

THE CHANGING PATTERNS IN
JEWISH INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1914-1930

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

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1972

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DIGEST

Early Twentieth-century America was characterized by the growth of industrialization and urbanization; the spread of Darwinism; and the breaking with traditional modes of thought and traditional value systems. Vigorous economic development unleashed a turbulent age of intellectual and spiritual ferment.

Although President Wilson's Fourteen Points had given impetus to such liberal ideas as national self-determination, these fell victim to fundamentalist Christian doctrine and fanatical patriotism, which aroused distrust of liberal, scientific, and modernized modes of thought.

The idealism following the war thus faltered. The economic collapse in the early Twenties and the fear of revolution which followed in its wake led to the stifling of dissent, to prohibition, and to ultra-Americanism. The major source of this reactionary wave came from the rural areas, especially in the South, where fundamentalist churches were in the ascendency and where liberal and radical thinking was an anathema.

With the upturn of the economy in 1924, conservative ideology retreated to its rural base, as corrosive new ideas and values were spawned by iconoclastic intellectuals, such as H. L. Mencken.

The stock market collapse of 1929, followed by a decade of severe depression, abruptly brought the "roaring Twenties" to an end and ushered in a wide variety of radical alternatives

to unrestricted private enterprise.

Throughout each of these phases, American Jews responded to external challenges by adapting and modifying their Judaism and sense of Jewish identity. Prior to World War I, their interest lay in the "melting pot," even though there were notable exceptions already calling for a clearly differentiated ethnic identity. Jewish nationalism more and more became the central issue, separating Reform Judaism from the other factions. Reform opposed Zionism: America was its Israel. But after World War I, Palestine proved to be more acceptable -- culturally and economically, although still not politically.

American Jews were adversely affected by economic collapse. They took the brunt of bigotry and hatred, which created new efforts on their part for unity--to combat anti-Semitism and to promote Jewish rights. But when the economy improved in 1924, the Jews benefitted. Rapid industrialization and urbanization liberated many Jews from traditional ties, while science helped contribute to the decay of traditional, religious ideas.

Zionistic efforts increased as the economic advantages of Palestine became apparent. Practical upbuilding supplanted pre-war propaganda. So long as the economy was favorable, Jews fared well. But as the stock market declined, Jews felt the brunt of economic collapse. With social planning the order of the day, Jews struggled with anti-Semitism and the inherent threat to their freedoms.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the interpenetration of Jewish and American thought, as well as the impact of economic change on the thought patterns themselves.

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EATONS



To Bobbye, with love

Acknowledgements

It is not an easy task to write a paper covering Jewish intellectual material in depth. The research is the easiest part, the technical difficulties must be borne by many.

I would like to thank my parents who have given me encouragement and have taken a keen interest in my college career. My wife, Bobbye, must be thanked for her help in the typing of the first draft and her ability to put up with my "thesis talk." I cannot thank Fannie Zelcer enough for her patience in typing the final draft, after I handed in the original four months later than planned. And finally, thanks to Dr. Ellis Rivkin, whose keen insights and constructive corrections have added greatly to my appreciation of Jewish History.

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FOREWORD

The years 1914-1930 were decisive years in American history. They were years in which wealth, rising industrialism, science, and progressive ideas were to persuade intellectuals to speak out against the binding chains of traditional thinking and for a new approach to the problem of individual freedoms. These were years of war and economic depression, the reaction to which caused a deep split in American life-- between those people influenced by liberalism and economic progress, and those people retaining traditional modes of thinking and acting.

The Jews living in the United States during this period of time were greatly influenced by their environment. Those who came in contact with the progressive ideas and economic growth benefitted through a proliferation of options for their Jewish expression. Those Jews remaining untouched by these same factors were left to retain their traditional modes of thinking.

What were the patterns of intellectual thought which guided Jews through this period in United States history and what was the influence of American intellectual thought on Jewish intellectual thought? Hopefully, this thesis will provide answers to these concerns.

CHAPTER I

AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT PRIOR TO WORLD WAR I

AMERICAN POWER AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

The United States was, in 1900, on the verge of a new industrial growth which would have an enormous effect not only on American life, but also on American thought. Since the mid 1800's, financial and industrial interests, with the aid of the more fortunate farmers, had ruled the country, unimpeded by the slave-owning aristocracy of the South. In other words, "the masters of great urban wealth now dominated the social plan."¹ Whereas in 1861 there were only three millionaires in the United States, that number had grown to thirty eight by 1900, and these men owned ninety percent of all wealth in this country.

The swiftness of this accumulation out-rivaled all previous achievements in the history of wealth accumulation, as the new industrial capitalists were unhindered by the remnants of the older order.² The philosophy of the industrial masters was Doric in simplicity: the state and the Society were nothing; the individual was everything.

Free from the repression and emancipated from the inferiority complexes of European peasants and merchants, these captains of industry, and the society which they represented, kept a wide distance between themselves and the lower classes. Charles Beard offers the following description

of the lower classes:

With scarcely any direction other than that given by avid real estate speculators and greedy landlords, the tenements of the poor stretched and sprawled forward and outward in haphazard fashion, devoid of all beauty, comfort, or health-made worse by the incoming hordes of Europe who pressed of necessity into the cheapest districts already cursed by squalor, dirt, and disease.³

With all this came occasional outbreaks and strikes by the poor working class. Nevertheless, these people were not slaves and were not hopelessly submerged in the muck of abject poverty. They could vote and were treated with some measure of respect. They were kept entertained by vaudeville shows and cheap theaters, paid for by the large and highly lucrative branches of capitalistic enterprise who delighted in "bickling the urban masses." Through efforts in the field of sensation and by creating popular tastes, the capitalist promoters brought not only heavy revenues into their own pockets, but also helped set the standards for popular culture.

The influence of wealth in setting the culture patterns for the United States at the turn of the century follows the thesis of Professor Ellis Rivkin, who states that

the degree of pressure exerted by economic factors which allow no one to escape their impact is greater than the reciprocal pressure that idea systems make upon economics.⁴

This interaction between economic change and the prevailing symbolic systems will be seen again and again as we push deeper into the thinking of early Twentieth Century America.

INTELLECTUAL IDEALISM IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

The victory of urban, industrial wealth over agrarian culture and the slave-owning aristocracy brought with it changing ideas. One of these ideas was that of Reform Darwinism--a philosophy of evolution and progress, an ideology which sought to dissolve conservative ideational systems built on eternal and idealistic verities by the power of pragmatic thought. Influenced by scientific discoveries and the progress in Europe, American colleges became caught up in the notion of progress, enhanced by the critical notion of inquiry. Beard observed that

at last, American colleges and intellectual interests...felt the shock of critical inquiry and the impact of ideas, wholly foreign to the heritage handed down by the theological educators of the middle period.⁵

Through the interpretation of Herbert Spencer, Darwinism was also applied to business. Just as animals were subject to the notion of survival of the fittest, so too "society was an organism that evolved by the survival of the fittest."⁶ By 1900 the doctrine was spreading across the country that only those businessmen who succeeded were the fittest.

No legislation should block this natural, progressive evolution. Poverty and corruption were merely temporary evils which would be taken care of by survival in the long run. Thus the rise of the businessman was seen as merely the working out of God's law. This application of the "survival of the fittest" to business came to be known as "Conservative Darwinism."

But the first real steps in evolutionary progress were taken by the Reform Darwinists, who found their most interested audiences on campus. Here was expounded the notion that Reform Darwinism, led by its prime spokesman, Henry George, had come to dissolve Conservative Darwinism. George pointed out that Conservative Darwinists seemed to be content just to let the environment take care of itself, thus relegating the problems of the poor to "the long run." Conservative Darwinism demanded that no legislation stand in ~~this~~ way; Reform Darwinists asked the people to determine their own environment through legislation.⁷

Thus, in theory, both Darwinisms were really different, one from another. Both utilized the concepts of progress and evolution, but while Conservatives used it to the advantage of laissez faire and business survival, Reformers held Darwinism to be that which was to free humanity from the steel chain of conservative ideas. Whatever the differences, however, by the end of the Nineteenth Century, the evolutionary idea had spread into every conceivable

sphere of mental activity, allowing the critical mood to challenge respectable dogmas everywhere.⁸

THE IMPACT OF PRAGMATISM

Along with the advent of Reform Darwinism in the field of social progress there developed a philosophy called pragmatism. According to educator John Dewey and many of his followers, ideas should change to give men what they seek. In other words, "ideas should pave the way and create an environment favorable to the achievement of goals."⁹

As late as 1929, Professor William Ernest Hocking of Harvard University described the task which pragmatism must undertake:

It has to make philosophy a highly responsible undertaking. It has to combat those traits which lead support to impulsive popular dogmatism, such as the idle securities and finalities of abstract truth... and thereby to render our moral thinking flexible and contemporaneous.¹⁰

Hocking goes on to say that the United States public is inclined to be a dogmatic nation, believing stiffly in external principles, final convictions, natural rights, an unchanging constitution, and mechanical theologies. To be effective, pragmatism must "limber up" the ways of knowing of this people, "to give the intellectually traditional, authority making, hero-worshipping American the courage of its own experience."

Thus, according to the Pragmatic theory operating amongst the intellectuals in the early Twentieth Century, Conservatism is found wanting in the fields of politics and economics. Truth is "what works" for the individual; only he decides what is true and right, with his conscience as his guide. The concepts of "discipline" and "tradition" are unimportant in the seeking after truth.

INTELLECT AND RELIGION IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICA

The years 1865-1900 brought with them a secular spirit, which was wrought by business, technology and science. The leadership of this age belonged to the inventors-every one of these thirty-five years saw a major new invention. As scientific thought advanced, it sent religious conservatives recoiling before its radical ideas. Science had become a new religion-aligning itself with liberalism and progress-and bringing about frontal attacks on theological traditions.¹¹ Thus, by the beginning of the 20th Century, many religious spokesmen were beginning to reconcile orthodox religious thought with that of evolutionary progress. Protestant theology was soon being permeated with an evolutionary type thinking "everywhere except in the intellectual hinterlands of the country."¹²

Through the influence of Hegel, which had reached the intellectual sphere of America, philosophy soon became divorced from theology and was given an independent status.

Philosophy gained a more scientific and mathematical outlook, and by 1900, laymen, rather than theologians, were filling the chairs of Philosophy in American universities. Likewise, colleges and universities as a whole were being liberated from clerical dominion (excepting those ruled by the Catholic hierarchy) through "the flow of gold" into these institutions. Men of money, secularized in thinking, now came into college management. And thus

with the spread of secular education, the multiplication of institutions for technical training, and the increasing prominence of science in the curricula of the schools, telling inroads were made on the kingdom of 'swinging and shouting parsons.'¹³

And yet, with the advent of science and critical thought most churches throughout the United States remained conservative in thought. Christianity stressed spirit, while the drift in American life centered on acquiring. The churches felt that plutocracy was dangerous, and that wealth corrupted. Capitalism had not been what Jesus advocated; rather his teaching had centered around a type of socialism in living. By the 20th Century, the church attitude toward business was to change greatly.

As a basis for having posited social living, the churches pointed out the tremendous gulf which was developing between the classes, caused by reckless capitalism. Thus, in the spirit of Christian Socialism, the church began to establish

small guilds and settlements, in hopes of removing these barriers by bringing the problems of the poor to the attention of the wealthy.¹⁴ With the establishment of such institutions as the Hull House, the church lead the fight against exploitation by child labor, and sweatshops, the result of which were the first steps taken toward more sanitary conditions and improved industrial codes.

America was a religious nation, but many religious spokesmen began defining Christianity in light of the environment of reform. William Morris and John Ruskin stated that

true Christianity meant working
for social change...to reform
through Reform Darwinism...to
change from dogma to Christian-
izing the environment in which
children grew up and women worked.

As a result of the Gilded Age and the spirit of progress, some religious intellectuals were beginning to see Christianity in the light of a new secular era, as witnessed by the spread of Biblical criticism and scientific thought to almost all corners of the United States.

THE LITERARY RESPONSE TO THE PLUTOCRACY

As Big Business continued to grow and dominate American life, there came the need for those whose interests were threatened by its advance to say something against it. And many did. Government by plutocracy was exposed as corrupting and criticized as being little better than a government run

by glorified pawnbrokers. There was a crying need for introspection. The call went out and was answered by such American critics as Henry George, Henry Lloyd, and Fredrick Townsend Martin. Through their writings they reached the conclusion that however successful our democracy had been materially, it had failed in its social, grand, religious, moral, and aesthetic aspects.¹⁵

The rapid growth of wealth had brought with it a rapid spread of literacy--and thus a wider demand for magazines and newspapers. Common to many of these periodicals were political cartoons which began to paint the stark realities of life--especially scandals and industrial filth. As journalism began to pander to the public, it began to attack the plutocracy and aristocracy, proposing and recommending to politicians taxes on luxuries, inheritances, large incomes, monopolies and privileged corporations.

But even though the plutocracy was being attacked by the literary branch of American culture, it was this same plutocracy which was monetarily supporting that part of American culture concerned with drama, art, and music. According to Bronson Howard and James A. Herne, dramatists by 1900 were deeply affected by the economic processes around them. This caused Beard to say that

by 1900 the theatrical trust had
the drama as firmly in its grip
as the oil trust had the petroleum
business.¹⁶

As for art, the expanding wealth of the plutocracy

produced an expanding market for paintings and sculpture. Music too was supported by the plutocracy-especially through endowments and gifts. Large scale art exhibitions in big cities and large scale manufacture of musical instruments showed that culture was being transformed from slow innovation to rapid imitation. "Whatever was profitable to business was praiseworthy in culture."¹⁷

NEW ECONOMIC VIEWS OF THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

In noticing the effects of the plutocracy upon American culture and American life in general, many writers began explaining United States history in terms of a progressive, economic view. In 1911 Algie M. Simons wrote Social Forces in American History,¹⁸ in which he interpreted the Revolutionary War, the Constitution and the Civil War in terms of economics. He felt that the capitalist rise to power was part of an evolutionary process, an extension of the Darwinian concept of progress. Charles Beard wrote An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution, in which he said that whoever omits economic pressures ~~offromhistory~~ is likely to substitute mythology for reality and will tend to confuse issues rather than clarify them. J. Allen Smith, in his The Spirit of American Government accused the constitution of being a social block against the have-nots. Framers of the United States Constitution, so he argued, and most state constitutions, who are usually recognized leaders of

commercial and industrial affairs, have little else in mind but selfishness and creed.

Thus, as one of the consequences of the gilded age of plutocratic control over the American Way of Life, Reform Darwinists began to apply their progressive ideas to the concept of constitution and law. Their goal was to redefine law as a "constantly evolving set of ideas." These progressives complained that most laws had been set up to protect the propertied class from the masses. Through their work they hoped to persuade the Supreme Court that only by upholding new and changing social legislation could the "law" be freed from association with those who were merely property conscious.¹⁹ This new activity in the field of law attracted many intellectuals. This was the beginning of the intellectual involvement in the fight against restrictive laws. Observing that many judges were making the higher law of the land out of "their sentiments and institutions," and thereby nullifying many social laws, these intellectuals often combined with reformers and labor leaders to apply recall to judges and judicial decisions.²⁰

In 1914, Walter Lippman wrote in Preface to Politics that this was a year to be freed from all arbitrary yardsticks-to be free of everything that smacked of the old America.²¹ Along with Dewey, the pragmatists, the progressives, and the intellectuals, Lippman set the tone for the intellectuals,

battle which would be fought during the next fifteen years. The social forces of evolution were to see no boundaries. The rule of oligarchy may win the battle, but the war will be won by progressives. Such were the processes and products of American democracy when the mind was left free to inquire, to propose, and to champion.²²

CHAPTER II

THE WAR AND ITS EFFECT ON AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

PROGRESSIVES TURN TO INTERNATIONAL THINKING

The American plutocracy was extremely instrumental in determining many of the policies of the war years. For in this arena of war, another war continued between the Conservative Darwinists and the reformers. Goldman explains that Conservative Darwinism and the plutocracy needed war as an ideological cover to expand their thesis of "bringing about the survival of the fittest among people within a nation and among the nations of the world."¹ To counter this move, the reformers pointed the finger at "the evil men in black coats deceiving the people at the behest of bankers and manufacturers...."

Even a few years before the American entry into the World War, liberals, led by Robert M. LaFollette, were protesting that the entrance into the war would benefit only munitions makers, stockbrokers, and bond dealers. The fact that we might be supporting the wrong side was another argument used by the liberals to keep us out of war. Said LaFollette:

...no better world is to be gained if the U.S. fights along side of 'old-world order'-Britain-against the Germans who wherever they have lived...have left a record of courage, loyalty, honesty, and high ideals....²

This pro-German feeling was found basically in the Midwest, a reflection of immigrant prejudices. Quite often there were the closest ties of friendship between the upper classes of Germany and prominent American citizens. In the eyes of progressives committed to isolationism, Britain was the center of international financial machinations, and they wanted no part of it. They saw a greater advantage in a United States-Germany alliance than in one with imperialist England. Besides having a soft spot for Germany and its social legislation, reformers explained that Darwinism had already shattered the notion of the "Anglo-Saxon past."

It may very well have been Woodrow Wilson, a great progressive himself, who was the one to turn these isolationist reformers to international thinking. In the early stages of war, Wilson had looked rather coldly on the pretensions of both the embattled forces, "being inclined to regard the conflict as a war of commercial powers over the spoils of empire."³ He felt that both sides had in mind basically the same thing, and the "the primary interest of Great Britain in the war (was) commercial and imperialistic." Thus Wilson did not think that the United States should be in a position of seeming in any way involved with British policy.

Out of his own doubts concerning the war, Wilson issued a call for national self-determination, the spread of democracy, and the immediate establishment of a League

of Nations, on an international basis. These ideas were set down masterfully in 1916 in his famous Fourteen Points, and along with other provisions for international cooperation, helped turn the thinking of the intellectuals toward these ideals. Thus we can answer the question asked by intellectual Harold Stearnes:

...how did men who were courageous, sincere, and intelligent progressives accept so easily a formulation of war aims that helped defeat their purposes?⁴

Not only were the progressives beginning to look to Wilson as champion of national and humanitarian considerations in 1916, but Germany too was looking to Wilson in that same year. She was calling him "the foremost champion of humanity and justice," while at the same time she was courting United States recognition of Germany as the protector of the rights of the oppressed peoples of Europe.⁵ And thus the progressives, influenced by Wilson and by Beard's and Dewey's articles in the New Republic, became convinced that the only way to achieve constructive progressivism was to use the means at hand: to spread liberty and national self-determination, and to establish a League of Nations.

It did not take long for Wilson to change his mind, regarding the powers of war, pointing the finger now at Germany rather than Great Britain. Much of this was due to the constant prodding of Walter Hines Page, ambassador

to the Court of St. James, who was violently pro-English in his attitude and was probably a tool of the pro-British faction in the United States. Page told England that "the American notes of protest against English acts upon the high seas were mere matters of form and not intended to be taken seriously."⁶ This naturally encouraged England to continue her violation of the right of neutrals.

Although reformers continued to argue against American entrance into the war, Wilson, aided by Teddy Roosevelt, persuaded them to focus their attention on Prussianism, which was a menace to all free peoples. Only if America entered the war as a holy crusade and only if America could sit at the peace table, could she assure the world that a peace settlement would be lasting and just, rather than immediate and vindictive.⁷ Reformers could accept this type of proposal which would offset British European hegemony and which hopefully would avoid a vindictiveness amongst Germany which might set her "bitterly spoiling for revenge."

While Wilson was persuading the reformers of the need to enter the war, he was encountering opposition by his European "allies." Wilson knew that they had all agreed to secret treaties, which would materially benefit them at the expense of Germany and the United States, since the United States was not cut in on the spoils. Furthermore, he was derided for his abstract "pontifical statement of a future international morality."⁸ Nonetheless, after Wilson

delivered his Fourteen Points, idealist propanganda continued to flow into the countries of the Central Powers, warning them that

they were fighting for imperialistic masters against governments that offered them a peace of justice and freedom.⁹

This helped dampen the ardor of the German flame.

GAINS FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

With respect to the ideal of democracy, Wilson's influence reached far beyond the Allied Powers, the Central Powers, and the Reformers. The years around World War I saw a drive within the very fabric of the United States for more and more democracy. Senators were now to be elected directly, and there were state primaries in all but four states. Women were given the right to vote, and there was an increase in the number of states using initiative, referendum, and recall.

Things were beginning to happen faster. Women did not exactly sit out the war at home. They formented certain minor revolutions in clothing and social attitudes; in short, they were raring to go.¹⁰ As a result, women began to challenge the comfortable social thesis of the gilded age.

Democracy was making its name felt in Socialist working circles as well. Socialists believed that the capitalists controlled the government, owned the press, and subsidized all the seats of learning and all the religious and moral

agencies. Thus, during the war years there were a number of mass strikes, by means of which the industrial workers hoped to improve their economic and political status. Many were interested in seizing the machinery of production and distribution, thus stripping the capitalists of much of their power.¹¹

Those who lent their strength to this movement were basically labor leaders and some foreign born liberal intellectuals, many of whom "took their gospel directly from Moscow."¹² But as real wages began to rise and as more and more socialists began to share in the "pot of growing material wealth," there was the growing possibility of compromise with the capitalists without stripping them of profits; thus, less and less response to Socialism.¹³ We shall see Socialism as a relatively negligible force by the end of the 1920's.

THE CHURCH AND WORLD WAR I

During World War I, while Wilson was persuading liberals to join in the war for democracy and women were beginning their struggle for emancipation, and socialists were becoming more aggressive, religion was engaged in solidifying its position. The churches became bastions of patriotism, and the "gentlemen of God stirred their parishioners to support the war effort as a sacred mission." Churches became the official recruiting stations--and all church conventions held in 1917 endorsed the war. Patriotic meetings were held;

war sermons preached. As Granville Hicks, instructor in Biblical Literature and English at Smith College said, "It was thus natural enough for Secretary Lane (Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior) to say later that the war could not have been won without the churches."¹⁴

Most ministers were won over to Wilson's messianism. They preached on the errors of pacifism and fully accepted the official doctrine of German war guilt. This is important to remember because conservative churchmen could connect such liberal innovations as higher criticism, evolution, and education to the German "godless" spirit.¹⁵ Because such notions were labeled German, and because Germans themselves were "un-Christian athiests," the progressive ideals of evolution, pragmatism, and criticism could be damned as alien doctrines, suitable for Huns, but not for Americans. As a result of the combination of war fever and hatred of Germany (and thus German intellectual innovation), fanatical nationalism was unleashed and replaced the far milder nationalism of the pre-war years.

THE COLLAPSE OF PROGRESSIVISM

The war brought with it many changes in American intellectual attitudes. At the turn of the Twentieth Century, United States life had been determined by fixed standards and certainties; the dynamism which was to accompany industrialization and urbanization was still in a nascent stage. Just

prior to the war, science, pragmatism, and Progressive Darwinism had begun to subject these standards to corrosive criticism. Fundamentalism in all fields was being challenged more and more audaciously. As was mentioned earlier, the economy affects the prevailing ideological climate, more than does ideology affect economic policies; and thus, rising economy brought with it rising progress against fundamentalism.

If we take a quick look at the economy during the war, we see that it was placed, in its entirety, under Wilson's authority. He was authorized

to consolidate, abolish, and establish bureaus, offices, and divisions in any fashion demanded by the exigencies of war.¹⁶

This resulted in price fixing, and government control of commerce.

Soon the public began to feel a real economic pinch. Bond drives were held throughout the nation so that "every engine of social control was brought into play."¹⁷ It was a universal dragnet. Whoever refused to "answer the call" might be black listed or "enrolled in the Doom Book in the Department of Justice as a potential traitor to his country."

All the pre-war liberalism and all the idealism of the war could not affect the American public as much as did the post-war economic crisis of 1919-20. According to Frederick Lewis Allen:

Human nature, the world over, was beginning to show a new side, as it has shown at the end of every war in history. The compulsion for unity was gone, and division was taking its place. The compulsion for idealism was gone, and realism was in the ascendant.¹⁸

Eager to shift attention away from the post-war depression and anxious about recent socialist developments in Russia, the Attorney General's office issued countless injunctions against coal strikers and deported many alleged Communist leaders. All these acts were done with the sanction of both the President and the American people. Through the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, it became illegal to criticize the Wilson Administration on any matters pertaining to government. It mattered little that constitutional rights were being violated. As a result, Beard observed that

never before had American citizens realized how thoroughly...a modern government could impose its ideas upon the whole nation and, under a barrage of publicity, stifle dissent with declarations, assertions, official versions, and reiterations.¹⁹

A type of national hysteria swept over the land. The nationalism present during the war permeated the new repressive laws. Many pacifist leaders were ousted from their jobs. Goldman observes that

both the unofficial and the official hysteria fell more and more under the control of conservatives who were just as interested in silencing re-

form agitation as they were in suppressing friends of Germany.²⁰

The country was indeed racing towards extreme reaction. There were an incredible number of Red hunts, as well as the continued harassment of unions. Fanatical nationalism, having been nurtured on irrational feelings, had begun to find expression in ideologies committed to traditional values.

Patriotism ruled the day, giving emotional conservatives "an opportunity to blacken the character of persons whose opinions they feared and hated." It allowed Wilson complete governmental freedoms, which resulted in "sky rocketing prices and an economic collapse that left thousands of returning veterans jobless."²¹ Immigration policies, government controls, anti-Bolshevism, prohibition, and anti-Semitism—all of which gained immensely in popularity and in power between 1919-23, owe their impetus to patriotism and intense nationalism fed by economic collapse and disillusionment with the fruits of war.²²

DISDIAN OVER THE PEACE TREATY

At first Reformers had been optimistic about the armistice because it had been signed, at least in part, on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points. Wilson himself, had been looked upon as "the most powerful figure in converting the armistice into a permanent peace."²³ But the optimism was short-lived. A Republic majority was returned to Congress in 1918, and their leaders were demanding an

unconditional surrender of Germany, "a Spartan peace" for the vanquished nations, and a rejection of the League of Nations.

Wilson was ridiculed and derided by the "Allies," who accepted fewer than half of his Fourteen Points. It was then the progressives' turn to call him on the carpet. The League of Nations, would be bound by machinery, which progressives knew would no doubt lead to another war. Thus, these progressives flayed Wilson for not only failing to uphold his Fourteen Points, but also for being outmaneuvered by French and British imperialism which had arrogated to themselves the fruits of war and "who had turned the treaty into a document of vengeance." President Wilson, who had a following of the "intellegentsia of the day" in 1916, had lost them in 1919 because of his "naive self-righteousness."²⁴

Progressives began to take up the pen against Wilson, the Peace Treaty, and the League, realizing that this League would have bound the United States to defend the British and French territorial interests. John Maynard Keynes, famed British economist, wrote The Economic Consequences of the Peace, in which he predicted that an economically ruined Germany "would serve as a continuing unsettling influence in the world." The New Republic said that Wilson had failed; it denied that peace was stable and urged that "America should withdraw from all commitments which would impair her freedom of action." Allen explains that

...the League Covenant...was too rigid and too full of possible military obligations to suit an American people tired of war and ready to get out of Europe once and for all...²⁵

Thus the people rejected the Treaty even as the Senate had. The election of 1920 proved to be the referendum on this issue, as the people rose and "swamped the pro-League candidate by a plurality of seven millions."

ANTI-GERMANISM AND ANTI-BOLSHEVISM

American feelings of anti-Germanism were spurred by the efforts of the allied nations to impose heavy burdens on the German nation. According to Lloyd George, the allies had one common principle: "Germany must pay to the last farthing of her power."²⁶ People began to accept unquestionably German atrocity stories,

and that easily inspired hatred of Germany remained as a hangover in America long after it had been thrown off by the British.²⁷

It was fear of revived German industrial competition which had also helped public opinion turn against everything German. Even though peace had been proclaimed, the nation went right on thinking with the mind of a people at war. American businessmen were still in a fighting mood and were ready to knock down anything that stood in their way, and that "anything" usually turned out to be Labor. Because of the economic decline, businessmen had hoped to restore profitability

by weakening the bargaining power of labor. So the unions now took the blows that were originally aimed at Germany and Germanism. It was time to teach labor (synonymous with Bolshevism and Socialism) a lesson. According to Allen, there developed the belief

that 100% Americanism and the Welfare of God's Own Country and Loyalty to the Teachings of the Founding Fathers implied the right of the business man to kick the union organizer out of his workshop.²⁸

Fanned by the Bolshevik uprising in Russia, as well as the revolutionary outbreaks in Germany, the flames of radicalism were said to be spreading to the universities. A common belief was that any professor who taught the pros and cons of socialism was actually "a bearded rascal from Eastern Europe with a money bag in one hand and a smoking bomb in the other."²⁹ All of the nation's pent up frustrations were thus aimed at the alien; no one wanted Bolshies and bomb throwers loose in the United States. Subversives and labor beware!!!

As noted above, the economic crisis facing the United States following the First World War contributed greatly to this ideational climate. Immediately after the war, capital, in general was in sad shape. Factories were still over-expanded, and the price structure was still skaky as a result of the havoc and destruction of foreign markets. Russia, for example, was cut off as a possible market. Cities were crippled from walkouts, and many of the nation's ports were shut down. It seemed only "natural" for big business to

blame these deplorable conditions on rebellious Bolsheviks, "who were getting their instructions directly from Lenin and Trotsky."

Anti-Germanism had been successfully transferred into anti-Bolshevism. Rumors spread that a Bolshevik revolution might occur any day, and the American public, according to Allen,

...were less concerned with making the world safe for democracy than with making America safe for themselves.³⁰

Innumerable patriotic societies were beginning to spring up, attaching the Bolshevik label to any person or issue they wanted defeated. Involved were men and women made up of drys, anti-evolution Fundamentalists, Jew-haters, Negro-haters,

...upholders of every sort of cause, good, bad, and indifferent; all wrapped themselves in Old Glory and the mantle of Founding Fathers and allied their opponents with Lenin.³¹

"Fear of Bolshevism" inspired Senator Thomas Hardwood, chairman of the Senate Immigration Committee, to propose restricting immigration "as a means of keeping out Bolshevism." The public was frightened; it made little difference that any real danger of a "socialistic regime, to say nothing of a revolution, was daily fading...."³² The American public continued to operate on a war time psychology.

ANTI-PROGRESSIVE MEASURES

In his essay, "The Tides of National Politics," Arthur Schlesinger explains that there have been eleven instances when the political pendulum swung from conservative governments to those inclined towards change. In all of these instances

the worsening of material conditions invariably disturbs the political waves, but unless reinforced by other factors, does not affect the deeper waters.³³

Thus, the poor economic conditions, reinforced by the fear of Bolshevism, favored a "no compromise attitude." Prohibition and the Eighteenth Amendment rode through easily on the tide of this feeling. The country was not ready "to assist in the establishment of a just democracy throughout the world." Rather, its thoughts were turned to repressive measures at home. With respect to prohibition, Allen says that

so half-hearted and ineffective were the forces of the opposition and so completely did the country as a whole take for granted the inevitability of a dry regime, that there was little talk about whether or not the law could be enforceable, but rather what would the dry country be like and what effects would it have.³⁴

What was needed was efficiency: a sober soldier was a good soldier and a sober worker was a steady, dependable one. Thus, the new post-war era should be ushered in in sobriety.

Things should be done quickly and efficiently, regardless. Fervently, and with headlong haste, the nation took the short cut to a dry utopia.

RETURNING TO A PRE-WAR WAY OF LIFE

The Republicans took advantage of the rumble of discontent with Wilson, and, in the Presidential Election of 1920, they decided to offer a contrast to his obsolescent idealism. Their candidate was Warren Harding, an old fashioned conservative who

looked back with longing eyes to the good old days, when the government didn't bother businessmen with unnecessary regulations.³⁵

And what of the progressives? For the most part, they too were finished with Wilsonian internationalism, and domestic affairs once again became their central interest. LaFollette, embodying the progressive spirit, felt

the American entrance into any war or any international organization was a betrayal of progressivism.³⁶

They, along with the rest of the American public, were ready to settle down and pursue their private desires.

Harding promised to restore the government to the people. Just as, "Wilson thought in terms of the whole world, Harding was for America first." He spoke for America, by saying:

America's present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy (correct word should be normality;) not revolution but restoration.³⁷

Harding made friends with big business. He proposed the repeal of taxes on incomes, inheritances and excess profits, hoping to shift the burden of federal support from the wealth of the rich to the goods of the consumer. He wished no government interference or meddling in with business.

FINAL REJECTION OF THE LEAGUE

There were many reasons, some mentioned above, why the American public was against United States involvement in the League of Nations. Possibly, the strongest reason was the one proposed by the isolationists who explained that involvement in the League meant automatic involvement in European entanglements. A hindsight, is offered by Dr. Ellis Rivkin. He feels that for the United States to have joined the League would have been tantamount to giving British imperialism not only a relatively free hand, but also guaranteeing that her holdings would be protected by the United States, a signator of the Versailles Treaty. As a member of the League of Nations, the United States would have been pledged to regard the peace treaties as sacrosanct.³⁸

Wilson brought upon himself the wrath of many diverse interest groups. Businessmen could not forgive him for the tariff, minimum hours, his indifference to their appeals for favors, and the heavy taxes on their private and corporate incomes. The German-Americans were resentful that he helped the cause of the fall of the German Empire. The

Irish Americans were furious that he had rendered aid to Great Britain. Finally, the liberals were angry because of Wilson's surrender to British and French imperialism and for his persecution of radicals.³⁹

THE BEGINNINGS OF PROSPERITY

The war and post-war economics centered around mass production, which had a terrific impact on the American way of life. Mass communications and large scale advertising allowed practically everyone access to everything. With machines whirring all around, came uniformity in everything - from products to movies. Standardization was the name of the game.⁴⁰

By 1922, the economic curve had once again turned upwards, as the government, under Harding became increasingly responsive to the will of the corporations. The national income grew and prosperity was in the air. This was the final blow to progressivism; there was no longer the same need for its program as there had been during the repressive years 1918-1921. As Goldman observes,

When corn is \$1.00 a bushel, the
farmer is a radical; when its
\$1.50 a bushel, he's a progressive;
and when its \$2.00 a bushel, he's
a conservative.⁴¹

As prices surged upwards for the farmers, they lost all interest in reform.

This fostered an interesting concept, discussed by Gerald

W. Johnson, head of the Journalism Department of the University of North Carolina in the 20's. In an essay entitled "The Curve of Sin,"⁴² Mr. Johnson proposes that common virtues originate from just above the line of subsistence, for

once a man has solved the problem of where his next meal is to come from, he has leisure to look around him and take note of the vast number of desirable things which his economic status prevents him from enjoying.

His deprivations become rationalized into abstentions and his abstentions thereby become virtues. This idea was especially true in the South and in the rural areas, where spokesmen (preachers and congressmen) were to persuade the poor people that it was a virtue not to be "cursed" with the wealth and material goods enjoyed by the city people. These "virtues" of the poor were to set the scene for a monumental clash of jealousy that the rural folk were to carry against the urban folk in the middle and late 20's. (See Chapter III.)

PROGRESSIVISM BOGS DOWN

By the mid 1920's, with the bull market in full swing, progressivism had come to a virtual standstill. Goldman describes progressivism of the Twenties as a "beaten army, muscles aching, its ranks seriously depleted."⁴³ Even LaFollette was forced to say, in 1924, that progressivism was a "nagging aunt unwanted in the cozy rendezvous of business and America." The labor movement suffered as well, for

"prosperity had given radicalism what seemed to be its coup de grace...;"⁴⁴ this prosperity having been partially due to the growing productivity of labor. Washington, which had been the darling of 1914 Progressivism, was proving now to be one of its most dangerous enemies.

It was obvious that conservatives had wrested the leadership positions from the progressives. The concern which the progressives felt "for the whole" was defeated by the conservatives' concern with "what is good for us special few." Because of continued economic growth the idea of the melting pot, in which all men would become the same, was replaced by the idea of cultural pluralism--stress on individual identities. It was very likely a progressive Wilson who, through his emphasis in the Fourteen Points, was responsible in the long run for the individualism which held sway after World War I.

THE GROWTH OF NATIONALIST FEELINGS

Concurrent with the death of the melting pot theory came rising feelings for "Americanism." The early and mid Twenties saw the rise of many groups, whose Americanism made them the self-appointed guardians of the nation's morals. Allegiance tests were formulated and were administered on a large scale. In 1921, Congress ruled "limiting the number of aliens admitted from most countries" to a percentage of their citizens already in the United States as of 1910.

As a result of Wilson's appeal for national self-determination, "every American group began to feel the surge of nationality feeling."⁴⁵ Included in this group was the recent "one-hundred-per-cent-American," whose first duty

is to assume that his country is never wrong; his second is to enforce that assumption upon all dissidents by brute force.⁴⁶

THE INTELLECTUAL RESPONSE TO AMERICANISM

Katharine Fullerton Gerould reported, in a 1922 article in Harper's, that any thinking citizen of the United States, pressured into the conformity which characterized the age, could not "express in freedom more than a part of his honest convictions."⁴⁷ She pointed out that free speech had literally been "choked off," the result of a concerted drive by the super patriots, the new one-hundred-per-cent-Americans. Another writer of the period, Virgil Jordan, criticized the ideal of national supremacy, by saying that it was

a fictitious, uncreative ideal, a compensation to offset a feeling of instability or insecurity in the individual group, arising from frustration or inadequacy in its creative life.⁴⁸

Thus, confronted with its own internal problems and faced daily with the fervor of nationalism, the progressives felt that they must turn in a new direction, and that seemed to be in the area of world peace. The country was ready for peace and had already begun to settle down to American concerns.

Virgil Jordan claimed that in order to attain a lasting peace, we must once and for all rid ourselves of the myths said to be causes for war. The basic reason for war, he said, was the exceptional chance for profit, because

there accumulates in every modern industrial society a reservoir of frustrated acquisitive energy, centered chiefly in the industrial, commercial, and financial classes, but swelled by the acquisitive energies of the working and middle classes. This constitutes a vast potential of destructive energy and finds its own discharge in war.⁴⁹

The country was indeed ready for peace. The public had rejected efforts by General Pershing and other army officers to establish universal military service as a permanent phase of American culture. In November, 1921, Senator Borah called for an international conference on the reduction of armaments. In principle this conference called for a ten year naval holiday, with a moratorium on shipbuilding. But the American public was interested less in agreements than in getting about with the business of business.

THE PARTNERSHIP OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

The post-war years ushered in an apathy towards politics and everything political. These were the years, according to economist Stuart Chase, during which

the businessman was the dictator of our destinies, ousting the statesman, the priest, the philosopher, as the creator of standards of ethics and

behavior and becoming 'the final authority on the conduct of American Society.'⁵⁰

Once again Conservative Darwinism was to capture the American mind.

The new attitude toward the federal government was that it should begin working with, rather than against business concerns. As opposed to Wilson who

had seemed to be everlastingly prying into the affairs of business and (who) had distrusted most businessmen, Harding meant to give them as free a hand as possible, 'to resume their normal onward way.'⁵¹

Later, Coolidge was to call manufacturing the "native power of American civilization, with industries having been the driving force of American progress.

There was good reason for this. Prosperity, spreading throughout the industrial states

brought a greater abundance of good things to the masses than either the regime of progressive democracy or the program of the new freedom.⁵²

The country was so business-minded at this time that even when all the oil and financial scandals broke out, the harshest condemnation was directed not towards those who defrauded the government, but rather to those "who insisted on bringing the facts to light."⁵³ In the conservative nature of the day, it was considered unpatriotic to condemn businessmen for these mistakes, or for that matter, for anything.

RELIGION AND BUSINESS

During the first decades of the Twentieth Century, the church, well endowed through capitalist support, grew in both wealth and power. Religious leaders could see that the country was definitely business oriented, and so it too decided to "cash in" on the benefits. Intellectuals looked upon the capitalist-church alliance as an effort to spread discipline over the "restive working classes." The church, in order to keep in the fold those distracted by "the clangor of industrial life and flashing amusements offered by commercial agencies," began to emphasize such activities as "instruction in such practical matters as bond selling, real estate promotion, and elementary technology."⁵⁴

The church realized that success per se had truly become a religion in America. Religious jargon, appealing to the masses, was now so intimately a part of business and commercial organization, that soon the Rotary was to be described as a "spiritual force" and a "life to be lived." Thus Allen was able to say that

under the beneficent influence of Coolidge prosperity, business had become almost the national religion of America.⁵⁵

Just as business utilized religious jargon, so too did many of the religious bodies adapt the business nomenclature. Christianity, according to Allen, was sold to the public "by showing its resemblance to business." One of the most

influential books of the time was Bruce Barton's The Man Nobody Knows, which pictured Jesus as the founder of modern business--a great executive and advertiser, who knew how to organize and build an account. And according to Byron Dexter, a writer for Scribner's, the clergy, overjoyed with increasing prosperity themselves and

with the best of motives...tossed Christ's ideas overboard, and substituted the religion of success, couched in the ancient terminology of Christianity.⁵⁶

An ad in the Bolivar Democrat, a Mississippi newspaper, indicates the degree to which its local church had adapted the business ethic. The ad ran as follows:

The oldest business in the world.
Organized in the year 0. Millions
of satisfied customers vouch for the
integrity of this BUSINESS. You are
cordially invited to look over our
stock of goods. Every article and
package bears the trademark-JESUS.
One price to all. Local office-
BAPTIST CHURCH.⁵⁷

In commenting on articles such as this, H. L. Mencken, brilliant, prolific and outspoken editor of the up-and-coming American Mercury (see Chapter III), seemed to believe that the clergyman of the day generally had nothing to do with religion at all. Rather he seemed to act more like the general manager of a corporation, and soon becomes even hostile to religion. Concludes Mencken:

Perhaps it is good that this is so.
If the higher clergy were actually
religious some of their own sermons
would scare them to death.⁵⁸

Likewise, James M. Cain, editorial writer of the New York World, noted that the clergyman makes his living by saving souls through yelling and scaring people to death, "making them see that it is good business for them, and above all, for him."⁵⁹

THE NEW EMPHASIS ON EXCITEMENT

Most Americans were satisfied with the business progress and physical luxuries which the 1920's brought. Nevertheless, there was a widespread feeling of disillusionment, brought about mainly by the disappointments following the war. The people felt that they were not getting out of life all they could or should be. Allen proposes that this feeling was basically an unconscious one as the American public

remained cheerful and full of gusto,
quite unaware of the change that was
taking place beneath the surface of
their own minds.⁶⁰

What was happening in the post-war world was quite amazing. The era of concern for social politics, economics, and philosophy, so prevalent before the war, was giving way to interest in business, fashions, the dance, fun and sex. According to Paul Sann, executive editor of The New York Post, who saw on the one hand the paradox of old, traditional conservative values in rural areas and on the other, the corrosion of these values among the plutocracy and in the metropolis:

The convulsive shocks of the Twenties left very little unturned as the once-sacred barriers of tradition and custom broke down. For better or worse, the populace would never again be inhibited by its own past. All the old playing rules went out of the book.⁶¹

The superpatriots and federal agents may still have been chasing after communists and socialists, but the big Red Scare was dying because economic prosperity had effectively undercut the danger of economic and political radicalism. This prosperity did, however, set the foundation for radical thinking vis-a-vis obstructions to individual life styles in thinking, sexual mores, aesthetics, etc.

It is very probable that the war and its conclusion helped bring about this new morality. Soldiers returning home had retained an emotional stimulant for speed, excitement, and passion, and they imposed this stimulant on the "very widespread and very natural breakdown of traditional restraints and taboos," which had been occurring in the United States while they had been fighting.⁶²

This was a revolt of the younger generation, which, confronted with vast changes in all walks of life, could no longer accept the moral standards of their parents. Beard's view is that the machine age ushered in new values. "Prodical members of the plutocracy" were setting the standard of reckless expenditure and high living,

which spread like a virus among all ranks of society, making the spending of money a national mania and

casting the stigma of contempt on virtues of thrift, toil and moderation.⁶³

There was now less and less dependence upon the breadwinner for support, as young people now broke out from their living rooms and parlors and began working, studying and playing outside the home. The velocity of mass productions and publicity, the invention of the radio, and the new emphasis on sports paralleled this decline of domestic authority.

The spread of Freudianism among the plutocracy, big city folk, and intellectuals joined with the spread of the scientific skepticism of the times and forced conservative moralists to loosen further their grasp on the "Roaring 20's." People wanted to be modern and smash conventions. There was a new frankness in conversation, books, and theatre. When conservatives spoke up for those things which were still forbidden, they found the intellectuals and much of the country laughing at them.

WOMEN IN THE EARLY 20'S

The bid of women for liberation in the post-war decade contributed significantly to the upheaval in morals. She was saying to man:

You are tired and disillusioned, you do not want the cares of a family or the companionship of nature wisdom; you want exciting play, you want the thrills of sex without their fruition, and I will give them to you...but I will be free.⁶⁴

Thus came a real change in the American feminine ideal, with women bent on freedom to work and play without the restraints which had hitherto curbed their drive for equality.

Women became wage earners, club members, and housewives, and through their new found position shaped greatly the production of all kinds of goods, material and artistic. Women bought most of the manufactured commodities. With money and leisure, women had become the new leaders in education, charity, social work, and civic affairs. In short, according to Beard, "they called the tune to which the captains of industry, men of letters, educators, and artists now principally danced."⁶⁵

In the Twenties women were not only dressing and acting like men, but for the first time, they actually asserted the physical equality of the sexes and insisted upon the freedom to compete with men on the same footing all along the line. Once they were able to attain a measure of these freedoms, a formidable barrier between the sexes was broken down.

THE RESULTING DISILLUSIONMENT

For the Plutocracy, intellectuals, and large-city dwellers, the new morality and the new freedoms of the early and middle Twenties brought about a feeling that life was futile and nothing much mattered any more. This was in part traceable to the let down in moral energy which followed the strain of war, and was very possibly caused also by the new prosperity,

in which profit was now traceable more to sociability and wealth, than to God and His churches. Old values were dissolving and satisfying new ones were not easy to come by. The few values which were as yet unaffected were themselves becoming vulnerable, while those values which were new were as yet too amorphous, and not wholly satisfying.

Liberals and intellectuals were sinking into hopeless discouragement, viewing politics as a hopeless mess. Although they saw Harding the president as responsible for the continued economic growth, they looked at Harding, the man, and noted that it would be impossible

in the long run, for any man of genuine capacity and particularly for any man of genuine dignity to get into the White House.⁶⁶

According to Allen

the morons always outnumbered the enlightened, the tobacco-spitting district leaders held the morons in a firm grip, and the right to vote was a joke.⁶⁷

By 1925, those who had fought for progressivism and socialism only ten years before, were holding such goals up to ridicule and satire.

The disillusionment of the post-war era was illustrated beautifully in many of the debates that were held. Many of them were concerned with the topic "Is Life Worth Living," and usually matched an optimist (such as Professor Frederick Starr) with a pessimist (such as Clarence Darrow). The optimist, in attempting to prove that life is not a failure,

says that we know what we want - we know what is good, lovely, and beautiful. It is worthwhile to have lived one's life to see the joy of anticipation, joy in hard work, and blessing in death.

Clarence Darrow, a mighty figure of the Twenties (see Chapter III), was a known skeptic and pessimist, as well as a keen criminal lawyer. Darrow believed that mankind is duped into thinking that he will go to heaven, mainly because "there is nobody on earth who can stand the realities of life."⁶⁸ Darrow argued that life was a joke, and the best thing you can say about it is that it does not last long. For him, the joy of pessimism was its own reward.

In looking back at the first half of the 1920's, Allen came up with the following conclusions. The ideals and hopes of the American people had been worn away by the disappointing aftermath of war. Religious ideals for the economic and intellectual elites, at least, had been undermined by science and psychology. The public at large was entertained by cheap heroics and scandals.⁶⁹ The changes that had begun after the war were to be speeded up in the mid-Twenties, as fundamental ideas continued to give ground to the freedoms and cravings of a people fed up with conservative idealisms and outdated conventions.

CHAPTER III
CHANGES IN THE MID AND LATE TWENTIES

DEBUNKING THE COMMUNIST MYTH

Businessmen, conservatives, churchmen, and one-hundred-per-cent-Americans believed, in the early 1920's that the Communists were dedicated to overthrowing the capitalist system and the American way of life. The truth is that these years, which marked the beginnings of positive and sustained economic growth in the United States, saw the Communist Party wracked by so many internal problems, that by 1924 there were only half as many Communists in the United States as there had been in 1919. The so-called Communist plot was

the greatest hoax in history. It is an example of that nervous psychology of fear which produced the illusion of the Angel of Mons.¹

The steps which were taken to debunk the Communist myth set in motion forces which, during the middle and late Twenties, were to overturn many other "sacred cows" in the United States.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Religious revivals, according to newspaperman Duncan Ackman, take place in periods of social uncertainty.

Hence, all revivals, overt or occult, past and present, have been distinguished by espionage and persecution, by boycotts, slander-spreading...by mob violence and withering hatred.²

This described the church during the early Twenties. But prior to World War I, during the period of religious apathy and general tranquility, the church had been quiet and was not known to have been a spreader of hatred. It was only after the war that religious revival reached a fever pitch, with Christians being taught to hate and often persuaded to kill.

True enough this was a period of uncertainty. Religion was no longer taken for granted; science and skepticism had forced it into the open for discussion and commentary. This was a sign that

for millions of people, religion had become a debatable subject instead of being accepted without question among the traditions of the community.³

Young men and women were loosening their ties to the church, and the more educated and the more affluent were opening their minds to the implications of science and psychology for traditional religious thought and values. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, a noted religious leader, reflected at the end of the decade:

That question, 'Is it scientific,' has searched religion for contraband goods, stripped it of old superstitions...and in general has so cowed and scared religion, that many modern-minded believers...instinctively throw up their hands at the mere whisper of it.... Science has become the arbiter of this generation's thought....⁴

In the spirit of the times, many church liberals broke away from their fundamentalist parents. Nonetheless, the

fundamentalists continued to maintain their strength in the nation's rural areas, "where the machine process had as yet made little impression." The rural preachers, not able to qualify for those theological schools "tinctured by scientific and historical methods," were trained in their own areas and thereby became specialists in "alarms and bugaboos." The same audience which had backed William Jennings Bryan was the same audience which supported the backwoods preachers:

...the ten million Americans who have never learned to write an intelligent letter, and the fifty million Americans who do not comprehend the nature of free government, and half of the State legislators, who never got beyond the grammar school.⁵

The attack program of fundamentalism in the mid-Twenties resulted not only from the post-war patriotic feelings of Americanism (see above, Chapter II), but also from the continuous development of liberal thought. Says Beard:

Without interruption the skeptical Deism of the early republic, the growing Unitarianism of the middle period, and the higher criticism of the gilded age...continued to make inroads upon the established systems of theological opinion.⁶

It was against these growing liberalizations within the church that the fundamentalists leveled their attack; lashing out at those who were getting away from the "old literalism" of the Bible and demanding "intellectual liberation." The modernists added fuel to the fire by proclaiming that science helps man much more effectively than God ever

did, and they concluded with the statement, "The more ignorant the man, the more religious he is."⁷

The conflict between modernism and fundamentalism developed into a conflict between science and religion. Horace M. Kallen, a Jewish intellectual of the period, offered the opinion that it is religion, rather than science, which is the attacker, because religion regards science as upsetting: "religion, the incomparably venerable of establishments of civilization, begins looking at science...as an upstart and as an interloper."⁸ Kallen notes that even though both religion and science seek to uncover the unseen world and understand invisible powers, the church

imposes a mental and moral conformity whose universal effect is to make each new generation a means merely for the upkeep of the particular ecclesiastical establishment.

Science, on the other hand, shifts the educational process from the techniques of indoctrination and discipline to techniques of inquiry, experimentation, and discovery.⁹

The church, according to Kallen, was notorious for acting more like a business or a government, than a religious body. Religion, he says has tried to eliminate all competition and remain a monopoly. Against all challengers, the church has called upon the legislative and police power of the state; thus, there were mass imprisonments, excommunications, and the torturing of atheists, Sabbath breakers, evolutionists, and spokesmen for birth control.¹⁰

To prove Kallen correct, one has only to review the proceedings of the World's Fundamentalist Convention, held in Fort Worth, Texas in 1924. At this convention there was agreement to withdraw support from all church schools which taught evolution. Biology texts would be withdrawn, and teachers would be forced to affirm that they believed in miracles, Genesis, the virgin-birth, the second coming, a personal devil and a literal hell.¹¹

Obviously it did not take long for the intellectuals and progressives to step into the church-science conflict. Recognizing the harm done when the "holy book" was put into the hands of an ignorant man who is victim of the injustices of the modern social order, poet Arthur Davison Ficke suggested that the reading of the Bible be quietly discouraged, "...and that the ingenuity of our intellectual leaders should be directed toward that end."¹² Charles Angoff, assistant editor of the American Mercury, pointed out the direct effect which religious ideas and ecclesiastical authorities had on the people of this land:

Even though we supposedly have separation of church and state, the two are closely associated, with the church quite often controlling the state. Baptists, Methodists, and other 'of the most bellicose sects' are as much interested in what goes on in Washington as they are in what goes on in Heaven and Hell.¹³

Angoff concludes that because of this and because there has yet to be a single first-rate theologian produced in the United States, religion in America has been kept "to a low,

emotional, ignorant, democratic level--that is, to the level of simple magic."

The clash between the modernists and the fundamentalists found its way into the famous Scopes Monkey Trial, held in Dayton, Tennessee in the summer of 1925. The trial itself was based on a Tennessee law forbidding any state school teacher

...to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.¹⁴

Clarence Darrow, famous Chicago skeptic and lawyer, not only defended the defendant, Scopes, but also said that he (Darrow) was trying

to show up fundamentalism...to prevent bigots and ignoramouses from controlling the educational system of the United States....¹⁵

The trial did much to expose many of the fundamentalist doctrines to the wrath of both intellectuals and liberal clergymen. Herbert Parish, Rector of Christ Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and editor of Religion, explained that the main characteristic of the fundamentalist god was to make people uncomfortable. Among this god's other quirks, Parish said, were that he delighted in taboos, hated wine and gin, and did not believe in evolution.¹⁶

H. L. Mencken, in his own caustic way, described fundamentalism as being a result of the wandering missionaries who

had gone around the South during the 19th Century, saving the slaves and converting them to be Methodists or Baptists. These missionaries, explains Mencken, having already "fetched the blacks," became anxious for bigger game, and thus flung themselves upon the poor white masses. The fire-eating ecclesiastics of the Confederate States--all those who are pro-prohibition and anti-evolution--came out of this class of poor whites. Thus the backwardness of this region, insofar as any intellectual vigor which might appear here "is swamped in the tide of Babbittry and Gantryism."¹⁷

Much of the legislation and political drift of the Twenties was determined by these rural Methodists and Baptists. Mencken viewing the elections of 1924 and 1928 as victories for both Babbitt and Gantry, observed that

the pious brethern who now prepare to rule us have a low opinion of mankind, that the only sound and safe ideas are held by clergymen and policemen, and that everything else is dangerous and ought to be put down.¹⁸

Thus we see that the same general mentality ruled the churches as ruled much of the business world: hatred of novelty, fear of liberals, and a demand for absolute power and control over the masses.

INTELLECTUAL PROGRAMS OF THE TWENTIES

A look at the class of intellectuals itself is now in order. According to Allen, these men, also called highbrows,

were centered mostly in New York and the other urban centers. They, who in 1915 had been known as reformers, were in 1925 openly contemptuous of reformers and reform, because of the multitude of freedom-curbing laws which reformers managed to write into the books. These intellectuals were also disenchanted with the Versailles Peace Treaty, and because of their interest in skepticism and scientific knowledge, felt the loss of certainty before it was felt by the rest of the country.¹⁹

The intellectuals of the Twenties cast most of their venom upon the business Babbitts and Rotarians and the religious Ganttrys. Perhaps the American Mercury, the intellectual magazine edited by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan did more than any other single magazine or publication to influence the educated public and to describe the feelings which the highbrows had for the lower classes. Allen described the American Mercury as having

poured critical acid upon sentimentality and evasion and academic pomposity in books and in life; it lambasted Babbitts, Rotarians, Methodists, and reformers, ridiculed both the religion of Coolidge Prosperity and what Mencken called the bilge of idealism; and looked upon the American scene in general with raucous and profane laughter.²⁰

The American Mercury allowed the intellectuals to take the offensive and, according to Goldman, the most effective reformers in the Twenties were those who adapted the Mencken methods. The approach was, according to Simon Strunsky,

"...a kind of latter-day muckraking." Mencken and the American Mercury would flay "anyone who wanted to cajole or force anyone else into a pattern." By 1927, Walter Lippman was to call Mencken and the American Mercury, "the most powerful influence on this whole generation of educated people."

THE INTELLECT AND THE SOUTH

The battle between highbrow and lowbrow was also a battle between urban and rural America. As we noted earlier, the intellectuals gathered in the large cities, while, according to Gerald W. Johnson, editorial writer for the Baltimore Evening Sun, the "intelligentsia doesn't and never has existed in the South." Southern journalists had always been favorable to Rotary, but had looked with fear at the arts.²¹ Mencken points out that much of the conservatism of the day--represented by Americanism, the Ku Klux Klan, and Prohibition--resulted from rural jealousy of the big cities. He pictures William Jennings Bryan not only as prosecutor in the Scopes Trial, but also as a hater of the city men who had laughed at him for so long. Bryan, he argues, was a natural leader of poor Southerners, who needed organization to bring some light and purpose into their poor lives.²²

This southern jealousy of northern wealth was emphasized by Samuel W. Tait, Jr., a businessman from Indiana. In speaking of the Ku Klux Klan, he said that

the Klan in Indiana, as everywhere else in this great land of Christian brotherhood, is merely one device for expressing the envy and hatred of the rustic toward the sinful and happy inhabitant of the city. In the city are the objects upon which the Klan focuses--Catholicism, Judaism, anti-Prohibition sentiment, and all 'learning and culture.'²³

Evangelists, too, were most effective in the hinterlands where decent public amusement, found in the city was lacking. When an emotional outlet was needed, evangelism was there to encourage it, and derive from it the profits it sought.

While the rural poor expressed the jealousy of urban wealth in terms of its evangelical program, intellectuals continued to stand by the wayside and look at the prosperity bandwagon with voices upraised in derision and dismay. Mencken adds a bit of hope for the distant future, although remaining disillusioned about the current strength of nationalism:

Bit by bit the barriers between nations will break down, as the barriers between the separate states that make up all the great modern nations have broken down. But before that time comes, nationalism will have its day, and before that day is ended, many millions of poor morons will give their hides and their bones in defense of it.²⁴

THE PROHIBITION ISSUE AS A MIRROR OF THE TIMES

It was only natural that a national prohibition of something would be the result of ever present nationalism and southern jealousy of northern wealth. Baptist preachers had

spoken in terms of God's opposition to drink, and southern moralists had raved about the ill effect of alcohol on the moral fiber of our great nation. But there were also economic reasons offered as possible causes for the prohibition laws. J. R. Sprague felt that prohibition was the inevitable result of Big Business: the fact that brewing and distilling interests were involved in overselling, and also because saloons were keeping more and more of the money which the distillers said belonged to them. Employers feared that rising profits might be siphoned off by alcoholic workers. But whatever the reasons behind Prohibition, the country was standing firmly behind the passage of the Volstead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment.

As the Twenties rolled on, it seemed only natural that Prohibition, so in accord with traditional notions, would be challenged by not only the intellectuals whose individualism and sensual drives had been blocked, but also by the American public in general. In the idealistic and conservative mood of the very early Twenties, the country had been gradually moving towards temperance anyway, with more and more businessmen casting off booze and with very few women and teenagers drinking. But in the age of disillusionment with ideals, people changed, and the question became one of rights. According to Mencken, prohibition agents--in order to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment--were violating not fewer than half of the Bill of Rights. Although this was unfair to all, it was especially

unfair to those living in the cities where law enforcement was more severe. Once again the city folk accused the rural folk and Southern pastors of stirring up trouble. For Mencken, Prohibition was merely another example that

the Christianity preached to them
(the rural boobs) by their pastors
is now frankly a religion of hate,
and there is no one they hate more
than the city man.²⁵

Prohibition might have been effective had the people backed it. But by 1924, the American public was tired of supporting loyal causes, and spartan idealism was vanishing. As we mentioned earlier, the people wanted to relax and enjoy themselves. Even "dry" advocates took no action. Says Allen:

It was easier to denounce the opponents of the law as Bolsheviks and destroyers of civilization and to hope that the tide of opinion would turn again.²⁶

The Prohibition law was not working, and neither wets nor dries were willing or able to do anything positive about it, one way or the other.

Intellectuals tried to point out that the enforcement of unpopular laws by drastic threats, by increased penalties, and by cruelty was not the administration of justice, it was tyranny under the form of law.²⁷ Thus deliberate and habitual violations of the Volstead Act flourished, and with it, the multi-million dollar bootleg industry, which made its profits on the manufacture, transport, and sale of beer and liquor.

With the bootlegging came the gangs, which moved as fast and as wild as did the Twenties themselves.

There were still those who were associated with the Anti-Saloon League of America believing that "any man who sneers at it (the Eighteenth Amendment) is an enemy of God," and that anyone who drinks liquor in public or private is an anarchist, deserving no more respect than "the lowest dregs on earth." But a majority of the American public living in the urban areas agreed with Mencken, who said of the Prohibitionists

...that they have filled the land with hordes of armed black guards; they have fostered the growth of such common nuisances as the Klan; they have preached crusades of hate against all the persons who do not share their theological imbecilities; they have libelled and defamed all Americans who are civilized; and they have made the United States look ridiculous. We have paid a great price for letting the ignorant and unscrupulous religious oligarchy come to power among us.²⁸

INCREASED FREEDOMS FOR INDIVIDUALS

As the Twenties roared on, the younger generation was turned on to the automobile and the freedoms which it rode with. Allen says that the coming of the closed car allowed for the temporary escape from parents and chaperons. The news of the "Model A" in 1927 was one of the great events of that year "in its capacity to arouse public excitement."²⁹

It was also an age of the growing economic independence

of women; and with their increased freedoms came a weakening of the institution of matrimony. Aided by the life of ease and new opportunities for excitement, boys and girls were now to have freer reign in their sex lives. Permissiveness, adultery, and co-op living became ever more prevalent.

Confronting the ignorant belief that birth control was a curse of God, which brought with it catastrophies ranging from hurricanes to famine, intellectuals began arguing for birth control, saying that it represented that liberty to which all men and women are entitled. Margaret Sanger, President of the American Birth Control League, said in 1924, that

the philosophy of birth control insists upon the maximum of personal liberty in every sphere of human behavior that is compatible with the maximum of personal responsibility.³⁰

NEW CRAZES AND TRIFLES

As we mentioned earlier, the nation in the Twenties was tired of "important issues." People did not want to be bothered with the World Court, the Ku Klux Klan, or the oil scandals. They were in a holiday mood; they wanted to be excited by things. Says Allen, "The country had bread, but it wanted circuses."³¹

With the help of the tabloids and thriller magazines, the country was treated to a whole host of gangster stories, romance, and sports and adventure tales. Art and fine

literature took a back seat to the comic strips. Sports, by the time of Red Grange and Babe Ruth, had become a national mania. When Lindberg became the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic, nothing else seemed to matter. His adventure was hailed as "the greatest feat of a solitary man in the records of the human race."³²

Now, only the immediate, cheap thrill seemed important, causing many people to

regard with dismay the depths to which the public taste seemed to have fallen. It was like 'a carnival of commercialized degredation....'³³

Mencken wrote that the hero worshipped most by the mob was the kind it could best understand (thus a Coolidge, rather than a Wagner or an Einstein), and he concluded that

the history of mankind is peopled chiefly, not with the genuinely great men of the race, but with the flashy and hollow fellows who appealed to the mob.³⁴

As a result of the increased prosperity and leisure for trifles, there was an increase in the number of clubs, golf courses, major and minor league baseball teams, along with more vacations and conventions and shorter working hours.

Comments William Feather in 1929

With Europe broke and exhausted, with the Japs excluded, with our natural resources so great that they cannot be computed even with the aid of the adding machine, with a climate that whips even sluggards into occasional activity, about all that is necessary for success among us is a willingness to gather the crop.³⁵

INCREASING PROSPERITY AND INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

Despite the low taste in art and literature, we must keep in mind that the American public was enjoying the continuation of sweeping prosperity. The people who were making money, encouraged and abetted by the new fast pace of life, the automobile, and increased leisure, now wanted to get away from their businesses and to indulge their leisure time. Between 1923 and 1929, according to Allen, while men and women may have been disillusioned about politics and religion and love,

(they still) believed that at the end of the rainbow there was at least a pot of negotiable legal tender consisting of the profits of American industry and American salesmanship.³⁶

With this increasing prosperity came a great boom in higher education. The desire for great wealth had brought with it a goal to "get cultured quick and become socially at ease." The unsophisticated were disappearing as urban tastes began to take over the country. Radicalism, which, as we saw, flourished strongly in periods of economic uncertainty and upheaval, was now given less of a "chance of making converts than common decency (had) at a Methodist Conference." Mencken concludes that

it was gold, no doubt, that busted radicalism among us...a certain greenness is showing itself in the bright face of Coolidge Prosperity; revolutionary radicalism does not flourish on American soil.³⁷

As it was with the radicals, so too with the intellectuals. Coolidge prosperity cooled much of their flame and ardor and by 1927 the American Mercury began to lose much of its punch. The intellectuals, themselves favorably graced with some of the harvest of continuing prosperity, began to think more positively and finally admitted that there were, after all, some positive aspects to American society. With more pride shown in American achievements, intellectuals turned to the values of humanism and offered the view that even though old values may have departed, the new ones proved life might be worth living after all.

Even Mencken, noted that things were beginning to look up. There were some signs that the essentials of liberty were breaking through the chains of fundamentalism. There were signs of revolt against the oppressive laws. Prohibition was in name only. New ideas could filter through despite censorship. Religion was losing force even as religious intolerance continued. Capitalism was no more negative and Babbitt-oriented. Said Mencken:

Even though capitalism may have certain boils and blotches upon it, it has no more than do religion, government or marriage. It is the only basic institution of modern man that shows any genuine health and vigor.³⁸

INCREASING PROSPERITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The middle and later Twenties found the American public generally content. There were, to be sure, farmers and planters

who were doing poorly, and there were obviously some spotty business dealings. Agitations were kept alive "by a handful of intellectuals and radical sympathizers." But generally the people were busy at the stock market, selling goods, floating trusts, and making foreign loans. The fundamental basis of the country was "sound."³⁹

The effect of the National prosperity reached into almost every aspect of American social life. James D. Bernard, newspaperman and sociologist, concerned with religious institutions, noted that as the Methodists increased in goods and worldly wisdom, they were gradually losing their fire. "Prohibition ceases to interest them because it is difficult to advocate it and still remain in good standing in any sound country club."⁴⁰ Mencken describes the growing prosperity, also, as a reason for our "colored brethern" now bursting into the sunlight. In the larger cities, he notes, and especially New York, the old social barriers are rapidly disappearing along with the old aristocracy. Afro-Americans are progressing at a faster rate, and are now more prosperous, more successful, and happier than ever before.

Among the many noticeable changes, as was mentioned earlier, was the rapid decline of the radical movements and socialist ideologies. Noticing that by 1928 there was no third party as there had been in 1924, Allen was forced to conclude that "the whispering radicals had been lulled to sleep by the prophets of the new economic era."⁴¹

MONETARY POLICIES AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END

As a result of many of the get-rich-quick schemes which caused people to speculate heavily on land (especially in Florida), there were many defaults caused by incomplete deals and bank failures. Then, to top it off, the Florida coast was devastated by hurricanes and crop failures in 1926-1927. Allen describes that period of increasing speculation from 1924-1927, and says:

That enormous confidence in Coolidge Prosperity which had lifted the businessman to a new preeminence in American life and had persuaded innumerable men and women to gamble their savings away in Florida real estate had also carried the prices of common stocks far upward since 1924, until they had reached what many hard-headed financiers considered alarming levels.⁴²

By 1927, a recession had set in as business activity subsided and prices began to decline. Yet there was still an undying faith in the Capitalist system, as explained by W. L. Wanlass, Dean of the School of Commerce and Professor of Economics at Utah State. He saw the capitalist fever spreading far and wide, basically due to the increased earnings of the rank and file worker. With optimism he remarked that

the greatly increasing productivity of the modern industrial system should, for a time at least, enable all those who participate in it to enjoy the benefits of abundant goods and services.⁴³

Prosperity was the key issue for the Republicans in 1928.

Even though interest rates, loan rates, and stock prices continued to rise to alarming levels, the people were told that these were signs of prosperity. They were reassured by business leaders that their fear was unwarranted and that nothing serious could ever happen in America.⁴⁴ Allen concluded that the public simply would not be shaken out of the market by anything short of major disaster.⁴⁵

CRASH

Optimism continued into 1929. The public refused to believe that the peak had arrived, and continued to believe in the possibilities of the new era. Many believed that the abolition of poverty was just around the corner. Finally, in late October, the bottom fell out of the market as the public had gone wild over selling. With no support from the big operators or powerful bankers, the people roared to panic, as "it was the unknown which causes real panic."⁴⁶ The economic structure of the country had cracked wide open, with hundreds of thousands, who had gone from rags to riches only five years earlier, now back to rags.

ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC DISEASE

In assessing this violent crash after eight years of continuing prosperity, Allen believed that the "blind faith" of the Twenties was mainly responsible:

What if bright hopes had been wrecked by the sordid disappointment of 1919, the collapse of Wilsonian idealism, the spread of political cynicism the slow decay of religious certainty, and the debunking of love? In the Big Bull Market there was compensation.⁴⁷

The country had been indifferent to graft, crime, war, and religion, but were easily excitable over the prospect of a rich America. And by October 1929,

Under the impact of the shock of panic, a multitude of ills which hitherto has passed unnoticed or had been offset by stock-market optimism began to beset the body economic...⁴⁸

Prosperity had been not only an economic condition, but also a state of the mind. It had been the climax of a cycle in American mass thinking and mass emotion. And now almost everyone would experience a shattering of their hopes and dreams. As the Depression years were to set in, there would be many changes in the fields of ideas, values, and the psychological climate. An era had ended.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

Yes, it was the end of an era which proved LaFollette correct. In 1917, he had warned that collective security and preparedness

led to war, and that war would mean the end of reform, a stifling of civil liberties, a peace that left the world no better than it was before.⁴⁹

But the people would not listen-and got the Versailles Treaty, the Palmer Raids, and Warren Harding.

Nevertheless, that same era also saw a great revolution, brought about by the post war disillusion, the new status of women, the Freudian gospel, the automobile, prohibition, the sex and confession magazines and the movies. When to these were added a national business mentality and eight years of prosperity, the result was the overthrow of practically all pre-war values and ideas.

What was to take place after the Stock Market crash would be a change in the national mood. Even though people realized that prosperity would return,

it could not be the same sort of prosperity as in the Nineteen-Twenties: inevitably it would rest on different basis, favor different industries, and arouse different forms of enthusiasm and hysteria.⁵⁰

As the market went down, skirts went down and the red-hot baby, carefree and adolescent only a few years before, went out of style. Decorum was the word of the day. The revolution in manners and morals had at last reached an armistice. Things had become more stabilized - there was no longer the feeling of breaking taboos.

The highbrows, too, were on their way out. Mencken and the American Mercury which had reached their pinnacle in the mid Twenties had now lost their audience. The people were weary of intellectual disillusionment and the denouncement of Babbitt. They were ready to call a truce to the war of fundamentalism and modernism,

and there was a widespread desire...
to find some ground for a positive
and fruitful interpretation of life.

"Stabilization" was now the key word - for morals and manners - as well as for religion. Ballyhoo had lost its vigor, heroes were few and far between. The freshness of youth was no more to be found. Once again the central issue was to be the economy - but this time an economy which could never do the harm most recently observed. Capitalism "as historically practiced" would have to be changed (Goldman adds "I never regarded ~~that system~~ as sacred, unchanging, and unchangeable"). By 1931, the interest was now in the Soviet system - the system so violently lambasted a mere ten years earlier. Social and economic planning, which might prevent the occurrence of future economic tragedies, was the idea now sweeping the country. Indeed, an era had passed.

PART II: JEWISH INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish experience does not take place in a vacuum. According to Dr. Ellis Rivkin,

the History of the Jews is a history of involvement. It cannot be separated from the larger context of which it is a part. It is by its very nature simultaneously a history of an entity linked lineally through time and a history of diverse civilizations, cultures, and societies.¹

Likewise, in an article from the Jewish Spectator, Jewish intellectuals described themselves in relationship to the larger society in which they lived:

Our style of life and our judgments are not shaped and determined by Jewish categories and criteria, but by the mores and the thought climate of the American civilization.²

Accordingly, any approach to Jewish history must take into account Judaism's interaction within the non-Jewish framework. In the United States, as well as in ancient Israel, Spain, Germany, and Russia, the Jewish experience has followed closely, and has been determined by the structural forces and thought patterns of that particular country at a certain point in time. Having already viewed the changing pattern of intellectual thought between 1914 and 1929 in America as a whole, let us now see what effects this thought had upon American Jewry during the same time span.

CHAPTER IV

JEWISH INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT PRIOR TO WORLD WAR I

JUDAISM AND THE AMERICAN WAY

In order to understand the changes which took place in American Judaism prior to, as well as following, the first World War, we must return to our economic hypothesis, which was stated in the first half of this paper. Again, according to Dr. Rivkin,

there is evidence for the direct correlation between capitalistic growth and Jewish emancipation; between capitalistic stress and strain and the rise of anti-Semitismdeveloping capitalism always encouraged the emancipation of the Jews.³

The period of time prior to World War I shows a correlation between the dynamic industrial growth of the United States and the growth of freedoms for American Jews. Reform Darwinism, progressivism, and liberalism were American ideals which helped to snatch the Jewish intellectuals from the clutches of old, traditional practices and beliefs. According to historian Nathan Glazer,

Jews were after all far more attracted to the new trends in thought because it was the political and religious philosophy of the Enlightenment that had brought about their freedom from medieval restrictions.⁴

Jewish intellectuals had the same tremendous enthusiasm for liberalism as did American intellectuals in general. The

former revolted violently against the traditionalized and ritualized organizations of Jewish life "which kept the workers in such abject slavery without a murmur of protest." Although most Jewish intellectuals had come to the United States for idealistic and political reasons, they turned, almost immediately, to the industrial and social problems which confronted them. Accepting the Reformist Darwinian theory of determining one's own environment through legislation, Kaufmann Kohler told the American public that Reform Judaism was the necessary outcome of our age of evolution, with old practices giving way to new forms. Thus

the principle of progress and reform constitutes the essence of Reform Judaism and forms the key-note of the Reform Movement.⁵

Utilizing the concepts of freedom and progress, Reform turned at once to forming societies and organizations to improve their lot.⁶

THE MELTING POT

One of the leading Jewish intellectual spokesmen of the time was Louis D. Brandeis. In his earliest pronouncements, he pictured the Jews melting into the pot whose final product would be duty, high intellectual attainments, leadership and community. Noting that the "Twentieth Century ideals of America have been the ideals of the Jew for more than twenty centuries," Brandeis said that the Jews were definite adherents

to these four products of the melting pot.⁷

What the intellectuals saw on the eve of the war was a Judaism excited by the idea of the melting pot and democracy. German Jews who had lived in the United States for over fifty years were already enjoying the fruits of integration into a dynamic democratic society. Eastern European Jews, still in the process of flocking to the Golden Land to escape the political and economic upheavals in Russia, sought refuge to live their lives in freedom, with the same liberties accorded all United States citizens. Thus nearly all the Jews, in some way or another, were caught up in the "melting pot," and were beginning to live like everyone else.

This should only be so. Jewish immigrants joined their Jewish and Christian American neighbors and

shared in the growing pains of these
new cities and assisted their rapid
rise by promoting trade and industry.⁸

Many of the Jews were poor, but caught up in the fervor of an expanding country, they were willing to work and to "make it."

It was exciting for the Jews to be Americans, to be a part of the melting pot. Reform Judaism, in the Pittsburgh Platform of principles written in 1885, had already sought to bring Judaism in accord with "the modern discoveries of scientific researchers in the domain of nature and history." Thus, Reform had not only broken with many of the orthodox beliefs and traditions, but also had called for a program of social justice, to participate on the basis of justice and

and righteousness in the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society. By 1904, this body had defined Judaism in much the same way liberal, evolutionary Protestantism was now being defined.⁹

Helping the immigrants, working for America, uniting together all the diverse groupings of citizens--all expressed the Jewish ideal of the early 1900's. In 1908, Israel Zangwill wrote The Melting Pot, expressing what he observed to be the hope and dream of the American people, "...the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward."¹⁰

Still, as of 1915, Americanism, in the abstract, had no existence of its own. According to Professor Harry Wolfson,

the American mind is as yet unknown in its essence; it is only manifest in its functions, of which Jewish activities may form a complimentary part.¹¹

What he meant was that there was as yet no "100% Americanism," because there was no need for it--socially or economically. Democracy and progress were still the watchwords of the day.

THE NATIONAL ECONOMY AND JEWISH FREEDOM

Big business was generally good for American Jewry. Involved now in the capitalist system of expansion--as opposed to the Eastern European shtetl, which offered only a medieval-type constriction--the Jews were able to take advantage of the ideal conditions for freedom, liberty of conscience, and the

right of citizenship. The more that national feelings were discarded, the more freedom there was to gain opportunities. Thus Israel Friedlander came to the conclusion that Reform Judaism, by 1915, had attained luxurious growth in America by disclaiming all nationalistic feelings. Reform had

...solemnly proclaimed that Judaism was wholly and exclusively a religious faith and that America was the Zion and Washington the Jerusalem of American Israel.¹²

THE BEGINNINGS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Reform Judaism was aware that big business generated great wealth accumulation and large-scale profit seeking--often at the expense of labor and the common man. Thus the Central Conference of American Rabbis appointed a commission on social justice to study the questions of social insurance, minimum wage, labor and industry regulation, and housing reforms. In its report to the parent body, the commission noted that:

Religion is a failure that cannot control private greed and subordinate it to the good of the community and to the just treatment of one's fellows.¹³

Much of this social work was done in conjunction with churches and secular organizations "to better conditions of living and to raise the status of the under crust of society." This again expressed the ideal of the "melting pot" as Rabbi Max C. Currick pointed out, saying that "...the old antagonism between church, synagogue, and secular relief society is dying."¹⁴

THE JEWISH FACTIONS

Despite the ideal of the melting pot, the ideals of democracy and freedom, and the Jewish attachment to progress, there remained many basic structural differences within the Jewish fold. By the dawning of the First World War, there were three thriving and distinct Jewish groupings in the United States: the German Reform, the Eastern European Orthodox, and the Eastern European Rebel Socialists.

The German Reformers were basically liberal and schooled in American ideals, freedoms, thought, science, and politics. They were part of the modern capitalist system--secure, generally assimilated, and comfortable. For them, religion was the only thing which separated them from their Christian neighbors.

The Eastern European factions on the other hand, present an interesting contrast. In this group were two extremes: the ultra-Orthodox and the flaming radical revolutionaries. Both were nurtured in traditional pre-capitalistic societies; hence neither was familiar with the Western ideas of freedom and democracy, in the liberal tradition.¹⁵ The extreme Orthodox were conservative in both politics and economics and very strict with regard to religious practices. They generally held separatist feelings, a ghetto mentality, and felt a strong attraction to Zionism. The rebel Socialists on the other hand were doubters and deniers of religion, mainly as a result of their intellectual spokesmen. They were trades-

men and menial laborers, never satisfied with their condition, and always looking for something to challenge or change.

Neither of these Eastern European groups, as newcomers to the modern world, were habituated to the proliferation of freedoms which accompanied expanding capitalism, democratic liberalism, and universal idealism. Thus they tried to hold on to their old styles and thought systems as long as possible --and this naturally presented problems to other Jews and non-Jews alike in America. It was not easy to teach these immigrants the freedoms which underwrote religious entrepreneurship, but as capitalism continued to grow and expand, these closed systems were to find themselves gradually opening up to the American ideal.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AS REASONS FOR THE FACTIONS

An interesting economic-religious thesis was presented by Elliot E. Cohen, President of the Yale Menorah Society. In his prize-winning essay, presented in 1918, Cohen assured American Jewry that the differences between Orthodoxy and Reform were temporary, due to the economic gap which separated them.¹⁶ The Orthodox Jews were poor and of the humbler classes, recently immigrant and not fully Americanized. They had brought with them the customs which they were used to following in the Russian ghettos. Their religious services, emotional as they were, were thus used as an outlet for their feelings of poverty and misfortune.

The Reform Jews, continued Cohen, were wealthy, aristocratic, and Americanized. They had built beautiful structures and held unemotional services,

the worshippers reserved and apparently unmoved as is the case with all wealthy and aristocratic congregations whether Christian or Jewish.

The decorum and promptness of American Reform Jews--as well as the music and the type of service--were taken from the American church and the American environment. Thus Cohen concludes that

the hostility of the two factions, which is quite real at times is, then, never on religious differences, but entirely the result of the suspicions and jealousy engendered by the social and economic differences between them.¹⁷

Here again crops up the thesis that ideology is determined to a great degree by economy. Just as we saw conservative and liberal hostility of the American people in terms of rural jealousy of urban wealth, so too early disputes between Reform and Orthodox Jews was also centered around jealousies over wealth. But, as Cohen concludes, in the spirit of the American dream, the poor man of today can be the rich man of tomorrow. Cohen predicted that once Orthodoxy was shut off from further Russian immigration, it would not take long to become fully Americanized.

PRE-WAR ATTEMPTS AT UNIFICATION: NATIONALISM

It seemed very unlikely that there could ever be any

harmony amongst such disparate Jewish groups. There were too many ideological differences as well as political, religious, and social ones. Basically the question was: Was the Jew a Jew by nationality or by religion? Dr. David Philipson, long a leading spokesman for Reform Judaism and a staunch anti-nationalist, expressed the view that Reform Judaism felt itself nationally American and religiously Jewish. "...this is the great distinction I desired to draw between the Jew nationally and the Jew as a member of a religious people..."¹⁸

Thus, the one issue which could have united pre-war American Jewry continued to divide it. This was the issue of the rebuilding of Palestine as a Jewish homeland. The rise of Jewish nationalism had begun in the 1880's with the spread of imperialism and the growth of nationalism throughout Europe. The Jews in these countries had found themselves singled out as dangerous to the national spirit. They were subsequently accused of subverting the race and/or being involved in international conspiracies to take control of the world. Theodor Herzl, prompted by the Dreyfus Case and growing anti-Semitism in France, maintained, in 1884, that the Jew should cultivate his own national character, since "we are now, whether we would or not, a group of unmistakable cohesiveness."¹⁹

Nonetheless, the Reform opposition towards Jewish nationalism, which had been so carefully spelled out in the Pittsburgh Platform, was unmoved by the rapid spread of Jewish national feelings, held in particular by the Eastern European

immigrants. Reform Judaism remained opposed to Jewish nationalism, even as the Jewish socialists, although for different reasons. It was the socialists

to whom the perpetration of any group distinctiveness was considered a barrier to the achievement of a socialist world order.²⁰

Louis Brandeis took a careful look at the tense situation and was determined to do something about creating some type of unity. In a letter to Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Reform leader for Zionism, Brandeis admitted the need for a democratic congress. But it should not be held

until this committee includes organizations and individuals constituting a much larger part of the Jews of America, representing not only in number, but also in character, that is, making it representative also of the various parts or localities of America and of the several classes and shades of opinion.²¹

Brandeis did, however, stress that the congress would be concerned with the Palestine program "since we see no other solution of the Jewish problem which does not involve that."

THE SPREAD OF ZIONIST THOUGHT

It was obvious that political and national Zionism would be the key Jewish issue prior to the outbreak of World War I. The great powers were involved in nationalistic and territorial wars. Many nations, especially England, were interested in the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, in the midst of which

lay Palestine. Thus it seemed only natural that a Jewish congress try to unify American Jews around this issue. According to Israel Friedlander, the dangers involved in a split over that question would be serious. Such a split, he said,

may not only result in permanent and perhaps irreparable injury to the Jewish cause in America and to the Zionist cause in this country, but may also...spell nothing short of disaster to the Jewish people as a whole....²²

Stephen Wise took it upon himself to try to bring the Reform wing of Judaism into the fold of Zionism. In letters to Horace Kallen, Wise mentioned the preparation of a Jewish mission to the Jews of Cincinnati (the bastion of Reform Judaism), "...the object of which would be to show forth the compatibility of Zionism and Liberal Judaism." We should

end the delusion under which too many Liberal Jews have been led to rest by the Philipsonians, that a follower of Liberal Judaism cannot be a Zionist.

Also, he noted,

...something ought to be done, in order to make the men who constitute the Union of American Hebrew Congregations understand that whatever their attitude in the past, Zionism is today the most pressing problem in Jewish life.²³

Thus on the eve of World War I, despite the fact that American Jews were living in a land which allowed them a

proliferation of Jewish ways of life, and despite the fact that American capitalism had enabled the "melting pot" to be successful, Jews were badly divided over the issue of nationality. Reform Jews, snug in American culture, were opposed by the immigrants who certainly had found no Zion in America. The Reform Jews, "successful, highly assimilated men of Western European origins" did not want anything that "smacked of the Eastern European ghetto." The recent immigrants, frightened and bitter, veered toward the Zionist movement.²⁴

Awaiting some hope for unity, the American Jews found their country involved in a European war. This war was not only destined to reverse the concept of "the melting pot," but was also to result in the advent of the concept of Americanism and Americanization--the first--negative for the Jews, but the second--a positive move towards the ideal of community, which was to take definite shape in the age of the Twenties.

CHAPTER V

THE INFLUENCE OF WORLD WAR I ON AMERICAN JEWISH INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

CULTURAL PLURALISM AND PROLIFERATING NATIONALISM

We have already noted (see Chapter II) how the United States turned to international thinking during World War I. Out of his own doubts concerning the aims and policies of France, Britain, and later, Germany, Woodrow Wilson had issued a call for national self-determination. This was for the express purpose of undermining European imperialist aims and encouraging democracy in the smaller nations of Europe and as a result, intellectuals of the United States had been persuaded that the war was indeed a campaign for democracy.

This emphasis on national self-determination was not without profound import for the Jews. Prior to the war, the emphasis, as we have seen, had been on acculturation, and commitment to the concept of the melting pot. The question now was: Could this idea stand fast over and against Wilson's pronouncement of national self-determination?

It could not. Jewish intellectuals, led by the famed philosopher Horace Kallen, responded to Wilson's call for national self-determination by initiating the exciting idea of "cultural pluralism." Viewing suspiciously the war aims of the major powers, Kallen asked whether or not the body and spirit of mankind would be cominated, without its consent, by only a portion of humanity, and be "compelled to elaborate and express the ideas of the portion?" Or would the world

be self-governed; i.e. would all the varieties of people have the right to determine their destinies

in a co-operating commonwealth, each part of which, by elaborating and expressing its own idea, would contribute its best to the whole?¹

Kallen further pointed out:

What is at stake is not something local, personal, political, but a universal principle, the goal toward which mankind has been slowly and deviously crawling from the beginnings of modern history-the principle of democracy in nationality and nationality in democracy.²

It is interesting to recall what was happening in Europe at this time. Rivkin notes that the breakup of the Ottoman Empire was "arousing interest on the part of the great powers, eager to seize its territories" and to out-maneuver each other in doing so. These powers saw that "proliferating nationalisms" could act as solvents to corrode the Ottoman Empire; it would then be relatively easy for these powers to control the small emerging nations.³

Kallen saw the proliferation of these rising nations as the only hope for Europe. In a letter to Louis Brandeis, he stated that the rise of nationalities also applied to Palestine, situated in the Ottoman Empire. Kallen pointed out

the great advantage which accrues to the economic and intellectual life of those countries in which Jews receive equal rights as

individuals and as a nationality
...There would be increased prosperity to the 'de-facto sovereignty in Palestine.'⁴

Gottschalk and Duker add their feelings, saying that a federated system composed of different nationalities, large and small, would be good for Jewish minorities, who have always received better treatment in multi-national states. The federated system, by its very nature, would tend to discourage exclusive nationalism "with its characteristic policies of intolerance towards minorities."⁵ The effort being made for nationality rights could eventually result in a national home for the Jews in Palestine, along with equality of rights for the Jews in Central and Eastern Europe.

As it was with blossoming nationalities abroad, so too should it be with Judaism within the United States. Reviewing American Jewish history till World War I, Rivkin has pointed out that

the pattern of capitalist development in the United States was decisive for the Jews, for it drew to these shores all of the multiple Jewish identities...It also gave all these multiple Jewish identities a security that could not be matched elsewhere.⁶

Horace Kallen had expounded this theme in his idea of cultural pluralism. Rejecting the "melting pot," he felt that the future of Jewish life in this country should be built on all varieties of Jewish expression-not only Judaism. The right to be different in a pluralistic society would allow

for democracy and freedom and would sustain anything calling itself Judaism.⁷

More specifically, this ideal of Kallen gave intellectual sanction for the development in the United States of Jewish nationality as not only compatible with, but also expressive of, the highest ideals of Americans. It gave new life to Zionism, by recognizing the importance of the Jewish national idea. The Jewish task, according to Kallen, was to be the cultivation of the Jewish idea and Hebraic spirit so that they might reach full flowering in the modern epoch

...in social organization, in religion, in the arts and sciences, a national future that by its inward excellence will truly make Israel 'a light unto the nations' ...Our duty to America is conditioned upon the conservation of Jewish nationality.⁸

In order to strengthen this ideal of Jewish nationality, Kallen appealed to Reform Judaism to accept "the inevitable conditions which govern all life." Thus again Kallen wrote in the Menorah Journal;

The hope of Liberal Judaism lies in a reincorporated national life for the Jews. That alone can preserve the Jewish religion, either from petrifying as orthodoxy through resistance against environmental pressure, or from evaporating as reform through submission to environmental pressure.⁹

THE RISE OF ZIONIST THOUGHT AND ITS PLACE IN THE WAR

It is hardly surprising that President Wilson did much

to further the cause of Zionism in the United States as the World War went into 1916. William Howard Taft, in a letter to his press secretary Gus Karger, confessed that the Brandeis nomination to the Supreme Court was indicative of Wilson's Zionist sympathies. This support could not but help Brandeis, who had already been elected as President of the World Zionist Organization, and was now being asked to preside over the Jewish World Convention.¹⁰

Leaders in the allied countries took advantage of American Jewry's growing approval of Jewish nationalism. The report of an allied mission to the United States in 1916 suggested that the furthering of Zionistic aims by these allies could be a major means of obtaining the goodwill of Jews as well as liberals in the neutral countries. In this setting came the Balfour Declaration which revealed, according to Rivkin, that "England, at least, was trying to utilize Jewish nationalism to further its interests in the Middle East."¹²

Palestine had always been a strategic link in the imperial system of the British, and had always been treated by Britain, as such. In an article entitled "The New Palestine," Bernard A. Rosenblat, writing in 1918, revealed the hidden intent of the Balfour Declaration of 1917. It was as he described,

part of a larger policy whereby Arabia, Armenia and Judea will form a triumvirate of nationalities, serving as a connecting link between the Orient and Occident, and a bridge between British Egypt and British India.¹³

This area would remain under British control and would eventually become a "self-governing dominion in the British family of nations." With the varied training and experiences of the Jews there, Palestine could be developed into a great commercial state, "the emporium of the East and West."

THE REACTION OF REFORM

The Balfour Declaration did not succeed in winning over Reform leaders to the nationalist idea. William Rosenau, then President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, stated in his message to that body that it was "our duty" to pledge loyalty only to the United States. A bastion of patriotism in World War I, the Reform movement must,

guard against giving the unfounded impression that Jews residing in the United States are anything else but wholehearted Americans.¹⁴

Patriotism demanded loyalty to the United States at the expense of a Jewish nationalism. Rabbi Louis Grossman, President of the CCAR in 1918, reiterated the patriotic view, when he acknowledged that

the War has evoked the deepest sources of our patriotism and has made us vigorous in its defense.¹⁵

At the same time

we look with disfavor upon the new doctrine of political Jewish nationalism which finds the criterion of Jewish loyalty in anything other than loyalty to Israel's God and Israel's religious missions.¹⁶

THE JEWISH CLERGY AND THE WAR

The active patriotism stirred by Reform leaders had been preceeded by feeble attempts to preach for peace, "and to warn against a false conception of patriotism that sees in conquest its highest expression." Pleas had been made in 1915 and 1916 to stop the war, to withdraw the supply of food used to sustain the combatants, and to withhold ammunition used to continue the war.

By 1917, however, Wilson's view of making the world "safe for democracy" had slipped into Reform thinking. The CCAR Committee on Resolutions had remarked that although Israel's mission is peace and brotherhood,

...yet when one's country is at war in behalf of righteousness and humanity, the individual Jew who claims this hope of Judaism as a ground of exemption from military service, does so only as an individual, in as much as historic Judaism emphasizes patriotism as a duty, as well as the ideal of peace.¹⁷

Samuel Schulman, a past President of the CCAR, wrote that World War

...which has revolutionized all thought and is laying the foundations of a new world order has naturally been the greatest challenge which the Jewish spirit has met with in history.¹⁸

PREPARATIONS FOR THE POST-WAR WORLD

Looking past the war to the restorational peace, certain

Reform rabbis began to see that Palestine would indeed become important for Judaism in the years ahead. The following report, given by the CCAR Committee on Contemporaneous History was to help change the traditional position which Reform Judaism had previously taken toward Zionism. The committee was of the opinion that

...the end of the present terrible war is bound to bring about a complete change in the condition of Palestine, and therefore (we propose) that this Conference express its sympathy with all cultural movements affecting Palestine, without committing itself to the political and national aspects of the question...¹⁹

Palestine was, now for the first time, brought to the fore in a positive way. The CCAR had welcomed the Balfour Declaration as "an evidence of good will toward the Jews," but had disagreed with the phrase which said, "Palestine is to be a national homeland for the Jewish people." The CCAR reaffirmed that it was opposed to Palestine as the homeland of the Jews, and continued to assert that "our survival as a people is dependent on our historic religious role," and not upon the acceptance of Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people.²⁰ The CCAR, however was soon to give recognition and support of Palestine. (See Chapter VI.)

THE PACE OF JEWISH CHANGE QUICKENS

As we noted earlier (see Chapter II), the war had brought with it many changes in American intellectual thought. Changes occurred at a faster pace and fundamentalism in all fields was being challenged. The rising economy had brought with it rising

progress against fundamentalism. Rivkin notes that at this time real wages had moved upward "and the total augmentation of capital was far beyond any attained previously in the history of mankind." The potential of economic growth seemed limitless-yielding hope that its actualization might "wipe out poverty, hunger, disease, and even war from the face of the earth."²¹

Reform capitalized on this economic progress to give strength to its social program. Looking to the future, Horace J. Wolf, Rabbi in Rochester, New York, believed that post-war Judaism would see a social reconstruction-and would utilize the resources to make the synagogue more responsive to the men and women "earnestly seeking the redemption of society." Judaism could begin to lift people out of dire poverty and elevate them to a position of equality.²²

A similar message was echoed by Louis Grossman, President of the CCAR. At the 1918 meeting he gave the following message of hope;

up until today there was no process of development of the Jewish community. After the war there will be a new perspective and 'a gradation of values.' Judaism will have a historic occasion for bringing to the new world life its message that religion is not a creed, but social organization...Because we have transcended our German origins, we have been able to create our own brand of Reform-revitalized and going beyond our purely theological and congregational.... The New Judaism should be real, bearing upon social and industrial problems that are breaking forth out of the heart of an anxious world.²³

Aside from the hopes of utilizing wealth for the solving of social and industrial problems after the war, there were also renewed hopes for universal peace as promised by the creation of the League of Nations. Jewish intellectuals joined with American reformers in hailing the idea of a body which would implement Wilson's Fourteen Points. Any anonymous Jewish writer thus expressed the hope for universal peace:

...undoubtedly the most promising and practicable plan yet proposed is the scheme of a League of Nations, bound together by the common purpose to enforce peace and to further the progress of justice and democracy.²⁴

Gottschalk and Duker favored a league and a federated system which would make national group differences cultural, rather than political. A league would allow for the full implementation of cultural pluralism, and would provide for the right of minorities to develop "their own distinctive culture and way of life."²⁵

Horace Kallen, in a personal note dated 1919, saw the formation of a League of Nations in light of economic growth. Prior to World War I, he said, most nations had been basically attached to medievalism and had been basically concerned with state sovereignty. Many had been economically self sufficient within their peasant economy. But the war, Kallen said, had tended to break down sovereignty and to expose the need for interdependence, a goal which had been growing ever so slowly for some time. He concluded that

"a crisis was needed to exhibit this interdependence to the full, to seek it in action."²⁶

Thus, in 1919, the CCAR Committee on Resolutions sent a cable to President Wilson "giving him the assurance of our fullest support in the establishment of a League of Nations." It was the hope of this committee that the final draft would provide

for full political emancipation and religious freedom for the racial and religious minorities in all countries, especially in the new states to be created.²⁷

THE INTELLECTUALS AFTER WORLD WAR I

Wilson's self-righteousness, we noted earlier -- compounded by the vindictiveness which both the Republican majority in the United States Congress and the allied powers of France and England felt toward Germany--began to turn the intellegentsia away from the idea of a League of Nations. They had hoped that those returning from the war "to make the world safe for democracy" would try to adapt this ideal to peace time conditions. Author Sidney L. Nyburg had expressed the hope that the ideal of democracy would be translated into democracy in housing, rates, wages and prices, and the control of industry.²⁸

But democracy and internal peace were to be delayed during the post-war adjustment to peace and the economic depression. As noted above, the American public blamed these

conditions on Germany, turning as they did after the war against all things German. This hatred had been translated by businessmen into a hatred of the "radical, un-American" labor unions, with ugly consequences for both the socialistic and communistic movements.

Thus it soon became apparent to some Jews that the idealism which would supposedly have altered the post-war world was only a mirage. It remained "an idle phrase on men's lips." Speaking to the CCAR Convention in 1920, Rabbi Leo M. Franklin observed that there was more restlessness now than ever before. Life was tense and near the breaking point. Conditions of the day were looked upon with dismay. The Jew, Franklin stated, was particularly ill at ease and was, in his opinion, being readied as a scapegoat.²⁹

The impending problems were enumerated by Abram Hirschberg, who delivered the Conference sermon at the CCAR convention in 1921. In admitting that we have now gone "back to the lowlands of pre-war days," he confessed that we have yet to solve any of the problems of unemployment or the high cost of living. Crusaders, bigots, and fanatics are at work spreading the poison of intolerance. The lot of the Jews remains precarious, as "the world is sitting atop a volcano that threatens to erupt at any moment." The war seems to have been in vain, for democracy and freedom remain only as catchwords. We have before us a "spiritual bankruptcy."³⁰

THE PLIGHT OF JUDAISM

The growth of patriotic societies in immediate post-war America was not without profound consequences for the Jewish socialists. As we saw earlier, socialism had had its greatest following in the labor unions. Abraham Cahan, through his newspaper The Daily Forward, exerted great influence among the Eastern European Jewish immigrants who swelled the ranks of these labor unions. Goldman describes these Jewish socialists as tending to make up a distinct wing of reformers - an eastern wing, basically urban, which has

arrived at its conclusions quite through direct ideological propaganda, and is still (though rapidly losing this phase) formed mainly among those born in other countries.³¹

Jewish socialists were thus exposed to harsh opposition. The economic crisis following the war created a climate in which the ideals of democracy and the melting pot were to give way to bigotry, hatred, fear and rampant anti-Semitism. As Rivkin states,

anti-Jewish attitudes serve as a barometer indicating the degree to which capitalism has overcome the obstacles in its path.³²

The shattered hopes, unfulfilled ideals, persistent fears, and bitter anger at the economic situation followed in the wake of the failure of capitalism to generate economic prosperity.

The presidential message to the CCAR in the year 1920, delivered by Leo M. Franklin, reflected the increasing concern

felt by Jews in this period. Rabbi Franklin said:

We see clearly today what perhaps we did not sense when last we gathered together, that the armistice of November, 1918, marked rather the beginning of a new war than the end of that which the nations of the world had been engaged. Class stands against class and group against group, and even nations that were companions in aims look upon each other with suspicion.³³

CCAR President Edward N. Calisch, who held office for three years following World War I, coupled the Red Scare with the declining economy together and confessed that

within the three years following the close of the war, there was perhaps more anti-Semitic literature published and distributed in the United States than in any previous period of its history.³⁴

What had happened? According to Allen, the average conservative businessman had come to distrust

anything and everything that was foreign, and this radicalism he saw as the spawn of long-haired Slavs and unwashed, East-Side Jews.³⁵

HENRY FORD AND CONTINUED ANTI-SEMITISM

We have already seen (Chapter II), that a brand of fanatical "Americanism" had emerged during the war, which continued to advocate the melting pot theory after the war. Many American groups, and especially the "one-hundred-per-cent Americans," preached the glories of a distinct and superior nationality. Lewis Mumford, writing for the Menorah Journal,

saw the danger which this upsurge in nationalism held for Jewish culture. He said:

If nationalism as manifested in the current Americanization program continues to flourish in every region, it does not take a very acute observer to foresee that Jewish culturism is doomed...³⁶

Under the cover of undiluted Americanism, Henry Ford, in his Dearborn Independent, also leveled attacks at the Jews. According to Levinger, Ford saw to it that

everything was done to convince the American people that the Jews were a dangerous element in American life, particularly that "the international Jewish financiers" were ruining the United States in order to rule it.³⁷

According to Allen, the Jews were accused not only of subjugating the world, but also for being the source of almost every American affliction, "from high rents to drunkenness, from shortage of farm labor to shortness of skirts."³⁸

A desperate warning was given by Rabbi Franklin who cautioned the CCAR in 1920 with the following statement:

In a time when the whole world is on edge because of the abounding unrest, it is particularly necessary that these malicious charges against the Jew be so completely disproved that now and hereafter, they shall be unable to revive themselves.³⁷

Likewise, a warning was issued by Herbert A. Miller who stated that

one of the greatest obstacles to truth and progress is the preaching of 100 percent patriotism.

It is absolutims, having no basis in fact. We should really be advocating ten to twenty-five percent patriotism. The seventy-five to ninety remaining percent of loyalty belongs to values in our lives that are international rather than national.⁴⁰

THE RENEWAL OF ATTEMPTS FOR UNITY

There had been, as we saw, many divisions and factions within the Jewish community prior to the outbreak of the war. When these divisions were accentuated at the outbreak of the war, the melting pot theory had all but disintegrated. But even though Wilson's call for national self-determination had created the atmosphere for the development of diverse nationalisms, it had also served to unify diverse Jewish groupings on the issue of Jewish rights in the post-war world.

In July, 1916, the American Jewish Committee, which had been opposed to the establishment of any permanent Jewish organization, joined with the National Workmen's Committee "to deliberate and reconsider the entire issue." The Committee then declared itself in favor of calling a congress of the Jews of America to take appropriate action on the following:

to secure full rights for the Jews of all lands, and the abrogation of all laws discriminating against them; ... (including) civil, religious, and political rights... and... wherever the various peoples of any land are recognized as having separate group rights, the conferring upon the Jews there of such rights...⁴¹

The CCAR was asked by its Committee on Cooperation with National Organizations to appoint representatives to the American Jewish Committee. Rabbi Henry Berkowitz exclaimed:

We will fail of our ultimate purpose
when we go before the Conference of
the World Powers, unless we go as a
united body.

Rabbi Samuel Schulman added that the delegates should go with an open mind for a "united American Israel." This is, he concluded, the most important moment in the history of this Conference.⁴² Gottschalk and Duker noted that by the end of 1916,

the major differences among the
rival groups in American Jewish
life were finally composed,
adapting the use of national
rights over group rights.⁴³

UNITY THROUGH ZIONISM

Perhaps Zionism, after all, would unify the various strands of American Jewish expression. Elisha M. Friedman, member of the Council of National Defense and author of numerous articles on economics and Zionism, offered the hope that

Zionism promises not only to
bridge the gap between national-
ists and cosmopolitans, but also
between Orthodox and Reform.
Jewish life in Palestine will
wed the essence of Orthodoxy
(reverence for the past and
respect for authority) with the
strength of Reform (adaptation
to the environment and creative
evolution).⁴⁴

Even Louis Grossman concurred:

The lines of demarcation between Reform and Orthodoxy are nowadays not so tightly drawn...the economic pressures, the spirit of the times, and the fusion in settlement and kinship have reduced the significance of the technical distinction.⁴⁵

NEW CHALLENGES FOR JUDAISM

The spirit of unification, which had begun to develop at the close of the war, enabled Judaism, and especially Reform, to turn from theoretical and philosophical questions to those of practical import. We have already noted that post-war America was apathetic towards politics and everything political and theoretical. Reform Judaism said that it was now time to prepare for a new type of Judaism--an "American" Judaism. For this to happen

our congregations must be democratized sincerely and thoroughly.... Absolute equality must be the right of all, and the responsibility and burden of administration must be borne equally by all in proportion to ability and means.⁴⁶

The war relief program had truly helped to mitigate the conflicts among the denominations within Judaism. Orthodoxy had begun a program of Americanization and modernization, while Reform began accepting the fact that there was more to Judaism than a set of religious beliefs which resembled those of their Christian neighbors. One of the greatest challenges to the Jews in the Twenties was to continue the program of

unifying its factions, as a response to growing anti-Semitism and quota laws.

THE IMMIGRATION QUOTAS

We have seen, (Chapter II), that the "fear of bolshevism" had inspired Senator Thomas Hardwood, Chairman of the Senate Investigation Committee, to propose restricting immigration as a means of keeping bolshevism from American shores. President Calvin Coolidge, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and Representative Albert Johnson were all obsessed with the notion that the survival of the Nordic race was threatened by the presence of "inferior peoples." Although the problem of a surplus labor market may have been the underlying cause for the stoppage of Jewish immigrants, the ideological jargon--which said that un-American philosophies dangerous to the political institutions of the United States must be stopped from infiltrating our country--was the public justification for the quotas.

The flood of immigrants who were seeking refuge on American soil consisted mainly of Jews "escaping from a bolshevized Russia and the ravaged, economically depressed and anti-Semitic new states of Eastern Europe."⁴⁷ Reform Jews had heretofore held negative opinions toward this mass immigration. Morris Lazaron, Rabbi of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, well expressed the early Reform view:

Such institutions as the Jewish parochial schools, or the tendency to inject into our American political system European conceptions

of group right and minority privileges,
must be combatted with all our influence
and power...we should not encourage the
importation of any such foreign con-
ceptions here...⁴⁸

But by 1920 the official Reform position had altered. It was then thought that the Eastern European Jews might be brought into the fold of Reform, for the purpose of establishing "unity and a consecrated people under the banner of the one God to the blessing of our beloved America."

That same year the CCAR Commission on Social Justice said that the gates should be kept open to the oppressed and distressed of all mankind. These people once assimilated to American modes of life would work for and be loyal to American institutions. Nevertheless, CCAR President Leo Franklin continued to express some of the prevailing anti-bolshevik fears, saying:

We would be prepared to exclude from
U.S. shores anyone who would not be
prepared to enter heart and soul into
the spirit of our institutions.⁴⁹

It might be pointed out that quotas and discrimination in the United States was found in places other than just the ports of entry. The colleges, too, were involved. Inside these sacred halls there had been constant reaction against all types of reform which had been taking place during the previous twenty years. So it was not uncommon to find these reforms linked to the Jews on campus, and as a result, Jewish enrollment could be successfully limited. All this was done

on a "legal" quota system, through the setting up of psychological exams. Author Stephen Steinberg noted that

World War I had fanned the flames of nationalism, and a combination of political demagoguery and nativist propaganda heightened anti-Jewish feeling.⁵⁰

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN JUDAISM

Levinger points out that when there are no new immigrants, there is nothing against which the "antis" can rage. He notes that

...as every new wave of immigration in the U.S. was followed by an anti-alien movement, so the decline of every immigration wave was followed by the stoppage of the agitation.⁵¹

The stoppage of immigration contributed significantly to the formation of a new "American Judaism." With the passage of the Johnson Immigration Bill, American Jews no longer needed to be concerned with the influx of thousands of poor immigrants; nor was there as much need to worry about the Jewish ghetto. Now the Jewish social worker could perfect his work and deal with the improvement of Jewish life in America.⁵² The stoppage of immigrants was also a sign for American Jews to take a look at other countries, especially Palestine (see Chapter VI) as alternative havens for homeless Jews.

Thus it was that social justice was to become very popular in Reform Judaism after the war. It was the avowed purpose of the Social Justice Committee of the CCAR to help to "bring moral and religious influence toward the solution of

the pressing problems of our present civilization."⁵³ For its justification, the committee reported a few years later that

...in the light of the ever-growing industrialization of modern life, of the spread of imperialism, of the rise of the tides of race and color, and of the undiminished dangers from militarism, it is not too much to expect of the Conference to look upon its social justice work as having a proper claim on half of its preoccupation. To minimize the urgency and the extent of this work means to fail to comprehend the challenge of the newer era in which we are living.⁵⁴

RELIGION AND THE GROWTH OF THE ECONOMY

It was, as we have seen, a new era. In 1922, the economic curve had begun to turn upwards. There was a feeling of prosperity in the air. The progressive program against big business had virtually ceased, but the new social justice program now hoped to utilize the nation's growing wealth to give new benefits to the working man and to improve the conditions under which he worked.

This growing prosperity had a marked corrosive effect upon the religion of the Jews:

The rationalist spirit of the last century and the absorption in material growth and prosperity have further weakened our hold on faith.⁵⁵

Marvin Lowenthal, writing for the Menorah Journal, pointed out that Jewish civilization had grown up in a non-industrial world, and it was to this world that all the details of Jewish daily behavior had been geared. All Jewish songs, prayers, and

ideals had been called upon to "square with a world that never knew gas, electricity, or steam." But the machine, continues Lowenthal, overturned ideas, transformed habits, and created new forms. The Sabbath and Hebrew began to give ground; there was just no time for it. Besides, industry tells us that we need to know the language of the majority. Independence in customs and laws has been banished by the factory, railroads, and machinery,

and the Jew has found that to survive, he must, like other peoples, accept a dependent relation and adjust his life to the machine.⁵⁶

The life style of the Jew was in the process of transformation. We have already noted that the fortunes of the Jews fluctuated with the changing economic conditions in their environment. In his message to the CCAR in 1922, Rabbi Edward N. Calisch reported that, with war hysteria and feelings of ethnic self-determination subsiding and with racial animosities lessening (all due to the rising economy), conditions for the Jews were beginning to improve throughout the country. Popular attacks against the Jews were beginning to subside.⁵⁷

During the Twenties religious leaders clearly saw that the country was business oriented, and thus they turned their attention to this "new religion." Lowenthal recognized that industrialism was the prime operating force in modern life and explained that

the measure in which this force is understood will determine the measure in which the Jewish situation is understood.⁵⁸

The Jews were involved in industrial life; yet handicapped and despoiled as they were due to the immigration quotas, they were determined "to save of the wreck what they can be creating their own land--Palestine (see Chapter VI)."

The Twenties--excluding the immediate post-war turmoil caused by economic depression--were good for the Jews of the United States. Rivkin believes that

...the post war decade witnessed the crystallization of a new Jewish middle class, firmly bound up with expanding capitalism and sharply distinct from the pre-capitalist Jewish classes of the turn of the century...⁵⁹

As the prosperity of this decade affected the Jews, they deserted areas of first settlement and moved into the newer city districts. Thus the ghetto lost much of its strength, as the mind of the Jew turned towards suburbia and suburban living.⁶⁰

A business jargon similar to that used by the churches was used by Horace Kallen to describe the Judaism of the day. He pictured that Judaism was, for the clergy and for those who made a living from the religion, their "stock in trade," and thus Judaism was of interest mainly to them. These people,

the rabbis, melamdim, hazanim, shochtim, teffilin makers and mikvah keepers--those whose products and factories center around Judaism--have a vital interest in keeping it alive. They are the ruling powers and

must market their wares to keep themselves alive.⁶¹

Judaism, said Rabbi Solomon Foster of Newark, New Jersey, must utilize the practices of good business in advertising the message of religion. Men must feed their souls with nourishing ideas and must change their terminology to suit the modern age. Foster concludes:

How can a generation, familiar with organized industry and international commerce and stupendous mechanical development, whose lines are fallen in the midst of vast cities with great social, political, and charitable organizations, be inspired by language that reverberates with the sound of lowing herds and the call of the shepherd...?⁶²

The changing times which were affecting American standards in general were having no less an effect upon the Jews. We have noted that the era of concern for social politics, economics, and philosophy, so prevalent prior to the war, was giving way to a new interest in business, fashions, the dance, sex, and fun. Bemoaning the changes affecting the Jews, Zelda F. Popkin, a publicity agent in New York City, noted that where there had once been a desire for Jewish scholarship in the Jewish boy, now the Jewish girls did not particularly care to marry an educated man; they wanted a businessman, who could give them furs, diamonds, servants, and all the luxuries of the Twenties. With prosperity and luxuries everywhere, why should a Jewish girl sacrifice to support a poor student?⁶³

Miss Popkin also noted that the Jewish settlement houses, which were at one time used to help foreign-born Jews adjust to life in America, were now geared to the problem of youth. In order to compete with the dance halls and movie theatres, these settlement houses were forced to teach art, music, fashion, and courses for brides, instead of the customary politics and philosophy.

Religious practice dissolved before the onrushing pressures of the Twenties. Dr. Maurice Fishberg, a noted Jewish anthropologist, observed as early as 1920 that the Jewish dietary laws seemed no longer to be a bar to social intercourse between Jews and Christians. He continued:

It appears to me that the intensity of the compliance with these laws is in inverse ratio to the prosperity of the Jews. Prosperity, whether it be material, intellectual, or social, liberates the Jew from the yoke of these anti-social laws.⁶⁴

Lowenthal concludes that the reason for this collapse of religious observance "is probably more a matter of the spread of industrial habits and ideals than any positive anti-religious convictions."⁶⁵

The increase in business interest in the 1920's brought with it the rise of many Jewish civic organizations. It is now necessary, said Rabbi Martin Zielonka at the CCAR Conference in 1920, that the synagogue be more than merely a place for the holding of religious services. It was now time for the synagogue to assume social responsibilities, "to bring

democracy and fellowship into the traditional place of worship."⁶⁶ Thus Jewish welfare organizations and community councils took root (especially in the larger urban areas) and began "to coalesce on a countrywide basis."

THE FURTHER DECLINE OF SOCIALISM

We have noted that socialism in the United States declined with the rise in real wages, as labor unions received a more equitable share of "the pot." Rivkin applies the same thesis to the Jews:

...along with the stabilizing influences of entrepreneurship came the processes of Americanization, dissolving the old customs, mores, culture, and religion that had been brought from abroad. As larger and larger numbers of Jews extricated themselves from the proletariat, the radical and socialist ideas receded.⁶⁷

Socialism and the Yiddish newspaper had seen good times before and during the war. But now the "spirit of the old timers" had departed, partly because the leadership had gone, "but mostly because the old compelling urge of poverty is gone."⁶⁸ With the trades now highly organized, labor leaders were now more interested in collective bargaining than in revolutions. Moreover "high wages and prosperity alienated all those to whom socialism was a practical necessity and not a mere philosophy."

The Yiddish papers Tageblatt and Freiheit, which once

mirrored a quaint, Jewish life style, had now given way to the tabloid. Under constant pressure from Americanization and Babbittry, and through the change of interest from art theatre to sensational movie, the Yiddish papers steadily lost their influence. Also, with immigration virtually at a standstill, "the doom of Yiddish in the United States is foreseen by all."⁶⁹

THE STRENGTHENING OF JEWISH UNITY

It seemed that the 1920's--primarily because of economic growth and the emergence of an "American" Judaism--was ready for the re-emergence of the "melting pot" idea. Jacob Billikopf, director of Jewish War Relief, had set the tone as early as 1918 when he observed that the great appeal to Jewish humanity and the "common-hearted response" of the past few years have

burned away overnight many a difference and prejudice between various groups of Jews that had seemed so deep seated that they would never be overridden in this generation.⁷⁰

Now that the Jews had unified themselves on the issue of war relief, it was time to organize more permanently. In 1921, the CCAR Committee on Cooperation with National Organizations asserted that

never in our history has it been more needful that the various national bodies should work harmoniously together than now. We are a disunited body; thus it behooves us as a body

of rabbis to stand above all else for unity of action in all matters affecting the whole of Jewry.⁷¹

The American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, and the Synagogue Council of America were a few of the organizations which sought to promote unity amongst American Jews. In 1920, Jacob H. Schiff called the American Jewish Committee "the most suitable unifying agent in America today." Horace Kallen, in a recent edition of the New York Times, lauded the American Jewish Congress as one of the great and conscious steps forward

in the Americanization of the American Jewish Community while arresting assimilation by halting the liquidation of Jewish identity.⁷²

The Synagogue Council of America, founded in 1926, was an organization comprised of the three leading lay unions and the three rabbinic conferences. Their common belief was that unity can best be achieved by working through the synagogues, and they hoped to be able to "discuss matters which they all have in common...for action on subjects which concern all religious Jews."⁷³ Thus, by the mid-Twenties, in the midst of ever-growing prosperity, an American Judaism, and newly found freedoms, Jewish unity was to forge a community more attuned to the "free life" than any community ever before in history.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT IN THE LATE TWENTIES

THE JEWISH INTELLECTUAL

Judaism in America, as we have seen, allowed for a proliferation of Jewish options. A Jew could be a socialist, orthodox, agnostic, reform, Zionist, or non-committed. Still another group which became popular in the late Twenties consisted of intellectuals. These intellectuals were usually rarely involved in religious matters, and their activities generally by-passed the synagogue. The Jewish intellectual found that the Jewish institution, with its modes of expression and thought, was "wholly inadequate to his modern conscience." However, though the Jewish intellectual may have been critical of past authority and tradition, he refused to consider himself outside the pale of Judaism.¹

According to Henry Hurwitz, editor of the Menorah Journal, the Jewish intellectual was ready, by 1926, to seek self-realization with and within, rather than outside or against, Judaism. Hurwitz offered the following challenge to the Jewish intellectuals:

We, living in the modern world, are beset on every hand by modes of life, institutions, and influences not Jewish. We share with our neighbors sciences and modes of thinking, behavior, emotional, and esthetic satisfactions. We can prevent this only by shutting ourselves into ghettos and cutting ourselves off

from the community at large. Zionism, an answer to some, is no answer to the great majority who continue to live in Diaspora.²

American life, Hurwitz said, will always be there. The Jews cannot and will not be destroyed. Thus,

...to avoid the very possible but repugnant outcome of survival on our part as a mere ethnic group, or as the preservers of an obsolete theology, or as sentimental parasites on the past, we are morally obligated to use our intelligence towards a reevaluation of Judaism and to create for ourselves a new intellectual and spiritual raison-d'etre in the modern world.³

This was to be the quest of the intellectuals who were still drawn to the Jewish fold. And to accomplish this, they were to be left alone to express themselves freely in the free society of America.

American Israel's greatest battle, according to Elliot E. Cohen, was an intellectual one, which must be fought with intellectual weapons. Our political and economic status may be assured, he said in 1925,

but our intellectual status--our conviction of the equal value of our culture and religion with the cultures and religions of our neighbors, and the winning of the right and the capacity to perpetrate its identity--is by no means established.⁴

For this recognition we need inner strengthening of American Jewry in regards to self-knowledge.

EFFORTS AT RECONSTRUCTION

In light of the need for a new type of Jewish expression which would serve to unify Jewry in the Twenties, Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan offered a daring solution. He warned that the salvation of Judaism lay neither in Reform nor in Orthodoxy. What was needed was the fostering of a Jewish communal life.⁵

By 1927, Kaplan was determined to save Judaism from the secular effects of modernization. He noted that the Jewish masses had become indifferent to Judaism because

as city dwellers they are more exposed to the effects of the industrial revolution than any other element of the population. It is well known that the machine industry has a larger share than any other single factor in undermining the medieval outlook both in Judaism and in Christianity.⁶

Kaplan thus proposed a communal definition of Judaism:

It is the funded cultural activity which the Jewish people has transmitted from generation to generation. It is the living dynamic process of intellectual, social, and spiritual give-and-take of Jews in the course of their relationship to one another as individuals and as members of various groups. In a word, a civilization.⁷

According to historian Michael Meyer, the Reconstructionists were looking for a rationalization for Americanization within the framework of Judaism. Kaplan had wanted to model the Jewish people along the lines of Dewey's functionalism and pragmatism. Mitzvot would become "sancts," which would be kept on a pragmatic level, to keep Judaism from "falling

victim to the plague of excessive abstraction which afflicted Ethical Culture."⁸

THE PROGRAM OF JEWISH INTELLECTUALS

(1) PROHIBITION

There were many challenges to the Jewish intellect in the middle-Twenties. The issue of Prohibition is one which separated conservative Jewish thinking of the immediate post-war period from the more liberal thinking of the middle Twenties. Before 1924, even Reform Rabbis had been swept up in the national hysteria and the move for sobriety. They were upset that many of their Orthodox brethren had maneuvered around the Eighteenth Amendment in order to gain permission to use fermented wine for sacramental purposes. In 1920, the CCAR Committee on Responsa made a counter-move and confirmed that in some blessings wine was not necessary, and that substitutes could be used instead.

The following year, Rabbi Leo Franklin, then President of the CCAR, revealed that many congregations were being established for the express purpose of being granted permission to use fermented wines. A few years later, when talk of repeal of the Volstead Act was beginning to spread, CCAR President, Abram Simon remained firm in the Conference's prior position. Repeal of the law, he said, would be a weakness:

We stand for law and wholesome discipline..for regulative restraint and for patriotic confidence in the integrity of the people of the land to make the virtues of Prohibition neutralize its evils.⁹

(2) INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Although Jewish intellectuals, as opposed to the Reform Rabbis, felt their concern for individual freedoms threatened by Prohibition, they generally remained silent. They did, however, make their ideas known in terms of lasting peace. As early as 1924, the CCAR, in responding to growing sentiments for the endorsement of a permanent court of international justice, passed a resolution calling war morally indefensible and accepting the Levinson-Borah plan for outlawing it. The CCAR then voted to create a Standing Committee on Peace, which a year later urged each member of the Conference to do his part

in developing public opinion in behalf of this institution whose aim is to substitute law for force.¹⁰

The focus was trans-national. In 1927 this same committee concurred with the words of Germany's Dr. Stresseman:

He will serve humanity best who, firmly rooted in the faith of his own people, develops his moral and intellectual gifts to their highest significance, thus overstepping his own national boundaries and serving the whole of mankind....¹¹

(3) BIRTH CONTROL

In Chapters II and III we saw how the economic surge of the Twenties undermined traditional values among the intellectuals, the plutocracy, and the urban dwellers. Among the controversial issues of the day was birth control, and it has already been established that the new sexual freedoms had created the need to rewrite the laws pertaining to birth control.

In 1926, the CCAR Commission on Social Justice said that while the traditional religious point of view on birth control should be considered, it should not be the determining factor. Birth control, the Commission explained, is a vital problem which should be left open to free discussion, and it must take into account the views of economists, medical authorities, and students of social life. In short:

Prejudices and presuppositions founded in old habits and in ancient taboos must be set aside in the consideration of this vital problem.¹²

It was hoped that the result would be the eventual removal of the restrictions on doctors giving birth control information to their patients. By 1929, the Commission reported:

We therefore recommend that the CCAR urge the recognition of the importance of the control of parenthood as one of the methods of coping with social problems.¹³

JUDAISM ENCOUNTERS SCIENCE

Religion in the Twenties fell upon hard times. Already noted has been the fact that young men and women were loosening their ties to the church--especially in the urban areas and among those associated in some way with scientific thinking and the expanding industrial economy. As early as 1920, Rabbi William Fineshriber described that

science has destroyed the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible... old cosmology and astrology have been repudiated... the decay of theology has been accompanied by a lessening of faith.¹⁴

This decay, Fineshriber continued, can be seen best in the subjects to which rabbis now address themselves: history and sociology. The feelings are now that prayer, per se is "perfunctory and useless." It is the echo of agnosticism which obtains among the psychologists and scientists of our day. Thus, one of the key reasons why popular theology has very little place in Jewish life today is the advance of the physical sciences undermining the belief in all things spiritual.¹⁵

Countering this growth of scientific thought in the urban areas was a corresponding growth in religious fundamentalism in rural America. The Scopes Monkey Trial, a "monumental battle" between fundamentalism and scientific thought, prompted CCAR President Abram Simon to state that Tennessee should deny that any particular interpretation of the Bible

is the official standard of truth. He said:

I recommend that this conference draw up an affirmative statement on the attitude of Reform Judaism to the present-day teachings of science.¹⁶

The CCAR Committee charged with reviewing the President's message expressed the opinion that

the Bible...does not prevent anyone who professes Judaism as a religion from accepting the doctrine of evolution, if he believes it to be true.

"We deplore," the Committee concluded, "the establishment of statutes which require the particular teaching of the biblical account of creation; it is contradictory to the spirit of the distinction between church and state."¹⁷

The growth of scientific thought amongst enlightened Jews offered yet another option for Jews who were seeking a viable Jewish identity. This option was Jewish science, its foremost spokesman was Rabbi Clifton Harby Levy of New York. Jewish Science, he said,

insists that there must be a positive hearty, and consistent cooperation between the scientist and the religionist, if man is to attain the best possible results in the art of living.¹⁸

INCREASED EFFORTS IN ZIONISM

The excitement of the era - created by new economic growth and correspondingly new ideas-led to further Jewish activity. In the early Twenties, reports were published in Jewish

periodicals such as the Menorah Journal, which described Palestine as

an ideal spot for industrial community...equal and probably superior to any harbor on the eastern Mediterranean Coast. It will be near the largest textile markets in the world.¹⁹

Various other articles were published showing the abundance of mineral and chemical resources in Palestine. These untapped minerals were estimated to be worth billions of dollars. The cosmetic trade could flourish there and could compete with any market in the world. Palestine would be able to supply the West with half of the raw materials that were raised for the markets in Japan and China, besides furnishing the non-industrial Mediterranean basin with supplies.

The English had foreseen all this in 1878; it was now time for the United States to recognize the potential of Palestine for economic growth. Jacob deHaas called for a prophetic vision and claimed that what was most needed were

men equipped to think in terms of organic industrial development, (who) will find a great play for their talents in Palestine. This form of practical idealism will achieve the Jewish homeland.²⁰

It is likely that these reports hastened the CCAR's speedy recognition of the need to support rehabilitation programs in Palestine. The year 1922 witnessed the beginning of cooperation between the CCAR and the Palestine Development Council. The CCAR Resolution on Palestine Development declared the

members of the CCAR ready

to associate themselves in the economic rehabilitation of Palestine and the promotion of the settlement in that country such Jews as wish to go there.²¹

Still, the Conference was not as yet committed to any "political national program."

The combination of favorable economic conditions in the United States and very unfavorable economic conditions in Europe hastened the Palestine rehabilitation program in the middle Twenties. With immigration officially blocked, there was less and less need to spend money on immigrants, and much of this money could be used in settling these immigrants in Palestine.

But despite such positive action, Abram Simon, President of the CCAR reminded his colleagues that the official position of the Conference remained a repudiation of nationalistic Zionism. He did, however, add that

...we do heed a call to Palestinianism....The rehabilitation of the Holy Land has our profound sympathy
....We must assist in the rehabilitation of the Holy Land either as individuals or as an organization.²²

Post-war Zionism took on different overtones from those of pre-war days. Writing for the Menorah Journal, Ben M. Selekman wrote:

Zionism seems apparently to be changing from a work of exciting promotion and propaganda (with all its outlets for surcharged emotion and idealism) to one of sober upbuilding.²³

And for this practical upbuilding program there was the Jewish Agency, which the CCAR finally voted to support in 1928.

In defense of these new directions towards development in Palestine, David Lefkowitz, noted Reform Rabbi, wrote in 1929:

At this stage of cooperation through the Jewish Agency, the Conference now finds itself ready to heartily enter into the work of Palestinian rehabilitation, but while as yet not by any means as a majority endorsing the political aspects of Zionism, yet more than willing for the sake of unity in Israel and especially of united and effective work in Palestine not to make any pronouncements on that question.²⁴

Thus, because of economic pressures and the need for its support, Reform Judaism had, by the late Twenties, dropped, in large measure, its totally negative stand and began to adapt a policy of benign neutrality toward political Zionism. The spread of British colonialism following the war, when coupled to the already changing theoretical and religious motives for Zionism resulted eventually in massive aid and concern for Palestine by Reform as well as non-Reform and Zionist organizations.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RELIGION

We have seen how the Twenties offered the American public a chance to express their feelings in novel ways. As the chains of tradition and fundamentalism were being torn asunder in those areas affected by economic growth and liberal thinking,

novel options were also being opened to the various religions.

In its 1926 Survey of Religious Conditions, the CCAR noticed that the trend in Judaism was moving away from rational thought to the emotional and spiritual--"from ritualism to feelingism." People were no longer interested in the abstract. There was "a craving for something warm, definite, concrete--that appears to the heart, that grips the soul." With the protest against over-rationalization had come a new emphasis on mysticism and

a desire to salvage all ceremonies
worthwhile, giving a new interpretation to all religious values
which affect our daily life.²⁵

The relative absence of popular theology in Reform Judaism after the war was, according to Rabbi William H. Fineshriber, advantageous, in that it has

diverted energy into Judaism's favorite channel--action; into the organization of charities, (and) the founding of settlement houses....²⁶

The two disadvantages of this loss of theology were that the philanthropic and social agencies were divorced from the synagogue and, secondly, that the sciences and philosophies which had caused the apathy towards theology left no substitute.

The skepticism which had spread amongst those whose beliefs had been shattered, was shared by those Jews whose customs and traditions had been disrupted by the on-rushing economic growth and liberalism. Stanley Walker, Assistant City Editor of the New York Herald Tribune, noticed that the

leading rabbis in New York were expressing their concern about the successful Jewish child who had forgotten "all about the God of his father." These rabbis were beginning to notice that many ambitious Jews, caught up in the swing of success, were being lost to the high status Episcopalians.²⁷

THE EFFECT OF THE CAPITALIST GROWTH
OF THE LATE TWENTIES ON JUDAISM

The new American Jewish community, which was being shaped by the country's economic growth, was very much interested, in accord with the spirit of the times, in helping to eradicate the problems of poverty and disease. Hyman Kaplan noted that with the cessation of immigration--due to the war, the surplus of labor, and the passage of the Johnson Act --

the belief has been growing that the pressure of poverty is lifting, that the central communal problem will no longer be economic in character, and that the elaborate mechanism of philanthropy which American Jewry has built up will, in large part, become obsolete.²⁸

Kaplan quoted Professor Irving Fisher, who, in the New York Times (December 12, 1927), had shown that the increase in real wages in 1926 had been 36% higher than 1921. Fisher had also predicted that if this rate were to continue, poverty would soon be eradicated.

UNIVERSAL IDEALISM AS SEEN THROUGH
THE REFORM SOCIAL JUSTICE PLATFORM

A brief outline of the program for the eradication of poverty as detailed by the CCAR Commission on Social Justice, 1928, follows below:

- (1) ...to study the ills of the existing social structure and to form intelligent opinions on the subject of social reconstruction. The problems of vice, slums, poverty, and degeneracy, we call to the attention of all elements in industry, to employers, employees, and investors.
- (2) We sympathize with measures designed to prevent private monopoly. Private ownership must have regard for social results.
- (3) We need sound humanitarian principles which "regard mankind as ONE...."
- (4) We should not lose the dignity of the individual. "Machinery and industry exist for man and not man for them."
- (5) We call for the rights of employees to organize for their common good, and to bargain collectively.
- (6) All men should endeavor to achieve the betterment of society.
- (7) ...arbitration of industrial disputes.
- (8) The social order cannot tolerate industry's beating down upon the worker. The family must be provided for in more than just their immediate needs.
- (9) There is a need for unemployment insurance, especially in times of depression.
- (10) We need pensions for the elderly plus sickness and disability insurance, rehabilitation for the industrial crippled, and protection of workers from industrial dangers and disease.
- (11) We need a reduction of labor hours and we need a five-day week to replace the six-day week.

- (12) "There must be no exploitation of women in industry, by giving them less than equal pay with men for equal work."
- (13) We oppose child labor. It should be ended.
- (14) We should attempt to remove the causes which tend to make men criminals; we should endeavor to make punishment corrective in its spirit, rather than retributinal.
- (15) With respect to lynching, we decry mob violence and condemn deeds and the moral attitude which actuates or condones it.
- (16) We have regard for constitutional rights and a free pulpit. We condemn the use of the injunction.
- (17) We should outlaw war and denounce the economic imperialism which leads to greater armaments.²⁹

Universalist aims, such as those mentioned in this social justice platform, prevented Reform Judaism from becoming nationalist-centered. So strongly did the Reform Movement feel towards this platform of universalism that, in 1926, it took an interest in the Liberal Jewish movement in Europe. Rabbi Louis Wolsey, President of the CCAR at that time, hoped to "carry the message of Jewish Liberalism into European life and thought..."³⁰ It hoped that the CCAR would join the newly-formed World Union for Progressive Judaism, an organization which would encourage the progress of Liberal Judaism throughout the world.

THE JEW AND AMERICAN LIFE IN THE LATE TWENTIES

It was obvious that by 1927 anti-Semitism was waning as an American institution. Rabbi Hyman G. Enelow, President of

the CCAR in that year, noted that the "fever of Jew-hatred" was passing, as nations turned away from the "scapegoat" method of solving problems to more scientific methods. He continued:

The frontiers of anti-Semitism are melting away before the onward progress of civilization....Perhaps, too, the liberalizing tendencies of modern life, the rational attitude toward ethical and theological questions, and the growing consciousness of social interdependence have pushed the problem of religious rivalries into the limbo of historical absurdities.³¹

Nevertheless, we have seen that Americans, despite the growing economy and the new freedoms, were still somewhat disillusioned over the value systems which had emerged. Rabbi Ferdinand M. Isserman of St. Louis offered an explanation for the widespread pessimism which was being defended by Clarence Darrow. Isserman revealed that Darrow was, in reality, a disillusioned religionist, whose background harbored a fundamentalist, puritan view. It was against that type of life that Darrow was rebelling, and in so doing, he had also discarded the belief in immortality while simultaneously retaining the puritan attitude that this life is "a vale of tears." Darrow's pessimism was like the American skepticism, arising out of the inability to accept old religious solutions and the inability to find new ones. Darrow's "pessimism is essentially a religious disease."³²

Isserman added that Judaism does not believe that this

world is all pain and suffering; yet Judaism does not ignore the fact that pain exists. To find joy in life, one must be a participant in it; through the struggle does man find life worth living.³³

THE JEWS AND THE STOCK MARKET CRASH

The middle Twenties had been good years for the Jews of America. With growing prosperity, anti-Semitism had begun to dissipate, with immigration shut off, poverty was becoming less and less a problem; with liberalism and universalism spreading, a Jew could now adhere to any of a number of options and could be assured that he was still Jewish.

But by the middle of 1929, the spiral of growth and economic optimism in America had begun to wane. This could be seen somewhat in the final collapse of the Yiddish theatre, a medium which had been gradually losing its audience to the American theatre and movie house ever since the passage of the Johnson Immigration Bill. It was not, however, the quotas which actually ruined the Yiddish theatre because

the stoppage of immigration was more
than made up for by the unusual
prosperity of the masses during the
war and directly after.³⁴

Thus prosperity continued to support the Yiddish theatre. It was only when the post-war prosperity had definitely come to an end that the Yiddish theatre suffered its fatal collapse.

Earlier we saw that prosperity had been the climax of a cycle in American mass thinking and mass emotion. It was

under developing capitalism that the Jews

...more than other ethnic or religious group, grasped the options spawned by capitalism to pull themselves up to the higher rungs.... If developing capitalism undermined either traditional Judaism or Jewishness, it did so by exposing them as anachronistic and not by legislating them away. Reform Judaism (in particular) was a creative response to this process.³⁵

In October, 1929, with the bottom having fallen out of the market, a whole new mind set arose. The future of Judaism in America was once again to be determined by an unsettled, desperate condition. Notes Rivkin:

Just as the extension of freedom had gone hand in hand with the extension of the market, so did the crushing of the individual and the shrinking of economic, political, intellectual, and religious options go together with the shrinking of the market.... Now his (the Jew's) degradation, humiliation, and annihilation would be the fruit of the collapse of capitalism.³⁶

CONCLUSION TO PART II

The United States had witnessed a changing pattern of intellectual thought during the post-war decade. There were many great "revolutions" following the immediate post-war depression which brought liberal thinking and individual freedoms to those areas into which economic growth and intellectualism had penetrated.

Jews in the United States, too, followed this basic

pattern and were benefitted by these revolutions and breakthroughs. This pattern of intellectual and economic growth began during the first World War, but was temporarily halted by American patriotism, the growth of nationalism, the collapse of the economy in 1921, and the rise of anti-Semitism. But as soon as the country had recovered--with increased productivity and the influence of intellectuals--Jews began to reap the harvest of material benefits, social programs, and Americanization. Jews had joined post-war America in living the good life.

But the Depression era after 1929 was to cause Jews, as well as the American public in general, to look with alarm at the results of over-extended speculation in the capitalist system. The CCAR in 1930--convinced that unemployment was a chronic evil, the solution of which lay with those who controlled agriculture, industry, commerce and finance--offered recommendations based on national economic planning. Unemployment relief, the Conference said, along with public works programs, and vast insurance programs--which were once the hope for eradicating the last vestiges of poverty--now were needed to curb an unemployment disease which had reached almost one-quarter of the population.³⁷

This collapse bode evil for the Jews of the coming generation. As Rivkin concludes:

Confronted with economic breakdown and stagnation, the American people would be ultimately driven to make the same desperate, disastrous choice: annulling of the grand universale underwriting the individual's inalienable right to his life and his liberty.³⁸

The era of Jewish freedoms and growth was giving way to an era of fear, hatred, persecution, and renewed anti-Semitism, all of which would abide until, once again, a rising economy and its counterpart in liberal thinking would underwrite individual freedoms for the Jews.

AFTERWARD

During the years preceeding, of, and following World War I, the patterns of Jewish intellectual thought varied, depending upon the current status of American intellectual thought. This American thought was influenced by the growth, decline, renewed rapid growth, and disastrous decline of the American economy during this same period. The economic growth and its corresponding progressive program which had characterized America prior to World War I, gave way to economic decline with its corresponding repression and Americanism.

Recovery, however, came quickly. Increased industrialism, the spread of science, and the new freedoms created, for those who came under their influence, revolutions in thinking and acting. Prosperity underwrote the Twenties, during which individuals were virtually free of governmental control. It was only when the Stock Market crashed in 1929, that individual freedoms were destroyed, causing people to ask why government had not stepped in to prevent all this from happening in the first place.

Judaism was influenced by these changing patterns in American society. Jews benefitted by economic growth and were pained by economic collapse. Jews found that a free American society was amenable to the freedoms which they sought. Judaism, during this period, was transformed into a multi-faceted religion.

Thus, as a result of the influence of intellectual thinking among the cultered classes in America between 1914 and

1930, Judaism was able to escape its pre-war, one-dimensionalism, to grasp onto the various reforms of the era, and to lay the foundations for a religion which promoted new freedoms and progressive thinking.

FOOTNOTES

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¹⁴Ibid., p. 421.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 436.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 446.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 458.

¹⁸Quoted in Goldman, p. 110.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 108.

²⁰Beard, pp. 588-589.

²¹Quoted in Goldman, p. 173.

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CHAPTER II

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- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 638.
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- ¹⁹Beard, p. 640.
- ²⁰Goldman, pp. 196-197.
- ²¹"Have Controls Ever Worked," Newsweek, Vol. lxxviii, No. 11, September 13, 1971, p. 89.
- ²²Goldman, p. 200.
- ²³Ibid., p. 202.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 208.
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- ³³Goldman, p. 224.
- ³⁴Allen, p. 205.
- ³⁵Ibid., pp. 33-34.
- ³⁶Quoted in Goldman, p. 218.

- ³⁷Quoted in Allen, pp. 34-36.
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