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THE SOUTHERN RABBI AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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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Referee:
Professor Stanley F. Chyet

This Study is Dedicated

To

My Parents

In profound appreciation for their inspiration, guidance, and love

To

My Wife

Who is my strength

And, Above All

To

Rabbi Charles Mantinband

"A friend of man."

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DIGEST OF THE THESIS

This thesis is an attempt to ascertain the role which Southern rabbis have played in the civil rights struggle in the South since 1954. It is based on interviews, secondary sources, and material on file at the American Jewish Archives.

Chapter One is a general introduction to the topic and the writer's methodology.

Chapter Two likewise provides background material. Through the analysis of several Southern cities, the writer attempts to show the manner in which the 1954 Supreme Court decision was received in different parts of the South. An effort is also made to describe the characteristics of the Jewish enclaves in each city. The chapter ends with generalizations based upon the information provided for each city.

Chapter Three provides the paper's core material. It is a topical analysis of what rabbis have done (in terms of civil rights involvement) within their communities and within their congregations. It is subdivided into a section on rabbis who serve Deep South ("closed") cities, and one on the men who serve less-closed Southern cities. The documentation provided shows that the rabbis have often been involved in civil rights activity, though this does

not apply to all Southern rabbis

Chapter Four is an in-depth study of the two Southern rabbis who most stand out as civil rights "activists." The first, Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, serves a pulpit in Atlanta, Georgia (a very "open" community), while the second, Rabbi Charles Mantinband, has served in two very defiant communities (Florence, Alabama and Hattiesburg, Mississippi). There is a brief discussion as to whether it is proper to compare these two men, one to the other.

Chapter Five is an evaluation of how much the rabbis have done. The analysts are, first, the rabbis themselves, second, other Jewish informants, third, former Regional Directors of the Southern Regional Council, and last, leaders of Negro civil rights organizations.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight attempt to organize and develop more fully material already touched upon: the methodology of rabbinic involvement, the determinants of rabbinic involvement, and the rabbis' relationships with their congregations.

Chapter Nine is an analysis of the role various national Jewish organizations have played in the civil rights struggle, with particular emphasis on how the Southern Jew and his rabbi have reacted to the participation of their national bodies.

Chapter Ten presents a final formulation of how much the Southern rabbi has done in the struggle for civil rights ("a good deal, but not enough"). In conclusion, suggestions are made as to a minimal program of civil rights involvement for a Southern rabbi.

Part Two of the thesis deals with incidents of a controversial nature, and also contains a frank analysis of many Southern rabbis, identified by name. This section is available only by permission of the Director or Associate Director of the American Jewish Archives.

CONTENTS

PART ONE

PROLOGUE

This paper is an effort to spell out the role that the Reform rabbinate has played in the civil rights movement in the South since 1954. It is based on the study of various types of sources analyzed over an eight month period beginning in June of 1966. Since this project reflects sociology and contemporary history of a controversial nature, it seems best to the writer to begin with definitions in order to build a foundation strong enough to bear the weight of the structure which will follow. I have set aside the opening pages of this thesis for such definitions and words of an introductory nature, with the ever present hope that the chapters which come later will do justice both to my subject and to the individuals involved.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Defining The Paper's Scope

"Why pick on the South?" one of the interviewees tossed out for my consideration. "Since when does the South have a monopoly on racism?" It does not, and I would indeed be foolish if I thought such was the case. But one must make decisions. The South, as I have seen fit to view it, is limited to a total of ten of our United States. It has turned out to be a project of major proportions just to attempt to do justice to the events and individuals of this one region of our country. When, at the beginning, I was faced with the dilemma of narrowing my sights to a workable target, I opted for the South. And why the South -- why not the West, or the Northeast, or the Mid-West, or what have you? It is not too difficult to answer this aspect of the question; I agree to a good extent with Langston Hughes, who, when parrying much the same query, replied: "Not that the North is perfect; not that New York is paradise; but compared to some of our deep South cities, Manhattan is Heaven!"[1] Or, as one Southern rabbi put it: "Integration is not a regional issue but a national problem. Yet, the decisions of the Supreme Court relating to race relations since 1954 have affected the South more than any other area in the nation, because in this region prejudice has a legal status."[2] Of all areas in our country, the South seems to be the most defiant, the least amenable to so called "liberal"

acts and statements on the subject of Negro civil rights. Thus, it was my belief from the beginning that the rabbi in the South would face the most serious problems, on the whole, when acting in this aspect of his individual rabbinate. My research has provided little reason to discard this hypothesis. So I have chosen the South.

The South, as I have understood it for the purposes of this paper, includes Alabama, Arkansas, northern Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, northeastern Texas, and Virginia. I recognize as very legitimate the belief that southern Florida, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., Maryland, southern Texas, and so on might also have been included in such a paper, However, due to time limitations, I felt it best to exclude them from consideration, on the assumption that they were not as "Southern," at least on the issue of civil rights, as were the states (or portions of states) listed above. Again, it was one of those cases where a decision simply had to be made, though there were pros and cons on both sides.

Setting a temporal limit for this project posed difficulties which were less weighty. Although it would have been possible to reach as far back as abolition days and earlier, practically everyone I consulted felt that the most important date for the South, at least in our century, was 1954. May 17, 1954, the day of the Supreme Court decision in the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka case,marked throughout the South the beginning of civil rights activities which were like nothing

the Confederacy had seen since its earliest days. Even though the agitation for change hit different communities at different times, for the South as a whole, this was the year of "Black Monday" or silver linings -- the end of the old order and the beginning of the new. One scholar, working on a related subject, stated that "most of my informants . . . agreed that their picture of quiet, mutually respectful existence began to fade with the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision."[3] In some instances, cities and towns were not shaken until years after the 1954 decision; a few as late as the Freedom Rider years in the early Sixties. But there was a tension in the air, things were not quite the same, "Black Monday" nestled in the minds of Black and White alike, and not even inhabitants of the deepest portion of the Deep South could pay it no heed.

We will be concerned here with the Reform rabbi, in the South, since 1954. I have decided to limit this investigation to the Reform rabbi for various reasons. Chief of these is the fact that adequate information on the Southern Conservative and Orthodox rabbinate was not available to the writer. Though some effort was made to contact such rabbis, not one reply was received -- nor did I have any other data regarding their activities in sufficient quantity to merit inclusion. Another reason is that the information which I do have about these men, in the great majority of cases, has been furnished by their Reform colleagues, and thus might rightfully or wrongfully be open to charges of excessive subjectivity.

There is yet an additional explanation of why the non-Reform rabbinate is, to all extent and purposes, omitted from this study. There simply are not many of them in the South. By way of example, in the entire state of Mississippi, there is only one Orthodox minyan served by a rabbi.[4] For various historical reasons, the overwhelming majority of Southern Jews are affiliated with Reform Temples, rather than with Conservative Synagogues or Orthodox Schuls. Far be it from a Jewish writer to discount a group because of their minority status -- but this fact somewhat supports the systematic exclusion necessitated by the first two situations. Systematic, I say, because after much of the story has been set down, I do hope to turn to some discussion of the roles Southern Orthodox and Conservative rabbis have played in the civil rights movement, brief and hesitant as that discussion must be.

A Word On Methodology: Sources

The sources for this paper were quite diverse. There were, of course, books and periodicals used to furnish the background information. These published materials, like, for example, Wilbur T. Cash's The Mind Of The South, generally provided the writer with some understanding of the backdrop upon which the rabbinical actors would be seen. Very few of them dealt specifically with the subject of rabbinic involvement in the drama being enacted in the South. On occasion an author might turn to the Jewish community as a whole, and mention the rabbis en passant, but this was both rare and of

limited value when seeking specifics. More valuable along the latter lines was the surprisingly large amount of material to be found at the American Jewish Archives on the campus of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. This material included personal correspondence of the rabbis involved in the drama, newspaper clippings, sermons, speeches, and other mostly unpublished data. To supplement the information available through the Archives, a questionnaire was drawn up and mailed to approximately seventy rabbis who had each served Southern pulpits for at least five years.[5] The responses which the writer received, amounting to approximately one-third of those questioned, proved most helpful. Very useful also, were the taped interviews with an additional fourteen rabbis of the South, who graciously donated upwards of one hour of their time to a somewhat frenzied interviewer at the convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, meeting at Toronto in January, 1966. As a balance to the material derived from testimony of the rabbis themselves, other persons were also interviewed, including gentlemen associated with the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Community, the Southern Regional Council, the Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Negro civil rights leadership. All statements and information set forth in this paper, although obviously the sole responsibility of the writer, are, at least indirectly, derived from these sources.

Structure

It goes almost without saying that we are dealing with a dangerous and potentially explosive subject. Men have suffered economic loss, have had to leave communities, have even died because of what they did or said regarding Negro civil rights. This is not a topic which can be treated without some restraint. It has seemed the better part of wisdom to be guided by such considerations; therefore the paper is being written in two parts. Part One will attempt to tell the story, but will often mask the participants. On occasion it might even be necessary to touch but lightly on some event which cannot, at the moment, be described without possibly limiting the effectiveness, endangering the life or livelihood, or discrediting the character of some person involved. Part Two will develop these things more fully, as it will also identify all individuals and places which have been concealed in Part One. This latter section will, of necessity, be restricted to the American Jewish Archives, and available only upon consent of Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, the Director, and Dr. Stanley F. Chyet, the Associate Director. I do not mean to over-dramatize the situation; most likely very little would come of a full revelation of facts, but when there is room for doubt -- as the bombings and assassinations of recent years would suggest -- it seems no more than prudent to proceed with caution. I would emphasize that in any case in which a statement is made under

the cloak of anonymity, it can be, and will be, supported by exact references in the proper place.

There is yet one more word to add -- a guarded disclaimer if you will, The paper will undoubtedly suffer from some limitations, over and above those inherent in the writer's scholarly capabilities. My knowledge of the facts is by no means exhaustive -- though I might wish it so, there is much information I simply could not uncover. In addition, my sources are heavily weighted on the rabbinic side -- though I feel I have allowed for this, this might prove a weakness beyond my expectations. It is the oft-repeated problem of making the best of a non-representative sample. There is yet one more thing which bothers me: would that I could praise all involved, "would that all God's people were prophets." Alas, they are not. Though I will attempt as scrupulously as I can, in the body of this study, to refrain from passing any judgement, and will confine my personal reactions to a separate heading, the facts (as I have and see them) might often do the job for me. People's feelings are bound to be hurt -- the feelings of people who were most helpful to me. For this I am truly sorry, but I have attempted, above all, to be true to my material. I am reminded of a passage uncovered in my research:

> Since the researcher cannot always agree with his informants, he cannot please them by his report, no matter how fair, in the eyes of an outsider, he is

able to be; the informants do not want him to be fair, but rather actively partisan on their side.[6]

CHAPTER II

THE SOUTH AND ITS JEWS

When the rabbi of the Southern congregation acted, he did so in the context of a community setting. There were people -- Jews and non-Jews; there were traditions; there were economic and other considerations. All of these could not but have influenced, to one degree or another, what the rabbi did, or did not do, in the area of civil rights. It would thus be helpful to have some general familiarity with these diverse factors prior to discussing what various rabbis did, and why they acted -- or failed to act -- as they did. I have chosen to describe seven Southern communities -- among them representatives of large metropolitan areas, small, highly rural townships, and some of the shades in between. Though these cities cannot be totally representative of the entire South, they are highly representative of the communities within which the Southern rabbi functions.

New Orleans, Louisiana

New Orleans is a city of approximately 627,000 inhabitants, of which slightly over 10,000 are Jews.[7] It is the third largest port in the United States. This, taken along with its large number of Catholics (almost fifty percent of

the population) and its French traditions, give it a somewhat unique position in the South. Though it has a full share of Southern "provincialism," this has been mitigated by the cosmopolitanism so much a part of a port-based economy. In comparison with most other Southern cities, New Orleans would be labeled "moderate" on the race problem. Most likely this is why one rabbi claimed that "New Orleans is not the South, it's a different kind of city." This would be borne out to a larger degree than it is, if some typically "Southern" situations were not so clearly discernible. First of these, although desegregation was very slowly and quietly taking place prior to 1954, the school desegregation issue came as a major shock to the city. New Orleans, like so many other Southern communities, had its active White Citizens Council, its Federal marshalls to escort Negro children to school, and so forth. Although the power structure of the city was generally not vocally defiant, they were classified by one analyst as "neutral" in the matter. That is to say, ". . . time and time again, they refused to speak out, despite the fact that certain other responsible citizens urged them to do so."[8] Also typically Southern was that among these "responsible citizens" were very few Protestant ministers. One rabbi from this city advised me that, with regard to civil rights activity, his "big disappointment was that the Protestant ministry as a whole was not only lukewarm; with one or two exceptions it

was absolutely negative." The other rabbi from New Orleans who was interviewed said much the same thing: "The ministers were almost completely conspicuous by their non-participation." This did not hold true for the Catholic priests of the city -- their attitude was an important factor in loosing a liberal response in the community.

A third element which I would term very much a part of Southern life is the existence of a powerful anti-integration voice in the area, housed in the body of one Leander Perez, whose stronghold is less than fifteen miles from New Orleans. His presence, and his influence, are surely often, even constantly felt in the city. These three situations are but reminders that New Orleans is indeed a Southern city. But, the fact that there <u>are</u> liberal voices to be heard, that the power structure is quiet, but not defiant, and that the local newspapers are more or less neutral on the subject of Negro civil rights, supports designating New Orleans as one of the more moderate areas of the South,

The Jews of New Orleans, almost to a man, can be found in the city's "upper middle class." In 1958, their median family income was over $10,000 per year.[9] According to one survey, eighty-three percent of them are either professionals, in management, own their own businesses, or are in clerical and sales work (less than twenty percent being in the latter category). The remaining seventeen percent are in "lower prestige jobs."[10] One rabbi described them as "mostly middle or upper middle-class, self-employed or professional people;"

the other called them "very affluent." The above mentioned survey, made in 1958, showed that forty-one percent of them had been born in New Orleans, another twenty-four percent had been resident in the city at least thirty years, an additional twenty-four percent had been there at least ten years, while only eleven percent had lived in New Orleans less than ten years.[11] Over ninety-five percent of these Jews are affiliated with at least one congregation, and most congregations of any size can trace their organizational history back prior to the Civil War. New Orleans Jews are, all in all, a highly respected element of the city's population.

Yet, they are afraid. The overwhelming majority fear any type of involvement which might make the Jew "too conspicuous;" especially if that involvement could be interpreted as contrary to the prevalent Christian position. I asked the New Orleans rabbis where they thought their congregants stood on the civil rights question. One rabbi felt that they "at least" were mostly "sympathetic to the Negro," the other would not make such a judgment. In his eyes, his people would differ (on this matter) hardly at all from a Protestant congregation on a comparable socio-economic level. Sociologist Leonard Reissman saw it this way:

> To be sure, some typically Southern values have been assimilated by Jewish families who have lived as Southerners for generations. . . . Hence, one encounters a loyalty to the city and the region that is hardly the mark of a "luftmensch." . . . Attitudes towards race are not unrestrainedly equalitarian but sometimes are hedged by some of the elaborate rationale that Southerners of conscience have evolved to justify segregation . . . But the Southern tradition has been tempered by a Jewish tradition which has

> prevented a comolete acceptance of that strange orientation mystically called "the Southern way of life." The Jew is not an average white Southerner in his general attitudes toward race, aristocracy, or the Civil War.[12]

If this be so, and I think it is, there has been very little proof of the matter. And the villain is the aforementioned fear. As one rabbi phrased it, the Jews "wouldn't take a stand against the Negro, but, on the other hand, they're not going to stick their necks out for him." Neither rabbi could identify any vocal segregationists in his congregation, as they likewise could point to precious few members who were vocal in the other direction. Alfred O. Hero, in his fine The Southerner and World Affairs, gave much the same analysis:

> Although a relatively large number of New Orleanians who identify themselves as Jews have been paternalist segregationists by preference and uncomfortable with changing race relations in their city, virtually none have agreed publicly with the intransigent position of the Citizens Council.[13]

The vast majority of Jews, quite out of favor with the methods and extremism of the Councils (if not with their goals), are, according to all my sources very sensitive to "mah yomru ha-goyim." Being highly concentrated in the retail businesses, they have considerable concern about possible economic boycotting. But more than this, there is the fear that "being out of step' will cause social ostracism and even anti-Semitism. These facts were dwelled upon by the New Orleans rabbis interviewed, and must be taken into account if we are to understand the "milieu" in which a rabbi of that city operates.

Jackson, Mississippi

Jackson is the capital of the state which many commentators call the most tightly "closed society" within the Confederacy. Surely very few vocal liberals could be uncovered in Mississippi between 1954 and the date of this paper. Mississippi is not an urban society. Jackson, though it is the state's main city, numbers but 147,000 souls, according to the 1960 census.[14] Example could be followed by example to make unquestionably clear the "sullen mood" of Mississippi, and Jackson, following the Supreme Court's decision of 1954. I will limit myself to a very few, for I doubt the need to prove this point.

"Today," said James Silver in 1964, the closed society of Mississippi imposes on all its people acceptance of and obedience to an official orthodoxy almost identical with the one developed in the middle of the nineteenth century."[15] "Imposes" seems a little mild, indeed, when one notes the report of the Mississippi Advisory Commission to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1963), which includes these words:

> We find that terror hangs over the Negro in Mississippi . . . The people of Mississippi are largely unaware of the extent of illegal official violence and the press is partly to blame.[16]

This "official violence" is referred to in a statement issued in early 1963 by the Voter Education Project, which chronologically enumerated sixty-four separate acts of violence

and intimidation against Negroes that had occurred in Mississippi since January, 1961. Silver thought the list an "understatement."[17]

When Professor Silver placed part of the blame for the closed society upon the press, he was surely not excepting Jackson's newspapers. In 1963, following James Meredith's riot-accompanied enrollment at the University of Mississippi, Jimmy Ward, editor of Jackson's Daily News (one of the two Hederman-owned papers) theorized on the editorial page: "It would appear apparent by now that prudent people will not wantonly toy with tradition or tamper with the soul of a civilized society."[18] Silver calls the Jackson newspapers "extremist" in their orientation, adding that "to read them day after day is to understand what the people of the State believe and are prepared to defend."[19] Nor, of course, are they the only element standing "vigilant guard" over the status quo. Right after the 1954 decision, the Jackson chapter of the White Citizens Council "built up a card file containing the racial views of nearly every White person in the city."[20]

In such an atmosphere, it comes as no great surprise that the White clergy did not distinguish itself as liberal in the civil rights struggle. One Mississippi rabbi interviewed said that his Gentile colleagues were, "for the most part, silent;" another could not think of even one Protestant minister who had positive feelings (leaving aside the area

of actions) with regard to desegregation. This is not to say that there were not a few who dared defy the "sullen mood." Methodist minister Dr. W. B. Selah, who was for eighteen years pastor of the largest Methodist congregation in Mississippi, signed, along with twenty-seven other ministers, an anti-segregation statement issued in 1963, and declared "There can be no color bar in a Christian church." He eventually resigned in protest when his own Jackson congregation refused admission to five Negroes.[21] Ralph McGill, Pulitzer Prize winning Editor in Atlanta, noted in 1964 that one committee of Mississippi laymen alone "is credited with having forced more than twenty young Methodist ministers to leave churches in that State."[22] In the period between 1954 - 1963, a total of sixty-eight Methodist clergymen were, in Silver's words,"driven from Mississippi."[23] Silver summed up the matter when he said "In the past year or two, many individual preachers and a few ministerial groups have made courageous stands, but the church as a whole has placed its banner with the status quo . . . ."[24] Jackson, like every other section of Mississippi, is open to very little argumentation over any aspect of the civil rights movement.

In Jackson and the surrounding towns reside approximately 150 Jewish families. They are mainly middle and upper-middle class merchants. Their congregation has passed the century mark in years, while many of their number can also point to

a lengthy connection with the area. Alfred Hero had these people in mind when he wrote:

> Isolated in their local communities and profoundly dependent upon local goodwill and friendly relations with local white Gentiles, most of these Jews adapted themselves to prevailing values and habits . . . sons and daughters frequently married Gentiles . . . as the generations succeed one another, more and more Southerners of Jewish ancestry became virtually indistinguishable in ideology from the rest of the local power structure of planters and merchants.[25]

One rabbi interviewed felt these Jews were so "indistinguishable in ideology" that he called them "as racist as any white non-Jew". A local newspaperman, writing in the Jackson State Times, seems to be in agreement on this point, as his words testify:

> Today many a fine Jewish leader is part of the Southern resistance. Jackson's Citizen's Council, outstanding in South and Nation, points to them with pride.[26]

Whether this is so or not, they are afflicted, to an even greater extent than their co-religionists in New Orleans, with the fear of anti-Semitism, in addition to the fears anyone might have who thinks of challenging the status quo in Mississippi. One liberal Jew living in this area, explained to Hero why it was that he refrained from acting out his liberal ideas. Hero, in turn, paraphrased the man's responses:

> The whole Jewish community might become a target for antagonism -- other Jews would fear that one was risking the status of the entire ethnic group, and many local Jews felt that no one had any right to upset the delicate balance whereby Jews had been treated well and accepted generally as fellow Southerners.[27]

Such was, and is, the situation in Jackson and in the other towns and cities in Mississippi.

Norfolk, Virginia

Norfolk, like New Orleans, is a port city. It has a resident population of approximately 305,000, of whom somewhere in the vicinity of 8500 are Jews.[28] Inasmuch as the city's major "industry" is the Navy, it is unlike any other city in Virginia. Virginia, not known as the most intransigent Southern state on the civil rights issue, is still considerably in the rear of Norfolk on this topic. But Norfolk is also part of the South. When the 1954 decision became known, the majority of her populace (30 percent of which is made up of Bible Belt immigrants) was indignant and had no intention of acceding to the wishes of the "Nine Old Men." As one interviewee said, by 1957 "the lines were drawn very tight . . . massive resistance became the tone of the community." There was every possibility that the city could become rabid on the subject. It did not -- and, more than anything, the cosmopolitan atmosphere provided by the naval base was the reason. This was the reason, because it allowed the moderate and liberal elements in the community to speak up without the fear of being utterly alone and in danger.

Among these liberal elements were some of the clergy. Although a majority of the city's ministers would have nothing to do with it, a bi-racial Ministerial Association was

founded six years prior to the Supreme Court ruling. It met, according to one interviewee, "purposely to work on interracial projects."

Another moderate voice was provided by the morning newspaper; surprisingly, though owned by the same interests which controlled the evening segregationist paper, the morning newssheet was unquestionably pro-integration. This did much to bolster the morale of the increasingly visible moderate minority.

The Reform Temple in Norfolk counts among its members approximately one-eighth of the Jews of the city. Though only fifteen to twenty percent of them (according to my interviewee) are merchants (the remainder are in the services -- doctors, lawyers, civil service employees, manufacturers' representatives, insurance men), the community is still quite hesitant to participate in the pro-integration struggle in their area. The Jewish connection with Norfolk is a very old one -- it is thus not difficult to understand why one Norfolk rabbi felt a good ten percent of his congregants were "Southern in their outlook" on the civil rights issue. In fact, the history of the community might prepare an outsider to expect even a somewhat larger percentage in that category. An additional fifteen percent he identified as "active liberals," while the remaining seventy-five percent "went whichever way the wind blew." Although the element of fear does not seem to be as crucial to this Jewish community, the concern for

"what the Gentiles will say" is of utmost importance. According to the rabbi questioned: "The old families in the congregation particularly were very sensitive to this sort of thing. So, whatever the goyim said, counted."

Montgomery, Alabama

A city of 134,000 (including 1800 Jews),[29] capital of the state of Alabama, locale of two military bases, and home of some moderates on the civil rights question, Montgomery might have been expected to take an appreciably less defiant stance than many other Southern cities. Such has not been the case. One analyst, discussing the city post-1954, noted that

> . . . no serious trouble was expected because the leading families could be depended upon to be moderate and rational with respect to Negro civil rights and because their patriarchal influence could be counted on to control Negroes and "rednecks" . . . . Perhaps this certainty that there was "no need to worry" was partially responsible for the paucity of authoritative local statements by religious or secular leaders in support of the Supreme Court's decision, or at least in support of the supremacy of the law and legal processes in our national life.[30]

It is not too difficult to understand why, at least for the moderates, "no serious trouble was expected" following the Court decision. Like Norfolk, Virginia, Montgomery is a city heavily influenced by the generally moderating presence of the military. According to one report, one of every fourteen employed civilians in Montgomery in 1954-5 received his salary from the Federal government, while one of every seven families was connected with the military.[31] It was also

true that, prior to 1954, a local newspaper, the Montgomery Advertiser, was editorializing against the White Citizens Councils then being organized. Though most ministers in the community took a decidedly segregationist stand, there was an "informal inter-denominational ministerial group" which was attempting to demonstrate goodwill by bringing white ministers to the pulpits (as guests) in Negro churches. There was also a small chapter of the Alabama Council on Human Relations in the city.

Even with the presence of all these potentially moderating influences, there, indeed, was serious cause for concern over Montgomery's position on the civil rights issue. Though the Air Force bases were vitally important to the city's economy, the outside community totally ignored them when it came to the race issue -- the bases were fully integrated, the city totally segregated. The one newspaper which showed signs of at least minimal support of the Negroe's cause, began to feel the pressure, and after 1954, curtailed all opposition to the Councils. And the local clergy, save for the very few affiliated with the group discussed above, were at best, silent. Possibly more than any single factor, the transportation boycott which the Montgomery Negro community staged in 1955 - 1956 (led by the then unknown Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.) helped crystallize feeling on the side of defiance. John B. Martin, in The Deep South Says Never, describes a segregationist rally which took place in Montgomery on February 11, 1956:

> It was, perhaps, high tide of the Council movement, its greatest hour. After that night there could be no doubt that the South . . . had found in the Citizens' Councils a flag to rally round. The Deep South was solid once more.[32]

And Montgomery, the old "Heart of the Confederacy," felt itself as important an element of Southern resistance as it had been a century before. It was only fitting, therefore, that John Kasper, at the 1958 convention of the National States' Rights Party, should nominate Rear Admiral John G. Crommelin (Ret.) of Montgomery to head their party's national ticket in 1960. Crommelin's only platform, as reported in Look magazine, was to expose the "Communist-Jewish conspiracy" trying to lead the South down the road to mongrelization.[33]

Which brings us to the Jewish community of Montgomery. In 1954, as today, there were approximately 1800 Jewish residents of Alabama's capital city.[34] The Jews of Montgomery, like those of most other Southern cities, can claim a long connection with the community. Thus, the city's Reform Temple can trace its origin back a half dozen years prior to the Civil War. The majority of its members, again like most Jewish inhabitants of the South, are fairly well-off business and professional people. On the civil rights issue, they have been noticeably silent. Of primary concern to Montgomery's Jews is the perennially vocal Crommelin,who takes advantage of his periodic candidacy to spew forth the usual anti-Semitic venom. It is his well-known position that Jews are behind

the "insidious plot" to desegregate Montgomery and the South.

Because of Crommelin, and because of the White Citizens Council and the Klan, the Jews of Montgomery are very, very much afraid. Though, in private, most admit to a moderate position on the issue,[35] rare indeed is the one who will be publicly vocal in support of desegregation. One researcher, who was concerned entirely with the Jews of this city, put it in the following manner:

> The activities of the White Citizens Council, the Klan and Biggot, [i.e., Crommelin] have engendered a great deal of fear in the Jewish community. Jewish leaders are extremely sensitive to any Jewish prominence in the entire desegregation area . . . . Some Jewish leaders spoke to me of a "paradise lost." It used to be so quiet, the Jewish community used to be so respected, Jewish leaders used to be welcomed in the best society."[36]

Within Jewish circles, much pressure is exerted upon the very few who would break the silence, lest they provide grist for Crommelin's mill, and further destroy the old "respect" which the Jews had enjoyed. There is little doubt where the Jewish community leadership and the majority of Montgomery's other Jews stand on the subject of civil rights "agitation" by their co-religionists -- they are strongly and unequivocally opposed. The fear, not so much of economic reprisals as of social rejection, is so great that it has even brought a few local Jews to "widely advertise" their affiliation with the White Citizens Council, in an attempt to show that they are at one with the majority viewpoint in the Gentile community. Indicative of a basic liberalism in the Jewish group, however, is the fact that these vocal Jewish segregationists have more

often than not felt the need to justify their behavior to their co-religionists. They claim that they join such groups in order "to inhibit the growth of anti-Semitism." The total picture is a relatively clear one: Montgomery must be placed among those Southern cities most intractable in their resistance to the push for Negro rights.

Birmingham, Alabama

In some respects, Birmingham is very much the same as Montgomery. They are, of course, in the same state, but this is not the crucial factor. We observed that Montgomery, though steeped in Southern tradition, might have been expected to find its way into the "moderate camp," due to its considerable dependence on the military bases in its locale. But the traditions of the "Heart of the Confederacy" have proved more powerful than more recent economic influences. Birmingham, for quite dissimilar reasons, might also have been expected to reject a highly segregationist stance. The New York Times of May 26, 1963, so explained:

> The history of Birmingham would seem to have cast it for a more progressive role in the advancement of race relations than it has assumed. It was not founded until 1871, six years after the Civil War . . . . In the 1960 census its population was only a little over one-third Negro . . . not a high percentage in the South. Most of its ties were with the North, not with the cotton growers of the old South. Yet its thinking had remained largely Southern plantation.[37]

My interviews bore out the Times' analysis. The terms that one interviewee used most often to describe the general reaction in

Birmingham to the Supreme Court decision were "disgruntlement," "dislike," and so on. But, for the most part, it was not rabid or violent defiance. There was, as could be expected, the minority which "loathed, despised the Negro," but the majority of the population was content to quietly ignore the Federal government. It should be noted, however, that there was in Birmingham slightly more freedom to dissent than could be found in cities like Montgomery. Thus, in the early 1960's, when militant anti-segregation demonstrations began to rock the community, there was more than one reaction. Some people, in line with Montgomery's response to its transportation boycott, moved closer to the position of the Klans and Councils. Most persons were annoyed, but showed few signs of increased defiance; rather, though they definitely were against integration, they seemed to realize that "there's nothing you can do about it." A small number, however, began to raise their voices in favor of change. The newspapers were on the side of the first two groups, as were a large majority of the ministers. One interviewee noted: "When things began coming to a crux, during 1962, 1963 . . . you couldn't discuss this question at the Ministerial Association meeting; you had very definite segregationist opinions that would be openly voiced if anyone tried to bring up anything related to this subject." He went on, however, to tell of a "number of ministers . . . particularly among the younger men, who were very sympathetic -- quite liberal -- sympathetic to,I wouldn't say integration, but certainly to desegregation." On rare occasions, men like these did take

vocal positions in the community. Thus, Birmingham, by no stretch of the imagination a "liberal" community on this issue, was at least not quite as sullen as Mississippi and cities of Montgomery's ilk.

According to most recent figures, there are approximately 4,000 Jews in Birmingham.[38] Those who belong to the Reform congregation note with pride that their synagogue is just a few years younger than the city itself -- inasmuch as there were Jews in the community from its very inception. Life in Birmingham has been financially rewarding to the great majority of the city's Jews; many are highly successful merchants, while others are equally successful professional men and dealers in services. The Jewish community is easily middle, even upper-middle class on the economic ladder. When asked how these people felt about the civil rights struggle, one interviewee saw them as being much more liberal and sympathetic to the cause than the Gentile population. In his estimation, they "want to be as helpful as possible in changing the situation." But, then the inevitable disclaimer followed: "But you've got to bear in mind that out of a metropolitan population of 630,000 . . . . There are 4,000 Jewish men, women and children . . . . They are very, very vulnerable."

The Jews of Birmingham, like those of so many other Southern communities, prefer silence. They feel themselves highly susceptible to economic pressure from both sides (Negro and White), and their fears have not proved to be unrealistic. In addition, they wish the respect and acceptance

which can only be bestowed upon them by the outside community, of which they are such a small portion -- and they know that it will be denied them if they "rock the boat." Seen in the light of my sources, I can distinguish very little difference between the Jews of Montgomery and those of Birmingham, save for the possibility that there is a little less fear, and a little more freedom of expression among those in the latter city.

Atlanta, Georgia

Twenty years ago, Atlanta vied with Birmingham in the bid for economic centrality in the mid-South. Today it is no longer a contest. Of all the cities of the South, Atlanta stands out as the most progressive, most highly urbanized, most attractive to business and industry. There are many reasons behind Atlanta's startling economic and urban growth. In 1954, when the Supreme Court decision shook the South as a whole, Atlanta was best prepared to cope with it and, so-to-speak, to rise above it. A major part of the credit must go to its municipal government -- which refused to panic. There was, and is, according to my informants, an enlightened mayor in office, who was not about to allow race prejudice to dull the senses or the prosperity of the community. He had for many years kept lines of communication open between himself and the Negro community -- probably the wealthiest, highest social-status Negro enclave in the South. And the mayor was far from alone. Of similar nature and purpose was the

chief of police, whose goal was not so much the maintenance of White supremacy as it was the maintenance of law and order. Both these gentlemen were supported on a continuing basis by what is assuredly the most liberal press in the central South -- headed courageously and visibly by the Pulitzer Prize winning Ralph McGill. Only in Atlanta, of all the non-border Southern cities, could one find, in 1960, a full page ad by local Negro students listing the rights they demanded as American citizens -- an ad which was praised by the mayor of the community in that it "performs the constructive service of letting the White community know what others are thinking."[39] As it became evident that Atlanta was more concerned with order and prosperity than with "the Southern Way of Life" (interpreted in its worst sense), business and non-Southern individuals flocked to the city -- creating an even larger body of moderate or liberal opinion. But Atlanta is still part of the South. As proof of such a statement, I would present one commentator's words:

> In the 1962-63 school year . . . after the city had basked in national praise for the dignified way in which it integrated its schools, a grand total of forty Negro students were actually enrolled in White schools.[40]

Part of the South, yes; but how many deep South cities could even claim forty Negro children attending school on an integrated basis?

The clergy in Atlanta was also a source of some moderation and liberalism. Though only eighty out of 400 of them --

and not their most prominent representatives-- signed a statement of conscience issued in 1957 (at the time of the school integration crisis), there was no other city which could even claim that high a percentage. Atlanta's liberals could also point to an integrated, if not too consequential, ministerial association of modest size. All of these elements helped make Atlanta a city in which the old status quo could be challenged -- if one felt inclined to do so. But -- the liberal would still be speaking from a minority position, for, as one informant suggested, the mood in Atlanta since 1954 has been one of "as little as you can get away with and as slowly as possible."

Atlanta's Jewish community, well over one hundred years old, claims today in excess of 15,000 souls[41] -- making it second only to Dallas of all the cities which lay within the scope of this paper. The Reform rabbi of the city ministers to a prestigious congregation which numbers in the vicinity of 1200 families. In Atlanta, as in so many other places, the Jews are mainly middle-class merchants, white-collar workers, and professionals. Due to the various service industries which are headquartered in the city (for example, insurance), there is a comparatively high proportion of persons in the Jewish community who are employed in such activity. There is very little fear of economic pressure felt by the Jews of Atlanta, nor has there ever been an appreciable amount of such fear. On the civil rights issue, although there are many Jews who would prefer not to get involved,

there are a goodly number of moderate and liberal voices. One rabbi interviewed felt his congregation to be much more liberal on the matter than a "comparable non-Jewish congregation." The heavy mantle of fear, which weighs so noticeably on the shoulders of other Southern Jews, rests lightly upon their co-religionists who make their home in Atlanta. It is in this sense, not a "typical" Southern city.

Nashville, Tennessee

Though not, in truth, a border city, Nashville would hold such a position within the geographical limits of tnis paper. In many respects, research has borne out that this city evidences a sufficient number of characteristics of the "border" phenomenon (with regard to its response to the civil rights movement) that I would offer Nashville as a community to be considered within such a light.

Located in upper Tennessee, Nashville, the state capital, is home to approximately 170,000 persons.[42] In the years since 1954, it has participated in practically the full gamut of civil rights activity and the attendant reprecussions -- bombings, sit-ins, picketing, violence, school integration, and so on. Though Nashville is located almost two hundred miles north of Atlanta, one informant, a long-time resident of the city, told me "there is no comparison . . . . Atlanta was more liberal and that at an earlier date."

When the 1954 decision became known in Nashville, there was a very vocal, but not too large Klan-type response. The city, to this day, shows some affinity for Klan, Council, and John Birch Society type organizations -- they have been quite obviously a force to consider, especially since 1954. Racial segregation represented the status quo in that year, and it has but grudgingly given ground over the past two decades. Unlike Atlanta, Nashville's municipal government was not exemplary in showing the way -- one informant said that despite this leadership, the city has made some progress in recent years. Factors working toward such progress can be traced to a number of sources. One of these would be the Tennessee Valley Authority, which has provided Nashville with power inexpensive enough to attract Northern industry -- not to the extent which Atlanta has been able to do so -- but to a great enough extent to have a moderating influence on the city. Another source of potential moderation have been the numerous military bases located in the Nashville area. Also of major import along these lines has been the voice of The Nashville Tennessean, a newspaper which, according to one interviewee, "tried constructively to change attitudes" to bring about desegregation. Working as a counter-balance, however, has been Nashville's other daily, a paper which is "typically Southern" on the Negro civil rights issue.

A key period in Nashville's recent history was the early Sixties, for at that time a sweeping change was made in the

system of municipal government which, for various reasons, had a liberalizing effect on the city's atmosphere. This development might, at least in part, be the result of the many months of sit-ins, picketing and violence which tried the patience of the community, and mobilized not only the segregationist forces, but the liberal forces as well. Supported by the Nashville Tennessean, a small number of clergymen, some important businessmen, and other members of the power structure began to press for desegregation. They were able to gather enough momentum to effectively drive professional agitators like John Kasper out of the community, and to help bring about the advent of the above-mentioned new metropolitan system of government. School desegregation, a bitter bone of contention in 1957, has become official policy in recent years. So Nashville has evidenced the dual nature which one mignt expect of a Border State community -- on the one hand it has opposed, resisted and even physically fought the encroachments of federally initiated integration; on the other hand it has complied, grudgingly, but to a greater degree than most Southern cities,with the Federal demands, as sponsored and supported by a visible minority of Nashville citizens.

Nashville and its environs are home to nearly four thousand Jewish individuals. Many of these persons can trace a lengthy connection with the city proper, but others, the so-called "country Jews," either presently live in the small towns surrounding the city, or have just recently, post-World War II, immigrated to the big city. It is of value to make

a distinction between the two groups since this situation has had much bearing on the nature of the Nashville Jewish community. In its simplest formulation, as one interviewee advised me, the difference is this: those Jews living in the small towns or but recently removed from them are hardly distinguishable from the non-Jews in whose midst they live or lived; the Jews who come from Nashville families or who have moved into Nashville from outside the South, have not arrived at the same level of acculturation. But more on this in a moment.

The majority of Nashville Jewry is part of the middle class community. More likely than not their income is derived from merchandising, manufacturing, other white collar occupations,or the professions. There are a good many Jewish doctors who practice in the city. Although there are Jews on lower levels in banking and insurance, none can be found on the top strata in these industries, as is generally the case. Those Jews who still reside in the smaller towns, or who have just recently moved to Nashville, are mainly merchants who have done very well in their respective businesses. These individuals, often feeling the pressure of local White Citizens Council groups, are highly sensitive to what the Gentiles will think, and consider themselves extremely vulnerable to economic pressure. On the subject of civil rights, if they should desire to take a moderate or liberal position, they almost invariably bow to the general community,

out of fear of social and economic reprisals. But, from the answers my respondents gave me, very rare indeed is the one who would even think of doing so, for most of these "country Jews" were quite at home with the status quo prior to the civil rights push. As for the larger Jewish group in Nashville, the "city Jews," they appear to be less happy with segregation and all its implications. Typical of their response would be their reaction to the involvement of one of the Nashville rabbis in a civil rights incident. As the rabbi related to me: "Some of the members of my congregation said this is not a problem for Jews . . . and some of them said, even if it is a problem, let's stay out of it and not have any trouble, because we're living in the South." Not one of my respondents would place the majority of the Nashville Jewish community on the liberal, or even the vocally moderate side of the civil rights movement; though there were some in the community who began to show up as such during the last six years. The rabbi I interviewed saw them as potentially more liberal, while my lay informant could see little difference between Jewish congregations and comparable (in the socio-economic sense) Protestant congregations. When my data is viewed as a whole, it appears that the Jews of Nashville, though generally quite hesitant, were more willing to identify themselves with the desegregation position than most Southern Jews. It would definitely not be correct to place them in the same category as the Jewish community of Atlanta, but if a comparison is to be made,

I think they would fare very well when considered alongside of their coreligionists in cities like New Orleans and Norfolk.

An Overview: The Jews of the South

The one thing that should be clear at this juncture is that the South is far from "solid," if by "solid" we mean uniform. There are many degrees of what James Silver calls the "closed society" within the Southern region. It is generally true that the larger the city, and the more "Northern" the influence manifested within it, the more "open" that community will be to dissent and change. Thus, Atlanta and New Orleans are worlds apart from, say, Cleveland, Mississippi, or Macon, Georgia. But -- as we have shown -- this principle cannot be applied without some caution, for there are large cities, like Birmingham and Montgomery which are very little different, indeed, from their smaller counterparts. So, when discussing what the Reform rabbis of the South did or did not do in the realm of civil rights, it is not only proper, but necessary, to pose the question -- which South? Understanding this, let me now make some generalizations about the mood of the South as a whole, in the hope that my reader will keep in mind that Southern cities and towns must be viewed as loci on a spectrum, with a much higher intensity of "openness" on one end than on the other.

I think it no exaggeration to say that not a single city or town in the South welcomed the Supreme Court decision of 1954. No matter where the city might have been on the "open" to "closed" society spectrum, 1954 came as an unhappy and disturbing shock. For when we speak of desegregationists or integrationists in the South, we are talking about the smallest of minorities. One rabbi put it as follows:

> The minority that favors integration represents an infinitesimal percentage of the southern white population. This integrationist group is not only small, but also suspect. Integrationists are regarded as evil men who would desecrate the cherished ways of the South. It has become increasingly difficult for integrationists to express themselves or to take any action leading to desegration. Those whose ideals we share are without any influence . . . . Any efforts made in behalf of integration are fraught with peril and danger. Such is the emotional climate that prevails in tne South today.[44]

There is hardly a community in the entire South where antipathy to desegregation is not the rule, rather than the exception. And, if this applies to cities like Atlanta, New Orleans, and Nashville, how much the moreso does it apply to the four "hard core" Southern states -- South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. John B. Martin made mention of this in The Deep South Says Never: "Segregation is not a principle upheld only by louts and bullies. It is viewed as inherently right by virtually every white person in the four-state South of which we speak."[45]

When Mr. Martin said "virtually every white person" he was not excluding the upper strata of Southern society. With very few exceptions, the power-structure of each Southern

city and town viewed the Supreme Court decision with vocal disfavor. In the vast majority of cases, this leadership element has been an essential part of the forces resisting change, reinforcing the community-wide tendency toward defiance. Such has been the case with local government officials, state-wide office holders, and the men who control the mass media. A person growing up in the South, especially during the past twenty years, is bombarded every day with propaganda upholding "the Southern Way of Life" and denigrating those "damn Yankees." He hears this tune piped at home, in school, at work, on television and radio, and also in his church. A survey of religious institutions of the South made in 1964, showed that only one of all the Protestant denominations had desegregated (in word, if not in deed) its Southern dioceses, and this was the Episcopalian Church, which can count precious few Negro members.[46] This comes as no surprise when viewed in the light of another survey, which showed that almost one of every two ministers within the region under discussion held to the segregationist position.[47] The remaining fifty percent, for various reasons -- generally relating to the word "fear" -- have given little sign of disagreeing with the majority of their lay people. According to Harry Golden:

> Some clergymen . . . stood their moral ground and stayed on but they were few and far between By and large, the Protestant clergy of the South abdicated its responsibility in this crisis . . . . The mass of clergymen kept silent about the crisis and when

> these clergymen issued public statements they were cautionary and noncommittal statements. Since May of 1954, the sermons in most Southern churches have been concerned with the virtues of happiness and the evils of juvenile delinquency.[48]

I have been speaking only of the Protestant clergy, for special mention must be made of the Catholic priests serving Southern communities. Due to the hierarchical set-up of the Church, and to the comparative financial independence of its local religious leadership, the priests, at least in recent years, have been far more vocal in favor of desegregation than their Protestant counterparts have been. Though Catholic flocks have generally disapproved of the sentiments of their spiritual leaders, they have not been as successful in muzzling their clergy as have been their Protestant brethren. This being the case, the general rule might be applied that the larger the concentration of Catholics, necessitating the greater number of priests, the less the pressure will be upon these priests, and the more the voice of religion will be heard on the side of social change. In such communities it is eminently easier for other, non-Catholic, liberals to speak out in favor of desegregation. But the number of these communities should not be exaggerated -- the South is basically "Protestant country," and it reflects this type of character more often than not.

Defiance, violent opposition, go-slow tactics, at best, sullen acceptance of the inevitable -- such has been the mood of the South during the last two decades. There is a patriotism in the South which is dying hard, if it is dying

at all. Its object is not the country, but the region; its anthem not "America," but "Dixie," its traditions not American, but "Southern." As much as any other incident, one related by Robert Penn Warren gives insight into this atmosphere, and hints at the problems which a "liberal" faces in Dixie Land:

> . . . I remember sitting with a group of college students, and one of them, a law student it develops, short but strong-looking, dark-haired and slick-headed, dark bulging eyes in a slick, rather handsome, arrogant -- no, bumptious -- face, breaks in: "I just want to ask one question before anything starts. I just want to ask where you're from."[49]

There are approximately 200,000 Jews in the South of this study -- a number amounting to less than one percent of the total population.[50] As has been quite evident, they are mainly to be found in the middle and upper-middle class. Most are businessmen, many are professionals, others are engaged in various other white collar occupations, a few are planters. Just as it is helpful to ask "which South" when discussing the civil rights climate of any community below the Mason-Dixon line, it is likewise advisable to ask "which Jew" when discussing Southern Jewry, for there are, at least according to one researcher, two Southern Jewish societies.

Theodore Lowi, in a fascinating analysis of a Jewish community in a small town in Alabama, posits the existence of a dual Southern Jewish community.[51] His work in this town uncovered a major difference in outlook on many issues

between the group which he calls the "old Jews" and the one he names the "new Jews." The "old Jews" are those whose families "as long as they can remember" have been in the South. "New Jews" are those who have "but recently" come to the South from outside its geographic limits. "But recently," in this definition, could mean as far back as thirty years ago -- they are, in other words, first or second generation Southerners. This latter group of Jews has a larger number of relatives resident outside the South -- generally in New York and Chicago.

The "old Jew," according to Lowi, is much more acculturated to the "Southern Way of Life" than is his more-recently Southern coreligionist. This degree of acculturation is reflected, of course, in his outlook on the civil rights issue. In Lowi's words:

> On the question of segregation . . . . the old Jew most willingly shows his hierarchy of identifications, as Southerner first, Jew second, and "minority" or "ethnic group" last (if such a concession is made at all). Typically, the new Jew can be pushed to concede the inevitability of desegregation; the old Jew can only be pushed to anger. Not a man on either side would join or otherwise condone a White Citizens Council . . . . But an old Jew, regardless of age, will use the rhetoric of states' rights, of Plessy v. Ferguson, and, if pushed, of race superiority and biblical sanction. The new Jew will not . . . . The new Jew is distinguished by a concern with and an only poorly repressed sense of guilt about Negro problems.[52]

At the time of this study, there are still many Jewish communities with a very high proportion of "old Jews" -- my data does not permit me any certainty here, but I would

guess that they make up anywhere from twenty percent to sixty percent of various Southern Jewish communities -- with the average being closer to the lower figure. But numbers have a way of deceiving, for, even though they might be a minority, they represent the top-status group of most Southern Jewish enclaves. One rabbinic analyst mentioned them when he wrote:

> A large segment of the Jews in the South are segregationists. Almost all native-born southerners whose families have lived in the South for two or more generations have segregationist attitudes . . . . Some join White Citizens Councils, though . . . it is not known whether they join because of conviction or community pressure . . . . Though there are Jews who . . . are either integrationists or segregationists, most have ambivalent feelings about this issue.[53]

It has not been an easy thing, pinpointing how the Jews of the South feel "about this issue." One's decision could very well depend upon to whom you posed the question. So, let me summarize my responses, group by group, prior to venturing an opinion.

First is the response most typical of the rabbis interviewed, but shared also by various sociologists and students of the contemporary South. It claims the average Southern Jew to be, at least at heart, a desegregationist. In its strongest form, it is as follows:

> I would most respectfully submit . . . that the vast majority of our coreligionists in the South are neither voiceless nor supine. In cities, both large and small, they have taken the courageous (though frequently unpopular) stand. In many communities of which I am aware, our people have taken the lead -- in upholding the law of the land, in extending the rights they claim for themselves to their Negro fellow-citizens, in proclaiming the ethical and moral imperatives of Judaism . . . . Their rabbis

> have steadfastly and courageously led them in the Deuteronomic command: Tzedek, Tzedek, Tirdofe, which doesn't mince words when it says "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue."[54]

The idyllic picture that this statement paints lacks support from most of my sources. Even those who see the Jew as liberal on the subject of civil rights, modify their estimate of this liberalism. Thus, one rabbi said, "it is my sincere and honest belief that the great majority of Southern Jews recognize the rightness of the moral issue involved. With rare exceptions, no one has told me, or made known generally, that he accepts the philosophy of white supremacy and negro inferiority."[55] Most rabbis questioned felt their congregants to be definitely more liberal on this issue than comparable non-Jewish groups. They often had difficulty remembering any member who was a vocal segregationist, while they almost never placed more than ten to fifteen percent of their congregants in the class of those who sympathized with segregation. Then again, they could not point to more than ten to fifteen percent of their people as being vocal integrationists either -- the vast majority were, in these rabbis' estimation, quietly sympathetic to the Negro in his struggle.

Why "quitely"? One rabbi explained that

> The Jew in the South, despite his long residence in the area and the high place he has attained in communal life, remains insecure . . . . Though he believes he is an integral part of the community, he fears any challenge to his position . . . . Jews are . . . extremely sensitive to what non-Jews think about them. Thus, the vast majority,

> however doubtful they may be about the morality of segregation, will neither express integrationist sentiments nor identify themselves with an integrationist movement . . . . This fear should be not so much condemned as understood. It is not easy for an infinitesimal fraction of a community to rise up and protest against the deep-rooted and cherished ways of that community.[56]

Thus, it is as our survey of selected cities seemed to show: the Jew is quiet out of fear.[57] This fear is diffuse in nature, from one community to the next it tends to show a slightly different emphasis. In the larger cities, concern over economic sanctions is not too weighty a factor; rather, the Jew fears, above all else, social ostracism. In the smaller communities, where one is more readily identifiable and more narrowly dependent for a livelihood on the favor of dyed-in-the-wool segregationists, the economic factor is a major one. And, added to it is concern for social acceptance, fear of anti-Semitism, and worry about the actual physical well-being of oneself and one's family. The Southern Jewish community does not exist which is entirely free from at least one of these fears, and this, according to most rabbis, explains their people's silence.

Not all accept this logic. Some who disagree are the rabbis of small, Deep South communities, Rabbi "C," for example, of community "X," said that his people are "almost one hundred percent not different from other denominations" on this issue. Rabbi "D," of "W," put this even more strongly, when comparing his congregation with the non-Jewish community: "All are segregationists in preference and fact . . . . there would not be a difference because

they will do only what the preponderant Protestant groups voice -- regardless right or wrong." A statement typical of those who hold the first theory is one by a columnist for a Jewish newspaper, discussing his interview with the director of the Jewish community council in a Southern city: "He said that his membership would vote for integration on a secret ballot. But if required to make an open, public stand they would be 'embarrased' to be linked with the Negro."[58] Theodore Lowi was reacting to such reasoning when he wrote:

> . . . . it would . . . be easy to overdramatize the "dilemma of the Southern Jew." Practically all Jews in Iron City are publicly conservative, but easily a majority are privately conservative as well . . . . the manifest values of Jews . . . are homogenized under the pressure of Southern consensus on the most important political and social issue of all.[59]

In other words, the Jew's acculturation has been most thorough -- his public utterance does not differ from his private thoughts.

Somewhat to my surprise, this also appeared to be the viewpoint of the Negro civil rights activists. My informants here were Thomas Offenburger, public relations man for Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, one of Dr. King's "right-hand men," and Mr. Aaron Henry, president of the Mississippi N.A.A.C.P. and the man whom James Silver designates as "the most likely candidate in Mississippi for the next Medgar Evers treatment."[60] Mr. Offenburger's position, possibly because he is a public relations man, seems least typical:

> The response of Southern Jews to the [civil rights] movement certainly compares favorably with that of numerous other white groups. Jews have rendered outstanding service to the movement, both openly and behind the scenes. Negro communities in the South generally view Jews with respect and admiration, especially Negroes who have had direct contact with Jews working in the movement.[61]

The last sentence is crucial -- for a close evaluation of my total sources shows a glaring lack of Southern Jewish participants in the civil rights movement, notably in the Fifties, and especially in the Deep South.

Less laudatory is Rev. Shuttlesworth's response to the majority rabbinic "Jews are desegregationists at heart" hypothesis. In an interview with the writer he said:

> . . . I would disagree with the percentages [less than fifteen percent of Jewish congregants being segregationists]. Up till '64 . . . I think a majority of their congregants -- I'm talking about the Deep South now -- were real Southern. Not that the majority of their congregations would join a mob; but so far as being for the status quo, so far as voting against the interests of . . . something that would move the Negro forward -- the majority was negative . . . . The word "liberality" has been misinterpreted so very much. At one time, a "liberal" was a man who would make a good speech on Brotherhood, who would come to a rally . . . to an annual N.A.A.C.P. meeting . . . . I think that you might have had far less than ten percent who were on the [real] liberal side.
>
> I think the Jewish congregation . . . would be naturally more inclined to at least assent to rights, if not crusade for them . . . . The point we're talking about is crusading to the point where you can see people pushing for something now . . . . the Jewish people would have to be rated a little bit above the average . . . especially if the . . . Brotherhood angle is pushed more than any other.

Reverend Shuttlesworth went on to say:

> On the Jewish side, if I would have a negative strike against them -- he who controls the wealth really controls the economy -- and I think that the Jewish people could have done more, since they had control . . . . If the Jewish people actually were . . .

> actively committed to crusading and would apply their economic power to it, you would do it overnight. . . the real American white man [sic] . . . has kept the Negro from owning, but he doesn't own all of it -- while he was keeping the Negro down, the Jew has it . . . . This isn't to cast aspersion against the Jews . . . they'd buy the town up in reaction [to anti-Semitism]. . . this has been their gift, their prowess over the years, and consequently it has been their opportunity to move things forward.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze all the implications involved in such a view of Southern Jewry. Rather, I would share only the response of a White Protestant who is a one-time director of the Southern Regional Council:

> In terms of the larger cities, there could be considerable merit to what Shuttlesworth is saying, but in the smaller Deep South area, I don't think that the Jewish merchants and businessmen had that kind of "clout" in their communities -- they were much more vulnerable than that. I'm not sure they could have taken the lead in doing these things -- I'm not sure a non-Jewish merchant could have.[62]

In any case, the implications of Rev. Shuttlesworth's response are clear -- he sees the Southern Jew as being, at best, a potential ally who has yet to prove himself. Closer to reality, he views the Jew of the South as having been, more-often-than-not, "real Southern" on the issue of civil rights.

There is a note of deep disappointment in the words of Aaron Henry, when he arrives at much the same position:

> The image of the Jew in national civil rights activity has not rubbed off on the Jewish population of Mississippi. There is little difference if any between the Gentile White and the Jew in their treatment of the Negro. This was the greatest surprise of my Civil Rights career to find that "the Jews of Mississippi" were not with us, the Negro Community, in our quest for human rights. We have had to fight this battle pretty much alone

> . . . . you asked about Jews in the South and Rabbis particularly. Sorry, they are not with it.[63]

Fighting friend, frightened friend, or foe -- what are the Jews of the South? I am tenpted to say to the first group of analysts -- who see the Jews as friendly -- "you're right!", to the second group -- who see them as little different from the Gentile population -- you're right!", and to any analyst who takes a position midway between the extremes, "you're right, too!"; for such is the only answer which takes all the data into account. Certainly there are vocal and active desegregationists among Southern Jewry -- but their number is small. They would usually be members of the group which Lowi called "new Jews," as, for example the well-known Harry Golden. In addition, they are to be found, almost invariably, in other-than Deep South-type communities. There are vocal, card-carrying Jewish segregationists -- who are so not out of fear but out of conviction. More often than not, they will be "old Jews." They too are a definite minority -- amounting, most likely, to about a percentage equal to their liberal coreligionists. The vast majority of Southern Jews -- around seventy five percent of them -- are in the middle; somewhat ambivalent about the whole issue, but tending toward thoughts sympathetic to the Negro. Fear of repercussions keep their sympathies in the realm of the mind alone, and make them very difficult to live with if you happen to be on either "extreme." They would no sooner join the White Citizens Council than they would affiliate with the N.A.A.C.P. --

unless abnormal pressure is applied. Absolutely essential if they are to be understood is their minority status, as Morris Schappes pointed out:

> . . . Jews who live in the North and West . . . need to keep in mind . . . [that the] Jews of the South constitute seven-tenths of one percent of the total population of the South! . . . . We who think of ourselves as a minority when we are approximately one-quarter of the population of the city of New York, need perhaps to shift gears a bit when we think of the minority status of Jews in the Southern states.[64]

I thus find myself substantially in agreement with Alfred O. Hero's interpretation of where the Southern Jew stands with regard to the Negro civil rights movement:

> . . . the great majority of the Jewish interviewees, even in smaller communities in the Black Belt, ranged from mild segregationists to integrationists. The informants were more than twice as likely as the Southern Protestant white average in surveys to feel that desegregation is both inevitable and, in general, desirable in the long run, and only about one third as inclined as the latter to believe that Negroes are constitutionally inferior . . . . Only a handful of Jews were actually racist beyond the conformity apparently required for maintaining their businesses or professional careers in strongly segregationist communities. The majority of the small number of Jews on the rolls of Citizens Councils and other racist groups were by and large rather inactive and probably joined primarily to appease their segregationist neighbors, clients, and customers, to help keep these organizations "respectable," and to prevent development of anti-Semitism which many feared might be latent in such groups.[65]

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERN RABBIS AND CIVIL RIGHTS

A Dilemma

> Many rabbis and Reform congregations in the South have reacted to the trials and heart-rending conflicts of the struggle for human equality in their area with courage and with fortitude. They have spoken bravely their convictions and ours, and they have put into action their preachments and ours. Their words and deeds are precious to us, and we record our sense of pride in their strength of faith. In the face of threats and violence, they continue to adhere to the teachings of Judaism in word and deed. May God grant them vigor and continued courage.[66]
>
> . . . you asked about Jews in the South and Rabbis particularly. Sorry, they are not with it.[67]

If the reader is somewhat confused, he need not apologize. The opening words, a resolution passed by the Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1958, and the second quote, uttered by Aaron Henry, stand in glaring opposition to each other. Were the rabbis "activists," or were they "not with it"? Eventually, we will try to come to some opinion on this matter, but, if the opinion is to be more than pure guesswork, it behooves us to spend some time looking at what role individual rabbis have played in the civil rights movement throughout the South.

The Rabbi in the "Closed," Deep South Community

A majority of Southern rabbis would fall into the category of men holding pulpits in these usually small, deeply

"Southern" cities and towns. Their participation in civil rights activity has differed, on the whole, from cities where the liberal element is larger and more vocal. There have been one or two notable exceptions, and these will be touched on at a later point in this study, but they are highly atypical. Rather than discuss each rabbi by himself, it has appeared to the writer that another approach would be more informative, in the long run. Thus I have chosen to analyze the role these rabbis have played in their local Ministerial Associations and in other organizations, followed by an analysis of how effective they were in the various school desegregation crises, in making their views known within their own congregations, in spreading this knowledge to the general community, and in reacting to any special civil rights crises which their cities have experienced.

It seems to be the general rule that whenever the Protestant clergy in a given community took the initiative in organizing an integrated or, at least, "liberal" segregated Ministerial Association, the Reform rabbi made himself a part of their group. In the communities presently under discussion, however, this was a rare development. More often than not, the rabbi, if he were to take part in any such anti-status quo clerical organization, found it necessary to be in on the planning stages of its formation. Thus, one rabbi of a city of less than 500 Jews,[68] wrote that he was among those who had spoken out in favor of the establishment of a biracial clergy group. Another rabbi in a Deep South

city with less than 250 Jewish inhabitants,[69] felt his most significant contribution to the civil rights struggle was his creation of an integrated Ministerial Association in 1963. This organization now numbers ten White Protestants, fifteen Negro ministers, and two priests -- in addition to its Jewish founder. His analysis of its function and problems is contained in a letter returned in answer to the thesis questionnaire:

> It is, in my opinion, one of the most important areas of communication that we have in this community. We have had problems of finding meeting places. Our Temple was the first white church to offer its facilities. . . . This is the only specific action on my part which I can report.

Rabbi "G," when serving as president of the Ministerial Association of "T," a city with well over one thousand Jewish citizens, worked to have the group's constitution changed so that it would admit Negro clergy to membership. Though his efforts were successful, and the constitution was changed, the first non-White has yet to affiliate inasmuch as "no effort has been made to bring them in." This rabbi finally joined together with two ministers in forming, in 1961, a small integrated (in fact) clergy group, but the group's activity has been minimal. His evaluation of it tells the story: "I don't consider it a great accomplishment, frankly." The experience of this rabbi was not unique. For example, one of his colleagues in one of the larger Deep South communities,[70] attempted very early, in 1954, to organize an interdenominational ministerial

association which could be the "buffer group between the extremists." He was joined in the venture by three Protestant ministers, but to little avail. As the rabbi described it:

> When we were reasonably sure about one another, we dared voice what was "treason" (to the South) behind closed doors, and admittedly foolhardy and impractical from the pulpit. . . . But every . . . move for interfaith commitment to a solution of the "problem" was foredoomed, and not the least of the reasons [was] a very justifiable reluctance to be exposed to a peculiar brand of publicity which frankly is indescribable and incomprehensible to a reader of the New York Times. Some of our local columnists are second to none!

The unpopular alliance was not long-lived: it "collapsed with the advent of Little Rock, primarily because I felt I [had done]. . . all I could without being the leader."

Such it has been. Though the rabbi has appeared eager to join liberal Ministerial Associations, few exist in the Deep South communities. Some rabbis have worked to form them -- a very small number, so my sources would report -- and these almost invariably in concert with like-minded Christian clergy. But few have pushed too hard, or too prominently -- for it is extremely difficult to shape an organization when there are no potential members. In those cities where there are small liberal clergy groups, or where the large Ministerial Association contains a small number of liberals or moderates on the civil rights issue, the rabbis have occasionally been involved in statements of conscience or acts of conscience in the community. Thus, one rabbi,[71] in 1965, affixed his signature to nineteen

others (mostly belonging to Christian clergy) below a full page advertisement in one of the local newspapers. The declaration, captioned "LAW AND ORDER MUST PREVAIL," contained the following paragraph:

> WE AFFIRM that every man, whoever he is and whatever he is, is entitled to express his opinion within the framework of the law. We insist that there must be freedom and justice for all men, without regard to race, religion, or national origin.

In another city, which has more "open" elements than many places in the South, the rabbi,[72] upon hearing of a letter to the City Council appealing for the formation of a bi-racial committee, placed his signature alongside of those of the few Protestant ministers who had prepared the statement. A final example might be offered. In a very large community, with a population including over 4000 Jews, the Reform Jewish clergyman has been meeting with a group of six to eight White ministers since 1960 "out of frustration."[73] As he put it, he and one of the ministers initially drew up a list of names of "kindred spirits" and they began having lunch together "every few weeks or so," in order simply to talk and exchange ideas. This was done because of the generally conservative and hesitant approach to civil rights found in the community-wide Ministerial Association. However, on one occasion he was able to stir the larger group itself to limited action. It was the year of the Freedom Rides for his city, and the first group of these persons to reach the local bus depot were set upon and enthusiastically beaten up, while the city's police took their time about proceeding

to the scene. The rabbi was shocked at the whole incident, and he immediately expressed this shock to an Episcopal minister who was then president of the Ministerial Association. In the process, he asked for an emergency meeting of the group with the aim of issuing a strong statement "deploring and condemning the attack." The meeting was held and a statement was drawn up (in good part, by the rabbi) and issued.

A few instances of rabbinic participation in the issuance of "statements of conscience" have been noted. As we proceed, we will also observe that a number of rabbis participated, along with ministers, in additional acts aimed at reducing the defiance in their particular community. For the moment, however, we turn to a consideration of the rabbis' participation in non-clergy organizations.

Possibly the most important civil rights-oriented group operating throughout the South is the Southern Regional Council and its state and local Councils on Human Relations. This would definitely be true if we excluded the N.A.A.C.P., S.C.L.C., S.N.C.C., and other organizations whose aims and tactics include political activity and/or direct action. The S.R.C. is basically an educational group, with the limited goals of spreading moderate feeling through the South, giving moral support to the isolated nonconformists of Southern society, and keeping lines of communication open between the races. To my

knowledge, only four Southern rabbis have participated in the S.R.C. on a regional basis. Two of these have done so only in recent years.[74] The other two, Rabbis Charles Mantinband and Jacob Rothschild, will be discussed in a separate chapter. Of interest is that, of the four, only Rothschild serves an "open" community; though Rabbi "L"'s community has many moderate elements, Rabbi "H"'s and Rabbi Mantinband's communities are as defiant as any to be found in the South.

On the state and local level there is a better rabbinic representation. Rabbi "I" is a member of his community's Council on Human Relations; the same is true of other rabbis[75] representing communities in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. One of the men reported that he and a Protestant minister were the only two White members of the Council in his city, when he joined around 1956.[76] The minister subsequently lost his job. Undoubtedly, there are more Jewish clergymen connected with the state and local councils; one interviewee, a Protestant past director of the S.R.C., was of the opinion that every state organization, and most local ones, had at least one rabbi on their membership roles. This, in itself, is an act of some courage in these closed Deep South communities of which we speak. By way of example, I quote briefly from the Southern Review, a segregationist periodical distributed throughout the South:

> This journal reported in its November 15, 1964 issue on page eight, the activities of the communistsfront Mississippi Council on Human Relations. It also named a number of people . . . who attended its November meeting. . . . The following people . . . were also in attendance at the meeting in Galloway of the Interfaith Group:
>
> Mrs. S. W. Moore, Don Thompson, Power Hearn, Rabbi _____, Helen Rodriduez [sic], Mrs. Emmett J. Johnson, and Father Law.

In like manner, it is not unusual for the local newspaper to conclude its article on the recent Council on Human Relations meeting with "The following people attended the meeting. . . ."

Up to now, we have been speaking of specifically religious or civil rights oriented organizations. No one will be surprised to hear that these do not represent the "power" groups in the Southern community. If one wishes to rub shoulders with those who are part of the local power structure, he takes himself to the luncheon meeting of Rotary or the Lions Club, or is found among those who gather in the meeting place of the American Legion. These groups, in the Deep South, invariably represent the status quo or defiant position on the civil rights issue.

Some rabbis join these organizations because of the regard they have for them -- but this represents very few men. Many rabbis, rejecting the highly conservative coloration of such groups, prefer not to affiliate with them at all. I would guess, on the basis of my interviews,

that a sizeable number of men do affiliate, on the assumption that it is important to be friendly with the power structure of the community. Of these rabbis, many, perhaps even the majority, could think of thousands of ways they would prefer spending their time. One informant put it rather colorfully:

> I joined everything I could join when I first came. . . . Within six months I was active in the American Legion. . . . only for public relations purposes -- it used to turn my stomach to attend the American Legion meetings. I eventually became the State American Legion Chaplain. I eventually became the State Chaplain for the Shirne . . . public relations-wise it served a good purpose . . . and, secondly, those were the organizations and the people who were at the heart of all of the extremism that was going on -- and while they [militant segregationists] would look at me askance, because they would be hearing where I'd been. . . . they couldn't very well touch me, because I . . . have to my credit these super-patriotic affiliations and organizations. I played them . . . to the hilt.[77]

This rabbi was not alone; many of his Southern colleagues have used the service and patriotic clubs as means of becoming friendly with the top people in the general community and as means of establishing their own local position. During times of trouble, the rabbi might then be able to approach the newspaper editor, or school superintendent, and so on, on a first-name basis, in an attempt to influence action. In addition, many say that they try to work as a moderating influence upon the group itself, something which only attendance at meetings can accomplish.

I doubt, however, whether the majority of Deep South rabbis utilize participation in these groups for civil rights purposes -- even in a peripheral way. The more vocally liberal rabbis often reject these organizations as a hopeless waste of time; their more conservative colleagues might affiliate, but are often quite hesitant to express their true feelings within the meetings or without. Partially illustrative of this is an excerpt from a letter to Dr. Jacob Marcus, Director of the American Jewish Archives:

> I spoke at the _____ American Legion post's "Back-to-God" dinner meeting on February 19th [1957]. I had planned to speak directly and openly on integration as one aspect of "getting closer to God," but when I saw that my address was to be tape-recorded I decided to attack the subject by indirection and implication, using telling quotations from the Bible, permitting the audience to reach my conclusions by inference. . . . if they did.[78]

This rabbi had intended to broach the subject of civil rights, however. One of his colleagues would not have gone this far.[79] He told me that such tactics can do little good, for, "if you're argumentative about the situation, you're lost." Yet another rabbi, a man who has shown some level of involvement in the civil rights struggle, also avoids this topic in the service club meetings:

> I have not . . . chosen to address the Rotary Club or the Downtown "this-that-or-the-other" on a civil rights issue -- that would be a little too volatile to handle. But this hesitancy does not apply in preaching to my own congregation; in preaching from the pulpit all of these issues have been fully explored and discussed.[80]

Mention was made earlier of rabbinic participation in "acts of conscience" along with members of the Christian clergy. Often, this took the form of inclusion in "ad hoc" committees, necessitated by some local crisis of a civil rights nature. One rabbi thus played a role in his city's solution of the problems involved when the local playgrounds and libraries were desegregated.[81] Another, whose activity in the civil rights sphere appears to have been quite limited, counts his most effective work to have been on the Public Library Committee, where he labored behind the scenes toward the desegregation of the new library facility.[82]

When the rabbi became involved in activity aimed at implementing desegregation or at combatting the segregationist's philosophy and tactics, he did not always work in committees or groups. There were times when, at least for some men, the issue had to be faced without the partial anonymity provided by one group or another. Thus, when a Northern minister, the Reverend James Reeb, was brutally murdered in a small Southern community, the rabbi of that city,[83] on his own initiative, not only attended the N.A.A.C.P. sponsored memorial service in a Negro church, but also furnished the invocation. This did not go unnoticed by some in his congregation, who made their disapproval known. In an unfortunately similar situation, the rabbi of another community[84] approached the minister of a Negro church where, in 1963, a memorial service was to be held on behalf of three Negro youngsters who perished as a result of a

church bombing. He asked permission to attend the funeral "so that by our presence we could indicate to his people where our sympathies lay and also could indicate to the white population. . . ." The morning following the funeral, an extemperaneous Rosh Ha-Shana sermon preached by this rabbi proved sufficiently powerful to bring in approximately $5000 for the demolished church. Yet another man, Rabbi Perry Nussbaum, played a prominent role in raising money for churches leveled by the fanatics' bombs. The year was 1964, and his name and picture were prominently displayed throughout the South and the Nation, since he was one of four clergymen who created a "Committee of Concern" to collect $300,000 for "the destroyed churches" of his state.

The one issue which created the greatest furor in the Deep South, and which needed, above all else, the moderate's involvement, was school desegregation. City after city grappled, often violently, with the threat which little Negro children posed -- and the clergy was given a fine opportunity to influence the outcome. One rabbi, in as closed a Deep South city as could be imagined,[85] saw no need for action. The schools in his community were integrated, from top to bottom, according to his knowledge. "Anyone can get in," he told me. Some of his colleagues appeared more perceptive of what was happening in their respective communities. One of them, rabbi in a much larger city,[86] saw the handwriting on the wall in 1963. Faced with the possibility of a

shut-down public school system, he joined with a few others in founding a group called "ABLE" (Alabamians Behind Local Education). Rather than stress the desegregation aspect, ABLE tried to impress upon the community that the schools must be kept open, whatever the circumstances. The group and its members were, of course, eventually smeared as being under Communist influence, but, the rabbi informed me, "when school desegregation came that fall, our community was fairly well prepared for it." At least two other rabbis of Deep South communities engaged in similar activity aimed at preparing the populace to accept the Supreme Court's edict.[87] Of these, one played a quite prominent role, attending commission hearings, and participating in talks with the local Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools.[88] In all, however, my sources do not permit the assertion that most, or even many rabbis in these very difficult communities played a significant part in abetting or hastening implementation of the Supreme Court decision.

So far, we have been concerned with the rabbis' actions in the general community. Though we will soon continue along these lines, it would be of value to discover what the Jewish clergyman was doing within his own Jewish community, specifically, within his congregation. When it came to the espousing of civil rights causes, most rabbis in the small Deep South towns played a hesitant role,

if any, in the outside community. Within their congregations, however, it was a different matter. Though not all men have used the pulpit for a constant and unequivocating stand in favor of specific civil rights measures, the vast majority have let it be known to their own congregants that they favor change in the South's social system. There are, of course, exceptions.

One of these is a rabbi who has served two communities during his almost twenty years in the South. This man[89] informed the writer:

> I don't preach to my congregation what to do with regard to this. I have my own ideas on civil rights which I don't foist upon my own congregation. They know -- in private groups we discuss these matters. From the pulpit I very rarely discuss it, because I don't want to harm the Jewish community in any way, shape, or form.

Another rabbi interviewed, when asked how many of his congregants held pro-segregationist feelings, responded "I wouldn't know, because the question has not been discussed."[90] However, he did advise the writer that he sometimes speaks on civil rights matters from the pulpit. But this he followed with an explanation which all but negated the purpose of these sermons:

> The question's always been how you talk; whether you deliver an agitating speech or discuss . . . problems. If you discuss problems, you can discuss any problem. But, if you are going to take sides and agitate, you accomplish nothing, except the hostility of the people. So I have always, in my discussions with individuals and within groups, just plainly discussed the problems and how to solve them. [underscoring added]

It is difficult to comprehend how a man can be a force for change if he restrains himself from taking sides on an issue so heavily loaded with ethical overtones. Another example of the rabbi who did not speak is provided by a letter to Dr. Jacob Marcus from a since-deceased colleague.[91] The letter is dated March, 1957:

> In answer to your inquiry on the subject of desegregation, I wish to say I have made no public promouncements on this subject either from my pulpit or in the columns of our daily press. Since you, yourself, say you appreciate the problems involved, I know you will understand why I have felt it impossible to discuss this very pressing problem.

There is yet one more rabbi who should be considered here. He is unique among his colleagues in that, according to my informants, he has spoken, but in favor of segregation. James Silver mentioned him briefly in Mississippi: The Closed Society:

> With a few clergymen in modest rebellion against the status quo, the Citizens Council eagerly grasped to its bosom a strange new reinforcement in the person of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz. Not long after his arrival from New York, the Clarksdale [Mississippi] rabbi laid down the "principles" which could save America:
>
> > ". . . if Mississippi had prevailed, pro-Communists would be off American college faculties. . . . 'red-baiter' would not be a dirty word. Traditional patriotism would sweep the land to strengthen our people inwardly, and insure victory in the international crisis. As it is, America is losing, mostly because of decay among its own intellectuals."

> Such a statement did nothing to prevent Mr. Schultz from being elected in 1964 as president of the Coahoma Ministerial Association.[92]

Rabbi Schultz finds no support for his views among his Southern colleagues. Though some men do not speak on civil rights, to my knowledge, no other man is even peripherally associated with the segregationist position in the eyes of his colleagues or congregants.

It is to be remembered that, to my knowledge, definitely Schultz, and the aforementioned men also do not represent the majority of rabbis in the Deep South. I have testimony from a number of rabbis that they have preached specifically on civil rights topics, and undoubtedly there has been many a sermon delivered on this issue which has not come to my attention.[93] It should be pointed out, however, that often these sermons have been quite mild in tone. Thus one man, in a large Deep South city, sermonized (in November, 1955) against the White Citizens Councils and for school integration with thoughts similar to those reflected in this excerpt:[94]

> There are other and better courses open. As no good will come from calling names or using measures of force, much good can come from the realization that most of us on both sides are decent people and that if we sat down together in good will, we could work out a course of action that might be acceptable to all. . . . I believe that such a procedure would produce this situation: that the overwhelming majority of colored children, at least ninety or ninety-five percent, would remain right where they are. From previous experience, it seems that they definitely prefer it this way. . . .

Another rabbi informed the writer that he rarely devoted an entire sermon to civil rights subjects.[95] One of his sermons, which is in the files of the American Jewish Archives, is a rather strong reply to a segregationist editorial, but even this message is less an attack on segregation than it is an attack on an irresponsible press. In any case, it is still quite obvious where the preacher stands on the greater issue involved:

> The Negro has sweated in America. How much more must he sweat before his sweat washes away the color? . . . "Real Freedom," our writer concludes, means the right to prove your worth. Does the Negro in fact have that right, Mr. Editor?

And this man's position became even clearer one Friday evening, when he read the Union of American Hebrew Congregations "Call to Racial Justice" from his pulpit.

Within the majority of rabbis who have made their views known to their congregants, there is a percentage, I think considerably less than one-half of the total, which has spoken forcefully and directly to the issue. Thus, it might be remembered that the man quoted above (p. 58), though hesitant to discuss civil rights in the outside community, went on to say "This hesitancy does not apply in preaching to my own congregation; in preaching from the pulpit all of these issues have been fully explored and discussed."[96] Even stronger are some of his colleagues' statements: "I have always been very blunt about outlining the religious imperative that lies behind the civil rights movement,"[97] or "I am not watering down my sermons."[98]

These latter two gentlemen represent two of the most evident "civil rights rabbis" in the Deep South since 1954,-- for, in addition to speaking within their congregations on many more than one occasion, and in no uncertain terms, they have sought other ways to reach and influence their people. Thus, the first of the two located in a community near an Army base, has helped accustom his people to having Negroes in attendance at his services. In addition, he has attempted to achieve his goals with regard to civil rights progress through persuading his congregants on an individual basis and in group sessions to play an active role in the struggle. In his eyes, his efforts have not gone unrewarded; he feels that many in his 250 family congregation have been "leaders in much of the desegregation movement," because "they have been sensitized by the preachments from the pulpit and by the actions of their rabbi." And the actions of their rabbi have, indeed, set an example for his people: he has been in both the regional and state branches of the Southern Regional Council, has played a role in the somewhat successful desegregation of the city's schools, playgrounds, libraries and theatres, and has become a spokesman for desegregation in the general community. But, it should be noted that there are factors in his community which have made it a more favored city as Deep South cities go, with the Army base playing the major part in moderating segregationist opinion.

The second rabbi[99] lacks this partially favorable climate for liberal thoughts and actions, yet he also has distinguished himself in the civil rights struggle. Due to his importance, his story will be told in some detail at the end of this chapter, and in considerable detail in Part Two. For the moment however, let it be noted that, along with playing an increasingly more apparent role in civil rights-oriented organizations and programs outside the congregation (for example, the Southern Regional Council, the Freedom Rider incident, the Council on Human Relations), he has also worked, in pulpit and out, to inform his congregants and to involve them in the "movement." Thus, in 1958, in response to the rash of synagogue bombings, he sent out a bulletin message in which he wrote:

> The good people of the south . . . will continue to give encouragement to the dynamiters so long as they refuse to challenge the "thought control" in the atmosphere about us. Let them through the press, through schools and churches, through all their organizational news media, once and for all embark on a crusade to preserve morality, decency, fair play, regardless of color, race, prior nationality, or that ingrained stereotype which is called the North and the East. . . . the best way to come out from behind this iron curtain of fear, is for the leaders of the"good people" to reestablish lines of communication, in spite of color, in spite of religious affiliations -- and to talk openly now about all our problems.
>
> In the meantime, let Jews remain strong in their religious convictions. We believe that no man was born to be another man's subordinate. . . . every man is a child of God.

A courageous statement, indeed, to put into writing in a community of this nature. And more. This rabbi, living in an area of the South much frequented in recent years by Northern civil rights workers, managed to prepare his congregation to receive politely, if not enthusiastically, the Jews among these "carpetbaggers." Not a one who came to the synagogue was refused permission to participate as one of the congregation, and, those who did not go out of their way to be obnoxious (like the man who loudly clipped his nails throughout the service) were generally offered home hospitality. The rabbi explained some of this to the interviewer:

> I had a list of about maybe a dozen families who were prepared to give some of these Jewish workers coming into the city . . . meals and that sort of business. . . . As it became . . . a little safer to be active in these things. . . . so that, by now, I have a nice element of civil rights workers, in fact . . . I think some of them have gone too far. . . . I've got one of my younger men . . . who's now a member of our Social Justice Commission . . . I think he's the only Jew in the Deep South who's a member of our Social Justice Commission . . . you may not appreciate this, but just using that word down in [my state] . . . was "tawmay" [taboo] .

That the rabbi actually did do these things is attested by many outside sources, including articles by these very Northern visitors printed in various national Jewish periodicals, and letters addressed to him similar to the following, on file in the Archives:

> I received a letter the other day from Sam S_____ in which he told me how helpful you had been to the men who came down to

> _____ this past summer. He also told me that your congregation had been very hospitable in its reception. On behalf of the [Central] Conference [of American Rabbis], I want you to know how deeply appreciative we are. . . .

Or this one, from another Northern colleague:

> . . . may I relay to you a message given to me by [Rabbi] Michael Robinson of Croton-on-Hudson. Mike went down to _____ with the Fellowship of Reconciliation Group in August. He said that you had really prepared your group for the arrival of the ministers and Rabbi and that they were very pleased with their reception.

If it is true that the majority of Deep South rabbis were hesitant to speak boldly and in specific terms within their own congregations, it follows that an even greater number have failed to do so in the community at-large. We have already touched upon involvement with other clergy and in service clubs, from the viewpoint of civil rights activity. I would like now to round out our analysis of the role of the Deep South rabbi, by examining his participation, or lack of same, in other aspects of the general community.

One interviewee, when asked if he had ever felt the need to become involved in the civil rights struggle outside the confines of the synagogue, responded:[100]

> Yes, but it would have been limited to twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours later I wouldn't be there in the state anymore. . . . The majority of the people of the city have been vehemently opposed to integration . . .

> including a great number of the Jewish community. . . . the Jewish community could not exist, could not exist, if they had been in any way involved in the civil rights movement.

This rabbi, the one who had earlier described his sermons as ones in which he did not "take sides," admitted to speaking to some civic clubs with an occasional reference to "general community problems." He felt able to do so because

> . . . they consider the rabbi a liberal who is supposed to be somehow on the other side of the picture. They would be surprised if he was on their side. And he's a kind of an animal who has a right to go his own way. There was no hostile response as long as there was no active participation [by the rabbi or as long as] . . . . he did not "agitate."

Lest we too quickly stand in judgment, let it be remembered that this rabbi lives in the heart of the Deep South. Alfred Hero discusses another man's response to a similar predicament:

> A rabbi who had retired because of illness to Antebellum Town and who read widely and was generally cosmopolitan remarked that he had tended to voice disagreement with views expressed in face-to-face conversations when he first returned there. However . . . he had given up trying to change people's thinking. When someone next to him at a . . . meeting expressed irresponsible . . . views, by 1961 he either let him "rave on" or changed the subject.[101]

This response has not been uncommon amongst the Deep South rabbinate, as we will point out a little further on. Yet, it is far from the only solution evident.

A rabbi, invited to speak to a local church on "any subject except the 'niggers'," responded to the invitation: "While I had not intended to speak on 'The Negro,' now, the issue is such that I will speak only on 'The Negro' or I am not coming to [your] . . . church."[102] This was one speaking engagement this man did not have to fill. Another man however, accepted an invitation to speak to Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, on "The Anguish of the South."[103] Carefully choosing his words, he introduced his talk as follows:

> After having announced the subject and thus, so to speak, having reached the point of no return, I found myself wondering if I could do justice to it. The problem is so far-reaching. . . . it is so involved that I wished for more time for background preparation and reflection. But there is a time to say something. . . . The social crisis in which we in this part of the South are caught up is moving rapidly toward some sort of climax that bodes ill for the happiness and welfare of its people. The voices of intolerance and of violence are loud in the land. . . .

It is difficult to see why such a carefully thought-out introduction was necessary -- in view of the fact that what followed was a rather general analysis of Southern character and Southern history, based, apparently, in great part upon Wilbur Cash's Mind of the South. The rabbi himself admits as much when he continues: "It is not my intention this morning to discuss the merits of the case for either side of the issue. I do not believe that I need to."

Less hesitant to speak to specifics was one of the rabbinic leaders in a state which was early up in arms over the school desegregation issue. Rabbi Ira Sanders appeared in 1957, before an open hearing of the Arkansas Senate to testify in opposition to four pro-segregation bills. He began by recounting his long connection with and love for Arkansas. He then continued:

> Above my love for Arkansas comes my devotion to America. . . . I regard the Supreme Court as the final democratic authority of the land . . . . Once they pass on the constitutionality of the law it should become operative as the law of the land. Higher than the legal law, however, stands the moral law. . . . WhenJesus died on the cross He repeated those immortal words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Legislators! May future generations reading the statute books of [the] laws [of our state] not be compelled to say these words of you. . . . defeat, I pray you, in toto, these four measures.

Rabbi Sanders' voice was one of the few sane sounds to be heard in Arkansas during the black year of 1957, and it took no little courage to stand up and be counted in so open a manner.

Two years earlier another man became involved in a situation which, unexpectedly, forced him to make a civil rights stand in his community.[104] This rabbi was asked by the Jewish Chautauqua Society to take part in a Religious Emphasis program at the University of Mississippi. In addition to the Jewish clergyman, an Episcopal minister, a Catholic priest, three other Protestant ministers, and

a layman were invited to participate. About two weeks before the program a crisis developed. The Episcopal minister had won a large sum of money on the then popular $64,000 Question television show, and he, of all things, had loudly proclaimed, coast-to-coast, that he was donating a percentage of it to, you should pardon the expression, the N.A.A.C.P. The dam broke in the Mississippi Legislature. Epithet followed epithet, the phone rang, and the University's Chancellor was ordered to cancel the Episcopal minister's invitation. This having been done, the rabbi began to give second thoughts to participating in the University program. He placed a call to Mr. Albert Vorspan, Director of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, and, through him contacted the national office of Chautauqua, telling them he could no longer accept the invitation. He then placed calls to the six other participants, asking them to join him in rejecting the University's request that they take part in their Religious Emphasis program. All save the layman agreed. A complicated exchange now began to take place between the rabbi and the Commission on Social Action. The latter office wished the rabbi to make a public, dramatic, unilateral rejection of the school's invitation. The rabbi refused, wishing only to draw up a tri-faith statement in support of academic freedom, signed by the five clergymen and himself, which would then be sent privately to the Chancellor, a longtime friend of the rabbi's.

Eventually it turned out that, in direct opposition to the desires of the national body, the rabbi sent an individual telegram to the Chancellor. The next day the local newspaper headlines screamed out, "Rabbi Refuses to Speak at University," and a months long period of telephone harassment began for the rabbi and his family. It was even necessary for the F.B.I. and the local police to place his house under surveillance for a two to three month period. In this whole incident the rabbi played the central role in opposing an act demanded by "the Southern Way of Life," and this act of opposition placed him, at least for the moment, into the public eye as an opponent of the caste system of the South.

While discussing the University of Mississippi, the activity of another Jewish clergyman, in this case a student-rabbi on assignment from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, comes to mind.[105] This experience, which he relates, took place in October, 1962:

> I was staying at the home of _____ of _____, His son, _____, is editor of the newspaper at the University of Alabama which, the day before "Oxford," came out for [James] Meredith's admission into Ole Miss. Tuesday, the White Citizen's Council passed out leaflets with that editorial to customers of Mr. _____ and "requested" that they no longer patronize his printing establishment. Mr. _____ found out. . . . Being the rabbi and staying at their home, I was drawn into the situation. The _____s, on the verge of hysteria and a breakdown, came to me for help. Having written a history of the Citizens' Councils, I felt I knew something about it and its economic

> sanctions. We planned an attack. Mr. _____. . . . requested a hearing before the purchasing board of the county (by far his largest customer and mainstay). . . . he built up his past and his inability to have stopped the editorial. . . . A week later, most of his customers had returned to him, and though he will easily survive, his business has been badly damaged.

When it came time for the University of Alabama itself to meet its "integration crisis," a rabbi also played a behind-the-scenes role in that incident. The young man, relatively new to his congregation,[106] had no wish to see a replay of Oxford, Mississippi, complete with its riots, so, on the very day of the rioting in Oxford, this rabbi approached the outstanding civic leader in his Jewish community. Through his offices, a social evening was arranged which brought together the town's two bank presidents, the head of an insurance company, the rabbi and his above-mentioned coreligionist. The point was made by the latter two men that racial disturbances of the nature Oxford was seeing at the present, had been responsible for considerable economic loss to Little Rock in 1957. The proper bell, having been rung, the other three men took over. At least partially as a result of their applying pressure in the appropriate places (including the Governor's mansion), the University of Alabama met its crisis peacefully.

One rabbi, though his community-wide role in the civil rights struggle appears to have been a minimal one, informed the writer that he played a very significant part on a state-wide basis.[107] In his own words:

> . . . going back to "massive resistance," it happens that I'm a very close personal friend of Governor Almond [of Virginia] and I talked to him on this question. . . . I was probably responsible for convincing him to break with [Senator] Byrd and with "massive resistance" . . . about 1960. . . .

This potpourri of incidents provides, I hope, some insight into what many of the Deep South rabbis have been doing in the area of civil rights. Prior to concluding this section, in order to help concretize the subject, it might be beneficial to take a less "shotgun" look at but three of the men sporadically touched on above. In addition, I refer the reader to the chart on rabbinic involvement to be found in the Appendix to Part One.

Rabbi "N" is the spiritual leader of a semi-Deep South community which he has served for the past eight years. Prior to this, he spent ten years in an even more "closed" city, to the east of his present home. Both of these communities have Jewish enclaves of about 500 souls, and both can trace Jewish settlement back to pre-Civil War times. The rabbis present community is more amenable (though certainly not friendly) to civil rights activity than his former city. Nevertheless, his participation in such activity has been quite minimal.

Asked about the response to civil rights on the part of ministers in his community, his reply was "most of [them] . . . wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole. . . . They didn't speak about the moral problem at all." Yet,

in 1965, the Ministerial Association in his present city voted to integrate, while the rabbi admitted to playing no major role in this event.

The rabbi's congregants in both cities have been and are mainly merchants, with the majority of the remainder being professional people. In his first pulpit, he felt the greatest percentage of them to be fully acculturated to the "Southern Way of Life," including their views on Negro civil rights. Thus, the rabbi refrained from any activity which would "create ill will" or potentially "harm the Jewish community in any way, shape, or form." When discussing his present pulpit, he informed the writer that he has served on the local Board of Economic Opportunity and participated in a small group which worked to prepare the community for school desegregation. Other than these two things, he could recall no additional involvements which could be even nominally considered civil rights activities. With regard to speaking in his congregation and community, this is the rabbi who refused to be "argumentative about the situation" or to "foist" his own ideas upon his people.

It might be instructive to note exactly what some of his ideas are. Asked whether or not Freedom Riders had ever entered his community, he replied:

> No, thank goodness. . . . I don't think it accomplishes much. . . . I've lived in the South for twenty years now . . . I feel that the people there are going to have to solve their own problem, and they're solving it, even if they had to be prodded through legislation . . . they're still doing it, nonetheless, and to add salt to the wounds is not helping the situation one bit.

The writer then inquired as to what, specifically, were his goals for the entire civil rights movement.

> I don't know, I've never really thought about the question, to tell you the truth. I would like to see, of course, the Negro to have fair treatment, in all respects, but I think . . . he's going to have to earn it to a certain degree himself. We're going to have to help him. . . . this is not going to happen overnight, even with legislation, because you can't legislate sociology . . . and the background of the Negro is such that he is going to have to prove himself -- through education, through his own morals (which he will do, but it's going to take time) -- and I think that rushing these things through with Freedom Marches and all kinds of picketing and strikes -- this is not going to do it -- it's only going to create ill will.

Rabbi "J" serves one of the larger cities of the Deep South. Though the city is of considerable size, it retains the "closed mind" typical of smaller hamlets when dealing with the issue of civil rights. This rabbi has been with his congregation throughout the period under discussion in our paper, and even earlier. I have found him to be somewhat of an enigma as to his stance on the topics under study in this thesis. Some interviewees adamantly proclaimed him to be not only hesitant to speak <u>for</u> civil rights, but an actual opponent of desegregation. On the other hand, he personally recounted to me numerous involvements which support the opposite position. I tend to feel that an objective analysis would place him somewhere in between the two extremes, possibly a little closer to the non-activist side.

From our quite lengthy discussion, and from other testimony, the writer would suggest that this rabbi has not used the pulpit or lectern, save for rare occasions or brief references, to do battle on behalf of the civil rights movement. The reason for this is inherent in one of the statements which he made during the interview:

> I am not prepared to tell a man that he should commit economic suicide. This is very well at the [Central] Conference [of American Rabbis] for somebody that lives in New York, or Detroit, or in Oshkosh to say that Mr. Ginzburg . . . should employ five Negroes . . . or one Negro, no matter what the cost. . . . I'm not prepared to tell that man that he become bankrupt. And I feel very strongly on this issue because my colleagues who have shouted the loudest have not been willing to take Southern pulpits -- period. And the main reason . . . is economic . . . . They like their 15 and 20,000 dollar pulpits. . . . If you are truly sincere about your prophetic Judaism, then you would not hesitate to give up a plush pulpit in the East and take a pulpit in Gadsden, Alabama for $9000 a year . . . this is what a prophet does. But he has no right to tell somebody else to commit economic suicide unless he's willing to make a sacrifice himself.

This rabbi has shown an occasional willingness to make such sacrifices. As the reader might recall, Rabbi "J" did seek out and join with a few liberal Protestant ministers back in 1960, in an effort to keep discussion alive on his community's racial problems. In addition, he was instrumental in creating a statement eventually issued by the Ministerial Association condemning an attack on Freedom Riders which took place in his city. This rabbi is likewise the one (discussed at length above, p.72 ff),

who refused to participate in a program at the University of Mississippi, when one minister's invitation was withdrawn after the minister had contributed to the N.A.A.C.P.. In order to tell more of the story, there are other incidents which should be mentioned.

One occurred less than three years ago. As his state's annual fair was drawing to a close, the information reached the rabbi's desk that the Ku Klux Klan was disseminating their spurious literature at a booth set up on the fairgrounds. That week, at a meeting of the local chapter of the Conference of Christians and Jews, this rabbi strongly denounced the Klan and the officials who had allowed it to be so blatantly a part of the State Fair. His speech received wide newspaper coverage, and the next day, the rabbi was served a court notice. The late Matt Murphy, then lawyer for the Klan, had initiated a suit asking $1,000,000 damages on behalf of his client, Klan-head Robert Shelton. Though the rabbi is inclined to laugh the whole incident off, the suit is still pending in the courts.

I have already mentioned Rabbi "J"'s reaction to the church bombing which took the lives of three Negro children;[108] this was a time when he actively involved his congregation in taking a stand (minimal though it was) on a potentially dangerous issue. The rabbi informed me of other occasions when his congregation was directly involved in what might be considered "liberal" acts. One of these is an on-going

program. A few years back the rabbi conducted an Institute on Judaism for all the Christian ministers of his city. The biracial audience which resulted marked the first time Negroes had been officially invited to enter his synagogue. This is not to say that it was the first integrated gathering in the temple building; individual Negroes had come to services in previous years on special occasions, like weddings or Bar Mitzvahs. And when they did come, they, at the insistence of the rabbi, could sit wherever they wished to sit. Thus, his congregation was somewhat prepared for the wave of "pray-ins" which swept the community in recent years. During a period when these were quite in vogue, the rabbi would instruct his ushers prior to each service that, if any Negroes came, they were not only to be admitted, but they were to be asked which seats they wished to occupy, "so that they couldn't complain." The rabbi summed up his own feelings about the entire matter:

> During the kneel-ins and the pray-ins, and all this sort of stuff, I felt this way about it: that anybody that came to my temple to pray and to worship was welcome, but anybody that came to my temple to use it as a fulcrum for political action or something, could come, but very frankly I would not feel happy about it.

At the core of this rabbi's approach to the civil rights movement has been his antipathy toward agitation and anything but quiet, behind-the-scenes maneuvering. Part of his philosophy is contained in the following statement, made to the interviewer:

> I am not an organization man for a lot of reasons. I do not belong to N.A.A.C.P., never have, and I have no intention of doing so. I have never belonged to C.O.R.E., certainly not to S.N.C.C.. I do whatever I do in accordance with the dictates of my conscience, with no desire for publicity and to try to be as effective as I can. I feel that when I sit down with a group of ministers, or with a group of businessmen, that I could be much more effective than getting up and waving a flag . . . precisely because I represent less than one percent of the total population of the city . . . this makes a tremendous difference.

When discussing his Northern colleagues who took part in Freedom Rides or marches, the rabbi said:

> In any community, the Jews and the rabbi and the Jewish leadership cannot travel faster than the rest of the population. . . . we have to live with these people day-in and day-out. A Freedom Rider comes down, and a marcher, and a demonstrator . . . and I don't know what he accomplishes, very frankly, except he goes back and he's a hero -- and he doesn't have to live with these people. But we do, and our people have got to live with them . . . the only way we can be effective is to work <u>with</u> the Christians who are willing to be active in any given program -- and certainly in the field of civil rights. And unless you have this and unless you have a press, you can't get very far.

Most telling of all the rabbi's statements, however, is this very brief one:

> Very frankly, this is my point of view . . . all our facilities should be desegregated, but I don't believe that integregation should be forced on anyone . . . I don't think there <u>has</u> to be a racially balanced neighborhood.

Rabbi "J" is not happy with the progress of the civil rights movement to date. Though he appears broadly in sympathy with its ultimate goals, he is decidedly out of sympathy with many of its tactics. For example, one of his

comments on the demonstrations in his city, which attracted national attention a few years back, is:

> The whole story was not told. The Negroes were never depicted on the television . . . taunting the whites . . . . The police were criticized for police brutality -- this is an unfair and untrue statement. I admired their restraint.

He further explained his position:

> We must abide by the laws of the land. . . . or we shall have anarchy. We don't like all the laws that are passed . . . but we obey them . . . . The same thing goes as far as desegregating the schools, the eating places . . . this is the law. But, whatever goes for the general population, the White population, must go for the Negro population too -- they also must obey the law. . . . there has to be not only civil rights, there has to be civil responsibilities. And I don't think that two wrongs make a right . . . our Scripture says there should be one law for the homeborn and for the stranger. I think it should be . . . whether they're White or whether they're Black. . . . I object to provocation to violence all the while prating that this is a non-violent movement. . . .

This approach to the civil rights movement took on adding meaning when, during the period of demonstrations, the Negro civil rights leadership determined to make an example of the rabbi's city. In the Jewish clergyman's sight, the strategy was ill-advised. The city had for years been saddled with the most reactionary government possible; under the pressure of Negro demonstrations the old government had been voted out, a new, reportedly more moderate one, was just coming in. Yet Martin Luther King refused to halt the demonstrations. The new mayor appointed the

rabbi to a biracial Community Relations Council, consisting of sixteen Whites and fourteen Negroes. The segregationists attacked the committee as a surrender to King's tactics; the Negroes attacked it as a stalling device stocked with "Uncle Tom's." Meanwhile, the rabbi, feeling that the committee could be of some value if all the pressures were removed, grew increasingly impatient with the men who insisted on keeping the city in a constant state of turmoil:

> We pleaded for an opportunity for this new city government to be able to do something. It never got the chance. . . . This is why Martin Luther King doesn't find great favor [in my sight], because we felt that he just didn't care, he didn't want to give us a chance.

Yet another incident reinforced this position. During these demonstrations, the Negro leadership chose, as its first target for mass picketing, a department store belonging to a member of the rabbi's congregation. This was greatly resented by the rabbi for, among other things, this merchant had been the most moderate in his views on segregation of all the businessmen on Main Street. In a meeting involving Dr. King, the Reverend Shuttlesworth, and others, the rabbi vehemently opposed King's actions. Speaking of his congregants, he said:

> They're caught in a vise between the Negroes and the Whites -- they couldn't win for losing. I pointed this out to Martin Luther King, incidentally, in a meeting that was held between fifteen White ministers, and him and six of his associates. . . . he kept referring to the "merchants" . . . and I told him that in the city of _____, when you talked about "merchants"

> you might just as well use the word "Jew" -- and that there was certainly implied anti-Semitism here. . . .

The Negro leadership took a dim view of the rabbi's comments, and the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, one of those who had been present at the meeting, went so far as to tell me:

> The other meeting that we had, and I'm speaking frankly, sometimes these are not very bright pictures -- with the clergy was in 19__ -- during the demonstration . . . a week or two before the climax of it. . . . they met with us, and they had a Jewish rabbi, among whose membership was . . . most of the big chain stores against whom we were demonstrating -- so that the Jewish rabbi was there. . . . In influence, I guess for the status quo, he ranked a hundred, but so far as crusading for progress and civil rights, this meeting convinced me that in many situations the clergy is a cause of many people not really moving out for brotherhood. . . . Our conversation went something like this: "Well, the way I heard, my people tells me that they thought we were getting along all right . . . before the demonstrations. We thought that we had elected a progressive city government, and now you're demonstrating and didn't give them a chance." They never spoke about the years of frustration. . . . Now, of course, after the demonstrations, and when the . . . church was bombed . . . they did speak out and they did help raise some money -- but I think this was acts of conscience . . . there was no crusading clergyman, if you can get the point that I'm saying.

The correspondence between what the rabbi says of himself, and what the Reverend Shuttlesworth says of him in retrospect, is sufficient to give credence to the belief that this clergyman has not been a "crusader" of the kind that the Negro activists would point to with favor. He has been too hesitant to identify himself totally with the Negro's

struggle, partially because he seems temperamentally unable to identify with it fully. He has been constantly in favor of the slow, unspectacular transition from segregation to desegregation (but not necessarily to integration). He has been resolutely opposed to agitation, on either side:

> I am opposed to demonstrations. . . . I don't think that the American mind is capable of dreaming up these things, just like these student revolts and so on -- they are following a pattern, and it's a pattern that was imported to this country -- and I'm very dubious and skeptical as to who's pulling the strings.

It is no wonder then, that no matter his occasionally liberal involvements in the struggle, many observers do not view this rabbi as anything more than a lukewarm friend of the Negro, at best. And how does he see himself?

> I don't consider mine a significant role -- I've only done from time to time the things which my conscience called upon me to do. And, with a perfect willingness to accept whatever risk was involved . . . when your life's threatened, when your family and you are harassed . . . you take a dim view of these people that tell you what to do a thousand miles from where you live. And you know what you can do and what you can't do. . . There are times when it is not heroic to go forward. If you are standing at the edge of a precipice, is it heroic to keep on marching forward, or does it make more sense to take a step back? . . . This is realism. . . . I feel that in my quiet way I have helped, and I've also felt that in my quiet way I've been a catalyst among certain people who were in a position to do something that I was not in a position to do. And the interesting thing is that I have the feeling that my colleagues feel that I have done very little, because they marched to St. Augustine. . . .

Our third rabbi, Rabbi "H," is also the object of some controversy as to how deeply he has been involved in civil rights activities. Some of my informants felt him to be of little or no importance; others placed him among the three or four most praise-worthy men serving Deep South communities. I definitely incline toward the latter view.

Rabbi "H" serves a long-established Jewish community numbering about 150 families. They evidence all the signs of hesitancy and fear common to Deep South Jewry, and it has been the rabbi's task to work within this context. When he first arrived in his community, he saw the dangers of "becoming involved." In his words:

> . . . the rabbi of the Jewish congregation . . . was, and in many respects, still is, a lone wolf in his operations. . . . In 1954 . . . there were two or three Protestant ministers . . . who could be considered, by a stretch of the imagination, as liberal theologically . . . . As the situation worsened, and everybody got scared . . . and there were threats against any minister who even dared hint that segregation was "unChristian" . . . the rabbi definitely became a lone wolf, and the rabbi today is very much a lone wolf because I am the last of the clergymen who was in _____ in 1954. I'm not counting the . . . Baptists, because their attitude towards this so-called civil rights program is that it doesn't exist. . . . Anything that I have done, I did on my own, and, in the process, I've created a lot of enemies. I've been the gadfly, and there was a time when people were afraid even to be associated with me, because they knew what I stood for, they knew what I was saying, and it was dangerous.

This danger, as he saw it, played a major role in moderating the involvement which Rabbi "H" permitted himself:

> I was not going to do what the Christian power structure was not going to do. My own philosophy was that I would not be a leader. I'd be glad to be a vice-president, but not a president. I'd go along . . . I was content to be a gad-fly, trying to get some of the Christian leadership to do a few things. But overt influencing? No, I wouldn't do it, because I'd be doing it as a lone wolf -- no support. I used to beg the Catholic . . . Bishop, the Episcopal Bishop, the Methodist Bishop . . . let the three or four of us say something: we'll put things in the paper, we'll go to the mayor . . . we'll do this and do that -- but as long as those boys found excuses not to go, I was not going to go by myself.

The rabbi's acts tend to refute his words. In his very first year in the city, he set about to organize an inter-faith ministerial association which could be "the buffer group between the extremists," but, after three years of being "a gadfly," he saw it was a losing proposition. Any minister who showed signs of liberalism was dismissed post-haste from his pulpit. In the early months of 1963, twenty-eight ministers in the state published a statement asking for no more than "freedom of the pulpit." By June, not one remained. In the rabbi's words, "communication among the clergy is back to the level of casual greetings in hospital corridors."

Realizing the futility of his efforts within the Ministerial Association, the rabbi turned to participation in the prestige civic groups in order to solidify his position in the community.[109] He joined Rotary and the American Legion, though the meetings often "turned his stomach." And he joined other groups also. He became a

part of the few interracial organizations which were permitted by the community until 1955, when they disbanded. He likewise began to make regular trips to a near-by Negro college, where he spoke and participated in meetings.

> . . . for years I was the only White clergyman in _____ to go out on that campus. . . . the extreme Whites would take your license number whenever you got near these places. . . . the State set up what they called a Sovereignty Commission, which was just another name for a "Gestapo," with their files . . . and I know darn well that they have . . . my name in their files . . . .

As the years have passed, the rabbi has increased his involvement in the struggle. He has become a member of the state-wide Commission on Human Relations, and now sits on the seventy-member Southern Regional Council. And he has also made his presence felt within the Jewish community.

In his first years in his pulpit, Rabbi "H" became highly concerned with the relative impotence of the Jewish community in his state. As he said it in 1958: "I am fed up with supine acquiescence to the second-rate citizenship which the Jewish community as a whole accepts." One of the major reasons for this timidity was, in his eyes, the fragmented nature of state-wide Jewry. The congregations were all quite small, there were no more than a dozen all told, yet "none of them would have anything to do with the others," and "the rabbis . . . would have nothing to do with the others in the state." He therefore set out in 1955-1956, to organize an Assembly of Jewish Congregations.

"In the process," he told the writer, "I made myself persona non grata to so many Jews in the state because they were so afraid I was going to lead them down the road to integration." The interview continued: "Was that in your mind at all?" He answered,"Yes . . . [though] I didn't say it obviously." The Assembly of Jewish Congregations had collapsed by 1960.

Inside his own congregation, the rabbi has spoken on a number of occasions on civil rights topics. Though there is considerable fear among his congregants, they have, as explained above, (see p.68), reacted admirably in moments of crisis -- as, for example, when their community was beseiged by tens of Jewish civil rights workers. Mention has also been made above (p.67) of the bulletin message sent out both to his people and to some persons in the outside community. On another occasion, it was Rosh Ha-Shana 1962, he wrote and delivered a civil rights oriented prayer from his pulpit which was reprinted in many other congregational bulletins. His people have absolutely no doubt as to where he stands on the whole issue:

> I am not watering down my sermons. . . . I said early in my career in _____, from the pulpit . . . enough times so that they understood me: "I know what our problem is as Jews in _____ and I'm going to do my best not to expose the Jews of _____ . . . I think my responsibility as the rabbi is primarily to the Jews . . . but I will never let a member of my congregation tell me, the rabbi, what Judaism is and says about social justice." . . . that naturally rubbed and rubs a lot of people the wrong way.

Of major importance was this rabbi's role in the crisis which developed when the first group of Freedom Riders hit his area of the South. The reader will here have to forgive and bear with the writer; I can but hint at the story, though it will be covered in detail in Part Two. Let it suffice to say that Rabbi "H" distinguished himself above all the rabbis of his state at that hour, going out of his way at great personal risk to do that which his conscience demanded of him.

Life has not been easy for such a man, living in such a community. His congregants, though understanding and patient to some degree, have been only too human. In what appears to be a diary-like notation which the rabbi wrote in 1958, he complained:

> So long as the Rabbi talks in generalities, the congregation will not vocally object, although I suspect there is muttering among themselves afterwards; but let him reduce the general to the specific, as I did on Yom Kippur when I spoke out against the Citizens Council . . . and there very definitely is a violent reaction. As one of my "oldtimers" said to me, "You can have freedom of the pulpit, but we'll stay away from services."

"Let him reduce the general to the specific. . . ." In 1958, the local White Citizens Council had embarked upon an ambitious "block to block membership drive (à la Hitler)." When his members asked their rabbi what to do, his answer was clear enough, "Don't join." In a Yom Kippur sermon he castigated the Council, and also severely criticized the local

B'nai B'rith group for inviting a prominent Council member to address them as guest speaker. When these acts were followed by the Temple Bulletin, which lamented synagogue bombings and said "It could happen here," his congregants were running scared. The straw that broke the camel's back was a column in the local newspaper. Having been asked by a columnist to comment on the rash of temple bombings, Rabbi "H" sent a copy of the bulletin to the reporter. The next day this man's column bore the scare heading: RABBI SAYS IT WILL HAPPEN HERE. This was too much for some of the congregation to take. Plans were made immediately to get rid of this "troublemaker," and the matter came to a head at the next congregational meeting. The showdown was won by the rabbi, but he took little pleasure in what he considered a Pyrrhic victory (in that one-fifth of his congregation had shown itself solidly against him).

How has this rabbi reacted to his many colleagues who have joined civil rights demonstrations in his city and throughout the South? Though this will be discussed in detail in Chapter IX, it would be well to say a few words here, to help complete our painting of this clergyman's portrait. Let the words be his own:

> Despite my own feelings about the need and/or value of rabbinical forays into _____, I have never shut my door or rebuffed my colleagues . . . but some things are hard to take -- like the young man who was here a total of 48 hours, told me how thrilled he was over his insights, and how

> thrilled he was for me that I am helping to make history. A mazel of Colombos! I told him to make history in his own backlashed community.

So that I might not be open to accusations of romanticizing, let me remind the reader that there are many persons, possibly including a majority of this rabbi's colleagues, who envision him as anything but a civil rights activist. They have their reasons. First, though he is on, for example, the Southern Regional Council, one informant, very familiar with the Council, judges him to be the most conservative member of the organization. Second, most of his activity has come in recent years; one called him a "Johnny-come-lately" on the civil rights scene. Third, for many reasons, this rabbi tends to view things, at least in others' eyes, pessimistically. Thus, some reason, it isn't all as bad as he says it is -- he could have done much more. This could be -- I leave it to the reader to decide. Simply keep in mind that, though he is possibly the most conservative member of the Southern Regional Council, he is a member; though he may be a "Johnny-come-lately," he has come; though he may be a pessimist, much data could be provided to support his pessimism. What he will do in the future, I cannot know; but on the basis of his past, I think he must be considered a most important source of liberal Jewish leadership in the Deep South.

Why has he been so? What has motivated him to join "taboo" organizations, to hammer at his congregation on the subject, to flirt with economic, even physical disaster to the extent which he has? Especially when he readily admits that, as his retirement age approaches, he is afraid -- afraid he might any day be forced to join those twenty-eight ministers who long since have departed his community and his state? At least part of the answer is furnished by an excerpt from a letter he wrote nine years ago to some of his colleagues:

> I have not wanted to be a southern hero. I have not sought publicity. . . . I think my statements and my writing has been kept to a minimum. . . . Within this State, I have let my congregation know by a variety of methods that I am against segregation and for the law of the land. I have spoken my piece. . . . [for] somewhere along the line Jews around here must be taught that their Judaism is more than a few formalisms hidden away in the Temple. This is an old story, but if the next generation of Jews in these parts are to be preserved for Judaism, they must face up to some spiritual and moral realities, including some dignity. I don't know if I make this point clear. Perhaps I can express it this way. The average Gentile thinks of the Temple as some offbrand Christian sect. And too many of our people like it that way. They don't like my slogan, "We will never resign from Judaism and the Jewish people". . . . What price Amos?

The Rabbis of Other Southern Communities

We turn now to the rabbis in the "less closed" societies of the South. In the introduction, an attempt was made to

describe the characteristics of such communities. In general, I would include within this category most cities in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Florida, Texas, and western and southern Louisiana. In addition one cannot forget Atlanta, Georgia, which stands out as an oasis of liberalism in the desert of the Deep South. Our methodology will be similar; first we will look at the rabbis as a group, then we will analyze in some detail three individuals among them.

In these large and/or "border" cities, it is much more common to find at least a portion of the Christian clergy visibly supporting a moderate or liberal position on civil rights. For this reason, I also discovered a greater involvement among these cities' rabbis in biracial or liberal (though segregated) clergy organizations. In many instances, the rabbi was not only a member, but he played a major role in the formation of the group. A case in point would be one man who, as far back as 1933, joined together with a few fellow clergymen to initiate an integrated ministerial program in his community.[110] And examples could be multiplied. A rabbi in a very large city was instrumental in creating such a group which has since "petered out;"[111] another successfully worked for the integration of the major Ministerial Association of his city while he was serving as its president.[112] While a few of the more "open" cities possess a large, community-wide Ministerial Association

which is biracial, the integrated clergy group is small in both numbers and importance in a majority of the cities under discussion. Thus, one interviewee informed the writer that in 1960, he joined four other clergymen to form a biracial "Minister's Discussion Group," with meetings rotating from one member's building to another. He continued: "I am the only one of the original five white clergymen still in the community. . . . I don't think that the participation of the white ministers [necessarily] jeopardized their position, but it may be more than a coincidence."[113] Similarly, another rabbi commented:

> For a number of years we have had an Interracial Ministers' Fellowship, meeting once a month for lunch in one another's places of worship . . . . The Interracial Ministers' group, kept alive by the sheer determination of some of us not to let it die, is finding it increasingly difficult to find white church groups that are willing to offer it hospitality.[114]

This latter rabbi has been quite active in this biracial clergy group -- to the extent of serving as its president one year. As he describes it, the Fellowship, organized in 1948, met "purposely to work on interracial projects." One of these was a brotherhood service, held in 1951 in the rabbi's synagogue. Another was a crash educational program to help prepare local Negroes for the voters' registration tests they were encountering. Of interest is the fact that though there were an additional eleven or twelve rabbis (of different denominations) in the immediate vicinity, only this one cast his lot with the unpopular biracial organization.

Other rabbis, in an even larger city, likewise participated in an interracial ministerial group, only to see it die out after a few struggling years.[115] If generalizations need be made, I would hypothesize that the rabbinate of the cities under discussion has a commendable record of sometimes initiating, and more often seeking out and participating in biracial clergy fellowships.[116]

Before turning to another subject, there is an incident which would best be discussed at this point. Since the matter attracted nationwide attention, there is little need to disguise the identity of those who participated in the affair. The scene might best be set by quoting from an article which appeared in a Baton Rouge newspaper only last year, with the caption: Reznikoff on Stand in B.R. Wiretap Case --

> The case centers around segregationist and integrationist forces maneuvering around each other during the hectic months of 1961, when Governor Jimmie Davis was calling special sessions and segregationist fever was at a high pitch. . . . [due to the] uproar over federal court orders desegregating schools in New Orleans.

Involved were the defendants Wendell Harris (former state senator) and Lawrence Hall (a private investigator). The two were accused by Wade Mackie (a director of the American Friends Service Committee) of intercepting and divulging the contents of telephone conversations between himself and several local clergymen, including Rabbi Marvin Reznikoff. During the trial, tapes of the actual conversations were

played, and according to the report of the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate (April 21, 1966; page 12-A):

> Much of the conversation between Mackie and Reznikoff revolves around the question of ministers making a moral stand, rather than just taking the position that they were going to have to "go along" with integration because the federal government was cramming it down their throats. . . . Reznikoff and Mackie also agreed ministers who took a stand on integration would have to realize they would face inconvenience and ostracism.

Apparently the two men were working for the issuance of a definite statement by the clergy (almost certainly the "Affirmation of Basic Religious Principles" which came to light in May, 1961, bearing among others, their signatures), and Rabbi Reznikoff was at least one of the clergymen drawing up this statement. Thus, the Morning Advocate in 1961, immediately after the story broke for the first time, reported:

> During one of the conversations . . . Reznikoff and Mackie discussed how forcefully the draft of the affirmation should read and Reznikoff read a draft or a portion of the draft of the document.

As the case dragged on, and Rabbi Reznikoff's name sporadically came to the fore, it became common knowledge where he, and a few other Baton Rouge clergymen, stood on the civil rights matter. The defense attorney was most generous to the rabbi when, in April, 1966, he described him as "a sincere man of God trying to do the right thing . . . who had been tricked and duped into following Mackie's leadership."[117] Turning to the jury, the attorney later exclaimed: "Which is more important? Mackie's rights on the telephone or [possible] riots in Baton Rouge?"[118] Though it is

questionable how much influence such logic had on Rabbi Reznikoff, there is no question of the extent of its impact on the jury. The same article notes that the jury found for the defendants on one charge and was "hopelessly deadlocked" on four additional charges. Then, in true segregationist fashion, the newspaper article concluded by listing the names of those who had served on the jury.

As this wiretapping case could be traced back, eventually, to the prospects of school desegregation, so many other involvements of rabbis in non-Deep South communities have had a similar origin. One rabbi, in 1964, participated with other clergy in his community in numerous meetings with the public school administration to help effect the desegregation of the city's schools;[119] another appeared as a witness before his state's Senate to oppose "the silly education laws that were intended to block school integregation."[120] To my knowledge, three men in particular have played major roles in preparing their communities for school desegregation; partially by coincidence, each will be discussed toward the end of this chapter.

One of the men, rabbi of a community with slightly under 10,000 Jewish inhabitants, began to see the handwriting on the wall as early as 1957.[121] He would be last to claim any great prophetic insight on this account, for Little Rock's name was already writ large on newspapers throughout the country. On Yom Kippur evening, within the

confines of his own synagogue, the rabbi told his people:

> It is obvious that regarding Little Rock, Arkansas, there is little that you and I can do. . . . [But our city] may be tomorrow's Little Rock. . . . [Our state] is the only state, not in the deep South, that has remained completely defiant toward the Supreme Court decision and has taken no steps in the direction of integration. . . . [So we] may well be next -- and you will have to do something about it. . . . The time to act is now -- not waiting, as President Eisenhower did, until events propel us into hasty and unprofitable action . . . . we should start now looking for men of leadership . . . whose judgment we trust and whose views we respect. . . . We can make a beginning by voting this November, and by paying careful attention to the views of the candidates rather than the party labels which have so little meaning in this commonwealth. . . . Let me ask you . . . where will you be, next semester or next fall. . . . Would you want the teen-ager in your family part of that foolish-looking group, pictured on this morning's front page, who tried . . . hanging a Negro in effigy? . . . I, therefore, propose to you -- and through you to the citizens of [our city] -- the formation of a Legion of Honor. . . . This Legion of Honor shall enlist as members all right-minded citizens of our community to pledge themselves in writing to the prevention of violence on their own part and on the part of others and to the encouragement of proper attitudes on the part of our youth. . . . I propose to enlist the cooperation of my colleagues in the Rabbinate and among the Christian clergy in the formation of this Legion and dissemination of its pledge.

The rabbi did not confine his words to those spoken within his own synagogue. A few months later, in a sermon delivered to a Methodist congregation, he warned his audience: "If we don't rise above our partisan feelings of segregation versus integration we'll have disintegration in our public schools." He was in just the proper frame of mind, therefore,

to be receptive to a comment made by a friend at a Rotary meeting in early 1958. The Rotarian wanted to know if "anything could be done" by the liberals of the community to facilitate school desegregation. The rabbi, after some thought, came up with the idea of a community-wide forum whose purpose would be the discussion of the school-closing crisis. His proposal, sent to the mayor, members of city council, and various business and professional leaders, called for representatives of the state and federal judiciary to participate with legal representatives of the city and the school system in this "town hall discussion," with a local judge presiding and ruling out of order any comments on the merits of segregation or integregation. It was the rabbi's intent that the clergy would serve as ushers. After having mailed this suggestion out, the rabbi left the city for a few days, to attend the convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. About four days after his proposal had been put in the mail, it made the headlines of the two local newspapers. As the rabbi related:

> . . . the whole thing was outlined. The morning paper came out with "it was a good idea," and the evening paper came out with "the Jews better shut up" or something like this. . . . I knew my people were running scared when this kind of stuff came out. . . . It turns out that the mayor was quoted as saying that the idea wouldn't work. . . . the forum never materialized.

As the summer drew to a close, and it became increasingly evident that the public schools were not going to open come September, Rabbi "Z" took a different tack. Joining together with like-minded individuals, he helped form a Committee for Public Schools. The atmosphere became more tense and emotionally charged, and the Jewish community began to show concern over the all-too-visible role one of its rabbis was playing in the whole affair. Thus, it came as no surprise when, in a meeting of the Jewish Community Council, a resolution was passed urging "all those who might be considered spokesmen for the Jewish community" to refrain from taking any vocal stand on the school issue. The rabbi thought it the better part of wisdom to accede to the request. However, on the following evening, in the midst of his sermon, he advised his congregation that, though he would be silent for the moment, if and when the time came when he felt his "voice and position would be useful" in the battle to desegregate the schools, he would "not be muzzled." Many did not take kindly to this "threat," and at the next board meeting, a proposal to call a special session to sit in judgment on the rabbi failed by only one vote.

The weeks passed and the schools remained closed. A ministerial delegation (including the rabbi) which appeared at a meeting of the city council was rebuffed by the mayor. At this point, the other rabbis of the

community began to enter the picture. A request was made to all the local synagogues and churches (by groups of parents) to make their facilities available for tutoring groups. Rabbi "Z" at first opposed the idea ("I said we don't want to do anything which is going to encourage keeping the schools closed"), but he eventually capitulated. Tutoring groups were set up, and, to the rabbi's dismay, were well received by members of the community. He told the writer:

> That was when the rabbis got busy. We started screaming -- we went to mass meetings, talked to our own congregants, got the Christian clergy alerted and aware that this was no substitute for accredited high school education. . . .

A meeting was called by some of the local clergy, and a statement, framed largely by Rabbi "Z," was issued "warning the parents that teachers would leave the city if the schools did not reopen for the second semester, that the tutoring groups were very inadequate for such subjects as the applied sciences, and that the church and synagogue facilities had been overtaxed in providing hospitality for these courses."

At last, mainly because the business community "woke up" and began to support the clergy's proposals, the battle was won. It was announced that the schools would reopen for the second semester. The rabbi now turned his attention to helping make the transition as smooth as possible. Realizing that, in his words, there would have to be a "letting-off-steam period," especially for the

rabid segregationists, he wrote the Governor and suggested that the State set up in his city "one school that would be for those who vehemently objected to sending their children to an integrated school." He continued:

> As it turned out, the State took the idea (they probably didn't get it from me) . . . and they agreed [that any parent] . . . who wanted to keep his child out of an integrated school could collect $280 a year from the State . . . and there was a segregated school set up as a result of this . . . which remained in existence for five or six years, I think; it's not in existence now. . . . The majority of the community did not take advantage of it . . . showing that the mass of the population was not too upset.

I asked this rabbi if his involvement in the latter weeks of the school desegregation incident created any repercussions in the general and the Jewish communities. He replied:

> One place along the line I was personally attacked in print by two or three writers. . . . I can't remember anything [additionally] untoward done to me. . . . My own people . . . once the schools were closed . . . were pretty solidly behind what I was trying to do. . . . the congregational [board] never raised any objections. . . .

Rabbi "Z," even among the big city Southern rabbinate, appears to have been one of the few exceptions with regard to participation in the process of school desegregation. More common, it would seem, were the rabbis who occasionally lent their moral support, but who were little involved in the actual behind-the-scenes fighting.

When we approach the subject of rabbinic support of desegregation in the outside community, through affiliation

with various organizations or through more individualistic means, the rabbis of non-Deep South communities appear far more active than their Deep South colleagues. Even the more hesitant among them have been known to speak out on occasion. Thus, this testimony from one of their number:

> I have not, often, gone outside my own Congregation with these [desegregationist] views, as I feel that it is important to sell them first, rather than involve them and me in a general community wrangle. However, I have explained these views at the local Rotary Club [and] at meetings of Methodist and Presbyterian Church groups. . . . I have not joined with others in any organized effort to achieve these views, for I feel that whatever I can do is not strengthened but weakened by binding myself to a platform. My own good intentions and honesty are pretty well known . . . here. . . . That might not always be true of associates.

Though this rabbi is not a "joiner," many of his colleagues are. One who is a member of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare, also is a past-president of his city's Rotary group.[123] When asked why he devoted so much time to such a group, he answered:

> It is absolutely essential if a rabbi can get in it. It puts you in contact with citizens of the first rank, whether you like them or not. . . . [In addition, usually] they invite you to speak at least once a year. You can [then] talk along liberal lines.

His feelings are shared by many a Southern rabbi. As further examples, I quote two of his colleagues:

> You become a part of a community. You join with ministers in their Ministerial Association, you work with them, you become friends with them through the Rotary Club or the Kiwanis Club or some other

> group. . . . you become friends with these people, you're on a first name basis . . . you become a name-dropper. Does this help? Yes, you can bet it helps. When you're able to go to an outstanding Christian minister on a first name basis and say to him "Now John, lets get together and see what we can do about this situation" . . . once you have the Christian support, you're not out on that limb all alone -- you can be more effective with your own congregation.[124]
>
> My Rotary contacts were very useful . . . on a one-to-one basis, talking to people. . . .[125]

Rabbinic affiliation in community organizations has not been confined to the "service" clubs. Many a rabbi has been a member of committees on community relations, commissions on civil rights, commissions on human relations, and like groups.[126] One of these men[127] attempted as far back as 1954 to organize such a committee, and working with others, succeeded in so doing after three years of failures. He has been secretary to the group since its inception, and served on its nominating committee during its crucial early years. Though he had been asked to head the organization, he refused "on the grounds that I didn't think it helpful to the cause to have a member of a minority group trying to advance the rights of a minority group." This Committee on Community Relations has effectively mediated many an actual or potential civil rights conflict. By way of example, it has served as an arbitration board for the development of fair employment practices in the city, as it has, at one point or another, participated in every major civil rights question which

has been raised in the city since the Committee's inception. Some rabbis informed the writer of their involvement in less structured groups, as, for example, one who has visited the mayor on many occasions as part of various ad hoc delegations,[128] or another who has worked on various committees aimed at placing Negroes on the police force, bettering their financial condition, and so forth.[129] One rabbi, sitting on the local Symphony Board, worked for years to integrate the city's symphony orchestra, and succeeded (but in principle only, since a qualified Negro musician was nowhere to be found).[130] A colleague in a border state integrated the local Red Cross Board while serving as its president.[131]

While speaking of organizational affiliation, we would be remiss if we failed to include those national organizations whose raison d'etre is the Negro civil rights movement itself. Very few of my informants claimed to have played an active part in such groups. One rabbi told the writer that he was a member of the N.A.A.C.P. and of C.O.R.E., while he served his Southern pulpit.[132] He was also a member of the Social Action Commission of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (a committee which does not restrict itself to Negro civil rights, though this issue is of major concern to it). One of his colleagues was active in

a branch of the Urban League.[133] But even these two men played relatively minor roles in such organizations -- especially in the groups with large Negro memberships. Possibly due to time limitation, possibly for politic reasons, or possibly due to conflicts over goals or methodology, the Southern rabbinate (not unlike its Northern counterpart) has not been an important factor in the meetings of national, Negro civil rights groups.

The rabbi in the more "open" Southern Community has made his presence known apart from group action and affiliation. One rabbi has for years had his own radio program, on which he has delivered sermons, many containing "civil rights themes."[134] The following two excerpts from his broadcasts (October 17, 1954, and January 30, 1955) are typical:

> The Supreme Court has ruled that Negro children have the right to sit in the same room with white children. This has upset many of us . . . there have been strikes and riots, rebellion . . . against the decision. . . . such behavior is subversive. . . . the time must come when the color of a person's skin is no reason for setting him apart. . . . There is nothing we can do to prevent this change, and if we refuse to grow up to it, we shall only handle mature problems in a childish fashion.
>
> There are many good people who counsel patience about the race issue in our country. They point to the need for education, gradualness, and understanding. These are all virtues and have merit. But there are situations where the blood of wrath begins to boil. A boy . . . who has just returned from fighting for his country,

> is told that in this restaurant he cannot be served because his skin is black. To be calm and patient with that is immoral. . . . it is not enough to talk of gradualness and patience. This is immoral and both God and man should be angry with indignation.

Another man mentions innumerable speeches he has made in local churches and before community groups. "There isn't any question -- after all our city's only half a million and I've been there twenty years -- people know where I stand -- there's been no equivocation on the matter."[135] Many of his colleagues have likewise devoted hours of their time to making such speeches.[136] A rabbi in one community, recalling how effective the Quaker-sponsored interracial Fellowship House had been in Philadelphia, in 1957 persuaded some of his Christian colleagues to join with him in inviting the integrated Fellowship House choir to give a concert in the local high school.[137] This act was but one of many which identified that rabbi as an active proponent of integration.

Examples could be multiplied, but, for the most part, they would refer back to a handful of men. There are two reasons: first, my sample was relatively small, so that, due to a lack of data, I cannot report what many rabbis have done in their communities; second, there is a good possibility that, even having the data, the result would be the same. One cannot escape the suspicion that the rabbi has not been as vocal in his community (even in the less closed parts of the South) as many would have

liked him to be.

The picture is quite different when we turn our attention to what these rabbis have done in their own congregations. There has been no dearth of sermons, especially since 1954, dealing with the civil rights movement. Many of these sermons are presently on file in the American Jewish Archives, and they speak eloquently on their own behalf. Though some are vague and skirt the issue, a large number come directly to the point and place the pulpit which they represent very clearly on the desegregationist side. A constant theme is the necessity to abide by the law of the land, and the need for the Jewish community to show the way in such acquiescence. In order to provide the reader with a "taste" of these pulpit messages, I briefly quote from two (the first delivered November 18, 1955, the second Yom Kippur eve, 1954).

> To the newspaper reporters and visitors to the Congregation this evening I want to bid a warm and most cordial welcome. Then I want to hasten to add that whatever is written or spoken about my remarks this evening must make clear that I am speaking only for myself as an individual, as I do every Friday evening. I am not speaking for the Jews of _____ or Jews anywhere else. But most definitely I am speaking for myself and as a Rabbi of the Reform Jewish faith who has been trained in a faith founded upon the Prophetic message of the Bible. . . . This is a sermon I must preach, for myself and the sake of my soul if for no one else. . . . There are times when one . . . must speak, come what may, else he perverts his pulpit, himself and his calling. For silence is also vocal. . . . When the pulpit

> becomes safe, silent and harmless, then religion is dead in that pulpit. . . . Anyone of intelligence who lives here and understands and loves the South knows full well the race problem is going to take time and intelligence, patience and good will on both sides before it will be solved. But it will not be solved by unyielding, unmoving, unthinking resort to prejudice and Shintoist slogans that scream about keeping the Southern Way of Life. Greater than the Southern or Eastern or Western Way of Life is the American Way of Life. And greater still is the Judeo-Christian Way of Life. [The sermon continues by attacking any society which would put up with an Emmet Till case without making some drastic changes in its "Way of Life."][138]

> We have reached that time in American history when certain changes are to be made in our culture which will radically modify some of our customs and mores, especially in certain sections of our land. Our society is governed by . . . laws, and.. . . It is the responsibility of every good citizen to abide by the laws as they are interpreted. . . . Since certain significant decisions were rendered by the highest tribunal of our judiciary last Spring, certain hate groups have been organized to resist the decisions that have been handed down. . . . Let the name of no Jew be found on the roster of these hate organizations. . . . If there are those among us who cannot be in the vanguard striving for a better humanity, then at the very least, let us not be among those who would stifle the moral progress of mankind.[139]

Though some rabbis never devoted an entire sermon to a civil rights issue,[140] I do not think it an exaggeration to say that nearly all Southern rabbis outside the Deep South touched on the subject at least occasionally. And, of this large majority, a smaller number, still a majority in the writer's eyes, spoke several times a year, often on the High Holy days, and in specifics. A much more common

response on the part of my informants was that they "pulled no punches" from the pulpit on this subject, rather than the reply that they spoke in guarded terms and only infrequently on the issue.[141] And I see no reason to doubt the veracity of their answers, subjective as they might be, since I have many a sermon text to substantiate their claims.

Of all the desegregation-oriented preachments which emanated from Southern Jewish pulpits, none created more of a furor than those spoken by Rabbi Emmet Frank, of Alexandria, Virginia. On Yom Kippur eve, 1958, Rabbi Frank rose to the pulpit and loosed a calculated barrage of words against his state's policy of "massive resistance," and against Senator Harry Byrd, its architect and principle spokesman:

> I speak as a Rabbi on this issue to a Jewish congregation on our holiest evening. The significance of my remarks are heightened this evening in that I have chosen one of our holiest days to devote it to root out the evil in our midst in the form of bigots and hate peddlers who, for a headline, a misplaced vote, would attack minority after minority. When those who are not afraid to speak . . . sound like a voice crying in the wilderness -- it is our moral obligation as Jews not to desist from being a light unto the nation. . . . I am afraid of silence and I will not remain silent as long as God keeps the breath of life within me. I will not be silenced! . . . The Jew cannot remain silent to injustice. . . . Has silence given to the Jew of the south security? -- bombings, economic reprisals, have been his reward. . . . Let the segregationists froth and foam at their mouth. There is only

> one word to describe their madness -- Godlessness, or to coin a new synonym -- Byrdliness. Byrdliness has done more harm to the stability of our country than McCarthyism. . . . Thousands who in the south were ready to accept the law of the land, reject it now because of misguided, false, and tyrannical leadership. . . . Outsider! they cry. You are not a Virginian; you are a Texan. I am something that transcends being a Texan or a Virginian. I am an American and, yes, I am a Virginian; but not of the vintage of Byrd and his invertebrate crew that follow him like subdued puppies, but I am a Virginian of the vintage of Jefferson, who said: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

This was not the first such sermon delivered by Rabbi Frank. As early as December, 1955, he devoted a pulpit address to a broadside attack on the Gray Referendum (a tactic employed to defy the Supreme Court school desegregation decision). On that occasion, he branded this proposed legislation as "illegal and unconstitutional," "immoral and unethical," and "destructive to the public educational system." But, though this was not the first time Rabbi Frank spoke out, this was the time his words cut deepest into the segregationists of his city and state, and the rabbi became a national figure overnight. Within days, practically every newspaper in the area carried a report on his sermon -- often beneath eye-catching headlines. Typical of the many lines written about him, are the following:

> . . . that's enough, nay too much, of Rabbi Frank. His intemperate remarks from the pulpit are so far from truth that they constitute no sermon at all and a mighty poor political speech. . . . Virginians have attacked

> no minority within the borders of this Commonwealth. . . . Rabbi Frank is not only mad but silly. . . .[142]

> Rabbi Frank's statement shows unquestionably that he is a complete one hundred percent integrationist, which is further emphasized by the published disclosure that he is an active and aggressive leader in the Council of Human Relations, comprising both colored and white . . . dedicated to a crusade to force the mixing of races in all phases of social and educational life in Virginia. Rabbi Frank, as a minister . . . may speak with authority and exercise influence when he concerns himself with religious matters, but. . . . [he should] leave it to laymen to argue the kind of tribute we should render unto Caesar.[143]

> It has been my privilege to know several rabbis in my almost 40 years of newspaper work. I recall some of these with admiration for their wisdom, and affection for their humanitarian instincts. I feel certain that these would have been horrified by Rabbi Frank's theocratic ostracism of the senior Senator from Virginia.[144]

> I can think of no possible reason why Rabbi Frank should attack so patriotic an American as Senator Byrd other than the specific reason that Senator Byrd opposes the dangerous, agitative race policies of the N.A.A.C.P., which is headed by a member of Rabbi Frank's race.[145]

It was, then, no surprise to the Jewish community when a group of segregationists, calling themselves the "Arlington Chapter of the Defenders of State Sovereignty," issued a not-so-veiled threat to Virginia Jewry, saying that "friendly relations between Jews and Christians would be damaged" unless the Jews "move quickly to refute and condemn Rabbi Frank." The New York Times, reading between the lines, suggested that this group was also hinting that "Jewish merchants might expect economic reprisals unless they prove

themselves 'loyal Virginians'."[146]

It was not the outside community alone which took Rabbi Frank to task for his utterances. Some members of the Jewish community as well were annoyed. Out of a file of like letters, let these three excerpts suffice to present their point of view:

> I do not feel that what goes on in our Church is a matter for the public press. And I feel that our Jewish public relations is doing fine without a kick in the teeth. . . . I think integration in the schools should come about . . . and I feel the Courts will make it without any assistance from the religious leaders. . . . Your securing of a bunch of headlines does not at all help the situation and it has damaged Jewish public relations in this town. I would and do not object to any sermon you made within the four walls of our Temple . . . as you must speak according to your conscience . . . but I cannot go along with the "play to the gallery." I think this is immature. . . .
>
> As you well know as Jewish people we can ill afford to be constantly in the limelight on such a delicate subject as Integration.
>
> Had you gone to a T.V. or Radio Station and expressed yourself as an individual, that was your right; when you had over 750 members in their Temple on Yom Kippur night . . . you used them as a background for your cowardly attack and cheap publicity through prepared statements to the Press for widespread coverage. . . . with your picture and story on the front pages of papers you reached the pinnacle of your career when you condemned many of those who considered you a friend. . . . I see by the papers, you have just received an award in Brooklyn, New York, You should also receive one for creating disunity in Beth El Congregation.

Not all of Rabbi Frank's mail was of this nature. For every letter he received from an angry congregant, another came in from a proud or happy one. And letters of congratulations and encouragement poured in from ministers, rabbis, and lay persons throughout the country. To these accolades was added an official commendation by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations praising Frank "for his courageous championing, in his state, of the brotherhood of all men under the Fatherhood of God." Support began to flow in from what might be considered even more important sources, for they were closer to home. Less than one month after "the sermon," eleven Alexandria ministers came out publicly in support of everything Rabbi Frank had said, one of them comparing the rabbi with the Old Testament prophets.[147] And, at a meeting of Jewish congregational delegates from all the communities in northern Virginia, Rabbi Frank's "right to champion racial integration" and the concept of "freedom of the pulpit" were publicly endorsed. Even Frank's own Temple board, the target of the fanatics of the area, rose to the occasion. The president of the congregation, when asked whether or not a special meeting had been called in order to discuss the rabbi's sermon, replied: "The executive board of the Temple is an administrative body. Any religious or spiritual matters are solely the province of the rabbi."[148]

With all this happening so rapidly, it was almost anti-climactic when, on October 24, 1958, Rabbi Frank preached a second sermon, "Fearing God Alone -- Reactions to My Sermon'Byrdliness Versus Godliness'." In this text the rabbi reaffirmed what he had stated over a month before, and declared that he would continue to say what needed to be said, "fearing God alone." Though this sermon also received headline newspaper coverage, it was beginning to become "old hat" for the community. One writer, commenting on this whole "cause celebre" in Temple Beth El's Centennial History Book, published in 1959, wrote at least his own interpretation of the entire incident:

> Gradually, the furor over these sermons died away. . . . But the controversy served many useful purposes. The rabbi of Beth El was given complete freedom to voice opinions from the pulpit that might be distasteful not only to a large and powerful segment of the community but even to his own congregants. Nor had these opinions caused a deterioration of interfaith relationships. They had, in fact, strengthened them.[149]

All of this has been an analysis of how the rabbis, in particular one among them, have used the sermon as a means of conveying to their congregants (if not to the outside community as well) their feelings on civil rights matters. But the sermon has not been the only tool employed within the congregation by the rabbis who serve Southern, but not Deep South, congregations.

Very important also has been the use of integrated worship services. Many of my informants told me of Negroes having come, either as individuals or as groups, into their synagogues to participate in prayer or study. Thus, one rabbi, on Washington's Birthday in 1951, "despite some serious qualms on the part of my board," organized an interracial service complete with an integrated choir and a sermon by the president of a local Negro divinity school.[150] Another man invited a Negro to occupy his pulpit in 1955, as a dramatic gesture in order to "indicate at a time of tension, the support of Reform Judaism, not only for the decision of the Supreme Court, but to take a stand in behalf of the Negro."[151] This rabbi's board, when asked not for permission but for a vote of confidence, showed itself strongly behind their religious leader. On two additional occasions, within months of the above event, this same rabbi invited the President of Fisk University to his pulpit -- he eventually spoke to the congregation and over 100 Negro guests -- and he held an Institute for Christian Clergy, integrated right down to the luncheon table. Not all rabbis have been as firm when it comes to the point of allowing integrated worship within their synagogue. One told of the evening when, just prior to services,

> . . . a well-groomed Negro came to my office. . . . He asked for the privilege of attending Temple that night. In answer

> to my query as to what led to this request, he said that he was indeed a Jew who had been converted by a colleague in Arkansas. I immediately telephoned this man . . . and he verified the fact of the man's sincere conversion. I then suggested to the gentleman that, because of the ticklishness of the situation, I ought to discuss his request with those who had already begun to arrive. The people I consulted were life-long residents of the city, as well as life-long members of my Temple. Their answer was: that if anyone objected to this Jewish Negro worshipping that night, they themselves would leave in protest, rather than have him embarrassed. I was proud of them then, as I was some years later, when a Negro sergeant from a near-by Army base asked to worship with us -- for again, their answer was the same.[152]

The question which comes to mind, of course, is what would the rabbi have done if his congregants had refused the man permission? My sources lead me to believe that at least some of the rabbis would have made peace with the decision, and done without Negro worshippers.

Integrated worship services did not, of course, constitute the only method which rabbis employed to influence and educate their members. Articles in the bulletin have not been uncommon, and they often consisted of excerpts from the rabbi's own sermons or portions of the sermons of his colleagues (usually gleaned from their bulletins). More valuable is the one-to-one persuasion that invariably takes place in the congregational setting. One rabbi told me that, in 1963-1964, he met individually with the department store owners and managers, and the owner of a motion picture theatre chain, who were members of his congregation,

and helped persuade the former to upgrade their Negro employees and the latter to desegregate his theatres.[153] Another man was able to influence some of his congregants to work for the election of certain liberal candidates for the city's School Board (two liberals were elected).[154] And yet another rabbi spent much time counselling some of his congregants, department store owners, on what to do when their businesses were being picketed.[155] The number of rabbis who have been involved in such person-to-person persuasion and counselling is most difficult to determine. More likely than not, the percentage which occupied themselves with this type of activity would be higher than the percentage which has been vocal outside of the congregation. But the writer would only be guessing if he suggested one-third, or half, or two-thirds of these rabbis have played an important role on this level.

There is no guesswork involved, however, in the reporting of a major educational program which one rabbi undertook to implement in his congregation.[156] During October and November, 1963, the Social Justice Committee of his synagogue initiated a series of "parlor meetings," which eventually involved a sizeable percentage of the Temple membership. The format and intent of each meeting was the same: a discussion leader began with a prepared "Introductory Statement," following which the "Decalogue on Race Relations" suggested by the Social Justice Committee

was read, and discussed in detail. As the discussion was concluded on each of the ten statements, a vote was taken either for or against. Because of the value of this program, and the imaginative leadership which it displays, I think it worthwhile to set it down in some detail. Thus, I have excerpted two of the four paragraphs from the Introductory Statement, and have listed the Decalogue in toto.

> The responsibility for the resolution of America's race problem is that of every American. However, we whose ancestors knew slavery, segregation in ghettoes, and persecution; and we, who in our own day have had close contact with the most sadistic persecution of Jews ever devised; and we, who know the self-doubt, the hurt and the resentment aroused by discrimination and prejudice as we lead our daily lives -- we Jews, should be more aware of the need to solve the problem with urgency. . . . we are being asked to accept or reject TEN guideposts to direct our actions. Let me read all ten, first, and then we shall return to them separately for discussion and decision:
>
> GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN HUMAN RELATIONS
>
> 1. Our Congregation membership is open to all Jews, of every race. To our worship services we welcome visitors from every racial, national, or religious background, at any time.
>
> 2. Our Congregation will support the Freedom of our Rabbi in speech and in action to further the cause of equal opportunity.
>
> 3. We urge our Congregation and affiliate groups to sponsor programs in our Temple and in other religious institutions, and to cooperate fully with other recognized

organizations in the field of human relations, to further racial justice and equality.

4. We encourage individual members of our Congregation to establish meaningful interpersonal relationships with men and women of every racial, national, and religious background through participation in intergroup activities in our community and through informal gatherings in our homes.

5. Our Congregation and all its affiliate organizations will not patronize or sponsor any activity at a place of public accomodation, which discriminates locally against anyone because of race, religion, or ethnic origin.

6. We urge members who are in businesses or professions to institute and enforce nondiscriminatory employment and promotion policies, and to make a conscious, positive effort to hire and to train for upgrading all persons without regard to racial, national, or religious background.

7. We urge our members who belong to labor, business and professional groups to take positive steps to encourage the introduction of all qualified persons into skilled trades and professions, without regard to racial, national, or religious background, and to exert their influence in providing all such persons with equal opportunities for occupational and professional advancement.

8. We urge our members graciously to accept all neighbors regardless of race, national origin, or religion.

9. We urge all our members to support and work for full integration of all educational facilities.

10. We urge all our members to give active support to the enactment of local, state and Federal civil rights legislation and

> to forceful executive action at all levels of government.

After these principles were aired in small discussion groups throughout October and November, they were returned back to the Social Justice Committee, which then endorsed them. On January 19, 1964, the Temple Board came out officially in their favor. Such an action would have been worthy of praise if done by a Northern congregation; when implemented by a Southern (though Border State) community which had only five years earlier experienced an intense anti-Semitic campaign, how much the more are they,and their rabbi, deserving of applause.

The writer has attempted to give examples of what the rabbis serving the "more open" Southern communities have done in the area of civil rights. Having looked at this section of the rabbinate as a group, I wish now to concentrate for a moment on three individuals, with the hope that observing them in some detail might "tie up the loose ends" and provide the reader with what might be called archetypical figures -- figures which will at least partially support any general conclusions I arrive at later on.

Rabbi "X" has for many years served in a large Southern city (in excess of 50,000 persons) which claims over 10,000 Jewish inhabitants. His congregation is approaching the century mark in age, and it represents a very affluent

section of the overall community. His male members are mainly businessmen and professionals, who are not very susceptible to economic pressure from the general community, but who are, nevertheless, quite sensitive to "what the Gentiles will say." The community itself is fairly liberal on the civil rights issue, when compared with most other Southern cities. There are the ultra-segregationists, but the general tone is moderate, with even the mass media reflecting this.

In the early years of the rabbi's service in the community, when integrationists were not as common or as accepted as they are now, Rabbi "X" was in the vanguard of the liberal element in the city. From the very beginning, he opened his Temple to small integrated meetings, and, since there was no publicity, he ran into no difficulties while doing so. In 1949, however, the outside community began to take notice. Dr. Ralph Bunche, the Nobel Prize winning Negro diplomat, had been invited to speak in the city, but no hall was made available to those who had planned the evening. Knowing this, the rabbi offered the Temple building for the Bunche talk. When this information made the local papers, a flurry of threatening calls began to afflict him, and he was officially pegged by the local fanatics as a "trouble-maker." The night of the talk, the rabbi circulated through the synagogue, making sure that all members of the integrated audience kept the aisles clear -- lest a fire marshall use this as an excuse to cut short the evening's

program. This was the first time that the rabbi's name figured prominently in newspaper articles.

The second time was in September, 1954. With the Supreme Court decision on the books for a scant six months, Rabbi "X," a member of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare, approached the school board with a few others as part of a delegation. The group made a less-than-radical proposal; they simply asked the board to study the implications that the Supreme Court decision might have for their city. Possibly because the rabbi was a major spokesman for the delegation, the newspaper which came out the following morning shouted: RABBI ASKS SCHOOLS TO INTEGRATE. The threatening calls began again, and, as the rabbi noted, in his eyes "that was the beginning, as far as I was concerned, of any participation whatsoever in the civil rights movement." A few days later was Erev Rosh Ha Shana. From the pulpit that evening, the rabbi noticed a policeman standing in the rear of the synagogue at the beginning of services. Thinking that the man had been hired to regulate the heavy traffic outside, the rabbi was bothered by his constant presence throughout the worship service. It was hours later when the rabbi discovered that his Board had, on their own decision, asked for police protection for their spiritual leader. Though Rabbi "X" refused any protection for the future, he continued his involvement in the school desegregation issue.

When the week arrived for the entrance of Negro youngsters into previously all-white schools, the rabbi accompanied one Federal marshall as he drove a Negro child to school. That afternoon the rabbi's phone was again busy, and soon thereafter handbills appeared in the community, distributed by the White Citizens Council, branding Rabbi "X," of course, a Communist.

So, by 1954 Rabbi "X" had earned himself the title of "activist" in the civil rights struggle -- his name was known (for good or for bad) throughout his community and, increasingly, among his colleagues as one who would be heard. Then, for some reason, he abruptly switched tactics. Possibly, this was due to some outside pressure; possibly some inner change in philosophy or goals was the key factor. In any case, in his own words: "After this first experience of mine, with the Supreme Court decision, I didn't feel individually that I could be effective. . . ." In the years since 1954, Rabbi "X" has remained a proponent of integration, but he has largely confined his labors in this area to his own synagogue. He has often preached on the topic; he has used personal persuasion to influence his people on a one-to-one basis. And he has, on occasion, brought his message out to the general community. He remains a member of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare; he has used his connection with Rotary (he is a past president) to speak on civil rights every so often, and he has not completely halted the practice of approaching

the mayor as part of one delegation or another. But he is no longer in the vanguard.

When analyzing his total involvement in the civil rights struggle, the rabbi commented: "I don't feel I'm as active as I was ten years ago, because I feel the thing is in the only channel it could be in for effectiveness, and that's the courts." Related somewhat to this philosophy is his reaction to Freedom Rides and demonstrations:

> I don't think it's helping things any. Progress is . . . gradual. . . . This only strengthens resistance and makes it a little more difficult. . . . It's going to take a long time. . . . These marches, frankly, only upset the situation, and probably even delay it.

Rabbi "X" thus provides an interesting, if somewhat puzzling, example of a rabbi who appears to have grown more conservative in his approach to civil rights activity as the years have passed. It is the opinion of the writer that the majority of the rabbis of even the "open" South are much more similar to the Rabbi "X" of today than to his crusading former self.

Rabbi "Z" also served in a community with a total Jewish population in the vicinity of 10,000 souls. The combined population of the city and its suburbs is about 30,000. The community, though on the whole defiant to desegregation, possesses a sizeable moderate minority, so that the right to dissent has been fairly

well established.

The rabbi's congregation was of the "prestige" category -- being over one hundred years old and containing mainly middle and upper-middle class individuals. Their attitude was little different from that of Rabbi "X"'s congregants -- their major concern was what the Christians were thinking about them. This situation necessarily influenced what their rabbi did and said regarding civil rights, but the end result was by no means silence and inactivity. As he explained it:

> I could preach on integration -- and did. I could bawl them out about integration -- and did . . . a few might murmur. . . . My Christian liberal clergymen . . . several of them were driven out of their pulpits . . . others lost members. None of this happened to me. The only thing that happened to me was that, when I started making headlines on this subject, some of my membership got a little bit scared, and then tried to have me silenced . . . from public utterance but not from pulpit utterance.

Rabbi "Z" began making headlines on "this subject" in 1957, but prior to that year he had not, by any means, been completely on the sidelines. At the very beginning of his service in the community, he had affiliated himself with the small biracial Ministerial Association which met "purposely to work on interracial projects." As reported above, the rabbi offered his Temple for an integrated brotherhood service in 1951. In addition, every two years or so the ministers' group met in his synagogue for a luncheon meeting, which was catered by individual women

whom he had approached regarding the matter. He did not ask the Sisterhood to prepare and serve the lunches, since it "would have been a very difficult thing to get across." As it was, when his board discovered, in 1951, that he had offered the Temple as the site of an integrated worship service, they were displeased enough to delegate a person "to sit down with him and discuss how wrong he was in doing this sort of thing." The displeased board notwithstanding, the brotherhood service took place as planned.

The "big" issue for this rabbi, as for so many of his colleagues in the South, was school desegregation. Rather than repeat the story of his involvement, I refer the reader back to the beginning of this section (see above, p. 99 ff.). Very briefly, Rabbi "Z" joined with other clergymen in proposing various means of facilitating desegregation in the community, and played a major role in bringing about the reopening of his city's schools. The publicity he was receiving in the local press frightened many in the Jewish community, and efforts were made to restrict his freedom of word and deed, but, after the rabbi survived (by one vote) a board "showdown," he had pretty much weathered the storm. As he said: "My own people . . . once the schools were closed . . . were pretty solidly behind what I was trying to do. . . . the [congregational] board never raised any objections."

This rabbi involved himself in other ways also. In 1957, as president of the small Ministerial Association, he brought the biracial Fellowship House choir from Philadelphia to appear in a program at the local high school. He participated with this ministers' group in a program to teach Negroes how to pass the voters' registration examination. He successfully worked for the principle of an integrated symphony orchestra in his city. He spoke constantly to groups like the Women's Council for Inter-Racial Cooperation, and occasionally to Rotary. Within his congregation, along with preaching, he attempted to work on a one-to-one basis in this area, as, for example, when he counselled department store-owning members on how to react to the picketing of their places of business. His basic philosophy was, try to get the job done with the least amount of personal publicity. I asked Rabbi "Z" if that meant that he would work only within the anonymity provided by an organization of some sort -- like his Ministerial Association. He replied: "I didn't hesitate to do things, but I would be exonerated in the eyes of those in the congregation who opposed it, were . . . Christian clergy involved in it." I then asked, "Involved -- but not necessarily in front?" His reply: "No, not necessarily." I think his role in the school desegregation crisis is as good an example as any of how Rabbi "Z" has put this philosophy to work.

When one analyzes this rabbi's role in the school crisis, especially his proposal for the establishment of a desegregated school in his city, and his partial acquiescence with the demands of the Jewish community that he restrain himself, it becomes clear that, though he was quite active on the civil rights scene, and though he never truly compromised his ideals, he approached the matter in a quite reasoned, some might even say conservative, fashion. Thus, when asked whether he had ever invited Negroes into his home, he replied:

> We were the only Jews on the street. . . . We had people on the block who were sending their children to the segregated White high school. . . . We had definite bigotry on the street. . . . in the interest of public relations with our neighbors I never did . . . invite a Negro into my home.

And again, when commenting on the various Negro civil rights organizations, his evaluation of their role would find little favor with militant activists:

> Actually, many of the rabbis . . . were . . . disturbed by the civil rights organizations and their activities. The Freedom Rides and so on created more trouble for us, living in the community, than they contributed to the well-being of the community. . . . When rabbis came down . . . we had to be their "Kappora". . . . They <u>definitely</u> played a role in being helpful to the <u>Negro community</u> . . . but they made our task harder.

The rabbi himself seems quite aware that his position, and possibly, his personality, did not destine him to play more than a supportive role in the civil rights struggle in his community. And, maybe here he is being not only

realistic, but sensible -- and a possible guide to those who would castigate the rabbinate as not doing enough. Maybe we should ask not "what have the rabbis not done?" but "what have the rabbis not done which it was within their power to do?" Surely Rabbi "Z," if judged according to the last standard, would appear to have played an important role in the civil rights struggle in his community. I asked the rabbi for his own reactions to my question as to what part he has played.

> I would say it would have been a secondary role; it wouldn't have been a major role. I think that our very nature . . . the fact that our congregations were never in the forefront of it, were always waiting to see what the Gentiles did first, prevented the rabbis from being the great outspoken leaders that some have been in other parts of the country. . . . I tried to start things, as I've indicated, without success. Most of the things I've ventured. . . . Maybe I didn't lay my groundwork well enough . . . if I'd organized a come off . . . but also, I think the times weren't just right for it. . . . It's easy to look at another guy, but until you're in his shoes, you can't recognize what he's doing.

Of the three men under discussion, Rabbi "g,", both because of circumstances and personality, has been the most highly visible in the civil rights arena. He came about four years prior to the Supreme Court decision to his city of under 200,000 (less than 4,000 Jews). Because of the nature of the community, and the fact that many of the Jews lived in small towns surrounding the city, the Jewish merchants felt themselves very vulnerable to economic

pressure tactics. In addition, the White Citizens Council had enough of a foothold in the area to make life even more uncomfortable for the moderate. It was only the influence of the city-dwelling members of the Jewish community (which tended to offset the timidity of the town-Jews on the subject of civil rights) which made the Reform congregation a potential source of liberalism in the city.

When Rabbi "g" came to the community, as he tells it

> I made it crystal clear to the Board of Trustees that I must be accorded full freedom of the pulpit -- that I would speak frankly on all convictions. No subject must be "verboten" from my pulpit. The Board concurred, and there has never been any official question raised as to my pulpit utterances.

The rabbi's pulpit utterances on the subject of civil rights were, when made, clearly liberal. In 1954, for example, he strongly took to task anyone who would not go along with the decision of the Supreme Court. At the same time, in the outside community, the rabbi joined the Ministerial Association and the service clubs in order to make himself known and to meet the city's "leaders." Though, as it will become clear, Rabbi "g" was not averse to taking individual action when the moment demanded it, he much preferred working alongside others. Thus he said, regarding his methodology:

> I am convinced that the rabbi should not assume outward leadership or occupy a conspicuous position as the dominant spokesman for the integrationists in a Southern community. This does not mean that he withdraws from participation. This does not mean that he holds back and retreats into obscurity. Quite to the contrary, I believe he should take an active part as a clergyman and should speak out together with representatives of the Catholic and Protestant clergymen. If he is put on the spot, however, and asked to commit himself, then he must do so honestly and without reservation.

Acting in consonance with this philosophy, Rabbi "g" early became a member of the Mayor's Commission on Civil Rights, the Governor's Commission on Human Relations, the N.A.A.C.P., C.O.R.E., and the Social Action Commission of the U.A.H.C. - C.C.A.R.. Oftentimes, as a delegate of one group or another, he approached various key people in the community in an effort to effect changes of a civil rights nature. On one occasion, for example, he was in contact with both the Mayor and the Governor in an attempt to have more Negroes appointed to the local police force.

Within his synagogue, the rabbi did not limit himself to sermons supporting desegregation. In November, 1955, he invited a Negro to occupy his pulpit in order to "indicate at a time of tension, the support of Reform Judaism." The Board, faced with a fait accompli, furnished the rabbi with the vote of confidence which he requested. Two months later the President of Fisk University (where the rabbi occasionally spoke) was invited to the Temple's pulpit, and spoke to an integrated congregation. Then, in March, 1956, Rabbi "g" initiated a fully integrated Institute

for Christian Clergy. "There were objections from some of our members, of course, but in the main the congregation approved and commented favorably." As it became obvious that the rabbi was serious about involving the congregation in controversial situations, an undercurrent of grumbling developed in the synagogue. Hearing about this, Rabbi "g" went to the Board and firmly restated his position as to the freedoms he expected while rabbi of their congregation. He came away with a second vote of confidence.

Though all of these activities prior to 1957 might be considered impressive by an observer, the rabbi sees it quite differently: "I don't think we did enough," he told the writer. "I think it was just piddling around the periphery . . . but there wasn't much pressure on us at the time." Pressure enough was forthcoming.

In 1957, two local schools were dynamited by the so-called "Confederate Underground." There was much concern in the city over the desegregation of the public schools, and the air was tense. Prior to the bombings, the rabbi had been working behind the scenes to help implement the Federal program. As he wrote:

> It was my opinion that when our County and City schools would actually attempt to integrate, there should be adequate preparation and an effective organization made up of all segments of the community, to strengthen the hands of the School Board.

In an effort to create this "adequate preparation," Rabbi "g" approached the Governor of the State, but with no success. He then called together "some of the key people in our community, business and professional men, educators, and the like, and suggested that we organize a group that would represent the responsible citizens of [our city] and could speak for them in the event of trouble." This venture proved far more successful, for a group was formed (called the Community Relations Conference), with the rabbi sitting on its leadership board. One of the organization's first acts was the setting up of a speakers' bureau, to spread their message of moderation in the community.

As a result of these activities, the rabbi's name became increasingly familiar to various segments of the city's population. This would help explain what happened immediately following the first bombing incident:

> . . . I was asked by CBS to go to the dynamited section of the school and make a telecast that would be beamed out nationally. When I asked why I was selected, he replied, "I have been told that you are the only minister in town with guts enough to speak out." . . . [I] suggested that he obtain a Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister to join with me in making the telecast. This never came about because of the difficulty of securing a Priest and a Minister.

After the bombings, the rabbi continued his behind-the-scenes work with even more determination. The day following

the explosion, he went to the office of the local liberal newspaper, and suggested an intense coverage of the tragedy, complete with a "roundup of opinion" from key persons in the city. The newspaper accepted his suggestion, and made it very clear to its readers where the city's leadership stood on the issue. On other occasions Rabbi "g" met privately with the Mayor, Chief ofPolice, Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, and the community's leading Methodist minister. Source of much of the tension and fanaticism in the city was John Kasper, racist par excellence, who had been stirring up trouble since before the bombings. According to the rabbi:

> I believe I was instrumental in motivating drastic action against Kasper (who was arrested), and strong action on the part of the police to disperse the mobs and to protect the Negro children and parents who were being vilified and attacked.

It is almost anti-climactic to say that, prior to much of this, the rabbi had preached a strong sermon urging school integration for the city. This sermon, taken along with his many other involvements in the whole matter, provided the hatemongers with more than enough reason to begin a campaign against the "nigger-loving rabbi." In April, 1957, while leaving a Methodist church in which he had delivered a guest sermon, he was attacked and roughed up. But this proved only the beginning.

On the night of March 16, 1958, the rabbi received a phone call at his home. The caller, an "officer in the

Confederate Underground," reported:

> We have just dynamited the Jewish Community Center. Next will be The Temple, and next will be any other nigger-loving place or nigger-loving person in _____.

A hasty phone call unhappily bore out the fact that the Center had indeed been dynamited. In the weeks which followed, a constant police watch was placed on the rabbi's home. Even so, morning after morning he would awaken to dead rats or pigeons lying on his lawn, with "appropriate" notes attached. Members of his congregation grew quite apprehensive: "Some of the members of my congregation said this is not a problem for Jews . . . and some of them said, even if it is a problem, let's stay out of it and not have any trouble, because we're living in the South." The rabbi continued:

> To me it was a matter of maintaining the integrity of what we preach and the principles of Judaism and social justice. It's so easy to say "Tzedek, tzedek tirdof," everybody accepted that -- but then speak out on behalf of justice and you're becoming too specific. I was called "the nigger-loving rabbi" . . . and I accepted it. . . . being a lover of mankind is not an insult. . . . There was constant harassment against me. . . . unfortunately there wasn't a minister in town that came to my defense. Later on, one man did . . . and he was soon removed from his post.

The rabbi pressed the point further in sermons:

> . . . I believe that any spiritual leader who does not speak forth and lead his congregation on moral issues is not worthy of being the Rabbi of this or any other congregation -- and I speak clearly and without equivocation that all may underatand:

> TOGETHER WITH THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS AND THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS I FAVOR INTEGREGATION. . . . I urge the members of our congregation to join and support the . . . Community Relations Conference, a reputable, moderate organization. . . . I urge my congregation to study Judaism and learn what Judaism has to teach about racial justice. . . . I urge my congregation to identify itself with the eternal laws of God and not the transitory mores of a geographic area. . . .

And, to those members of the Jewish community who were blaming the bombed Jewish Center on their "extremist" rabbi, he replied:

> Whether we are silent, or whether we speak forth in behalf of decency, morality, law and order, the Jew will be attacked. . . . I say this not with pride, but with a profound sense of shame, that with the exception of my sermons during the High Holy days last September, and one Parent-Teachers Association address wherein I complied with a request to speak on the implications of the bombing of the . . . School, I have not made a single public utterance or statement on this subject of integration, and have not been as active in behalf of social justice as my faith demands.

The harassment continued. One day it took a new turn, however, when the caller informed Rabbi "g" that he knew the daily routines of the clergyman's two children, and that he was going to blind one child and cut off the arms of the other "to show you what happens to the children of a nigger-loving rabbi." The rabbi spoke to police officials, and was formally deputized by them as a deputy sheriff, with permission to carry a gun. That

week he went on local television, waved the gun, and warned his viewers that nobody better come near him when he was with his boys. He carried the gun for six months. In his words: "This became a cause celebre in the community. . . . many of the decent citizens . . . expressed their sympathy." With the battle degenerating more each day, the decent people in the community were progressively less able to keep from choosing sides, and this, in the rabbi's opinion, helped bring about the acceptance of the federal court order more than anything else. It was as if the rabbi had played the role of a catalyst in a process of crystallization. As he viewed it: "I don't think I chose to be involved in this, really. I was catapaulted into it by circumstances and by their doing me the dubious honor of selecting me as their victim."

When Rabbi "g" left his congregation for another position in 1960, the tone of his pulpit had been fairly well set. His successor has also been a vocal liberal with regard to civil rights, as is partially evidenced by the "Decalogue on Human Relations" which the congregation discussed and accepted in 1963 (see above, p. 120ff).

We have been concerned with three men. Though they are unique in their total approach to civil rights, they represent within their make-up many of the elements to be found in the non-Deep South rabbinate as a whole. There are those who are reticent to do or say anything, there

are those who constantly make front page news, and there are the great majority located somewhere in between. But more on this later. It is time now to turn our gaze to two men who are regarded by most of my sources as the outstanding spokesmen for prophetic Judaism in the South.

CHAPTER IV

TWO WHO STAND OUT

Throughout my readings and interviews there were two names which consistently came up in discussions of rabbinic leaders in the Southern civil rights struggle. Outside of the Southern Jewish community, these two were the only rabbis known by name to the majority of Negro and White Christian civil rights activists. For Rabbi Jacob Roth-- schild, of Atlanta, Georgia, at least a part of his fame is due to the nature of the community in which he operates. This statement would apply, however, only in a negative sense to Rabbi Charles Mantinband -- without question Judaism's most prophetic voice in the Deep South.

Rabbi Jacob Rothschild

When Rabbi Rothschild came to Atlanta in 1946, the city already had the makings of what was to become the atmosphere most "open" to liberalism in the South (see above, p. 27). It was a fortunate blending of personalities, for Rothschild has been eminently suited to take advantage of the oppor- tunities such a milieu would provide the religious leader. Very soon after his arrival, he broached the subject of civil rights from his pulpit. He had been preaching on the issue for well over a year, when he said, one Yom Kippur day (October 13, 1948):

> We must do more than "view with alarm" the growing race hatred that threatens the South. . . . The problem is ours to solve -- and the time for solution is now. . . . There are agencies at work in the South which attempt to come to grips with the problem. One of these is the Southern Regional Council. It -- and the others -- receives the lip service of great numbers of our citizens -- but the actual labors of a pitiful few. . . . We have committed no overt sin in our dealings with negroes. I feel certain that we have treated them fairly; certainly we have not used force to frighten them. We have even felt a certain sympathy for their predicament -- and perhaps a fleeting shadow of shame has flicked at our conscience. No, our sin has been the deeper one, the evil of what we didn't do haunts us. . . . Let us, then, be among those who are willing to <u>do</u> something.

Rabbi Rothschild gave early evidence of being willing to do something. Along with joining the highly controversial Southern Regional Council, he sought out kindred spirits among his city's numerous clergymen. He soon was part of a small integrated ministers' group, an organization which he has termed "inconsequential" due to its small and non-influential membership. In all, the rabbi gave his congregation and community fair warning that he meant to stand up and be counted on the civil rights issue, even prior to "Black Monday." As he told the writer: ". . . t hey were n ' t surprised [in 1954] when I showed up on the liberal side of the question. I think this was a good thing, because the congregation had been prepared before the . . . climactic event -- they already knew something about what Judaism had to say on this subject."

After the "climactic event," things grew more tense in Atlanta. In 1956, Rothschild wrote:

> . . . one must understand that hysteria prevails, that there has been an abdication not alone of reasonableness, but of reason itself, to appreciate the climate of today's South. There is no freedom of thought or speech; government is rapidly becoming government not by law but by men.[157]

Since freedom of speech was in danger, Rothschild increased the tempo of his pulpit and community pronouncements. Commenting on this few year interval, the rabbi said:

> You can't move too far ahead of your community. You have to handle this whole problem with a certain amount of "sechel" -- otherwise you frustrate your own capacities. There was one period, for example, in Atlanta, that all I did was preach and speak on the right to dissent, the right to speak, because it was getting to be that you couldn't.

From 1954 to 1964, with the exception of 1956 alone, Rabbi Rothschild devoted at least one of his High Holy day sermons to the civil rights issue. In 1954 he said:

> . . . it is important to face reality. The Supreme Court is the final arbiter of law. . . . we must guard against acts irrational or hysterical. . . . The plan to destroy the public school system is equally as reprehensible. . . . Personal experience leads me to believe that if we do not let ourselves be stampeded, we shall discover that the prospect of integration is worse than the reality.

In 1957, he introduced a Shabbas Shuvo sermon in which he spoke of the necessity of maintaining law and order with the following words:

> I suppose I must tell you at the very outset of this sermon that it is not another pulpit utterance on the subject of desegregation. Not that you are to be spared that periodic confrontation between what Judaism says and what Jews are willing to do. Yom Kippur is still before us!

When Yom Kippur arrived that year, his sermon contained this passage:

> . . . an attitude . . . has gained popularity in recent months. Even our President -- more correctly, especially our President -- has glibly tongued it. "You can't legislate the hearts of men" is what we hear. On the surface, it sounds plausible. In actual fact, it is as specious a statement as ever beguiled the soul. . . . Laws do not wait for general acceptance. . . . They stimulate and coerce a way of life that is better than the way they seek to modify. . . . To rationalize our unwillingness to accept it is to refuse to lift ourselves up to a nobler way of life.

To supplement his frequent pulpit pronouncements within the congregation, Rabbi Rothschild initiated, prior to 1957, a series of seminars whose purpose was to instruct his people how they might best comply with the Supreme Court order. At the same time, he concerned himself with preparing the general community as well.

In 1957, Rothschild and a few other liberal clergymen "enlisted the support and the aid of the men whom we knew would feel as we did. . . . we went out and invited everybody to join in. . . ." One result was "The Atlanta Manifesto," a statement issued above the signatures

of eighty Atlanta clergymen. This statement, published on November 3, 1957, called for preservation of freedom of speech, adherence to the law of the land, protection of the public school system, maintenance of communication between "responsible leaders of the races," and the elimination of "hatred and scorn for those of another race, or for those who hold a position different from our own." This Manifesto was one of the earliest and most influential of the clergy statements issued through the South, and the rabbi played one of the key roles in creating it. When the second statement of Atlanta's clergy came out a year later, the number of signatures shot up to over 300. Rothschild was quite proud of his colleagues' courage and leadership, demonstrated at a critical time for their community. Thus, the Sabbath following the first Manifesto, he titled his sermon "Eighty Who Dared."

> Yes, in every generation and in every circumstance, the clergy -- or at least a significant segment of it -- has faced with courage the vital issues of their day. Such a stand is not always easy as we in the South today can somewhat ruefully attest. Inevitably, ministers who confront the mores of their day with the timeless morality of their religious faith find themselves at best unpopular and frequently reviled and threatened. How could it be otherwise? If their people were in agreement with them, it would hardly be necessary for them to speak out at all. Thus, it was in the noblest tradition of religious leadership that the eighty Protestant ministers of our own city issued the statement "In the Hearts of Men. . ."

> which appeared in last Sunday's paper. I salute them for their courage and forthrightness but above all bless them for their willingness to assume their rightful role as messengers of God's word and the teachers of it to mankind. . . . Will their statement have any real value in the struggle for Negro equality?. . . I am firmly convinced that this Ministers' Manifesto will become the turning point in bringing law and justice and reason to our own community. It sets forth a view . . . thus far unheard anywhere in the South. . . . Now. . . . it will not be as difficult for those decent citizens who have thus far kept silent to speak their minds. . . . Search your own hearts. Are you not relieved and delighted to discover that your own secret thoughts, fearfully concealed but laying heavy burdens on your conscience, can now be openly articulated?

Rabbi Rothschild, it was evident to all those with any insight into what was happening in the city, also was one "who dared." He dared speak out as an individual in places where he knew his views would not necessarily be popular. For example, I quote briefly from a talk he delivered to the Atlanta Rotary Club:

> We shall never understand the present racial crisis until we see it not from our point of view but from the point of view of the Negro. . . . The Negro has won no victory without going to court, employing direct action techniques -- or using the threat of them. Nothing has come his way voluntarily. . . . Meanwhile, the white community resents such actions and deplores them.

On another occasion during these critical years, Rothschild was the Mayor's choice to speak to a meeting of hotel and restaurant owners when the public accomodations issue was coming to a head. And, in 1961, he was one of the founders

of and speakers for a group created to prepare the community for integration -- called HOPE (Help Our Public Education). As the rabbi said: "I was involved in practically everything that happened in Atlanta."

For this reason, the local mass media began to "tune in" on what the rabbi was doing. He has been quoted on many occasions, has written articles on civil rights issues for the newspapers, has appeared on radio and television. He told the writer that he was "constantly in the public eye on this subject."

Rabbi Rothschild's multi-level involvement with the Negro's struggle for equality has, of course, brought him into contact with members of the Negro community. Though he has had no connection with the more militant S.N.C.C. ("I'm not particularly enamored of their position"), he is quite friendly with a local Negro Baptist minister who is also a professor at Morehouse College and president of the Atlanta chapter of N.A.A.C.P. This gentleman appears to be his main contact with the Negro community, but it is impossible to generalize about this. As Rabbi Rothschild told me:

> I don't need a channel to the Negro community. They call me. . . . I'm kind of a part of this whole thing. . . . I've spoken in their churches; we're on a first name basis. . . . You don't have to look for somebody [when something needs be done] . . . we just do it. . . .

One example of an activity which he carried on in concert with like-minded Negroes (and Whites) was the testimonial dinner for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which was given in 1965. The idea was Rabbi Rothschild's -- and he took it to some Negro friends, who received it enthusiastically. A committee was formed, with the rabbi at its head, and preparations were made to honor their city's only Nobel Prize winner. The White power structure, however, was not so enamored with the prospects of a Southern city honoring a Negro. Rabbi Rothschild was somewhat taken aback:

> . . . when we first met, I didn't visualize opposition. I thought that it would be perfectly acceptable to the Atlanta community that, yes, we honor a Nobel Peace Prize winner. But it didn't turn out that way. . . . A half dozen of us . . . went to the Mayor . . . but he is . . . at the mercy of the power structure too. . . . at which point both the power structure and the Mayor thought that this was the end of the matter -- because nothing happens in Atlanta without certain banks, and Coca Cola, and so on. But we weren't willing to give up. . . . we simply went ahead. . . . rented the Dinkler Plaza Hotel for the occasion. . . . and we figured that if we got 500 people this would be a nice dinner and it would honor King. . . . At this point, the power structure got wind of the fact that there was going to be a dinner. . . . they called a secret meeting [and decided to join us] . . . the whole thing turned around. Then the thing snowballed.

The rabbi faced one more minor "crisis" when King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,

tried to take over the entire affair, and make it into a money-raising function. Rothschild was adamant, "we're honoring a man, not raising money for him." Finally, King consented to come on the rabbi's terms, and the dinner took place as planned. The 500-person audience which Rabbi Rothschild expected turned out to number over 1600. At the evening's close, all of these people, Negro and White alike, stood up and sang the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome." Said Rabbi Rothschild: "This meeting was absolutely the most significant meeting that Atlanta ever had -- everybody said so."

One further incident seems worth reporting. Rabbi Rothschild received a phone call one evening from a Jewish girl, wife of a (White) professor at a local Negro college. Her husband, it turned out, had been given a twenty-day jail sentence for contempt of court while testifying in an integration case. Rothschild promised the wife he would try to help, and he immediately put in a call to a friend, the lawyer in charge of all the civil rights cases in Atlanta. The lawyer saw no hope for the man -- he had deserved the sentence. Rothschild decided to take the matter into his own hands.

The next morning, he went to the judge and asked him to reconsider. The judge invited the rabbi to testify that afternoon in open court on behalf of the professor. When Rothschild rose in the young man's defense, he argued as follows:

> Your Honor . . . I have the greatest respect for your court . . . I'm not questioning your action . . . justice is your department. But, Your Honor, I'm not a judge, I'm a rabbi, and just as justice is your department, so mercy is my department.

On the basis of this plea for mercy, the judge dismissed the charges. Rothschild continued the story: "After [the judge] . . . left the court room, the city solicitor came up to me and he said: 'Do you want to be on my staff? It's the first case that the Negroes have won in this court . . . in ten years!" According to the rabbi, "This is the sort of thing that they know I'm willing to do. . . . I wish that my own congregation held me in as high esteem as the Negro community does."

How has Rothschild's congregation reacted to his activities in the civil rights sphere? Surely this consideration has been of major importance to Rabbi Rothschild hemself. When referring to the prophets of old in one of his sermons, the rabbi thought out loud:

> They didn't have congregations. We do. They could preach and leave -- like Amos did. We can't. . . . the minister has an obligation to his congregation -- whether that body is willing to see it or not -- to lead and inspire and strengthen rather than run away. . . . There must be mutual trust and confidence and understanding. A dedicated leader can engender such confidence. He must guide with patience and be mindful of his role as teacher and friend. Hysteria, fulminations, extremism render him ineffective. He may become a hero in his own eyes -- and even in the eyes of some of his colleagues. But of what avail to be such a hero and yet to fail

> in his mission of lifting up his people to the vision of "what the Lord doth require of thee"?

All of this soul-searching became even more important during October, 1958, when congregation and rabbi faced their major crisis to date. On October 12, 1958, Atlanta became the fifth Southern city within eight months to look upon the crumbled walls of a Jewish community building. Only hours after it had been ringing with children's voices, Rabbi Rothschild's synagogue heard the boom of dynamite ushering in well over $200,000 in damages. Why his synagogue? According to the rabbi:

> I suppose that part of it, at least, was because I was so obviously identified with the civil rights movement. . . . But no member of my congregation ever said to me "We told you so". . . . What happened was . . . a small group of so-called Nazis . . . took advantage of an atmosphere of violence. . . . They used the atmosphere to bomb a synagogue, because they were specifically anti-Semitic. . . . [but] they misread the attitudes of the community . . . because the bombing . . . created a reaction . . . of such outrage that it backfired, and as a result of the bombing of the Temple, it now, for perhaps the first time in Atlanta, became possible to speak out. I'm firmly convinced that it was this episode that prevented Atlanta from becoming the same kind of closed society that Birmingham became, or Mississippi became. . . .

More than any other event, this bombing of the Temple served to unite the congregation behind its rabbi. This has been true to the extent that Rothschild could tell the writer:

> I have never been criticized by the board . . . they have been very patient, very understanding, and have really been, I think, most praiseworthy in their attitude. I have complete freedom of the pulpit, They have never in any way tried to stop me from either saying anything in the pulpit or taking an active part in the whole struggle. . . . They didn't always agree with me, but they gave me the right to speak and act.

It happened that once, a few years ago, a member of the congregation saw the rabbi's daughter eating lunch with a Negro girl in a local restaurant. Indignant about this, she sent a letter of resignation to the Board. Rabbi Rothschild recalled the incident:

> What happens when you get letters of resignation? Somebody says, "I move that it be accepted with regret," and somebody says, "I second it," and that's the end. Which is what happened . . . and some guy said, "Wait a minute, why should we accept it with regret?" . . . so they said, "We accept your resignation; we feel that you are absolutely right, because obviously your membership in the congregation has not taught you what Judaism really believes, and therefore your payment of dues is a waste of time."

Summing up, Rabbi Rothschild told the writer:

> I'm no longer a . . . loner in the community. The powers-that-be in the community are now saying what I have been saying all these years. So, not only does the congregation get a sort of "kvell" out of the fact that their rabbi represents the thinking of the best of the community -- they get a vicarious pleasure out of this now.

Rabbi Charles Mantinband

Charles Mantinband, a native of Norfolk, Virginia, has, since 1946, served three Southern communities. His pulpit from 1946 to 1951 was Florence, Alabama; in 1951 he left for Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he remained until 1962, when he departed for Longview, Texas. Since he was located, for most of the years under discussion in this paper, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, our interest will focus on his experiences in that community.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi, not unlike Florence, Alabama, is about as closed as the closed society gets. It is a small community, numbering less than 50,000, with a total Jewish population of about 175. The mood of Hattiesburg, when Rabbi Mantinband first arrived, and even more so after 1954, was sullen and defiant. It is Klan country, and not the place to look for liberals.

The Jewish community of Hattiesburg is only about fifty years old -- somewhat young for the South. The Jews are mostly upper-middle class merchants, and on the civil rights question they are understandably nervous. All this notwithstanding, Rabbi Mantinband had made certain vows to himself at the beginning of his years in the rabbinate, and he intended to live by them in Hattiesburg. As he told the writer:

> From the very beginning, I had to make up my mind to two things as to what I would do. The first was relatively easy, the second was a little harder, but I managed to do it -- and remain. I didn't come in, do it, and then run away. The first thing was that the pigmentation of a person's skin would make no difference to me in my relationship to him. . . . I would judge a man, if I would judge him at all . . . in terms of his merit, his worth. That means that Negroes came to my home, through the front door, sat at my table, all the time, and that was my private affair. That was not too difficult. . . . The second thing was much harder. I vowed that I would never sit in the presence of bigotry and hear it uttered . . . that I would not voice a contrary opinion, and make my opposition felt and heard and known. I wouldn't be histrionic about it . . . I wouldn't try to make a speech. I just would register . . . what my religion compels me to think, and feel, and be, and how it makes me behave. And when they would say to me, "God is a segregationist, because the Bible is full of it, " I always ripped out a Bible and I would open it to where the very opposite is stated and say, "Do you mean here? or do you mean there? or do you mean the other place?" And then they would say, "You're too smart for your pants."

Rabbi Mantinband took his vows seriously. He told the writer of one unpleasant incident, out of many, which came about because of his personal standards. The rabbi had been given a parsonage (or rabbinage, if you will) directly across the street from the Temple. Negro visitors were frequently to be seen entering and leaving through his front door. At one board meeting, the matter was raised by a congregant, who warned, "You must remember, rabbi, this is our property." The rabbi continued the story:

> I said, "Yes, it is your house, but it is my home. If you want your house back, I'll give it to you back. But you can't tell me how to live my personal private life." . . . The non-Jewish public wasn't quite so pleasant about it. They would telephone with obscenities . . . and say, "You just tell that rabbi if he's going to see any of those nigger friends, we'll run him out of town."

They tried to do just that on more than one occasion.

Rabbi Mantinband's activities in the struggle for Negro equality were not of a sporadic, occasional nature. The philosophy was too much a part of the man -- he could not separate thought from deed. In 1964 he wrote:

> Product of a Southern society and a segregated school system, I have for a long time felt that the supreme sin of our day is segregation, as monstrous an evil as any in our Western civilization.

Feeling as he did, Rabbi Mantinband early sought means to rid his society of this "evil." In Florence, when he heard rumors that the Ku Klux Klan was organizing a chapter in the town, he privately approached some of the top Christians in the community and convinced them to begin applying pressure. The Klan never made it in Florence. Also, while in Alabama, Rabbi Mantinband began his twenty year connection with the Southern Regional Council and with the state Councils on Human Relations. After moving to Hattiesburg, he switched to the Mississippi Council of Human Relations, and soon began a two-year stint as Mississippi state chairman. He has likewise served on the board of the South-wide Southern Regional Council. It has been no little thing, in a state where the "white nigger" is despised above

all others, for a man living in a town like Hattiesburg to be so openly a part of these hated organizations.

Rabbi Mantinband, to no one's surprise, had his own ideas about which organizations were worthy of dislike. One group which he has had very little use for is the White Citizens Council. There was a branch in Hattiesburg, and its members had a habit of leaving their segregationist literature in various spots around town, like the post office. Rabbi Mantinband had his own little group which used to go out, every so often, pick up the pamphlets and unceremoniously dispose of them.

Within his congregation, the rabbi seldom preached on civil rights. As he explained:

> I didn't feel that was the function of a sermon. I might do it by way of illustration, I might do it more easily at a forum, or in a lecture, or in an adult study class. I didn't want people to say that I used or abused the pulpit for a particular partisan purpose. Yet, on the other hand, there never was any doubt in anybody's mind as to where I stood. . . . so I don't use the sermon for that purpose for I think there are other and better ways.

On at least one occasion, he did devote a sermon to the evils of segregation. Years before James Meredith, an intelligent Negro young man named Clyde Kennard attempted to integrate near-by Southern Mississippi University. In a short time, he was framed, placed in prison, and eventually died in his cell. Mantinband could not keep quiet; he spoke from the pulpit about the tragedy -- much to the

chagrin of many of his congregants. On the whole, however, the pulpit was not Rabbi Mantinband's platform for civil rights statements.

Other places were. The rabbi spoke frequently on the subject at nearby colleges, Negro and White. Again there was opposition within his synagogue:

> My congregation has been troubled about these public appearances. . . . They fear reprisal, harassment, violence. No amount of assurance has allayed their misgivings. . . . when my Temple's board urged that I cancel my visits to Negro colleges, I told them I would, on condition that I also refuse invitations to white colleges and be allowed to inform the authorities why. When the board urged that I refrain from speaking on the race problem, I said I would, if the daily press would also fall in line.

Rabbi Mantinband continues to accept such invitations and continues to speak. In addition, he has been an active member of Rotary and the Ministerial Association, and has spoken on this controversial issue at their meetings. There are few inter-faith and brotherhood activities in his communities in which he has not participated, and, often, this has meant some allusion to civil rights. It might be mentioned, also, that Rabbi Mantinband usually had a good deal to do with the writing of the annual race relations messages issued by the Committee on Justice and Peace of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. After having written or helped write it, Mantinband would distribute copies of the message to his congregants.

It was inevitable that the bigots of the community would try to silence this all-too-vocal rabbi. Rabbi Mantinband learned to live with telephone harassment and veiled threats. He developed a sense of humor to deflate his antagonists. But one day, in 1958, he needed more than a sense of humor. He was walking down one of the city streets, when he met the town's ex-mayor, who was also the president of the White Citizens Council, and a first-name acquaintance of the rabbi. The discussion, as related by Rabbi Mantinband, went something like this, with the ex-mayor speaking first:

> "After the bombing of the synagogue in Atlanta," he said to me, "I told my boys at the last Council meeting how foolish it was to bomb a synagogue which, after all, was lifeless. . . I hoped they would not do anything like that in the city of Hattiesburg. If they wanted to know who the real mischief maker was, his name was Rabbi Mantinband . . . I know his personal habits, I know where he lives, I can tell you how to get at him if you decide that's what you really want to do." Well, I could not believe my ears, because this was a threat of violence by a fellow who was in dead earnest. . . . I had to do some quick thinking. I don't scare easily. Usually I parry some of these efforts with humor, but this was no laughing matter. So I took out a piece of paper . . . I noted the time . . . the place . . . exactly what he had said. "What are you doing?" said this gentlman, I said, "I won't ask you to sign it, because you'll probably refuse to do that . . . I'm going to take it to the F.B.I. and I'm going to take it to the first five representative White Christians I meet in this town, and I'm going to say to them, 'Mr. So and So, President of the White Citizens Council, threatened me in this fashion.' . . .

> and if ever in the next ten years anything ever happens to me, I'm going to ask them to arrest you for creating the climate in which this type of thing would be possible." "Oh," he said, "don't do that. I was only trying to be funny; I was only joking; I didn't really mean it that way." . . . But I did go to the F.B.I. and I did go to that five people, and that fellow and I lived in that town -- he never looked me in the face again because I had called his hand.

Another incident worth reporting happened in 1958. News of Rabbi Mantinband's courage reached the directors of the Taconic Foundation in New York, and they sent a check for $2500 to his Hattiesburg congregation in honor of their rabbi and "his sane approach to the race question." The gift threw the congregation into a panic. Before accepting the money, they conducted a months-long investigation, to determine who, exactly, their benefactors were. The matter eventually came to a head and Rabbi Mantinband made his position quite clear -- no money, no rabbi. The congregation accepted the money, and in the process, voted five-to-one to extend life tenure to their rabbi, who had almost got away.

Strange, you might say. Why would they want him? The answer is probably closely related to why Rabbi Mantinband has managed to last so long in the Deep South. Harry Golden explains this paradox as follows: in the Bible Belt, where religion is such a major force, a rabbi who speaks or acts out of religious convictions is put up with -- simply out of respect for his being a man of God. Mantinband himself has another analysis, one

which the writer feels much closer to the truth:

> . . . when you live in a town long enough, you get to know everybody, and you're given the opportunity to befriend everybody. And, if after ten years or more you have gotten this fellow a job, and this fellow you visited when he was in the hospital, and this person you were able to get a scholarship for his child, and this person you did a favor -- served on a committee with him . . . they'll say, "Well now, this fellow is out of step, and he's ahead of his times and he's crazy -- we don't like what he says -- but don't you touch him, he's my friend, and I like him!" Whatever the case may be, I stayed a long time.

In the New South, the official publication of the Southern Regional Council, a non-Jewish observer saw it much the same way:

> Still, and all, it is possible in the South for a man to be what he is, speak what he believes and stand up to segregationist hatred, as our Rabbi Charles Mantinband has stoutly demonstrated for 15 or 16 years in darkest Alabama and Mississippi. . . . I think Rabbi Mantinband . . . survives his environs so handsomely, despite his freely and frequently expressed view that all men are equal, because he sees no man as his enemy, not even that city official, Temple constituent or White Citizens Council race-saver who threatens him with violence, damage to his church or removal from Hattiesburg. . . . the first time I saw him. . . . I figured that if you're good enough, you can say and do what you believe anywhere.[158]

Rabbi Mantinband has, indeed, been good enough. It was a matter of love for many -- respect for others. He might be "meshugah," but he was their rabbi. The rabbi seemed to speak with just a touch of astonishment in his voice when he told the writer:

> . . . I lived there for many years, and when I left I got the key to the city, and I had an open invitation from the two local colleges and from the Chamber of Commerce, and from the Ministerial Group, to come back anytime I wanted and I'd always be received with open arms -- and they knew my position!

In 1962, Rabbi Mantinband left Mississippi for Longview, Texas. There has been considerable speculation as to why he made the change. James Silver, in Mississippi: the Closed Society, hints that the rabbi could no longer weather the day-to-day struggle:

> On Washington's birthday, 1963 [sic], Rabbi Mantinband wrote in obvious distress: "The 'why' of Mississippi is anybody's guess. I suspect we are lacking in courage and in true spirituality. Some of us are very lonely." Four months later he moved to Texas.[159]

The rabbi explains it differently:

> I think it ought to be said that most of . . . my colleagues think I left because it was a good time to get out of Mississippi, and that my life was in danger; that "he who fights and runs away will live to fight another day." Actually, that is not the fact. I left under flying colors. I moved because of special circumstances of a personal nature: [in Longview] we were near our grandchildren and we were near our family . . . there was a brand new congregation that challenged me . . . I still have close contact with Mississippi.

Is the rabbi being honest with himself? To a good extent, I think so. He has too often shown himself to be constitutionally unable to run away. Two years prior to his

departure he wrote: "There are temptations for a Rabbi to desert the scene and go into less turbulent pastures. But some of us feel this is a gigantic struggle, and we measure our work in terms of opportunity rather than achievement." Whatever the case, he moved to Longview. His prayer, uttered five years ago, is that, "with God's help, I may continue to live in a house by the side of the road, and be a friend to man." The reader will, I hope, pardon the writer's subjectivity and allow him to add a personal "Amen."

"In His Generation"

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that at least part of Rabbi Rothschild's fame as a civil rights activist can be traced to the relative liberalism of the city in which he resides. Surely Atlanta, when contrasted with Hattiesburg, Mississippi, appears an absolute haven for liberals. Many of my informants have seen fit to judge Rabbi Rothschild a little less favorably for this reason -- and the writer recognizes his own tendency to do likewise. But, I am reminded of a rabbinic midrash on the verse in Genesis: "And Noah was a completely righteous man in his generation." The question the rabbis posed was, is this last phrase meant to qualify Noah's praise, or is it meant as a further compliment to him? The first answer suggested is that it is indeed, a

qualification: in a generation of evil men, Noah appeared completely righteous, but he would not stand out so prominently in a generation of more righteous persons. The second response is that it adds further praise to Noah, since if he was righteous among the wicked, when it is so much easier to be wicked like one's neighbors, he would have been even more righteous in a happier time-place situation. With very little maneuvering, it would be possible to apply these questions and answers to Rabbis Rothschild and Mantinband -- would one have appeared less an activist in a more "open" environment; would the other have been more hesitant in a more "closed society?" The reader is free to consider the matter as much as he deems necessary or desireable. I must, however, remove myself from the controversy, with the suggestion that this question is one of the many which will be decided, if decided at all, only when the Messiah has come.

CHAPTER V

THE SOUTHERN RABBI AND CIVIL RIGHTS: EVALUATIONS

In the preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to survey Southern rabbinic participation in the civil rights movement. It is now time to evaluate the findings and ask, how important has the Southern rabbi been in this struggle? In this chapter, the question will be answered by four groups of analysts: the rabbis themselves, Jewish, but non-rabbinic informants; White Protestant interviewees (affiliated at one time, if not at the moment, with the Southern Regional Council); and some of the Negro civil rights leaders. The writer will reserve his comments for a later chapter.

The Southern Rabbis: As They See Themselves

Chapter III opened with a dilemma: two quotes, one in high praise of the rabbis, one condemning their inactivity. It has been possible to find both of these positions, slightly modified, among the Southern rabbis themselves. Let us begin with the former.

In a talk delivered in 1965 by Rabbi "A" to a congregational audience in Chicago, the rabbi said:

> So far as your Jewish brethren in the South are concerned, let me state quite

> frankly and honestly -- they are frightened. To be sure, along with the majority of your Rabbis, there are many courageous and liberal Jews. These people have voted for liberal laws, and have continued to make their views known. . . . They have persevered in their pursuit of the ethical and moral imperative -- even though some of them check their cars every morning, to be sure no bomb is attached to the starter. [underscoring added]

Another rabbi, Elijah Palnick, wrote in an article in the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Journal, about his Southern colleagues, that though they have consistently camouflaged their participation in the civil rights struggle, "if the truth were known, these same men in the Southern pulpits would be acknowledged as heroes of prophetic social action."[160] Yet another of my informants spoke in a similar fashion: "Very frankly, I think that the rabbis in the South . . . did all that they could do to be helpful in the process of desegregation, which is of course different than 'integr ati o n'. . . . to my knowledge every rabbi [save for Rabbi "m," whom he excepts] did about everything he could do."[161] And Rabbi Randall Falk, when discussing his own community, told the writer:

> I think unquestionably the Reform rabbis in Nashville . . . have been in the front ranks of the leadership in the civil rights movement in the South. This has not been true of the Conservative or Orthodox rabbis, though both of them have been cooperative in following our leadership.

The opinions of these four men represent a definite minority viewpoint among my rabbinic informants.

More common was the negative, or modified negative evaluation. Rabbi Charles Mantinband, in private correspondence, sadly commented: "Six years after the Supreme Court's historic decision, our mood remains sullen and defiant. . . . It is difficult to be optimistic. . . . Lillian Smith of Georgia speaks of a conspiracy of silence. This particularly characterizes our Rabbis and other Jewish leaders." He enlarged on this in an interview with the writer:

> I'm very sorry to say that the great disappointment for me has been the lack of a role of leadership on the part of the rabbi of the South. If you examine the tenure of office of the rabbis of the South, you'll find that most of them have stayed a good long while. But most of them have played it safe -- I think they've been opportunistic, and I think they have been lacking in the courage it takes to rise to the challenge of the present crisis. I'm not sitting in judgment on them -- perhaps if I were built differently, if I had a thinner skin, perhaps, if I were twenty-five years younger, I might be a little more fearful myself. You mentioned before Rabbi Rothschild . . . Rabbi [Perry] Nussbaum . . . Rabbi [Levi] Olan . . . and Rabbi [Marvin] Reznikoff . . . [with] myself in Hattiesburg [and] in northern Alabama, and I would say that there might be a half a dozen others like that [who were active in the civil rights struggle] . Not that [the others] . . . don't do good work . . . but they haven't allowed their names to be seen, or they haven't stood up to be counted -- and they haven't struggled day in and day out with the problem. . . . they haven't joined the Council on Human Relations. . . . I would be inclined to think that most rabbis played it cozy -- and it's not to my liking.

Rabbi Mantinband is not alone in this position. One of the New Orleans rabbis interviewed said:

> Any of the rabbis . . . did what they could, or what they felt they could, but none of us made himself a spearhead or got out on a limb and sawed himself off. The situation in New Orleans was that there was nobody who was going to stand with you to back you up. You were going to be a leader without anybody to lead, and none of us felt he could afford to put himself in that kind of a position. I know I felt that way, and I assume the others felt that way. . . . Oh, rabbis have protested, they've spoken, they've been identified and so on -- but I don't think any rabbi has done anything which has been in any way a turning point. . . . [he then excepted Rabbi "H" from this judgment] [162]

The reader might recall another rabbi's evaluation, mentioned earlier. When asked about the part he and his Southern colleagues played in the civil rights struggle, he replied:

> I would say it would have been a secondary role; it wouldn't have been a major role. I think that our very nature . . . the fact that our congregations were never in the forefront of it -- were always waiting to see what the Gentiles did first -- prevented the rabbis from being the great outspoken leaders that some have been in other parts of the country.[163]

Yet another rabbi showed signs of disappointment regarding his Southern colleagues when, in a letter of congratulations and encouragement to Rabbi Emmet Frank, he concluded: "I only wish more rabbis in the south recognized the danger of silence to southern Jewry."

The third opinion, proferred by quite a few of my rabbinic informants, was of a more generous nature, yet it kept far away from the unconditional praise contained in the first evaluation (see above, p.167). It is best represented by this statement of Rabbi "X":

> I think that the [Southern] rabbinate as a whole would at least have some outstanding personalities. . . . by and large, speaking of the rabbinate, I think that it was commendable. . . . I'm rather proud of [it] . . . . At least people knew who they were -- whether it did anything or not. They didn't belong to the wrong group.

Another rabbi, long in his Deep South pulpit, spoke in a similar manner:

> Most of our men, including myself, have worked quietly, have followed their conscience, have not been interested in headlines. There are a few rabbis who . . . have been in situations where they were able to follow a more dynamic Christian leadership, have a more liberal press, had a milieu which was more amenable. . . . I think there are many men who have played a significant role.[164]

Two of the rabbis discussed in this paper as being among the most active participants in the civil rights struggle,[165] seem to sum up this last position in the fewest words. Said one: "I think that the perspective of history would show that we did a good deal but not enough," while the other was even more brief: "[We have done] more than the ministers, but not enough."

"But not enough. . . ." This is what the large majority of Southern rabbis seem to say about themselves

and their colleagues. But, to them, this is a far cry from saying "very little," or "nothing at all." There is, in fact, considerable resentment against their Northern colleagues, who sit "a thousand miles away" and -- all too commonly -- condemn their Southern co-workers as being inexcusably silent. This is a tender spot with many a Southern rabbi, and, the writer would suggest, to a great extent, rightfully so. The words spoken by Rabbi Richard Hirsch, Director of the Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, seem worthy of consideration:

> I am not quick on the trigger to criticize the Southern rabbi the way a lot of our colleagues would . . . because I say to myself, the very fellows who are criticizing chose not to go to the South. What are they doing in their communities? How do I know how they would act if they were in their place -- you know, "Al tadin et chavercha ad she-tagiya lim'komo" [i.e. Don't judge another until you're in his place] . I think you have to be careful not to impugn the motives of people, particularly when you know your own motives may not be of the highest.

The Southern Rabbis: As Viewed by Coreligionists

Most of my non-rabbinic, Jewish sources tended to be hard on the Southern rabbinate. One who was about as complimentary as any, was Lloyd Gartner, writing in Conservative Judaism:

> Readers of this journal require no reminder of the large number of rabbis who have visited the South for the [civil rights] cause. More should be known about those who have done arduous, difficult service in their local communities. The pioneers in this sphere have been Reform rabbis, for whom social action is a tradition of three generations. . . .[166]

Also complimentary, but only of selected individuals, and generally referring to just the past few years, are writers like Harry Golden and Ruth Silberstein. Mr. Golden, writing in Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes, said:

> If the local Protestant Church of the South has a sorry record in the social revolution, the Jewish fellowships in the South have an even sorrier record. . . . The Catholic clergy did not back away from the problem. The Protestant clergy did back away from the Negro, and the rabbinate, while not backing away from the Negro, backed away from the Protestants.[167]

One section of Golden's book is devoted to praise of Rabbi Charles Mantinband. After discussing this rabbi, Golden continues:

> Rabbi Mantinband was not alone. Rabbi Marvin Reznikoff of . . . Baton Rouge, Louisiana, not only helped integrate his Ministerial Alliance but actually defied the legislators in the Louisiana capitol. Rabbi Robert Kahn of . . . Houston, Texas, was the author of the Race Relations message of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and . . . Rabbi Percy [Perry] Nussbaum . . . was consistent in his heroic stand for justice, both in and out of his pulpit.[168]

Just as Golden reserves his praise for precious few, so also Ruth Silberstein, writing in the Congress Weekly,

is hesitant to count too many Southern rabbis among the "activists.":

> There is now under way a reappraisal by Southern Jews of their attitudes on the integration issue. A number of Jews despite their sympathy with desegregation have thought it prudent to maintain silence about the issue and not risk the possible loss of social and economic status. This attitude has recently been questioned by several rabbis and other Jewish leaders in the South. . . . Several rabbis in the South. . . . have been speaking out in favor of integration in the face of much criticism. Prominent among these are Charles Mantinband . . . Jacob Rothschild . . . and Hyman J. Schachtel and Robert I. Kahn, of Houston, Texas. . . . Rabbi William B. Silverman . . . has been particularly frank and outspoken in denouncing this retreat of Jews into silence.[169] [underscoring added]

Less given to praise is Joshua Fishman. In an article written for Midstream, he paints a rather sad picture of the Southern rabbinate:

> The spiritual isolation of the few "exposed" Jewish individuals [in the South] seemed clear. . . . Rabbi Mantinband . . . and Rabbi Rothschild . . . were the only Jewish sources of spiritual comfort and support mentioned to me. On the other hand, my Methodist, Episcopal and labor informants seemed to feel far less alone. . . .[170]

And least complimentary of all was sociologist Dr. James A. Jones (formerly of Columbia University), who, in a paper on Jewish participation in the civil rights movement, wrote: " . . . Southern rabbis have equivocated in the civil rights struggle. . . ."[171]

These five individuals represent the extent of my findings in periodicals and books as to the participation of Southern rabbis in the civil rights issue. The last source quoted, though not himself Jewish, was taking part in a panel discussion on the subject sponsored by (and reported in) Jewish Currents, and thus I have allowed myself the liberty of including him in this section (though he might fit better in the next). The writer was surprised to find that there are very few references, and no known studies, by Jew or Christian, which deal specifically with the role the Southern rabbi has played in the civil rights movement. This tends to increase the importance of the material which could be gained through interviews.

One of my interviewees was for twelve years a regional director for the American Jewish Committee, with his office serving much of the South. His evaluation of the Southern rabbinate was not too favorable:

> The Jewish clergy was not particularly relevant in the earlier days of the civil rights movement in the South . . . as various members of the Christian clergy took on leadership roles, and got some support, the rabbi . . . felt embarrased by non-participation . . . and as a result was energized into doing something about it. . . . If you're talking about in the fifties, particularly in the period immediately after the Supreme Court decision in 1954, I had a feeling that the Southern Jewish rabbi -- at least in the communities that I

> covered -- was essentially a follower and not a leader of his congregation when it came to civil rights. That, by and large, he was . . . told to remain neutral on this subject, and did so. . . .

The second man interviewed was a regional director for the Anti-Defamation League, working out of Atlanta from 1948 to 1962. His major responsibility was a four state area -- consisting of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina. In a lengthy interview, he commented on nearly all the rabbis who had been serving pulpits in his area during his fourteen years with the A.D.L.. Though he praised a few men (Mantinband, Rothschild, William Silverman, and Alfred Goodman), by far his most frequent comments were "he was friendly to civil rights, but did nothing," or "he played no role." This interviewee even classified four men by name (and several others not by name) as being active opponents of the civil rights struggle. When asked to explain what he meant by this, he answered: "Opposed to civil rights means speaking within the confines of his congregation in opposition to civil rights activity." After checking this informant's analysis of the various rabbis in his area against other data which the writer had at his disposal -- often including letters from or interviews with the actual men involved -- his comments are almost without exception supported. Thus, I tend to weight very heavily his overall evaluation of the Southern rabbinate, which is contained

in the following statements made to the writer:

> Most rabbis were privately in favor of civil rights, and so expressed themselves to me . . . [but] most rabbis . . . did not take public positions. . . . In general, I would say that the rabbinate neither helped nor hindered, with some outstanding exceptions on both sides. . . . In the main, certainly up until . . . 1960 or so, the rabbis played only that role that the clergy played . . . and I think that the role of the Church in the South was a relatively unimportant one, in so far as civil rights are concerned. . . . They tended to follow, rather than lead the public, and I think the rabbinate falls into that category, always making room for the exceptions that I've indicated. . . . Religion played no positive role, and played a negative role by default. That is, where they had a responsibility, and . . . could have been a very important influence in the South -- by not playing that role, they then played a negative role.

The Southern Rabbis: As Viewed by Christian Analysts

Here my sources were of a varied nature: a brief reference in Alfred O. Hero's The Southerner and World Affairs, interviews with two former regional directors of the Southern Regional Council, an interview with the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, and correspondence with Mr. Aaron Henry and the office of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr..

Mr. Hero notes in passing that:

> Although most Reform rabbis who have held pulpits in smaller Southern communities have not been among the more intellectually vigorous, and such congregations have in a number of cases called relatively conservative spiritual leaders, most rabbis in the region in the early sixties. . . . seemed to

> continue to inform their congregations of their [liberal] views on world affairs as on other public issues, including race.[172]

Fred Routh, the first of the Southern Regional Council directors that I interviewed, served out of Miami, Florida, during the years 1954 to 1959. His analysis was among the most favorable that I discovered during my research. After praising Rabbis Mantinband, Rothschild, and Nussbaum (the latter with some reservations), Mr. Routh turned to the Southern rabbinate as a whole:

> I think that any adequate history . . . of the times would include the religious leadership, including the rabbinate, as a significant part of the leadership moving toward transition and toward desegregation. Perhaps not . . . [as much of a part as] some of the activists in the field would hope -- but perhaps more than the traditionalists . . . would have expected. . . . They served in many ways . . . the support that clergy gave to the laity in their congregations [was important]. Time and time again people who were in the business community, or were educators, or perhaps were public office-holders, turned to the rabbi, to the minister, or to the priest in his own congregation and quietly asked for help and guidance -- and received it. Any adequate history of the times would take into account several . . . levels of leadership. One would be the frontal and aggressive and dramatic leadership that certain of the clergy gave. . . . Another . . . level would be the role of participation on the boards as an officer of one of the civil rights . . . agencies. Still another would be that of being a conscience in the general community and a conscience to his own congregation. And, finally, as a counsellor to members

> of the congregation who were participating . . . in the events of those difficult times.

The second informant, Harold Fleming, was regional director for the Council serving out of Atlanta during most of the years covered by this paper. He also began by praising Rabbis Mantinband and Rothschild -- the only rabbis he remembered by name. When asked to comment on the Southern rabbinate as a whole, Mr. Fleming responded:

> In terms of the public role, most of . . . the rabbis would fall into the same range as the moderate Protestant minister. Very few rabbis that I've ever heard of were on the extreme right of the spectrum -- most of them were quietly in the middle. A few were quite conservative, and a few were activists and liberals, but most of them were playing what, in those days, was known as the "moderate role." They were willing to go along on things that, hopefully, somebody else would initiate -- like the ministers' statements that sprang up over the South in '58 or so. . . . My guess is that, taken as a group, the rabbis in the South did a great deal more than we realize and that's on the record -- once the tide had begun to turn somewhat. . . . to help engineer the kind of moderate community response that helped to change the public posture in the South.

Quite varied in their analyses have been the Negro civil rights activists whom I interviewed. Most complimentary among them, would be Thomas Offenburger, public relations representative of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In a letter sent to the writer, Mr. Offenburger states:

> History will show that Southern rabbis have made an enormous contribution of advice, active leadership, public and private support to the civil rights movement and specifically to Dr. King.

The great discrepancy between this analysis and those given by Aaron Henry and Rev. Shuttlesworth, added to the fact that Mr. Offenburger is a public relations man, causes me to be somewhat skeptical of his judgment.

The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, a key participant in the civil rights struggle in the South, took a less complimentary, but by no means excessively critical view of the Southern rabbinate. He told the writer:

> It's difficult to categorize the White clergy. . . . You found sporadic situations where there were Catholics and some Jewish rabbis who took the lead. . . . I don't know of any instances where the rabbis started the action, but in New Orleans and in one or two other places the Jewish rabbinate gave supportive evidence pretty well. . . . because the Jews control a lot of the financial institutions [which were being boycotted and picketed by the Negro community] . . . . because of self-interest, and, I would presume, to a large degree because of their understanding that we're living in a new day where changes have to be made, many of them became involved -- especially in the later years. . . . many rabbis . . . were at least encouraging to the people who would dare speak out. They would come to rallies, they would offer a prayer, they would speak and make statements of brotherhood -- and all of this helped.

Possibly significant is the fact that Rev. Shuttlesworth could not recall the name of a single rabbi who was an

"activist" -- it might denote more than a poor memory on his part.

As critical of the rabbis as any of my informants was Aaron Henry, state president of Mississippi's N.A.A.C.P. In a letter to the writer he stated very candidly:

> Unfortunately, I live in the hometown of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz. . . . He has good warm relations with the White Citizens Councils and the John Birch Society. . . . It appears that he has strong control of the Jewish rabbis of the State, and hence we have no participation by the Rabbis in the civil rights movement. The last participation by a Rabbi was from Rabbi Mountinban [Mantinband] of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. A Rabbi Bon Ami [David Ben Ami] followed him and tried to carry on the program of Rabbi Mountinban. The pressures were too great for Rabbi Bon Ami who lasted about a year.[173] This was around 1960. Since then Rabbi ["H"] . . . has joined the Mississippi Council of Human Relations. He, however, is about the most conservative member of the Council. . . . you asked about Jews in the South and Rabbis particularly. Sorry, they are not with it.

Rabbis, analysts, activists -- their evaluations cover the spectrum from praise to disapproval. But in the process they possibly provide material which can permit us a general conclusion of our own. This indeed will be our preoccupation in a later chapter. For the moment, there are still a few additional matters to be covered.

CHAPTER VI

GETTING THE JOB DONE: A WORD ON METHODOLOGY

When a Southern rabbi wished to play some role in advancing the civil rights struggle, there were many modes of activity open to him. Though these channels for participation tended to increase in proportion to the "open-ness" of the community, we have in Rabbi Charles Mantinband an example that most of them might also be found in the smallest Deep South hamlet. And what were some of these modes of activity? From our earlier discussion it is obvious that they included, among other things: preaching in one's own Temple, working on a one-to-one basis with individual congregants, bringing integrated activities into the synagogue, holding educational programs within the Temple, and evidencing in one's personal relationships with members of the Negro community the depth of one's commitment to civil rights. Then also there was participation in service organizations (partially for civil rights purposes), affiliation with civil rights oriented groups or standing committees, involvement in ad hoc committees meant to find solutions for civil rights problems, involvement with fellow clergy through groups, statements, and so forth, and the employing of personal relationships with members of the city's

power structure to accomplish civil rights goals. And we have not yet exhausted the means available to the rabbi, for the reader will recall that many rabbis spoke occasionally or frequently before church congregations, civic groups, Negro and White college audiences. Others used the mass media to get across their message, another worked by destroying segregationist propaganda passed out in the community, a third worked closely with the Negro community to the extent of planning a dinner for Martin Luther King. Possibilities of involvement appear to depend much on the rabbi's imagination and inclination -- there are many roads open to those who would walk them. However, basic to which paths an individual rabbi might chose or reject, is his own approach to three very crucial methodological controversies. Though I will treat them separately, the reader will note that, at best, but a thin line divides the three subjects.

To Be or Not To Be . . . An Organization Man

Many types of organizations can be found in a Southern community. There is the Ministerial Association (usually segregated, not infrequently closed to priests and rabbis); possibly an off-shoot of it which is less prestigious but more moderate; there are the civic and patriotic groups, social groups, and what have you. A rabbi,

concerned with establishing himself in the community, getting to know the "important people," and gaining a larger audience for his views, might wish to affiliate at least with the ministerial, civic and patriotic groups. Such has been the decision of many men, in both the large and small communities. Thus, one rabbi, quite active in the civil rights arena, told the writer that he early "joined everything he could join."[174] And, the reader will recall similar statements by other men (e.g., Rabbi "X": "It is absolutely essential if a rabbi can get in [civic groups]," and Rabbi "Z": "My Rotary contacts were very useful. . . ."). Some of the most prominent "activist" rabbis have been participating members of such groups, notably Rabbis Mantinband, Julian Feibelman, Alfred Goodman, and Perry Nussbaum. This does not mean that the rabbis who join necessarily enjoy their connection with the various organizations; one advised that a rabbi should join them "whether you like them or not;"[175] another said that they "turn my stomach."[176]

It is no wonder, especially in the Deep South, that the civic and patriotic groups can "turn a liberal's stomach." Possibly two short statements by W. J. Simmons, organizer of one of the Deep South White Citizens Councils, and co-head of all Councils in Mississippi, will make the point for me:

> The main way Councils were organized was through the service clubs. [Robert] Patterson or I would go and make a talk to Rotary or Kiwanis or Civitans or Exchange or Lions. We'd tell them what the Council movement is, what fellows were doing in different communities. Invariably the response was favorable[177]

> If you take the Farm Bureau, Rotary, Kiwanis and Lion clubs out of the Citizens' Council movement, you wouldn't have much left.[178]

Of all the Southern rabbis, only one, Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, has been identified as being in harmony with the political and (according to my informants) social viewpoints of these organizations. Yet many have joined -- and a few have used their affiliation to some advantage in the civil rights field.

Many rabbis are also to be found on the rolls of specifically civil rights groups, like the Councils on Human Relations. Often, according to some of my informants, they are little more than members in name only; occasionally they are leaders. The latter has been true of Rabbis Mantinband, Goodman, Silverman, and, to some extent, Nussbaum. But, most Southern rabbis have lent little more than moral support to activist civil rights organizations.

Some rabbis forsake civil rights organizations entirely. One told the writer:

> I am not an organization man for a lot of reasons. I do not belong to N.A.A.C.P., never have, and I have no intention of so doing. I have never belonged to C.O.R.E., certainly not to S.N.C.C.. I do whatever I do in accordance with the dictates of my conscience. . . .[179]

While one of his colleagues (Rabbi "e") wrote:

> I have not joined with others in any organized effort to achieve these [civil rights] views, for I feel that whatever I can do is not strengthened but weakened by binding myself to a platform.

All in all, the Southern rabbi has been more a "joiner" than a "loner." He has frequently affiliated with the civic and patriotic organizations, though he may not find them appealing; he has often joined with civil rights oriented groups or committees, and he has usually participated in the Ministerial Association. The crucial point, however, is that he has not seen fit to use these organizations, in the majority of cases, to further the civil rights struggle. Part of the reason for this will emerge in our consideration of the next topics.

The Southern Rabbi and "Christian Interference"

Many a Southern rabbi has been hesitant to "carry the ball" without at least one Christian "running his interference." The classic statement of this is the one

by Rabbi Elijah Palnick:

> . . . the Jew [read "rabbi"] can realize the dictates of his religious commitment in a manner consistent with common sense if he can secure a non-Jew to do what needs to be done. . . .[180]

With the Jewish population in the South generally less than one percent of the total, it is not too difficult to understand why this is so. And this hesitancy can be reflected in all aspects of a man's rabbinate -- certainly in his unwillingness to "push civil rights" in outside organizations or to speak frankly in the community. I asked many of the rabbis for their reaction to Palnick's statement, and found a good proportion of them to be in agreement with the rabbi from Little Rock. One of them told the writer: "I've never been involved in any activity on my own. . . . [since] you strengthen the cause all the way around if you have a Christian or some others with you."[181] This man, when offered the presidency of his city's Committee on Community Relations refused "on the grounds that I didn't think it helpful to the cause to have a member of a minority group trying to advance the rights of a minority group." This was substantially the position of Rabbi "J" also, and of Rabbi "H", who said:

> I was not going to do what the Christian power structure was not going to do.

> My own philosophy was that I would not be a leader. I'd be glad to be a vice-president, but not a president. I'd go along . . . I was content to be a gad-fly, trying to get some of the Christian leadership to do a few things. But overt influencing -- no, I wouldn't do it, because I'd be doing it as a lone wolf -- no support.

Only two men, of the Southern rabbis questioned specifically on this point, reacted negatively to Rabbi Palnick's statement. One was Rabbi "Z," who told the writer that he would be "exonerated in the eyes of those in the congregation who opposed" his activity if he had Christians involved in the activity with him -- but only "involved," and not necessarily "in front." It was not inconceivable for him to lead the interference for others -- which is, in fact, what he often did. Rabbi Willaim Silverman was even more clearly opposed:

> No sir, I don't agree! I think you ought to have a Gentile at your side. It's helpful. But, if you can't have one at your side -- do it alone.

The informant once connected with the American Jewish Committee, showed some dissatisfaction with the philosophy that a rabbi must never seek to act alone, or at the head:

> A substantial number of the Jewish clergy, having good contacts in the Christian community, have used their good relationships as a means of giving aid and solace to their Christian clergy friends who were really up on the firing line. The assumption is that by giving solace they were actually doing something for the civil rights movement. In many cases, what was being

> done was inadequate to the need. . . . Jews were conspicuous by their absence. . . .

Finally Harold Fleming, the Southern Regional Council director who had worked out of Atlanta, gave his reaction to Rabbi Palnick's statement:

> In general I agree . . . that it's best and most effective for these efforts to be both interracial and interfaith. I see no reason why the rabbis . . . should necessarily have to bear any special burden. On the other hand, if it is a question of conscience . . . anybody who . . . is sensitive enough to know what needs to be done . . . has an obligation to do it, whether he's Jewish, or Protestant, or whatever he may be. I do not agree . . . that the Jews should be a special case the other way, that is, that they should be especially abstinent in these activities. . . . if it can't get done any other way than by the rabbi being the head of it -- or if nobody else is going tospeak . . . I don't think that relieves him of his responsibility, as a moral leader, if he sees the issue, to speak out on it.

Public or Behind-the-Scenes?

Closely related to what the rabbi has or has not done in organizations and as an individual, has been his outlook on how he might be most effective -- with or without publicity. Rabbi Palnick states that, when he first arrived in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, -- where he served before coming to Little Rock -- one of his congregants advised him, "Rabbi, you can either work for what you believe in,

or talk about it." From his experience this rabbi posits two cardinal principles of rabbinic methodology in the South: "Be a friend and good citizen, and don't get your name in the paper." Rabbi Palnick is far from alone on this point; this philosophy cropped up time and time again in interviews and written sources. The major element stressed was, as little exposure in the press and other mass media as possible. Thus, Rabbi Mantinband attempted to avoid such publicity: "[The press] just complicated life for us." Another man[182] suggested: "The [rabbi's] role is to work within organizations that seek to improve the situation, and to stay out of the newspaper as much as possible. . . . Publicity hurts the goal that we're trying to achieve." Still another man told the writer: "I have not sought any newspaper publicity . . . but from the beginning requested the news media to omit my name, lest it stir up any Ku Klux Klan resentment in [my city] . . . ."[183] A last example, of many at hand, would be this statement: "The point is . . . is it important to get a headline in a newspaper, or is it important to get a Negro working as a sales person someplace?"[184]

For some men, it was not such a clear "either . . . or" proposition. One of the better representatives of a more publicity-oriented philosophy among the Southern rabbis would be Emmet Frank of Alexandria, Virginia. We discussed in detail the sermons which he preached in

1958 and the headline newspaper coverage he received (see above, p.112). Athough I cannot be absolutely positive, my sources lead me to believe that Rabbi Frank had every intention, from the beginning, of alerting the community to his ideas. He may even have mailed copies of his sermons to the local press. Surely his words hint at such a philosophy:

> I am afraid of silence and I will not remain silent as long as God keeps the breath of life within me. I will not be silenced! . . . The Jew cannot remain silent to injustice. . . . Has silence given to the Jew of the south security? -- bombings, economic reprisals, have been his reward.

How did other rabbis react to Frank's "prophetic stance." One man, in a not-so-Deep South pulpit, commented:

> My personal response . . . was I wished he hadn't done it. Frank . . . in my opinion didn't do the cause any good. I think in our own way, we do much more. We help change the minds of people; this way, he won friends for the opposition.[185]

A second colleague likewise did not agree with Frank's tactics. "If you want to settle a problem," he told the writer, "you don't create more antagonism."[186]

Another rabbi had mixed emotions:

> I think it enunciated quite clearly the disaffection of the Jewish community generally with Byrd. . . . I think it may have stiffened the Byrd resistance. . . . My congregants were highly critical of Rabbi Frank -- only the extreme liberals applauded him. I found myself being put

> on the defensive about it, and at the time . . . I wasn't sure that it was the right thing.[187]

On the whole, Rabbi Frank was appreciated much more by his Northern colleagues than by his Southern ones, for he had transgressed one of their cardinal principles: "Keep your name out of the newspapers." Even as much an activist as Rabbi Mantinband questioned the wisdom of seeking newspaper publicity:

> I saw no particular purpose in doing it. It was a slow, painstaking, day-by-day, hour-by-hour uphill fight in education, and [the] newspaper wasn't likely to do very much good.

The controversy, then, in its most basic form, can be reduced to those who feel it worthwhile to have full publicity for any civil rights pronouncements or activities, and those who feel that it is essential to the cause, to work only in the background, "behind closed doors." In truth, there seems something to be said for both positions.

Even if one is inclined to dismiss the fear that overt Jewish participation in civil rights activity creates anti-Semitism (much to be preferred, perhaps, is Rabbi Silverman's analysis -- held to also by Harold Fleming -- that "Whether we are silent, or whether we speak forth in behalf of decency, morality, law and order, the Jew will be attacked"), one might see merit in the argument that sometimes more can be done quietly than could be achieved

with much sound and fury. Thus, Rabbi Rothschild, a man never averse to being in the public eye, still told his congregation:

> . . . we must quietly put [our] . . . principles to work. . . . It will serve no good purpose for us to become the champions of the struggle. To storm the deeply rooted ramparts of tradition in the vanguard of the attack, far in advance of those whom we had hoped to lead, before adequate preparation has been made, is the course of fools. . . . But neither dare we absent ourselves from the fray.

It was similar logic which brought Rabbi Silverman to comment: "I am convinced that the rabbi should not assume outward leadership or occupy a conspicuous position as the dominant spokesman for the integrationists in a Southern community."

But there are times when one must speak out, no matter the consequences, regardless of the publicity. Thus Rabbi "H," after sending out a strong message to his congregation and to the local newspaper, explained his action to a colleague by saying: "All I know is that for four years I desperately tried to keep my mouth shut in public, while boring from within. . . . [but] I could not help writing it. . . ." And another rabbi, knowing full well that there were newspapermen present, began his sermon: "This is a sermon I must preach, for myself and the sake of my soul. . . ."[188]

There has been a conspiracy of silence in the South, and this, more than anything, has perpetuated the status quo. Sociologist Melvin Tumin, in a book published in 1958, was most explicit about this:

> . . . silence and inactivity favor the existing traditions, and bold public affirmations of the importance of social change are almost always required if that change is to come about. . . . The educated and moderate, though committed, segregationists favor quiet but determined resistance, without public clamor. The educated and moderate, though committed, desegregationists, by contrast, favor vocal and frequent public talk. Both groups . . . seem to have sensed well the appropriate . . . strategies for leadership of their respective camps.[189]

To the accusation that clergy statements really mean very little and simply create problems without helping the matter, Tumin gives the following response:

> . . . these [statements] are only apparently and not really futile. For such public stands by the respected and legitimate leadership:
>
> a) inform the public of where its leaders stand;
>
> b) attach moral sanction to one side;
>
> c) deprive the opposition of an appeal to morality;
>
> d) force the opposition to advocate anti-law and anti-morality action;
>
> e) set a model of decorous behavior toward which the majority leans, at least ambivalently;

f) offer a viable and positive alternative to which the majority can respond when the situation is appropriate.[190]

So, it is in truth, not an "either . . . or" situation at all, and the rabbis who insist that it is, might do well to analyze their inner reasons for doing so. More perceptive, as regards this less rigid approach to publicity, were those of my informants who were not part of the Southern rabbinate. The Reverend Shuttlesworth, though inclined to favor the man who would speak up and be heard, showed some appreciation for unpublicized activity as well. Speaking about Rabbi Frank's methodology, he said:

> At least there was a voice; there has to be a voice . . . or else wrong takes over. . . . While behind the scenes conversations are helpful and beneficial . . . being oriented as I am, I would be more inclined to believe that this was helpful, even though it caused reaction. . . . A minister . . . is a public man, he belongs to the public, and I can't see where he could spend his life out of the public.

Rabbi Richard Hirsch, of the Reform Religious Action Center, saw the need for both methodological approaches:

> I think he has to be vocal sometime . . . the outside community has to know where the rabbi stands. Now, how he does that, and when he does that, and how frequently he does that -- all are determined by . . . the rabbi's character, his position, the nature of the community and all that. But a man who doesn't make his position

> known, doesn't stand for anything. . . . the community has to know where he stands.

Most perceptive of all were the words of Harold Fleming, the former director of the Southern Regional Conference:

> Either one of these two approaches could lend itself to the charge of being self-serving. . . . The object ideally shouldn't be to seek publicity or to avoid it absolutely -- it ought to be to get the job done. Usually that's done best by something less than either one of those extremes.

In the final analysis, it would pay to listen closely to the words of Rabbi Perry Nussbaum:

> Who has the definitive answer about the right kind of tactics in this mess -- from the Jewish point of view? I don't pretend to, but I am fed up with supine acquiescence to the second-rate citizenship which the Jewish community as a whole accepts.

It seems almost inevitable, if the rabbi means to accomplish anything in the field of civil rights, that sooner or later this whole methodological dispute will be reduced to words, and words alone. As Rabbi Silverman explained:

> There were times when the methods didn't make any difference -- I mean you either fish or cut bait -- you'd come out and take a stand -- and you'd stand with your stand.

CHAPTER VII

THE DETERMINANTS OF RABBINIC INVOLVEMENT

We have reached the point now where it would be in order to pose the question: What have been the determinants of rabbinic involvement in civil rights activity in the South? We speak, of course, only of Southern rabbis, as has been the case throughout the paper. There is little new to be said in this chapter, for the points have already been made. It will be the writer's task mainly to gather them together at this juncture, in order to make clear why some rabbis were more, or less, active in the field of civil rights.

The Nature of the General Community

One of the more important factors in determining rabbinic involvement has been the nature of the general community. There are, as we have noted, many Souths, and thus many milieus in which the rabbis have functioned. On one end of the spectrum is the tightly closed society of Mississippi, which James Silver calls "the South exaggerated." On the other end of the spectrum is Atlanta, Georgia, which many of my informants considered as a non-Southern city. And in between -- hundreds of locales,

each slightly different, each with its "open" and "closed" qualities.

There are a number of qualities which help determine the openness of any given community to civil rights activity. The reader should remember, however, that the presence of one (or even many) of these factors does not necessarily mean that the community will be more open than a similar community lacking such forces. There is no simple dynamic operating in the cities of the South; the process is complex, and often one factor might work to nullify or override a host of others. So, with this warning, let us turn to some of the determinants of the nature of Southern communities.

The presence of a more cosmopolitan atmosphere generally works toward modifying the total allegiance to the "Southern Way of Life." Thus, when a city is quite populous, and has a fairly large number of "outsiders" (people who are less than second generation Southerners) living in it, it tends to be more amenable to civil rights activity. Any port city of moderate size would fall into this category; likewise, cities with a heavy dependence on nearby military bases are usually to be included. Thus, a community like Norfolk, Virginia, which evidences both of these qualities, would be expected (other factors not working too strongly to the contrary) to be more open

than many other Southern cities. Also falling into this category would be communities which are the center of much commercial activity, as for example, Atlanta -- since such an atmosphere, at least to date, has usually resulted from an influx of Northern money and influence.

This last point suggests another factor to be considered. The general rule would apply that the more prosperity which the community has, the more open it will be to changes in the social status quo. Put another way, cities or towns with poor, rurally-based economies, tend to be less open than more prosperous communities.

Another element which plays a role in how "open" a community will be is the ratio of Negroes to Whites in the area. The greater that ratio is, the higher the percentage of Negro inhabitants, the more "closed" the community will be. Quite logically, where the Negro is a small minority, one can "loosen up" slightly, for the possibility of his "taking over" is not too worrisome.

Another factor of major importance is the mood of the city's mass media. A newspaper with a liberal editorial policy can do much to moderate opinion -- even in a small backwoods community. Then again, if the city is large and prosperous, but the newspapers are rabidly segregationist, the liberal will have lost a valuable ally. Thus, a key question asked in the interviews was: "What was the position of your community's mass media?"

Of importance also is the quality of leadership in the community. A forward looking city government, like the one in Atlanta, if in office at crucial moments (like, for example, in 1954), could help mold the character of the total community. There are some instances in the South when a moderate, elected mayor or chief of police, has been able to make even Deep South cities less defiant and more open to gradual change.

A factor which often goes along with many of the above-mentioned ones is education. The higher the general level of education in the community, the greater will be the tendency to reject a one-hundred percent allegiance to "the Southern Way of Life." Education, of course, goes hand in hand with occupation and exposure to the national mass media. Persons with white collar jobs, who occasionally read periodicals published outside of the South, or who watch nationally-syndicated news programs on television, are generally more ready for desegregation than are their less-educated neighbors who earn their money through physical labor.[191]

Finally, in this brief survey, we must include religion as an important consideration. The formulation would be something like the following: the smaller the percentage of fundamentalist Protestants in the area, the greater the possibility of openness in the community. This is

especially true when there is a large concentration of Catholics (Jews are such a small minority everywhere throughout the South that we cannot assign them much weight in this discussion).

These are a few of the more important factors which determine how much freedom of dissent a Southern city will allow its inhabitants. We turn now to an analysis of the nature of the Southern Jewish community.

The Nature of the Southern Jewish Community

The enclaves of Jews in the South reflect, to some extent, the general communities in which they are found. I qualify the statement because, according to most of my informants and written sources, the Jews are generally more moderate on the race question than are their Christian neighbors. This would follow from the fact that they are usually better educated, are mainly to be found in white collar occupations, and are more frequently exposed to national (including Jewish) mass media. However, Jewish communities likewise differ one from the other.

Of crucial importance is the proportion of "old Jews" to "new Jews" within the Jewish community (see above, p.39ff). It is generally the case that the stronger the influence of the "old Jews," the less liberal

the rabbi will find his congregants to be. Thus, one would expect a city like Charleston, South Carolina, where over 50 percent of the Jewish community are native Southerners, and 12 percent have been Southerners for at least three generations, to be more "Southern" than the Jewish communities of Atlanta or Nashville, which have significantly larger proportions of "new Jews."

Another factor influencing the nature of any specific Jewish community is the source of its members' income. Those communities in which the majority are merchants, highly visible on Main Street, and dependent in large part on the favor of the Gentile populace, are more "nervous" on the matter of civil rights activity than communities in which most Jews are in services or the professions. Thus, the Jews of a rural town in Alabama will almost without exception have far less patience with a crusading rabbi than those in a bustling metropolitan area.

Worth noting is the fact that there are a number of exceptions to the general rules thus far stated. Though most "new Jews" are moderates or liberals, the phenomenon of a recently arrived Northerner "out-Southerning" the Southerners is definitely not uncommon. And, conversely, there are some third- or fourth-generation Southern Jews who represent the most liberal thought to be found in the South. But these are atypical situations, and should not be accorded more weight than they numerically deserve.

One additional factor might be mentioned. The Jew is, throughout the South, an infinitesimal minority of the total population. In the South as a whole, including southern Florida, he amounts to slightly more than one-half of one percent of the populace. And, in states like Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina, even that ratio is extravagant.[193] There is security to be found in numbers -- a security which most Southern Jews lack. This is especially the case in the smaller towns and cities. For example, the largest Jewish community in the state of Mississippi numbers only 700 souls. Only in the few major metropolitan areas in the South -- in Atlanta, New Orleans, Memphis and the Alexandria, Virginia, urban complex, does the individual Jew approach the feeling of being able to hide behind the number of his coreligionists. And, even this should not be exaggerated, for Atlanta, with the largest concentration of Jews anywhere in the South (about 15,000), still is ninety-seven percent Gentile. Thus the rule which we can derive regarding population is of limited value, since it is so much the same story throughout the South. Understanding this, one may state hesitantly that, the larger the Jewish population in a city, the more permissive that Jewish enclave will be to civil rights activity of a moderate or liberal nature.

Feeling so small in numbers, and carrying in his inner consciousness a four-thousand-year tradition of being different, the Southern Jew is highly susceptible to real or imagined anti-Semitism. Especially in the smaller or more "closed" communities, he avoids like the plague any suggestion that he is "different" on the civil rights issue. In the privacy of his home or synagogue, he might admit to being a moderate or liberal, but in the outside community, almost never. Only in the large, "open" cities, where he can find some security in numbers, will he consider casting his lot with those who criticize the "Southern Way of Life." A rabbi, serving a Southern Jewish community, must inevitably be affected by the character and size of the group to whom he ministers.

The Personality and Philosophy of the Rabbi

The nature of the general community is important; the character of the Jewish community is a major consideration; likewise, the personality and the philosophy of the rabbi influence the role he will play in the struggle for Negro equality. There are "open," relatively "safe" communities in which some of the rabbis have done little or nothing; there are also tightly closed communities where the rabbi has been a vocal and consistent

opponent of the accepted racial system. Here clearly the man has made the difference.

Not all rabbis agree with the necessity of involving themselves in the civil rights struggle. One, mentioned earlier, appears a segregationist at heart. Others are far from "activists" in personality and personal philosophy. For example, one rabbi wrote:

> The Negro has just experienced his second emancipation. Now he and his leaders, including Dr. King, expect a sudden and miraculous transformation. By the magic hocus pocus of President Johnson, Secretary [Attorney General Nicholas] Katzenbach, the Department of HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] and Congress they should all now be white collar men of the upper middle class. . . . The age of miracles is gone. Gold is not found on the streets of American cities. The Irish came to this country and struggled hard to establish a place of social equality and economic security. They lived in rat infested slums too. So did the Italians. So did Polish immigrants . . . they had it much harder than the Negro has it today. I grew up in the _____ ghetto; I understand conditions were even worse in Chicago and New York. The Negroes and Puerto Ricans now occupy what was formerly the Jewish slums. Like the other strata of American society, the Negroes will have to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. . . . Negroes are not as pretty as Cinderella and do not have a fairy godmother.[194]

Another rabbi, writing in 1957, explained his philosophy:

> After eight years of service, from 1949-1957, in the Southern city of _____, in the closing years of which the Supreme

> Court outlawed segregation, and fully aware that others may have different views with equal reasonableness, I submit the following:
>
> Though in agreement with the Supreme Court decision, I believe, because of the traditions of segregation of the South about the change of which many Southerners are bitter, it would serve the interests of peaceful change to concentrate first on achieving desegregation in the border states, between North and South. With the passing of at least a decade, the change might then be made by peaceful transition to desegregate in the deep South. . . .[195]

And others of their colleagues, though speaking in favor of desegregation, do not convince (at least the writer) that they do so without reservation. For example, one rabbi, preaching on behalf of school desegregation, used in one of his major arguments the following logic: "I believe that [official desegregation] . . . would produce this situation: that the overwhelming majority of colored children, at least 90 or 95%, would remain right where they are. From previous experience, it seems that they definitely prefer it this way."[196] And there are more examples. Rabbi "O," when discussing the civil rights movement in his own Deep South community, said: "I like the way in which it has been handled thus far. . . . without the theatrical side-effects that I have witnessed in other communities. . . ." Rabbi "P" explained why he had yet to have an integrated program in his

synagogue: "You have to find first a Negro who is intelligent enough, who is willing, or who has the educational background [so that] you can talk to him in a civilized manner. I have not been able to find [one]." Another rabbi[197] explained his inactivity to his colleagues by telling them he had but eight or nine years to go to retirement, and he didn't intend to get fired in the meantime. Finally, three men presented their overall goals in the following words:

> I don't know, I've never really thought about the question, to tell you the truth. I would like to see, of course, the Negro to have fair treatment. . . but I think . . . he's going to have to earn it to a certain degree himself. We're going to have to help him. . . . this is not going to happen overnight, even with legislation, because you can't legislate sociology . . . and the background of the Negro is such that he is going to have to prove himself -- through education, through his own morals -- which he will do, but it's going to take time. I think that rushing these things through with Freedom Marches and all kinds of picketing and strikes -- this is not going to do it -- its only going to create ill will.[198]

> Shall we start a Messianic movement? . . . The Negroes won't follow us anyway. They identify us with the possessing classes. It often seems as though the task of trying to clarify issues and teach simple truth is beyond us. It's like ladling out the ocean with a spoon.[199]

> We must abide by the laws of the land. . . . or we shall have anarchy. We don't like all the laws that are passed . . . but we obey them . . . . the same thing goes as far as desegregating . . .

> this is the law. But, whatever goes for the general population, the White population, must go for the Negro population too -- they also must obey the law.[200]

This last rabbi, when discussing the struggle for Negro equality commented:

> I feel that this problem is not a Jewish problem, it is an American problem. . . . a lot of people feel that the synagogue is bankrupt . . . so that social action is regarded as an opportunity to revitalize . . . the synagogue. My feeling in the matter is that if the synagogue has to look for issues to survive, it's in a bad position.

The role personality and personal philosophy have played with regard to these men is at least as important as the influences exerted on them by the outside community. The writer would venture to say that most or all of them would be far from active in the area of civil rights, regardless of which community they served. But, as inner influences determine a man's lack of participation, so also do they determine his involvement in the struggle for Negro equality.

"My early school and social life was in a segregated society. After considerable struggle I learned to exercise control in my attitude and make no distinction between one man and another." Thus Rabbi Charles Mantinband partially explained why he has become the activist he is. Among his colleagues there are many like him,

men who have felt an inner drive goading them on to action. They have not been silenced by fear or pessimism, nor have they been willing to settle for limited objectives. They expect more of their people than a grudging obedience to the law of the land, they see the value in standing up and being counted in a physical manifestation of their support, they indeed wish to start a messianic movement. Their goals sound much less negative than those of some of their colleagues:

> [My goal] is to bring the community to a position where everyman would be judged by what he is, rather than by the color of his skin -- which is, of course, the traditional Jewish attitude.[201]

> [My goal is complete desegregation] and that there would be an acceptance, in good spirit, on the part of the people of the community. They weren't just giving in, but they believed that it was the right, moral thing to do.[202]

> I believe that any spiritual leader who does not speak forth and lead his congregation on moral issues is not worthy of being the Rabbi of this or any other congregation -- and I speak clearly and without equivocation that all may understand: TOGETHER WITH THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS AND THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS I FAVOR INTEGRATION. . . .[203]

The division is not a "black and white" one. Even the hesitant almost always are in general sympathy with the goals (if not the methodology) of the civil rights movement. Similarly, even those most committed to the

struggle know their moments of pessimism, fear, hesitancy -- they have not done all they would like to do. And the gradations from pole to pole are as numerous as the rabbis laboring in Southern vineyards.

Who the man is, where he comes from, what he believes, and how great his need is for acceptance and security -- in the final analysis these elements must be considered. It is true that a rabbi responds to external pressures and stimuli -- but, this is but half the story. There is a piper who pipes a tune within as well as without.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUTHERN RABBI AND HIS CONGREGATION

When Hiring and Firing

For some Southern rabbis the issue of civil rights was important from their early days in their pulpit, or even from the day they began negotiating for their position. Several Reform congregations to my knowledge (and probably several more of which I lack knowledge) made their feelings known to their prospective rabbis, and possibly even attempted to exact some sort of promise from them. This, at least, is the opinion of my A.D.L. informant. And there is evidence supportive of his comment. One rabbi, applying for a Deep South pulpit, was questioned about his civil rights stance. In a letter which he wrote to one of the Board members he explained:

> I cannot give the congregation any more assurance than I did on my visit . . . that I am neither an agitator nor a rabblerouser. I never intend to make martyrs of others or myself. If the congregation, however, still has doubts about me; if the congregation cannot trust in my good sense and judgment -- then it were better that they engaged another rabbi.[204]

They did. Another rabbi tells how the message was delivered to him immediately after he was engaged for his position:

> After a lengthy correspondence with the President of the . . . congregation -- during which no mention whatsoever was was made of the Negro problem -- I accepted their pulpit. As soon as we arrived -- on May 1, 1949 -- the President said to me: "We don't speak on the 'nigger problem' here." I asked him why he did not discuss this subject with me during our correspondence; that had I known this earlier, I would never have agreed to come. Further, tne Negro question was not the main issue now -- the main issue was Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Pulpit. I told him that I would speak on the subject whenever I saw fit -- and that I did not intend to remain in _____ after the expiration of my contract on August 31, 1950.[205]

A third rabbi informed the writer that, from the start:

> I was told by my members to take no part and not to get mixed up with the Negroes. . . . I have been restrained by the knowledge of the fact that this congregation (like most others) would not support anything that aroused their fears for their safety.[206]

It happened, in 1956, that Life magazine gave pictorial coverage to Conservative Rabbi Seymour Atlas, of Montgomery, Alabama. The incident reported was a radio program, in which the rabbi, along with Reverend Ralph Abernathy, a right-hand-man of Martin Luther King, discussed the current bus strike. As Harry Golden tells the story:

> The Temple's board of trustees were, to put it mildly, distressed. They were annoyed at Life, at the Rev. Abernathy, and particularly annoyed at Rabbi Atlas. They demanded that he ask Life for a retraction. Rabbi Atlas explained that Life didn't make retractions except when its reporters were in error. . . .

> The trustees ordered the rabbi to make no further statements outside the Temple and to stop inviting Negro clergymen to the weekly Hebrew class. . . . a week later Rabbi Atlas sent off to the newspaper, as is the usual custom of all clergymen in the South, the title of his weekly sermon, which he called "Social Integration." The rabbi wanted to discuss the successful integration of the Arab minority with the Jewish majority in Israel. The trustees . . . accepted Rabbi Atlas' resignation and voted to ask the next rabbi for a contractual pledge not to discuss segregation "in any manner, shape, or form. . . ."[207]

Some men, when faced with congregational ultimatums, rejected the offered position. Some accepted and let themselves be muzzled. At least one was forced to resign. But some successfully furnished their own ultimatums:

> When I came to _____ in September, 1950, I made it crystal clear to the Board of Trustees that I must be accorded full freedom of the pulpit -- that I would speak frankly on all convictions. No subject must be "verboten" from my pulpit. The Board concurred, and there has never been any official question raised as to my pulpit utterances.[207]

Others couched their ultimatums in softer language:

> I told them what my feelings were. I also told them that, having been born and reared in the South, that I felt I understood the problem; and that I felt that, as far as they were concerned, in inviting a rabbi, they would have to invite a rabbi in whose discretion and wisdom and good judgment they could have confidence. . . . and if they didn't have this confidence in his judgment, they should not take him as a rabbi.[209]

A man is hired. He then begins to upset many of the congregants due to his civil rights activity. Have any Southern rabbis ever been fired specifically because of this subject? As we noticed, Rabbi Seymour Atlas apparently was. Rabbi "H" hints that some Reform rabbis in Louisiana were let go for that reason. There is widespread belief that a certain rabbi in Mississippi was dismissed because of such involvement, but most of my informants familiar with the situation say that it was a case of general incompetence, and this issue was but the "straw which broke the camel's back."[210] In truth, the words spoken by Rabbi Richard Hirsch seem at least close to being the correct analysis:

> I know of . . . a lot of rabbis who have given up their pulpits because they couldn't take it any more. . . . I don't think that, for any rabbi that I can think of, the sole factor, or even the primary factor is civil rights. There are many factors. . . .

If this is so, it is an interesting situation. Scores of ministers have been sent packing throughout the South due to civil rights activity, but it is difficult to find more than one or two rabbis fired for a similar reason. Rabbi Hirsch offered two explanations:

> Jews, despite their protestations, may be willing to accept stronger stands by rabbis than the corresponding socio-economic group of Christians would be willing to accept from their ministers. . . .

> They expect the rabbi to think that way: "Well rabbi, you're a rabbi -- how else would you think! . . ." [and] maybe some of these ministers engaged in activities on a much more intense level than did any of our colleagues, the rabbis. Which is also true, I think.

The writer is led to believe that how a man feels about civil rights is more apt to influence whether or not he is hired by a Southern congregation than whether or not he is fired.

Incidents of Conflict

Though congregations might not have fired many rabbis due to civil rights activity on their part, there is much evidence that they have gone out of their way to express their disapproval in less drastic fashion. One rabbi tells this story on himself:

> The Rabbi preached on integration in 1957 . . . and at subsequent times. He received the "silent" treatment. This meant they to a man walked out after services without a greeting. The Oneg Shabbat was ignored. They maintained the silent treatment for a week or so. If the rabbi continued to preach on race relations he would merely have been politely released at the end of the year, with little or no comment.[211]

And this may very well have been the Jewish congregations' method of firing -- patient, polite, with little publicity. If so, possibly more rabbis than we realize have changed pulpits over this issue. Surely some members of one congregation had just such an end result in mind when

they became impatient with their spiritual leader. The rabbi involved was Rabbi "H." He had made public a bulletin in which, reacting to the bombing of the Atlanta synagogue, he had suggested that "if it could happen in Atlanta, it could happen here." This statement appeared in the local press in banner headlines: [OUR CITY'S] SYNAGOGUE BELIEVED MARKED FOR TERRORIST BOMB. Two weeks later, the members of Rabbi "H"'s synagogue received the following proposed amendments to their constitution:

> Contracts or agreements entered into by members of this Congregation, for any purpose, obligating the Congregation for expenditures in excess of $2,000.00 in any fiscal year, must be approved by written secret ballot of two-thirds (2/3) of a special quorum, consisting of 60% of the voting members of the Congregation.
>
> The rabbi shall attend all regular meetings of the Congregation, Board of Trustees, and all Committee meetings and after giving his report or counsel he shall excuse himself unless requested to remain at the respective meeting.
>
> . . . no paid member or member of the Board of Trustees of _____ Temple shall make public statements expressing the views of the Congregation at large on any controversial issue without the prior approval of a majority of the Board of Trustees. . . .

The purposes of the amendments were quite clear: the second was meant to remind the rabbi of his menial status, the third was meant to silence him, the first threatened actual dismissal. "If they pass," Rabbi "H" confided to

a colleague, "I will have to resign, I couldn't stay." As it turned out they failed, by a considerable majority. But a serious attempt had been made, and the rabbi was by no means overjoyed with the vote of confidence he had received: "What will happen in the future is one of those imponderables difficult to assess. . . . While my friends consider the results a clear cut victory for me . . . the twenty percent [which voted against me] is a significant ratio in any organization."

Other rabbis have been criticized in less dramatic ways. Rabbi Mantinband faced the problem on numerous occasions -- the reader might recall the incident regarding his entertaining Negroes in his house (see above, p. 155); also mentioned was the crisis caused by a $2500 gift to the congregation (see above, p. 160). As Rabbi Mantinband wrote: "No amount of assurance has allayed their misgivings. . . . For years the writer has wrestled with his trustees. . . ." Rabbi "Z" faced the same problem in his congregation: when he scheduled an interracial service in 1951, he did so "despite some serious qualms on the part of my board." Seven years later, when this rabbi was involved in his campaign to integrate the public schools, he was temporarily silenced by the Jewish community. Another rabbi was not allowed by his Board to attend the convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, because Martin Luther King had been chosen keynote speaker.[212]

And Rabbi "L" had to remind his Board that his membership in the Council on Human Relations "was not a Board concern."

It has been the rule that the congregations are very much concerned with what their rabbis are doing in the civil rights sphere. As my American Jewish Committee informant explained:

> As I spoke to members of old Jewish communities throughout the South . . . on the school desegregation issue, they made it quite clear that when it came to the choice between being Southerners and being Jews in terms of . . . social justice . . . they seemed to be Southerners first. But more important . . . was the fear that these people expressed about their continued status. . . . some of the outstanding Jews of the South . . . [they] were wealthy. . . . they could trace their ancestry back before the Civil War . . . they had been chosen for all kinds of public office or heads of private organizations in their communities . . . [indicated] to me privately and personally that the status they had achieved they feared was already substantially lost -- and that they just weren't going to permit their rabbis to participate in any kind of a situation which they felt would make matters worse.

So, has it been a constant battle between rabbi and congregation? For some, yes. For many there is no battle -- they have been willing to bow to the needs and fears of their congregants as far as activity in the outside community goes. And some have even silenced their pulpits, because of their "Christian choirs" or "visitors."

Hardly a man who has said or done anything has not had some controversy within his congregation about his words or actions -- but -- many keep on speaking and doing -- and the great majority have been able to retain the freedom of their pulpits. As I noted earlier, the most typical response, even among the hesitant, has been "I could speak on segregation -- and did."[213] And a handful of men, even some who are scarred from congregational battles, talk affectionately of how their people have acquitted themselves admirably. For example, the words of Rabbi Rothschild:

> I have never been criticized by the board . . . they have been very patient, very understanding, and have really been, I think, most praiseworthy in their attitude. I have complete freedom of the pulpit. They have never in any way tried to stop me from either saying anything in the pulpit or taking an active part in the whole struggle. . . . They didn't always agree with me, but they gave me the right to speak and act.

And those of Rabbi William Silverman:

> People expect me to support and substantiate the stereotype they have about the typical Southern community being opposed to the rabbi, fighting against the rabbi, being reactionary when the rabbi's being a liberal. . . . This was not so. These people didn't want trouble, but I found that I was being supported.

For it has not all been struggle and controversy. Rabbi Silverman's congregation repeatedly provided him with votes of confidence; and the congregations of Rabbi Frank,

"H," "Z," and Mantinband, among others, when the pressure was really being applied, more often than not stood behind their spiritual leaders. Rabbi "H," who has had his share of problems, was sufficiently grateful only two and a half years ago to include these words in his annual report to his congregation:

> . . . the mood of my Report is one of gratitude: FOR THE CHALLENGE OF THE RABBINATE in this era, in this place. So many of my Christian colleagues found their people wanting over the past year, when religious conviction as taught from the pulpit collided with the bitter fruits of bias and hatreds of one man for another. How can I convey my thankfulness that our Congregation did not succumb to sordid experiences, as others have done, in an admittedly difficult reconciliation of the position of the pulpit and that of the pew about fundamentals: God's Fatherhood and Human Brotherhood, whatever man's skin color. . . .

The following year his people gave him further reason for gratitude. At the Annual Meeting they presented him with the following resolutions (complete with a raise in pay):

> WHEREAS, [Rabbi "H"] has given high spiritual leadership to the Congregation during years of special challenge within and without the Jewish community;
>
> WHEREAS, he has maintained the dignity and integrity of the Rabbinate and the Faith of our Fathers, and the fruits of his labors are daily evident in our congregational and communal life. . . .

> THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that [our] Congregation renew its call to [Rabbi "H"] to serve as our Rabbi until August 31, 1973, when he will have attained, God willing, sixty-five years of age. . . .

If a statement about the congregations would be made in summary, it might be very similar to the judgment some rabbis have passed on themselves: "We did more than most, but not enough." The congregations have been afraid; some of their number are segregationists; most of them would like to stay out of the whole affair. They have tried to keep their hands off, and the hands of their rabbis also, but they have often not succeeded. The great majority of them, even in the Deep South, give the rabbi his pulpit (more than could be said for most Christian churches in the Deep South), and have not seriously questioned his right to use it. A few have even backed their rabbis in the outside community. Many a Northern liberal has summarily dismissed them as "as bad as their Christian neighbors," but the sweeping criticism appears a little too harsh for the writer. If they were all that bad, the Southern rabbinate would not have been able even to attain the level of involvement of which this study gives evidence.

CHAPTER IX

THE RABBI AND NATIONAL JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Setting The Scene

One wag once remarked, "Wherever you find two Jews, you'll have three synagogues." There is some truth to the statement, especially when applying it to the organizations which have developed so abundantly in the American Jewish community. Many of these national organizations are represented by chapters throughout the South. Our concern will be with but a few of them, the ones most active in the civil rights sphere, but what will be said and the conclusions which will be set forth could apply equally to any national Jewish organization which sees fit to speak or act on this issue.

To my knowledge, every Reform temple in the South is affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, a lay-rabbinic organization with headquarters in New York. Likewise, practically all rabbis serving these congregations are members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Both the U.A.H.C. and the C.C.A.R. schedule conventions on an annual or biennial basis. These conventions invariably appoint committees to draw

up resolutions, and such resolutions are often accepted by the total body. Upon acceptance, they are publicized both within and without the Jewish community. A typical resolution on Race Relations, representative of many which have come before and after it, is this one adopted by the 1955 Assembly of the U.A.H.C.:

> Having consistently opposed every form of discrimination because of our fundamental belief in the equality of all men under God, we rejoice in the unanimous decision of the United States Supreme Court in the school segregation cases. We regard this decision as a major chapter in the history of the growth of true equality under the law. . . . we pledge ourselves to do all within our power to make this decision of the highest court in the land meaningful in our respective communities.
>
> Therefore, Be it Resolved:
>
> That we urge our congregants and congregations in all sections of the country to join with forward-looking racial, religious and civic groups in the community in using their influence to secure acceptance and implementation of the desegregation decisions in every community in our land.

Another example would be the one issued by the same organization in 1965:

> . . . we reiterate the traditional stand of Reform Judaism that there are no color barriers to the acceptance in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations of congregations composed of Reform Jews. Therefore,

> BE IT RESOLVED, that the U.A.H.C. invite qualified Jewish congregations, regardless of the racial ancestry of their respective memberships, to seek affiliation with the Reform movement and we urge all constituent congregations to likewise invite individual Jews, regardless of their racial ancestry, to affiliate with them as members.

In addition to these two Reform "institutional" organizations, there are some national Jewish groups whose raison d'etre is not the support of an institution as much as it is participation in civil rights defense work. The Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, for many years primarily an agency to combat anti-Semitism, has in recent years entered enthusiastically into the Negro's struggle for equality. The A.D.L. has regional offices throughout the country, and it attempts to play an active role in combatting prejudice and deprivation of civil rights in as many communities as possible.

Of like mind and purpose are yet other national Jewish organizations -- for example, the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee. Although each of these three defense organizations employs different tactics, all have been concerned with providing aid and comfort to individual Jewish communities. Thus, when a rash of bombings hit Southern synagogues, most of these groups sent literature and instructions to the rabbinic

and lay leaders of Southern Jewry, advising them on how to avoid a bombing in their own city, and what to do if they were unable to avoid it. In many cases, when a bombing or some other anti-Semitic act occured, the regional director (especially of the A.D.L.) would come to the city, ready to initiate a prepared campaign of propaganda and pressure. More often than not these representatives of the national organizations were much more prone to seek publicity in the outside community than were those persons who actually resided in the community, and, as we will see, this has been a major area of conflict between local Jewish communities and the national groups.

These groups envision as part of their function the providing of specialized assistance to individual Jewish communities. Thus, they keep tabs on all racists of importance, and send occasional confidential reports to rabbis and lay leaders (especially in the South), keeping them up to date on where such-and-such a person is and what he has been doing of late. They also try to follow the machinations of the Klan and White Citizens Council and similar racist groups. Among the literature they publish are pamphlets meant for distribution outside the Jewish community -- for example, discussions on fair employment practices to be sent to a community's businessmen, or pamphlets on proper police tactics to be distributed

to local policemen. In the South, according to my informants, by far the most active of these defense groups has been the Anti-Defamation League.

Southern Jewry and the National Organizations

In 1958, an editorial appeared in the Richmond (Virginia) News Leader. The subject was the A.D.L.:

> . . . this branch of B'nai B'rith is identifying all Jewry with the advocacy of compulsory integration. . . . relations between Jews and Gentiles were excellent in the South before the A.D.L. began setting up regional offices . . . and stirring up clouds of prejudice and misunderstanding.[214]

The Southern newspapers, especially the more segregationist-oriented among them, give considerable coverage to the civil rights statements and activities of national Jewish organizations. This is a matter of no small concern to Southern Jewry. It is not so much because the Southern Jew disagrees with the word or deed -- it is, of course, because he is afraid. The result is, as Alfred Hero points out, a very common ambivalence on the part of many Southern Jewish citizens:

> While wanting to separate themselves in the local Gentile mind from them and their equalitarian pronouncements and accusing them of generating anti-Semitism among segregationists, they have wanted the support of these agencies in case of anti-Semitic developments in the region. And many who have objected to the public statements favoring interracial justice by these agencies probably privately agreed with them.[215]

Whether or not the Southern Jew agrees at heart with the deeds and statements of his national organizations, he has been, with very few exceptions, in opposition to them. He watches men like John Crommelin quote U.A.H.C. and C.C.A.R. resolutions in his anti-Semitic outbursts, and he is "greatly incensed" at the national groups for providing grist for such bigots' mills. He sees it reported in the local newspaper that the U.A.H.C. has asked Martin Luther King to give the keynote speech at its convention, and he orders his rabbi to remain in the South as a sign of protest. When the A.D.L. is particularly conspicuous due to involvement in desegregation activities, B'nai B'rith lodges throughout the South suffer from membership resignations and protests.[216] On this point there is very little ambivalence -- the Southern Jew wants his national bodies to keep out of the civil rights picture.

By way of illustration, I quote Joshua Fishman's study of "Southern City":

> The rabbi, the "top policy leadership," and the Jewish businessman with White Citizens Council connections were all united in their views that Jewish national organizations should never have gotten into "the nigger issue" in the first place and that they should get out of it now and stay out. Their rationale is that Jewish organizations were organized for the purpose of "helping the Jews" . . . [and] their entry into the desegregation issue [is] . . . a breach of faith with their constituencies.[217]

Rabbi Harvey Wessel, of Tyler, Texas, provides another illustration in an article written for his April 22, 1956, bulletin:

> Bitterly disappointing was the experience of some Jews in Shreveport [Louisiana] last Sunday in finding other Jews hostile by a majority of 2 to 1 to desegregation, to the position of the "Union" (U.S.A. and U.A.H.C.), and to the rabbis present for "sticking together" in their insistence that the question of segregation was not merely political and social but mainly religious. . . . at the second session of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Southwest Council [representing congregations in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas] . . . . [by] a vote of 27 to 19 on a motion to table, these representatives only of Reform Judaism in five Southern States refused to endorse the Statement of Principles (rejoicing in the unanimous decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court) adopted by . . . the U.A.H.C. . . . The stubborn hard core of the gatnering was the sizable number of Mississippians, supported by their lone rabbinical apologist. Allowing for the 6 (of 7) rabbis who might have been expected to oppose segregation . . . and did, the decisive vote must be understood to signify the unmistakable identification of Jews of the middle South . . . with the dominant attitude of the area.

The writer would tend to feel that the vote was more a rejection of speaking out, of endorsing the national resolution, than it was an acceptance of the "dominant attitude" of the middle South.

Example could be piled upon example. One community used to send a delegation up to the national office of A.D.L. on the average of once every three or four months, in order to obtain the dismissal of their A.D.L. regional

director -- since the man was too visibly involved in civil rights.[218] And the following mimeographed statement from a small Mississippi community, can be found in the American Jewish Archives:

> Whereas, certain national Jewish organizations have issued statements in regard to segregation and other issues, and
>
> Whereas, said statements have not expressed our opinions and are, in fact, contrary to our individual points of view, and
>
> Whereas, we desire that our position be known publicly, therefore be it resolved that an organization be formed to be known as the Southern Jewish Laymen's Organization with the following objectives. . . .

What follows is a typically segregationist platform. Though their anti-desegregation position does not represent the majority of Southern Jewry, their dissatisfaction with the national Jewish organizations does appear to be representative of most Southern Jews -- even those in the less-Deep South cities.

Of all the writer's sources and informants, only Rabbi Richard Hirsch could see on the horizon a possible rapproachment between Southern Jew and national Jewish organization. He expressed himself as follows:

> We've gone through several stages. . . . There was a time when the White Southerner felt that he was being persecuted and discriminated against by everybody in the North. That nobody took into consideration the unique problems of the South. That, in terms of Jewish organizations, nobody took into consideration

> the unique status of the Jew in the South. And all these national organizations were coming up with all kinds of "moralistic pronouncements" which, when they appeared in the public press . . . put the local community or local congregation in what they considered to be jeopardy. We had a number of situations like that at C.C.A.R. meetings and at U.A.H.C. Biennials. . . . Last Biennial was the first Biennial where we didn't have to have a special caucus with some of the congregations from the South because of the positions we had taken, or were about to take, on civil rights. . . . it kind of has worked both ways. In the first place, the Southern congregations that were concerned with what they considered to be over-zealous activities . . . which endangered their position, had some degree of justification, in that the national organizations of which they were constituents should have consulted with them about some of these things. On the other hand, the national organizations have some degree of justification in that, had they always consulted there would never have been an appropriate time for them to act or take a position. . . . The pressure which was put upon Jews in the South by national Jewish organizations by taking positions, in the long run was saluatory, because they have now come to recognize that these positions were morally valid, and they have come to accept them, even though they may disagree with some of the specifics. . . . I want to point out, though, that that is also within the context of civil rights itself having been elevated to the dimension of morality.

Though this might indeed be true of Jews living in more "open" Southern communities, most Deep South rabbis would consider Rabbi Hirsch's comments still a little too optimistic. On the whole, Southern Jewry's ambivalence

toward the national Jewish bodies is very much a present-day fact.

The Rabbis and the National Jewish Organizations

The Southern Jewish layman is not alone in his mixed feelings toward the national organizations. His rabbi, though more apt to support the goals of the national bodies, and more likely to appreciate aspects of their service, also has serious reservations as to their value.

First, what do the rabbis have to say in praise? Only Marvin Reznikoff of Baton Rouge, of all the rabbis interviewed, would pay one of the national bodies an unqualified compliment: "It has been a comfort for me as a rabbi to know the liberal policy of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations regarding the Negro struggle for civil rights and for a new dignity." Rabbi Jacob Rothschild expressed much satisfaction with the A.D.L.: "They're very helpful . . . we use their personnel. . . . by and large we've gotten along very well. That is, they understand that they can't take any unilateral action on local matters. . . ." Another activist rabbi, Rabbi Alfred Goodman, also paid the Anti-Defamation League a guarded compliment: "[They] have been helpful, in a way, although their entrance into the school situation elicited many unfavorable comments on the part of the local community."

A New Orleans rabbi commented:

> They haven't helped me any. I have mingled feelings about them. I think they must exist. I think they do largely good work. I know they have embarrased certain communities by sending their representatives in without notifying even the local people. . . . We have a local office of the Anti-Defamation League, and we've been fortunate to have a series of very fine young men. . . ."[219]

And Rabbi Malcolm Stern remarked: "[They] served as an information-giving and sometimes advisory body. . . . They were helpful. They did not enter into any actions that I know of, but they did lend aid. . . . I don't recall any instances of their being detrimental."

A majority of the Southern rabbis, however, could say little, if anything, agreeable about the national Jewish bodies. Among the chief rabbinic complaints were: one, the national bodies were too frequently pushing themselves onto Jewish communities which did not want them, and two, they were endangering Southern Jewry and making the Southern rabbi's job doubly hard. Thus, Rabbi "P" said: "I would say that national Jewish organizations have stuck their necks out too much They like to be in the driver's seat all the time -- and I don't think that's right. We are a very small minority." One of his colleagues told the writer:

> They would be discouraged in my community. . . . They would be looked upon as outsiders -- and that's true. . . . I think once . . . they

> wanted to come in . . . I remember that they were told not to come into the picture at all . . . don't call us, we will call you.[220]

Rabbi Mantinband, commenting on the A.D.L., said: "I don't find their help too much to my liking. I don't belittle their effort, I don't even question their method, it might be alright for A.D.L. -- but it's not the way a rabbi usually works. A rabbi works quietly, behind the scenes." Rabbi Silverman's words are also typical: "We had all the organizations coming in. Of course all of them took credit for action. . . . I don't think they counted very much. . . . They were detrimental to the extent that their actions crystallized a certain resentment on the part of the Jewish community . . . against outside Jewish organizations."

Two rabbis commented on the resolutions which the national organizations periodically issue. The first man could not get excited about them, one way or the other: "There are . . . many Jews who are terribly upset . . . but I'm convinced that [these resolutions] . . . make very little difference. . . ."[221] The other rabbi, though appreciative of the moral soundness of the resolutions, complained that they were written by men who "are not really aware of all of the implications of the resolutions, nor do they come to the South to live with the situation and to solve the problems that confront us."[222]

Let but two more examples suffice. The first is Rabbi "n," the second Rabbi "H":

> I take a very dim view of national organizations' involvement. The Anti-Defamation League. . . . wanted to send a pamphlet . . . to our six hundred policemen, on the race question. I, frankly, was incensed about it. We have a very fine police commissioner. . . . The job had been accomplished. . . .
>
> In only one word that I can use, C-R-A-P, when you talk about the national bodies . . . From the beginning they pulled the wool over the eyes of the Jews of the South. . . . They went ahead with their own programs regardless of the attitudes of the Jews of the South. They issued their statements. . . . They would go through the form of understanding the Jews of [my state] -- but they'd do anything, they'd say anything they'd want. . . .

In late 1963, the news was out in congregational circles that Dr. Martin Luther King had been asked to deliver the keynote speech at the U.A.H.C. convention. As already reported, Southern laymen were up in arms at the prospect. In the Deep South, and in some other Southern communities as well, the rabbis were likewise displeased. In Mississippi, a meeting of that state's Reform rabbis drafted a message to be sent to the presidents of the U.A.H.C. and the C.C.A.R. It read, in part:

> The undersigned . . . deplore the selection of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King as principal speaker. . . . We are challenging neither the personality nor the importance of this great American leader. . . . We hope

> we will not be dismissed as segregationists or among those refusing to socialize with a Negro. We do challenge your insistence to us who function in a most sensitive and difficult area that the Biennial Banquet must feature Dr. King. . . . Where is it written that the . . . Union . . . must be equated in the minds of many people with an individual whose presence, on such an occasion, will exacerbate wounds that have still to heal, will recreate animosities toward the Union -- and the [Hebrew Union] College -- with which we, the Rabbis of congregations fighting the battle for our national bodies day by day, and year by year, insist are still with us? . . . We are being asked what to do by our own people. Our answer to those who will be persuaded to go to Chicago is to stay away from the Banquet.

So, among the Southern rabbis, there are a small number who would praise our national Jewish bodies and there is a much larger number of men who would be more likely to condemn them. In between these two groups stand probably the majority of Southern rabbis -- men who place some value on the behind the scenes services which the national organizations provide, but who are at the same time displeased with the public pronouncements of these bodies -- and who, when asked, "How important have these groups been in the civil rights struggle?"will answer like Rabbi Silverman, "Not very." The reader will find, in the Appendix, a chart denoting how various Southern rabbis answered this question.

The Role of National Jewish Organizations: As the Rabbis See It

If a majority of the rabbis interviewed are unhappy with the role national Jewish bodies have played to date in the civil rights arena, would they be able to suggest a more acceptable one? A few men responded to this challenge, and the suggestions which follow, though likely to be unpopular in some circles, represent their thinking.

The first proposal is that they remove themselves entirely from the civil rights struggle. In the words of Rabbi "J": "If you want to work in the field of civil rights as a Jew, you [should] work as an American -- you join the N.A.A.C.P., you join C.O.R.E. . . ."

A second suggestion is very similar to the first: the national organizations have served their purpose -- now they should retire gracefully to the background, standing ready to aid the Negro organizations when asked. Thus, according to one rabbi: "Now that Negro organizations have advanced in their own thinking, Jewish organization roles should be only supportive, not leading."[223] Another man put it this way:

> I believe that the role of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League has been well-defined by S.N.C.C. and C.O.R.E in recent weeks; that Jews have shown them the way and now ought to get out of the "Negro business" so that Negro leadership can take sole and complete charge of their own activities. We ought

not to be their spokesmen any longer. . . .[224]

In his article, Joshua Fishman reports that the most frequent suggestion he heard was that the national organizations provide some type of financial support for those Southern Jews who suffer economic reprisals because of civil rights activity. This "fund" would also be used to help move such families to the North "when their physical and financial position in the South became unusually precarious."[225]

Rabbi "e" suggests that the organizations remain "completely outspoken," but that they speak only after being sure that they have all the facts. He also would like to see each organization "more desirous of working with other organizations just as dedicated in the same directions." This latter idea was proposed by other rabbis as well -- they would not be half as angry with the national organizations if these bodies would work closely with (and subordinate themselves to) local Jewish groups, like the Community Relations Councils. Of course, as Rabbi Hirsch noted above, this would probably mean considerably less action on the part of the national organizations.

Even this would not be to the liking of Rabbi "h", whose proposal, the last the writer was offered, was that the national bodies stay out of the local communities entirely, and concentrate all their activity "where it counts," that is, in Washington, D.C..

It is extremely doubtful that any single one of these suggestions would be acceptable to those individuals who staff the offices or chair the committees of the national Jewish organizations. What is not doubtful, however, is the very marked dissatisfaction which Southern Jews -- rabbis and lay people alike -- feel regarding these national bodies. There appears to be much room for improvement -- and thought and labor devoted to bringing about a more congenial relationship would seem, to the writer, time and energy well spent.

Freedom Rides, Marches, and Demonstrations

Prior to concluding this chapter, there is one final subject to be discussed. The Freedom Rides and various civil rights demonstrations are connected closely with the activity of national Jewish organizations, since most of the Riders and marchers and many of those involved in demonstrations are Northerners, and many were Northern Jews recruited by one Jewish organization or another. How did the congregants and rabbis of the South react to these people and their activities?

It is difficult to determine how the Freedom Riders were received by the various Deep South Jewish communities. Many of these "carpetbagging Northerners" were Jewish. Rabbi Mantinband, in 1961, estimated that one out of

every eight was Jewish. One participant in a public dialogue on the subject, himself a Freedom Rider, estimated that two-thirds of these activists were Jewish.[226] Another participant in the same dialogue, a woman who had served as a secretary in the main C.O.F.O. office in Jackson, Mississippi, figures one-third to one-half of all volunteers were Jewish. It made little difference, really, whether one-eighth or two-thirds were Jews -- the White Southerners had ample ammunition. "Freedom Rider," to many a Southerner, meant "Jew" or one financed and stirred up by Jews. Not uncommon were the thoughts expressed on a leaflet distributed in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, in 1964:

> Dear White American. . . . every dollar you spend at a Jewish business concern is helping toward the elimination of our white Anglo-Saxon race . . . do you think the "Freedom" workers who are invading our state are here out of a heart of love? Make no mistake! There is only one thing that brought them here . . . the dollar. The JEWISH dollar. . . .[227]

Is it any wonder, then, that the Jewish communities did not welcome their Northern coreligionists with balls thrown in their honor? If the Jews of the Deep South could have had their "druthers," there would not have been a new Northern Jew in all of their region during the tense months ushered in by the first Freedom Ride. Most especially, in their judgment, should the Northern rabbis have stayed home -- they should have known better.

Some Jewish communities seemed to have communicated their feelings quite thoroughly to the "invaders." One Freedom Rider wrote of her experiences along this line:

> The Jews of this Mississippi town are not happy that I am here. Too many of us civil rights workers are Jews, it seems. . . . My presence disturbs them. . . . Until we came everything was calm, unruffled. . . . had they not blended well enough into the Southern landscape?[228]

Another Freedom Rider told of his time spent in another Deep South city: "The [Jewish] community was gripped by an overwhelming fear. We met with the leaders of the Jewish Community Council, who were most anxious to have us leave."[229]

Though no Jewish community went out of its way to make their city a "resort" for Jewish "carpetbaggers," some, according to my informants, did extend to their coreligionists a certain amount of hospitality. Which brings us to the consideration of how the Reform rabbis in these communities responded.

With hardly more than one or two exceptions, the rabbis were one with their people on this issue. Nevertheless, at least one rabbi known to the interviewer prepared his congregation sufficiently well so that they welcomed these visiting coreligionists into their synagogue and into their homes.[230] And the writer has reason to believe that this was not the only congregation to act in such a manner.

Many of the rabbis interviewed were quite pessimistic about the usefulness of these Freedom Rides and demonstrations:

> In any community, the Jews . . . cannot travel faster than the rest of the population. . . . We have to live with these people -- day in and day out. A Freedom Rider comes down, and a marcher, and a demonstrator . . . and I don't know what he accomplishes, very frankly, except he goes back and he's a hero. He doesn't have to live with these people, but we do. . . .[231]

> I don't think its helping things any. Progress is . . . gradual. . . . This only strengthens resistance and makes it a little more difficult. . . . It's going to take a long time. . . . These marches, frankly, only upset the situation, and probably even delay it.[232]

> I personally was not in favor of the Freedom Riders. I don't think they accomplished anything. They were just plain hit and run people.[233]

> I have never been able to bring myself to say to these people from the North: "Don't come down into the South." I've never regarded myself as a god, I'm not too sure that I have the answers to any of these problems. I do resent the fact that people have come down from the North and they have <u>all</u> the answers. . . . Some of it, to me, has <u>been</u> so unnecessary . . . things they have done. . . . Why can't they [the national Jewish organizations] leave it to some of the "goyish" bodies to do? Why do <u>they</u> have to be the pioneers?[234]

The Southern rabbis feel even less delighted when their Northern colleagues join the ranks of the lay persons invading the states below the Mason-Dixon line. During the summer of 1964, a letter went out from the Central

Conference of American Rabbis asking men to join the "invading forces" going South. Again, in 1965, the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America called for a "task force of 200 rabbis . . . who will be on call to participate in civil rights meetings and demonstrations throughout the country."[235] The reaction of one Southern rabbi was:

> If it were not so tragic it would be positively funny, when one realizes the extent to which some of our colleagues are going to sacrifice us, not themselves, in the struggle. Like the English fighting to the last Frenchman, so they are quite willing to fight to the last Southern rabbi.[236]

Another man actually published the following "editorial" in his congregation's bulletin in September, 1964:

> The first phase of the "invasion" of Mississippi is over. . . . Those who came here uninvited to help us to prepare our "ground" could have done better if they had stayed home and helped prepare their own "ground". Their "ground" needs as much preparation as ours if not more. One incident is a point in the case. A colleague of your rabbi from Rochester, New York, spent a few weeks in our area. He did not show any courtesy to your rabbi by informing him of his presence. . . . He finally succeeded in getting himself arrested. It is to be assumed that without an arrest in Mississippi he could not face his Congregation and justify his presence here. He and his kind come and go. They become "experts" over night. When they are gone, it is left for us to pick up the pieces. . . . In the "good old times" when a rabbi was preparing a sermon, he looked for material in the Bible, Talmud, Midrash. . . . As all these books are available now in English translation, and we assume that rabbis can, at least, read

> English, it is difficult to understand why they have to come here to look for material for their sermons and annoy, bore and weary their congregations. . . . To be sure: Their accomplishments are nil, and the damage they had [have] done to race relations is great. Let them stay home and take care of their own and we will take care of our problems.[237]

Although by no means as vitriolic, even Rabbi Mantinband, acknowledged as an activist of the first rank, shows little liking for his colleagues who beseige the South. In a letter to another Southern rabbi, dated October 3, 1962, he wrote: "Not many voices will be heard on the side of decency, justice, and the higher patriotism. But the numbers are increasing. If only we can keep the northern rabbis from invading our precincts." And, in an article written for the C.C.A.R. Journal, he chided:

> We who live in the South have long been accustomed to visits by investigators from the North who, after a few days, become experts upon conditions in Dixie. I should not presume to venture any opinion about the sorry situation in New York City.[228]

Most Southern rabbis, regardless of their feelings on this subject, still have provided home or community hospitality for their Northern colleagues, if the colleague has had the courtesy to make known his plans in advance. The reader might remember Rabbi "H"'s words, quoted earlier: "Despite my own feelings about the need and or value of rabbinical forays into [my state], I have never shut my door or rebuffed my colleagues. . . ." But this rabbi's

patience was sorely strained at the last rabbinical conference, when one of his Northern co-workers asked him for a list of names of some of his congregants.

> I said to [him] : "What do you want them for?" He said, "Oh, to go around and talk to them." Now he doesn't understand -- I am fed up to the gills -- and my people are fed up to the gills -- with such men . . . coming and talking to us -- we've been talked to enough. I don't know why I should give him names -- he could find his own names. . . . So he said, "Well, if you're scared." . . . It hasn't got a thing to do with fear. I was scared stiff during that Freedom Rider summer . . . but it wasn't the kind of fear which prevented me from doing what I thought had to be done by a rabbi. . . . I've had too many experiences with the rabbis who have come down to [my state] . . . climbed on the band wagon. . . . I have every sympathy in the world with the man who comes . . . in the spirit of commitment . . . and I saw enough of these "goyish" preachers . . . they had to do it . . . but I saw too many of my fellow Jews, and some of them were even rabbis, who were coming down to make the gesture. It was dramatic -- and, by the way, I never closed my door to any of them. Where other rabbis throughout the South would have nothing to do with them -- nobody can accuse me of cold-shouldering. . . . And I could see them, already while they're talking to me, composing the articles that they're going to write, the speeches that they're going to deliver, how they came down to the South, and how they saved the South -- that sort of stuff.

Only a bare handful of the Southern rabbis interviewed seemed even somewhat in favor of their Northern colleagues participating in these "forays into Dixie,"

and these men qualified their approval by saying "they think it's right, but I'm not sure,"[239] or "the time for such demonstrations is now over."[240] My informants were, by a large majority, not in agreement with these tactics.

In January, 1964, Martin Luther King wrote his famous "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." In it he chastised the Southern clergy who had labled his demonstrations "unwise and untimely." "I guess it is easy," he said, "For those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait'."[241] Surely the Southern rabbi who opposes the Freedom Rides is open to such criticism. Charles Silberman, in Crisis in Black and White, quotes Tolstoy:

> I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means -- except by getting off his back.[242]

Many a Negro of late has expressed his weariness with the "White liberal." James Baldwin informed his readers that "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time." What good are the sermons, the integrated services, the talks to the local Negro college, if the rabbi disassociates himself from the street-fighting, which, in the activists eyes, is the only way segregation and the Southern Way of Life will be defeated? Silberman quotes Bismarck's

famous statement, to make his point:

> When you say that you agree to a thing in principle, you mean that you have not the slightest intention of carrying it out in practice.[243]

Does rejection of the demonstration methodology by a large part of the Southern rabbinate mean that they are liberal "only in principle?" As we have already seen, the activists tend to answer "yes." But is it as clear-cut as they would make it out to be?

The Southern rabbi works within the context of a congregational setting. He must minister to his people also -- they cannot be but a homebase for his labors in other vineyards. As Rabbi Mantinband said, sometimes he cannot judge his effectiveness by what he has accomplished, but by the opportunities which are open to him. Surely he must try to make changes; surely he should work to lift his people out of the fears so common in their society. And maybe, just maybe, the incursions of Northern colleagues will help him to do so. But it is no easy thing to judge at the moment -- it is a mark of no sensitivity at all, to set up the Southern rabbi as our example of spineless wavering on really important issues. This might be true of some; it certainly is not true of all. Rabbi Hillel said it, many years ago, "Judge not thy fellow man until thou art come into his place." The words may sound trite, but they would take on added reality were one to actualize the exchange.

CHAPTER X

SOME FINAL WORDS

> In a nearby town a Negro said, "I'm in a bad position. I make four thousand dollars a year as a school principal and I'm also a preacher and I make five thousand dollars a year out of that. If I say I don't believe in integration they'd run me out of the church, and if I do they'll run me out of the school.[244]

A goodly number of the facts have been presented. The picture has been sketched with the data and ability at the writer's command. The moment has come for final thoughts -- for judgments, if you will. And also, for a few suggestions. Our concern, in this final chapter, will be, briefly, what have the Southern rabbis done, and what more could they do?

The Southern Rabbis and Civil Rights

If the writer has learned nothing else from his preparation of this study, he has learned that to generalize about the Southern rabbinate is to fall prey to all the misconceptions which usually accompany generalizations. There have been many different levels of involvement among the Southern rabbis, from the few fully engaged in the civil rights struggle, battering at the walls of the old system, to the one who is a keeper of the gates. There are

men who speak and act, men who speak but rarely act, and men who rarely speak. Examples have been given, and I hope this point has been made. Assured that the reader will remember this, it is time to speak in more general terms. Though generalizations are faulty instruments, they have their use, especially if the reader is forewarned to accept them only as the view of the forest which cannot do full justice to its individual trees.

Our first generalization, then, is that the Orthodox and Conservative rabbinate in the South has been conspicuous by its absence from the fray. According to my informants and in accordance with my written sources, these representatives of the more-traditional branches of Judaism "haven't participated to any great extent." Of the two groups, the writer was able to trace civil rights activity to but two Conservative rabbis, Seymour Atlas, of Montgomery, and Arie Becker, of Memphis. Though there probably have been others, none of my Jewish or Christian informants could recall their names or activities. The highest praise accorded to some of their number was that they signed petitions prepared by other clergy, or that they discussed the subject within their congregations. The A.D.L. informant, himself a member of a Conservative synagogue, responded as follows when asked if there was

a difference between the involvement of Southern Reform, Conservative and Orthodox rabbis in the civil rights struggle:

> I guess I would have to say yes. In the first place, there were more Reform rabbis in the Southern region. . . . also the Reform rabbis . . . by philosophy and background felt that they had a greater involvement publicly in community affairs than either the Conservative or Orthodox did. Matter of fact, the Orthodox rabbinate, where it existed, was not at all involved.

Though the Conservative and Orthodox rabbis in the South did little or nothing, their Reform colleagues, on the whole, played a respectable, if not overly important role. They were, as the Reverend Shuttlesworth described them, "a force in readiness . . . giving some support . . . some tacit, some active." Much of what they did was unpublicized and behind-the-scenes. Many among them spoke in their congregations and in the outside community; a few involved themselves in civil rights groups and activities. There is probably not a single community where the Reform rabbi has played the key role in battling segregation (although Hattiesburg, Mississippi, might be an exception), but there are a number of communities in which Reform rabbis played valuable secondary or supportive roles. Such has been the case especially with regard to the battles for school integration. And the fact that this is so -- that the rabbis have not led the parade --

is not a necessarily derogatory evaluation. At least Harold Fleming, the Southern Regional Council director, was hesitant to condemn the Southern rabbinate because of this:

> I'm not sure that the more defeatist rabbis were not right, in practical terms, that there were very stringent limits on how much direct or unilateral action by rabbis could have changed the situation in those days. . . . I wasn't one of those who felt that if every rabbi would get "gung ho" on this issue that it would change it substantially. I think a whole predominantly WASP . . . region had to be moved on this.

The rabbis have played a respectable role. The question is, have they played as great a role as they could have played? The answer must be "no."

What the Southern Rabbi Could Do

It is an easy thing for those who sit in the comfort of their Northern cities to condemn the Southern rabbi as a disgrace to prophetic Judaism. Many have done so. Many have made week-end trips down South to teach their colleagues some Judaism. I question the reasonableness of their words and deeds. If we must condemn those who minister to Southern Jewry, it should not be because they have not been outspoken liberals, leading the picket lines in their Deep South communities. It should be, because they have not done what it was within their power to do.

What could most any Southern rabbi do to advance the cause of Negro equality? The absolutely essential thing which he must do is work to win his congregation over to the struggle. A rabbi who is silent within his congregation is worthy of an unfavorable judgment. What might his procedure be? First, at hiring time, he must clearly convey to the congregation what he stands for. "Liberalism" should not spring forth, new born and unexpected one afternoon or evening, days or weeks or months after the "marriage" between rabbi and synagogue has taken place. The marriage should be a totally honest one.

Next, the rabbi must begin an intensive educational job upon his own people. He should employ every means at his disposal -- the pulpit, the study group, inter-personal relationships -- to sensitize his people to the ethical demands Judaism must make upon them, if it is to be of any importance to them. There is no surety that his efforts will succeed; it might be a lifelong battle. But if the rabbi fails to make it <u>his</u> battle, he has defaulted in his role as spiritual leader.

Then, while the job is being pursued within his congregation, the rabbi should turn to the outside community. This need not be done with any fanfare or speech making, especially if the community is a difficult one in which to operate. But he should make it his duty to know and be

known by the various members of the power structure -- the mayor, police chief, school superintendent, important businessmen. The relationship should not be one-way -- if the rabbi is always criticizing or seeking favors, he will not have strengthened his possibilities of influencing these people toward moderation when important crises develop. Here, the service groups might prove helpful. Also, a certain degree of friendliness on the rabbi's part. How he does it is less important than that he does it -- the Southern rabbi will be immeasureably more important in his community if he is able to approach the community's leaders on a first-name basis.

At the same time, the rabbi should be reaching out in other directions. It should not take him long to discover the liberal elements, few though they might be, in his city. He should quietly "cast in his lot" with them. He will undoubtedly be strengthened by them, and they by his presence. If all that it is possible to do is talk, then he must talk. When the hour is propitious for more dramatic and meaningful action, there will at least be a core group ready to act. And the rabbi should be among them.

Of utmost importance is to find kindred souls among the clergy in the community. In most communities there will be at least a handful. Religion still is a "respected force" in the South -- interfaith activities in which

the rabbi participates can only strengthen the cause. The rabbi should know and be known to the liberals and moderates among the priests and ministers.

Finally, the rabbi should quietly extend a hand of friendship to the Negroes of his community -- certainly the ministers and professors among them. Again he need not be dramatic, although some rabbis have been quite obvious about this in the Deep South and have managed to retain their pulpits and their effectiveness. But the Negro community should know, at the very least, that this man is sympathetic to their cause. The time will come, if the rabbi has been at all diligent and blessed with an average amount of luck, that he will be able to bring Negroes into his home and Temple. This too should be a goal not easily deferred by a Southern rabbi.

This is, at best, a minimal program. But some communities might necessitate such a program -- at least for the early years of the rabbi's ministry. We have said nothing about sending sermons to the local press, participating in prayer vigils, loudly doing battle with the city's Klan and White Citizens Council. A man who can do these things, and more, has found a more fortunate community, or is a "mighty man of valor," or possibly both. But a man who has not attempted to do the minimal, has not done

justice to his calling.

The simple fact is that the Negro, at least to date, has been unable to do the job alone. He needs votes, jobs, political pressure, education, good will -- things which can be provided only by the Whites among whom he lives. And the Whites must be convinced to provide the votes, education, jobs, and so forth. It is for the leaders of the Southern communities, the molders of public opinion, to respond to their task. And the rabbis -- though seemingly insignificant -- are among the leaders. The leaders must chose their tactics well -- the battle will not be won by bravado alone. Melvin Tumin reported in his book, Desegregation: Resistance and Readiness --

> The principal advocacy of social change . . . comes from those who have the widest perspective on themselves and their communities. The development of this sense of perspective leads one to be deliberate rather than impulsive; to be reflective rather than hasty; to bewilling to bargain delayed gratification of several desires against immediate impulsive gratification of only one; to be concerned for the obligations of oneis membership in the larger society along with the obligations of membership in one's local province; and, finally, to take into account, in deciding upon a course of action, some notion of responsibility to one's community and its organized patterns of life, as well as listening to the clamor of the inner voice. . . .[245]

President Kennedy, during a White House conference of Southern clergymen, advised his audience that "they were a most fortunate group -- that it was not often that

people have had such a role to play in history."[246] So far, the clergy of the South have played their role half-heartedly, even badly. Rabbis, though small in number, must be considered among those men of all generations to whom Edmund Burke's dictum was addressed: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, in 1954, compared the struggle with a slowly building log jam:

> At the present moment, the two races are separated by a rushing torrent. No one can safely cross to the other side. But one day a log will lodge itself between the opposite shores and balance precariously there. Some more courageous -- and perhaps you will want to say -- more foolhardy than the rest will take a chance and dart across it. A few more may take the risk. But soon another log will rest against the first, creating now a more secure footing. Others will find the courage to brave the torrent. Then still a third . . . will add itself to the other two. . . . At long last, a bridge will be built, firm and safe, upon which even the most timid will walk without fear. This, I believe, is the way it will be.

The rabbis of the South must carry some of those logs, cross this bridge, if they are to do justice to their calling. Some have already shown the way. The battle, though so very far from being over, has made a few incursions into enemy territory. One old Negro slave preacher once said: "We ain't what we ought to be, and we ain't what we want to be, and we ain't what we're going to be. But thank God, we ain't what we was."

There will be no progress in the South without those who are working constantly, day in and day out, to bring it about. No man who claims the role and title of a religious leader, can afford the luxury of inaction, silence, waiting. The rabbi must join himself to the struggle, and must do his part. There is only so much passivity which can be excused by the atmosphere of the community in which he lives. The man who sees his hands utterly tied, his mouth completely muted, is rightfully open to criticism -- his master is as much within as without. The Southern Reform rabbi has done a good deal, but he could do so much more.

APPENDIX

I. Chart on Rabbinic Involvement

II. Copy of Questionaire

I. CHART ON RABBINIC INVOLVEMENT

The following chart attempts brief profiles of forty Southern rabbis. Most were interviewed personally by the writer, others provided the information through the mails. For yet another group, the information was obtained through sermons or second-hand sources. This chart represents mainly what the rabbi sees his participation to be. In a few instances, there might be some variance between the writer's picture of a rabbi's involvement and the rabbi's self-image, but this was not a frequent occurrence. The information on this table is meant to summarize the material discussed at length in the body of the paper -- but it is incomplete and could prove misleading if considered by itself alone. Some further notes: a few rabbis (e.g., "R," "S") have been omitted from the chart -- there simply was not enough information available on them. Question marks mean the writer's information was not sufficient to allow a decision on that one point. A blank space means that the rabbi was not involved in that activity, did not feel that way, or could not be classified in that group.

Explanation of the Chart's Letters and Numbers

The letters refer to particular Southern rabbis, who are identified by name and place in Part Two -- the restricted portion -- of this study. The numbers represent the following:

1. Rabbis serving a Deep South congregation.
2. Rabbis rating their congregants as basically moderate or liberal on the civil rights issue.
3. Rabbis who have at one time belonged to liberal or integrated Ministerial Associations.
4. Rabbis who have been members of some service, civic, or patriotic group in their communities.
5. Rabbis who have preached at least occasional civil rights sermons.
6. Rabbis who have spoken on civil rights problems in the outside community.
7. Rabbis who have had integrated events in their temples.
8. Rabbis who have been members of the Southern Regional Council.
9. Rabbis who have held membership in a Council on Human Relations.
10. Rabbis who have been members of other civil rights committees or organizations.
11. Rabbis playing some role in the integration of public schools in their communities.
12. Rabbis who have been involved in a bombing incident.
13. Rabbis who have experienced harassment due to their civil rights activities.
14. Rabbis who have had conflicts with their Temple Boards over civil rights activities.

15. Rabbis expressing negative feelings toward Freedom Rides.

16. Rabbis expressing negative feelings toward other civil rights demonstrations.

17. Rabbis expressing negative or indifferent feelings toward the role national Jewish organizations have played in the civil rights struggle.

18. Rabbis feeling that their Southern colleagues have played an important role in the total civil rights movement.

THE SOUTHERN RABBI AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Rabbi	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
A		X		?	X		X						X		X	?	X	X
B		X	X	?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
C	X			?											?	?	X	?
D	X			?	X					X				X	?	?	X	
E	X	?		?	X										?	?	?	?
F	X	X	X	?	X		X		X						?	?	X	
G	X		X		X				X	X	X		X		?	?	X	
H	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	
I		X		?		X			X	X				X	?	?	?	
J	X	X	X	?			X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X
K	X	X		X	X	X	?		X	X					?	?		?
L	X	X		?	X	X			X	X	X		X		X	X		X
M	X		?	X	X	X								X	?	?	?	?
N	X			X					X						X	X	X	
O	X	X		?											X	X	X	
P	X	?		X		X									X	X	X	
Q	X			?											X	X	X	
*** T	X	?	?	?	X	X	?		?	?	X		?		?	?	?	?
V	X	?	?	X	X	X	X		?	?	X				?	?	?	X
* W			X	?	X	X								X	?	?	?	?
X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X		X
Y		X	X	X	X	?	?			X	X				?	?	X	
Z		X	X	X	X	X	X		?	X	X		X	X	X	?		
a		X	X	?													X	
*** b					X					X								

Rabbi	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
c		X	X	?	X	X	?							?	?	?	?	?
d			X	?	X	X	?		X				X		?	?		
e			X	?	X	X										?	X	
f				?											X	?	X	?
g		X	?	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		?	?	X	X
h		X		?	X	X	?		X	X	?				X	X	X	X
*** i		X	?	?	X	X	?		?	?	?			?	?	?	?	?
m		X	X	?	?	X	X		X	X			?		?	?	X	X
n	X														X	X	X	
o		X	X	?	X		X								X	X	X	
*** p	X														X	X	X	
s	X			?	X				?	X			X	X				
t		X	X	?	X	X	?		X	X			X		?	?	?	?
v	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	?	X	

* Refers to his activities prior to 1954, when he was in this pulpit.

*** Insufficient information available.

II. THE THESIS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was sent to approximately seventy rabbis who had each served in the South five years or more. Responses were received from about one-third of those to whom it was mailed.

THESIS QUESTIONNAIRE

When answering these questions, please number them according to the questionnaire. I would appreciate as much detail as you feel able to give me. If it would be easier, you might record your answers on tape, and send the tape to me at the American Jewish Archives. Thank you.

I. What date would you consider to be the legitimate starting point for this thesis — that is, when did you notice a significant increase in civil rights activity in your area of the South?

II. What was the response to this civil rights activity evidenced by the non-Jewish population in your area? How did the local mass media (especially the newspapers) react? Was there a visible and vocal "liberal" response? If so, what segments of the community were in this liberal "group?" How did the local white clergy react?

III. Background Questions on Your Jewish Community:

A. How long has there been a Jewish community in your city?
B. How long has your congregation been in existence?
C. What is the economic standing and source of income of your congregants? Are they susceptible to economic pressures from the non-Jewish community? If so, is this a major consideration to them?
D. How "Southern" are your congregants in their outlook on the civil rights question? What percentage are definitely segregationists? If your congregation was to be compared with a near-by Protestant (not Baptist) congregation, would there be any noticeable difference in outlook on the civil rights movement and its goals?

IV. What has been your response to and involvement in specific "civil rights" activities in your area and in the South as a whole? This would include school integration, transportation, public facilities, voting, employment, Freedom Rides, marches, etc.. Please be specific, discussing one or two involvements in detail.

V. What means have you employed to accomplish your aims in the area of civil rights? How have you worked within your congregation and community in order to best attain your short and long-range goals? Please be specific.

VI. What role have national Jewish organizations played in the civil rights movement in the South (and,, specifically, in your community)? How helpful have they been to you? How detrimental? What should their role be?

VII. Have you ever been criticized by your board or by any elements of your synagogue because of your actions or lack of actions in the civil rights sphere? Have you ever felt restrained by the fear that your congregation would not support you?

VIII. If, fifty or a hundred years from now, a history is written of the civil rights movement in the South, and in your community, what role do you feel the rabbis of the South (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform) will play in it? Why?

FOOTNOTES

1 Morris Schappes, "From Mississippi to Harlem," Jewish Currents, XVIII (September, 1964), 4.

2 James A. Wax, "The Attitude of the Jews in the South Toward Integration," C.C.A.R. Journal, XXVI (June, 1959), 14.

3. Joshua Fishman, "Southern City," Midstream, VII (Summer, 1961), 43-44.

4 Charles Mantinband, "Mississippi, the Magnolia State" (1961), in the Nearprint file of the American Jewish Archives.

5 See Appendix, p. 261.

6 John Dollard, Caste and Class in a Southern Town (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957), p. 29.

7 World Almanac: 1964 (New York: New York World-Telegram, 1964), p. 267.

8 Louis Lomax, The Negro Revolt (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 76.

9 Leonard Reissman, "The New Orleans Jewish Community," The Jewish Journal of Sociology, IV (June, 1962), 112.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 113.

12 Ibid., p. 111.

13 Alfred O. Hero, Jr., The Southerner and World Affairs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 490.

14 World Almanac, 270.

15 James Silver, Mississippi, The Closed Society (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964), p. 22.

16 Ibid., p. 102.

17 Ibid., p. 92.

18 Ibid., p. 34.

19 Ibid., p. 30.

20 Ibid., p. 41.

21 Ibid., p. 59.

22 Jacob M. Rothschild, from a sermon delivered April 17, 1964. Sermon on file in the American Jewish Archives.

23 Silver, 58.

24 Ibid., p. 53.

25 Hero, 482.

26 State Times (Jackson, Mississippi), October 24, 1958.

27 Hero, 499.

28 World Almanac, 280, and American Jewish Yearbook (henceforth, AJYB), (Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee, 1965), LXV (1965), 153.

29 World Almanac, 261, and American Jewish Yearbook, 149.

30 Fishman, 44.

31 Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1958), p. 20 ff..

32 John B. Martin, The Deep South Says Never (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1957), p. 41.

33 Look, January 1, 1959, p. 16.

34 American Jewish Yearbook, LXV, 149.

35 See Fishman, 39-56.

36 Fishman, 46.

37 New York Times, May 26, 1963, p. 58.

38 AJYB, LXV, 149.

39 C. Eric Lincoln and Martin L. King, Jr., "Non-Violence and the American Negro," The Quiet Battle, ed. Mulford Q. Sibley (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1963), p. 292.

40 Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in Black and White (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 201.

41 World Almanac, 264.

42 Ibid., 278.

43 AJYB, LXV, 153.

44 Wax, 15-16.

45 Martin, 9.

46 David M. Reimers, White Protestantism and the Negro (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 186.

47 Time, October 27, 1958.

48 Harry Golden, Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes (New York: World Publishing Co., 1964), p. 192.

49 Robert Penn Warren, Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 24-25.

50 AJYB, LXVI, 83ff. Also see Hero, 474.

51 Theodore Lowi, "Southern Jews: The Two Communities," The Jewish Journal of Sociology, VI (July, 1964).

52 Lowi, 112.

53 Wax, 16-17.

54 Rabbi "A." For key see restricted Part Two.

55 Rabbi "B."

56 Wax, 18.

57 This theory is likewise accepted by, among many others, Hero (see p. 478 ff.), Golden (see p. 206 ff.), and by the former representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, and the Southern Regional Council whom the writer interviewed.

58 Milton Friedman, in the Jewish Advocate (Philadelphia?), October 9, 1958 (?).

59 Lowi, 111.

60 Silver, 99-101.

61 Excerpted from a letter from Thomas Offenburger written to the writer on January 25, 1967. The letter is now in the files of the American Jewish Archives.

62 From a taped interview with Harold Fleming, December 20, 1966. Tape is to be found in the American Jewish Archives.

63 Excerpted from a letter to the writer from Aaron Henry, dated July 22, 1966, and placed in the American Jewish Archives.

64 "Jewish Young Freedom Fighters and the Role of the Jewish Community: An Evaluation," Jewish Currents, XIX (July-August, 1965), 22.

65 Hero, 478.

66 In the Emmet Frank file in the American Jewish Archives.

67 Aaron Henry letter.

68 Rabbi "E."

69 Rabbi "F."

70 Rabbi "H."

71 Rabbi "H."

72 Rabbi "I."

73 Rabbi "J."

74 Rabbis "H" and "L."

75 Rabbis "K," "F," "G," and "L."

76 Rabbi "O."

77 Rabbi "H."

78 Received from Rabbi "M."

79 Rabbi "N."

80 Rabbi "G."

81 Rabbi "L."

82 Rabbi "O."

83 Rabbi "G."

84 Rabbi "J."

85 Rabbi "p."

86 Rabbi "G."

87 Rabbis "L" and "O."

88 Rabbi "N."

89 Rabbi "N."

90 Rabbi "P."

91 Rabbi "Q."

92 Silver, 131.

93 Some of the rabbis included in the group which, to my knowledge, has used the pulpit for civil rights purposes are: "G," "L," "H," "E," "J," and "K."

94 Rabbi "R."

95 Rabbi "E."

96 Rabbi "G."

97 Rabbi "L."

98 Rabbi "H."

99 Rabbi "H."

100 Rabbi "P."

101 Hero, 499.

102 Rabbi "M."

103 Rabbi "S."

104 Rabbi "J."

105 Rabbi "U."

106 Rabbi "V."

107 Rabbi "O."

108 See above, pp. 59-60.

109 See above, pp. 51-52.

110 Rabbi "W."

111 Rabbi "X."

112 Rabbi "Y."

113 Rabbi "Y."

114 Rabbi "Z."

115 Rabbis "a," "b," and "X."

116 See "Chart on Rabbinic Involvement" in the Appendix.

117 Baton Rouge Morning Advocate, April 27, 1966, p. 8-A.

118 Ibid.

119 Rabbi "Y."

120 Rabbi "e."

121 Rabbi "Z."

122 Rabbi "e."

123 Rabbi "X."

124 Rabbi "g."

125 Rabbi "Z."

126 See "Chart on Rabbinic Involvement" in Appendix.

127 Rabbi "h."

128 Rabbi "X."

129 Rabbi "g."

130 Rabbi "Z."

131 Rabbi "Y."

132 Rabbi "g."

133 Rabbi "h."

134 Rabbi "i."

135 Rabbi "h."

136 For example, Rabbis "Z," "g," "W," "d," and "Y."

137 Rabbi "Z."

138 Rabbi "b."

139 Rabbi "h."

140 For example, Rabbi "k."

141 Only one man furnished the latter response -- Rabbi "a." Rabbis "h," "e," "k," "g," "m," "Z," and "K," among others, responded according to the former.

142 The Danville Register (Virginia), September 24, 1958, editorial page.

143 The Alexandria Gazette (Virginia), September 26, 1958, pp. 1-2.

144 The Richmond Times (Virginia), October ?, 1958.

145 The Northern Virginia Sun, October 5, 1958, Letters to the Editor.

146 The New York Times, October 5, 1958, p. 72.

147 The Alexandria Gazette, October 4, 1958, pp. 1-8.

148 The Washington (D.C.) Post, October 1, 1958, p. A2.

149 Max Rosenberg and Arthur Marmor, Temple Beth El: A Centennial History of Beth El Hebrew Congregation Serving Northern Virginia Since 1859 (Alexandria, Virginia: Temple Beth El, 1959), p. 48.

150 Rabbi "Z."

151 Rabbi "g."

152 Rabbi "A."

153 Rabbi "Y."

154 Rabbi "X."

155 Rabbi "Z."

156 Rabbi "m."

157 Jacob M. Rothschild, "The Southern Rabbi Faces Desegregation," C.C.A.R. Journal, XIV (June, 1956), 6.

158 Margaret Long, Editorial in The New South, XVII (October, 1962), 2 and 17.

159 Silver, 57-58.

160 Elijah Palnick, "Southern Jewry and Civil Rights," C.C.A.R. Journal, XIII (June, 1965), 62.

161 Rabbi "h."

162 Rabbi "a."

163 Rabbi "Z."

164 Rabbi "J."

165 Rabbis "g" and "B," respectively.

166 Lloyd Gartner, "The Racial Revolution and Jewish Community Policy," Conservative Judaism, XX (Spring, 1966), 45.

167 Golden, 212-213, 221.

168 Ibid., 215.

169 Ruth Silberstein, "A Southern Rabbi Takes a Stand," Congress Weekly, XXV (January 20, 1958), 7.

170 Fishman, 51.

171 "Jewish Young Freedom Fighters, etc.," 18.

172 Hero, 500.

173 There is considerable reason to believe that this was not the reason for Rabbi Ben Ami's dismissal. Please see Part Two, the restricted section of the paper.

174 Rabbi "H."

175 Rabbi "X."

176 Rabbi "H."

177 Martin, 14-15.

178 Ibid., 34.

179 Melvin Tumin, Desegregation: Resistance and Readiness (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 160.

180 Palnick, 62.

181 Rabbi "h."

182 Rabbi "G."

183 Rabbi "Y."

184 Rabbi "J."

185 Rabbi "o."

186 Rabbi "h."

187 Rabbi "Z."

188 Rabbi "b."

189 Tumin, 160.

190 Ibid., 169-170.

191 Ibid., 149.

192 Hero, 488.

193 AJYB, LXV, 83-84.

194 Rabbi "f."

195 Rabbi "p."

196 Rabbi "R."

197 Rabbi "Q."

198 Rabbi "N."

199 Rabbi "I."

200 Rabbi "J."

201 Rabbi "L."

202 Rabbi "h."

203 Rabbi "g."

204 Rabbi "r."

205 Rabbi "M."

206 Rabbi "I."

207 Golden, 214.

208 Rabbi "g."

209 Rabbi "G."

210 Rabbi "s." See Part Two.

211 Rabbi "D."

212 Rabbi "Q."

213 Such has been the response, for example, of Rabbis "F," "Y," "K," "Z," "L," "G," "P," "B," "e," "d," "h," "g," and "t."

214 As quoted in the National Jewish Post and Opinion, October 10, 1958, p. 1.

215 Hero, 496-497.

216 Fishman, 42.

217 Ibid., 50.

218 Community "J."

219 Rabbi "X."

220 Rabbi "O."

221 Rabbi "G."

222 Rabbi "L."

223 Rabbi "K."

224 Rabbi "Y."

225 Fishman, 50.

226 Jewish Young Freedom Fighters, etc., 14-15.

227 Irene Paull, "From Hattiesburg, Mississippi," Jewish Currents, XVIII (September, 1964), 35.

228 Irene Paull, "My Grandfather's Ghost in Hattiesburg." Jewish Currents, XX (January, 1966), 13-14.

229 Report of Rabbi Isaac Freeman as found in correspondence with the American Jewish Archives (see Desegregation File).

230 Rabbi "H."

231 Rabbi "J."

232 Rabbi "X."

233 Rabbi "P."

234 Rabbi "H."

235 As reported in Jewish Currents, XIX (June, 1965), 25.

236 Rabbi "u" writing to Rabbi "H." Letter on file under latter rabbi's name at the American Jewish Archives.

237 Rabbi "P."

238 Charles Mantinband, "The Horns of a Dilemma," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, LXXIV (1964), 248-9.

239 Rabbi "e."

240 Rabbi "B."

241 Time, January 3, 1964, p. 15.

242 Silberman, 224.

243 Ibid., 217.

244 Martin, 66.

245 Tumin, 199-200.

246 Golden, 165.

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THE SOUTHERN RABBI AND CIVIL RIGHTS

PART TWO

by

Allen Krause

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

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio
1967

Referee:
Professor Stanley F. Chyet

Part Two, due to its highly controversial nature, is attached only to the copy of this thesis on file at the American Jewish Archives. It may be consulted only with the permission of Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, Director, or Dr. Stanley F. Chyet, Associate Director.