought reforms in government and in its social and economic policies. Consequently, the United States witnessed the rise of a growing and outspoken labor movement as well as the emergence of communists, atheist socialists, and anarchists who said that their programs were the answers to the social ills of American Society.

The Reform Jewish movement, by and large, never advocated the extreme social points of view. While many of its rabbinic spokesmen favored radical theological reform, their social solutions tended to be of a more moderate nature. Leading Reform rabbis, such as J. Leonard Levy, Joseph Krauskopf, and Emil G. Hirsch, saw the rabbi's role to be that of teacher and preacher and they viewed social justice, education, and philanthropy to be the fundamental work of religion. Their congregations were fairly sympathetic to their rabbis' view of religion but those same Reform Jewish laymen only seldom actively involved themselves in social action projects, in programs which

would give visible support to their rabbis' preachings.

> For their pains, (activist laymen) were rewarded not only with the satisfaction of a worthy task accomplished, but also with control of the Jewish communities in which they lived and which now focused ever more of their attention upon philanthropy and upon defense against anti-Semitism.[1]

Even the most nominal congregational support of the "Jewish Social Gospel" of the pulpit was not always the case. Rabbi and laymen did not always see eye to eye on important issues and examples of congregational disapproval of pulpit radicalism are found in various synagogue record books and in the personal correspondence of their rabbis.

One such conflict is found in the papers of B'rith Kodesh Congregation, Rochester, New York, and in the papers of its Radical Reform rabbi, Max Landsberg. It seems that for a number of years, prior to 1900, B'rith Kodesh had been joining with the Unitarian, Universalist, and Congregationalist congregations in Rochester for a union Thanksgiving service, a practice not uncommon today. It was a highly successful interfaith project which met with the approval of the clergy and membership of the four religious institutions. In a letter to B'rith Kodesh's officers, dated March 10, 1900, the pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, William T. Brown, assured the Jewish laymen that he shared their warm views concerning the value of the annual Thanksgiving service. He made it

clear that he also believed that the union worship experience led to unity between Jew and Christian and that, as he saw it, there was "no essential difference of religious faith" separating the congregation to which he belonged and the Reform synagogue. The Reverend Mr. Brown also informed B'rith Kodesh's leadership that he had only the highest regard for Rabbi Landsberg, its spiritual leader, and that he was extremely warm to the rabbi's personal religious outlook.

> Let me take this opportunity to tell you that I have never met a minister in any religious fold with whom I felt so fully in accord as I do with your eminent and gracious Rabbi. I cherish no friendship more deeply than his. Cordially accepting, as we do, the results of that scientific historical criticism of the biblical literature and of comparative religion, and both cherishing that which is vital in the traditions of the past and responding earnestly to those new visions of truth which are constantly opening before the world, there surely is nothing to hinder the closest fellowship between us. Indeed, there is every good reason why we should recognize common faith.[2]

William T. Brown was apparently a thoroughgoing liberal, in fact, around 1900, he began to take a deep interest in socialism and even taught its economic aspects from the pulpit. The Trustees of B'rith Kodesh were aware of Brown's leanings and, in light of them, they issued a statement in 1901 which declared that B'rith Kodesh would no longer join in the same services with the Reverend Mr. Brown.

> Without doubting the sincerity of his beliefs, (the Trustees) cannot withhold the conviction that (Brown's) utterences are distinctly at variance with the facts of life and their teaching subversive of the existing social organization. This being the case (the Trustees) do not consider it proper that the Congregation Berith Kodesh be placed in the position of a quasi-endorsement of theories they must hold to be harmful.[3]

Rabbi Landsberg was very much annoyed by the Trustee's action. In a reply to his board, dated May 9, 1901, Landsberg stated that he was sure that the Trustees of B'rith Kodesh had acted out of "hastiness and irritation." He illustrated that to participate in the same service with someone of socialist leanings was no more "quasi-endorsement" of socialism than joining in a union Thanksgiving service with Christians was a Jewish endorsement of the belief in the Trinity.

Although Landsberg was not in full agreement with Mr. Brown's socialism, he pointed out to his congregation that "the most violent explosions of socialistic temper are not by far as dangerous as repression" and he warned that the Jews, of all peoples, should be tolerant because they, throughout history, had suffered at the hands of intolerance and prejudice.[4]

Max Landsberg carried the banner of religious radicalism and, to some degree, his congregation followed but, as in so many of the liberal Jewish congregations of this age,

when the rabbi went too far in his Jewish radicalism, his congregation stayed behind. Religious radicalism never gained the strength among Jewish congregants that it enjoyed among Protestant laymen. A few possible reasons for this can be offered. In the first place, the Jewish congregant who filled the Reform synagogues and listened to the preachings of the Radical Reform rabbis was still relatively new to America. Granted, by 1900 he was a successful merchant and shop owner but his American roots only went back forty or fifty years, to the large immigration of mid-century. His Protestant counterpart, on the other hand, was often descended from colonial settlers and even earlier immigrant groups. The freedoms which American life offered were something altogether new to the Jew and he had not yet developed the sense of security and identity with the American experience which well established American Protestants felt. Furthermore, the Jew was a member of a minority group and he was very cautious about doing anything which would make his behavior conspicuous. When the Boston Jewish radicals, Solomon Schindler and Charles Fleischer, told their Temple Israel congregants to take their religion into the streets in the form of vigorous social action, the two rabbis were preaching a religion which was almost identical with the Social Gospel of Boston's radical Protestant clergy. The one difference was the following. A Boston Unitarian

or Congregationalist could easily identify with his minister's American brand of religion. For the Jewish congregant, this approach was far too alien. How could a first or second generation German Jewish American really comfortably identify with the religion of a Fleischer or Schindler, systems in which assimilation was favorably viewed. After all, much of the membership of Temple Israel had but only recently fled the reactionary Germany of the 1840s and the historical memory of Jewish political and social disability was firmly impressed on the conscience of their children. Large numbers of Jewish congregants attended services at Temple Israel but the social activism expounded by its radical rabbis was left to the many non-Jews who attended the temple's services each Sunday morning. (The masses of Christians, however, were conservative in their social activism and the Jewish congregants probably feared that their becoming involved in such programs might become a source of anti-Semitism.) Jews were just not ready to actively carry out their rabbis' social justice causes.

> Schindler's religious inspired radicalism was premature, for his congregation lacked a reformist tradition such as had the middle-class Protestant community in Boston.[5]

A detailed examination of the extreme radicalism of Solomon Schindler and Charles Fleischer follows, later in this section.

Now to turn to an examination of Jewish religious radicalism itself, by pointing out its general features. From the sermons and other writings of Radical Reform rabbis one is able to discern the basic aspects of their religious approach.

Optimism was the order of the day. As was stated in the preceding section, Isaac Mayer Wise was a thorough-going optimist. Although not a radical, his outlook was shared by colleagues with views far more liberal than his own. Besides possessing a strong conviction that the Messianic Age was imminent, Wise and other Reform leaders believed that their time and place offered an unparalleled moment in history to bring a modern, meaningful Judaism to people who never before realized its inherent genius.

In an 1892 address before the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Henry Berkowitz evaluated the unlimited possibilities open to the contemporary Reform rabbinate. His optimism was unquestionable.

> The present opportunity of Judaism and especially of the American Jewish ministry finds no parallel elsewhere, now, nor in the past.[5]

Rabbi Berkowitz believed that if the American rabbi would take advantage of the moment, he could bring about the liberalization of all religion. In other words, the time was ripe for American Israel to proceed with its historic mission, a mission which was now translated into the most liberal of terms.

> Let us keep constantly and clearly in view that we are to realize the opportunity that is before us; that as American ministers we have a special call to liberalize religion. In unqualified devotion to the fullest liberty in religion we yield to none.[7]

The Mission concept was a significant aspect of Jewish religious radicalism from the 1880s until the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Jewish radicals were wholeheartedly convinced that they had the important responsibility of enlightening the world with the ethical teachings of Judaism and they believed that they were to carry out this Mission in the same spirit which had motivated responsible Jewish leaders throughout the centuries.

An 1881 incident illustrates that radicals held on to the "liberal Mission" idea with great tenacity. A sermon of Sabato Morais was to appear in Rochester New York's Jewish Record. Morais, a religious conservative and founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary, objected to the newspaper's editor by saying that he did not want a sermon of his to appear in the same publication which also carried articles by "acknowledged theologians," probably his way of saying "liberal rabbis with radical theologies."

> The controlling thought with some of our ministers is not devotion to their legitimate calling, but the liberalization of the world.[8]

Morais most certainly had in mind B'rith Kodesh's rabbi,

Max Landsberg, and the liberal Rabbi Landsberg could not let the Morais statement pass unreplied. With his Radical Reform devotion to the Mission firmly in mind, he answered his conservative colleague.

> But I ask him, what elese is and always has been the legitimate calling of the teachers of Judaism and of the Jews, but the liberalization of the world? The history of Judaism is in fact the history of the liberalization of the world, of human enlightment. That constitutes the secret of its success and of its vitality. As soon as it loses sight of this mission and becomes stagnant and crystalized in formalism, it is in danger of dying.[9]

There were even those who carried the Mission concept to its final conclusion, proselytization among the Gentiles. Most Reformers felt that Judaism had to adopt a more positive attitude toward the prospective, sincere convert but they usually did not advocate an active missionary spirit. There were exceptions. One of the most notable was Rabbi Adolph S. Moses, for some years rabbi in Louisville, Kentucky. Although born in Poland and educated at the Breslau Seminary, Rabbi Moses soon came to be recognized as one of the most radical of the Reformers.

Moses felt that Jews had an obligation to the non-Jewish world, to bring them the Jewish message. The Jew, not in an overt missionary sense but certainly with a warm and welcoming spirit, had to carry his mission to all mankind. Moses was sure that there were many Christians

who, without knowing it, lived a religion which was identical with Moses' universalistic and spiritual Judaism, a religion he came to call Yahvism.

> Obviously the principle that those Gentiles should be considered and treated by us as our co-religionists who sincerely base their whole theory of life and conduct on the ethical monotheism of Judaism sans Christian phrase and mental reservation.[10]

In his characteristic, non-ceremonial approach to Judaism, Rabbi Moses wanted to make entry into the Jewish faith as simple as possible. Rites and ceremonies were of no importance as far as conversion was concerned. He was even willing to dispense with circumcision. All that was necessary for Moses was the recitation by the convert of a simple declaration, made in the presence of a rabbi and a few responsible men and women of the community.

> Why should the idiosyncrasies of tradition be allowed to interfere with the advancing and expanding life of Judaism? Let no meaningless ceremonies and deterrent rites come between Judaism and the world. Has not history taught us impressively enough the folly of such ways?[11]

Adolph Moses was struggling with an issue which concerned most of the Radical Reformers. If Judaism is a universal religion, with a universal mission, should the aim of that mission be the creation of a universal religion, based on the ethical values of Judaism, yet no longer called Judaism or should the purpose of that mission be

the bringing of all mankind under one religious roof called "Judaism." Moses favored the former approach and, as has been stated, Yahvism was the new name he applied to that religion.

In an address to the 1894 graduating class of Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Moses presented his case.

> The Israelites of America, at least the overwhelming majority of the enlightened, the truly genuine American Israelites, have completely emancipated themselves from the yoke of ceremonial laws, have broken down the inner wall, built by the hand of Talmudic and later times, which has kept Jews and Gentiles apart. ...let us do our part to the best of our ability; let us try to perform the task which the God of History has imposed upon us; let us remove every obstacle from the way in which the universal spirit of Yahvism would move, and as a first important step let us give up the name Judaism, which is a hindrance to the spread of our religion. Painful though the truth be, let us not hide it from ourselves, that many who would embrace our faith, because they are already as one with us in belief, refrain from doing so because they do not wish to become Jews, because by embracing Judaism they believe they lose their own race and nationality and become adopted into the Jewish nation and race. Let us call our religion YAHVISM.[12]

In order to bring Yahvism to the Gentile world, Moses believed that it was necessary to rid Judaism of all the elements of the religion which non-Jews found to be repugnant. He advocated the elimination of laws and rituals

which were remnants of the days when Judaism was a tribal religion. For Moses, Yahvism could only become a reality when it realized itself for what it was, an ethical faith, and not a romantic nationalistic religion which stubbornly held on to outmoded customs and practices.

> Millions and tens of millions of Gentiles who are no longer Christians even in name, but are at one with us in all the essential elements of our religion, feel themselves repelled from Judaism. For, by retaining all its national ceremonies, usages and laws dating from biblical, talmudical, and medieval times, it is made to appear intensively national and tribal, narrow and exclusive, and strongly out of harmony with its Occidental surroundings.[13]

Rabbi Moses constantly reassured his listeners that he was not going to abandon the Jewish way because it was saturated with outmoded rites and legal systems of other ages. On the contrary, he planned to work within the existing Jewish religion because he was spiritually drawn to it. He would bring about the religion of Yahvism by rejecting all the excesses Judaism inherited throughout the centuries and thus the basic truths of Judaism would be revealed to all.

> If I knew that there is not a drop of Semitic, not a drop of Jewish blood in my veins, I would yet cling with every fiber of my being, as long as there was breath in me, to the religious community of Israel, to the Church of Yahvism, to the monotheistic faith of pure humanity.[14]

Although a radical, Moses' approach was not so humanistic that it rejected belief in Deity. The very name "Yahvism" was evidence that his was a theistic system, even though he had little regard for the important biblical personalities who had been on intimate terms with that deity. The mere mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Patriarchs gave Judaism the tribal character Adolph Moses so deeply abhorred.

> Abraham is not our father, Isaac did not beget us, Jacob we know not, but Yahve, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Father of all men, the Father of justice and mercy, He is our Father and our God, He is the Redeemer and Guide of spiritual and universal Israel from generation to generation.[15]

As stated above, there was another way of looking at matters which, although similar to Moses', was, in some respects, different. It aspired for the same universal ethical religion and yet did not find the discomfort with "Judaism" which annoyed Adolph Moses. The latter religious approach won the support of many in the mainstream of Reform's radical wing. Probably the most eloquent spokesman of this position was Emil G. Hirsch.

As rabbi of Chicago's Sinai Congregation, Rabbi Hirsch gained the reputation of being one of the most outstanding preachers filling an American Jewish pulpit. He was a man of great learning, a thoroughgoing liberal, who translated his thought into social justice in the form of many lasting

social welfare programs.

Hirsch was a product of the religious liberalism of his day. He looked upon Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis as one of the greatest achievements of the latter half of the nineteenth century because it pointed out that evolution was the central fact in nature and, for Hirsch, evolution was synonymous with progress. Optimism and progress were favorite words of his and this was the outlook shared by most other Radical Reformers.

Rabbi Hirsch was also aware of the fact that scientific advances, such as Darwin's, had begun to drive Christians from their orthodox churches. In their place, these men and women embraced numerous religions of humanity which were devoid of all the old supernaturalisms and which placed new emphasis on love and ethics. As Hirsch saw it, the same thing had taken place in the American synagogue. Jewish laymen, exposed to science and scientific scholarship, found that the orthodoxies of the synagogue no longer met their religious needs. They began to seek religious truth in the rationalism of Reform Judaism.

No single religion was completely perfect, according to Hirsch, but he did believe that Judaism, his own liberal brand of Judaism, "was the most perfect religion in existence."[16] In the end, Judaism would make way for the more perfect faith, a religion which Hirsch, like so many others of his age, termed "the religion of humanity."

Rabbi Hirsch did firmly believe that Judaism already possessed the majority of the requisites to become the universal faith.

Hirsch was a humanist. He did not speak of Yahveh in the high-sounding terms which Adolph Moses employed. On the other hand, he preached the glorification of man and continually spoke on the moral possibilities open to mankind. The God concept was important only insofar as it glorified and ennobled human existence. God was very seldom mentioned from Hirsch's pulpit.

> (Regarding a belief in God, he) meekly said "agnosea" (I do not know)...he chose from Jewish literature of the past Ethics rather than theology as being the most vital gift Judaism had bestowed upon the Western world.[17]

Emil G. Hirsch was, of course, a devotee of the Higher Criticism. He understood Scripture to be a human document and, therefore, he found little value in the idea of revelation. Revelation was translated into reason and Hirsch soon found that if man searched for God with his rational faculty, he would soon discover the absolute unknowability of the Deity.

> (God) can only for man a[illegible] a representation, perhaps corresponding to reality and perhaps not, created by man's own mind. In the final analysis theology, Hirsch believed, is not science, but poetry. It makes its own poetry.[18]

As was pointed out above, Judaism, for Hirsch, had most of the characteristics which made it an excellent candidate to become the universal religion of humanity. It was almost entirely free of dogma and creed and had little room for emotionalism, otherworldliness and worship of the Bible as the supreme word of God.

> (Judaism) is rather concerned... with regulating human life and conduct according to moral ideals. Its chief theological cornerstone is the idea of man made in the image of God, and its chief sacrament is the concept of duty.[19]

Therefore, the observant Jew was expected to live his life in dedication to social justice. Sunday morning after Sunday morning, Emil G. Hirsch spoke on the primacy of Judaism's social mission.

> In the common sense of the word, Judaism is not a religion, it is not a system of dogmas, of sacramental grace; it is not a bundle of rites and ceremonies; it is not a road to happiness in the hereafter; it is not a scheme of salvation from original sin; it does neither stand or fall with our views as to the character of those books we call sacred, and as to their authorship. But it is a message to the world that righteousness must be its own reward, and is of that force which builds the world and shapes the courses of men.[20]

In terms of ceremonials and practices, Hirsch and Moses were in general agreement, as were the other Radical Reformers. Traditional rites were retained in a religious

system by those with deep sentimental feelings for those rites, or so the radicals believed. Radical Reform had little use for romantic longings. Old practices were either eliminated or translated into modern terms. Hirsch saw the synagogue as serving a new purpose.

> The essential function of the synagogue is to serve as a place of moral and spiritual instruction. This is the basic purpose of the sermon which is itself the most important element in the synagogue service. Prayer is of secondary value in that it prepares the mind and the soul to receive the religious and ethical message of the pulpit.[21]

Emil G. Hirsch and other Jewish religious radicals took a special interest in Unitarianism. That liberal religious movement came closest to what the Jewish Reformers were trying to bring about in Judaism. It was humanistic and rationalistic and its very name, Unitarianism, suggested the universality of its outlook.[22]

Maurice Fluegel, rabbi of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation from 1881 to 1884, was an especially fond admirer of Unitarianism. He believed that it was on a tremendous increase and that, in a short time, it would win thousands of American Christians to its side. They would find new religious meaning in progressive religion but in the course of time, or so Fluegel predicted, Reform Judaism would wean Unitarians away from their Christian foundations and united, Reform Jews and Unitarians, would form one

great universal monotheistic faith.[23]

Another rabbi who had only the most positive feelings toward Unitarianism was S. H. Sonneschein, rabbi for many years at St. Louis' Shaare Emeth Congregation. Sonneschein was an outspoken man and his radicalism often took him to the farthest extremes. He came to St. Louis in the summer of 1869 and his liberalism soon became known throughout the community. At a Friday evening service during the Christmas season of 1883, Dr. Sonneschein expressed the deep personal hope that the time would come when Hanukkah and Christmas could be celebrated by Christian and Jew as one national and religious holiday. From that point on, the extremes of Sonneschein's outlook made him a highly unpopular figure among St. Louis' more religiously conservative Jewry. The rabbi's contract at Shaare Emeth was renewed but, by 1885, congregational board support of Sonneschein began to diminish and the congregation's officers issued a statement which announced limitations on their rabbi's authority. Sonneschein believed that he was being limited to the extent that he was unable to effectively carry out his programs and he was of the opinion that his tenure at Shaare Emeth was highly uncertain.

Knowing that the future in St. Louis was tenuous, S. H. Sonneschein went to Boston in 1886 to speak with Minot J. Savage, the distinguished Unitarian minister,

and with Grindall Reynolds, Secretary of the American Unitarian Association. What Sonneschein was actually doing in Boston will probably never be known for certain. The Board of Shaare Emeth learned of supposed Unitarian flirtations on the part of their rabbi and a long and unpleasant scandal ensued. Statements, counterstatements, affidavits, and other legal procedures were used in the course of the affair. The St. Louis congregation believed that its rabbi had been in Boston to make arrangements with the Unitarians for his eventual union with their movement. Sonneschein insisted that he had spoken to Savage and Reynolds only to inquire about the possibility of his doing speaking or other educational work under some Unitarian auspices and it is impossible to ascertain whether the truth lay in the statements of Dr. Sonneschein or whether the information in the possession of Shaare Emeth's board was, indeed, the truth.

Of considerable interest in this case are the letters which Mr. B. Hysinger of Shaare Emeth's board received from Minot J. Savage and Grindall Reynolds. Savage began his letter with warm words regarding Rabbi Sonneschein and then stated the following:

> As I understood it his (i.e. Sonneschein's) position when here was this: He was doubtful as to whether he would be able, conscientiously to remain in his position as a Jewish Rabbi. That is, he felt it a question as to whether his

> people would so far indorse his views as to make it possible for him to do so, as an honest man. It not, then it became a pressing and practical question as to what he would do. He seemed to be in much the same position which I occupied when I was about to leave the orthodox church. In his conversations with me he wished to find out the positions and tendencies of Unitarianism, so that if driven out of the Synagogue he might know whether there would be any other field left for him as a preacher. He was also considering the possibility of leaving the ministry altogether, but felt that he did not wish to if he could help it, as both love and training were still that way.[24]

Reynolds' words were similar to those of Savage.

> I conversed with him (i.e. Sonneschein) about an hour, possibly two, on the views of theological positions of Modern Judaism, and also of American Unitarianism. I got the idea that he wished to ascertain whether in event that his views should be too liberal for his own people, he should feel at home among us.[25]

The Sonneschein-Unitarian incident is not a particularly crucial one but it does raise two important issues. First of all, something discussed earlier in this chapter, active and substantial lay support for the rabbinic radicalism of Sonneschein was not to be found and, secondly, it is interesting to note that when a Radical Reform rabbi such as S. H. Sonneschein felt limited in his work, he sought the advice of Unitarians, a group toward which he obviously felt a great deal of affinity.

Even though the Radical Reformers held Unitarianism in the highest esteem, there were those who had their reservations concerning the movement. What bothered some liberal Jewish thinkers like Emil G. Hirsch was the fact that even though Unitarianism had eliminated most Christological elements, it still was a Christian movement.

In a sermon preached at Chicago Sinal Congregation on December 17, 1915, Rabbi Hirsch spoke on the similarities between Reform Judaism and Unitarianism. He also voiced many clear-cut doubts concerning the liberal Christian movement.

> While rejecting the Christ-theology, Christian Unitarians agree with their antipodes in regarding Judaism in the light of a mere and imperfect preliminary. For them, all religious and moral development has culminated in Jesus. It is evident that this Unitarian Christianity declares Judaism to have been a stupid, perhaps wicked error, if not before, certainly after, the glorious beginning of the Christian Era.[25]

Furthermore, Hirsch advocated outspoken social justice. He saw Judaism as a religion of heroic deeds and massive social action. For Hirsch, Unitarianism was "sweet and light" and, in too many ways, contrary to Judaism's bold message of righteousness. Jews did not need to join with the Unitarians in order to create the universal ethical religion. The main objective of Judaism was to develop the Jew ethically, to such an extent, that he would become a model and all peoples would follow and eventually join

his movement.

Rabbi Hyman G. Enelow, another liberal Reformer and scholar of great breadth, although possessing respect for Unitarianism, raised the most obvious question.

> If Unitarianism is in no wise superior to Judaism, why shall any Jew turn to it in preference to his own religion, with all its heroic history and manifold achievements.?[27]

Enelow said that the Unitarians themselves claimed to have a religion which was superior to Judaism and their claim lay with the fact that even though Unitarianism was a non-Trinitarian system, the man Jesus was still the preeminent figure in that system.

> Nor can we accord Jesus such exclusive preeminence. On the contrary, though we recognize his uniqueness and grandeur, we are convinced that he is not sufficient to all our needs.[28]

An almost universal characteristic of Radical Reform was its interest in the subject of Jesus. There were very few rabbis of the radical persuasion who did not speak, from time to time, on Jesus or the Gospels. Sermon titles such as "The Man Jesus Was," "Jesus and Modern Judaism," and "Jesus of Nazareth" are found on the front page of congregational bulletins and sermon pamphlets dating from the 1890s and 1900s.

The new Jewish interest in Jesus and Christianity was partially brought about by the American experience.

Never before had Jesus and things Christian been discussed from Jewish pulpits. It had always been taboo. Since America offered the freedom under which a Jew was permitted to live side by side with a Christian, the Radical Reform rabbis felt that the time had come for the Jewish layman to know something about his neighbor's religion. Furthermore, an interest in Jesus and the New Testament had already been a part of Reform Judaism since the 1850s when, in Europe, Reform Jews produced scientific scholarship on Jesus and the Gospels. One can be certain that the liberal's frequent sermons on Jesus were not for the purpose of syncretism but, rather, it was done in the spirit of scientific inquiry which, in the end, would give Judaism even greater meaning.

Another reason for the interest in Jesus and the Bible stories surrounding his life is suggested by Freehof and Kavaler in their work on Radical Reformer, J. Leonard Levy. Their explanation is basically that the Jesus theme was used as a defense against anti-Semitism and that Jewish clergy were subtly forced into using it.

> While economic prejudices or libels and social snobbishness were elements in anti-Semitism in America, the chief anti-Jewishness came from the Church, and the inimical feeling sprang mostly from the Gospel stories of the Crucifixion. For that reason the story of the Crucifixion, the life of Jesus of Nazareth and his relationship to Judaism were discussed by J.

> Leonard Levy and his contemporaries more often than they ever were discussed before by Jewish preachers and, for that matter, more than they were discussed by Jewish preachers after his time.
> Just like the general theme of defense against anti-Jewish bigotry, the theme of Jesus was virtually forced upon Reform preachers of Levy's day; or put in another way, they had ample reason to feel the theme to be highly relevant. Christianity in that generation was highly evangelical and strongly missionary, and it confronted anybody in any religious discussion with the question, "What think ye of Christ?" As the association between Jews and Christians increased in America, the question, "What think ye of Christ?" was put before both rabbis and laymen, and so the Jewish attitude to Jesus was almost an invariable theme, generally around Christmas time, in Reform pulpits.[29]

It is an interesting explanation and one which probably better applies to the more moderate group within Radical Reform, men like Moses Gries and Joseph Krauskopf, who, while possessing the characteristic optimism of Radical Reform, were keenly aware of the potentials for anti-Semitism in America and of the relationship between Christianity and anti-Jewish prejudice.

The various sermons on Jesus had a great deal in common. In other words, the rabbis presented very similar pictures of the man whom they preferred to call "Jesus of Nazareth." He was usually depicted as a Jew, from birth

to death, and his teachings were said to have been in total harmony with the Hebrew Scriptures he was said to have known so well. He had a Jewish soul and, therefore, what he was trying to give his followers was a direct reflection of that soul.

Rabbi Enelow frequently spoke on "the ethical power" and "spiritual beauty" of Jesus. It was the originality of the Nazarene that most Radical Reformers questioned.

> As far as the religious and ethical teachings of Jesus are concerned, there is nothing in them but a confirmation of Jewish idealism and no one needs turn Christian in order to understand them or to reiterate them.[30]

Enelow pointed out that Jesus fit well into his generation of Jewish teachers. He differed from them only in that he placed new emphasis on love, brotherliness, and kindness, elements which were a part of Judaism but which Jesus' rabbinic contemporaries found to be of less importance than other issues.

Jesus was pictured as a man, prone to all human faults, and certainly not a divine or superhuman personality. He was a spiritual heir to the great Jewish Prophets of Scripture and his message was thoroughly Jewish. J. Leonard Levy and others took a view which later was adopted by many liberal Protestants, namely, that the real truth of Christianity lay in Jesus' prophetic ethics and that his message was distorted by the stern theology of Paul. Enelow saw the Protestant liberal movement as an attempt

to gradually eliminate from Christianity all of its non-Jewish elements, only then would Christians be able to concentrate on the part of their religion which came to it directly from Judaism, that is, its ethics and not the Pauline supernatural theology.

In the same sermons, these Radical Reformers stressed that Judaism, even its most orthodox varieties, always maintained an open and fair attitude toward Jesus and Christianity. In fact, they pointed out, traditional Jews recognized Christianity to be a valid monotheistic faith which was regarded as another of "God's appointed agents" which had the task of carrying "the light of monotheism out into the darkened world."[31]

Emil G. Hirsch saw Jesus as being entirely a product of Judaism but he was relatively unimpressed with his teaching for he too was of the opinion that Jesus had really brought nothing new to Judaism. Those who sincerely live by his system are following the Jewish system and are worth of that respect.

> The Jews had no reason to love or to hate the founder of Christianity. They might have had provocation to hate those who pretended to be his followers.[32]

Although Jewish religious radicalism of this period was staunchly devoted to universalism, its synagogues were relatively exclusive in their membership. Because the great majority of that membership was of German descent

or even recently arrived from Germany and due to the fact that such sweeping reforms had taken place in synagogue practice, the newly arrived immigrants from Eastern European countries found the Reform synagogues to be alien in their ritual and coldly uninviting. Most of the Radical Reformers had moved their main worship service to Sunday morning. It consisted of a brief service, followed by a lengthy sermon. At first these discourses were delivered in the German but, in time, the vernacular English was adopted. The rabbi, often in cutaway coat and stripped trousers, read the brief prayers and silent devotions and was joined by the congregation for responsive readings. The Torah was rarely read, in fact, certain radical congregations never used the Torah service at all. In their eyes, it was an important document of Jewish history but its lengthy legal codes and priestly prescriptions were looked upon as remnants of the days when Judaism was the tribal religion of the ancient Hebrew nation.

Two of the more important radical liturgies were Max Landsberg's Ritual for Jewish Worship, dated 1885, and Joseph Krauskopf's Service Ritual of 1888. The Landsberg work, evidently intended for use at Rochester's B'rith Kodesh Congregation, followed the order of the traditional liturgy, although large sections of that liturgy were eliminated. It was almost entirely in English, Hebrew being

used only for a few of the more important responses. Even the first paragraph of the "Avot" was in the vernacular and its English translation was a free paraphrase of Landsberg's which eliminated the original prayer's particularism. In fact, the prayer book avoided any mention of Jewish peoplehood by substituting universalistic passages or statements in their place. For example, the closing line of the traditional Mourner's Kaddish reads, translated: "He who makes peace in His high places, may He make peace for us and for all Israel." Landsberg rewrote the Hebrew and his translation read as follows: "May he Who preserveth peace in the heavenly spheres bestow peace upon us and upon all his children." Kol Yisrael ("all Israel") became kol banay ("all his children"). Similarly, in the second last line of the same Kaddish doxology, kol Yisrael is changed to kol ahaynu ("all our brothers"), "brothers" obviously referring to all humanity.

Krauskopf's work was even more radical than Landsberg's in its departure from traditional liturgy. It contained less Hebrew than the Landsberg prayer book and bore almost no resenblance to any standard Jewish service ritual. The work, intended for use at Krauskopf's congregation, Keneseth Israel, in Philadelphia, was a set of thirty different services for use on Sunday mornings. They contained elements from various Jewish prayers and

yet the form was totally free. Selections from other literary sources were widely used. In other words, bits and pieces of the traditional Jewish siddur were utilized but they were scattered throughout the thirty services with little regard for their historical place in the Jewish worship service. Rabbi Krauskopf's work was also thoroughly universalistic in its outlook and, instead of rewriting the Hebrew and English of particularistic passages, Krauskopf preferred to eliminate them altogether.

Now to turn to the extreme radicalism of men such as Felix Adler, Solomon Schindler, and Charles Fleischer. As stated in the introduction to this paper, there was a group among the most radical of Jewish liberals who asked themselves the question: "If the aim of Judaism is a universalistic one and if our liberal Protestant brethren have an identical view, why should we even remain Jewish and concern ourselves with the 'petty peculiarities of Judaism?'"[33] They saw their task to be one of bringing humanistic universalism to the broadest possible audience. The work of Adler, Schindler, and Fleischer illustrates what happened when extreme Jewish religious liberalism was carried to its radical conclusion.

Felix Adler was the son of Rabbi Samuel Adler, noted scientific scholar and rabbi of New York's Temple Emanu-El. Although born in Germany, young Adler came to the United

States when his father was called to the New York pulpit in 1857. Columbia University graduated him and he then went to Germany to study for the rabbinate. While in Europe, Felix Adler was enrolled at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums, Germany's liberal rabbinical seminary, and later received a Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg.

Adler returned to the United States without rabbinical ordination. He accepted a position at Cornell University as instructor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages but it was soon discovered that Adler's views were too liberal for the University. In 1876 Felix Adler went to New York and founded the Society for Ethical Culture.

The society was Adler's attempt to bring together people of various religious backgrounds, men and women who, although of differing creeds, were in agreement as to man's ethical responsibilities. He believed that theology divided people into opposing camps and that it was a major source of hostility. Why then, asked Felix Adler, should a man belong to a particular religious group? It must be pointed out that Adler never intended Ethical Culture to become a religion in the traditional sense of the word.

Upon looking deeper into Felix Adler's work and thought one finds other reasons why Adler's radicalism took him outside of Judaism. He pointed out that "the continuation of Judaism as a unique religion" was a very definite

"stumbling block in the path of unification of the moral forces of man."[34] At first glance, however, one does not find in Adler's point of view enough reasons why he could not have carried out his program and still remained within the Jewish community. Adler answers this by saying that the main reason why he left Judaism altogether was that he found it impossible to stand before a Jewish congregation and carry out empty rituals and repeat statements which, in all good conscience, he found impossible to accept. He felt that it was not possible to change a Jewish congregation's ideas as long as he falsely posed as its spiritual leader.

> Indeed, if Judaism is so rich in moral values and is so appreciated and admired, why not stay within its fold and reform it further. The answer which Adler gave contains the basic reason for his dissociation completely from Judaism. He asserted that Judaism, like Christianity, is not capable of adaptation, for it claims finality. It is capable of a certain degree of change but not of indefinite change. The limits of change are determined by its leading conceptions.[35]

Stated in its simplest terms, Felix Adler was of the opinion that Judaism had outlived its usefulness because the ethical values which it gave to the world were now the possession of many other groups of men and for Jews to accept the concept that they were "chosen" for a particular mission was a defeating idea in that it caused disunity among men. Many individuals believed in the

primacy of ethical deeds. Why then should they not be united?

Ethical Culture was never a particularly large movement and Adler's impact was most keenly felt in some of the educational programs which he instituted. The attitude of other Jewish religious radicals to Adler's work was mixed but there were those who had only the most hostile feelings for both him and his movement. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, upon hearing that his congregation's literary society had invited Adler to speak, responded angrily.

> (Kohler) protested the invitation in very vigorous terms, saying that Adler "deserted the Jewish flag, and openly professes his disbelief in God and immortality." He continues in the protest to condemn the invitation as having the purpose of "eradicating the Jewish faith..." and then he concludes, "I shall not allow my temple to be disgraced by a lecture to be delivered within its walls by one who blasphemes God and Judaism."[36]

Other Radical Reformers worried that Ethical Culture would be successful in drawing large numbers of Jews from the Reform synagogues. Emil G. Hirsch's writings reveal that he actively worked to keep his educated, cultivated and scientifically trained membership away from Ethical Culture.

Enelow pointed out that Adler's movement was actually more Christian than Jewish and that there was the possibility that it might serve as an easy way for Jews to make

entry into Christianity.

> While originally Ethical Culture was designed as a substitute for both Judaism and Christianity, it has finally led to relinquishment of Judaism and partial adoption of Christianity, if it has not become wholly a gateway to Christianity.[37]

Furthermore, Rabbi Enelow questioned why any Jew would even consider Ethical Culture in the first place.

> But if Religion is needed, surely none better exists for devotees of Ethical Culture than Judaism--Judaism with it simple creed--Judaism with its emphasis on ethics--Judaism summed up by one of its Prophets as a fusion of justice, love, and humility; and surely none better for those devotees of Ethical Culture who themselves are, or were, Jews.[38]

Solomon Schindler never left Judaism but he carried Radicalism as far as it could possibly go within the Jewish context. During his lifetime, he stood on the bridge between Radical Reform Judaism and Free Religionist Protestantism and, near the end of his career, in a sermon entitled, "Mistakes I have Made," Schindler admitted that extreme Jewish religious radicalism had been a mistake and that his personal religious approach was a failure.

Schindler was born in Silesia in 1842. He prepared for the rabbinate against his wishes but, upon arriving in New York, in 1871, he was forced to enter the rabbinate because he could not find any other form of work. Three years later, Rabbi Schindler was called to the pulpit of

Boston's Adath Israel Congregation.

From the very beginning of his Boston rabbinate, Schindler's major aim was to win the respect of the Gentile community. He felt especially at home with those liberal Protestants who were in the forefront of the Free Religion movement.

At Temple Israel, as his congregation came to be known, Rabbi Schindler introduced sweeping ritual reforms. A Sunday service was begun, family pews were instituted, a liberal prayer book was brought into the worship service and a choir and organ were used for the first time. Schindler's opponents looked upon those changes as giant steps in the direction of Christianity, but there were others who warmly welcomed the innovation, although they had serious reservations concerning their rabbi's reasons for the innovation. Schindler admitted that he wished to make the Jew like the Gentile in terms of ceremonials. To be more specific, all of Solomon Schindler's deep admiration for the Unitarians was translated into Temple Israel's new form of worship.

Week after week, Rabbi Schindler preached to his congregation on the similarities between his brand of Reform Judaism and progressive Unitarianism. On several occasions, more than half of his Sunday congregation was made up on Gentiles. He tried to point out to his congregants that Unitarians, because they were devoted to

the Jewish concept of God, had more in common with Jews than they did with Orthodox Christians.

> He advised his flock to give up the medieval fear that the Hebrew faith would die if they recognized the validity of Christianity or that the younger Jews would give up their religion for the other. An up-to-date Judaism, he asserted, would have the vitality and strength to survive.[39]

Temple Israel's congregation probably did not share their rabbi's views. In fact, they became less and less tolerant of his religious viewpoint which, in reality, was an attempt to make some sort of synthesis between liberal Judaism and progressive Christianity.

> (His congregants) wished to retain their Jewish identity; Schindler wished to destroy it. For him Reform, in Christianity as well as Judaism, was a first step toward a non-sectarian religion that would include the highest ethics in the Jewish-Christian tradition.[40]

Schindler began to expand a great deal of his energies in pointing out to Christians that the Jewish way was neither hostile to Christianity nor was it unwilling to work with Christians in discovering the common elements which existed between the two religious systems. Above all, he made the point to Jew and Christian alike that the religion of the future, the system he was personally striving for, would be an entirely new phenomenon, neither Jewish nor Christian nor Moslem. Rather, it would

contain the best and lasting elements of all religions and would be balanced in such a way that the positive aspects of neither religion would have superiority over the others.

In the quest for such a religion, the Messiah concept was useless. Schindler saw the messianic longing as something man created as an answer to his misery throughout the ages. According to Rabbi Schindler, it was the scientist, the scholar, and the inventor who were the real saviors of society.

Judaism was on the right track, or so Schindler believed, because, in its non-orthodox form, it was a true religion of humanity. This did not mean, however, that Jew and Christian could not join religious forces to bring about the future religion. In fact, one step in the right direction, taught Schindler, was Judaism's conforming, in spirit and form, to the Free Religionist Unitarianism of Boston's liberal Protestants. In practical matters, Rabbi Schindler went so far as to totally sanction the marriages between liberal Christians and liberal Jews.

In 1894, Solomon Schindler became director of the Boston Jewish community's central charitable organization because he found that philanthropy was a better means of bringing about his religion of humanity. As mentioned previously, Rabbi Schindler later told his former congregation that he believed his radical approach had been a

mistake. During his tenure at Temple Israel, the congregation never felt comfortable with Schindler's radicalism. It is ironic then, that some years later, Temple Israel elected a rabbi who carried his radicalism to even farther extremes.

Although born in Breslau in 1871, Charles Fleischer received his rabbinical education at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Immediately upon ordination, he went to Temple Israel to fill the position vacated by Schindler. Almost from the beginning, Fleischer began the practice of exchanging pulpits with both Unitarian and Trinitarian Christian clergymen.

Fleischer's Sunday morning congregation at Temple Israel was half Jewish and half Gentile, much like that of Rabbi Schindler. Although a great admirer of Unitarianism Rabbi Fleischer's sermons began to introduce elements which Schindler had not touched upon. Fleischer was an avid follower of the Transcendendalism of Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson. He began to preach the philosophy of those New England philosophers who favored social action over religious introspection, observation over dogma, and evolutionary growth over the maintainance of the status quo. Fleischer pointed out that the rationalism of the Unitarians was essential for religious liberalism and he continually told his congregants that it was possible for them to be Americans and Jews at the

same time, as long as they also became thoroughgoing humanists and humanitarians.

Charles Fleischer had plans for Judaism. He wanted to turn it into a religion of humanity, a faith of social activists and he soon began to speak of a religion which would unite the entire human race and thereby eliminate all ethnic and religious divisions. To begin with, Fleischer pointed out that the synagogue was outmoded and that it was too concerned with theology and Jewish particularisms.

> We need, Fleischer wrote, a religion that will talk less of God and more of good, a new prophet like Jesus, Isaiah---⇒ (who) will talk ...about the sort of man that the individual must be in himself and in his social relations.[41]

From this, America would develop a new faith, "the religion of democracy."

Before his religious system could be brought about, Rabbi Fleischer was of the opinion that it would be necessary for Jew and Gentile to realize their singular purpose. The rallying point he offered was the figure of the man Jesus. From Temple Israel's pulpit, in 1907, Fleischer made the following declaration.

> (He) preached that while Jews could not regard Jesus as the miraculously begotten son of God, they must embrace him as the greatest of all Jewish prophets. Jesus had understood God's message that the human

> race was one, that all must love one another. "Jews and Christians," he observed, "will be reconciled and reunited, largely through Jesus, in love of God and service by man."[42]

One year later, from the same pulpit, he said that since Jews already had mixed blood there was no reason why they should not intermarry further with other peoples and thus build a new nation and a new religion out of the American melting pot. In 1919 Fleischer himself married a Gentile.

The problem facing Charles Fleischer was whether a rabbi who saw himself as spiritual heir to New England's liberal Protestant thinkers could still remain in the Jewish fold. By 1908 that difficulty was solved when he announced to his congregation that Transcendentalism was dearer to him than Judaism and that he was leaving Temple Israel and Judaism to found the Sunday Commons, "a non sectarian religious congregation dedicated to the amelioration of society and the fusion of America's diverse stocks into a new people. It was Boston's first community church."[43]

The third section of this paper states that by the beginning of the 1930s the shift from Radical Reform to the Neo-Reform of the Columbus Platform was already in progress. There were figures like Stephen S. Wise who took from both viewpoints and created a viable religious system. He was an ardent Zionist and yet a radical and

rationalist Reformer. He believed in the concept of Jewish peoplehood and yet felt only the deepest respect for Felix Adler and sincere reverence for Theodore Parker. He was sympathetic to his traditional Jewish past and yet conducted Sunday services, used a revised ritual and liturgy, and tried to find a place for Jesus, the prophet, in Jewish life.[44]

The dark clouds of bigotry and war which were gathering over the world of the 1930s marked the beginning of the demise of Radical Reform as it had been known during the previous five decades. Optimistic visions of a world united around the ethical truths of Judaism were possible during the hopeful eighties and nineties and throughout the promising early years of the twentieth century but, when the world passed from light into darkness, the optimism faded and a more sobering religious outlook emerged. A Radical Reform rabbi, Leon Harrison, wrote toward the end of his life:

> There is such a thing as being too liberal; there is such a thing as selling your birthright for a mess of pottage. There is such a thing as turning a smiling face to a stranger and turning your back on your own. Let me not be misunderstood. I believe in the brotherhood of man as fervently as ever. I need hardly say that I haven't the slightest prejudice against any human being, against any race or any creed; yet I say that our paramount duty today as Jews is to stand together, to stick

together more closely than we ever did before; to present a united front to the wave of hatred and insane prejudice that is now rolling over the world.[45]

NOTES

1. Oscar Handlin, "Judaism in the United States," in The Shaping of American Religion, Vol. I of Religion in American Life, ed. by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 140-1.

2. A letter, dated March 10, 1900, from William T. Brown, Pastor of Plymouth Church, Rochester, New York, to Max Lowenthal and Joseph Michaels, Officers of B'rith Kodesh Congregation, Rochester, New York, thanking the latter for permitting the Rev. Mr. Brown to speak at B'rith Kodesh on the previous February 25th.
Max Landberg File, American Jewish Archives.

3. A resolution issued by the officers of B'rith Kodesh Congregation, Rochester, New York, stating that the congregation would no longer join in union Thanksgiving services where the Rev. William T. Brown participated. No date given (probably April, 1901).
Max Landsberg File, American Jewish Archives.

4. A letter, dated May 4, 1901, from Rabbi Max Landsberg to the Board of Trustees of B'rith Kodesh Congregation, Rochester, New York, expressing indignation at their action involving the Rev. Mr. Brown.
Max Landsberg File, American Jewish Archives.

5. Arthur Mann, Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 72.

6. Henry Berkowitz, "The Opportunity of the American Jewish Ministry," Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook, 3, (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1892-3), p. 118.

7. Ibid., p. 122.

8. A page from the Rochester, New York, Jewish Record, dated September 9, 1881, containing letters to the editor by Sabato Morais and a reply from Max Landsberg.
Max Landsberg File, American Jewish Archives.

9. Ibid.

10. W. Gunther Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1965), p. 285.

11. Ibid.

12. Adolph Moses, Yahvism and other Discourses, (Louisville: The Louisville Section of the Council of Jewish Women, 1903), p. 9.

13. Ibid., p. 15.

14. Ibid., p. 238.

15. Ibid., p. 239.

16. Bernard Martin, "The Message of Emil G. Hirsch's Sermons" (unpublished rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, 1951), p. 52.

17. Leo Kaul, The Story of Radical Reform Judaism (Los Angeles: Leo Kaul, 1951), p. 38.

18. Martin, Emil G. Hirsch, p. 63.

19. Ibid., p. 66.

20. Ibid., p. 67-8.

21. Ibid., p. 69.

22. Another liberal movement of this period, Universalism, had a name which proclaimed, even more directly, the worldwide mission of progressive religion. Although somewhat more theologically traditional than Unitarianism, Universalism joined the Unitarians by the mid twentieth century and formed one religious movement.

23. Robert I. Kahn, "Liberalism as Reflected in Jewish Preaching in the English Language in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, 1949), p. 129.

24. The text of two letters to Mr. B. Hysinger,
25. Member of the Board of Trustees, Shaare Emeth Congregation, St. Louis, Missouri, regarding Rabbi S. H. Sonneschein's visit to Boston. One is from Minot J. Savage, dated June 3, 1886, and the other is from Grindall Reynolds, same date. S. H. Sonneschein File, American Jewish Archives.

26. Emil G. Hirsch, Twenty Discourses (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1906), p. 5.

27. H. G. Enelow, The Adequacy of Judaism (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1920), p. 78.

28. Ibid., p. 76.

29. Solomon B. Freehof and Vigdor W. Kavaler, J. Leonard Levy--Prophetic Voice (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1970), p. 69.

30. Enelow, The Adequacy of Judaism, p. 24.

31. Hirsch, Twenty Discourses, p. 3.

32. Ibid., p. 4.

33. Handlin, Judaism, p. 141.

34. Levi A. Olan, Felix Adler-Critic of Judaism and Founder of a Movement (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1951), p. 7.

35. Ibid., p. 12.

36. Ibid., p. 7.

37. Enelow, The Adequacy of Judaism, p. 56.

38. Ibid., p. 65.

39. Arthur Mann, "Solomon Schindler: Boston Radical," The New England Quarterly, XXIII, 4 (December, 1950) 460.

40. Arthur Mann, Growth and Achievement: Temple Israel 1854-1954 (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1954), p. 59.

41. Arthur Mann, "Charles Fleischer's Religion of Democracy," Commentary, XVII, 6 (June, 1954), p. 562.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 558.

44. Handlin, Judaism, p. 143.

45. Leon Harrison, The Religion of a Modern Liberal (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1931), pp. 231-2.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Nineteenth century America witnessed the rise of a progressive Protestant movement, one which came about as a reaction to Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis and the new critical-scientific approach to traditional religious texts. It developed primarily in New England and came to full realization in the Unitarians and Free Religionists. Their religious outlook was dedicated to humanism and rationalism, with a sincere devotion to the concept of Social Gospel and a firm belief in the idea that the real work of religion is found in the social activism of humanitarian individuals.

In more ways than one, the same phenomenon took place within American Judaism. A Reform movement arose as a response to the Higher Criticism and to the new freedoms which American society offered. Within the developing Reform movement was found a radical wing which was of the opinion that, in the end, it was Judaism' ethical values which were of importance, not ceremonies and rites, and that a humanistic, rationalistic approach was just as relevant for Judaism as it was for Christianity.

The radicalism within Reform Judaism manifested itself in a variety of ways. Some men operated wholly within the existing system. Being of the opinion that

liberal Christians held the same key to religious possibility, these men still believed in the primacy of the Jewish system. Others, however, felt that since many peoples, both Jewish and Gentile, shared the same religious aspirations, there was no reason not to create a synthesis between the two or, even better, to leave the narrowness of Judaism altogether because they saw individual creeds as being divisive. For such individuals, the best possible solution lay in the creation of a religion of humanity, under whose roof all liberal religionists would eventually come.

One question must be answered. Was the radicalism which developed in the late nineteenth century American Jewish Reform movement a product of something inherently Jewish or did the liberal extremes of the radicals discussed in this paper arise from the desire on the part of those radicals to emulate the Protestant liberals whose Social Gospel message was beginning to win the admiration of an increasing number of Christian clergy? This paper pointed out the viewpoints and reasoning of Radical Reformers and, from that information, one can only sense that the correct answer to our question is the latter one. There is not within Judaism any historical support for those who would substitute Jewish ceremonials, feelings of Jewish group responsibility, and dedication to Jewish survival for a social activist religion of

humanity. Even the social justice message of the biblical prophets never goes so far as to advocate those extremes. Men such as Schindler and Fleischer and, to a lesser degree, Hirsch, Moses, Sonneschein, and Landsberg, were wrapped up in the promise and hope of their times and with the freedoms which the American experience offered its Jewish population, an open atmosphere unlike any the Jewish community had ever known. These men wanted to emancipate their people from what they believed to be a dark historical past and the only way they knew how was to throw off all of Judaism's ritualism and particularism and to build their people in the new image of America's enlightened Protestant community which, we can be certain, was viewed by the Radical Reformers as being the most truly American religious group.

World War I, growing anti-Semitism throughout the world, and the prospect of another World War were factors which led to the decline of American Jewish religious radicalism. In response to such a world, Reform Judaism took new interests in Jewish Peoplehood, in traditional Jewish rituals, and in the prospect of rebuilding the Jewish homeland in Palestine. The optimism of the previous generation gave way to the sobering realism of modern times and we, in our age, developed our own religious response, just as the past generation formulated theirs.

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