INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESES AND PRIZE ESSAYS

AUTHOR Garry Allan Loeb

TITLE "The Changing Religous Role of the Reform Jewish Woman"

TYPE OF THESIS: Ph.D. [ ] D.H.L. [ ] Rabbinic [XX]

Master's [ ] Prize Essay [ ]

1. May circulate [✓]) Not necessary
) for Ph.D.
2. Is restricted [ ] for ___ years.) thesis

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses or prize essays for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ___ yes ✓ no

3/20/81
Date

Garry Loeb
Signature of Author

Library Record

Microfilmed
Date

Signature of Library Staff Member

THE CHANGING RELIGIOUS ROLE OF THE REFORM JEWISH WOMAN

by

Garry Allan Loeb

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio

1981 - 5741

Referee: Dr. Michael A. Meyer

Digest

In examining the changing religious role of the Reform Jewish woman this study addresses itself to the following questions: What actual changes have occurred in the Reform woman's religious role and responsibilities? What was the influence of contemporary change in women's position in general society?

The thesis is made up of four parts. The first chapter in each contains an overview of woman's position in society and the churches during the period under consideration. This is followed by a more detailed examination of the religious role of Reform Jewish women, supplemented by a brief study of the non-Reform Jewish woman's position where necessary.

Part I presents the European roots and development of the Reform movement from the beginning of the 19th century to the Holocaust in Germany. The response of the early Reform thinkers to Jewish emancipation included attempts to change the religious role of Jewish women. Yet after a brief period of activity during the mid-1800s little actual change had been accomplished. With the rise of secular feminism in the early 20th century, some German Jewish women organized and tried to press for a broader role in the Jewish community. By the late 1930s, while a woman had been ordained as a rabbi and women were more actively involved in communal affairs, they remained severely restricted in their role outside the home.

The last three parts of the thesis concentrate on the Reform woman in America. Part II covers the essentially pre-Reform period in the colonies and the newly-formed United States. It especially describes the effect of the "Cult of True Womanhood", which pictured women as the more religious and spiritual sex, on Christians and Jews.

Part III examines the period of Classical Reform in America, from the arrival of Isaac Mayer Wise in the 1840s to the first discussion of female ordination by the CCAR in 1922. The thought of Wise and other prominent Reformers on the position of women is studied as are the changes Reform brought about affecting women. The growth of Jewish

women's organizations is also examined with a view to understanding female attempts to define their own religious role.

Part IV brings the study from the 1920s to the ordination of the first woman rabbi by the movement in 1972. Organizational developments are followed and the effect of the rebirth of popular feminism on religion is examined. The rise of Jewish feminism and the final progress toward female ordination are studied as reflections of general social change.

It can be seen therefore, that the religious role of the Reform Jewish woman has responded, just like the Reform movement itself, to trends and developments in general society. Reform Judaism, by being open to change, has allowed women's religious role to develop along with it.

Acknowledgements

I can only begin to thank Dr. Michael A. Meyer, my teacher, advisor and fellow canoeist for putting me onto the topic of this thesis. His suggestions, encouragement and marvelous patience enabled this work and this author to grow.

To my magical, mystical circle of friends, brothers and sisters - love and blessings, for their support, fellowship and wise laughter. The tie never breaks. We will change the world.

And above all to

Sorel

my wife, my friend

spinner of love

weaver of sunlight

Ohiniya

Table of Contents

Digest i

Acknowledgements iii

Table of Contents v

Preface 1

Part I - GERMANY

Introduction 4

I Woman's Place in Religion and Society

1) In Pre-Enlightenment Europe 5

2) The Place of Women in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Germany 7

II Women and Traditional Judaism

1) The Jews of Pre-Enlightenment Germany 10

2) Women's Position in Traditional Judaism 11

3) Jewish Responses to a Changing World 13

III The Reform Movement and Woman's Place

1) First Efforts at Reform 17

2) The Classical Period of German Reform 19

IV The Beginnings of Woman's Activism

1) In General German Society 27

2) The Response of Jewish Women and Reformers 30

3) Bertha Pappenheim - Jewish Feminists 36

Conclusion 38

Part II - AMERICA - FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE RISE OF REFORM

Introduction 41

I Woman's Place in Colonial and Early American Society

A: The Colonial Period

1) Women's Sphere in Economics and Education 41

2) Women in Colonial Religion - The Puritan Churches 43

B: Women's Place in Early America

1) The Secular Realm 44

2) The Religious Realm 47

II The Jewish Woman in Colonial and Early America 49

Part III - AMERICA - THE PERIOD OF CLASSICAL REFORM

Introduction 58

I Women and Religion in American Society

1) Woman on a Pedestal 60

2) Woman-Power, Sisterhood and Social Change 63

3) Women's Role in Organized Religion 74

II Reform Judaism and the Jewish Woman 78

1) The Jewish Woman and the Development of American Reform:

i) The Cult of True Womanhood and the Jewish Woman 79

ii) Isaac Mayer Wise - reform, Reform and the Jewish Woman 81

iii) The Philadelphia Conference 98

iv) The Jewish Woman's Religious Role - The Impact of Early Reform 101

2) The Jewish Woman - Defining Her Role:

i) Local Society to National Council 106

ii) Reform "Sisterhood" - The Rise of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods

iii) The Ordination Ouestion - First Attempts 134

Part IV - AMERICA - THE PERIOD OF REFORM REORGANIZATION

I The Christian Woman's Religious Role

1) Going Nowhere Fast: The Stagnation of the Woman's Movement 145

2) The Emergence of Modern Feminism 149

3) Steady As She Goes - Women and the Churches 150

II The Reform Jewish Woman's Religious Role

1) (Quite) Separate But (More-or-Less) Equal- The Organization Woman 163

2) Jewish Feminism - Reinventing the Religious Role 183

3) The Reform Jewish Woman - Recognition and Rabbinical Ordination

i) Recognition - The UAHC and the NFTS 189

ii) Woman as Rabbi - The Last Barrier Falls 193

Conclusion - The Challenge of Change 201

Appendix A - Suffrage and the Jewish Woman 211

Appendix B - Resolution of the CCAR - 1975 "Women in Reform Judaism" 216

Notes 217

Bibliography 239

Preface

Few issues in Jewish life have caused as much debate in recent years as the decision by the Reform movement to ordain women as rabbis. The Reconstructionist movement has acted similarly, while at this writing, Conservative Judaism is in the process of intensely searching its soul.

At a time when societal perceptions of women are in a state of flux, producing a variety of reactions within organized Judaism, it may be instructive to consider historically the changes in the role of women in American Jewish religious life. Specifically, this study examines the relationship between changing secular and Christian perceptions of women and the evolution of the female role within Reform Judaism.

Reform has prided itself on the fact that it is the branch of Judaism most open to change and development. It has seen itself as a liberal movement, translating a prophetic Jewish tradition into a contemporary progressive spirit. What has been the connection between this Reform self-perception and the issue of women's role within the movement?

For the purposes of this study the female "religious role" is defined as that sphere of activity available to the Jewish woman within Jewish life and the Jewish community. It manifests itself in three areas: the home, the synagogue and the Jewish organization. The religious role is that which, from a woman's point of view, contributes to her Jewish identity. A consideration of self-perception is important here as is the availability of realistic female models who may have pioneered new areas of Jewish female activity. The words "Reform Judaism" and "Reformers" refer to that progressive ideology and its propagators within Judaism that had its origins in early 19th-century Germany. This movement is characterized by its view that Judaism should be adaptable and changing, responsive to the contemporary world.

A casual glance at the bibloiography of this work will reveal a portion of the vast amount of literature that has only recently become available on the subjects of women's history, women and religion, Jewish women's history, and the like. Little work has been done with a view towards a developmental consideration of woman's place in Reform Judaism. I have attempted to provide such an examination.

The subject has been divided into four major parts. The first is an overview of the attempts of the German Reformers to accommodate Judaism to a changing role for women in society. The last three parts detail the American experience, beginning with Colonial times and then concentrating on the period following the establishment ofatrue Reform movement in the United States. Each part contains an overview of the religious position of the contemporary Christian woman, as well as a survey of pertinent social trends. The non- or pre-Reform Jewish women's role is also discussed where applicable. It is hoped that this background analysis will facilitate comparison and contrast with the specific position of the Reform Jewish woman.

It has been almost two centuries from the beginnings of Jewish emancipation to the symbolic attainment of female religious emancipation - rabbinic ordination. This study attempts to trace that long journey in an effort to understand where we have been that we may know where we have yet to go.

PART I

GERMANY

Introduction

Any study of the Reform Jewish woman must properly begin with a consideration of the position of Jewish women in the country where Reform was born: Germany. Reform grew out of and was nourished by the great cultural and philosophical movements that dominated the German states in the 18th and 19th centuries. As these forces influenced the Jewish reformers in their view of Torah and Halacha, they also challenged them in their understanding of the traditional place of women in Judaism. What the German reformers did to change the role and status of Jewish women would have a profound effect on the place of women in Reform as it developed in Europe, and as it crossed the ocean to North America. The pioneers of American Reform Judaism were either German or deeply influenced by German Reform. The congregations that they served were for the most part made up of German Jewish immigrants. The debate over the position of women in those communities was a continuation of that begun with the rise of Reform in Germany.

In the European Jewish community, exposed to the influences of the Englightenment, Romanticism, and to a changing view of women, Reform was the first movement to attempt to harmonize women's new status in society with that which they possessed in Judaism.

I Woman's Place in Religion and Society

1) In Pre-Englightenment Europe

At the dawn of the Enlightenment German women had lived for almost two centuries with the images of the female sex that had grown out of the religious struggles of the Reformation.

The ambivalent view of women held by the Church Fathers in the early Middle Ages had set the stage for their official position within the Church, as well as in society in general. Indeed, by the 10th century, women's role and status were so minutely defined that very little else had to be added to canon law in the following centuries.[1] It would seem that the Church believed that the sole reason for women's existence was to produce future Christians. They were allowed no place in the ritual of the Church. Yet while women might be vilified as devils who tempted men into sin - as Eve had done to Adam - they were not without pre-eminent role models from Christian tradition, primarily Mary, the mother of Jesus. It was a simple fact that a woman held a prominent place in Church mythology, one that no man could deny - indeed, the cult of the Virgin was popular throughout the Christian centuries of Europe. The emphasis on Mary's virginity and celibacy within the Church gave some women an avenue within Christian life that celebrated their femininity as "brides of Christ" - in the nunnery. Thus while the position of women in the Church was severely limited, there did exist a way for certain women to obtain a degree of respect and authority within Catholic Christianity.

With the coming of the Protestant Reformation, much of this changed. Protestant theology vigorously reduced the position of Mary as an object of veneration. Mary-worship was labeled idolatry. Furthermore a greatly decreased emphasis on celibacy and more positive view of marriage and women's role therein had led to abolishing the option of a nun's way of life for Protestant women. Martin Luther seemed to place more stress on the role of women within the domestic sphere. Woman's place remained the home, buth with a further sense of religious duty and responsibility. Luther wrote:

> If a mother of a family wishes to please and serve God, let her not do what the papists are accustomed to doing: running to churches, fasting, counting prayers, etc. But let her care for the family, let her educate and teach her children, let her do her task in the kitchen...if she does these things in faith in the Son of God, and hope that she pleases God on account of Christ, she is holy and blessed.[2]

A woman was to know enough about her religion so that she should better educate her children, aid her husband and live a moral life.

How was the "new" Christian woman to be educated? Primarily, as had been the case for long before the Reformation, by other members of her family and at church. Some reformers suggested schools for boys and girls. The new humanistic philosophies of the 15th and 16th centuries, coupled with an increasing social mobility caused by the period's tremendous social and economic changes, allowed for an expanded intellectual horizon for a small percentage of young women. Those girls and women who received any education at all learned that which would conceivably aid them in those domestic duties which were deemed "natural" to the female sex: "reading, writing, calculation, elementary nature study (as preparation for nursing the sick), needlework, spinning, music, astrology, religion".[3]

Few role models existed for European women that offered any realistic alternative to the traditional home-centered world of women. While female monarchs ruled in some parts of Europe, their role was not one on which the common woman could model herself. Economic development made some women wealthy as independent entrepreneurs but their numbers were never large. If women had any major economic involvement, it was most often in the struggle, beside their men, to make a business or a farm produce. Whether such women served as role models for others is difficult to say. It is possible that the entire concept of "role models" is foreign to this period when a person's destiny depended on social position and community tradition. Protestant women lost the nun's life as an accepted "active" female alternative within their faith. This was replaced to some extent, for a few, by the new institution of the minister's wife. Such

women were often held up as worthy of emulation to their sisters: knowledgeable, perhaps teaching other women and children, devoted to their faith, to their husband and to his career. Still, such women were respected more for their husbands than for any intrinsic ability they might have possessed. Nuns, on the other hand, were respected for the vows that they themselves had taken.

Some pastors' wives were far more outspoken than others, stressing the importance of women in religion, though not necessarily objecting to their male-delegated home "duties". A small but energetic number published their religious writings and even conducted funerals. One such woman, Katherine Zell, the wife of a Strasbourg pastor, wrote a biting rejoinder to the bishop who had excommunicated her husband:

> You remind me that the Apostle Paul told women to be silent in church. I would remind you of the word of this same apostle that in Christ there is no longer male nor female and of the prophecy of Joel: "I will pour forth my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy." I do not pretend to be John the Baptist rebuking the Pharisees. I do not claim to be Nathan upbraiding David. I aspire only to be Balaam's ass, castigating his master.[4]

The position of the Protestant woman was well-defined. Her sphere was the home. There was added emphasis on the positive areas of life that affected her with regard to marriage, sex and childbirth. She was to be educated in those areas that would enable her to function well in herdomestic role. It may be that the new emphasis on female education and the increased possibility of some sort of active participation in commerce prepared the ground for the changes that the next centuries would bring.

2) The Place of Women in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Germany

Even as Rationalism began to break down the barriers between Jew and non-Jew, so too it called for a change in the relationship between men and women. A thin social stratum of both sexes felt stimulated by the new forces and ideas of the Englightenment, of rationalism and cosmopolitanism. The development of basic intellectual

capacities became important to the point that governments found it desirable to expand their systems of education. Throughout the German states

> compulsory attendance for boys and girls was made law, and the states recognized their financial obligations to maintain schools for all the people. . . The mid-century was a period when for many people Reason was God: and viewed rationally the question of education does not readily admit division on sex lines.[5]

While intellectual development of women in the "common school" received new attention, to an even greater did their education among the upper classes. These privileged female students were taught at home by special tutors.

Yet it seemed that as soon as Reason had been set up on the center stage of history it was inexorably shunted aside by the rising wave of Romanticism. This new movement redefined many of the goals of the rationalistic Enlightenment. Women were affected by the influential thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed in women's education and intellectual development for one purpose - to serve men. For women of the upper classes knowledge was to be used to delight and to spur on the careers of husbands, brothers and fathers.

The intellectual needs of wealthy women had been acknowledged by the Enlightenment. Now their emotional and spiritual needs would be addressed by Romantic ideals in literature and religion. For upper-class articulate women, the Englightenment, that had championed their education, was not enough. Those of the so-called "salon-society", women like Caroline Schlegel, Bettina von Arnim and the Jews Dorothea Mendelssohn, Rahel Levin Varnagen, and Henriette Herz were aware of the disparate gifts of Reason and Romance and in particular the difference between rational and romantic religion. Henritte Herz wrote:

> Reason, which the more cultivated take as their help and support, does not suffice to sustain them in severe suffering. Happy is he for whom, at least later in life, the beautiful light of faith dawns inside, and he is permeated by that everlasting, blissful feeling of devotion before his death. By the Grace of God this happiness has also been mine.[6]

For certain of the "salon women" the unequal position of women in German society was apparent. Rahel Levin Varnhagen, perhaps the most thoughtful and popular of this female elite, wrote:

> It is hard that in Europe men and women belong to two different classes: one moral, the other not. This can only be kept up by dissimulation. And this was chivalry! These few words are most true: they contain much misery and much wickedness. Some one should write a book about this.[7]

She was also sensitive to the loss of female talent to society. When it was suggested to her that she had missed a truly literary career, she retorted:

> Granted! So many women miss their true vocation that the few who miss it by writing may well slip in among the rest. There is no need to pity them more than those others who have but little pity bestowed on them.[8]

For the perceptive female observer it was clear that the inequality of the sexes was something that had to change.

To Immanuel Kant, whose thought greatly influenced this period, the "maturation" of society was essential. According to Kant, men at present were immature, but could be saved by using their intellect and logic. Women were far more immature. Their "natural" proclivities - adaptability, coordination, balance, sense of community and spontaneity - were those which made a person, to Kant's mind, immature.[9] This, in spite of the gains made by some women in education, literature and society, was the commonly-held view of women throughout the 19th century.

There were, however, those who championed the growing idea of "women's rights". In the 18th century, in England, Mary Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of the Rights of Women, a strong rebuttal to Rousseau and an argument for women's education and financial independence; it was a work that affected continental writers as well. Among the German Enlightenment intelligentsia, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Christian Wolff and others called for equal opportunity for women. Within the currents of Romanticism the theologian Friedrch Schleiermacher wrote a Catechism of Reason for Noble Women whose second

article stated: "I believeinthe power of will and education to bring me closer to the Infinite again, to free me from the bonds of false education, and to make me independent of the barriers to my sex."[10] The "noble" Romantic woman, therefore, was to rise above her less gifted sisters.

It was a Rationalist belief that a proper education for women, one that included the classics, languages and all those other subjects that had been the domain of men, would enable them to participate more fully in society. Yet it should be remembered that not all of women's so-called defenders were far from the opinions of Rousseau or Kant. Few were willing to see the educated woman as being more than an interesting companion for her husband and a better informed partner in conversation. By the middle of the 19th century it was clear that other factors would have to play their role before the position of women would develop further.

II Women and Traditional Judaism

1) The Jews of Pre-Enlightenment Germany

By the 18th century, Jews had been living in Germany for close to two millenia. A new influx arrived in the years following the Chmielnitzki massacres in Poland (1648), to be welcomed by the various absolutist monarchs who had become very favorably disposed to the special taxes Jews paid directly to the crown. With the development of mercantilism Jews were appointed to high court positions where some assimilated while others used their prominence to improve the lives of their co-religionists. A further expansion of the Jewish population occurred in the late 1700's when Prussia annexed parts of Poland and their Jewish inhabitants.

While Jewish communities had been more or less autonomous throughout the Middle Ages, government interference in communal affairs began at the end of the 17th century and continued, decreasing the power of communal officials.

In religious life, the Halacha remained supreme, still the subject of commentary and interpretation by individual, often celebrated, rabbis.

It was this body of law and custom that dictated the religious role of women in Judaism.

2) Women's Position in Traditional Judaism

The Jewish woman's religious role was defined by the patriarchal society out of which Judaism developed and in which Jews had continued to live without substantial change. The woman's place was the home, raising children and running the household. Jewish law concerning women supported and sustained their accepted social role. Women's education was largely received at home as they aided their mothers in running the house. There they learned the laws that affected their sphere of the Jewish world as well as local and family custom. Women were exempt from the performance of those laws or "mitzvot" (commandments) which it was felt would interfere with their important duties in and around the home, such as going to the synagogue for thrice daily prayer, or intensive study. While a woman was not strictly speaking prohibited from doing certain mitzvot, only men were expected or obligated to fulfill them. As custom developed, a clear distinction was made between the male and female religious spheres resulting in many cases in a de facto exclusion of women from certain areas of Jewish life.

While woman was celebrated as the queen of her house and her husband praised her as a"woman of valor" in her domestic duties, the "separate but equal" status she held also became imbued with negative qualities. As Paula Hyman has noted, "separate but equal, in this as in other areas, remains an ideal most difficult to realize":

> Generally it has resulted in the dominant group's defining both the separateness and the equality of the second group, and justifying that separateness by projecting upon the group being defined a radical otherness. What this has meant in male-female relations is that the qualities of femininity have been defined by male culture in polar opposition to masculine traits. And uniquely female biological characteristics - in particular menstruation and child-bearing - having been perceived by men as both frightening and awesome, in no small measure because they were alien to male experience.[11]

Women were thus assigned a sphere which included the home and children, and were limited to that role. In Jewish religious civilization the exclusion of women from much that was held important, particularly the obligation/responsibility for fulfilling many of the mitzvot, effectively meant that their religious and communal status was inferior to that of men.[12] Certain elements in the folk-culture amplified and justified the "division of labor" by adding that because they had been given a much greater degree of religious responsibility, men were the more spiritual sex, whereas women were far more sensual and bound to worldly needs and concerns - the opposite of Christian tradition. Female biology seemed to give credence to this view and partly for that reason, was seen as a source of impurity. Menstruation in particular played on fears and superstitions about blood, and though the ritual laws of immersion (mikveh) for women following their monthly period were a legal, not hygienic, concept, they "charged women's primary biological functions with a negative animus hardly calculated to enhance a woman's self-esteem and attitude to her own body."[13] Women were also seen as the more sexual beings, needing sex as they were of a different spiritual and moral fiber than men and because of this they were apt to tempt men from their proper business. In the synagogue, when they attended, women were therefore seated separately from the men, in a screened section, not only because they were not halachically obligated to recite the same prayers as male Jews, but because their presence was thought to be distracting to male worshippers. (As was the case in various cultures, women were blamed for male sexual arousal and lust.)

While certain areas of the halacha provided them with the rights and protection rare in contemporary cultures, women were still considered to be male property. They were passive participants in those life-cycle events that affected them directly such as marriage and divorce, events in which the male was actively involved. Similarly, women could not act as witnesses and their vows could be nullified by the male responsible for them, either father or husband.

The limitations placed upon them so that they could fulfill their important role in a patriarchal society gradually restricted women to those roles. A few women did venture beyond the role-delineations but there was little support and much opposition to such behavior. Woman's place in Judaism had been sanctioned by centuries of custom as well as by the authoritative voice of halacha. In a world that was often threatening, Jewish women carried out their assigned roles in support of family and people. Did they object to their status? It is difficult to say. No real alternatives were available within Judaism and for centuries outside trends were regarded with suspicion. Jewish women had their role as did their men; both received a degree of respect and honor.

The traditional role of women in Judaism was never really challenged until Jewish identity itself became an issue. When Jewish men and women stepped over the rubble of their ghetto walls and cast a glance upon from whence they had come, they could see for perhaps the first time what Judaism looked like to their non-Jewish neighbors. When confronted with the possibility of citizenship, Jews were faced with redefining their existence. What did it mean, they asked, to be a Jew?

3) Jewish Responses to a Changing World

Both Rationalism and Romanticism offered well-to-do Jewish women opportunities they had not had before. Raised within a religious tradition that did not encourage female intellectual growth, the new rush of ideas streaming through the cracks in the ghetto walls excited a developing appetite. Since they were generally not taught Hebrew or other Jewish studies, for most Jewish women there were no educational activities to compete with learning a new language and literature. Their time had been spent running the home, but for the wealthy, with servants taking care of the household chores, this was no longer necessary. Wealthy Jewish women seized the opportunity to enliven their day's activities.

For the Jewish male, however, the new knowledge opened to him by the Enlightenment was forced to compete with his traditionally mandated study of Torah. Among the upper classes women were not working and the male was the family member most engaged in providing a livelihood. (Moses Mendelssohn could balance all these things, but he was a rare individual.) The finer points of social skills had to be left to the woman to master. Thus "it is on record from the time of the literary salons that some of those men, whose wives were the life and soul of social gatherings, were embarrassed to put in an appearance." [14]

The rabbis of the time were not unaware of the powerful lure that the new secular learning exerted on women. Somewhat belatedly perhaps they realized that the traditional dearth of Jewish education for women had contributed to the undesirable results symbolized by the Jewish woman spending the Sabbath engrossed in a Romantic novel. While many rabbis simply refused to admit that any real danger existed, others fulminated against fathers "who hired gentiles to teach their daughters foreign languages instead of Bible, Hebrew and prayers more appropriate to the pious Jewish woman."[15] If the influential Jewish women of the upper classes were to be prevented from bolting altogether, something had to change.

Even orthodox Judaism, in its new German form of "neo" or "modern" orthodoxy, was forced to deal with the issue. It was Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) who would spearhead the traditionalist response to the threat posed to Judaism by the new intellectual movements. He and his followers were vehemently opposed to the program of the Reformers as a solution. Hirsch wrote that the Reform claim that the Jewish woman had been "degraded and subjected" was "groundless" as was any idea of an "oriental yoke".[16] He saw this simply as "clever bait to win the favor of Jewish women for the Jewish reform efforts", and he included a chapter on "The Jewish Woman" in his work Judaism Eternal, which celebrated the "high position and great influence whihh the Jewish woman enjoys in Israel."

However, Hirsch was certainly aware that something had to be done to remedy the failure of Jewish education for women. In his famous piece, The Nineteen Letters, he made clear what he saw as the problem by recommending as an answer:

> Schools for Jews! The young saplings of your people should be reared as Jews, trained to become sons and daughters of Judaism. . . They should be as familiar with the language of the Bible as they are with the language of the country in which they live. They should be taught to think in both. Their hearts should be taught to fell, their minds to think. The Scriptures should be their book of law for life, and they should be able to understand life through the word of that Law.[17]

Yet Hirsch and his followers were unable to offer an alternative to many Jewish woman who were struggling with their heritage and the new opportunities afforded them. Hirsch, and his opponents the Reformers, were all reacting to the failure of their predecessors to adequately deal with the problems facing the Jewry of their day.

For the famous women of the Berlin salons Judaism must have quickly lost any attraction, if indeed it ever held any for them. The Judaism they saw was a confused and confusing middle of oppressive custom and repellant superstition and, in the first services of the Reformers, an all too generous dose of cold rationalism. It allowed no room for them to develop individual sensibility, to express the values of their period;nor did it give them any particularly desirable role as women by contemporary German standards.

Romanticism, on the other hand, idealized women. It appealed to their emotions and moved within a rich spiritual framework that they had not been made privy to in Judaism. In fact, much of the attraction of Romanticism was rooted in the allure of Christian and German national symbolism. Romanticism seemed to offer everything to these exceptional women while to them Judaism was restrictive both legally and spiritually.

They became the hostesses and benefactresses to a veritable court of poets, philosophers and liberal thinkers who sought and welcomed this chance to associate with these exotic muses and with

each other on a sort of neutral ground without class distinction. Surrounded by the press of stimulating ideas and personalities, is it any wonder that the Salon Jewesses chose to leave the weight of whatever Judaism they had behind in order to soar higher in the Romantic heavens? The sensitive Dorothea Mendelssohn wrote to her sister:

> Never cease to perfect yourself, improve steadily, and do not tire to extirpate flaws which you notice in yourself. Believe me, the only way to happiness is always to improve yourself; everything else is outside of us and can make us happy only so long as it is new to us. Accustom yourself to write down faithfully every evening not only what you did and what you encountered, but also what you thought and felt.[18]

For Dorothea "improving herself" could only mean the fulfillment she would find in a total embrace of the Romantic ideal - possible only through conversion.

Henriette Herz was sensitive to the deficient education that Jewish girls received, though her own was more inclusive than the average:

> The children, particularly the girls, were not really instructed in the faith of their parents, but were constrained to observe its forms, i.e. they had to keep all of the countless customs which it - or rather the rabbis - prescribed. Girls had to pray in the Hebrew language without understanding what they were praying.[19]

Henriette accurately portrayed the view of the empty Judaism that she and those like her rejected. Neither traditional Judaism nor the empty rationalism of the early Reformers could fill their spiritual longing.

These women, with all their talent and intellect, could not find a place for themselves in Judaism. Indeed, it may have been those very gifts that alienated them from their religion and prompted them to seek their faith elsewhere.

III The Reform Movement and Woman's Place

1) First Efforts at Reform

There were Jews who recognized the disastrous effect of too much "cold" rationalism in an increasingly Romantic age with its consequences of assimilation and conversion. In the early 1790's Isaac Euchel, who had been an editor of the Enlightenment journal "HaMe'asef", wrote a play detailing the dangers faced by the Jews of his day. He posited that neither assimilation, orthodoxy nor the trappings of Englightenment rationalism were the answer for the Jewish dilemma. Instead he proposed a "true enlightenment" which spoke to both mind and heart.[20]

Bringing that "true enlightenment" to the people was the self-proclaimed mission of the Jewish progressives, the early "Reformers". They were at least partially aware of the predicament of many Jewish women and attempted to expand the educational content for girls in their schools, which combined Jewish and secular subjects. In the progressive journal "Sulamith", a column entitled "Letters to a Respectable Young Lady of the Jewish Religion" featured articles that its author, Gotthold Salomon, thought would edify young Jewish women.

There were attempts at reform in the area of ritual that affected women as well. The confirmation ceremony was introduced in 1807 by Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg at his school in Wolfenbuttel (the single confirmand was Leopold Zunz). The ceremony was to mark a young Jew's acceptance of Judaism, just as it functioned in the young Christian's acceptance of religious responsibility in the rest of German society, from whence the rite was borrowed.[21] Just as Christian confirmation included girls, so too the ceremony's Jewish advocates accepted the participation of children of both sexes. Girls were first confirmed in Berlin in 1817, with Hamburg following suit the next year. As innovation was most unwelcome in established synagogues - especially such that involved females and had non-Jewish origins - the first ceremonies were often conducted in private homes or in the Reformers' schools. By 1830 the two reform-oriented Jewish schools of Frankfurt had instituted equal

confirmation for boys and girls.[22] However, as the idea caught on, the synagogue became the ceremony's location and mixed classes were confirmed as early as 1822 at the Hamburg Temple.[23] Rabbi Samuel Egers began confirming boys and girls together in 1831 at the synagogue in Brunswick. A later German-American Reform rabbi, Kaufmann Kohler, called Egers "one of the most prominent rabbis of his time and a man of unquestioned orthodoxy", evidence that confirmation had become an accepted practice beyond reformist circles.[24]

It appears that at this early stage Jewish confirmation was a conscious imitation of a Christian form, part of an effort to "modernize" Jewish practice that included increased emphasis on decorum and the introduction of German in sermon and to an extent also in prayer. A further development of confirmation, as a specifically Reform Jewish ceremony would come with the next generation of Reformers.

Another change in Jewish worship that touched women's lives - albeit only a select few - came in 1818. In that year, services were held in a private home in Berlin during which men and women, while seated separately, were nonetheless on the same floor without a partition between them. While such a departure from the normative "women's section" may have been as much due to architectural reasons as any other, it may also have indicated a growing opinion on the part of some that it was not seemly to "banish" women from the main hall during the service. Whether this congregation showed a concern for female sensibilities or not is hard to tell.

Yet many such male-initiated efforts had only limited impact on the Jewish women of the time. No one, it seems, allowed the objects of all this "good will" to determine what <u>they</u> wanted or needed from Judaism. <u>Men</u> decided what would be best for women. Indeed, the early Reform services with their emphasis on decorum and propriety (in deference to mostly Protestant, Prussian neighbors), may have been quite different from the form of worship desired by those Jewish women to whom Romantic pomp and emotional ceremony appealed. In fact it was Catholicism, with its tradition and drama, that drew the Romantics - both Protestant and Jewish. At the same time

Jewish ritual and tradition were simply too "oriental" for them. The progressive schools, the introduction of equal confirmation and other small efforts were all external remedies which did not really address the deep and important needs of Jewish women, needs that were only beginning to be understood.

2) The Classical Period of German Reform

It was left to the second generation of Reformers to develop a Reform theory of Judaism that would speak to the many Jews who sought to reconcile their tradition and the world in which they lived. One of its leading figures was Abraham Geiger(1810 - 1874).

Geiger was deeply influenced by the writing of the philosopher-historian Johann Gottfried Herder, who wrote of the "evolution of the human spirit", the striving of human beings to move forward through history. Geiger applied this principle to Jewish history (as Leopold Zunz had not done) and introduced the concept of a religious development in Judaism. That dynamic, Geiger believed, could and must continue. He regarded himself foremostly as a "theologian", synthesizing his various interests. For him theology was the

> scholarly study of religious history with the intention of grasping the expressions of the religious spirit in each age and its development in the course of time - a study undertaken not wholly from scholarly motives, but with the intent of providing perspective and direction to religious development in the future.[25] (my emphasis)

Judaism would have to react to the modern "Zeitgeist" as it had reacted to the spirit of earlier ages. Thus as the role of women in society became an issue, Judaism should by its very nature reflect that change.

Yet Geiger did more than merely provide a theoretical framework. He dealt with specifics as well. David Philipson was correct in calling him "the first public champion of the religious emancipation of the Jewish woman".[26] In 1837 Geiger published an essay in which he argued for the religious equality of Jewish women and concluded:

> Let there be from now on no distinction between duties for men and women, unless flowing from the natural laws governing the sexes; no assumption of the spiritual minority of woman, as though she were incapable of grasping the deep things in religion; no institution of public service, either in form or content, which shuts the doors of the temple in the face of women; no degradation of woman in the form of the marriage service, and no application of fetters which may destroy woman's happiness. Then will the Jewish girl and the Jewish woman, conscious of the significance of our faith, become fervently attached to it, and our whole religious life will profit from the beneficial influence which feminine hearts will bestow upon it.[27]

Other rabbinical leaders hadalso begun to tackle the issue of Jewish women's religious emancipation. The reformist rabbi of Arad in Hungary, Aaron Chorin, wrote in 1842 that it should no longer be "though sinful to put women on the same level with men."

> Women must not be excluded from the soul-satisfying experiences which come to us through a solemn worship service. But in which language shall such a service be held? Certainly not exclusively in Hebrew, of which women do not have the slightest notion and which does not speak in any wise to their emotion![28]

For Chorin, religion is more than simply fulfilling the mitzvot - it is linked to "soul-satisfying experiences". And women, having souls, should not be denied these.

Perhaps unwittingly, Chorin ties the reform of services "not exclusively in Hebrew" to the sorry state of Jewish education that left women without a knowledge of Hebrew. A major thrust of the Reformers' program was to introduce German into the service to make it comprehensible to the majority of Jews who no longer understood Hebrew. Yet it is interesting that Chorin does not speak of teaching women Hebrew.

There were at least three major considerations in the Reformers' concern that the status and role of Jewish women be changed. To the

non-Jewish German population - especially the government - the Reformers wished to prove Judaism to be a religion, as they conceived it to be. Jews were not a separate nation which therefore could not give allegiance to the Fatherland nor be trusted as good citizens. Such reasoning spurred on reforms in liturgy and theology that would do away with references to the messianic longing to return to Zion. It was also felt by both non-Jews and Reformers that much of Jewish life and custom was similarly out of place and "oriental" in 19th century Europe. The later Reformers continued the work of their predecessors, calling for and instituting more decorous and orderly services on the Christian, mainly Protestant model. To some of them, another glaring example of Jewish orientalism was the limited position of women in Judaism. To improve the lot of female Jews, they felt, would increase the acceptance of all Jews, refuting arguments that in Judaism the woman was regarded as chattel. As a rule the Reformers were highly sensitive to outside criticism and made many changes while attentively looking over their shoulders.

To their fellow Jews the Reformers wished to present a Judaism that would appeal to those who wished not for assimilation, but for a religion responsive to their contemporary world and needs. They wanted a Judaism that was relevent to the age in which they lived. Excluded from the surrounding society for centuries, Jews desired to feel a part of European civilization. While maintaining their Jewish identification, they also wanted to feel involved in the world.

For some of the Reformers, retaining the traditional Jewish position of women was untenable. They felt that by improving women's place in a "reformed" Judaism they would help to create a religion of which Jews could be proud.

Finally, the Reformers were sensitive to the alienation of Jewish women themselves from their community in light of recent changes in European culture and Jewish civil status. It can be understood, therefore, that Reform action for female religious emancipation was undertaken with several intertwined purposes in mind. Indeed, it is easy for the cynic to say that the pro-female

stances taken by some Reformers were merely a result of their anti-orientalism and/or apologetic sensitivities. While this may be true for some, others (and in this company it would seem correct to include Geiger) appear to have been genuinely and specifically concerned about the unequal status and role offered to women within Judaism. Still others, as we shall see, may have taken a position on the issue at the behest of their wives or other female friends and family members.

While most reformist rabbis and congregations did not heed the call of Geiger and other pro-female Reformers to change the existing Jewish institutions, one early reform continued to gain popularity - the confirmation ceremony. For some Reformers confirmation replaced the Bar Mitzvah as the rite of passage for Jewish boys. Their dissatisfaction with the perceived emptiness of the traditional Bar Mitzvah was coupled with an aversion to its purely male orientation, producing an inclination toward standardizing confirmation as an equalized ceremony for both sexes, as it was in Christianity. It was this desire for equality that Kaufmann Kohler later cited as a major reason for the ceremony's institution. Women's lot had been neglected,

> besides, there was no provision for a solemn consecration of the Jewish maiden to her religious duties. Confirmation was the first step toward the official recognition of woman as a member of the Synagogue.[29]

Of course that fact that Christian confirmation was a ceremony involving boys and girls was also a factor. All the sensitivities mentioned above in connection with reform in Jewish life were doubtless involved here. While other groups had instituted the rite, it was mainly Reform-minded congregations that supported its introduction, and confirmation became known as a hallmark of Reform Judaism.

The new generation of Reformers undertook certain ambitious liturgical reforms. The traditional man's prayer that praised God daily for not having made him a woman was felt to be an

embarrassment as well as a factor in the alienation of progressively minded Jewish women. The decision to eliminate this benediction from the prayerbook was up to the discretion of individual rabbis and community leaders, and was often a part of other liturgical changes. In 1844, the newrabbi of the Frankfurt community, Leopold Stein, proposed the prayer's elimination as one of sixteen liturgical reforms.[30]

Whatever the reasons for their beliefs about women's "place" in Judaism, the Reformers, collectively sought to make changes on women's behalf at the various rabbinical conferences held during the 1840's. At the Brunswick conference in 1844, Samuel Holdheim of Mecklenberg-Schwerin proposed a commission to reform the laws of marriage. The group was formed but did not have its report ready for the Frankfurt or Breslau conferences. It did offer a resolution at the latter assembly that called the traditions of levirite marriage and chalitza "unsuited to modern conditions".[31] The members reached this conclusion in part because they thought such institutions "an insult to the free personality of woman".[32] However no action was taken on this proposal; the reform of marriage laws would have to wait until the Augsburg synod in 1871.

Several individuals appeared sensitive to women's feeling at the Frankfurt conference of 1845. In the discussion on the Aufruf (the call to the Torah), Abraham Adler of Worms recommended its abolition due to the fact that it "accentuates the distinction between the sexes in religious functions, men alone being called to the Torah, while we must insist upon the equality of men and women in religious functions".[33] The modern reader is tempted to note, however, that it seems the sensitive Rabbi Adler could obviously not imagine suggesting that women be offered the Aufruf as well, as an alternative to its elimination. In any case, the conference voted for its retention.

At the same gathering, Samuel Adler of Alzey read a resolution on the status of women, urging the conference to assert that

> she has the same obligation as a man to participate from youth up in the instruction of Judaism in the public services and that the custom not to include women in the number of individuals necessary for the conducting of a public service is only a custom and has no religious basis.[34]

The resolution was referred to a committee composed of Rabbis Abraham and Samuel Adler and David Einhorn (then rabbi of Birkenfeld) for a full report at the next conference.

That assembly took place the following year in Breslau. The committee's report and recommendations are an indication of the thought of the more progressive Reformers on the status of women and merit careful study.

The report begins optimistically and forcefully: "The halakhic position of women must undergo a change," but betrays the fact that the members of the conference were less than united in support of women's religious emancipation when it adds, "it is hoped that all the members will be unanimous on that subject".[35] Einhorn and the Adlers were not afraid of noting that cosmetic changes would not be enough, and compared the position of women in Judaism to that of the Jews in German society:

> A more theoretical recognition, devoid of all legality, gives them as little satisfaction as, for instance, the Israelites are given in civic matters. They have received assurances of their capabilities for emancipation, without, however, being indeed permitted to become emancipated.

The influences of the schools of historical thought are evident in the perspective given to the position of women in the halacha:

> To be sure, according to their viewpoint, the rabbis were absolutely right in systematically excluding the female sex from a significant part of religious duties and rights, and the poor women could not complain about being denied exalted spiritual blessings, for it was believed that God Himself had pronounced the damning verdict over her.

Yet times had changed. The committee wrote:

> For our religious consciousness, which grants all humans an equal degree of natural holiness, and for which the pertaining differentiations in the Holy Scripture have only relative and momentary validity, it is a sacred duty to express most emphatically the complete religious equality of the female sex. Life, which is stronger than all theory, has indeed achieved quite a bit in this regard; however, a great deal is still lacking for the achievement of absolute equality, and even the little that has occurred already is still devoid of all halakhic strength. It is thus our task to pronounce the equality of religious privileges and obligations of women in so far as this is possible. We have exactly the same right to do this as the synod under R. Gershom, 800 years ago, which also introduced new religious decrees in favor of the female sex . . . we want to apply this principle in a far higher sense to all of religious life, thus supplying our religious community with a strength of which it has been deprived for all too long.

While on the whole the report concerns itself with giving additional rights to women, in one case it takes away a previous "right" in the interests of what we would call today "equality of the sexes":

> On the other hand, there shall no longer occur that religious preference on the part of the woman which the Talmud grants the female sex . . . Regarding the beginning of religious maturity, it is assumed that women mature earlier intellectually. For us, the religious coming of age shall begin for boys and girls alike, with the completion of the thirteenth year.

In accordance with this line of reasoning the committee recommended that

> the Rabbinical Conference shall declare the female sex as religiously equal with the male, in its obligations and rights, and pronounce accordingly as halakhic:
>
> 1. That women must observe all mitzvot, even though they pertain to a certain time, in so far as these mitzvot have any strength and vigor at all for our religious consciousness;
> 2. That the female sex has to fulfill all obligations toward children in the same manner as the male;

3. That neither the husband nor the father has the right to absolve a religiously mature wife or daughter from her vow;
4. That from now on, the benediction "shelo assani ishah," which was the basis for the religious prejudice against woman, shall be abolished;
5. That the female sex shall, from earliest youth, be obligated to participate in religious instruction and public worship, and in the latter respect also be counted in a minyah; and finally,
6. That the religious coming of age for both sexes begin with the age of thirteen.

It is interesting to note that overall, the tone of both report and recommendations is one of additional obligation. "Freedom" from women's previously second-class Jewish citizenship vis-a-vis the halacha, seemed to entail, for these Reformers, an acceptance by women of the obligations of Jewish males under the ritual law, though the latter were to be substantially reduced for both sexes.

What is <u>not</u> included is also interesting. No mention is made of the women's gallery that was retained. The laws concerning a woman's ritual impurity during menstruation were apparently so widely neglected as to require no formal statement. The exclusion of women from leadership roles in the congregation and community was not mentioned either. It is apparent that even the most progressive of the Reformers were still limited to some extent in their view of religious emancipation for women. Indeed, this document, truly revolutionary for its time and place, was not acted upon at the conference. A true debate on the granting of religious freedom to more than half of Germany's Jews would have to wait.

It is instructive to note that while the rabbis took no official action concerning the religious rights of women through the rabbinical conferences, a group of laypeople did take concrete steps toward changing women's role and status within the synagogue. In 1845 a group of progressive Berliners formed the Berlin Reform Association. In arranging services for the High Holidays of that year, the service committee prepared a list of suggestions that included female participation in the choir and "the seating of men and women on the same floor; provided only that the former occupy

the left, the latter the right side of the auditorium".[36] This move may seem comparatively tame by current standards. Yet its real uniqueness may be better appreciated when we consider that in 1907, when Philipson published his history of the Reform movement, the Berlin congregation remained the sole example of a Jewish congregation that had done away with the women's gallery. Philipson cites "continental custom" as the only reason that the sexes remained seated separately, yet on the same level.[37]

How did the Jewish woman react to the Reformers' debate over her rights? There is no evidence that there was any sort of organized female activism to change Jewish practice and increase women's role and status in the first half of the 19th century. Furthermore, we must recall that the vast majority of Jews were still living outside of the major cities where Reform was active. For the still smaller number of Jewish women who were attracted to Reform ideas, we can assume that most of them were pleased with those few areas opened to them and were somewhat cheered by the pronouncements of Einhorn, Geiger and others. Some were doubtless fearful of change, others were exhilarated at the new possibilities opening up for women. For many it must have been a combination of powerful feelings. By the 1850s Jewish women began to realize that new forces were beginning to make themselves felt on men and women of all backgrounds.

IV The Beginnings of Woman's Activism

1) In General German Society

Before the middle of the last century most women at home - wives, mothers, daughters or sisters - had an enormous amount of work to do. Food was prepared entirely at home: baked, butchered, canned, smoked, as well as cooked. Women spun, wove, made and maintained clothes. They drew and carried water from wells, cisterns or rivers. They hauled, cut and burnt wood, tended gardens and made soap, candles and a vast number of other household implements. Whatever items had to be purchased at the market were usually obtained there by women. These jobs were formidable, requiring skill and sense, and took interminable

hours. Only the small upper classes could afford servants who freed them to explore books and other arenas of culture. For the mostly rural Jews, society's definition of woman as homemaker and mother merged with that of traditional Judaism. For most urban Jewish woman there was likewise little idle time for outside interest. Yet the world was changing.

By the 1840s ready-made clothing was available and by the next decade was widely purchased. Sewing machines appeared in Germany in the 1850s. Incandescent lamps in 1879, gas lamps in 1885 and gas stoves by the 1890s greatly simplified home life. During the last half of the century most of the work traditionally done at home by women was being done commercially. Industrialization had come with extraordinary speed.[38]

There was a migration to the cities where jobs sprang up in the new industries. Small city houses were easier to care for, but had little space for storing preserves or growing food. Women began to rely on commercial goods - in reality, few had any choice.

Urban women began to have more time on their hands. Several possibilities existed for them at that time. The new type of living called for more ready capital. Whereas woman at home had been a producer, her production was being usurped. To replace it cost money,often more than the family's male members could raise. For proorer families survival dictated that women had to work outside the home.

For the women of the rising middle classes, however, there was now more time to devote to organizational life and philanthropy - all traditional preserves of the wealthy which were gradually coming within their reach. Charity had always been an acceptable outlet for excess female energy among both Jews and non-Jews. Such activity did not threaten the traditional male power structure of Judaism or general society and at this time continued, now within a larger group. Yet some of these women saw the profound ahd desperate changes industrialization wrought upon their poorer sisters, and for them organizational involvement meant forming and joining embryonic women's group.

Ironically it was the tyranny of the factory that "freed" women

from their home-based roles. No longer producing at home, an unmarried woman became a distinct liability. The "spinster", whose profitable work at the spinning wheel had created her name, was now in dire financial, social and mental straits. In addition, there were many more women than men, a differential augmented by Bismark's wars of expansion.

Women began to clamour for job-training and their potential competition threatened the traditionally male guilds. Organizations promoting the rights of working women and the right of other women to work grew up swiftly. These groups were eager to stress that the emancipation they sought was economic, not political - an important distinction in autocratic, Bismarkian Germany, within living memory of the revolutionary turbulance of 1848.

The next year, under the patronage of the Crown Princess of Prussia, Dr. Adolf Lette set up a society to teach untrained middle-class women. Previously such women could only work as governesses or seamstresses. Lette's institutes taught them new trades: nursing, midwifery, engraving, pattern-making, telegraph operation, bookkeeping, library skills and the like.[40] Lette made clear his Society's goal: "What we do not want and what we never wish and intend, not even in the most distant century, is the political emancipation and equality of women".[41]

The increasingly popular ideas of liberalism in the 1840s gave rise to an institution that combined a progressive education ideology with a positive view of female talent. Friedrich Frobel dreamed of instructive play for youngsters in a "garden for children" wherein they would grow naturally. It was also his view that women were particularly suited to be teachers, giving encouragement to the early women's movement and bringing women into teaching seminaries. Naturally such ideas were far too liberal and democratic for the Prussian government which banned kindergartens in 1851. The outcry against this was so great that the ban was repealed in the 1860s.[42] Women (and some men) had seen and appreciated the benefits of this early form of "daycare".

The artificial wall between women's economic and political emancipation began to tumble in the 1870s. John Stuart Mill's On the Subjugation of Women was translated into German by a "closet feminist" member of the Lette Society in 1870. In liberal circles women's suffrage came under increased discussion. Yet an important difference existed between feminist views of "the vote" in Germany, as opposed to the United States or Great Britain. Unlike the latter, with their heritage of liberal democracy, the German states had a tradition of autocratic government. Liberals and other progressives were aware that change could by no means come swiftly, particularly in the reactionary period of the late 19th century. This period's emphasis on "duty" by anti-feminists meant that woman's place was still at home as a mother, while progressives declared that it was woman's duty to work, get a good education, and still later, to vote.

Whatever one's views, it was clear that women had begun to agitate for change as a group and that changes would indeed have to be made.

2) The Response of Jewish Women and Reformers

Jewish women were deeply involved in many of these new movements. Lina Morgenstern, a board member of the General German Women's Association, founded and presided over Germany's first kindergarten association in 1859. She also began the first kindergartens in Berlin and established the first school for their teachers. Henriette Goldschmidt, also on the Association's board, established kindergartens, teacher-training centers and the Society for Familial and Popular Education (based on Frobel's theories) in her native Leipzig.[43] Her husband was Rabbi A.M. Goldschmidt who participated in the rabbinical gathering at Cassel in 1868 as well as at the synods of Leipzig and Augsburg. It is interesting to note the involvement and activities of a prominent rabbi's wife. Such women must have served as important role models for other Jewish women. Frau Goldschmidt went even further than most women activists of her day, demanding involvement of women in all areas of German life:

higher education, suffrage and public offices.[44]

Jewish women may have seen the obligatory cast of women's role in the words of Einhorn and other reformers in the same light as the idea of women's "duty" promulgated by secular feminists. Jewish women, the Reformers had said, had their "duty" to perform within Judaism.

As the economic and political awakening of Jewish women was beginning, Jewish religious reformers attempted to deal specifically with the areas of ritual life that involved women. At the rabbinical synod in Leipzig, 1869, a portion of a resolution on Jewish education recommended "most urgently to the congregations the establishment and support of good religious shools for the youth of both sexes."[45] The smaller and more Reformist Augsburg synod in 1871 called for several fundamental changes especially with regard to the reform of marriage customs. The passivity of the bride during the traditional marriage ceremony had long offended the sensibilities of Reformers who saw its roots in the "oriental" concept of "bride-as-chattel". The double-ring ceremony, wherein the bride too presents a ring had been popular among certain congregations. Hence, the synod made this "officially" permissable, symbolizing thereby, it believed, the equality of the sexes. (Geiger believed that the bride's bestowal of a ring should be accompanied by "appropriate words", as was the groom's. He suggested "Ani l'dodi v'dodi li - I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine", from the Song of Songs.[46])

One of the roles denied women by traditional Judaism had been that of acting as a witness in ritual matters. The Augsburg synod declared that the testimony of two women would be accepted in witness of female proselyte's bath (mikveh) as part of her becoming a Jew. While restricted, this pronouncement <u>did</u> recognize women's right to act as witnesses and was made, at least in part, with the idea of improving women's status and role within Judaism.[47]

Yet the synods, like the rabbinical conferences before them, brought little real change. Neither could dictate policy to even the portion of the German community that was amenable to Reform. At the turn of the century, the inheritors of the Reformist mantle

preferred the word "liberal" to symbolize their continued striving for Jewish reform while at the same time affirming their respect for tradition. The first national organization of Liberal Jews was founded in 1898 - the Union of Liberal Rabbis of Germany. At its conferences discussions were held on various aspects of Jewish life, including the place of women. At its Berlin meeting in 1908 the newly re-named Union for Liberal Judaism in Germany called for "a larger role for women in religious life".[48]

Still, so little had changed by 1912 that the "Guidelines for a Program of Liberal Judaism", rising out of the Union's conference in Posen and signed by 61 rabbis, had to reiterate that "The participation of women in religious and communal life is indispensable. They should receive their equal share in religious education as well as rights". It preceded this, however, with the hope that "all members" of the community should participate, "especially in the area of Charity and social welfare" - the traditional, limited province of Jewish women.[49] As in the rest of German society, it was merely a case of men giving women their rights. The turn of the century however, saw as well an increasing militancy on the part of progressives of all types, including Jewish feminists.

Out of a meeting of Jewish feminists at the 1904 convention of the International Council of Women came the founding of the Jüdischer Frauenbund (JFB). It was the only German Jewish Women's organization to synthesize the aims of Jewish and secular feminists. It fought for both political and religious suffrage and was the only religious women's movement in Germany to also belong to the General German Women's Association. (The Catholic women's organization, founded in 1903, took no stand on the suffrage issue and didn't join the Association. The Protestant Federation of Women, established in 1899, was only in favor of emancipation within the Protestant religious sphere and against universal suffrage. It left the Association shortly after joining it.[50])

By the outbreak of the First World War the JFB had gained little in its drive for women's voice in the Jewish community. The Protestant Federation of Women had achieved its goals: by

1919 women had gained both active and passive suffrage within their church. (Protestant reform was easier than Jewish in that it had a centralized authority. The Jewish community was generally fragmented.[51])

When the Weimar Republic granted women the right to vote in 1918, the JFB accelerated its drive to gain for Jewish women the right to participate in community elections and issued this proclamation in the Jewish press:

> The Jewish community needs our collaboration more than ever . . . we are unanimous in our fight . . . for our rights! Not because we are power hungry. Not because we are suffragettes, but because we are convinced that women's work is necessary for the cultural development of the Jewish community and that we can accomplish good . . . in official communal posts precisely because we are women.[52]

The male Jewish establishement was split on the issue. Rabbi N.A. Nobel an orthodox leader in Frankfurt and a friend of Jewish feminist Bertha Pappenheim, declared that the denial of active and passive suffrage to women within the Jewish community was halachically insupportable.[53] The Frankfurt community responded to such reasoning and became the first to grant women suffrage rights in 1920. By 1924 there were four women on the community's council and one on the executive board.[54] A further complication arose when orthodox (or power hungry) minorities in communities and congregations threatened to leave if women were enfranchised. Thus there were those who were sympathetic yet whose hands were tied, while there were many who were simply not interested.

"Reform" rabbis were not especially in the forefront in aiding the advance of women in the community. At a 1923 meeting during the JFB's "national suffrage week", Rabbi Leo Baeck had only "words of goodwill".[55]

The effect of the fragmentary nature of German Jewry on liberalization and women's rights can be seen in an example from Berlin in 1929, which also provides insight into the Jewish politics of the day.[56] The Central Jewish Organization in Berlin was composed of two houses - the upper of seven members, the lower of twenty-one members. These were elected every four years. (It is unclear

whether or not women were able to vote by this time.) All synagogues were under its authority except two orthodox congregations and the Berlin Reform gemeinde. The controversy in question developed as follows. A liberal congregation soon to be moving into a new building petitioned to be allowed to have family pews, where all members of a family would sit together. (Only the Reform congregation had inaugurated a policy of seating the sexes together; all others, even the "liberals", had either women's galleries or separate seating areas.) The upper house of the Central Jewish Organization gave its permission, sent the resolution to the lower house and also asked the opinion of Berlin rabbis. Eight liberal rabbis replied: three in favor, three opposed and two offering substitute resolutions. In opposition one rabbi wrote, "Picture a man making his way through a pew occupied by women to participate in a ceremony before the Holy Ark. We cannot afford to dispute a tradition of hundreds of years." Said another, "For the past hundred years the separation of the sexes at services has been a distinctly Jewish practice. This we must keep. We cannot afford to assimilate Judaism with its environment".

In his account of this action David Philipson wrote, "it seems almost incredible that so-called liberal rabbis, ninety years after Abraham Geiger wrote his ringing words urging the religious equality of women with men, should have declared themselves against this measure". Those in favor spoke in the best liberal tradition: "The modern attitude towards women demands change". The compromisers allowed that "while members of families should be allowed to sit together, the sexes of other worshippers should be separated by a curtain". As Philipson notes, "All this bears witness to the peculiar condition of liberal Judaism in Germany. The religious leaders, though theoretically liberal, are, with honorable exceptions, fearful of decisive action".

Not only rabbis were concerned about the position of women in Judaism. As had been the case in Berlin in 1845, it was a layperson who spoke strongly for women's rights. Dr. Heinrich Stern declared:

> The new place of woman in modern life, the modern interpretation of the status of mother and woman in Judaism and the recognition of the non-existence of male religiosity or female religiosity must lead us to dispense with the ordinance which separates the sexes during the services in our synagogue.

The resolution was passed in the lower house by a vote of 10 to 9.

It may well be that another reason for the liberal congregation's petition was the sermon delivered by the incomparable Lily Montagu from the pulpit of the Berlin Reform Synagogue during the meeting of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in that city a year earlier, in 1928. A woman long active in liberal Jewish circles and an executive committee member of the Jewish Religious Union of England, she wrote later of her continental experience, "The German woman must come down from the galleries and take part literally and in a real sense".[57]

The congregation was proud to be the first to allow a woman to preach from its pulpit and in the years following Montagu's visit, other women occupied that place as well. According to one account, several prominent Jewish women were invited to preach in the early 1930s and their sermons were printed in the congregational news.[58] When Friday evening services were introduced in 1932, "Readings from the Bible" replaced the Torah reading and a Jewish actress was found to make them "also an artistic experience". The widow of the founder and editor of the periodical Der Morgen preached to the congregation several times and may have read the service as well, on the High Holidays in 1933. It would seem that at least one congregation had attempted to allow women to take part, as Montagu had urged, "in a real sense".

The mid-1930s witnessed an event that showed just how much women's religious role had changed - and how much more had yet to be done. Regina Jonas completed the requirements for ordination at the Berlin Academy for the Science of Judaism: the subject of her thesis was "Can a Woman Become a Rabbi?"[59] Yet while the majority of the faculty were willing to answer in the affirmative and granted her academic degree, the orthodox Talmud professor, Chanoch Albeck refused

to give Jonas ordination.[60] She was eventually ordained by three liberal rabbis, one of whom was Max Dienemann of Offenbach. The Berlin Jewish Congregation hired her as a religious school teacher and preacher though mainly in homes for the aged.[61] She preached a few times in 1941 or 1942, appearing in a robe without a tallit.[62] Wolfgang Hamburger wrote of her, "I guess that is what she always wanted to do but could only do under the most incredible circumstances just before the end". The first female rabbi was deported to Theresienstadt concentration camp where she died.

3) Bertha Pappenheim - Jewish Feminists

The story of modern German Jewish feminism is bound up with that of its heart and soul, Bertha Pappenheim. Born in Vienna in 1859, by the 1890s she was deeply involved in Jewish social work, aiding Eastern European refugees. She was fully aware of the position of women in Judaism and in general society, and railed against the failures of her own Jewish upper-middle class. She wrote:

> Until now, an axiom of proper education was to keep girls from knowing anything that occurred beyond the confines of their homes. They studied history from books that were "rewritten for girls" but they remained cut off from the enormous demands of daily life. They do not understand the relationship of poverty, sickness and crime. To them, poverty is a street beggar or scene in a play, sickness is disgusting and crime is a sin. Under such circumstances we cannot be surprised when girls do not understand, or at best, feel fleeting pity for the tragedies of humanity.[63]

This could not be otherwise in a religious tradition whose treatment of its female members was, to her mind, horribly unfair.

> This can already be seen in the different reception given a new citizen of the world. If the father, or someone else asked, what "it" was after a successful birth, the answer might be either the satisfied report of a boy, or - with pronounced sympathy for the disappointment - "Nothing, a girl", or, "Only a girl".[64]

Pappenheim pointed out the Jewish woman's religious role - or lack thereof - had added to this idea of female inferiority:

> We have sufficient proof of the disregard of the woman in the Jewish service when we see that for purposes of prayer a woman is not counted as a member of the congregation, she is not called up to the reading of the Law, and she does not participate in the public ceremony of coming of age, as every boy of thirteen years of age is required to do. This last, the ceremony of Bar Mitzvoh, gives the boy early a higher status than the girl. By a religious privilege he feels himself from childhood superior to the female sex.[65]

Such a view of women had to be changed - Judaism needed the commitment of female Jews in every area. For Pappenheim, the key to increasing women's loyalty and participation in the community was an improvement of their Jewish education. That in turn would lead, if men were willing, to a greater communal involvement. The denial of such primary recognition of their importance and talent was responsible for much assimilation, she felt.

> Had the Jewish woman been able to expend her energies and capabilities in communal work, and been given her rightful position and status in the congregation, we should not have had to lament the loss of so many, who in their justifiable longing for useful activity and self-development, have broken the bonds which held them to their community and have sought salvation elsewhere.[66]

A Jewish woman's religious role should rightly include work in both the synagogue and the wider Jewish community. Jewish men had to be convinced - just like other German men - of the potential and ability of their women. Where the Jewish community lagged behind in extending rights to women, female Jews had to take it upon themselves to achieve emancipation. Pappenheim's concerns over the plight of women in general and her deep committment to Jewish survival spurred her activity. In 1899 she published a play, Women's Rights, detailing the exploitation of women in all spheres and translated Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women. In 1902 she established an up-to-date social work society, "Care by Women", applying modern feminist theory to the Jewish charity idea. She was active in the fight against the white slave trade, which she saw as a danger and outrage to all women and a particular threat

to female Jewish refugees who migrated to Germany after pogroms in Eastern Europe. Pappenheim also noted the sexism of Jewish charities which were "underestimating the value of women's work and trifling with their interest by refusing to admit them as equal partners".[67] She saw the need for a national organization of Jewish women dedicated to advancing their rights in both the Jewish and secular world, and was one of the founders of the JFB. For the last portion of her life Pappenheim worked in the JFB and on her own in the struggle of women, Jewish and Gentile, for equal rights in their society and community.

While Pappenheim was certainly an extraordinary person and perhaps more involved than most of her contemporaries, she must have been a powerful and appealing model in at least some ways, to many Jewish women who desired change in their political and religious status. Her campaigns (and to some extent those of the JFB) were directed at achieving political rights for Jewish women within their communities as a first step in expanding their religious role; Perhaps she, and others like her, felt that in a general political climate favorable to somen's suffrage, it would be easier to achieve communal suffrage first.

V Conclusion

By the middle of the last century the position of Jewish women of Germany had moved from being all-but-ignored to at least some awareness by men that a problem existed. Some rabbis and concerned laity had responded to the discrepancies between women's place in Judaism and that offered to them in a changing society by attempting to improve their Jewish position. Movements for educational and ritual reform arose. Yet for all the talk in publications and from the pulpit, at conferences and synods, the situation of the Jewish woman vis-a-vis Judaism had changed little. While she was confirmed in some synagogues, she usually was still seated separately from the men and could not participate in the service in such public capacities as being called to the Torah.

By the time the blackest clouds in Jewish history rose over Europe, Jewish feminists could point to few real victories. While

women were allowed involvement in community elections by the late 1920s, in 1936, the year Bertha Pappenheim died, the JFB was still battling, after four years, to gain a voice on the organization representing collective Jewry under the Nazis, the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland. Its president, Leo Baeck, explained his opposition to women in political roles. He had not changed his mind since he spoke to the JFB suffrage meeting in 1923. His view remained that "while men possessed perspicacity and foresight, women had the gift of being good listeners . . . of being able to recognize the needs of mankind . . . and of shaping an evening with warmth, dignity and substance".[68] Angrily recording Baeck's words, the president of the JFB, Ottilie Schonewald strongly dismissed "the special position that was gallantly accorded. From time immemorial we have learned that the higher we are placed on a pedestal, the further we are pushed from the ground upon which the real . . . decisions take place".[69]

While Germany had provided the soil for the growth of a Reform movement in Judaism, it would be in another land that other Reformers would deal more boldly with the position of women in Judaism - across the ocean, in America.

PART II

AMERICA

FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE RISE OF REFORM

Introduction:

The immigrants arriving in Britain's American colonies in the 17th century brought more than their material possessions with them. Various heritages, religious and cultural, came ashore with them as they first touched the soil of the new land. Mixed in among diverse political and religious persuasions were views of the world born in Europe, that the settlers would attempt to plant in America. This psychological baggage included their understanding of man's place in the universe as well as woman's place in what was, essentially, man's world.

Although an organized Reform Jewish movement did not come into being before the latter half of the 19th century, a survey of the trends in society that affected women of all religions before that time is important to the understanding of how female religious roles changed.

I Woman's Place in Colonial and Early American Society

A. The Colonial Period

1) Women's Sphere in Economics and Education

The position of women in Stuart England was the heritage of colonists of both sexes, and had a profound effect in shaping the place women would occupy in America. In some cases, a serious attempt was made by the colonists to duplicate the European world they had left behind, including women's position in it. Yet it was clear that in the wilderness of the colonies compromise would necessarily be the order of the day. For others, it was the very idea of creating a society different from contemporary England that had drawn them across the ocean.

The position of women in the country that most of the settlers had come from was clearly delineated. It was a commonly held belief that women were inherently inferior to men in all areas. They were generally not involved in business or commerce. Women's place was the home where they were to serve as housekeeper and breeder, while being obedient and subordinate. Even in so-called "gentle society", women were effectively cut off from the other sex and general culture, in part certainly due to their lack of education and Latin. Under

English common-law, an unmarried woman was her father's property while after marriage the "deed" would be transferred to her husband. It is no wonder, given this setting, that the symbols used for women in the poetry of the period were without their own power: moons, mirrors and flowers that followed the sun.[1]

It was necessary that a different situation obtain in the colonies. With a small population and a large area of land to work, women were <u>needed</u> in economic life. Guilds could not afford to ignore women and the shortage of labor ensured that women would receive the same or at least comparative pay as men. While the plight of the poorly-paid, uneducated single woman in England was such that she could only eke out a living as a "spinster", women weavers in Virginia received a wage similar to their male counterparts.

Women were active in a wide variety of roles. Many of the "businesses" engaged in by colonial women were outgrowths of their domestic home roles. They acted as teachers, embroiderers, preserve makers, cooks, dealers in crockery and so on. But others engaged in trades that were not considered to be traditionally female preserves: hardware, farm implements, liquors, imports and exports. The pastor of Boston's North Church, Cotton Mather, urged that women be trained in business so that they might aid their husbands. Of course it was precisely that idea - that women were <u>aiding</u> husbands, fathers et al., - which made their work acceptable.

This view, that women had no need of work for themselves, also affected the development of public education in colonial America. In the colonies, differing views of female education held sway. Among the northern colonies founded by religious groups, and often influenced by Dutch thinking, girls were at least supposed to have an equal educational opportunity with boys in church religious schools and at home.[2] The great emphasis placed on a literate populace by the religious groups contributed to a favorable view of female education, at least literacy, whether or not it succeeded in practice.

In contrast to the public-spirited, community endeavors of the more densely populated Puritan north, the thinly populated southern

colonies viewed education in a slightly different light. Whereas the northern populations were by and large close-knit religious groups, the southerners were mostly widespread, Anglican, and retained a more English view of women's education. While there was certainly a realization that more education was necessary for girls than had been available in England, they were still usually instructed at home when male children received their lessons.[3]

While greater educational and economic opportunities existed for women in the colonies, their place was still pictured as being in the home. With rare exception, married women did not seek employment outside the home that was not connected with their husband's business. There was much need for women to remain at home; house-management was a formidable task in itself and in addition, families were quite large. Ten and twelve children were usual, while enough families had more than twenty to make it a matter not worth comment on the part of contemporary observers.[4] The wife/mother was to rule her home with love. Her sons would go forth to found their own families and work, while her daughters would become housewives as she was.

2) <u>Women in Colonial Religion - the Puritan Churches</u>

It was in the area of religion that colonial women achieved a significant advance over their English sisters. For the female members of the Puritan churches, religion offered them opportunities that English society denied.[5] The oppressed, non-institutionalized sects were open to giving women a more active role, partly because of an ideology of "equality" and partly as a way of appealing to new members. Women had suffered persecution in England as much as their men and in that sense had earned their right to a place in the religious community. Women were attracted to the Puritan denominations and to Quakerism in the colonies. The latter in particular appealed to women of its day in its pacifism, passive resistance and spontaneity - characteristics that were popularly seen as "female". A lack of liturgical forms or complex theology broadened its appeal to the poor. It boasted no traditional heirarchy and offered informal meetings.[6] By stressing the right of all believers to interpret the Gospel for themselves, these denominations opened up the way to

experimentation and sectarianism. Their policies of "tolerance" encouraged individuals to seek out the sect that best represented their own feelings - and women were encouraged to seek along with men. While some, like Edward Johnson, held that women who tried to take an active religious role were "silly women laden with diverse lusts" and "phantasticall madnesse"[7], the actual situation seemed to lead preachers to encourage women's participation. Cotton Mather wrote that "As there were three Maries to one John, so still there are far more Godly women in the world than Godly Men; and our Church communions give us a little demonstration of this". [8]

Some historians have suggested another possible reason for the deep involvement of women in religious life. Women were forced to think on the state of their souls because of the ever-present danger of death in child-birth. The high mortality rate of infants and children must have increased such thought. Women's work in the home was held up by the pious and preachers as virtuous and as contrasting with the evils of the world, which men faced and to which they often succumbed. Religion for the colonial woman was, in truth, all she had to herself. In general, she had little or no outside activity to compete with her divinely-assigned role, a role that could easily become self-perpetuating.[9] While the women of colonial America could choose the "church of their choice", their role within it was carefully and narrowly defined, as the once innovative Puritan sects became established and interested in preserving the status quo.

Undeniably the position of women in the colonies was in many cases far better than that of the contemporary woman in England. Yet as a new, uniquely American society developed, the position of women within it underwent a subtle alteration.

B. Women's Place in Early America

1) The Secular Realm

When the framers of the new United States Constitution declared as a "self-evident truth" that "all men are created equal" they knew exactly who they had in mind. Excluded from their conception of "men" were Indians, blacks - and women. To one of the latter, a daughter of a general in the Continental Army, who had written to

to him asking about the new Constitution, Thomas Jefferson replied that she should not concern herself since "the tender breasts of ladies were not formed for political convulsion".[10]

The American Revolution was basically conservative in character and the ideas of social reform that would affect women were simply too radical for the time. The Revolutionary pamphleteer Thomas Paine found that those who roared their approval of his "Common Sense" had gone apparently deaf to his proposals for improving women's lot in marriage.[11] In fact, forces of reaction set in motion during and following the Revolution now actually attempted to revoke rights that women had exercised. This renewed conservatism militated against women who engaged in activities that took them beyond their assigned sphere. Hence, women who ran their own businesses were considered to be unfit as wives and mothers. Literary women were portrayed as being "unsexed" by their pursuits and were warned that they would find no husbands.[12] Fierce battles were waged by pamphlet and in the popular press over what was woman's proper "place". Yet, as would be the case in Germany, social forces beyond the control of anyone would help to define if not decide the issue.

Industrialization, particularly that connected with textile manufacture, was on the rise in late 18th-century America. The traditional work done by women at home began to be replaced by that done in factories. Large numbers of women who had been tied to their homes by their role as producer, were now able to become earners alongside men. By 1807, women and children outnumbered male cotton-mill workers by 7 to 1. (Wages, however, were not equal.[13]) As the economic arena began to widen for women, some felt that the educational realm should follow suit.

Most proponents of a wider education for women had no desire to see them learn solely for the sake of their own improvement. It seems that these champions of women's education were advocating <u>that</u> learning, so that women could take over - at certain times only, to be sure - from husbands who would be absent at the new jobs. Or more simply, that women should "share" the burden of raising a family and minding the home affairs.[14]

Objection to the broadening of women's education was based on the challenge female learning - beyond a certain sphere - might present to the male status quo. Women might grow dissatisfied with their lot. Hence, the charges that the study of geography would lead to wanderlust. (In the past opponents of teaching women to read and write had warned that with these gifts women would forge the signatures of husbands and fathers!). The first girl to be publicly examined in 1829 in geometry heard the country's clergy "prophesying the dissolution of family bonds".[15] The schools were hard-put to defend themselves and generally stated that they were not conflicting with women's divinely ordained role as keeper of the home. Education would expand and improve women's abilities in the home, not remove them from it. The "progressive" Maysville Eagle of Kentucky reassured its readers in 1830:

> The cultivation of the female intellect cannot detract from the power, influence and pleasure of man. It will bring no "rival" in his kingdom - it will not render her conversation less agreeable - it will not render her judgement less sure and certain in the management of the domestic concerns of the family.[16]

For the woman, the socially recognized and acceptable way for her to achieve power was through marriage and motherhood. To ask for more was to be a monster. Male authority figures strove to reinforce the idea that the "truly" female way to exert power was through women's role in the home. This development of a "Cult of True Womanhood" which attempted to give a philosophical-theological base for the status quo dominated popular conceptions of women through the first half of the last century and its influence is still with us today.[17] Marriage and motherhood were raised as the ultimate purpose of woman. Her place as "ornament of man" was "beautifully ordained by Providence".[18] In such a role, she was not "subservient" as some misunderstood (a reference to early feminists), but rather she was a "chosen vessel" preserving civilization and society by maintaining her place.[19] The Cult demanded four "cardinal virtues": piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.[20] The first will be discussed with religion below. The others were so skewed that any social change in the 19th

century was often seen as an attack on women's virtue. Women were to be innocent, that is ignorant.[21] The domestic arena was a woman's place to shine: she should not desire anything of her own, not fame nor talent. Her own sphere was a science, a skilled and influential pursuit. And any education must not take a woman's interest away from the home or disturb her work there.[22] She was to remain passive and dependent. The spheres of the sexes were separate but equal - that was the "order of the Universe".[23]

2) The Religious Realm

For the American religious establishment, the excesses of the French Revolution were proof of the dangers of "Godless rationalism". As religion had played a prominent part in the reactionary wave of Europe at the beginning of the 19th century, so too the American church authorities sought to improve their positions. Religion played a key role in the rise and perpetuation of the Cult of True Womanhood. The churches taught that piety was one of the four cardinal virtues, and that no less than divine authority had ordained women's place in the home. By its emphasis on the "positive" aspects of women's domestic position, the Cult turned old medieval ideas of the sexes on their heads. Women were now told that they were particularly suited to religion, that they were the most spiritual sex and would save their more sensual and wayward men. Hence religion suited women's proper position of dependence - far better to pray than to think.[24] Preachers assured women that religious or church work did not take away from female domestic life. Religious schools and seminaries propagated the idea of a woman being "a good friend, wife and mother". Female education was to be "preeminently religious".[25] A gradual shift is detectable in the image of women used in preacher's sermons at this time. Before the 1790s women were usually pictured as daughters of Eve, she who was "first in transgression". By the turn of the century, abetted by and abetting the growth of the Cult of True Womanhood, other Biblical models were in use to show women to be conscientious, prudent and suited to religion - Sarah, the obedient wife, was a better role model than Eve.[26]

Yet the Cult idea had its profound problems. It actually threatened the preservation of the status quo by positing an authority for women that was above men. While God, in the minister's view, supported male rule, it was possible for certain women to re-interpret Deity in a way more sympathetic to their sex or simply to challenge the existing order. The Cult's celebration of womanly virtue allowed for self-interest and introspection. These could - and did - conflict with the self-abnegation demanded by their domestic vocation, primarily husbands and children. The Cult instilled a gender-group consciousness and a self-confidence that was potentially disastrous to its own aims.[27] Hence, while most women were reinforced in their "true" nature, others rebelled. The Cult, and revivalism in general, gave women a sense of purpose in which they were supported by authority, peers and the community. Women were told by their preachers, ostensibly speaking for men:

> We look to you, ladies, to raise the standard of character in our own sex; we look to you, to guard and fortify these barriers, which still exist in society, against the encroachment of impudence and licentiousness. We look to you for the continuance of domestick purity, for the revival of domestick religion . . .[28]

This emphasis on the moral resposibility of women for the improvement of society was developed further in the growing evangelical movement of the decades surrounding the turn of the century. Evangelical women felt the support of the Cult that spoke of the important link between the female and religion. However, revivalism called for <u>action</u> and involvement by women in social betterment, something not advocated by the Cult of True Womanhood in its purest form. The growth of the Sunday school movement at the beginning of the 19th century was an example of the renewed interest in spreading the Christian word. That movement gave women a chance to participate in religion in a way that combined their Cult-envisaged role (keeper of the faith) with the new evangelism (spreading the faith). Women founded, directed and most frequently taught in the religious schools.[29]

What Barbara Welter has called the "feminization" of religion in the 19th century - positivizing emotion and suffering - the

supposedly "female traits - had widespread appeal".[30] Women who wanted more than the Cult of True Womanhood offered could become missionaries - or join a sect. As had been the case in the early colonial years in both England and America, the sects offered women a more active role in religion. In several sects women were indeed equals. Some offered an attractive theology for women.[31] Several sects had female founders and encouraged women's active participation as leaders.

The role of women in such sects was a direct challenge to the Cult of True Womanhood's vision of proper female religious roles. Already by the 1820s preachers were warning against woman's involvement "beyond her sphere".[32] It must be emphasized however that most women did not question the role assigned to them by tradition or Cult. Some women became radicalized by the Abolitionist movement yet remained loyal to their faiths. Others rejected organized religion when they began to agitate for their rights as women.

The religious efforts of the Cult of True Womanhood as well as the traditional subjugation of women in most of the established religions "tainted" traditional faith for some in the rising feminist movement. Many would be openly antagonistic toward religion and women's assigned place therein. By the middle of the 19th century, the "Woman Question" had become a separate and compelling social issue.

II The Jewish Woman in Colonial and Early America

The Jewish population in America, a tiny minority in the periods under study, was deeply affected by many of the forces present in general society. Jewish women in the new land often reflected the position of their Gentile sisters. How might a Jewish woman attain Paradise? Abigail Lopez' tombstone in Newport bears the Latin answers: "Virtute insignis charitate ardens". American expectations of women had merged easily with traditional Jewish ones: she was to be virtuous, charitable, and loving.[33]

Like the Gentile woman, the Colonial Jewish woman was often involved in business, whether on her own or more likely, with her husband.[34] Her home life was generally more pleasant than that of non-Jewish women - as later chroniclers would note. Some Jewish women developed an intimacy with their children that was simply unheard

of in the period, as the letters of Abigail Franks attest.[35] The sorry state of Jewish education in the colonies is evident from the appearance in 1766 of Spanish and English translations of the prayer-book by Isaac Pinto. Pinto alluded to the need for such works, as many men, women and children - especially girls - were unable to read Hebrew.[36]

If we can gather any information about Jewish female education at this time, it indicates that it was similar to the state of study for Jewish girls in Europe - negligible or non-existent. Some learned to read their Hebrew prayers and to recite them mechanically, but any educational emphasis was for the son, not the daughter.[37] As in Europe, the daughter's upbringing was the province of the mother who would teach her the domestic arts. In this she was no different from the non-Jewish woman, although a Jewish daughter was usually taught as well the halachic ordinances which pertained to her role as woman and housekeeper. A daughter's Jewish education was not of anywhere near paramount importance to most parents yet, as in general society, a "secular" education was desirable. We read of a daughter of one Judah Hays who had been receiving Hebrew and religious education in addition to other subjects from a Jewish tutor. When a female Christian tutor was found who charged less for her services, the first tutor was dismissed - along with the girl's Jewish education.[38]

In one area in particular Jewish women were faced with a different problem than were non-Jewish females. The small and scattered Jewish population forced a hard choice upon Jewish women with regard to marriage. If they were to marry within the faith, their choices were relatively few - if they were given any say in the matter at all by their parents. To marry a Gentile was to risk familial ostracism as well as the ire of the community where one existed. The only alternative was spinsterhood which was frowned upon in Jewish tradition.[39] The aforementioned Judah Hays disinherited a daughter "as she married contrary to my will and desire", and a Canadian merchant did the same to his daughter who wrote to him, pitifully: "I suffer by your taking all away from me, don't make me miserable by rejecting me as not your child".[40]

The synagogue, where such a structure existed, offered Jewish women at least some sense of belonging. There they could socialize with other women in the gallery, though the Jewish custom of separate seating was strange to non-Jews whose families sat together at worship. Dr. Alexander Hamilton remarked that in their separate screened sections the women seemed "like hens in a coop".[41]

Woman's role in the synagogue and in community life was her traditional exercise of philanthropy and Tzedakah. Women were involved in almost every aspect of communal support for the poor, for travellers, widows and orphans. They cared for the sick, collected dowries, planned weddings and did many other vital works.[42] While they were unable to become community members in their own right, Jewish women gave their support to the male bodies that ran the synagogue and other aspects of Jewish life. Gifts were donated by women's groups or by single, wealthy women, to synagogues in New York, Newport and elsewhere.[43]

The Colonial period saw no organized attempts to "reform" Judaism in any way. Jews were generally scrupulous in following the dictates of tradition, though some laxity was inevitable. Jewish women did not seem to feel unhappy with their status either, though one tantalizing letter from Abigail Franks complains of the superstitions that Judaism was clogged with and declares that she would cheer the advent of a Jewish Luther or Calvin![44]

While the Revolution opened the doors to Jewish political emancipation in the United States, it seems to have affected the Jewish woman even less than her Gentile sister. A concern seemed to be growing alongside that of their non-Jewish neighbors for a better education for their children. The growing Jewish populations in the cities beckoned those who lived on the frontiers. One woman living near Petersburg, Virginia, wrote to her parents in Germany of her plans and reasons for moving to Charleston. She speaks of her desire for a Jewish and a general education for her children, particularly, her daughter:

> My Schoene, God bless her, is already three

> years old. I think it is time that she should learn something, and she has a good head to learn. I have taught her the bedtime prayers and grace after meals in just two lessons. I believe that no one here among the Jews can do as well as she . . .[45]

Significantly, she also states: "You can believe me that I crave to see a synagogue to which I can go". For this Jewish woman and others like her, a Jewish community helped to define her place in the world as a woman.

Concern over education resulted in the establishment of formal Jewish schools. Many were for boys only though some provided for children of both sexes. A rule of a New York Talmud Torah, established in 1808, stated that "No scholar of either sex, shall be admitted under the age of six years".[46]

As was the case for women generally, the life and position of Jewish women were determined by the men around them. Anita Libman Lebeson, using an apt metaphor writes of the Jewish woman: "Hers was the reflected light".[47] The Jewish woman's position in the family was supported by praise from both within and without her faith: Jewish tradition lauded her role as wife and mother and now, in 19th century America, non-Jews would sing her praises and that of the closeness and warmth of the Jewish family, reinforcing the Jews' own view.[48]

The turn of the century brought new waves of German Jewish immigration. Many of these new arrivals were women who had left Germany in the hope of finding husbands. As part of the general reaction against Napoleonic reforms, Bavaria had severely restricted Jews' ability to marry. For many, immigration to the United States was the answer and some even married aboard ship before they arrived.[49] These German-Jewish women had often received at least some elementary education in community schools in Germany. They had usually been taught a marketable female skill, such as knitting, embroidering and spinning, that might serve them in good stead in the new world.[50] On their arrival, however, the new immigrants discovered that one thing that the largely middle-class American Jewish population had assimilated was the popular view of woman's place. American Jewry seized upon one of the symbols of having "made it" in the United States; a wife who was not employed outside the home.[51]

While women's role in the community remained unchanged, extensions of their traditional roles were explored by a new generation of American women. In the growing city of Charleston, Penina Moise (1797-1880) made a name for herself as a widely-published poet.[52] Her talents also turned toward synagogue liturgy and she wrote a hymnal for her congregation, Bet Elohim. When a new synagogue was dedicated in 1833, Moise was commissioned to write the dedicatory hymns. She was also active in Jewish education, serving as the second superintendent of the congregational school. Her poetry covered a broad range of subjects, her advice to Jewish women being to keep the faith by supporting the community and strengthening the family. While Moise's views were hardly radical, it was a very great departure from the European Jewish tradition for a woman to play so prominent a role in synagogue life - especially to the point of supplying new liturgy! Perhaps the small number of Jews in America enabled women to participate in areas that would have been unheard of in Europe. There may have been some small recognition that "talent" had no sex.

More important for our consideration is the fact that Charleston was the location of the first "Reform" agitation in the United States. In 1824 a group of reform-minded congregants seceded from Bet Elohim and organized the "Reformed Society of Israelites". While the Society only existed until 1933, when most of its members rejoined Bet Elohim, it demonstrated that there was widespread interest in "Reform" ideas. Less than ten years later, Bet Elohim itself became a Reform congregation. It may be that the presence of an apparently strong "Reform" faction in the congregation created an environment that was more receptive to Moise's involvement than a traditionally oriented group would have been. Yet such a case would be very hard to prove. The new Reform congregation was far more interested in liturgical reform than in granting women religious emancipation. Indeed it was 1879 before the synagogue's women's gallery was removed and seating in family pews was introduced.[53] It is possible that, with its diverse make-up, the Charleston Jewish community was more open to women's participation; yet it is more likely that Moise's accomplishments in the congregation were more a mark of the community's

appreciation of a talented poet than of its support for female participation per se.

Was Penina Moise a role model for other Jewish women? She was certainly held in great esteem by her sister Jews: mothers had brought their girl babies to her before they were named in the synagogue.[54] One of her poems may have been an inspiration for Emma Lazarus' famed lines on the Statue of Liberty. Lazarus may have modelled herself, at least in part, on the poet from Charleston. Certainly Penina Moise and other women like her helped to expand the traditional idea of the role of the Jewish woman.

No study of the Jewish woman of this period would be complete without some consideration of the celebrated Philadelphia woman, Rebecca Gratz (1789-1869). In many ways she was typical of the "synagogue-oriented" women of her day. Rebecca Gratz was given little formal education, though she was a voracious and intelligent reader. Her religion was very important to her, something that she lived every day and therefore was in no way an oppressive element in her life - a typical view of the time.[56]

She, and other Jewish women of her time, were greatly influenced by the work of a Jewish Englishwoman, Grace Aguilar.[57] Aguilar saw Jewish women in the popular mode of the Cult of True Womanhood, as the upholders of their faith. Yet she was also aware of the traditional religious bias against women and attempted to explain it away as an accretion from "the blinded notions of the Jews of Barbary and other Eastern countries, infused unconsciously by the contempt for the sex peculiar to the Mohammedan inhabitants of those lands".[58] Despite such blemishes on the face of contemporary Judaism, Aguilar urged Jewish women to rally to the standard of faith. Her goal was to "convince every woman of Israel of her immortal destiny, her solemn responsibility, and her elevated position, alike by the command of God, and the willing acquiescence of her brother man".[59] Aguilar probably did not consider any expansion of woman's role beyond that dictated by Jewish tradition (or the Cult), only a fuller and more serious realization of that role. We can but speculate on her dissatisfaction with certain aspects of women's alloted position

in Judaism.

Rebecca Gratz was determined to live the exemplary life of a Jewish woman advocated by Aguilar with whom she felt "an affectionate interest and companionship".[60] She organized the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1819 and aided in the establishment of a Jewish orphans' home four decades later. Her founding of the Philadelphia Hebrew Sunday School Society in 1838 was part of the expansion of the traditional Jewish woman's role - philanthropy and charity were usually the provinces of women - and may have mirrored the Evangelical women's Sunday School involvement. While the participation of Jewish women in children's education was not strictly traditional, it did not seem to threaten tradition either. "Since moral education and the inculcation of religious piety, and not serious study of the Jewish classics, were the purpose of Jewish Sunday Schools, they fell within woman's realm".[61] It might also be added that since "moral education and piety" were taught by women in the Christian Sunday Schools, Jews, similarly influenced by a popular Cult view of women as keepers of the ethical flame, were open to seeing them involved in the education of youth. The rise of the Sunday-school movement in America at this time was, in addition, symptomatic of the need for supplementary religious education as seen by the parents and preachers of all denominations.[62] The efforts of Rebecca Gratz and other Jewish women may be seen therefore as an admission of the poor quality of religious education otherwise available to Jewish children, and of the genrally assimilationist currents within American Jewry at the time.

As far as Jewish women's religious position was concerned, Gratz' Sunday School Society was the first Jewish school in the city to admit girls. The school was also staffed by female teachers from the congregaion and was generally run by women - Gratz herself was its first director.[63] In the same year (1838), Congregation Bet Elohim in Charleston established its own Sunday School, wherein girls and boys were to be "divided by a curtain". Miss Sally Lopez, its founder, received copies of the lessons each week from Rebecca Gratz, whose model she had followed. (Lopez was succeeded as superintendent by Penina Moise.)[64]

While Rebbecca Gratz lamented the lack of Jewish observance by her fellow Jews, she did allow for other views than her own. In her correspondence with her non-Jewish sister-in-law, Maria, she asserted her strong belief in the tenets of Judaism, but allowed: " . . . yet I wonder its adoption too inconvenient to be fitted for present times".[65] She was not open to efforts at "reform", however, and was quick to condemn the first reformist ripples begun in Charleston in 1824, as potentially divisive. She later modified her views of the Charleston Reformers when they had become less strident in 1840, and wished them well.[66]

It is interesting to note that both Rebecca Gratz and Penina Moise, the best known Jewish women of their day, never married. While in their cases part of the reason in remaining single may have been the previously mentioned lack of eligible Jewish males, it is also clear that only as spinsters were they able to conduct lives that were, while well within the realm of Jewish womanhood, so different from the life available to their married contemporaries. A single woman, though stigmatized in Jewish and general society, could do things that no married woman was able. Women like Gratz and Moise were widely admired but could not be totally satisfying role models to women in a society that conceived of the True Woman as one who was married.

By the middle of the 19th century two new movements would arise in America that would profoundly affect the Jewish woman. One was the movement for women's rights. The other was Reform Judaism.

PART III

AMERICA

THE PERIOD OF CLASSICAL REFORM

Introduction:

For the purposes of this study the 1840s mark a watershed in the history of the American Jewish woman. By that decade the ideas of the Cult of True Womanhood had become a major factor in the way women were viewed by themselves and society. Every major city as well as most towns boasted Ladies' Benevolent, Sewing or Literary Societies wherein upper-middle class women devoted themselves to self-improvement and small-scale philanthropy. The growing Abolitionist movement had produced several outstanding female advocates, as well as a large body of reform-minded women who were conscious of at least this one need for change in society.

From these women came the leaders who would help to spur the emergence of the American women's movement. Whereas most female abolitionists saw the cause as an end in itself, some viewed it as merely one of the areas of society that required reform. Still others began to apply what they had learned in the battle against slavery toward the emancipation of their own sex. The very growth of a women's movement showed that while abolitionist work was important for the welfare of others, for some women it was high time to strive for themselves. The first women's rights convention in the United States met in Seneca Falls, New York, July 13,1848. A "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions", modelled on the U.S. Declaration of Independence was issued, stating in part:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights . . .
>
> The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her . . .[1]

A true movement for women's rights had begun. Before it would achieve its major goal - women's suffrage, in 1920 - it would affect and be affected by the other social and religious movements of the time.

Two years before the convention, on July 23, 1846, Isaac Mayer Wise arrived in New York. To a very large extent, it would be this man who would organize Reform Judaism in America and attempt to define women's role in it. The "changing religious role" of the American Jewish woman would begin in Wise's congregation in Albany, New York.

The position of women in Reform Judaism and their changing role would reflect the changing role of women in American Christianity and society in general. When the Cult of True Womanhood pictured woman to be demurely changing the world through her position as wife and mother, Reform followed suit. When at a later time a more dynamic activist force shook Christian women into involvement with social problems, Reform women reacted in a similar fashion. And when women gained entry into the world of professions, Reform was called upon to deal with the possibility of women as rabbis. From the arrival of Isaac Mayer Wise and the Seneca Falls Convention in the 1840s to the granting of female suffrage and the debate over women's rabbinic ordination in the 1920s, there would be great changes in the way American women saw themselves and their role in the world.

I Women and Religion in American Society

1) Woman on a Pedestal

"America worships two idols: one is Mammon - who is deaf dumb and blind . . . The second idol that is prayed to sees, hears, walks, speaks, and - above all - is full of life: this is the female sex".[2] Such was the observation of Israel Joseph Benjamin, a Jewish traveller who styled himself successor to his medieval namesake, Benjamin of Tudela. Benjamin spent three years in America, 1859-1862, and evinced his disquiet with "a land where women ruled".

Indeed, by the time of Benjamin's visit, American womanhood had been celebrated and enshrined by the so-called "cult" or concept of True Womanhood. The Cult's popularity continued to grow throughout the century. Christian religious spokesmen and theologians identified certain "female" qualities as divine. By the 1850s, preachers such as Henry Ward Beecher were using female imagery to describe God as one who, like a mother, pardons and kisses away offence, protecting and rocking the child/worshipper to blissful sleep.[3] Yet, an important distinction was drawn: while God may be like woman, woman does not partake of all God's attributes. Woman's power lies in her gentleness and delicacy - not in thunder! She is warned in sermon and treatise that should she attempt to exercise "real" power, she would lose all. Hence the Harvard theologian, Horace Bushnell called his 1869 broadside, Women's Suffrage: The Reform Against Nature. Within their sphere as wives and mothers, women are "subordinate" but "superior", he wrote, continuing with the premise of True and Virtuous Womanhood. This of course, is all as it should be, divinely ordained and "natural":

> They do quite as much, and I strongly suspect, more for the world than men. Their moral nature is more delicately perceptive. Their religious inspirations, or inspirabilities, put them closer to God, as having a more celestial property and affinities more superlative. It may be that men have larger quantity in the scale of talent, while yet they are enough coarser in the grain of their quality to more than balance the score.[4]

Such a view permeated most 19th century religious writing. Women were to be quietly superlative at home.

Yet "home" was no longer what it once had been. As was the case in Germany, middle-class woman's role at home had been redefined by technological changes that were making themselves felt by mid-century:

> Women became consumers, not producers, of the new technology. They did not translate free time into employment opportunities or careers. They did not compete in the world of men - employment was legitimate only for a brief period before marriage. Technology freed them from the manual labor that had dominated the lives of their mothers and offered them opportunities to go outside the home, but it did not free them from the commitment and obligation to the home that had structured their mother's aspirations and choices. They too, although in new and perhaps more insidious ways, were dominated by an outlook that ultimately confined and narrowed their sense of possibilities.[5]

The great question for women was: would outside involvement cause them to neglect their paramount duties in the home? If such activity did, it was seen as unwomanly. Indeed, the very type of involvement open to women was dictated by the idea of the "virtuous woman". Activity that was not related to the domestic role of supportive wife and mother was not possible. Since its development in the 1820s, the religious aspect of the Cult of True Womanhood allowed for a woman's gentle touch to extend beyond the home - so long as home life was not jeopardized - into areas of philanthropy and self-improvement. The latter meant learning how to improve her abilities as wife and mother, which were the roles that defined her womanhood. Philanthropy therefore became the sole acceptable vocation outside the home for the True Woman.

Yet how to define philanthropy? Before the Civil War, local Female Benevolent Societies collected food and clothing for the poor and at times raised funds for similar projects. This was well within women's sphere as defined by the Cult - from mothers at home, women could become mothers to their community. All was small-scale and local. This began to change when women were attracted by a larger scale philanthropy, national (at least in the northern states) in scope: the Abolitionist movement. If the Cult was to keep women locked in

their homes it had a flaw in that it, perhaps unwittingly, permitted a degree of lateral movement insofar as it spoke of women as the moral arbiters of society. It was a simple step therefore for women to feel that they were well within their role to become active in the moral issue of slavery, as they had in the Sunday school movement whose goal was to convey Christian ethics to children. Yet the difference between traditional women's philanthropy and the abolitionist cause soon became apparent: the anti-slavery movement quickly became a political force seeking larger political cures to an unjust situation. The political education of women in the Abolitionist movement was, needless to say, not supported by the Cult image.

Women felt encouragement to undertake such larger philanthropic involvement from the developing religious idea of the time. Part of the new wave of evangelism in the early 19th century was concerned with social reform. The movement, which later grew into the "Social Gospel", gained momentum in the antebellum years as slavery became a major issue. This evangelism stretched the definition of the virtuous woman, to include her social activism in the cause of what might be called "True Christian Reform". Again, as in the case of the Cult, it was a religious movement which defined woman's place in society and the perimeters of her activity.

In the Abolitionist movement, those motivated by the evangelical call for Christian reform were far more conservative than those who were moved by a broader, more liberal "spirit of the times". The latter boasted a social program that called for radical changes beyond the abolition of slavery; including rights for women and criticism of pacifism, non-resistance and organized religion.[6] While supporting a vague conception of women's rights, most of the so-called liberal abolitionists subscribed to the female role as defined by the Cult. Women's activity in these abolitionist circles was to be behind the scenes, probably as much because the men were unwilling to share the limelight with a woman as for any concern over the stability of the American home. The situation was the same among the Christian abolitionists in regard to women's participation, though in that group the religious roots of woman's place were the cited reason.

Still, it was within these groups of abolitionists that women were introduced to large-scale, efficient, reform-activist organization. The few women, who, despite the odds and resistance, rose to prominence as abolitionist speakers and organizers, were not realistic role models for most pre-Civil War women, imbued with the Cult's definition of their proper place. A woman's power was for support; she was not to be at center-stage herself. The exposure to organizational methods for social change gained by women in the movement would have a profound effect in the post-war women's movements.

There were women abolitionists who had begun to question not only the oppression of black people but also the enslavement of their own sex. Such a situation was glaringly clear within the movement itself wherein male leaders spoke of the plight of the oppressed black man while ignoring black women and actively subordinating their white female co-workers.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) were active abolitionists who called together the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Conference in 1848. These women symbolized the two factions of the anti-slavery movement which would continue in the women's suffrage movement for some time. Stanton was a radical, decidedly hostile toward organized religion which she saw as particularly oppressive to women. Mott was a devout Quaker who strongly supported female suffrage. While some women abolitionists began to call for suffrage <u>before</u> a defeat of slavery, others preferred to keep their alliances within the abolitionist movement in hope of winning their support at a later suffrage battle. A Women's Movement thus emerged, yet while united in its goal - suffrage - it was divided in its program.

2) <u>Woman-power, Sisterhood and Social Change</u>

The stage had been set before the Civil War by the Cult of True Womanhood, evangelical social reform, the abolitionist and the growing suffrage movements. The post-war years saw these various influences on women combine to produce dramatic changes in women's role in society. As we have seen, religion dictated much of what was properly understood to be woman's role. Following the Civil War, women began to stretch the perimeters of their sphere, at first causing it to strain and then, ultimately, break.

The period of Reconstruction after the Civil War was filled with a reformist air. The "liberal" North had defeated the "reactionary" South in the name of human freedom. Yet the land was full of pressing social problems. Women who had been told that their sex was the paragon of moral virtue easily made the next logical association. If women were the conscience of the world, women should reform it. This subtle shift in reasoning was a direct result of women's acceptance of their role as it had been defined by the Cult, by the preacher and by society at large. Their place was in the home teaching morality. What could be more "natural", therefore, than looking upon the world as a "large home" which needed the same ordering and uplifting that women had devoted themselves to on a smaller scale?[7] The all-to-recent memories of the horrors of war brought the imperative that women had to "civilize" men to new heights of urgency.[8] Men - and man's society - were brutes that needed to be tamed by the soft, refining hands of women.

The ministers' celebration of women as closer to the Divine than men, led some women to experiment with new views of religion and their place therein. Women obviously believed in their higher spirituality and for some this meant a privately developed and held spiritualism that extolled female religious proclivity.[9] Others were spurred on to create new interpretations and to found new religious groups.[10] The most influential and durable of these was the system of Christian Science. Founded in 1866 by Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1911), it offered women the logical conclusion of ideas about virtuous womanhood and social reform: from quiet pietism at home to religious equality.[11] Christian Science is an example of all the factors that influenced women in the 19th century; it was tightly organized, and it combined deep spirituality with concrete belief in social reform, training women as social workers to create a better society. That such a system was eminently suited and attractive to contemporary women is apparent - in 1895 80% of Christian Scientists as well as most of the leadership, were women.

Clearly women were receptive to organizations responsive to their evolving place within American society. The women's club movement of the late 19th century is another case in point. The Ladies' Societies of the early 1800s were still in existence, and in

some ways the two groups were very similar. Yet while both spoke of "self-improvement", the club saw its role as educating women not only for the sake of their domestic obligations, but also for woman's own sake and for her interest and involvement in the world at large.[12] The club movement itself was primarily made up of middle-aged women who had not been able to avail themselves of educational opportunities such as those that were becoming more widespread for women in the last half of the century. For such middle-class women, the clubs offered an acceptable arena for socializing, self-improvement, education and, in some cases, political involvement. Whereas many of the Societies were in reality run for the "ladies" by men, the clubs were indeed women's groups. Jewish women, too, were aware of the power of the club movement. As Hannah Solomon, founder of the National Council of Jewish Women and an active clubwoman wrote, "to join an organization of 'women' - not ladies - and one which bore the title 'club', rather than society, was in itself a radical step".[13] The clubs were one result of the growing organizational prowess of women. The lessons learned in the abolitionist movement, church auxiliaries and Ladies' Societies were put to effective use. Many clubs continued the local philanthropic work pioneered by earlier groups. These clubwomen, stimulated by the call of Christian social reform and slowly awakening to the strength of "sisterhood" were usually concerned with similar issues. As male-run philanthropies generally excluded women, the women's clubs searched for - and found - women's problems. Perceived by middle-class clubwomen, through the lenses furnished by preachers and pamphleteers, these were societal aberrations that seemed to threaten women's virtue, and as a consequence, that of society in general.

This religious social-reform thrust bequeathed to the clubs by the social reformers focussed on morality - the "natural" province of women. The problem with this approach, common to most middle-class reform efforts of the period, was that it tended to focus on the symptoms of "immorality": drunkenness, crime, prostitution, without addressing the causes: industrialization, urban growth, exploitation.

It was the honest conviction of temperance advocates that if the saloons were closed down, drunkenness would disappear. Middle-class clubwomen generally saw contraceptive information as a threat to "women's virtue". The heavy accent on women's spirituality created "Protestant nuns" whose view of sex was bound up with their view of lusting, bestial men.[14] Males demanded sex, which women, well above the pleasures of the flesh, consented to, while pitying their weaker partner. For the women of what was the Victorian era, sex was solely for procreative purposes. Contraception therefore pointed to another end and thus was evil. Abortion, naturally, was unspeakable.

Several organizations sprang up in the battle for "social reform" and the strong undercurrent of evangelism is clear in each. Thus the Young Women's Christian Association was founded in Boston in 1866. It's concern was to provide lodging and "Christian council" to unwary country girls, who arriving in the big city, most often in search of work, were prey to pimps - in the so-called white slave trade. YWCA representatives met incoming girls and women at the train stations.[15] The organization quickly expanded its activities to offering training and a placement service in properly female domestic work. As economic opportunities for women widened in the 1880s, the YWCA offered training in office work. The Association expanded to New York in 1870 and by 1906 was established as a national organization. Jewish women were indebted to the YWCA's pioneering work. The members of the National Council of Jewish Women patterned their reception of European Jewish immigrants - from meeting them at the port, to providing employment - on the model of the Association.

One of the other movements that represented the Christian striving for social reform was the temperance movement. While male temperance societies did exist, the movement was soon dominated by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1873-74. Its roots in the Cult of True Womanhood and evangelical social reform are apparent in the WCTU motto:"Woman will bless and brighten every place she enters, and will enter every place". In that "entry" women would not seek to compete with men but to reform them.[16] The Union had a broad program of social reform in addition to its temperance struggle. It organized

Sunday schools, and advocated the reform of public schools and prisons; in each area battling the forces of immorality, as its members saw them. The WCTU's stand on women's suffrage is an example of the somewhat ambivalent feeling of religious women's groups toward female enfranchisement. The Union supported suffrage from an interesting standpoint: woman, the superior moral being, should have the vote so she could exercise her virtue at the ballot box to reform the country and further the WCTU social agenda. This was the reason that woman should be granted suffrage, not because she deserved it as a citizen.[17]

The struggles of labor did not involve many women's organizations. The Christian social reformers' call for a fair deal for workers and support for organizing labor, went beyond most women's group concern with individual morality and character reform. Class distinctions may also have made co-operation difficult. The clubs and other associations were largely middle class and they may have been reticent about becoming involved in major social upheavel - as some labor-management disputes seemed to portend - which might threaten their position. In addition, laborers may have been suspicious of middle-class "do-gooders". Yet the social reform imperative was not shirked by all organizations. The most radical labor association, The Knights of Labor (est. 1869) had close ties with the WCTU. The Knights supported suffrage, temperance and equality of women workers, while the Union, in connection with its social programs, backed up labor. Such a coalition may well have been due to the particular personality of the WCTU's founder and president, Frances E. Willard. Willard, in her involvement with social issues, had become a supporter of socialism which may have predisposed her to a strong sympathy with labor - especially in combination with her belief in Christian social reform.[18] It was doubtless the WCTU's involvement with labor that helped break down class barriers between some women's groups and the workers. To be sure, an additional reason for middle-class women's interest was the plight of an increasing number of female and child workers. The need for representing these workers was not being met in most of the new labor organizations. So it was that in 1903 at the American Federation of Labor convention, a coalition of middle-class and working-class women established a National Women's Trade Union League, to give working women their own voice. The League joined the suffrage movement declaring that if women could work,

they should be able to vote and have an effect on the laws that governed the workplace. At first the League's leadership was upper-class and Christian, including Chicago clubwoman Ellen Henrotin, who would influence the founders of the National Council of Jewish Women. In a short time, however, the middle-class Christian religious element of labor support had receded to the point where not only working women took over their roles, but Jewish working women at that.[19]

The struggle for women's suffrage is one that is receiving increasing attention from historians. Yet, the role of religion in the movement is stressed but rarely. The suffrage movement grew out of a patchwork of abolitionist groups in the decades before the Civil War. It reflected its mixed origins and was by no means a monolithic movement united in program and purpose. Two major factions arose within the umbrella abolitionist group, the Equal Rights Association, which was dedicated to the achievement of equal rights for blacks and women.[20] One faction was a generally conservative group, drawing strength from Christian-religious anti-slavery associations. It favored women's suffrage but argued that blacks must be enfranchised first, as they felt Christian social reform required. The other faction grew out of the more radical and secular abolitionist groups and argued that female suffrage should be pushed forward first. After years of disagreement the two groups split in 1870 over the Fifteenth Amendment which granted the vote to black males without giving the same right to women of any race. Two organizations were established that reflected the differing views of how suffrage should be attained. One was the more conservatively-oriented American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). It became a moderately voiced, tightly organized association with its sole purpose being the achievement of suffrage. To this end, under the leadership of Lucy Stone, it enlisted the aid of male suffragists including the well-known minister Henry Ward Beecher, and Stone's abolitionist husband, Henry B. Blackwell. The AWSA eagerly sought endorsement of their goal from the churches and therefore refused to take a stand on issues that might jeopardize such support.[21]

The more radical suffragists formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) whose major leaders were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. This group viewed suffrage as an issue tied to many others affecting women including marriage and divorce law reform and the improvement of women worker's conditions. While the NWSA did not welcome male members, the Association was not as radical as some of its leaders would have liked.

Stanton was the chief spokeswoman for those who saw organized religion as playing a major role in the suppression of women. Such a view was given credence by the general opposition of male clergy (with a few notable exceptions) to the suffrage movement. At the NWSA's 1885 convention Stanton planned to introduce a strongly worded resolution denouncing Christianity's role in the subjugation of women. Her coworkers prevailed on her to tone the statement down and to substitute "Judaism" for "Christianity".[22] The submitted resolution read:

> Whereas, The dogmas incorporated in the religious creeds derived from Judaism, teaching that woman was an after-thought in creation, her sex a misfortune, marriage a condition of subordination, and maternity a curse, are contrary to the law of God as revealed in nature and the precepts of Christ; and
>
> Whereas, These dogmas are an insidious poison, sapping the vitality of our civilization, blighting woman and palsying humanity; therefore,
>
> Resolved, That we denounce these dogmas wherever they are enunciated, and we will withdraw our personal support for any organization so holding and teaching; and,
>
> Resolved, That we call upon the Christian ministry, as leaders of thought, to teach and enforce the fundamental idea of creation that man was made in the image of God, male and female, and given equal dominion over the earth, but none over each other. And further we invite their co-operation in securing the recognition of the cardinal point of our creed, that in true religion there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, but all are one (in Christ Jesus).[23]

These resolutions, originally written by Clara Bewick Colby, advocated the need for suffragists to deal with the religious conceptions

of women that underlay those of general society. In threatening a boycott and demanding that the clergy teach a more egalitarian version of women's place in creation, Stanton and her supporters were recognizing the power and influence of religious doctrine on female lives. After what must have been a raucous debate, with most members objecting to the Association's involvement in church dogma, the resolutions were turned down. Undeterred, Stanton herself drafted a similar statement for submission to the NWSA convention the next year. The Association's Executive Committee debated its merits.[24] One member stated, "we can not afford to antagonize the churches. Some of us are orthodox, and some of us are unorthodox, but this association is for suffrage and not for the discussion of religious dogmas". Another had mixed feelings,"I have no objection to sending missionaries to the churches asking them to pay attention to woman suffrage; but I do not think the churches are our greatest enemies". A smiliar view was expressed by an Indiana delegate:

> I think it is quite enough to undertake to change the national Constitution without undertaking to change the Bible. I heartily agree with Mrs. Stanton in her idea of sending delegates to church councils and convocations, but I do not sanction this resolution which starts out - "The greatest barrier to woman's emancipation is found in the superstitions of the church". That is enough in itself to turn the entire church, Catholic and Protestant, against us.

Still others supported Stanton's resolution: "The ministers falsely construe the Scriptures. We can overwhelm them with arguments for women suffrage - with Biblical arguments", "I am willing to stand by it. I have not found that it hurts the work". The Committee placed the matter before the assembled convention - where it was voted down again. It would seem that the Association's rank and file were unwilling to further antagonize their opponents or become involved in what they saw as religious dogma. Few appear to have understood the important connection between that dogma and their position as women.

When the two suffrage groups reunited in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) the more conservative element prevailed. Subsequent attempts to inject a more radical - and particularly anti-religious - aspect into the movement

failed. The uproar over The Woman's Bible was proof that the NAWSA was leaving theological debate behind and concentrating on the particular achievement of suffrage.

The Bible was a compendium of biblical selections dealing with women and included commentaries written by Stanton and a committee of women that included Colby and two ministers. Its first volume was published in 1895. In her introduction, Stanton cited misuse of scripture by the churches - not religion itself - as a major barrier to women's emancipation:

> These familiar texts are quoted by clergymen in their pulpits, by statesmen in the halls of legislation, by lawyers in the courts, and are echoed by the press of all civilized nations, and are accepted by woman herself as "The Word of God". So perverted is the religious element in her nature, that with faith and works she is the chief support of the church and clergy; the very powers that make her emancipation impossible.[25]

Stanton, in her own way, had identified the danger the Cult of True Womanhood posed to women. She saw the trends in religion and society that conspired to "pervert" woman's religious sense and convince her of the justice of her separate role. Woman's place on the pedestal should not be misconstrued; the pedestal was but a gilded cage. Stanton dismissed those who counselled caution, like the NAWSA: "Others say it is not politic to rouse religious opposition. This much-lauded policy is but another word for cowardice". She revealed much of her own view of the Bible and theology as well:

> The only points in which I differ from all ecclesiastical teaching are that I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God, I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic Code, or told the historians what they say he did about woman, for all the religions on the face of the earth degrade her, and so long as woman accepts the position they assign to her, her emancipation is impossible. Whatever the Bible may be made to do in Hebrew, or Greek, in plain English it does not exalt and dignify woman.[27]

For Stanton, "so long as woman accepts" meant that women could, once they chose to, bring their power to bear on changing their assigned place in society. This was rather heady stuff for most late 19th century women. Indeed, in 1896, a year after the appearance of The Woman's Bible, the NAWSA felt compelled to pass the following resolution:

> This association is non-sectarian, being composed of persons of all shades of religious opinion, and has no official connection with the so-called "Woman's Bible" or any theological publication.[28]

The cautious Association could not allow itself to be linked to such a strong critique of what was, for almost all of its members, a sacred area. It is possible that women who saw suffrage as growing out of the movement for Christian social reform and who lived in a society wherein the church celebrated womanhood, were unwilling to criticize what for many of them was a symbol of all that was good and moral in society. Such a move would also have undermined the purportedly divine basis of female importance and virtue which for many was part of their self-esteem.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton continued to stress the important relation of religion to women's emancipation for the rest of life. Many of her comments reflect a gift of deep perception. In 1898 the second volume of <u>The Woman's Bible</u> was published. After discussing the reaction to the previous volume, Stanton restated her position:

> The real difficulty in woman's case is that the whole foundation of the Christian religion rests on her temptation and man's fall, hence the necessity of a Redeemer and a plan of salvation. As the cause of this dire calamity, woman's degradation and subordination were made a necessity. If, however, we accept the Darwinian theory, that the race has been a gradual growth from the lower to a higher form of life, and that the story of the fall is a myth, we can exonerate the snake, emancipate the woman, and reconstruct a more rational religion for the nineteenth century, and thus escape all the perplexities of Jewish mythology as of no more importance than those of the Greek, Persian and Egyptian.[29]

Stanton's theories did not achieve wide acceptance during her lifetime, yet some eighty years later, a new generation of women would explore the links between religion and feminism and reach many of the same conclusions.

The last major issue to rend the suffrage movement was not religious in nature but rather reflected the movement's class-consciousness as well as the xenophobia of late 19th century America. Between 1890 and 1905 certain prominent suffrage leaders flirted with the concept of "educated suffrage" - the idea that the vote be granted only to

men and women literate in English.[30] For most this seems to have been a ploy to elicit support from middle and working class American males who were concerned with the economic effects of large-scale immigration. It was felt to be more expedient to urge the franchise for educated women, as a hedge against the involvement of the "ignorant" in government, a line of reasoning that American men could and would support. Was it not more logical, the educated suffrage supporters argued, to give the vote to loyal, responsible American women than to newly arrived citizens and the (irresponsible) poor. The idea numbered among it supporters Stanton, Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt, the president of NAWSA, whose membership was highly interested in the concept. Such a turn gave further cause for alarm among Jewish women who were already apprehensive over the movement's popular image as "anti-family", in addition to its anti-religious elements.[31]

Other prominent suffragists strongly opposed "educated suffrage". Stanton's own daughter Harriet Stanton Blach published an open letter taking her mother to task for supporting the idea.[32] Jane Addams, a disciple of Mary Baker Eddy and a pioneer in settlement house and social work with immigrants and the poor, attacked the concept which separated women in a time that required sisterhood.[33] Addams was another suffragist whose work would influence the Jewish women of her day.

By 1905 the support for "educated suffrage" was on the wane as suffragists ultimately began to realize that the movement had to represent the interests of all woman. The growing involvement of women in the labor movement and in social work helped to create a more truly represenative suffrage movement. Sisterhood had been building during the previous decade. Women's clubs understood the powerful potential of national organizations. Hence, in 1880, Frances Willard and Susan B. Anthony helped found the National Council of Women as an umbrella organization for various other national women's organizations including NAWSA and the WCTU.[34] In 1890 the General Federation of Women's Clubs was established, representing a vast array of local and national groups. By 1916 it numbered two million members. The spirit of women working together united other groups as well. The National Association of Colored Women and the National Council of Jewish Women were both founded in 1896.

Women's organizations, whether pro-suffrage or ambivalent, had become prominent fixtures on the national scene. Women of every class had become more involved in society whether following the dictates of Christian social reform, suffrage, social work or the labor movement. By the end of the First World War, womanpower as a political force had built up a visible momentum. Suffrage and other issues concerning women had bridged distinctions of class and sex. To a large extent, religious fervor had done much to bring this about. The originators of the concepts of "True" and "Virtuous Womanhood" would have been aghast had they seen what had developed from their early theories. Women's "place" had moved from the home to the world. The Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the vote, passed through Congress on June 4, 1919 and was ratified by the states on August 26,1920.

3) Women's Role in Organized Religion

For the Catholic woman in 19th and 20th century America the role model of the nun was a socially acceptable alternative to that of wife and mother. It can be seen that the social and cultural influences of the Cult of True Womanhood would combine with the image of the nun as an ultimately religious and spiritual being/woman devoting her life to nurturing and caring for others. The nun's life may well have offered Catholic women opportunities that were unavailable - or unacceptable - elsewhere. As Mary Evans has observed:

> Relieved of the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, they enjoyed the personal fulfillment that comes from opportunities for meaningful and useful work, education and economic independence, and lived in groups that gave them warm sisterly support and encouragement.[35]

For Catholic women so inclined, the nun's life offered a variety of experiences, respect and security that must have been very attractive, and for some outweighed the sacrifices such a commitment entailed. Women's position in the Catholic Church had not changed radically since the Middle Ages.

The option of convent life was not available to Protestant women, yet an acceptable alternative (or addition) to the wife/mother role

had sprung up early in the 19th century. The missionary movement offered Protestant women an opportunity for a life of religious service. While part of evangelical social reform called on women as superior moral entities to expand their home sensibilities to the larger world, resulting in such quasi-religious organizations as the WCTU, missionary work was sanctioned by the various official Protestant churches, each supporting its own workers. The movement for Christian social reform appears to have had a strong influence on Protestant women in connection with the missionary movements. Spreading the "good word" of Christianity was an intrinsic part of this movement for social reform and was also an element in the paternalistic view of white Western societies which saw non-Christians in the Americas, Asia and Africa as heathen children. The female-missionary-as-mother was a popular and, in that world-view, accurate image. Male church elders were also aware of the practical aspects of enlisting women as missionaries. In many foreign societies only strange <u>women</u>, not men, could approach other women who, once converted would influence their husbands and children and eventually bring about the Christianization of their society. The view of woman as the true foundation of society was exported and applied by the missionaries. American women were also motivated to some sort of involvement in the movements by stories of the desperate plight of women and children in other countries.[36] The Virtuous Woman as "mother to all" saw it as part of her Christian duty to protect and enlighten benighted foreign children as well as their mothers. The sacred position of womanhood had to be enshrined all over the world.

While women worked within the various church-run missionary societies, there was an impetus for semi-independent women's missionary organizations. Such a movement was met with less than enthusiastic approval and the first attempt to form an inter-denominational women's mission society failed in the face of stiff male opposition in 1834.[37] However, the first female society was established in 1861 and by 1882 there were sixteen principal groups. The movement's growth probably owed much to the fusion of Social Gospel and Cult that was affecting American women. The life of a missionary offered a potentially exciting

and fulfilling career for single women. It also offered attractive educational opportunities; whereas most seminaries were closed to women, the burgeoning number of missionary training schools welcomed female students and provided an in-depth religious education that was unavailable elsewhere. By 1916 there were close to sixty such institutions.[38] Missionary work was an opportunity for Protestant women to become an active part of their religion. In the women's missionary societies - which were represented in the National Council of Women - women learned to play the role of leader and organizer. They were a part of the general movement of "respectable feminism" of the late 1800s, sharing and participating in its growth.

As a result of women's involvement in the missionary movement, the question was soon raised concerning the ordination of women as clergy. The positon of the minister in the various Protestant denominations had a tremendous effect on the female ordination question. For one wing of Protestantism - Disciples of Christ, Baptist, Congregational, Reformed, Methodist and Presbyterian - ordination was seen as a "matter of practicality and not doctrine". For Lutheranism on the other hand, the ministry was a "mediating agency". To Episcopalians as well as to Roman Catholics - the priest was a actual representation of the Christ.[39] The denominations therefore dealt with the question differently. The Lutherans consecrated women as church workers as early as 1849 but the idea did not catch on until 1884.[40]

A Methodist Conference in 1880, despite the denomination's view of clergy, refused to admit women to the office of deacon - even though as missionaries they performed most of the same duties in the field. The Methodists finally began to train and ordain deaconesses in 1888, with the Episcopalians following suit. These women served mainly as nurses and social workers. Yet the nun-like aspect of the office - uniform and role - was not welcome in a time of virulent anti-Catholicism among Protestants, hence the order was never very popular.[41]

Though the seminaries disapproved, some women did attend and graduate from ministerial programs without support from the churches. Ordination was possible for such women, yet it was an empty title as pulpits were unavailable to them.[42] An interdenominational Women's Ministerial Conference was established in 1882 as a support group,

albeit one with a powerless voice.[43]

The experience of Protestant women seeking ordination was very different from that of Reform Jewish women during this period. While both could hearken back to female figures in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, Christian women had the added historical heritage of deaconesses and nuns as models of women's official role in the church. The office of deaconess faded by the Middle Ages, yet while the Reformation did away with the nunnery, it increased the personal religious role of Protestant women. Their activity as teachers and, in some cases, preachers, had also, to some extent, prepared people by accustoming them to a degree of female expertise and leadership. The acceptance of female ministers, while bitterly difficult in most cases, was at least made easier and less radical because of these related precedents.

Jewish women had no such female thread in their history. While throughout the ages Jewish women might have been active in commerce, they were very rarely, if ever, entrusted with comprehensive knowledge of scripture or Jewish law. Teaching and preaching were almost exclusively male roles. Hence, while there was some agitation among Protestant women for a place in the clergy by the middle of the 19th century, Jewish women only began speaking of such a possibility in the 1890s. When this finally did occur, Jewish women became interested in female Christian ministers, if not directly as role models, then as symbols of women's possibilities. The presence of female Christian clergy raised consciousness, and pointed the way for some - particularly Reform - Jewish women. At an organizational meeting for the Jewish Women's Congress in Chicago in the spring of 1893, a Jewish periodical noted that "The Rev. Augusta Chapin of the Universalist Church spoke of the need of more women in the pulpit".[44] A Rev. Ella E. Bartlett of St. Louis contributed an article to <u>The American Jewess</u> in 1895, entitled "Ideal Home Life".[45] Yet while there were enough liberal Christian denominations so that by the turn of the century a number of female clergy had been ordained, Judaism's most liberal branch, Reform, still hesitated, bound by the traditions and customs that kept the majority of both sexes from seriously considering the possibility of women as rabbis.

Following the turn of the century, the general mission societies of each Christian denomination began to swallow up many of the women's societies.[46] Similarly, the various seminaries began to merge with the once independent missionary schools. On the one hand, these moves could be seen as part of a move for more efficient organization and a spirit of equality and co-operation - women did fill many high positions in the newly united mission societies. This was not the case in the seminaries however, where women did not enjoy the places they had held in their own institutions. Many women were angered by these moves. Presbyterianism was so rocked by dissension that a study was commissioned to investigate "Causes of Unrest Among Women of the Church". Publishing their findingsin 1927, the study's female authors noted:

> Among thinking women there arose a serious question as to whether their place of service could longer be found in the church when a great organization (the missionary organization) which they had built could be destroyed by vote of male members of the church without there seeming to arise in the mind of the latter any question as to the justice, wisdom and fairness of their actions.[47]

The achievement of suffrage and the growing professionalization of the early 1900s contributed to a spirit of re-evaluation of women's role in the churches. Yet further substantial change would only come about in later decades. While religion had motivated many women to go out into the world to fight for reform and their own rights as female citizens, organized religion itself was only slowly showing the first signs of its own coming to grips with its most numerous membership.

II Reform Judaism and the Jewish Woman

The changing religious role of the Reform Jewish woman in the period of classical Reform cannot be studied in a vacuum. Almost every influence at work on Christian women and general American society manifested itself in some way among Jews of both sexes. Perhaps the most influential concept that affected the Jewish woman's view of herself, as well as the view held of her by Jewish men, Reform or Orthodox, was that of the Cult of True Womanhood. The Cult had a profound affect on the Reformers and greatly influenced their thinking on the proper role of women within Judaism. Other movements also

affected both the Reform movement and Jewish women in general. Evangelical Protestantism's emphasis on social reform fitted well with the Reformers' concept of a "prophetic religion" that could lead to the creation of a better world. When Christian social activism urged the True Women to make the world her "larger home", Jewish woman were encourgged to take a broader interest in their Jewish world. The growing Social Gospel organized women for the improvement of society; Reform Judaism attempted to tap its female resources to aid in the creation of American Judaism.

This section will be presented in two major parts. The first will examine the changing role of women within Reform from the arrival of Isaac Mayer Wise up until the East European Jewish immigration of the 1880s. The last portion will deal with the effects of that immigration, coupled with the larger influences of the women's movement, through the early 20th century.

1) <u>The Jewish Woman and the Development of American Reform</u>

i) The Cult of True Womanhood and the Jewish Woman

Returning from an examination of students from Charleston's Orthodox congregational school in 1845, an observer enthused over the dedication of the institution's directresses and teachers:

> With a heart gushing with grateful emotions (as a parent of one of the pupils), we exclaim, "powerful and beautiful is thy influence, O woman!" To stand forth as the champion of religion and morality, is her appropriate sphere. No aim or object can be more noble or more worthy of an enlightened Jewish female, than that which seeks to advance the character of Israel by inculcating these lessons of wisdom and piety.[48]

The Cult of True Womanhood had found ready acceptance among American Jews by the middle of the 19th century. The periodical literature of the time reveals a Jewish woman firmly set upon a pedestal similar to that occupied by the Christian woman. Just as the elevation of womanhood by the Cult represented a turnabout in Christian thinking, for Jews it was also a change. While Jewish ritual law undoubtedly protected women in the area of marriage and divorce by guaranteeing ownership of dowry, other strands of halacha were severely limiting and, in fact, repressive.

The exemption of woman from time-bound commandments in defference to her important domestic role, had originally been a "liberating" move. Centuries of custom however, had ossified this area of Jewish law into a matter of exclusion, to the point that the Jewish woman had lost any place she may have once had in religious ritual. While limited in her public religious role, the Jewish woman was still celebrated as the moving spirit of faith within the home as wife and mother. In terms of religious maturity, however, Jewish tradition as developed through the halacha viewed women as spiritual minors. In embracing the image of Virtuous Womanhood as presented by the 19th century Cult in America, Jews had to face a contradiction. The Cult held women up as the more religiously inclined sex, a view not at all in consonance with Jewish tradition.

What permitted this apparently contradictory accommodation? Several factors seem to have contributed to a change in Jewish women's religious status. A major element was the economic reality of life in America. To a large extent, the involvement of Jewish men in making a living caused them to relinquish their position as the major religious instructors of their children. Sabbath observance was difficult in a situation that demanded work on Saturday. As Jewish men took on the morality of the marketplace they more and more left religious morality to be upheld by women, as had their Christian neighbours. Just as Christian moralists condemned the poor church attendance of men. Jewish writers complained that "The young Jewess attends service at the sanctuary, and the young Jew attends service at the counting house".[49]

In addition to this, American Jewry was by no means as learned in things Jewish as was the European community. There were, at mid-century, few rabbis and fewer scholars in the United States. Jewish education suffered from a shortage of knowledgeable teachers as well as from being given a lower priority among struggling immigrants (though this latter factor changed with the attainment of economic stability).

With few reliable professionals available and with their men involved in making a living, the women of the new Jewish middle class began to expand the boundaries of the philanthropic work that was theirs into the realm of Jewish education. As we have seen, women founded, directed and taught in schools. The involvement of Jewish women in

the education of Jewish children received support from the Cult-image itself as well as from the involvement of Christian women in the Sunday school movement. While it was possible for Jewish women to explore the gray areas of education wherein sex-dictated responsibility was not clearly spelled out, they still remained in they synagogue's woman's gallery, unable to participate equally in the service. It is difficult to say whether or not women were unhappy with their lot in terms of their lack of a public religious role. Unaware of the possibility of an alternative, they accepted their traditionally assigned place, simply as part of the way things were.

However, in accepting American culture and the Cult's adoration of womanhood, and in the involvement of Jewish women in Jewish education, a small but not insignificant step was taken in preparing the way for major changes in the role of Jewish women.

ii) Isaac Mayer Wise - reform, Reform and the Jewish woman

Many years after his arrival in America in 1846, Isaac Mayer Wise gave this candid portrayal of his early days as rabbi in Albany, New York:

> The reforming spirit was innate in me; it was my foremost characteristic. In addition to this, I was an enthusiast on the subjects of America and freedom, and was convinced that everyone thought and felt just as I did. Consequently I could begin at once to reform and to improve the world. I vented my views awkwardly and unreservedly . . .[50]

As a young preacher in Radnitz, Bohemia, Wise had discovered the world of Wissenschaft des Judentums and had begun to question his own traditional Jewish assumptions. In July 1845 he travelled to Frankfurt to visit the rabbinical conference held there. His exposure to the pioneers of German Reform profoundly affected his own developing views. No record exists of Wise's attendance at the debates of the assembly, and we can only guess at what he thought of the discussions concerning women's rights. But he may well have been impressed by what he had seen and heard, for he soon grew tired of Radnitz and the next year left for America, convinced that Reform was the Jewish way of the future. Elected rabbi in Albany, he did indeed "begin at once to reform and improve".

Throughout Wise's long and distinguished career he was often the foremost champion of the Jewish woman, urging the expansion of her role inside and outside the synagogue. His first reform in this area came in 1847 when he introduced a mixed choir of older schoolchildren at a Friday evening Shabbat service. Apparently there was no opposition to the choir's mixing of sexes,nor to the singing in the synagogue of young women from the congregation's membership. However, the episode did bring a sharp rebuke from the editor of The Occident, Isaac Lesser.[51] In the pages of his journal Leeser defended traditional Judaism, yet was critical of American Jewry's failings, particularly in the area of education. He was a friend and supporter of Rebecca Gratz and of the involvement of Jewish women in religious education. For many years Leeser and Wise were the champions of their respective points of view, duelling often over ideas of reform in the pages of their publications. The verbal war over women in a synagogue choir would come to a head some years later, when Wise introduced a mixed choir into his Cincinnati congregation, as will be discussed below.

A few years after this first innovation, another situation involving the choir did embroil Wise's Albany congregation. The choir had grown in size and there was no longer any room for it on the main floor of the building. "Besides, the girls did not wish to sit any longer among the men and we had to make suitable provision for them".[52] What this indicates is not altogether clear. The young women, older schoolchildren in reality, may have felt uncomfortable away from the traditional place of women in the gallery. Their objection may or may not have been due to "religious" feelings. Yet the solution, to place the choir in a loft built onto the front of the women's gallery did not raise an objection from the male members of the choir. Either they were not as sensitive about tradition as the female members or the traditional aspect was not really an issue. Perhaps the designation and construction of a special, sexually neutral section for the choir defused any objection to mixed seating among the community at large. Whatever the reason, the choir and synagogue were satisfied. Not so the congregation's women. The choir's new position meant that the women who occuppied the gallery's front row could not see - or more importantly, be seen.

As Wise relates:

> A front seat in the first row of the gallery was equivalent, in the eyes of every woman, to her jewelry and her finest clothes...the sign of wealth and dignity, a post of honor. A woman who occupied a front seat was an aristocrat, a prominent personage, a distinguished noblewoman in Jewry.[53]

That these women were passionately outraged gives an interesting insight into the self-image of women in the period's Jewish communities. In part it was a matter of community status and prestige, whereby women of wealthy and important families got the best seats. More revealing may be the importance of the front row as the closest women could get to being actively involved in the service. The woman in the front row was <u>almost</u> like a man in proximity to the center of action. Another consideration that comes up again and again in 19th century Jewish periodical literature is the fact that for many, men and women, coming to synagogue was a social occasion to which one wore one's finest clothes with a desire to be seen by others. Most likely a potent combination of these reasons led to the loud outcry against the innovation. A new place was found for the choir. It is instructive to note that at no time was objection made to the mixed choir per se. This does not appear to have been a real issue for the members of the congregation.

Women were notably interested in what Wise had to say and he mentions their attentions after a sermon in Charleston.[54] Were they attracted by Wise's espousal of Reform philosophy? Some undoubtedly were. For others, a visiting speaker was an exciting relief from their often tedious lives. One woman who was much taken with Wise, becoming a sort of mentor and conscience to him, was the woman known simply as "Mrs.P." in his <u>Reminiscences</u>. This fascinating woman saw Wise's Reform ideas as the future path of Judaism in America and she attempted to aid him in his efforts. There were obviously educated, interested Jewish women to whom Reform ideas appealed.

Wise's next major foray on behalf of Jewish women took place in 1851 with the dedication of a new reformist congregation in Albany, Anshe Emeth, to which he and his supporters had gone. The synagogue building had been a church with family pews. Some discussion was held

about retaining them and finally "the congregation resolved unanimously" that they should remain. Wise later wrote:

> This was an important step, which was severely condemned at the time. The Jewish woman had been treated almost as a stranger in the synagogue; she had been kept at a distance, and had been excluded from all participation in the life of the congregation, had been relegated to the gallery, even as was the negro in Southern churches. The emancipation of the Jewish woman was begun in Albany, by having Jewish girls sing in the choir, and this beginning was reinforced by the introduction of family pews.[55]

Mixed seating was indeed a bold step. Yet it seems it was popular among the laity of Wise's congregation. For some Jews, as had been the case in Germany, separate seating was a mark of Judaism's oriental nature, something that "enlightened American Jews" were eager to do away with. In the United States, the traditional seating conflicted with the Cult of True Womanhood's emphasis on the superior spirituality of women and their importance in the family - symbolically underlined perhaps, by the family pew. Jews were also quite probably attracted by the simple idea of families sitting together at services. Wise was right in seeing it as an "important step"; it was a real reform which brought women literally onto the same level as men. They were now part of the service, as Wise mentioned. It was a beginning. The symbolic use of the black/slavery image was also commonly employed by some reformers when comparing the situation of Jewish women under the halacha. In a similar way, it was a popular image among early abolitionist-suffragists who likened women's position to that of slavery.

The "severe condemnation" of mixed seating came from orthodox rabbis, and, of course, from Isaac Leeser, who commented that the speedy growth of the new congregation was "worth of imitation". However, he objected to families sitting together in pews: "Our readers will easily recognize in this another reform of the Doctor's, one by no means to be commended".[56]

The controversy over a mixed choir boiled up again when Wise introduced a choir including "a number of young girls" into his Cincinnati congregation, Bene Jeshrun, in 1854. The synagogue had attempted to establish a choir - whether mixed or not is unclear - before Wise's arrival, though its failure to do so seems to have been due to a lack of organization rather than objection to the choir idea.[57]

When Wise's choir first took part in a service, its debut was marked by acclaim. No one in the congregation apparently objected to the mixing of sexes therein, or to the sound of female voices during the service.

Wise had started his own periodical, The Israelite, that same year, and in 1855 flung down the gauntlet in two articles answering the question: "Does the Canon Law permit Ladies to sing in the Synagogue?":

> The above question is agitated again by our hyper-orthodox friends to whom the standard maxim of orthodoxy, 'The custom of Israel is Law' is not orthodox enough; for if so, they would be obliged to admit that ladies sing in our most respectable synagogues . . .

Was it indeed a widespread practice as Wise seems to indicate, or is he referring to his two congregations as "our most respectable synagogues?" In the same article he writes:

> We admitted nine years ago ladies into the synagogue choir of Albany, N.Y., and when the rabbis of London wrote to New York on the dedication of the Wooster Street synagogue, that the ladies should not be admitted to the synagogue choir, we did not know whether to pity their ignorance . . .[58]

It would seem therefore, that at least some congregations other than Wise's were willing to experiment with mixed choirs - to the point of bringing down the wrath of rabbis across the Atlantic. In 1852, two years before Wise's arrival in Cincinnati, the other congregation in that city, Bene Israel, decided after much discussion to permit a mixed choir.[59] That the Londoners were notified indicates that there was opposition to the move. Yet, if there were indeed a climate of opinion among Jews that did not view the introduction of a mixed choir as an event of earth-shattering magnitude, it would explain the relative ease with which Wise accomplished these reforms. His congregations did not seem to object, nor apparently, did many members of the Wooster Street synagogue in New York. One must ask, therefore, if the issue was really one of religious emancipation of women or aesthetics? In his second piece on the question Wise wrote:

> It is most desirable and recommendable, that our ladies should take an active part in synagogue music and divine service. Let them add to the devotion of the heart, the solemnity of the ceremonies, and the decorum in the divine place of worship. Let them consider themselves bound in duty to participate in the worship of the Almighty, and the edification of the human heart. Let the daughters of Israel stand high to our God, and utter His praise and His glory with a pure, devout and pious heart, as our mothers, Miriam, Deborah and the daughters of the Levites did in days of yore. We have long enough sung metaphysics and prayed logic, let heart and sentiment come into our liturgy by song, and music, by female voice and female heart.[60]

We can see Wise balancing two of the Reformers' major objectives, decorum and aesthetics in the service, with an enlarged, more "equal" role for women. It seems that he had both in mind, though we may posit that aesthetics was the means of entry for women into synagogue choirs. Wise does go on to say, however, that women should feel "bound in duty" to participate in what had been a strictly male preserve - the service itself. We may recall similar calls for women to see their "duty" in the German rabbinical conferences. What did this "duty of participation" entail in the mind of Wise and the others? Not leadership such as reading from the pulpit or being called to the Torah, but being present, reading along in their service with the men, joining the choir and, in some places, sitting with the men. Wise also reveals a view of women that is typically Victorian and Cult-approved: that "heart and sentiment" would come into the service through "the female voice and the female heart".

What Wise had done in these articles was to apply Reform theories of halachic development to a particular question. Thus he traced the talmudic passage (Berachot 24a/Kiddushin 7a) which implies that the voice of woman is seductive and arouses "impure affections" to show that it is only one opinion, and that the thrust of halachic opinion would, on the contrary, seem to permit women's participation. Such an exercise was typical of early Reform when it was seen as important to prove a basis for reform in the halacha itself. Wise's invocation of biblical precedent is also typical - "Miriam, Deborah, and the daughters of the Levites". Reform urged a return to a pure, ethical Judaism

unencumbered by what it supporters saw as the "orientalism" alien to Judaism inherent in much of the traditional literature. Some were willing to place the blame for this "corruption" on the close proximity of Jews to the lands where Islam developed, a low opinion of that religion perhaps developing by osmosis in the predominantly Christian culture of Western Europe and America.

Wise had challenged "the Rabbis of London and our opponents in the United States" to reject his argument and noted their "queer notion" of keeping women from singing. Several months later a series of articles appeared in The Occident, from the pen of S. Jacobs, "To the Editor of the Israelite". Jacobs disputes Wise's use and interpretation of the texts and gives an indication of the view of women held by the more traditional-minded Jews of the time:

> One thing is nevertheless certain, that there is an attractive power in the dulcet, notes of dear woman's voice, exercising an influence over man altogether different from that produced by the sterner voice of man. This influence may be for good or for evil. This will, of course, depend a great deal upon the character and disposition of those on whom it is exerted. The Synagogue, however, should be as free as possible from any influences but those which are directed and calculated to awaken a sense of humility, and a devout and solemn consciousness that we are standing in the august and mighty presence of our Father in heaven.[61]

In this, Jacobs continues a line of thought evident in the halacha, and in the Talmudic passages in question (Berachot 24a/Kiddushin 7a), which blame male lust on the women. It is apparent that such an idea does not fit very well with the pure moral superiority in things spiritual of the female according to the Cult of True Womanhood. It can be seen that, in religious matters, orthodox Jews rejected the Cult view of woman though they accepted it in areas of their lives outside the synagogue. They were willing to live with this apparent contradiction - though it is doubtful that they saw it as such.

Jacobs offers a serious critique of the apparent Reform love affair with aesthetics. He worries that "it is now fast converting our places of 'public worship' into the concert room, where women are to be the 'prima donnas', and men are to be entertained with their delicious warblings".[67] This is indeed a valid criticism - Wise's own descriptions of the choir's contributions make those seem more like a concert

than part of a worship service. Such conflicts over the role of the choir have continued in many religious circles to the present day. One is struck by Jacobs' concern that women would be center-stage, with men left as mere observers. This may have been a real fear on th part of the orthodox, who were concerned with maintaining male hegemony in the religious sphere.

Neither side in the dispute swayed the other, nor was that really the point of such debate. These literary duels were written to win over the Jewish reader to the cause of Reform or Orthodoxy. It is an interesting footnote to the early reforms of Wise on behalf of women that when his Cincinnati congregation undertook extensive renovations including the addition of an organ and seats in 1855, there was no mention of the possibility of the institution of family pews. In light of this, the "bold step" in Albany seems to have been as much a matter of economics - to avoid removal and rearrangement of the seating - as it was a blow for the emancipation of Jewish women. It may also be that the Cincinnati congregation was far more conservative in this regard than Wise's own Albany splinter-group. Though they cheered on many other of Wise's reforms, he may have been enough of a politician to realize that such an innovation would not receive widespread support. The congregation did eventually institute mixed seating when it moved into a new building in 1863.

It is certainly clear that Wise considered improving and enlarging the scope of Jewish women's activities and religious role to be a central part of his Reform ideas. A range of reasoning colored the Reformers' view of female religious emancipation in America, as it did in Germany. Some viewed Jewish women's religious equality as a blow against orientalism, a "purifying" of Judaism. For some this may have been coupled with a wish to consciously imitate "American" culture - part of which was a Christian element - which at this period exalted womanhood. Yet for Wise, and for many others, the expansion of woman's religious role within Judaism was a matter of social justice with which Reform would increasingly identify. It was the women's <u>religious</u> role that ultimately concerned them as a religious movement. Hence when most spoke of female "equality" they usually referred to women's place and participation in the synagogue. Jewish women were

often pictured as following their male co-religionists on the path of reform. The Jewish woman had been doubly restricted, as a Jew and as a Jewish woman. The Enlightenment had taken care of the former restriction. Reform would remove the latter. Later in the 19th century a prominent Reform rabbi would address Jewish women:

> The history of the Jew will be repeated in the record which the Jewess is about making for herself . . . She shared the fate of every adherent of Judaism, but in addition she was under the despotism of home Orientalism, sanctioned by unyielding religious rigorism . . . Today, the Synagogue has ceased looking Eastward. Orientalism in thought, views and symbols gleans but a romantic tribute in the reconstructed and broadened Temple of Israel's God. Into Western life the Jew has thrown himself . . . And the Jewess without hesitation follows her brother's lead. She has turned her eyes Westward.[63]

Certain factors may have contributed to the Jewish woman's religious emancipation proceeding on a broader and swifter scale in America than in Germany. As was mentioned earlier, the more democratic atmosphere of the United States was in itself conducive to experimentation and change. For Reformers, this was no doubt aided and abetted by the separation of church and state. There was no official Jewish representative to the government, no Jewish religious establishment that might be understood as <u>the</u> practitioners of Judaism or who, backed by government authority, might dictate patterns of observance. The small number of rabbis, geographically scattered, with none pre-eminent politically, gave the Reform-minded the freedom to pursue their own religious ideas.

Reform momentum continued to build before the Civil War. In 1855 a Rabbinical Conference was convened in Cleveland mainly upon the instigation of Wise and others sympathetic to Reform. The discussions there were broadly theological as Reform and Orthodox supporters debated the place and influence of the halacha. The question of women's role does not appear to have been brought up. The arrival of David Einhorn that same year to take a position as rabbi in Baltimore, and that of Samuel Adler in 1857 to be rabbi of Temple Emanuel in New York brought two major German Reformers to the United States. Both men had been pre-eminent among the European Reformers on the issue

of Jewish women's equality. They had presented a lengthly paper at the Breslau Conference in 1846 urging an expanded and deepened role for women in Judaism, and their influence would be felt at the upcoming Philadelphia Conference of 1869.

Notwithstanding debate over reforms such as mixed choirs and family pews, the main subject of discussion in antebellum progressive Jewish arenas was the quality of female religious educaton. Leeser, certainly a "progressive" on this issue, filled the columns of his journal with applause for female educators involved in running Jewish schools, and in those same pages he also urged an end to what seems to have been a still prevalent custom of providing Jewish girls with an inferior Jewish educaion:

> There appears to be an indifference, or rather a total carelessness in regard to the religious educaton of females, even amongst persons who are otherwise religiously inclined. Why such a state of things should exist, we cannot even conjecture. Is a woman a less responsible being than a man? Is it not the mother from whom the child receives its first ideas, thoughts and impressions? Parents beware! How you trifle with the felicity of your daughters. Let them be taught to be at home in the Synagogue, as well as in the drawing-room, and then (but not till then) you will have done your duty . . . "Grace is an illusion, beauty is vanity. The woman who feareth the Lord, she alone is praiseworthy."[64]

For Leeser, women's education was primarily essential for their role as mother. Women should be "at home in the Synagogue", but there, they were to pay the same deference to their men as they did at home. Leeser advocated no change in women's religious role or "place", but rather sought the enrichment of their present situation.

As was the case in Germany, much of the idle time of the secularly educated daughters of financially successful Jewish homes was taken up with the reading of popular romantic novels. Many Jewish spokesmen fulminated against this - especially when it took place on the Sabbath - and some used it as an argument for a more serious approach to a Jewish education for females. The assimilationist dangers of a Jewishly ignorant female sex enamoured of popular American culture (and its Christian symbolism) were clearly recognized by many

Jewish leaders. Leeser wrote:

> Those men therefore will be benefactors to our people, who would compose books which from their intrinsic value, would become the Sabbath reading of our females, and banish, at least for that sacred day, the baneful habit of indulging in the perusal of the countless mass of silly romances, which are constantly following each other without end, all breathing more or less the same sickly sentimentality and leading to no other result than vitiating the taste, and weakening the religious sentiment which is so a great an ornament to human nature.[65]

Women and men read novels for many of the same reasons they still do. Excitement, adventure, romance and the vicarious living of another person's life served as an escape from lives that usually contained little enough diversion and much monotony. Jewish women doubtless felt these same attractions, and as they were hardly equipped by their education or community custom to deal with the classics of Jewish literature, popular novels were practically all they had for common diversion.

In the pages of the Israelite Wise seems to have attempted to remedy this somewhat. For many years the Israelite carried novels - many written by Wise himself - in serial form. What makes these significant is their Jewish content, that would hopefully strike a responsive chord within the reader and thus help to combat assimilation. More important for our study is the position of women projected in them. For the most part the female characters were suffused with the romantic properties of the day which closely followed the mold of the Virtuous Woman. Yet in some instances the female characters appear to have been designed as role models for more active Jewish women. In this tale "The Last Struggle of the Nation; or Rabbi Akiba and His Time" of 1856, Wise used the popular idiom of the historical novel to introduce heroic, active female figures. For the story of Bar Kochba's rebellion against Rome, Wise found, "I had to invent female characters. I gave Bar Kochba a heroic wife, and introduced Beruriah as her foster-daughter. She was, as may be imagined, Meir's beloved. I gave Rabbi Aqiba also a heroic daughter, who spurns the love of Acher, and drives him to despair".[66] Such a powerful assembly of Jewish womanhood may well have been a welcome change from

the often obviously Christian heroines of the popular romances. Jewish women could identify with them - and reinforce their Jewishness at the same time. The characters naturally have didactic functions as well: sacrifice for and involvement with one's people and, in the case of Aqiba's daughter who spurns the craven apostate Acher, a strong dose of anti-assimilation/intermarriage propaganda.[67]

Such ventures were hardly the antidote to the sorry state of female religious education. Wise spelled out the problem, and a solution, in an 1858 editorial entitled, "We Need a Female College".[68] He understood the problems of identity faced by Jewish students in the various female academies and colleges founded by Christian religious societies. At such institutions ministers exercised great influence on student affairs and students were expected to attend chapel services. To Wise, and others not necessarily in the Reform camp, such exposure, with little or no Jewish education to offset or complement it, increased the danger of assimilation among those people who should be part of the future of Judaism. Wise differed with those who did not agree with the Reform view of full religious emancipation for women. Those "conservatives", he said, declare that for women learning just enough Hebrew to follow the prayers is sufficient "to understand is out of the question". Wise used the issue to set forth the Reform view of women's role in Judaism contrary to that of the "conservatives":

> True to inherited Oriental principles, they exclude women from all religious communion, do not count them as persons of age in public worship (to Minyan), or in family devotion (to Mezuman, Kiddush and Habdalah); they insult every morning their mothers, daughters and sisters by saying the prayer "Blessed art thou Lord our God, King of the Universe, that thou hast not made me a woman . . .

They further disallow the female voice from being heard during divine worship, treating women as "if it was the destiny of the female to live in the harem". Wise noted the discrepancy between the orthodox view of women in general society and in religion:

> The rabbinical votaries . . . admit that the position of women has changed for the better in practical life; in religion, however, they would authorize no change. They therefore admit that the females must receive a good education for all practical purposes; but in Religion it is indifferent what our daughters know or feel; as they are after all mere cyphers in religious life.

"The friends of progress think quite differently on this subject", declares Wise. As a spokesman for those "friends", Wise reveals the linkeage between Reform ideas and the contemporary Cult view of womanhood that could not occur in more orthodox circles. Women, as the more spiritual sex, need religion more than men, and Wise quotes "a modern writer" who makes this clear:

> A man without some sort of religion is at best a poor reprobate, the football of destiny with no tie linking him to infinity, and to the wondrous eternity that is begun within; but a woman without it is even worse - a flame without heat, a rainbow without color, a flower without perfume . . .

As if this weren't enough, Wise continues, the religious education of Jewish youth depends on their mother who must know how to instruct them. But for Wise and other Reformers, this is not the sole reason for improved female education as it seems to be for Leeser. The recognition of women as exercising a "civilizing" influence on men is apparent when Wise says furthermore that "our own divine service is so destitute of refined sentiments, because women have been excluded from it in a very improper way". The remedy to all this would be "a female academy, where the daughters of Israel would be offered an opportunity to finish their education, and have the benefit of a thorough and enlightened religious instruction". This last sentence leaves no doubt as to which stream of Judaism Wise felt essential to the "daughters of Israel". The educational center that he envisaged proved to be an impossibility in the polarized Jewish community of the years before the Civil War. Wise would renew his call years later but the project never came about.

Reform ideas were having an effect on American Jewish congregations. A series of articles in the Occident in the autumn of 1860 offer an insight into the path Reform took in some congregations with respect to female emancipation and the reaction to it. Leeser had been concerned aboutthe Reform tendencies of one rabbi, Dr. Elcan Cohn, who had been rabbi after Wise in Albany and was now serving Emanuel Congregation in San Francisco. In the September 13 issue, Leeser noted:

> We are deeply pained to learn that our apprehensions of the probable course of Dr. Cohn have been verified. He has proposed the adoption of the New York Temple prayer book and the seating of men and women together in the Synagogue, and what is more the proposal was adopted at the largest meeting of Israelites ever held in San Francisco, nearly two hundred members being present.[69]

It is obvious that Leeser was particularly upset by the fact that the majority of San Francisco Jewry approved of Cohn's reforms. In the November 15 issue, Leeser began an article on the congregation with a strong attack on Reform, Cohn and the San Francisco Synagogue. He included the observations of an informant who advised him that:

> On Sabbath Vayelech, Dr. Cohn preached on Deut. xxxi. 12: "assemble the people, the men, the women, and the little ones," & c., urging therefrom, that men, women, girls, & c., are not only allowed to unite and hear the word of the Lord, but they are bound to do so. He complained of our religion as having for such a length of time excluded women from so many privileges to which they are justly entitled, but that the time has come when this evil ought to be remedied. The ladies were placed in so exalted a position by the preacher, that they were themselves even taken by surprise, as their greatness was never before so greatly appreciated by them.[70]

Leeser adds:

> We presume the tendency of the oration was to excuse the seating of the sexes together in the Synagogue. In the Beth-El-Emeth of Philadelphia, the minister (Leeser!) chose lately the same sermon text as a subject of his discourse; but he used it to exhort the ladies, that if they wished to be equal to the men in religious matters, and have a proper benefit from attending places of worship, they must qualify themselves by an endeavor to become acquainted with their duties, and be fitted thereby to be trainers of the young in all that the Lord has commanded.

Differing sermonic interpretation of the same Biblical verse reveals the attitudes of Reform and "Orthodoxy" toward women's religious role. Again Leeser, as spokeman for the more traditional view - though his ideas would seem to place him in the ranks of the present-day Conservative movement - stresses women's true religious role as "trainers of the young". It appears that he conceives of female religious equality in terms of a system of separate but "equal" spheres.

Such a concept was an element within the Cult of True Womanhood, which told women that they, as mothers/homemakers were equal to (even, at times, superior to) their working men. This woman-home man-work dichotomy may have found a sympathetic echo among those who wished to retain the traditional Jewish religious division wherein woman's role was primarily focussed on the home. She concerned herself with the maintenance of the laws of ritual purity pertaining to food (kashrut) and family (attending the mikveh), and may have given elementary instruction to the young. The male religious role was expressed in synagogue attendance and study. Leeser, representing a more "liberal" approach within the traditional framework, advocated an expansion of woman's role, whereby she would take greater responsibility for the religious training of the young. This principle of granting elasticity to the perimeters of woman's sphere was quite possibly a matter of practicality. The demands of making a living in 19th century America took many Jewish men away from their traditional role as teacher to their children. It was not a drastic change for women to assume that role, as in similar fashion women could expand their synagogue charities into Benevolent Societies and other philanthropies. Combining the elements of family education and community philanthropy led women to becoming active in Jewish "Sabbath Schools", these roles remaining well within the traditional female sphere - simply expanded.

Reform prided itself partly on inviting women to join men in a more or less "common" religious sphere. For the Reformers the element of the Cult of True Womanhood that best fit their philosophy was its celebration of women as superior moral and religious beings, or at least <u>equally</u> able to comprehend morality and religion. The worship of Womanhood easily combined with Reform's anti-oriental view of the halacha: women are men's equals (at least), therefore anything that degrades women is wrong (or old-fashioned, or oriental). Thus Reform, in purging Judaism of its "orientalism" will free women. That freedom, however, had its own peculiar limits, as did women's freedom within the Cult. The Virtuous Woman was for decades exalted on and limited to her pedestal. The Reform Jewish Woman was "equal" to men within Reform but it was not for many years that she could independently hold congregational membership or sit on its board, and many more years before she could become a rabbi.

Despite the opposition of Leeser and others, The Reform movement and specific reforms were often welcomed by congregations. On November 22, 1860, the Occident ran the report of the San Francisco congregation's president "in order that people may see how the same thing can be viewed by different parties".[71] The president gave a glowing account of the congregation's growth, giving much credit to the "noble-hearted, learned, and eloquent divine . . . Rev. Elcan Cohn". His report tells us of yet another reform affecting women, which was apparently well-received:

> The ladies who kindly volunteered to sing in the choir, I thank, and would recommend suitable presents should be given and presented for the ready manner and ways they have always assisted us in beautifying our mode of worship, and I think they . . . merit your approbation.

A year before his death Isaac Leeser wrote an article under the title "Education", lamenting its sorry state and suggesting that many of the most perplexing problems of Jewish education were made worse by Reform.[77] He mentioned the hesitancy of congregations to follow the reforms proposed by Wise and Einhorn, yet "still they shout for progress and its leaders! For what? We cannot answer; unless it be that the attractions of music and choir and the German or English language are too great to be resisted". The support of women for the Reform movement seems to have been notable, for Leeser held them highly responsible for the unhappy situation of Judaism as he saw it:

> They are hugely tickled with the respect paid to women's rights, or the apparent equality with the men which the moderns concede to them; and for this, if for no other reason, they join in the shout of progress, not knowing, poor things, that with its advance much of the ancient chastity and retiringness of the old women of Israel have evaporated into thin air, and that they are the actual losers in the estimation they were formerly held at home, as wives, mothers, daughters, friends, the true characters in which women should excel. Had they, therefore, a truly religious education, would they not see their proper position in Judaism? Would they not prefer their solid empire of the home, where they can truly rule in the affection of their parents, husbands, brothers, friends? Has progress brought them any good? We think not, and later experience will confirm our assertion.

Faced with the advances of Reform, Leeser longed for a "good old days" wherein all had their place - and stayed there. He fretted, as would

others, Jews and Gentiles, that if women forsook their home role they would cease to be Virtuous Women. A proper religious education, he asserted, would result in women accepting their role and place without complaint.

In addition to mixed choirs and family pews, Reform had introduced another religious change that affected women. In America, the first confirmation of boys and girls together was at Temple Emanuel in New York on the festival of Shavuot 1848.[72] It was introduced by Rabbi Leo Merzbacher, possibly the first "Reform" rabbi in the United States. Wise introduced the rite into his congregation in Albany around that time as well, and after his move to Cincinnati, made mixed confirmation part of his first Shavuot service there in 1856.[74] Before he left for Ohio, Wise had written on "The Confirmation and Bar Mitzvah", arguing that Confirmation should replace Bar Mitzvah, as the former rite did not exclude women.[75] Confirmation gained so much in popularity among Reform-oriented groups that Kaufmann Kohler's 1903 article on the subject could state:

> The ceremony has since gained so firm a foothold in America that there is now no progressive Jewish congregation in which the annual confirmation on Shebu'ot is not a regular feature of congregational life and one of the most inspiring ceremonies of the whole year.[76]

What those who opposed confirmation objected to was to a great extent the active role it gave to female in a synagogue worship service. They also criticised its non-Jewish origins which in their view made it doubly damned. As did the German Reformers, their American counterparts defended the ceremony's introduction primarily as a "more equal" version of the Bar Mitzvah rite since it allowed the participation of both sexes. The substitution of confirmation for Bar Mitzvah represented the aims of Reform and confirmation was a dignified and decorous service borrowed from Western religious culture that gave all Jewish children the opportunity to "confirm" their Jewish allegiance. To the Reformers, the Bar Mitzvah was a part of the noisy and undignified Sabbath service that reeked of orientalism - one proof of which was its exclusion of females. The Bar Mitzvah boy chanted a small portion of the Torah reading. The confirmand gave a reasoned speech about the

importance of Judaism. For the Reformers, confirmation symbolized the style of the "new" Judaism, and they were not loathe to mention the benefits for women that came with its introduction. Shortly after the turn of the century, Kaufmann Kohler, the president of the Hebrew Union College, wrote:

> Ceremonies which assign to women an inferior rank according to Oriental notions are out of place with us. Reform Judaism recognizes woman as man's equal and sees in her deeper emotional nature, which is more responsive to the promptings of the spirit, the real inspiring influence for religious life in the household. Accordingly all the ceremonies in the domestic life today should be Occidental rather than Oriental in form and character.[77]

After castigating those Reform congregations that still adhered to the "meaningless"Bar Mitzvah ceremony, he continued:

> The moment the Oriental notion of the superiority of man over woman in religious life was abandoned, a form of consecration for the young of both sexes was instituted in its place and the beautiful rite of Confirmation was adopted.

Twelve years later Julian Morgenstern - who would shortly thereafter succeed Kohler to the presidency of Hebrew Union College - summed up the accomplishments of Reform in an address, "Were Isaac Mayer Wise Alive Today". He, too, chose confirmation to make the point of the Reform Jewish woman's religious emancipation:

> A significant, positive advance has been made in the development of the ceremony of confirmation in connection with the Shabuoth festival. And in conformity with the tendency of modernism, woman has been accorded, or rather has won for herself, a position of approximate equality and responsibility in Jewish congregational life.[78]

It is revealing that by the early 20th century, confirmation had come to represent a vibrant proof of Reform's commitment to increasing woman's role. Confirmation had become the quintessential Reform innovation on behalf of women.

iii) The Philadelphia Conference

In 1869 the first truly Reform-spirited rabbinical conference took place in Philadelphia. In persuing its minutes one is struck by the similarities with the discussion of the

German conferences of the 1840s. This is, of course, no accident. By that year several Reform-minded rabbis had come to the United States from Germany and other places in Europe, intent on transplanting Reform Judaism to America. That they disagreed with each other, in particular Wise with Einhorn, is not the province of this study. What is significant for our subject are the efforts of the conference in changing the status and role of the Jewish woman. Not surprisingly, these efforts were directed at the reform of marriage and divorce laws. Abraham Geiger had proposed such reforms as early as 1837 in Germany, and presumably some of the Philadelphia conferees were acquainted with his work and the subsequent German discussion of the issue.

At the conference's third session, with the newly arrived Rev. Dr. I.M. Wise in attendance, Einhorn's motions on the marriage service were read and discussed. The two that most directly reveal the Reformer's thinking on female religious emancipation are the first two articles proposed. Article one stated:

> At the solemnisation of the marriage the bride shall no longer play a passive role, but there shall be reciprocal vows on the part of the bridegroom and the bride by the utterance of the same marriage formula combined with the reciprocal offering of wedding rings.[79]

The strong reciprocal element in Einhorn's motion disturbed some. S.H. Sonneschein of St. Louis agreed that "the bride shall no longer play a passive role" but argued against a mutual exchange of rings. Einhorn answered that such an exchange indicated, as the minutes relate:

> The acceptance of the conferment of equal status on the woman, which was universally acknowledged, (and which) must also find expression in the formula of the wedding ceremony. This did not concern "women's rights", but the denial of the false, oriental status of the woman.[80]

Einhorn's last statement appears to give an indication of the true motivation behind some Reformer's efforts in widening women's role. Such efforts were not to be made, it seems, to achieve for women what were their natural "rights", but rather as a step towards eliminating the so-called "oriental" influences in Judaism. It may also be a reference to the rising suffrage movement, in which case Einhorn would seem to be purposely separating his motivation from such groups and affirming his Reform Jewish reasons. It was not a matter of any women's rights

movement but rather one of reforming Judaism. When Wise declared his amazement at the importance given to the ring, Einhorn stressed that an exchange of rings was "necessary" for the "equality of both partners".[81] The motion passed.

The second article proposed as the marriage formula said by the groom to the bride: "Be thou consecrated unto me according to the law of God". While most of the rabbis who commented on this discussed the formula's difference from the more traditional usage (which stated " . . . according to the Law of Moses and Israel"), Samuel Adler was concerned that "Consecrated unto me" was not expressive enough of the marriage relationship.[82] He proposed that the words "as wife" or "husband" be added by the respective parties. This speaking role coupled with a mutual exchange of rings would end the bride's "passivity" during the ceremony. The second motion was passed as amended.

The other resolutions and their discussion centered on removing from the marriage ceremony any other "oriental" customs and did not mention women per se. The discussion on divorce revolved around the issue of "dina d'malchuta dina - the law of the land is the law" in divorce cases.

Thus it seems that women weren't really the central issue in the Philadelphia discussions of areas of Jewish life that affected them. The key issue appears to have been getting rid of "orientalism" connected with these areas. To be sure, women would benefit from many of the suggested reforms and, by at least two of them, were given an active role in the marriage ceremony. But this does not appear to have been the Conference's principal motivation in this area.

The Conference laid the groundwork for the establishment of a national congregational organization and made it apparent that such an organization would be Reform, much to Wise's disappointment (he had hoped for a group that would represent <u>all</u> American Jews). In 1873 the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) was established, comprised of southern and western congregations. It created the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in 1875, and, in 1878 amalgamated with the eastern Board of Delegates of American Israelites. By that time Reform Jewish women were beginning to feel the currents of religious movements and social change even more acutely that they had in the years before.

iv) The Jewish Woman's Religious Role - The Impact of Early Reform

Through the 1840s, 50s, and 60s, the influence of Reform ideas on Jewish women was limited for the most part, to those congregations whose pulpit was occupied by a rabbi who sought to implement them. In most synagogues, Reform or not, Women remained in the gallery. An observer in mid-century Chicago wrote of a friend who

> took me to the first Reform temple I had ever visited . . . Dr. Me[r]zbacher was its rabbi. There I found the male attendants divided, one class composed of those with hats, the other of those with caps. The women were then still in a separate part of the temple, but whether they, also, were classified as to headgear, I can not say.[83]

In general, women's religious role had stretched to include educational and philanthropic work. This might be synagogue centered as was that of the ladies of Baltimore's Lloyd Street congregation. The synagogue board of managers passed a resolution thanking them for "presenting the magnificent velvet curtain which decorates the Ark".[84] Or their work might take them out into the wider community as did that of the "Ladies' Hebrew Relief Sewing Association of Philadelphia". Their aims, like those of so many similar ladies' societies in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities, were "To clothe the naked, to feed those who hunger, to shelter the houseless, to be kind and charitable to all". They added that such lofty goals "are among the highest attributes of our national character".[85] These women were content to act in their roles as defined by a combination of the "Cult" and Jewish tradition.

A few were not content, however. Minna Cohen Kleeberg (1841-1878) was an accomplished writer and poet in her native Germany before coming to the U.S. following the Civil War. Jacob Marcus reports that while still a child she resented that she could not become Bar Mitzvah. She felt the injustice when women were denied the opportunity for an advanced Jewish education, and retorted to the male benediction that thanked God for not having been made a woman, "Thank God I was not created a man!"[86] Isaac Mayer Wise used her poetry in his hymnal published in the 1860s. Kleeberg, like Penina Moise, was able, through her talent as a writer, to take on the role of liturgist. Little wonder, then, that she was a strong supporter of Reform in America, revealing what had become the view

of Reform women when she said that the three pillars of American Judaism were the Reform temple, the religous school and the home.[87] The Reform woman had been allowed to add the sphere of the synagogue to her other active Jewish involvement with school and home - unlike her more traditional sisters.

This public religious involvement in temple was the major distinguishing feature of the Reform woman's role. As Marcus has noted, a few women attended daily services in small towns. "In the cities, women did come on the Sabbath, particularly if they worshipped in the Reform temples where the sermon and much of the liturgy was in English or German".[88] Reform services must have been a powerful attraction for women who, lacking knowledge of Hebrew, could follow along and participate in their vernacular. Marcus is correct, however, in advising caution against speculation in this area: "It is difficult, very difficult, to determine if women refained from attending the synagogue because they had so little to say, or because their role in the ritual was almost non-existent".[89] One can imagine that women did feel more welcome <u>as women</u> in Reform congregations, if they could accept the Reform view of a developing Judaism. Whatever their agenda, the Reformers had made women's religious inequality an issue, an effort that could only have been aided by the view of women held by general American society. Reform offered women what Morgenstern correctly called only "approximate" equality, yet it was still at least a step away from the old taboos.

In an 1876 editorial, "Woman in the Synagogue", Wise spoke of the role of Reform - and himself - in the beginnings of female religious emancipation.[90] It is noteworthy not only as an expression of Wise's own thought, but also that of most Reform rabbis on the issue well up to the present day. In referring to the Bible on the question of women's role, Reform writers (as well as others) often held up the examples of outstanding Biblical women as proof that Judaism allowed women to be active members of the community. Wise began with that invocation, then described the Talmudic steps to safe-guard women and their rights, for his purposes overlooking the strata that disparaged females. These, were part of

> the influence of oriental society and the Koran which excluded women from all public affairs

> of the synagogue and the congregation, so that we found her a garret in the synagogue, isolated like an abomination, shunned like a dangerous demon, and declared unfit in all religious observances. To call a woman to the Torah in the synagogue, or let her have any of the honors, would have appeared preposterous, and would today be considered a desecration of the orthodox synagogue. Those people are brutally pious and stupidly faithful to what they call ancient custom, whatever an abuse it may be.

Wise's judgement of orthodoxy may seem rather harsh, yet it should be recalled that he saw Reform's duty as shattering the "oriental" hold on Judaism. He was also, personally and deeply concerned with the need to give Jewish women religious equality. Perhaps smugly, he put forward his own role in the struggle:

> It was our first business in America to take female singers in the choir, and to make the girls attend the place of worship. The orthodoxy cried horror, but we proceeded. Next we confirmed boys and girls together at Pentecost during divine worship. The orthodoxy felt enraged, therefore we let the girls read the Thorah publically on that occassion. Raising at our heels the mad-dog cry of heresy, we introduced family pews in the temple, against which all protested who had left some orthodox sentiment; therefore we advanced, if a man may marry his deceased wife's sister, a woman may marry her deceased husband's brother which the halacha prohibited; And we did it in spite of all protests and remonstrances, simply in order to emancipate Jewish women.

Of course it was not as clear-cut as all that. Wise reveals another possible agenda when he adds that the service's aesthetics and decorum are much improved since women were invited to participate. All this fit well with Reform attempts to harmonize service-reform and the Cult of True Womanhood's image of the American woman. What seems to prove Wise's own integrity and depth of feeling on this issue is that he demanded more than this. "We can not stop here", he wrote, "the reform is not complete yet":

> You must enfranchise woman in your congregations, she must be a member, must have a vote in your assemblies. Women must be on temple boards for the sake of the principle, and to rouse in them an interest in congregational affairs.

Women should sit on school boards, on the choir board or committee.

> We must have women's influence in every department of the congregation, in order to infuse life into the dead bones . . . The principle, the advancement of the cause, justice to woman, and the law of God inherent in every human being, require that woman be made a member of the congregation, of equal rights with any man; that her religious feeling be given full scope to develop. All laws contrary in any congregation should be wiped out as reminiscences of barbarism and degrading to the cause of religion. We are ready to appear before any congregation in behalf of any woman wishing to become a member thereof, and to plead her cause. We will debate the question with anyone who will show us in what woman is less entitled to the privileges of the synagogue than man, of where her faith is less important to her salvation than man's is to him. Till then we maintain that women must become active members of the congregation for their own sake, and for the benefit of Israel's sacred cause.

In this, Wise was probably far ahead of the desires of most Jewish women, as well as the young Reform movement as a whole. His call for female membership was renewed again and again, and was taken up by others. Apparently Reform men were not opposed to extending religious equality to women - if that meant simply mixed choirs, mixed seating and women reading from the Torah on occasion. But when it came to matters of real power such as seats on synagogue boards, there appears to have been major resistance. If one granted women an expanded religious role in the temple, that was permissable, as general society proclaimed women to be the more spiritual sex. But to extend that "religious right" to include a masculine sphere of power, decision-making and voting, was to go beyond what the Cult and most male Reform Jews would allow. Women could be granted religious rights - as long as men defined them.

That "Reform" Jews' actions were not always consistent with their claims of having emancipated Jewish women is clear from an 1881 editorial from the Jewish Messenger. Founded by Samuel M. Isaacs, a pioneer of the Conservative movement, the Messenger was often critical of Reform and Reformers. Yet its voice was certainly liberal in this instance, as it reviewed the 1881 conference of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations:

> Among the many disappointing features of the Chicago convention . . . was its utter failure to recognize the status of the American Jewess and consider questions relating to her advancement, which the current of our time imperatively demands . . . Our progressive leaders may have reformed away the lattice-work in the ladies' gallery, and the gallery itself, as no longer consonant with American ideas, - why have they committed the more heinous wrong of retaining the lattice-work in the constitutions of their synagogues and the deliberations of the Union? Why has the educated American Jewess no voice in the synagogue, while every clerk or dry goods drummer can record his vote and be eligible to office? . . . Other sects, mere striplings compared with ours, are utilizing grandly the powers and influence of their women, and accord them a respectful place in their councils. Can we afford to neglect so vital a measure . . . ? What do we propose? To train women as rabbis, or render the office of Parnass open to ladies. Certainly not! All that we advocate at present is that woman's cooperation should be officially asked in synagogue work, that she should be allowed to vote for members of the school board and be herself eligible as a candidate, that seat-owners, male or female, should have a direct voice in the management of the congregation, and that she should be represented in the Councils of the Union.[91]

Perhaps stung by such broadsides and urged on by Wise and others, the Central Conference of American Rabbis passed the following resolution at its 1893 meeting:

> Whereas, we have progressed beyond the idea of the secondary position of women in Jewish congregations, we recognize the importance of their hearty co-operation and active participaton in congregational affairs; therefore be it
>
> Resolved, That the Executive Committee have prepared for the next Annual Conference a paper tracing the development of the recognition of women in Jewish congregations, and expounding a conclusion that women be eligible for full membership, with all the privileges of voting and holding office in our congregations.[92]

While the sentiment expressed in the resolution may be admirable, it may be even more revealing that the paper commissioned was never presented. Meanwhile, the UAHC had seen the days of all-male conventions disappear. In 1891 a delegation from a Rochester temple included a woman as one of its members.[93] The first female president of a Jewish

congregation took office in 1897 in Corsicana, Texas.[94] It took some years before the far-sighted urgings of Wise and others became the general view of most Reform Jews.

The women's press of the period was interested in the emancipation of the Jewish woman as a sign of the times, that all women were making great strides forward. As the Woman's Journal noted in 1874, in an article entitled "Light in the Hebrew Church":

> The position of women in the Hebrew Church has been, and still is one of more marked subjection and inferiority than in any other church except the Mormon. In the Hebrew Church women have always sat apart in the gallery, old ladies toiling up the stairs, while their vigorous sons sat with all other men in the body of the house below.
>
> Even in the Hebrew Church it is proposed to bring women down from the gallery, and to have "family pews" in the body of the house, where the mother and daughters may sit with their father and sons. But a usage so old and time honored is not given up without a struggle. In the congregation Bnai Jeshrun, in New York City, last May a resolution was adopted by a plurality vote, at a special meeting, for the introduction of an organ and family pews, whereupon Israel J. Solomon brought suit in the New York Court of Common Pleas, to restrain the congregation from taking such action . . .
>
> This disturbance in the Jewish Church, caused by a growing respect for the equal rights of women, is a cheering sign of the times . . . So we rejoice at this movement among the Hebrews, which will help to bring the sisters of Rebecca to the place where their great power, purity and goodness will tell in the welfare of the world . . .[95]

The "disturbance in the Jewish Church" over the role of women had been caused mostly by male Reform leaders seeking female religious emancipation for one reason or another. In the last decade of the century, Jewish women themselves, learning from the women's movements, would attempt to guide the direction of the "disturbances.

2) The Jewish Women - Defining Her Own Role

i) Local Society to National Council

In the first three quarters of the 19th century an acceptable part of a Jewish woman's religious role was involvement in local Ladies' Benevolent Societies. By the last decades of the century a number of factors had emerged to encourage the foundation of a national organization with national goals.

The influence of the Social Gospel was one of these factors. The Reform movement's first official platform, growing out of discussion in Pittsburgh in 1885, revealed a strong concern for social reform. Recognizing that Judaism is a "progressive religion", the platform concluded:

> In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.[96]

Whereas the Social Gospel had combined with the image of the Virtuous Woman in general society to urge Christian women to make the world their "large home" and sphere of operations, Jewish women, particularly Reform or Reform-oriented, were urged to devote their energies to improving the Jewish community. There were other reasons for Jewish women to interpret the call of the Jewish version of the Social Gospel in an ethnocentric manner. The decidedly Christian character of most general women's organizations probably made Jewish women uncomfortable about participating in them. The Social Gospel was, after all, an outgrowth of the evangelical Christian movement. Thus Jewish women became eager to start their own such movement and organizations.

The organization of women's movements in the earlier part of the century provided another model for Jewish women. Anxious for acceptance and involvement in American life, Jewish women also felt the spirit of Women's Club movement. For some, this meant changing "Hebrew Ladies' Societies" into "Jewish Women's Clubs", for some it meant involvement in general womens' clubs, and for still others, involvement in both. Whether from activity in or merely observation of, general women's organizations, Jewish women would learn a great many useful skills which could be applied to their own groups. It seems likely that Jewish women's involvement in parts of the general women's movements may also have been somewhat discouraged by actual or perceived anti-semitism within those organizations. This element will be explored below in conjunction with the Jewish woman's involvement with suffrage. (See Appendix A)

Christian women's groups, as well as general women's organizations, had been motivated by the Social Gospel and other efforts to rectify

social problems. Many of the problems - drunkenness, prostitution and labor exploitation - did not affect (or were not admitted to affect) the largely upper middle-class German Jews. Yet beginning in the 1870s, the flow of East European Jewish immigrants created an instant Jewish "problem". For Reform Jews, saving these new arrivals physically from starvation and penury, and spiritually from the bonds of orientalism, was as important as the WCTU member's saving a "fallen" woman's soul. Reform Jewish women's organizations in the port cities scrambled to the immigrants' aid. Their goal was to "civilize" their "heathen" brothers and sisters by providing them with food, clothing, job training, and by teaching them about Reform and America.[97]

In the 1840s, before several of these factors had developed their later influence, an organization of Jewish women was founded in New York. This Independent Order of True Sisters appears to have been a general benevolent society, possibly an unofficial auxiliary to B'nai Brith, which had been established in 1843.[98] It, like other local groups throughout the country, was primarily an "organization of Jewish women" as opposed to a "Jewish women's organization". As Deborah Grand Golomb has noted, such groups indicate a great deal about the self perception of Jewish women in terms of their religious role. For some, it seems, philanthropy could be specifically Jewish or not.[99] Many apparently felt a greater need to associate themselves with general, rather than Jewish work. A "Jewish women's" association saw itself as fulfilling a religious role; an association of women who happened to be Jewish fulfilled other than religious needs.

For many German-Jewish women in America, assimilation into general society was as important as it had been for the Jewish salon women of a century before. For others, a more Americanized lifestyle could harmonize with a strict preservation of Jewish religious tradition. Still other women found, along with their men, that Reform offered a Jewish philosophy and life-style that fit well into the spirit of the age and the country. The time was ripe, as a result of many reasons, for Jewish women who viewed their Jewish identity in a positive light to carve out a bigger place for themselves within American Jewish life. Out of this melange of influences on Jewish women in the 19th century, the first national Jewish women's organization was born.

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was to be the show-piece of a progressive, vibrant America - despite an economic depression of no mean proportions. Part of the festivities was to be a World Parliament of Religions, and a Congress of Women. The latter congress had representation from Jewish women as speakers yet it seems that there was impetus for a specifically Jewish Women's Congress as well.[100] What that "impetus" exactly was remains unclear. The more popular version was and is that when, within the auspices of the World Parliament of Religions, Jewish men refused to allow women's participation in the general Jewish Congress, the women betook themselves to form their own convention. If this was conceived "after the fact" by Jewish women in justification for having decided to hold a separate conference, as some historians believe,[101] an editorial of the time would seem to support it. Emil G. Hirsch, rabbi of Chicago's Sinai Temple, and a radical Reformer, noted in his paper, The Reform Advocate, two months before the Jewish Women's Congress began that "In most of the Religious Congresses at the World Parliament of Religions the men's and women's committees have acted together and will hold one Congress. But the rabbis refuse to give the women adequate time, place or representation, so they were compelled to hold a separate Congress".[102]

Hirsch may be correct, in which case we may understand that Jewish men, uncomfortable with women's public participation, squeezed them out of the preceedings, forcing them to take the extraordinary step of organizing their congress. Yet, it is on record that the Parliament's General Committee had both male and female branches. A Committee vice-president, Ellen Henrotin, a prominent Chicago clubwoman, invited a fellow clubmember. Hannah G. Solomon, to represent Jewish women and to organize a Jewish Women's Congress.[103] Whether the impetus, therefore, was negative or positive, or a combination of both, a Jewish Women's Congress of ninety-three delegates met in September.

The interplay between Henrotin and Solomon is revealing of the influence of the women's club movement on Jewish women. Both were involved in the Chicago Women's Club. "Clubwomanhood" cut across religious lines permitting friendship and co-operation. Henrotin made the opening speech at the Jewish Women's Congress, declaring that the "Brotherhood of man can only come through the Sisterhood of Woman' - a profound truth, and every day that sisterhood is enlarging, and is

permeating society.[104] Her involvement included a founding role in the National Women's Trade Union League a decade later. Hannah G. Solomon set herself to the task of using her clubwoman's skills to create the National Council of Jewish Women. Her dedicated lieutenant, Sadie American, was also an involved clubwoman. Both women were members of Hirsch's Sinai congregation as well. Thus they, along with most of the Jewish Women's Congress delegates, represented a rather specific slice of the female Jewish population. Predominantly Reform (as was the male Jewish Congress) and experienced in the club movement, they sought an organization that would combine the two areas of their lives.

In her opening address as the Congress' chairman, Solomon spoke of the "new departure for the Jewish woman to occupy herself with matters pertaining to religion".[105] As the Chicago Tribune reported, the Congress was received enthusiastically: "Women elbowed, trod on each others' toes, and did everything else they could without violating the proprieties, to gain the privilege of standing edgewise in a hall heavy with the fragrance of roses".[106]

Did Reform have any great influence on the proceedings? Doubtless the positive view of women held by Reform, spoken from pulpits and printed by Wise, Hirsch and others had helped to urge these women to utilize their much-praised power for the good of Jews and Judaism. Reform advocated women taking up a greater religious role, and involvement in a Jewish Women's Congress seemed to be a natural part of it. The presence of two prominent Reform rabbis, E.G. Hirsch and Kaufmann Kohler, as discussants must have given the women a sense of support and approval. At the end of her opening remarks, Solomon acknowledged the presence of more traditional Jewish women and asked for a spirit of understanding:

> We have different points of view, different methods of reasoning. Let us be just to each other, give to each one the same patient hearing that we ask for ourselves. Let those of us who have orthodox view, believe that the radical views may be as sincere as our own; those of us who are radical, believe the others just as honest as ourselves, so that harmony and peace may mark our going as our coming.[107]

The speakers at the Congress laid out an agenda for the committed, active, Jewish woman. The fact that these were women involved in

scholarly discourse must have been impressive indeed. There was much hearkening back to the Bible for role models. The names of Sarah, Miriam, Deborah and others were invoked like those of benevolent goddesses. Jewish history was threshed to reveal the impressive contributions of women throughout the ages. In this they adopted a conventional practice, one utilized by male writers earlier, to inspire Jewish women to new heights by reminding them of a glorious past.

One speaker, whose very presence and function was symbolic of the "new Jewish woman" was Ray Frank of Oakland, California. By the time she appeared at the Jewish Women's Congress, she had been celebrated as the first woman "rabbi" after preaching in Spokane Falls and Oakland and was even hailed as "the female Messiah".[108] At the Congress it was she who gave the opening and closing prayers, in a role usually taken by a rabbi. Hence, when she spoke on "Woman in the Synagogue" she must have had the rapt attention of her audience. After a survey of women's contributions to Judaism throughout the ages, Frank came to the present:

> To our times and to our country in particular, the Jewish woman is indebted for many changes in her relation to the synagogue, and this progress is mainly due to one man, whose decided stand as a liberalist, in all matters concerning woman and her work, earns our hearty thanks. I refer to our revered rabbi, Dr. Wise of Cincinnati.[109]

What then, should be the position of the modern Jewish woman? Frank obviously felt a need to deal with the popular argument against women's expanded involvement, and to assuage the fears it aroused:

> Innovation is not progress, and to be identical with man is not the ideal of womanhood. Some things and privileges belong to him by nature; to these, true woman does not aspire; but every woman should aspire to make of her home a temple, of herself a high priestess, of her children disciples, then will she best occupy the pulpit, and her work run parallel with man's. She may be ordained rabbi or be the president of a congregation - she is certainly able to fill both offices - but her noblest work will be at home, her highest ideal, a home.[110]

For Ray Frank, the home was the essential kernel of woman's Jewish world. Even if women were to take up interests in the synagogue - including the pulpit and the presidency! - they should not lose sight of their primary committment. Such a view was echoed by other speakers

throughout the Congress.

It may be that the thrust of these arguments was anti-assimilationist. Indeed, no speaker suggested that the home should be the only sphere for Jewish women, just the most important. Apparently the stress was on the maintenance of a Jewish home, as against over-involvement in the general women's movements of the time. Mary M. Cohen, in her address "The Influence of the Jewish Religion in the Home" sounded just such a warning:

> There are plenty of merely cosmopolitan women, open to the guidance of every creed or no creed, as shifting fancy may dictate; such women may be lovely and excellent in many ways, but they will scarcely command the admiring respect, the deep sympathy, the earnest fellowship, which a loyal Hebrew woman receives in overflowing measure from the world at large. Her chief value to the people of other beliefs is that she is a worthy daughter of Israel, in the home first, and then everywhere.[111]

Such views would seem to support the idea that those attending the Congress, who later would form the National Council of Jewish Women, were committed Jews, searching for ways in which they as women could participate in Jewish religious life.

The majority of speakers stressed the place of social service in the religious role of Jewish women. The sorry plight of many East European immigrants called for renewed and improved efforts on the part of Jewish women. Julia Richman, whose life was dedicated to reform in New York's public schools as well as among the new Jewish immigrants and laborers, agitated for an improved organization to aid them:

> Something that shall lay hold of the immigrant before she has been sucked down into the stratum of physical misery or moral oblivion, from which depths it becomes almost impossible to raise her.[112]

Richman and others argued for the application of emerging social work practices to Jewish women's philanthropy. The old "Sewing Societies" had dealt with symptoms - clothing the naked. In the same address Richman said, "It is easier to save from drowning than to resuscitate the drowned". This was an important theme in Sadie American's major address "Organization" on the last day of the Congress:

> While many of the associations are dignified by the name of organizations, they scarcely deserve it. They are merely associations; for work done

> with willing heart and hand may yet not be done in the best way, nor so as to do the most good - present good often leading to future ill. There is too much and too little in these associations - too much unjust distribution, too much consideration of the present; too little real justice, too little thought of the past and for the future. There are far too few ounces of prevention, too many pounds of so-called cure. The wound is but lightly covered, and again and and again breaks open.[113]

Jewish women, American asserted, were interested "in all that interests woman" and were in "perfect sympathy with the time". It was "custom and tradition" and the prejudice of the non-Jewish world that did not allow them to shine forth. Now it was the Jewish woman's duty to show that she was part of the great social movement of the day: "It is not enough that she be in sympathy with her time, she must be running hand and hand with it".[114] Against the objection that wider organization would take women from their place in the home, American rejoined, "That place will and must remain first and most sacred to her". Yet, following the still-prevalent image of the Cult, she added, "sometimes it is the woman whose spiritual eye discerns through the mist and cloud the steep and narrow path which must be followed".[115] It was Jewish woman's destiny to aid in the improvement of Jewish life - and at times to take the lead. The atmosphere of the Social Gospel, the women's movements and an expanded female religious role within Judaism had clearly made their mark on Sadie American. Judging by the protocols of the Congress, she represented the view of most of the Jewish women who heard her speak.

Later at the Business Meeting that closed the Congress, American proposed this resolution:

> Resolved, that we, Jewish women, sincerely believing that a closer fellowship will be encouraged, a closer unity of thought and sympathy and purpose, and a nobler accomplishment will result from a widespread organization, do therefore band ourselves together in a union of workers to further the best and high interests of Judaism and humanity, and do call ourselves the "National Council of Jewish Women".[116]

With its passage the Jewish Women's Congress ended and a new era of Jewish women's organization began.

The Congress was certainly not revolutionary in changing the Jewish woman's position or religious role. It was rather part of the evolution

of a modern religious role which had begun with female charitable groups, advanced to Ladies Benevolent Societies, and now stood on the threshold of a national body. Jewish women, as the Congress speeches show, were attempting to work out the relationship of their responsibilities to home and community as Jews and as women.

What were the reactions to the Jewish Women's Congress? Many of the fears addressed by Congress speakers were clearly preying on the minds of some observers. Before the congress, Emil G. Hirsch, writing on the new national organization of the Sabbath Visitor Association, had applauded "the apparent determination of some young men and women to take a more active part in the shaping of Jewish affairs, than has heretofore been the case".[117] However, he warned of the dangers of over-estimating the possible influence of such groups, adding that "If they will know their proper station and modestly consent to fill that well and with becoming deference to elder and wiser heads, theirs will be a noble opportunity". Concerned over the dichotomy of secular organization and religious affiliation, Hirsch cautioned, "Let the organization set out to be and to remain for religous purposes, in a broad but true sense".

This line of thought was continued by a reader's letter to the Reform Advocate following the Women's Congress.[118] The writer, Irma Rosenthal of Chicago, declared that there had been too much self-congratulation at the Congress. She asked: "What are our Jewish women doing for the Judaism they openly declare they love so much?" Rosenthal was concerned with the "downright, fearless truth", and in truth saw Jewish women neglecting their roles:

> We want to be distinct in nothing but our religion and in the haste to do away with all distinctive social traits, we are doing away with many of the essentials that mark the truly religious woman.

Saturday has become the "busiest day", Sabbath observance is lax.

> Our Jewish women are not religious in spite of their professions in the congress . . . The average Jewish woman knows nothing about the Bible and cares less. She may look into it now and then because she has heard it is a great literary work, as she will take up Shakespeare or any talked about book. But who in these days would go to the Bible for comfort or guidance?

The Jewish woman's care about charities is over-rated. Rosenthal echoes the concern of Hirsch over involvement outside the religious sphere:

> Our social life is centered in the club and not in the congregation. Question our girls as to their ambitions. It is to go into society and have a good time. They do not know much about religion and they do not care about it.

In spite of all this "truth" she closed her letter, hopeful that the Congress will have awakened Jewish women to caring about their religion. Rosenthal's letter is important as a counterpoint to much of the lofty talk of the Congress. The majority of Jewish women were probably as Rosenthal described, and not even interested in the Congress or its plans. Its appeal was limited: to those middle-class and upper-class Jewish women, mostly Reform, who, in one way or another, felt positively about their Jewish identity. To that group, what the Congress had to say, was exciting and stimulating.

In May 1886, some months before the inaugural meeting of the NCJW, Hirsch offered the Council "a few friendly words of caution":[119]

> The council is intercongregatonal, let it not become anti-congregational. The congregations are after all the exponents as they are in the focus of all Jewish religion. Without synagogues, and rabbis as teachers and students, Judaism as a religion cannot exist. Let the women bend their energies to this end, to strengthen the congregations as the factors and forces of the Jewish religion;let them create anew the conscious desire for and spread the deeper understanding of the character of synagogal worship!

It seems that Hirsch, and doubtless others, were afraid of the success of the NCJW. They feared that if Jewish women saw their religious role in terms of Council work, these women would be lost to the congregations. Jewish women were encouraged to participate outside of their homes - but in the synagogue, the Jewish woman's "larger home", not cut off from congregational life in the more or less autonomous NCJW. It is clear that some men were frightened of the potential they thought the Council might have to drain away their "woman power" just as they were beginning to value it.

Less than two years after the Jewish Women's Congress another unique event occured in the history of American Jewish women. In April 1895 a magazine called The American Jewess appeared. Declaring itself to be "Devoted to Social, Religious and Literary Subjects", it was the first journal addressed specifically to American Jewish women. The

magazine covered a wide variety of subjects indeed, particularly those thought to be of interest to its predominantly middle-class, German-American and Reform Jewish audience.

The founder and editor of The American Jewess was Rosa Sonneschein (1847-1932) of Chicago. She was the wife of Reform Rabbi Solomon H. Sonneschein who had been present at the Philadelphia Conference. While much of her magazine reflects a strong, pro-Reform bias, especially in terms of women's role, Sonneschein was not averse to seeing her own way. Her first printed advocacy of Zionism - in favor of a pro-Zionist stand for the NCJW - appeared in the October, 1896 issue. A glowing portrait of the First Zionist Congress in Basle was part of the October 1897 number, though Sonneschein was quick to chide that assembly for excluding women "as the step is Oriental, but not Jewish" (p.20).

The pages of The American Jewess generally reflect a Reform view of the religious role of women. Articles on philanthropy are common. Women's participation in the Sabbath school movement is noted. Articles by several prominent Reform rabbis, including E.G. Hirsch, Henry Berkowitz and David Philipson, hail the female contribution and call for further dedication on the part of Jewish women. These articles, as well as the general tone of the magazine itself, show the strong identification of Jewish women with the Cult of True Womanhood. Berkowitz includes the following in an article entitled "Woman's Part in the Drama of Life":

> Women are the educators of the race, God has so ordained it. They teach the lessons of evil or of good. Woman's dominion is over the heart, and though they are weaker than man, yet they have strength over him.
>
> "She who rocks the cradle rules the world".
>
> The mother's influence upon the child outweighs every other that can be brought to bear. Physical inferiority gives them a moral and spiritual superiority over man. This is an established fact, and so recognized in American manhood. Woman's is the intenser nature, the tenderer susceptibility. Religion is innate in her heart.[120]

While accepting the Cult view of Womanhood and stressing the propriety of female work in the areas of charity and education, The American Jewess urged the full religious emancipation of women, namely their right to be congregational members. In its third issue, the magazine presented a paper by Miss Rose Kohler who had seen lists of "more then 20,000 names", members of congregations that were "radical

reformers, conservative and ultra orthodox".[121] These were alike in one respect: members names began with "Mr." "Not even the most radical congregation on record put before its members' names 'Mr. and Mrs. _____'". The article continued:

> The fact stares us plainly in the face that in Jewish congregations married women are still debarred from membership. This ought not to be. Our girls receive the same religious instruction as our boys, most of our congregations are governed by laws equally well understood by women and men; and morally supported by both. Would it therefore not be befitting the spirit of our time to record as members of a Jewish congregation Mr. and Mrs. So-and So? A great deal could be said on the subject, but we prefer deeds to words. Which will be the first congregation to combine justice with dignity? Which will be the first to record our names?

Kohler's paper had originally been presented before the New York branch of the NCJW and seems to indicate, as had the words of Isaac Mayer Wise earlier, that even Reform congregations were slow to extend their membership and franchise to women. Kohler lauds Reform for improving the lot of women, yet is critical of her still inferior position:

> Why should she not enjoy the same right of becoming a member of the Temple she attends on the Sabbath morn; a member of the Sabbath-school Board, that often sadly needs her practical wisdom and active interest? Why is the Jewish woman behind her Christian sister therein? There is no reason why she should not have the same opportunities for activity and power in regard to matters pertaining to religion, that she has in her charitable work.[122]

It is interesting to note that religious "activity and power" for Kohler are represented by congregational membership and a place on the school-board. Few women were apparently ready to raise their sights to the synagogue presidency - or the pulpit - when their right to membership was not yet answered.

The American Jewess remained an ardent defender of this right and publicized instances of its exercise. Following the NCJW meeting in 1896, Sonnenschein editorialized:

> It is only of late, and mostly through the instrumentality of the Council, that women are permitted to become members of the Sabbath School Board, and

> we have but a few Jewish congregations which admit as members single and widowed women only, and there is but one Jewish congregation in the world where women have the unconditional right of membership and representation, and that is the blessed Temple Isaiah, in Chicago.[123]

That "blessed" congregation had been influenced by The American Jewess and "the direct efforts of its editor" who received not only

> a letter of thanks from the talented Rabbi (Joseph Stolz) of Temple Isaiah, but the London "Jewish Chronicle", well known as one of the most conservative and influential publications in the world, commented favorably on this congregational innovation.[124]

"The task is not as hard as some may think", Sonneschein continued, calling on the NCJW to continue the struggle so that "the doors of the congregational council chamber will be surely opened, will be as free to women as is now the pew, which in many cases she is permitted to occupy in solitary splendor".

From its inception The American Jewess supported the infant National Council of Jewish Women, running glowing reports of its aims and detailing the activities of member sections in various cities. One of Rosa Sonneschein's aims appears to have been to win for her magazine recognition as the official organ of the NCJW. A match between "the only publication in the world devoted to the interests of the Jewish woman" and the major national Jewish women's organization must have seemed divinely ordained to the journal's editor. When the Council was attacked, Sonneschein was quick to rise to its defense. When a San Francisco rabbi, the Rev. Dr. Voorsanger (who had succeeded Elcan Cohn) voiced his misgivings about the formation of the NCJW, the response was caustic:

> The reverand scribe premises his animadversions with the assertion that he is not an antagonist of the Council but merely an opponent, the differences between the two being a thing he states, that some women are unable to distinguish, among whom we confess ourselves one. Lest so fine a distinction be lost upon the more obtuse, he makes clear in his editorial what he means by his opposition by giving expression to sentiments such as: "The National Council should never have organized;" "These one-sex organizations have a tendency to widen the breach that already exists between the sexes. It is contrary to social instinct, it is unnatural;" "The Jewess has no mission apart from the Jew;" and similar other manifestations of that friendly state of mind implied by the word "opponent".[125]

Voorsanger's objections appear to be similar to those voiced by E.G. Hirsch in his Reform Advocate. The fear of schism along sexual lines was not a real one, though Voorsanger is aware of an existing "breach between the sexes". While damning "one-sex movements" he reflects the view of many men of the time who saw movements on women's part threatening while remaining blind to the "one-sex" cast of congregational organizations. For them, mixed seating and small-scale philanthropy within the synagogue were proof of women's religious emancipation and were all that was necessary. Sonneschein's reply to this is indicative of the combination of women's desire for reform and acceptance of a delineated "sphere";

> The arguments advanced by him are (of) the stock always used when womanhood is involved, the same old, stale, flat and unprofitable objections revamped to apply to the particular case in question . . . Like many others, Dr. Voorsanger persists in closing his eyes to the changes going on about him. New conditions have arisen and progressive people are trying to adapt themselves to them. Jewish women can by organization do much that cannot be accomplished by isolated effort; there is plenty for them to do that falls specifically within their sphere without impinging upon man's legitimate and natural province.

Sonneschein acutely observes that no schism is intended. Rather "thinking Jewish women" have felt there is a "void to fill" in their lives since their release from "the duties dependent upon kitchen religion; some of the hours thus placed at their disposal might be profitably used in meeting together to discuss the science of charity".[126] Such pursuits would not create a "chasm between the sexes" or make a woman a "bad wife" or a "bad mother".

Sonneschein was correct in noting that such objections were well worn. They had been used by both Jew and Gentile to keep women in line, and were supported by the Cult of True Womanhood. Yet it appears that the arguments of the various women's movements had percolated through to many Jewish women. They may have been ambivalent about actively joining suffrage or other groups, but Jewish women were undeniably affected by the vocabulary and ideas of the women's rights debate. Hence Sonneschein concluded her editorial:

> It will not be possible for the Jewess of the future to live the restricted life of her mother; she is a sharer in the universal broadening that

> has come to all womankind. It is the spirit of the times. She may and will pursue the same ends but it will be by different methods, and it is quite possible that these methods may be improved ones. Surely the world has learned something in all these years!

The first national meeting of the NCJW took place in New York City, November 15-16, 1896. In its issue for that month The American Jewess published the invitation from the Council's president and secretary "To the Jewish Women of the Country" to come to the meeting. The invitation and conference program were bracketed with photographs of prominent Council section presidents, and were introduced by Rosa Sonneschein who bid the gathering representatives "Thrice welcome!"

The proceedings of the conference are evidence of the distance travelled by the Council since its inception at the Jewish Women's Congress in Chicago. An air of businesslike professionalism pervaded the meetings. Local chapters described their activities, committees presented reports and recommendations. A constitution was framed which expressed the organization's goals:

> We, Jewish women, sincerely believing that a closer fellowship, a greater unity of thought and purpose, and a nobler accomplishment will result from a widespread organization, do therefore band ourselves together in a union of workers to further the best and highest interests of humanity in fields Religious, Philanthropic, and Educational . . .
>
> The purposes of this organization are: To serve the best interests of Judaism; to bring about closer relations among Jewish women; to furnish, by an organic union, a medium of communication and a means of prosecuting a common interest, to further united efforts in behalf of the work of social reform by the application of the best philanthropic methods. [128]

This desire to professionalize Jewish women's charitable eforts is also visible in the array of speakers and papers presented on the subject. Lillian Wald, the pioneer of nursing in New York, spoke on "The Crowded Districts of Great Cities, Our Duty to Better Their Condition". Julia Richman, the public school reformer, gave the report of the Religious School committee. Organization was discussed at length with a view to developing the most effective systems to meet various needs.

The interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish women's groups was also apparent. Mary Lowe Dickinson, president of the National

Council of Women, brought greetings and urged that there be

> no separation between sisterhood and the motherhood of the world; no separation of creed; no separation anywhere between any of us of any race or of any faith who care for the blessedness and purity of the home, who care for the glory of our national life; no separation for us as women anywhere, but one underlying principle; no separation either from manhood or brotherhood and husbandhood and sisterhood, and that which makes a perfect and complete home.[129]

Ellen Henrotin, who played a key role in the women's club movement and in the origin of the Jewish Women's Congress, spoke similarly as president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. She spoke of "Reciprocity" as part of American national life, and asserted:

> We are reading it into our spiritual life. Jew and Gentile no longer exist. We stand hand to hand, heart to heart. We are reading it into our relations between men and women. No longer do we live for men, but we live with men. We are reading it into all social life. We ask no longer of any woman, what do you believe, what is your sect; what are your politics, but are you a clubable woman, are you willing to go to work with us. And if she says yes, she is of us.[130]

Such optimistic declarations of "sisterhood" were doubtless welcomed by the listeners. A friendly spirit of co-operation existed between many Jewish and Gentile women's societies, and Jewish women were welcomed as equals in many clubs. Still, that sought after co-operation was not always easy to maintain, particularly when particularistic concerns were affected. A motion was made to endorse a resolution to President Cleveland by the WCTU protesting the treatment of American civilians (apparently missionaries) in Turkey. The Council refused endorsement on the arguments that its adoption "may tend to foster more hatred among the Mohammedans towards the Jews", and that since "so much harm has been done to the Jewish community from that very idea of sending missionaries to proselytize, to break up family homes, that it is a little foreign for us to voice our sentiments in this way".[131] Support for other women's organizations was thus by no means immediate or unconditional. Jewish women remained sensitive to their at times delicate position as Jews.

The diverse religious character of the NCJW was far more in evidence than had been the case in Chicago. The more religiously cosmopolitan city of New York may have been a factor in this. To be sure, the majority

of male speakers were Reform rabbis. Kaufmann Kohler gave the opening prayer, Henry Berkowitz spoke on the Jewish Chatauqua Society, established some years earlier to spread information about Judaism, and a Rev. Dr. Greenfield addressed the opening meeting on behalf of the CCAR. While applauding the Council, Greenfield was not unaware of the fallout from the views of Voorsanger and others:

> It has been said and it has been denied that some rabbis are opposed to the organization. But I may say, and I think with a good deal of authority, that the ministerial body of this country has not the faintest idea of opposing your organization. Would it not stultify the thought and the actions of the ministers, if they should attempt to oppose that which they have been teaching, that which they have been seeking to instill into the minds and hearts of men andwomen . . . through the land?[132]

The Reform hold on the Council seems to have been fading, however. The Rev. Dr. Sabato Morais, friend of Isaac Leeser and founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary nine years earlier, also spoke to the convention. Morais' address was a thinly veiled attack on Reform in which he urged: "Now, my sisters in faith . . . I beg of you to stand by the old flag, not to allow it to be trampled upon, but stand for your religion".[133] He disputed the value of Biblical criticism and called upon the women to study in order to show the world the spirituality of Judaism. The conference's final prayer was offered by another traditional rabbi, the Rev. Dr. Mendes. In 1884 he had published a booklet "The Position of Women in Jewish Law and Custom", originally part of a "Ladies' Class" at his congregation, and printed in the American Hebrew. In it, he stressed the positive effect of Jewish law in improving the status of women in contrast with other peoples: "we find that woman's fame has ever been appreciated by Hebrew hearts" (p.20). Mendes was also the author of the Council's hymn sung to the tune "My country, 'tis of thee".[134]

The presence of these men must have been encouraging to those Council-members who were uncomfortable with the organization's predominantly Reform leadership and orientation. Just like the UAHC and the Hebrew Union College, the NCJW had been founded as a national interdenominational organization. While the Reform tendencies of the former led to their becoming solely representative of Reform Jews, a battle was waged within the Council in an attempt to remove its "radical" Reform elements.

The struggle centered upon the specific issue of the Sabbath. Among the Reform congregations the Sunday Sabbath movement had caught on. This included Chicago's Sinai congregation whose rabbi was E.G. Hirsch and among whose members were Hannah Solomon and Sadie American. The issue was just beneath the surface throughout the conference and was brought up in Henriette Frank's paper on the opportunities of Jewish women. Frank advocated individual choice as to which Sabbath day would be observed, so long as the spirit of rest was made a part of Jewish lives, "Not the choice of the calendar day, but the manner of its observance makes of it a Sabbath".[135] A short discussion followed, in which Kaufmann Kohler (the session was being held in his temple) pointed out the complexities of the issue and concluded:

> I should advise my friends, the members of this Convention, that they may leave such theological disputes to the Rabbis. We have our hard work, we have our troubles, we have our severe battles, and I would not put them on the good ladies who mean so well as the members of this Council.[136]

The President, Hannah Solomon, replied to a question, reminding the delegates that no resolution had been passed on the subject and that resolutions would be in order at the next day's session. She seems to have been anxious to avoid any conflict:

> I beg again that we leave those questions out. We can still work, and we can still preach. Every one of us can preach for the Sabbath, for a good Sabbath. And let us go ahead, those who believe either way, we can do religious work in either field.[137]

The divisive nature of the issue was well-understood by Kohler and Solomon, however their wishes were ignored. Such a fundamental difference of opinion could not but come up again.

A very general resolution was put forward the following day affirming the importance of the Sabbath and calling on Council members to resist its "desecration" and to "reinstate it in their homes in its pristine purity".[138] The unavoidable discussion followed with various points of view put forward. A Mrs. Mendola De Sola of Montreal had previously crossed swords with the President on this issue.[139] De Sola now moved that Dr. Mendes be asked to speak on the issue. This was seconded but denied. On being told that Mendes did not want to speak but only to enter a protest, Hannah Solomon shot back, "He is not a member and consequently cannot enter a protest".[140] Further discussion

followed and the original motion on the Sabbath was finally adopted. A Buffalo delegate voiced her misgivings over the Council's involvement in the issue,"I feel as though we were standing upon the very rock that we are afraid is going to split under us. This is a matter of theological controversy and not for us to decide".[141] This was too much for De Sola who asked, "Are we a Council of Jewish Women or a Council of Women?" The President responded, "We are a Council of Jewish Women, and as Jewish Women we take the liberty of Jewish Women to have our own opinions".[142] The bitterness arose again during the nomination of officers. De Sola nominated another woman for President declaring that "'peace at any price' cannot hold good where the price is the sacrifice of principle".[143] The woman so nominated expressed her horror at the idea and Solomon was re-elected by acclamation.[144]

The wrangle over the Sabbath issue demonstrated the existence of deep-seated religious differences within the Council's membership. Most leaders and members were aware of the urgent need to preserve a unanimity of purpose that would transcend theological disagreement. For them it was important that the National Council of Jewish Women remain as non-denominational as possible, a nation-wide union of Jewish women from diverse backgrounds dedicated to furthering Judaism. Where a statement on specific religious practice within the Council's membership was called for, it was worded in such a way that women representing a wide spectrum of religious belief could feel comfortable with it. In its stress on including women of different religious belief as members, the Council was unique among the majority of Jewish organizations of the time. It was the only one to achieve a sense of pan-Jewish unity of purpose. By staying clear of potentially divisive theological argument - like that over the Sabbath - the NCJW maintained a committed membership whose ranks could include radical Reformers, staunch traditionalists and all the shadings in between.

The religious role of the Jewish woman as defined by the NCJW was a union of the idea of women's "sphere" with the developing social trends. Philanthropy and education, the twin pillars of Jewish women's communal involvement, were expanded and updated. At the turn of the century, "philanthropy" for the NCJW was primarily a deep involvement with the arriving Eastern European Jews. Patterning themselves on the successful

system of the YWCA, Council representatives met immigrants at the ports, aided them in finding housing, provided job-training and lessons in English and "Americanization". Their particular concern was to protect unescorted girls and women from pimps who were responsible for what was then called the "white slave trade". The Council was invited to join the fight against white slavery by the U.S. government in 1904, and apparently was quite successful. Between 1914 and 1918 the NCJW was the only agency for women at Ellis Island in New York harbour.

Council involvement in the field of education was three-fold: self-improvement, Sabbath school work and immigrant education. The first was a major component of the women's club movement, an outgrowth of the old literary societies. For the NCJW this was translated into Jewish study for women. Local sections set up "study circles" - at times with the aid of local rabbis - wherein various topics of interest were examined. At the 1896 convention a sampling of these subjects were mentioned including Bible, history, Jewish personalities and others.[145] Particularly interesting are the number of subjects dealing with Jewish women, in literature, in the home and in Hebrew thought. Female Jewish writers were also discussed. This Jewish self-improvement was basic to the Council's goals. Julia Felsenthal, chairman of the Committee on Religion at the 1896 convention spoke of its importance in preparing Jewish women for their duties:

> We believe, especially, that the central plan of our work must be to point to women's duties as priestess of the home, to strengthen the pivotal point in our religious activity, to help organize the waning interest in Divine worship, to aid in solving the problems with which the Sabbath School must cope; in short, to use those privileges which are freely accorded us, of being active participants in Jewish communal life not passive witnesses. It is conceded that women wield a powerful influence in modern life - may the power be used intelligently.[146]

If woman's role as "priestess of the home" remained paramount, it was no longer her only duty. The Council gave official sanction to a Jewish woman's version of "the world as a large home". For her, that home included the Sabbath school. Julia Richman chaired the Committee on Religious School Work and outlined a detailed program for improvement which included teacher-training, adoption of the American-model "mission

school" to replace the cheder (purely Hebrew) style and concluded: "Where you have not yet attempted or succeeded, try or try again to place our women on Religious School Boards".[147] Richman saw, as had others, that if women's superior religious sensibilities were to be brought to bear on the religious school issue, they would have to be involved in the decision-making process: to have clout, they had to sit on the Board.

Education for the newly arrived East-European Jews, as has been mentioned, centered on teaching them survival skills - a new language, a trade - as well as cultural lessons on how to be Jewish in America.

The influence of the Social Gospel made its way into other of Council's programs as well by the turn of the century.[148] Jewish women also felt the responsibility to heal the world had been laid especially on women. At its 1911 conference the NCJW established a broad social program calling for the elimination of child labor, adequate housing for low-income families, legal protection for female workers and uniform marriage and divorce laws. A strong pacifist element also grew up within the Council around this time, urging "that the cause of Peace and Arbitration . . . be placed before the growing generation". In 1911 the Council drew attention to the disparity between military and civilian spending. Yet when war came in 1917, the NCJW provided support for Jewish soldiers wounded in battle.

This increased emphasis on broader social concerns in the early twentieth century parallelled a similar interest on the part of several Reform rabbis. For them a movement for "Social Justice" was a Jewish response to the Social Gospel and it seems that the NCJW had a similar idea. To the Council, women's "religious role" could expand to include involvement in broad social concerns that, to them, as to many Jewish women, were not merely an extension of women's traditional sensitivities. Yet for some the Council's increasing emphasis on general social philanthropy decreased its character as a Jewish religious organization.[149] Some Jewish women who had looked to the NCJW to fulfill their need for a broader Jewish religious role were disillusioned when the Council enlarged its sphere of operations. Hannah Solomon stepped down as president in 1905. Within a decade of its birth the NCJW was beginning to undergo profound changes. For most of its members it contined to serve as an expression of their broader religous role. For others, ex-

members and those who had never been members, different organizations would have to fill their religious needs.

ii) Reform "Sisterhood" - the Rise of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods

By the second decade of this century it was becoming clear to who cared to notice that Reform was losing its almost exclusive grip on American Jews. The waves of Eastern-European immigrants had started this erosion. Reform ideas about Judaism did not relate well to the immigrant experience and did not take into account the traditional background of most immigrants. Moreover, a class distinction hampered the impression Reform made on the newcomers. A growing Conservative movement had established a seminary and was attempting to bridge the gap between Reform and tradition.

For Reform leaders in the early 1900s these trends and developments were cause for concern. Many remained anxious about the National Council of Jewish Women, worried over its focus on women's work outside the congregation - despite the Council's protests that this would not interfere with synagogue programs - and its growing involvement with larger social issues. It seemed to reject the notion that women could act Jewishly only within a religious framework. The Council had a mind of its own and could not, and would not follow the desires of Reform leaders. It was also "Jewishly interdenominational" and therefore not clearly an adjunct to the Reform movement.

The official establishment of Hadassah in 1912 as an American women's Zionist organization was another example of female energy at work in a non-Reform setting. Its founder, the remarkable Henrietta Szold, had spoken to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Congress. She had not then challenged women's place in the Judaism of the day, but her later Zionist activity opened up another area for women's Jewish expression and activity.

It seemed apparent to Reform leaders that a clearly Reform women's organization was necessary for the purposes of self-definition, as well as to give Reform women their own national organization. A union of temple sisterhoods was proposed and the following invitation was sent

out under the imprimatur of the Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations:

Cincinnati, December 13, 1912

To All Whom It May Concern:
The President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations issues this call to all ladies' organizations connected with congregations belonging to the Union, to appoint or elect delegates for a meeting to be held in Cincinnati during January 20-21-22-23, 1913. This meeting is called for the purpose of organizing a Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.

Very truly yours,

Lipman Levy,
Secretary

By order of
J. Walter Freiberg, President
The Union of American Hebrew Congregations[150]

It was clear from the outset that this organization was to have close ties to the UAHC. The inaugural meeting was called to order by Freiberg. Rabbi David Philipson addressed the assemblage on the subject of "Women and the Congregation". He spoke of the gains of women under Reform, and of the fine work being done by the individual sisterhoods. What the new organization was to be Philipson made clear:

> As our religion is the basis of all that is best in our life, so will your work as a religious and congregational organization be basic to that of all other organizations. Your new organization, when formed, will be the counterpart of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The two organizations will be the obverse and reverse of the same shield, the congregation as the basis of Jewish representation.[151]

A "religious and congregational" focus, this was what was missing, many Reformers felt, in the NCJW. Some were willing to assert this more forcefully. Rabbi Louis Grossman, successor to I.M. Wise at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun and a professor at HUC, also addressed the gathering. Some weeks earlier he had written in the American Israelite that the work of the new organization was not new, but rather marked women's "Coming back to their moral and religious responsibilities which alone are the guarantee of a really living Judaism".[152] He continued:

> The Congregations have a first right and lien upon Jewish womanhood and they have never had an occasion to assert it as now. It is the Jewish woman who must help make the Jewish Faith again central in the home and commit herself frankly and whole-souledly to the task . . .

Congregational activity was the necessary place for women's energies; not, he implied, the broader interests and functioning of the NCJW. Grossman summed up by noting the lack of opportunity given to women to participate in Reform organizational life:

> The local congregations are men's organizations, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is a men's organization. In not one phase of the great religious work which the congregations separately and the Union collectively have done, have Jewish women either [been] given or taken a share. It is time that the Congregation Life of the cities be enriched by the contribution Jewish womanhood can make to it . . .

The first constitution of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) reveals the major differences between it and the NCJW. In addition to establishing the Federation's formal ties with Reform and the UAHC, it states that "the congregation forms the religious unit in Israel"[153] and once again that woman's place is in the Reform congregation. The new Federation's standing committees functioned with that in mind: Co-operation (between sisterhoods), Religion ("to foster the religious life of the congregation"), Sabbath School, Propaganda, Scholarships (for HUC students) and Museum.

The leadership of the NFTS also reflected its function as auxiliary to the UAHC. The Union's executive secretary, Rabbi George Zepin, served the Federation in the same capacity. Whereas the NCJW had been organized from scratch by women themselves, especially through the dynamic leadership of Hannah Solomon, the NFTS was organized by men and women under the auspices of the UAHC. Such a difference, however, reflects the different purposes of each group. The Council answered to no-one but its members. The Federation was an official arm of a specific religious movement.

That did not mean the NFTS was without its own strong female leadership. One of the Federation's guiding lights in its formative years was Carrie Obendorfer Simon, who served as the organization's first president from 1913-1019. As a young women she had been active in the NCJW. She was the section secretary in her native Cincinnati, and an address she delivered before that body, "Philanthropy", was reprinted in the July 1896 issue of The American Jewess (II, pp. 545-48). She later married Rabbi Abram Simon of the Washington Hebrew Congregation in the nation's capital. Rabbi Simon's activity in the CCAR and his later becoming its president must also have given added prestige to

his wife. Yet Carrie Simon's energy and dedication to the NFTS reflected her own powerful commitment and concerns. She clearly subscribed - as did most sisterhood members - to the idea that Jewish women had a place in both home and synagogue. Simon also saw a positive connection between the general women's movement and the growing religious role of the Jewish woman.

A few days before the Federation's first Biennial in 1915 she wrote in a Chicago Jewish paper The Sentinel:

> Is there any connection between the renaissance of Religon and the rise of the Women's Movement? I think there is. And I believe there will be a still more intimate and positive relationship between the Synagog and the American Jewess. The Synagog shall hear the call of the Sister. The Synagog is not a masculine institution; it must provide a place of equal privilege, prayer, activity and responsibility for the Jewess. Shall she not be the creator of the new enthusiasm in Israel?[154]

Simon also realized that the NFTS was not unique, yet stressed the Federation's strong dedication to the tasks at hand. The women's movement need not alienate the Jewish woman from her faith:

> The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods is but a new name for Jewish and womanly enthusiasm, for Israel's Faith and Israel's Loyalty. It is an honest effort of the American Jewess to make good her pretensions, her privileges, and her duty. It is borne in the waves of woman's emancipation, not from, but into Religion, into Judaism, into the Synagog.

Both Simon and the Biennial drew the attention of the local press. The Chicago Journal reported an address by Simon under the headline "Urges Women to Aid Judaism".[155] In her speech, the Federation President combined Reform notions of female religious emancipation with the ideas of Biblical criticism. Neither sex had a monopoly on religion, nor did the emotional part of religion "make religious duty any more womanly than manly". She offered her own Reform Jewish woman's exegesis:

> If a woman had written the first chapter of Genesis she would have formed Adam out of the rib of Eve. She would have started the creative process by the procreative principle. The writer of Genesis must have suspected the keenest of woman in hearing the voice of God, because he tells us that the wily serpent addressed Eve and not Adam as to the command of God. He somehow caught a far-off gleam of woman's future when, in appreciation of Eve's initiative,

> "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit, and did eat, she gave also unto her husband with her and did eat!" At any rate, modern Judaism builds on the basis that the eyes of both were opened.

While appreciating the Reform doctrine of equality of the sexes, Simon at the same time agreed with the popular image of woman as the more religiously sophisticated. Like Eve, the modern Jewish woman was to help open the spiritual eyes of Jewish men. Orthodox women, too, would feel the influence of the time:

> I believe that orthodoxy will be compelled to yield when women will rise under the influence of the new conditions and call for a status of religious privileges and obligations. When this happens American Judaism will be in a still more interesting and productive stage. I look to woman for the next change in orthodox Judaism.

Simon's belief in "religious equality" was typical of Reform Jewish thinking of the time. Technically, Reform Jewish men and women were "equal"in religious obligations, yet outside of personal religious equality, each had a particular place. "What are the special spheres in which the Jewish ought to be most helpful in the development of American Judaism?" Simon asked. The home remained the "fulcrum" of Jewish life and women's social and economic emancipation did not justify "a lessening of that place in the affections of the American Jewess". Jewish women "ought to stand like a solid wall against the forces which may tend to weaken or prejudice it". The other sphere for the Reform Jewish woman "ought to be found in the house of worship":

> The Reform synagogue has given the Jewess a place of dignity and usefulness and she is grateful to the progressive synagogue for that fine opportunity. How shall she utilize this privilege? We stand with this union [the NFTS] in the conviction that the congregation is the representative expression of the Jewish thought and aspiration. "Rally round the synagogue!" is our slogan.

The home and the synagogue were the places of the Reform Jewish woman's religious activity. The local sisterhoods and the National Federation reinforced the former and served to create a role for women in the religiously progressive development of the latter. As

Simon said at the First Biennial Conference in 1915: "We do not believe in going back to the synagog. Our alliance with the synagog is a forward movement. Forward with the synagog is now our ruling passion".[156]

Despite this tie, however viewed, to "synagog" and movement, Simon offered the following invitation:

> We have a warm welcome for such organizations of women who, unable to attach themselves to a synagog, are nevertheless, more vitally interested in religion than in any other matter. We are warm in our welcome to so-called conservative congregations to join our ranks; and while Orthodox Sisterhoods may find some reluctance in active affiliation with us, they need not hesitate to seek our advice along lines of religious and congregational uplift.

This was not a matter of attempting to be an over-all Jewish women's organization - the time for that had passed. It was more a case of establishing the spirit of co-operation between equals, joined by the bond of Jewish sisterhood. As Simon added: "There is ample room in this country for Jewish women's organizations, and it is to be hoped that each will occupy a distinct field and function within whose sphere of operation it may serve its cause best".

As long as the Federation was committed to congregational work it seems that it was also possible to explore other involvement as well. Simon mentioned having entertained the idea of affiliating with the National Council of Women in America: "I am inclined to believe that membership in this body at some future time is likely to be helpful in clarifying problems in which women as women are deeply interested".[157] The idea that Jewish women could have interests "as women" was a further indication of the growing atmosphere of "women's issues" at the time.

"Sisterhood work" quickly became the summation of the Reform Jewish woman's religious role. It included involvement in the congregation, work on local and national committees, fundraising for HUC scholarships and other activities. The NFTS joined the NCJW in providing social services for Jewish soldiers during the First World War and was invited to be a member of the Jewish Welfare Board. In 1919, Mrs. Simon noted with pride that "many congregations have gone so far as to elect women to their official Board".[158] Increasing women's participation in congregational boards was to be a continuous

commitment of the Federation. By the early 1920s a spokeswoman could say:

> It is gratifying to know that so many Jewish women are now active on the School Boards of our religious schools, and that in many Temples they are represented on the Board of Trustees. They are naturally fitted to develop and understand the religious life.[159]

The Cult's image of woman as the "religious being" was apparently still popular. The speaker continued with what may have been a pointed reply to Rabbi Grossman:

> That they have confined their efforts to the home and not contributed toward the promotion of religion in the communal life to any great extent, until recent years, is due to the fact that they have not been called upon to do so, perhaps we might say, not even permitted, certainly not requested!

The first decades of the 20th century saw another developing Jewish movement recognize female potential. In 1913 a Conservative union, the United Synagogue of America, was established. The movement's guiding light was the newly appointed chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Solomon Schechter. It was clear to him, as it had been to many before him - Le ser, Wise and others - that American Judaism would have to make better use of its female members. Women were the key to Judaism's survival. Schechter wrote:

> It should . . . be the duty of this union to make its influence felt with regard to the religious education of women which is sometimes so woefully neglected in old congregations. It is through them that we reach the children in a country like America, where the husbands are so busy all week. It is through them that we can save a great part of the Sabbath, and it is through them that the dietary laws will be observed in the homes, I would even suggest that the Union assign a certain portion of its work to women, and give them a regular share in its activities. They can become more than an auxiliary to us, indeed helpful in many respects where, as conditions are in this country, their influence is more far-reaching than that of their husbands.[160]

By 1918, the movement had grown and an auxiliary, the Women's League of the United Synagogue was created. Its establishment had doubtless been influenced by the creation of the Reform women's organization five years before. One of the founders of the Women's Leage was Mathilde Roth Schechter, then the chancellor's widow. She was given a place

on the executive council of the United Synagogue, and while such an honor said something for that organization's view of her contributions to the movement, it was more exactly a sign of appreciation towards her late husband.[161]

In terms of women's religious role, Conservatism followed much of Reform's lead. "American" Jewish sensibilities demanded that mixed seating be adopted. Women played a role in congregational organizations and in the religious education of children. Yet, the traditional side of the movement restricted female participation in ritual areas, particularly the handling and reading of the Torah.[152]

By the 1920s the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods had proved itself to be an effective and efficient part of the Reform movement. The NFTS had fitted well into the UAHC, reflecting the careful planning that had preceded its establishment. The Federation, unlike the NCJW, had acquired instant "respectability" as part of the movement and had benefitted from the organization and support of its older brother - the UAHC. Reading through the proceedings of NFTS meetings of the early years one is struck by the paucity of philosophical debate. It may well be that being a part of the Reform movement of the day gave the NFTS a solid underpinning that therefore required little commentary, allowing for a concentration on "business". All these factors contributed to the high degree of organization and early success of the NFTS. It also doubtless benefitted from the experience of the NCJW, in some areas taking over a Council function, as in the case of religious school support. By 1922 the Federation counted a membership of 283 sisterhoods - 45,000 women. Reform Jewish women were organized and taking their place alongside men in the synagogue. How large that "place" was would be the subject of intense debate at the Reform seminary - the Hebrew Union College.

iii) The Ordination Question - First Attempts

"Whether the lady preacher would be a desirable inovation depends upon two things: First, whether the lady can preach; secondly, whether men will listen to her". So wrote Isaac Mayer Wise in the American Israelite on November 27,1890 (p.4). It had really been only a matter of time before the subject of a female rabbi came up in Reform circles.

Opening the pulpit to women would be the mark of their total religious emancipation which prominent Reformers urged. The Jewish community was by no means unanimously disposed to either side of the issue. Should we "train women as rabbis?" asked the conservative Jewish Messenger. It answered, "Certainly not".[163]

Yet the principle remained for some. And when a woman arrived on the scene who certainly "could preach", the matter heated up. Ray Frank's preaching reputation and her dynamic participation in the Jewish Women's Congress had received a great deal of attention in the press. It was she that Wise wrote of. Frank had proven that she could preach and make men listen. Female ordination, Wise believed, was held up by long years of conditioning:

> That a prejudice has to be overcome is certain; nor is it less certain that the prejudice is far stronger among Jews than among other denominations. The synagogue has always excluded women from participating in the celebration of its services . . . (but until the prejudice) becomes much less pronounced it is useless to think of putting ladies into the pulpit, even if any can be found both able and willing to occupy it.

Still, Wise added, for the sake of principle and justice women should be encouraged. They are "naturally" good at religion and would probably be better rabbis than some now holding pulpits: "There are, we maintain in this country Jewesses who are both able and willing to occupy the pulpit. We have opened for them the Hebrew Union College, because we wish some of them would prepare themselves for the ministry". Wise may have been exaggerating with regard to HUC, yet he remained one of the first and most devoted champions of the idea of female preachers. This can be seen as a logical extension of his other leanings regarding women's role. It also blended, at least for Wise, with the popular view of women as civilizers and higher spiritual beings: Would not these attributes be best exercised from the pulpit where women's "refining influences" would be coupled with the symbol of rabbinic authority?

Another prominent Reformer who addressed the subject was E.G. Hirsch. A month after the Jewish Women's Congress in 1893, he titled an editorial "Women in the Pulpit".[164] Hirsch's advocacy of women as rabbis clearly came from Cult imagery popular at the time. After asserting, "That there is ample room and call for a more extended and aggressive participation in our congregational and religious affairs

on the part of our women admits of no doubt", he described the sad state of many congregations and their "sad lack of enthusiasm".

> This condition of affairs calls for a remedy. It is clear that if any may bring about a change for the better, it is our women. Woman by nature seems to be capable of richer religious sentiment than is the sterner sex. Religion is synthesis. Intuition grasps totality where intellect loses itself in details. And that woman is dowered with quicker intuition than man, seems to be nigh universally accepted.

New cultural and economic necessities had left men "rarely so situated as to be masters of their own time. They are engrossed in their business or profession".

> The only leisure class which our civilization possesses is that of women in the families in more or less easy circumstances. Our synagogues have neglected to profit by this possibility. The churches have not. Their activiites are largely in the hands of their women. It were time we did emerge from our Orientalism in this respect.

If women could so rouse the congregation "schools and auxiliary societies" from their "wretched lethargy", "the question whether women should be admitted into the Jewish pulpit, admits of no negative solution. She is as much in place there as she is in any other profession". Hirsch went on, as Wise had done, to touch on the importance of well-rounded rabbinical qualifications for "the rabbi of whatever sex". Women candidates had to be as learned as their male counterparts. Novelty was not enough. Hirsch concluded: "Let us, if we must, have women rabbis, but let them be not only women but also <u>rabbis</u>".

Was Hirsch revealing a reluctance to the change in his qualification, "if we must"? Was he bowing unwillingly to the trend of the times? More likely, it meant, "If we are indeed going to ordain women, then we must make sure that they are well-prepared". Was Hirsch perhaps discouraging women from the rabbinate by emphasizing its demands and qualifications which few - if any - Jewish women had ever been able to prepare themselves for? This is doubtful. Like Wise, he favored women's ascent into the pulpit partly for women's own religious freedom and the dramatic end of their "oriental" second-class status, and partly because of the influence of the Cult of True Womanhood - women rabbis would be good for Judaism.

While Ray Frank was lauded and honored at the Jewish Women's Congress, even performing the traditional role of the clergy in offering prayers that opened and closed the meeting, she remained more of a curiosity than a role model. That she was a source of pride for many women is clear. An article on "The Jewess in San Francisco" in the American Jewess celebrated her accomplishments: "Miss Ray Frank, the woman rabbi, may stand as an exponent of the spiritual elevation of the Jewess . . . She has preached in the synagogues here and in the North, and has been offered a permanent position, but she has refused".[165] Two issues later, the magazine reprinted an interview with Louise Mannheimer by a "New York Press" reporter.[166] The reporter asked, "Do you expect some day to see a Jewish woman in the pulpit?" Mannheimer replied proudly, "We have a woman in the pulpit, though she has not been ordained. Her enthusiasm impels her to speak. She is Miss Ray Frank, of California".

Mannheimer's description of Frank is accurate. In the strict sense of the word, she was a "preacher", but not an ordained rabbi. Her unique position nonetheless attracted attention and exaggeration. The general women's press was even more prone to fantastic embroidery. In 1892 The Business Woman reported:

> To Miss Ray Frank, of California, is recorded the distinction of becoming the first woman rabbi in the world. She is the first woman student in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and has been urged by Rabbi Moses, the most celebrated Jewish divine in Chicago, to accept a congregation as he says women are needed in the pulpit.[167]

Frank did not complete rabbinical training at HUC. In November 1892, Wise wrote in the American Israelite:

> In the Hebrew Union College, among the different female students, we had one who heartily wished to prepare herself for the pulpit. We discouraged her, because it appeared to us, she had not the requisite oratorical capacities and without them success in the pulpit is not very likely. We can only encourage Miss Ray Frank or any other gifted lady who takes the theological course, to assist the cause of emancipating woman in the synagogue and congregation.[168]

Perhaps she found that the rigors of seminary work were far too onerous and dull for one who was a fiery, Jewish "evangelical". In the late 1890s Frank married, returned home to California and retired from public life. That she was an exceptional woman and preacher is clear.

Yet, women did not enter the rabbinate in droves as a result of her inspiration. Despite the encouragement of Reformers like Wise and Hirsch, the "prejudice" that the former had written of remained a powerful conservative force. Most Reform Jewish men and women were not ready to accept the idea of a female rabbi.

What was necessary, it seemed, was an official pronouncement on the issue by an authoritative Reform institution. As long as the question posed no immediate problem, it could be ignored. One wonders what debate would have resulted had Ray Frank or some other woman determined to finish the course of rabbinical study as early as the late nineteenth century. However, since none did, the issue took several decades to come to a head. It finally reemerged in 1922.

The question arose over Martha Neumark, who had been studying at HUC.[169] Her father, Prof. David Neumark, was a distinguished member of the faculty. Martha Neumark, then seventeen years old, petitioned to be allowed to conduct High Holiday services in the autumn of 1921. The HUC faculty was split over the issue, no doubt realizing its larger implications. Kaufmann Kohler ended the stalemate by voting in favor of Neumark's request. Noting that the time had come for a decision on the female ordination question, he recommended to the Board of Governors that a joint committee be established to study the question. Only one rabbi, Henry Englander, was entirely in favor of female ordination. The majority and the committee's chairman, David Philipson, could present "no logical reason" for continuing to exclude women but nonetheless, due to "practical considerations', the committee recommended that women be discouraged from entering the rabbinate.

Jacob Z. Lauterbach, professor of rabbinical literature and board member Oscar Berman were absolutely opposed to the idea of female ordination. Among their objections they cited the necessity of respect for religious tradition, the danger that Reform temples would become increasingly "an affair of women" - more than they already were - and the disruptive quality of a female presence at HUC might have in distracting the students from their work.

Unsure of what to do with the committee's report, the Board of Governors asked Lauterbach to prepare a detailed responsum to the question "Shall Women Be Ordained Rabbis". Lauterbach presented his conclusions

at the CCAR's annual meeting:[170] "The very raising of this question is due, no doubt, to the great changes in the general position of women, brought about during the last century or so". Lauterbach worked through the halachic material, noting the custom of excluding women from time-bound commandments, the different "spheres" of men and women, and the general disposition of the literature against women's public role. The problem with such reasoning, in a Reform context, was that the movement has based itself from its origins on the need to adapt and/or reject Jewish law to fit the changing world. Lauterbach devoted the latter half of his responsum to the importance of retaining the Reform rabbi's authority in the eyes of the rest of "Catholic Israel". To ordain women would be "a radical innovation which would necessarily create a distinction between the title rabbi, as held by a reform-rabbi and the title rabbi in general". He continued:

> We should, therefore, not jeopardize the hitherto indisputable authoritative character of our ordination. We should not make our ordination entirely different in character from the traditional ordination, and therefore give the larger group of Jewry, following traditional Judaism, good reason to question our authority and to doubt whether we are rabbis in the sense in which this time honored title was always understood.

The last major objection Lauterbach raised was based on the well-worn concept of women's sphere. How could a woman be a homemaker and a rabbi - it was difficult enough for her to juggle a less demanding profession with her household duties! How could a female rabbi marry and present the "proper" role model of a Jewish wife?

> In this important activity of the rabbi, exercising a wholesome influence upon the congregation, the woman rabbi would be deficient. The woman in the rabbinical office could not expect the man to whom she be married to be merely a helpmate to her, assisting her in her rabbinical activities.

The rigid separation of sexual roles would not allow a male to play the subordinate role that women as rabbinic spouses always had:

> And even if she could find such a man, willing to take a subordinate position in the family, the influence upon the families in the congregation of such an arrangement in the home and in the family life of the rabbi would not be very wholesome. Not to mention the fact that if she is to be a mother she

> could not go on with her regular activities in the congregation.

Women, therefore, could not be proper role models as rabbis. To the way of thinking represented by Lauterbach, molded by almost a century of "womanhood" as defined by the Cult, women could not act like men (or men, in the hypothetical case of the female rabbi's spouse, like women). It was simply not wholesome.

Lauterbach concluded by adding that he saw "no injustice done to women by excluding them from this office".

> There are many avenues open to her if she choose to do religious or educational work. I can see no reason why we should make this radical departure from traditional practice except the specious argument that we are modern men and, as such, we recognize the full equality of women to men, hence we should be thoroughly consistent. But I would not class the rabbis of Jewish tradition with those people whose main characteristic is consistency.

The discussion of the responsum is fascinating to read. Of the seventeen rabbis who voiced an opinion, twelve spoke in favor of women's ordination, four were against it, and Julian Morgenstern, as president of HUC, declared himself "here rather to listen than to offer any opinion I myself may have".

In opposing Lauterbach, many of the rabbis stressed the need for Reform to change with the times, especially on an issue of "justice" such as this. His supporters reiterated his points concerning the "specious" nature of the change and of the importance of a respectable Reform rabbinic title in the eyes of others. Practicality was an issue raised by many. Was it really practical to ordain women? Rabbi Abrams said no, feeling that "We are paying too much attention to what is being done by other (ie. Christian) denominations. It is the spirit and practice of Israel that should guide us. It would be a mistake to break with the traditions of the past". Rabbi James G. Heller, Wise's biographer, raised a salient point:

> Since traditional Judaism, Orthodoxy, did not require women to perform certain duties or functions, did not permit them to share in certain duties or functions, did not permit them to share in certain religious acts, it could not allow them to become teachers of these same duties. And, per contra, since Reform Judaism requires and asks of women the

> performance of every religious duty in the catalog, it cannot deny them the right to become teachers and preachers.

Julian Morgenstern suggested that those rabbi's wives who were present might well have opinions that would aid the Conference. Three spoke - and all supported female ordination. Mrs. Frisch, whose husband also supported the decision said:

> When I entered the hall this morning, I was opposed to the ordination of women as rabbis. I am now in favor of it . . . I now feel that whatever practical reasons I may have had cannot be compared in value with the matter of principle which has been mentioned here this morning . . . I do not believe that privilege should be denied women and it behooves us to go on record as being in favor of this movement.

Mrs. Berkowitz (Rabbi Henry's wife) used the same argument as had Wise and Hirsch, showing that the Cult image of women could be used to expand as well as restrict women's role:

> I am more than satisfied to be the silent member of our partnership, but I believe it is the function of women to give spiritual value to the world and especially the Jewish woman imbued with the Jewish spirit will naturally bring a certain quality to the ministry which some of our men lack. I think that might be enlarged and strengthened and therefore I should like to see our women become rabbis if they wish to do so.

Prof. Neumark spoke last. Point by point, he refuted the possible halachic objections to female ordination. As far as practicality was concerned, he saw no objection coming from the orthodox who "themselves employ women in their schools as teachers and readers, and more than this our woman rabbi will not do". Neumark saw female rabbis working within the same perimeters as Jewish women had previously been working. Ordination, he felt, would simply give them a measure of preparation and authority which women had previously lacked. Whether or not he truly believed that women rabbis would do no more than the women in orthodox schools - "teachers and readers" - is unclear. Would the female rabbi not preach, as Ray Frank and others had? If preaching was one of the Reform rabbi's greatest responsibilities, could a woman truly be a Reform rabbi and not preach? It is doubtful that Neumark was setting forth a double standard for male and female rabbis.

Neumark concluded by demolishing Lauterbach's concern over the "wholesomeness" of a female rabbi's family life:

> The woman rabbi who will remain single will not be more, in fact less, of a problem than the bachelor rabbi. If she marries and chooses to remain a rabbi, and God blesses her, she will retire for a few months and provide a substitute, as rabbis generally do when they are sick or meet with an automobile accident. When she comes back, she will be a better rabbi for the experience.

He rightly saw that by de-mystifying the image of woman-as-rabbi, that old "prejudice" could be broken down. Neumark concluded by addressing the idea of Reform/Orthodox relations:

> The rabbinate may help the women, and the woman rabbi may help the rabbinate. You cannot treat the reform rabbinate from the orthodox point of view. Orthodoxy is orthodoxy and reform is reform. Our good relations with our Orthodox brethren may still be improved upon by a clear and decided stand on this question. They want us either to be reform or to return to the fold of real genuine orthodox Judaism from whence we came.

Neumark may have been overly optimistic about Orthodoxy's view of such proceedings but he was correct in demanding that Reform judge itself in light of its own beliefs.

Following the discussion, the Conference President appointed a committee to draft a statement on the issue. It read:

> The ordination of woman as a rabbi is a modern issue; due to the evolution of her status in our day. The Central Conference of American Rabbis has repeatedly made pronouncement urging the fullest measure of self-expression for women as well as the fullest utilization of her gifts in the service of the Most High and gratefully acknowledges the enrichment and enlargement of congregational life which has resulted therefrom.
>
> Whatever may have been the specific legal status of the Jewish woman regarding certain religious functions, her general position in Jewish religious life has ever been an exalted one. She has been the priestess in the home, and our sages have always recognized her as the preserver of Israel. In view of these Jewish teachings and in keeping with the spirit of our age, and the traditions of our Conference, we declare that women cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination.

The statement was adopted by a vote of 56 to 11.[171]

The CCAR was not to have the last word however. The Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College met to discuss the issue. Of the eight members present, the two rabbis voted in favor of female ordination. The six lay members voted against it.[172] After close to eight years of study, Martha Neumark left HUC.

Rabbinic ordination for woman had been prevented by the "prejudice" that Wise had warned of three decades before. It was clear that no halachic case could be made against female ordination, and besides Reform did not see itself as bound by halacha. Moreover, appeals to a "Catholic Israel" called Reform's own legitimacy into question by positing a higher or more authentic Jewish authority. The problems of "practicality" and role models were more compelling. While the role of women in American society had expanded during the First World War and by 1922 included the right to vote, most Reform congregants remained conservative in their views of women in what were traditionally male roles. In the NFTS, women were separate from, but "equal" to the UAHC, a situation mirrored on a smaller scale by each congregation. A woman rabbi was still too radical a change for the majority of Reform Jews. In a culture dominated by the Cult of True Womanhood's image of woman, Reform could institute great changes in Jewish belief and practice yet could not bring itself, as a movement, to favor the ordination of female rabbis.

The woman's ordination issue would remain the great unresolved question in regard to the Reform Jewish woman's religious role. If she was truly equal, she could be ordained as certainly as a man. As long as societal forces were strong enough to support this contradiction, it could continue. If one demanded consistency, it was clear that Reform was lying to itself.

Addressing the CCAR in 1924, Julian Morgenstern spoke of "The Acheivements of Reform Judaism". Regarding the role of Reform Jewish women, he concluded: "But one privilege has been withheld that of spiritual ministry and religious leadership. And unquestionably in time that too must be accorded her".[173]

PART IV

AMERICA

THE PERIOD OF REFORM REORGANIZATION

I The Christian Woman's Religious Role

1) Going Nowhere Fast: The Stagnation of the Woman's Movement

By the mid-1920s it was apparent that the "Progressive era" of the previous decades was over. The carnage of the Great War, the triumph of Communism in Russia, and domestic turmoil, which included large-scale labor unrest, contributed to the growth of a strongly conservative national mood. Political reform movements, of which suffrage had been one, were no longer fashionable - in fact they could be seen as downright treasonous. A coalition of conservative business and church organizations began a political campaign against attempts at reform. They threw their weight against the passage of a child-labor amendment. The official organ of the Catholic Church denounced it:

> There never was a more radical or revolutionary measure proposed for the consideration of the American people than this so-called Child Labor Amendment, that . . . would set aside the fundamental principles of state's rights . . . would destroy parental control over children, and would commit this country forever to the communistic system of the nationalization of her children.[1]

The labelling of opponents "Bolsheviks" had emerged as a political tool for those who wished to put a stop to fundamental change in the status quo. Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent helped to publicize a U.S. Chemical Warfare Service Document which purported to show a "spider web" of connections between liberal women's organizations - especially pacifist groups, but also the Christian Temperence Union, the YWCA and others - and Moscow.[2] The women's groups were hurt by such attacks. Most tried to prove their patriotism by disassociating themselves from any platform that might be seen as tinged with pink. The few effective political coalitions that had grown out of the suffrage movement were hamstrung and broke up. The women's movement entered an eclipse that was to last for decades.

"Forty years in the desert" is how sociologist and historian Barbara Sinclair Deckard describes the experience of American women from the 1920s to the 1960s.[3] To be sure, there were occasional oases, yet the great women's movements begun in the 19th century shrivelled with disconcerting swiftness in the third decade of the 20th. Some

reasons for this decline are clear. The suffrage movement had so narrowed its sights on the achievement of the vote for women that once its goal was attained it quickly lost its raison d'être. The organizations that had grown out of the last stages of the suffrage battle, the National Women's Party (1916), the League of Women Voters (1919), and others became pale reflections of "the cause" soon after the Nineteenth Amendment had passed.[4] While the Women's Party continued the struggle for women's legal rights, and the League immersed itself in issues of general social reform, neither challenged what remained of the Cult of True Womanhood. Women had won the right to vote, but little else had changed.

The last gasp of the suffragist spirit was a proposed constitutional amendment introduced in the Congress of 1923. A mere eighteen words: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction".[5] Also known as the Lucretia Mott Amendment, after that pioneer suffragist, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) created great discussion within the surviving women's movement. The Women's Party, by sponsoring the ERA, hoped to do away with the legal restrictions limiting women's property rights in marriage, women's rights in divorce, and female employment opportunities, among others. It was opposed by the League of Women Voters and other groups who feared that the ERA would wipe out previously passed legislation which protected female workers. The split over the ERA and the conservative temper of the times had combined to sap the strength of the surviving women's movement.

A technological change was taking place in America as well. What remained of women's role as producer at home was further eroded by the appearance of ready-made clothing, processed and canned food, labor-saving devices like the vacuum cleaner, and other items. A vast new range of manufactured goods became available coupled with more sophisticated forms of advertising. Consumerism became a new force in society, and for the vast majority of women who did not have employment shopping became a major preoccupation.

While working-class women were forced to seek employment by the meager wages paid to their men, middle-class women could ponder the

merits of a career. The early women's movements had changed some societal attitudes. Working women - while hardly a great number among the middle class - were no longer a scandal, although they were far from universal approval. Women could also venture out of their homes or into a crowd without the company of their men folk. A new emphasis on personal "freedom" and independence was celebrated by the "roaring '20s" and symbolized by the apparently liberated flapper. A woman's choice of fashion, hairstyle, music or dance-step replaced the social activism of previous decades as expressions of her modernity. Individual style and appearance were far more important than any group consciousness. As Harper's Monthly Magazine approvingly saw it in 1927:

> Feminist - New Style professes no loyalty to women en masse . . . surveying her sex as a whole, she finds their actions petty, their range of interests narrow, their talk trivial and repititious. As for those who set themselves up as leaders of the sex, they are either strident creatures of so little ability and balance . . .or they are brilliant, restless individuals who so often battle for women's rights for the sake of personal glory.[6]

Most women felt "emancipated" by the vote, by a new sense of personal and sexual freedom and by the beguiling array of cleverly advertised new products. They saw little need for any further equality and this was buttressed by the highly conservative mood of the country. Yet women's new "freedom" in the 1920s was superficial: sociologists and advertisers stressed that woman's main role, indeed her duty to society, remained that acted out within the home. The Cult of True Womanhood had not disappeared; it had merely shifted its emphasis. A new romanticism stressed the woman's role as "wife-companion" to her husband in a home-life suffused with love and affection.[7] The new True Woman would properly treat marriage as her career: it was her job to provide her husband with a scintillating home environment and to maintain his interest in her, both mental and physical. Women's colleges and other institutions offered courses designed to help a woman "catch and keep" a man; home economics became a detailed science.[8] Childrearing too had become a far more complicated field. Experts boldly asserted, in the light of developing psychological theories, that most women had to learn how to be mothers. Children were best "trained to be happy", love was to be given a husband.[9]

The Depression narrowed women's role even further. The relatively small number of working women was reduced by a general perception that men needed jobs more than women. Discriminatory official practices removed married female civil servants whose husbands also held government positions.[10] Women who needed work as desperately as any man found their names at the bottoms of New Deal make-work programs. Supporting a family was a man's job - women belonged in the home.

The coming of another world war shook American society far more profoundly than had the country's brief experience in the Great War. The economy was much more highly industrialized and the commitment to the effort far greater than had been the case in 1917-18. Women were called on to fill the gaps in a wide variety of positions that had never before (and some, never since) been open to them. Yet this dramatic change was seen as a matter of unique emergency. "Rosie the Riveter" was hailed for her patriotism, while she and society both realized that when the men came home they would take up their jobs again and Rosie would return to the home kitchen. And so it was.

To a large extent, the post-war '40s, the '50s and the early '60s, replayed many of the same social trends that the 1920s had brought forth following the First World War. As women resumed the role of "wife-companion", it seemed that only the scenery had changed. The middle-class moved to the suburbs, new labor-saving technologies abounded and most women committed themselves to marriage and family. The traditions of the Cult of True Womanhood had adapted and developed with society for over a century, ensuring that despite alternative examples and the occasional rebellion of individuals, the popular image of the True Woman remained virtually unchanged.

Yet for a growing number of women the Cult-image was no longer enough. The lessons learned by working women during the war were not lost. Many post-war women found themselves better educated and inclined towards having a career. For most, employment was something exciting and important to be done before marriage. Others were beginning to question why the advent of a husband suddenly signalled the end of their own work outside the home. And still other middle-class women sensed a vague malaise that seemed to persist despite material and financial comfort.

2) The Emergence of Modern Feminism

By the early 1960s new movements for social reform had arisen. The growing civil rights movement was encouraging social critiques and re-appraisal. At the urging of prominent labor and club-women, President Kennedy set up a Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. Its report, American Women (published in 1963), detailed for the first time the ways in which women, like ethnic minority groups, had been treated as second-class citizens.[11] Legislative recognition came in the form of the Equal Pay Act (1963) and the Civil Rights Act (1964) which guaranteed women protection from negative financial or social discrimination.[12]

Literary contributions also helped women - and men - to realize the degree of society's limiting pressures on women. The most signigicant of these was Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique. Friedan gave that name to the post-war manifestation of the Cult of True Womanhood and urged women to give up the idea that being a homemaker was exclusively the most rewarding career a woman could ask for. Women needed to expand their view of themselves, Friedan argued, to participate actively in all aspects of society. Such involvement could only be beneficial; to women, men, children and society as a whole.[13]

The present day women's movement developed from two main sources in the late 1960s. The first represented mostly middle-class and middle-aged women of various backgrounds and occupations who saw the major need of women to be the continuation of the battle for equal rights and opportunities. Friedan emerged as an early spokeswoman for this group and in 1966 an assembly of like-minded men and women announced the formation of the first women's organization of the '60s - the National Organization for Women (NOW). NOW was founded as a tightly organized political lobby for furthering legislation (including the original ERA) that improved the position of women.

NOW's decision to work "within the system" and its hierarchical structure did not meet with the approval of all women. To those younger women who had been involved in the growing organizations of the student movements - New Left, anti-war and civil-rights groups - NOW's program did not go far enough. Coming out of the student movements, they were well aware of the subjugation of women within purportedly "radical" groups. Their experience had showed them, nonetheless, that a real change in women's position could only occur when the system

itself changed. "Women's rights" within existing structures would change little - what was necessary was women's liberation.

It is by no means within the perimeters of this study to detail the various strands, sub-groups and ideologies of the new women's movements. What is important for our purposes is to note the development of a feminist critical dialectic, especially among the women's liberation supporters. Utilizing the critical modes of the broader student movement, feminists turned their investigative gaze upon society and its history to examine the roots of women's roles. (The formalization of this examination created the field of "Women's Studies", just as "Black Studies" and "Native American Studies" grew out of the struggles of ethnic groups.) Just as the female abolitionists had recognized their own position, over a century before, the new feminists came out of another social movement and then, like their predecessors, turned their critical faculties upon themselves. It was not long before organized religion was identified as one of the major opponents of women's progress. Feminist religious criticism began to point toward a rethinking of the nature of religion itself.

3) Steady As She Goes - Women and the Churches

One of the most creative of the early feminist theologians was Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935). In 1924 she published His Religion and Hers in which she castigated religion, particularly Christianity, for not keeping up with women's changing position in society. Unchanging religious tradition had fixed the position of women and "Religion was supposed to be final, to be 'the truth', all the truth there was":

> Our belief in salvation rests on a previous damnation; damnation rests on "original sin", - the eating of forbidden fruit, - and that requires belief in the story of Eden. If the ancient Hebrew religion accepted the still more ancient Assyrian legend, stating that woman was made out of Adam's rib, for his personal accomodation, and that her subsequent interest in apples was responsible for the loss of that horticultural paradise it is not remarkable that the pious modern Hebrew still mutters his daily prayer of masculine superiority, thanking God that he was not born a woman.
>
> One religion after another has accepted and perpetuated man's original mistake in making a private servant of the mother of the race.[14]

Gilman believed that a new Christianity could rise above the idea of a dictatorial God and the collection of ancient myths that filled the

Bible: "Seeing God as within us, to be expressed, instead of above us, to be worshipped, is enough to change heaven and earth in our minds, and gradually to bring heaven on earth by our actions".[15] For Gilman, the teachings of the Social Gospel were still true, and women, once given the chance, would work as particularly able agents of its teachings;

> The new view of God brings a sense of boundless hope and power; so the new view of woman will change life utterly. Man will see her not as "his" but as a fellow-creature, strong, noble, free, competent in social service. The domestic subordinate, the too-concentrated and servile wife and mother will rise and rise in his mind, to her true place, a wife far more a friend, a mother not measured by devotion to one's self but as the chief channel of social improvement.[16]

Gilman, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton before her, had understood the central role religous tradition played in restricting women's position, and she realized that changing public attitudes would begin by changing private ones. Her book, however, was both past and ahead of its time. The world of the 19th century women's movements, Progressivism, the Social Gospel - all were beginning to change when the book first appeared. Such criticism of organized religion would not resurface until the 1960s.

The attainment of women's suffrage was a signal of change not lost on the churches. In addition, the growing acceptance of higher biblical criticism made it easier for those so-inclined to reinterpret scriptural passages that had been used to limit female participation in church organizations. It is also possible that some church leaders, sensitive to the anger and disappointment of women following the absorption by the churches of female missionary societies, were willing to recompense by allowing women greater access to church positions.[17]

There were positive signs for increasing female ordination. Two female Methodists founded the American Association of Women Preachers in 1919 and two years later the group began publishing a journal, Woman's Pulpit. That the women's movements had indeed affected some church leaders is made clear by the opening of more seminaries to female students. The Hartford Theological Seminary, training Congregational clergy, announced in 1920: "In view of the changed attitude toward the ordination of women, we no longer require women to state on entering the seminary that they do not expect to enter the ministry".[18]

"Women Workers Invade Nearly All Occupations" trumpeted the New York Times in 1923.[19] Describing the female "invasion" of the clergy, the Times noted that "women in the ministry, according to the census report, increased from 685 in 1910 to 1,785 in 1920".

> The Society of Friends has, like the Salvation Army, stood for sex equality from the beginning, and in the United States at least forty sects receive women freely into the pulpits. Recently a conference of the reformed wing of Jewish rabbis passed a resolution allowing women to be ordained on equal terms with men.

Times seemed to be changing, the paper reported, since

> as recently as 1921 appeared, in a church paper, this communication from a clergyman:
>
> "It would be a terrible thing for the _____ Church to ordain women in the ministry for, besides being unscriptural, it would tend to the feminization of the churches, increase tenfold occasions for scandal, faction, and unhappy and Satanic church quarreling and dangerously increase the spread of heresy, schism, error and fanaticism".

Such opinions had not disappeared. Certainly the Catholic Church had not begun to conceive of women in the priesthood and some Protestant groups remained adamantly opposed to female ordination. Among some denominations a more open attitude did not necessarily mean equality. In 1924 the Mehodist Episcopal Church began to allow women's ordination as local preachers - but withheld full membership in the church's governing body. The Presbyterians allowed women to become church elders in 1930 but denied them the rite of ordination.[20] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s other churches allowed lay women to speak before church conventions and even to hold positions on national boards.

The granting of the right of ordination was no assurance of employment or even encouragement in many cases. Active discouragement also took place. One church advisory board tried to push a female seminary student into other types of church-work besides the ministry:

> We are your friends. It is because we know so well the frustration awaiting any woman in the ministry that we are urging you to enter related work. We are trying to protect you not only from heart-break, but also from ridicule. Think of the sensationalism of woman evangelists. No matter how earnest you would be, no one would believe your sincerity. And consider our obligation to protect the dignity of the profession . . . There's only a slight chance you'd get a church and little promotion or professional advancement for you if you did.[21]

One way many churches made use of their female ordinees as well as laywomen was within the newly professionalized religious social service. Volunteers were quickly being replaced by church-trained "experts" in education, youth and social work and other areas, reflecting a similar change in general society. While providing meaningful work for women within the church structure, such employment also limited them to those areas. Futhermore, few churches were wealthy enough to afford such specialists - male or female - and when the Depression came, those services were usually dispensed with.[22]

The Second World War brought further changes in women's church status. Reaction to the Nazi restriction of women to "Kinder, Kirche and Kuche" (wherein "Kirche" was passive and women were not permitted to occupy men's positions), and the involvement of European women in their churches during wartime prompted a review of women's religious position after the war. When the World Council of Churches met in 1948 in Amsterdam one item of discussion was the "Life and Work of Women in the Church".[23] From this came an invitation to Dr. Kathleen Bliss to report on women's position in the churches. Her work, The Service and Status of Women in the Churches, was published in 1952. The book's purpose according to the General Secretary of the World Council "is not to offer solutions for the problems involved in these relationships. Its role is rather to show where the Churches stand today, at what points they may be able to learn from each other, and what questions need to be faced".[24]

Bliss set out the history of women within the churches, the development of their traditional roles and the functions they continued to perform. Her book was more than a recitation of historical fact - she clearly showed that men controlled church structure, allowing women to serve as it pleased them:

> Women have never found their place in the Church by imposing their will and their views; whether they find fulfillment or frustration depends on the relationship of the sexes - not only the relation of an individual man and an individual woman in marriage but the total relationship, governed by what men think of women, how they behave towards them and what women think of themselves. The question of the place of women in the Churches is not a "women's question". It might more truly be called a "men's question". Fundamentally it is a question of relationship.[25]

Because the various denominations had differing conceptions of this "relationship" women filled a wide variety of roles, those held in one sect contradicting those of another. Moreover, "a further confusion is caused by the fact that very few Churches have made up their collective minds on what they think about the position of women in the Church".[26] While the American churches surveyed for the study agreed that women were far more active in church affairs than they had been in 1940, "Tradition against their participation is often stronger than any legal barries".[27]

Female ordination was also a matter that needed broader discussion within the churches. Times had changed and women's role in society was reflecting that:

> What is needed is that there should start within the Churches, among those who care about this matter, a process of thought about women in modern society, an imaginative act of understanding, and entering into, a total experience. For there has been a revolutionary change in the place of women in society. Women not only live a very different life from that of their grandmothers, but - and this is even more important - they think differently about themselves.[28]

Bliss described reports from congregational women that assailed the limited role offered to women, in addition to the outdated image of womanhood advanced by many churches. Bliss asserted

> It is not much use for the Church to tell this type of woman that the role of woman is that of a helpmeet to man, that it is an honorable role and that man cannot be complete without her. This does not really mean anything to the woman who is a child of her age unless she is first assured that the Church accepts her own discovery of herself as fully a person.[29]

What Bliss was questioning were the elements of the Cult of True Womanhood that had remained a part of the churches' vision of women. Some women <u>were</u> going to work, and be working mothers - that was "a part of modern life". The stereotype, perpetuated by the church, "that women do not really <u>belong</u> in the economic sphere" has hindered a general Christian appreciation of "the new problems and opportunities before women".[30] This stereotype deeply affected women's status within the church as well and Bliss was not afraid to name its sources:

> Basically women are kept out of certain offices in the Church, and operate mainly in groups with other women, because a certain picture of what a woman is prevails in many church circles. Though few would

> admit as much, many Christians believe that the woman is a secondary being, an agent enabling and completing man; probing will uncover purity, still lurking in the most unexpected places. Many of the women who have written in the reports quoted in this book feel a sense of despair about the way in which Bible texts are used to justify and support already held opinions about the place of women in the Church.[31]

Bliss also commented on the way the churches seemed able to manipulate the tradition whenever it was expedient to do so:

> When Churches are in a desperate position for lack of manpower as they had been during the war, all sorts of service is gladly accepted from women: when the situation is eased, theological reasons against women doing this kind of work are at once raised. Some women feel quite as strongly the debasement of theology involved in this procedure as a true injustice to women!

The implications of Bliss' study were enormous. It was the first thorough investigation of women's role in the churches, and it was endorsed by a powerful official body - the World Council of Churches.

Not all of the member denominations agreed with the study's analysis, yet for most American churches it provided the final push toward opening the doors of church leadership to women. In 1953 the Disciples of Christ issued a statement insisting on total equality for women within every level of the church. The U.S. Presbyterian Church voted for women's ordination in 1956. Female Methodist clergy were granted full rights in the same year. The Divinity schools at Yale and Harvard encouraged women students as well.[32]

In addition to the new views coming from Europe, American churches were affected by other factors. Church membership was growing while at the same time there was a marked shortage of both professional church workers and clegy. When seminaries granted admission to women, the female graduates began to find various positions open to them. Need for trained leadership was possibly the major factor in breaking down the old Cult image of what defined the True Woman.[33]

Not all American churches were willing to accept such radical changes in their traditions. Despite support for a broadened role for women by some, many U.S. Lutherans resisted the idea. In this they found themselves practically alone among the American Protestant denominations - European Lutherans admitted women to the pastorate in the 1960s. While the ultra-conservative Missouri Synod remained firm, granting strictly limited lay rights to women only in 1969, certain of the

other Lutheran groups began to accept female clergy around the same time.[34] In 1957, five years after the Bliss study was published, a Lutheran pastor, Russell C. Prohl, had written his endorsement of it in a book called Women in the Church:

> The church has a vast resevoir of talent in her devoted and highly qualified women. To keep this treasure in storage is poor stewardship. It is time for the church to put to use, to the fullest extent, the mission potential she has in her women.[35]

By the early 1960s even the Catholic Church had begun to address itself to the position and status of women. The critical atmosphere of the time doubtless contributed to the church's own stock taking that culminated with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical Pacem in Terris of 1963, indicated a new awareness of women's desires and rights:

> Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person both in domestic and public life.[36]

Elsewhere he stated:

> Human beings have the right to choose freely the state of life which they prefer, and therefore the right to set up a family, with equal rights and duties for man and woman, and also the right to follow a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life.[37]

That the liberal concerns of the time also included women's position is made clear in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World which emerged from Vatican II. It declared that

> With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must sill be regretted that fundamental personal rights are not yet being honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace a state of life or to aquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men.[38]

While these passages were encouraging in showing that the Vatican felt the subject of women's status was important enough to deserve comment, they - and others concerning women - remained ambiguous. The effects of this apparently new point of view were not spelled out in

terms of specific church actions. Furthermore, other statements could clearly be taken as support for either more liberal or more conservative viewpoints. For example, The Church in the Modern World included this:

> Women are now employed in almost every area of life. It is appropriate that they should assume their full proper place in accordance with their own nature. Everyone should acknowledge and favor the proper and necessary participation of women in cultural life.[39]

What was meant by "their full and proper role" and "their nature"? What was the "proper and necessary particpaticion of women"? Pope John's successor, Paul VI also seemed to allow that, to a large extent a Catholic view of True Womanhood still dominated much Church thinking. In 1966 Paul said:

> For us [woman] is the creature most docile for any formation and suitable, therefore, for all cultural and social functions and particularly for those which are most congenial to her moral and spiritual sensitivity.[40]

Despite apparent signs of recognition and understanding, women's position in the Catholic Church was little improved by papal pronouncements. In fact, a rather contrary current seemed present. During the Vatican II meetings,a female economist was not allowed to present her paper and it had to be read by a man. Women journalists were at first prevented from attending the Council's masses and were only allowed in after vigorous protests by male reporters.[41] Pope Paul's continued disapproval of birth control and his steadfast opposition to the legalization of divorce in Italy further convinced many Catholics that a move to liberalize Church policy concerning women would have to begin at the grassroots level.

A feminist Catholic organization had been started in England in 1910 during the drive for female suffrage. This "Catholic Women's Suffrage Society" expanded after 1923 to become the St. Joan's International Alliance (an American section was established in 1965). Encouraged by what seemed to be positive thinking on women's rights surrounding Vatican II, the Alliance submitted a "modestly worded petition" to the Council Fathers:

> St. Joan's International Alliance reaffirms its loyalty and filial devotion and expresses its conviction that should the Church in her wisdom and in

> her good time decide to extend to women the dignity of the priesthood, women would be willing and eager to respond.[42]

The petition was the first public raising of the issue of female ordination in the Catholic Church.

With the growth and development of the feminist movement in the late 1960s, Christian women of almost every denomination began to apply feminist criticism to their status within their churches. For some women, as in the broader feminist movement, it became a matter of "women's rights" within a church, to have access to any and all positions for which they were qualified. For a growing number of others, "women's liberation" from negative stereotypes became as necessary within the church as it was without. The latter connection was made at the 1969 formation of a women's caucus at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches. Part of a statement by the caucus read:

> We begin our statement with an affirmation of support for the movement to liberate women in the United States . . . especially for those who have chosen to gather into the church . . . We will not be able to create a new society until and unless women are full participants . . .[43]

The critical examination of religion in general and the churches in particular by feminist writers has led in recent years to the creation of a new body of literature. Works available range through historical analyses of women's status and role, feminist liturgy, examinations of previous female experimentation and religious leadership, as well as powerful psycho-theological arguments for a radical redesign of traditional religion.

Judith Hole and Ellen Levine have divided feminist religious issues into three main categories: 1) challenging the theological view of women; 2) challenging the religious laws and/or customs which bar women from ordination; 3) demanding that the professional status and salaries of women in religious work be upgraded.[44] By far the most thought-provoking and creative concern was that surrounding the theological view of women. There again, Hole and Levine isolated the major problem areas for women in traditional religion - specifically Christianity. These were: that God is male, that women's subordination to man is divinely ordained (and in Christianity that "God's plan" for women was revealed in the writings of Paul), and that woman by nature is either "evil" or "pure" as symbolized by Eve and Mary.[45]

The divine origin of women's subject position had been debated years before by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the other contributers to The Women's Bible as well as by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Beginning in the 1960s religious feminist writing continued in much the same vein relying on the spirit and technique of higher criticism that put objectionable passages in traditional texts into a historical context. The problem of course with such systems was - where did one stop? If there was misogyny in scripture what did that do to a woman's conception of its origin? For some feminists such thinking took into consideration that while the "better" elements in religious tradition - those that emphasized the equality of all believers - might well have been divinely inspired, the texts themselves were, quite literally, man-made.

The damage done by the vision of women as symbolic of "evil" or "purity" had been that for men, through the medium of religion, women were seen as not real, but symbolic beings. The woman as "evil" faded from popular view with the coming of the Age of Reason, yet it remained in the image of woman as temptress. Woman as symbol of "purity" was the basis of the Cult of True Womanhood in its various forms down to the Feminine Mystique. Mary Daly, an influential Catholic feminist theologian, wrote in 1968 of the curious limitations that surround the concept of what had been called the "Eternal Woman":

> Subtly flattering to the male is the invariable tendency of the Eternal Woman school to describe woman strictly within the categories of virgin, bride and mother, thus considering her strictly in terms of sexual relationship, whether in a negative or a positive sense. It would not occur to such writers (who support that model) to apply this reductive system to the male, compressing his whole being into the categories of "virgin, husband, and father".[46]

What had been expressed in the past as a matter of separate "spheres" was revealed by feminist probing to be a rather restrictive use of a double standard dictated by men for women. The old Cult-approved/ Feminine Mystique image of woman remained so deeply ingrained in the popular mind that, when new opportunities arose for women that went beyond the old model, a tension was introduced. As Elizabeth Janeway has observed what happens when new female possibilities become available:

> The rational thing for women to do, therefore, is to change the roles and the goals that they set for themselves. But - alas! - it is just here that myth gets in the way, by insisting that the old role is not

> just the right role, but the only right role. Too many such women somehow find themselves agreeing that this must be so - and, consequently, trying to adjust their lives to a new reality while still fulfilling old obligations. The result is that they get stretched thin and nobody profits, not women, not husbands, not children, not society. Or else they resign themselves to playing only the old mythic role, and boredom and frustration breed resentment. Nobody profits from that situation either.[47]

The role of orthodox religion in perpetuating this mythic image of womanhood began to be recognized and explored. Friedan presented an example from a set of instructions to Catholic "priest-moderators" conducting panel-led discussion with married couples. Concerning the question "Can a working wife be a challenge to the authority of the husband"? it was suggested that

> Most of the engaged couples are convinced that there is nothing unusual or wrong in the wife working . . . Don't antagonize. Be suggestive, rather than dogmatic. The panel couples (previously coached) should point out that the bride who is happy at a 9-to-5 job has this to think about:
>
> a. She may be subtly undermining her husband's sense of vocation as the breadwinner and head of the house. The competitive business world can inculcate in the working bride attitudes and habits which may make it difficult for her to adjust to her husband's leadership.
> b. At the end of a working day, she presents her husband with a tired mind and body at a time when he looks forward to the cheerful encouragement and fresh enthusiasm of his spouse . . .
> c. For some brides, the tension of doubling as business woman and part-time housewife may be one of several factors contributing to sterility . . .[48]

The reward for women adhering to their male-defined "proper-place" had been the adoration of a cult that worshipped women as "virgin, bride, mother". Feminist writers realizing the price paid for such a "reward" declared that it was too high:

> Motherhood is a limited biological phase for a woman, which necessitates particular attitudes, such as support. But these attitudes are not lifelong definitions of woman's nature. Churches and conservative societies cultivating such a cult of motherhood obstruct women's full creative development of their personality.[49]

For many feminists concerned with religion the most fundamental problem to be examined was that posed by the male God. While religious authorities and theologians were unanimous in declaring that God is

above and beyond such categories as sex. Judaism and Christianity (especially because of its deification of Jesus) had continually described the Deity as male. Mary Daly underlined this confusion by quoting from the Jesuit scholar, John L. McKenzie:

> We have already noticed that in the Mesopotamian myths sex was as primeval as nature itself. The Hebrews could not accept this view, for there was no sex in the God they worshipped. God is, of course, masculine, but not in the sense of sexual distinction, and the Hebrew found it necessary to state expressly, in the form of a story, that sex was introduced into the world by the creative Deity, who is above sex as he is above all the things which he made.[50]

The result of such double-talk, some feminists felt, was the growing tendency over the centuries to equate maleness with godliness. Patriarchy, according to the myth, was therefore divinely ordained as the "natural" way of the world. Thus traditional liturgies were addressed to men and spoke of "fathers", "brothers", and "sons" - not their female equivalents. A more radical Mary Daly, writing a "Feminist Postchristian Introduction" in 1975 to her reissued earlier work, described the process and result succinctly:

> I would say that <u>sexist</u> conceptualizations,images and attitudes concerning God, spawned in a patriarchal society, tend to breed <u>more</u> sexist ideas and attitudes and together these function to legitimate and perpetuate sexist institutions and behavior. Briefly, if God is male, then the male is God.[51]

A fundamental change in women's role in religion would necessarily change the God-concept as well. When in 1977 Pope Paul reaffirmed the Vatican's opposition to female ordination, he stressed the importance of the priest's resemblance to Christ. As Naomi Goldenberg had noted,

> If the priest looked very different from Christ, a follower would not feel an immediate connection between God and the priest who was supposed to embody <u>him</u>. The Pope realized that people experience God through <u>His</u> representatives. If one were to change the sex of God's representatives, one would be changing the nature of God <u>Himself</u>. As the chief guardian of the Catholic faith, the Pope understood that he could not allow any serious tampering with the image of God.[52]

As we have seen the conception of clergy in various denominations and religions has contributed to the ease or difficulty with which the women's ordination issue has been faced. As Goldenberg and others have pointed out, if the religion identified the clergy with the male divine, acceptance

of women as clergy (and to a lesser degree in other positions) challenged the very nature of God. In other groups, where divinity was not seen as being invested in the clergy, the question of female ordination became a matter of accommodation with an earlier exclusively male tradition. Yet, some would argue, even if women could be accepted into an unlimited variety of religious roles - including ordination - the nature of religion itself would change. For some this was an argument supporting their denial of women's ordination and other rights, for others it represented true liberation. Goldenberg has written:

> As a psychologist of religion, I do not agree that improving the position of women is a minor alteration in Judeo-Christian doctrine. The reforms that Christian and Jewish women are proposing are major departures from tradition. When feminists succeed in changing the position of women in Christianity and Judaism, they will shake these religions at their roots. The nature of a religion lies in the nature of the symbols and images it exalts in ritual and doctrine. It is the psychic picture of Christ and Yahweh that inspires the loves, the hates and the behavior patterns of Christians and Jews. The psychology of the Jewish and Christian religions depends on the masculine image that these religions have of their God. Feminists change the major psychological impact of Judaism and Christianity when they recognize women as religious leaders and as images of divinity.[53]

The interplay between the old religious concepts and women's role in general society was being tested by the broader feminist movement - it could be <u>restructured</u> by feminist theologians with a resultant dramatic change in both religion and society. As Goldenberg has commented:

> Judaism and Christianity have never been challenged to the extent that they will be in the next decades . . . The women's movement will bring about religious change on a massive scale. These changes will not be restricted to small numbers of individuals practicing nonsexist religions within a sexist society. Society itself will be transformed to the point that it will no longer be a patriarchy. For if men are longer supreme rulers on earth, how could one expect them to retain sovereignty in heaven? . . . In order for systems of religions to prove inspiring in this new age such ideals of pluralism and experimentation will have to be reflected in religious doctrine and practice.[54]

Over the past one hundred and fifty years there has been a gradual but steady change in women's religious role within many Christian denominations. Such change was often bound up with broader social change as women's sphere expanded from home into society. Religious views of women

were not monolithic and seemed, at times, contradictory. The Cult of True Womahood placed woman as wife and mother on a pedestal. Abolitionist, temperance and other movements for social reform declared that while she was there she should use her "special influence" for the betterment of society. Women's involvement in the "larger home" of the world, led to questions about her role in the religious world. As the professions opened up to women, so, slowly, did the pulpit and the church board.

The social and religious trends of the 20th century also had a deep effect on the role of the Reform Jewish woman. How her position has changed and developed over the last fifty years is the subject of this study's final chapter.

II The Reform Jewish Woman's Religious Role

1) (Quite) Separate But (More-or-Less) Equal - The Organization Woman

Three decades of organization-building provided the Jewish woman of the 1920s with a new conception of her religious role. For the next forty years the role of "Jewish Organization Woman" would remain the major vehicle for female religious expression. Such a role would usually take one of several differing paths. Which path was chosen depended on one's class, status or denominational preference.[55] The National Council of Jewish Women continued to attract the major part of its membership from well-to-do Reform Jews. Hadassah tended to interest middle-class women of a traditional orientation. The women's auxiliaries of the various Jewish religious denominations were composed of the denomination's female membership.

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods as well as the Women's League of the United Synagogue shared many members with the NCJW. While the emphasis of the organizations was different - the former two stressing their religious (ie. temple/synagogue - movement support) role, the latter its broader philanthropic programs - there are examples of attempts at co-operation between them. An article in the Council's publication The Jewish Woman in February, 1924, while noting the differences between the groups, nevertheless approved an NFTS call to form a "committee of Friendly Relations" to co-ordinate programs and material between the organizations. The article echoed a Council resolution to that effect, passed at its most recent convention.[56]

The following issue of the Council's Jewish Woman contained an article by Mrs. J. Walter Freiberg, the President of the NFTS: "The Sisterhoods and Their Service to the Synagogue". Apparently addressed to Council members who were unfamiliar with the Federation, it provides an insight into the self-image of an important Reform Jewish woman. Freiberg stressed the special purpose of the NFTS:

> When the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods was organized eleven years ago, the religious keynote was sounded above all else. We have never departed from our original purpose. That the scope of our work has been broadened, that we have assumed new activities in the course of our progress is true, but each new task undertaken was assumed because of a religious motive, because we were primarily Jewish women.[57]

The Sisterhood, wrote Freiberg, "stands alone as a purely religious society. It is an adjunct of the congregation and its interests center principally around the Temple and the Jewish community". Of that other arena of woman's religious role, the home, she wrote:

> Woman today holds an entirely different position from that of former years. Her influence has increased and her religious activity has widened. Her influence in the home, where she is a true mother in Israel, is a powerful one. Here she should create a religious atmosphere, for it is with the child that her work is of greatest value. As the twig is bent the tree grows, and the careful religious training of the child cannot begin too soon. It is in the home that the spark of religion must be fostered until the flame lights the hearth and the home.

It is possible to sense here the feelings of a Reform Jewish woman in the years following the creation of the NFTS and the granting of suffrage. Indeed, it must have seemed that, as she wrote elsewhere in the article, "This is . . . the age of woman; all barriers are down and her ambition is limitless". At the same time, it is the traditional view of woman as wife and mother that is supported - in fact that is her work of "greatest value". Importantly, however, this is not her sole function. Freiberg cheers "the willingness and the desire of the men that our women assist them in awakening a deeper interest in religious problems", and she mentions that the Sisterhood member is "active on Temple Boards and in the Religious School, and she is indeed a force in the religious community".[58] It would seem that, for Freiberg and many others like her,

participation in the NFTS gave them a strong sense of equality with Reform men as well as an important feeling of being involved in something worthwhile and important. Being a part of a Sisterhood gave Reform women a positive religious identity.

The NFTS stressed its religious function and assumed a limited number of more general philanthropic responsibilities. The NCJW stressed its philanthropic work while at the same time trying to retain a "Jewish" dimension as well. Although the Council had finally passed a resolution affirming the Saturday Sabbath at its St. Louis Convention in the early 1920s, there were enough criticisms of the Council's lack of Jewish involvement to prompt a fiery editorial reply. Estelle M. Sternberger, editor of The Jewish Woman, wrote of "The Jewish Spirit of the Council" in October, 1924, detailing the many and impressive works of the Council in connection with Judaism.[59] Study courses for women on various Jewish subjects, Religious School work, production of literary material, prayerbooks for the blind and the deaf, aiding Jewish refugees - "When, in the history of Judaism, has any organization labored more earnestly, more loyally and more fruitfully"? Yet the criticism is indicative of a need that some Council members obviously felt was going unfulfilled in the everyday functioning of the organization. For Reform women wishing to express their religious role within an organizational framework, the NFTS would seem to have better filled their needs.

The pages of The Jewish Woman reflect the concerns of the Jewish Organization Woman. Should a mother work? asked a 1925 article, "The Job, the Home and Woman". After giving a very favorable view of working women who, like the Proverbs "Woman of Valor", can balance their responsibilities, and asserting that "Jewish women have been highly successful" in such efforts, the author concludes:

> Whatever her job, whatever her place, never for a moment does she, nor can she, forget what comes first. She chooses her career, but God chose her first - the woman of the race - to be the mother of the race. She can never forget that solemn duty encharged to her despite whatever paths or plans she may elect to take.
>
> She may challenge the conscience of society and question its judgement, but she cannot challenge her own. So long as her children need her they come first, and the job must follow.[60]

Despite the air of "biological destiny" here, what is interesting is that the idea of the working mother is not pictured negatively at all. Proverbs supports her and she may return to work when her children are able to look after themselves. This last is somewhat ambiguous, to be sure, but it is no closed door.

"Has Suffrage Caught Our Women Unprepared"? was the title of a Jewish Woman "symposium". Our respondent declared, "I should say that suffrage found the majority of women unprepared, and particularly the Jewish woman".[61] The writer, a suffragist herself, noted the apathy with which some Jewish women met the idea of civics and legislation study and applauded the Council's efforts to educate its members in this area. Of the three respondents to the question, she is the only one to mention Jewish women. She asserted:

> We have the leisure men have not, and until we give that leisure to our community instead of to mahjong, bridge and the matinee, we are failing in our duty, not only to ourselves and to our families, but also to our community.

It would seem that Jewish women who fought for suffrage as a first step were as disappointed as their Gentile counterparts in the combination of women's inertia and their increasing lack of group committment.

The Council's journal showed a serious attitude toward the situation of female workers, calling for improvements in labor safeguards in 1929. The effects of the Depression on working women was the subject of an angry editorial in 1931. Warning of "A Renewed Challenge to Woman's Emancipation", Estelle Sternberger wrote:

> In recent decades, woman has been making significant strides toward "emancipation". In some instances, the emancipation has been far-reaching, as in the opportunities for education and in the right of suffrage. In the religious world, woman has risen to a position of considerable influence though she is still a rarity in the ranks of preachers and on the faculties of our theological seminaries.
>
> The economic world is still the scene of a great conflict which is being intensified during the present economic depression. Those who view men as the breadwinners, are renewing the combat against women in business and industry. The scarcity of employment opportunities is impelling men to challenge every woman employed outside the home as vehemently as the use of child labor . . . There are thousands of women who are alone in the world and must earn their sustenance. And

> there are additional thousands who have been educated to the point where a career is a crying necessity for their happiness and self-expression.[62]

Such utterances were by no means popular at the time and the Council's integrity and courage are impressive. The sentiments expressed by the editor indicate the sense of justice and "fair play" that the suffragists and later feminists would display.

The NCJW was deeply involved in the international peace movements of the 1920s and '30s. It boasted an extremely active Peace Committee and was a founding member of the "National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War", which under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Cott became one of the leading American pacifist organizations. The March, 1925 issue of The Jewish Woman featured "Judaism and Peace", an assemblage of passages from Jewish literature on the subject put together on request by Dr. Abraham Cronbach of the Hebrew Union College. Cronbach himself was a renowned pacifist.

As part of the Council's continuing concern for quality Jewish education, Martha Neumark wrote an article for The Jewish Woman in 1925. Entitled "Bible Instruction in Public Schools", it suggested that Jewish leaders spend at least as much time introducing the Bible into the Jewish home as they did in banning its presence in the public school classroom.[63] Neumark called for a "reorganization of the Jewish system of religious education" and an improvement in teacher-training.

The Council was particularly sensitive about divisions within its ranks. In a paper presented at the Council's Western Interstate Conference a Spokane woman addressed the problem of "The Wall Between".[64] While acknowledging that within the NCJW "there is room for every Jewish woman of every shade of opinion", she related that:

> In our Section, however, there has frequently appeared an undercurrent of antagonism, which seems to be founded on the question as to whether the women of the Orthodox or the Reform wing should predominate. Those who thought that the ghost laid forever, find themselves very much mistaken, for the question has a way of cropping up every now and again. The mutual attitude of a few of our members acts like a handful of sand in the mechanism of a clock and interferes materially with the smooth functionaing of the organization.

The solution to this dilemma, a wall between Jewish women, is to let the wall collapse:

> Let both sides refuse to keep it in repair so that in time it will fall to pieces and we will be able to cart away the debris of two thousand years, leaving level ground where it once stood. This is a consummation devoutly to be wished. May it happen speedily and in our days.

The speaker seems to have been a Reform sympathizer - her view that that wall is "two thousand years" old must mean that she sees it as the divisive Halachic tradition already begun to decay. The problem cited, however, was a real one within the NCJW since its inception.

A more realistic way of dealing with the broad range of Jewish belief among Council members was suggested by Ruth E. Kohler in 1929. Writing in The Jewish Woman, she suggested that a broad sensitivity to religious feelings was essential to preserving unity, especially in connection with NCJW publications:

> There are so many ways in which Sections may unwittingly offend Jewish sensibilities that in the issuing of any publication care should be taken to insure harmony among a membership representing all points of view in Judaism.
>
> For instance, when a Section sponsors the publication of a cook-book it would be right and proper for the editors to delete any recipes that may offend those who strictly observe the dietary laws. Or when prayers from non-Jewish sources are issued, be sure that they do not contain some sentiment that may be contrary to the tenets of our belief. Neither should articles be printed or distributed as representations of Council Thought which would be sufficiently controversial as to be classed Orthodox, Conservative or Reform.[65]

For such a set of guidelines to be printed at all gives some indication of the level of Jewish religious sensitivity of most members of the Council. Despite a majority of women from Reform backgrounds or inclinations, the Council zealously fought to maintain its all-inclusive stance. In setting out "The Philosophy of the Council", Estelle Sternberger included as part of the NCJW's general principles that united and unified activity was central. The Council "has provided an organization that prevents the erection of mental barriers and the separation of its divergent religious groups into simply divided units".[66] Specifically:

> The National Council of Jewish Women, being representative of virtually all groups in Jewish life, shall not sponsor any movement or follow any procedure or policy that would violate the religious convictions and practices of any group within its membership. It believes, for example, that no united activity in behalf of Jewish womanhood is possible without complete understanding and regard for one another's religious practices and customs.

With such a strong and necessary concern for group unity, it is no wonder that the NCJW tended to emphasize its general philanthropic endeavours over its specifically Jewish concerns. Furthermore, as the NCJW ceased to be the sole Jewish women's organization, with the advent of NFTS, Hadassah, the Women's League and a host of others, the Council no longer had to feel particularly responsible for some of its original programs like Jewish Education,or service to the Jewish handicapped. The NCJW was the first truly national Jewish women's organization. By the 1920s other Jewish women's groups would take on or share much of its responsibility.

As has been seen, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods saw itself as a primarily religious organization with close ties to the synagogue and to the Reform movement, whose "Ladies' Auxiliary" it was. The NFTS continued its own wide range of programs of fundraising and support for Reform institutions. One of the Federation's proudest gifts was its building of a student dormitory at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Begun in 1921, the structure was dedicated four years later. Support for HUC and its students was considered an integral part of the Sisterhood role, nurturing the future leaders of the Reform community.

The range of Federation activity was extensive. Education for Sisterhood members was encouraged in addition to the traditional Jewish women's organization concern with religious school studies. Temple youth groups were supported as were university students in college towns. Work with the blind blossomed in 1931 as the Federation helped to found the Jewish Braille Institute of America. The NFTS, like the NCJW, was extremely active in the peace movement of the 1920s and '30s, its major involvement in the area of general social activism. The Federation was a member of the National Council for the Prevention of War and while it considered joining the National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War (to which the NCJW belonged), it never became more than a

contributing member in that organization.

The conscious attempt to remain primarily a religious rather than a philanthropic organization is evident in two examples from the Federation's 1928-29 proceedings. One committee presented a report on "Welfare Work" - detailing holiday gifts and visits to Jewish institutional inmates, the work of sewing circles on behalf of the "poor and needy", aid to orphanages and "baby milk funds". The report's preface was revealing: "Though philanthropy is not an emphasized part of our program, service to others is always a motto worth emulating . . ."[67] Smale-scale local "philanthropy" of the type described was well within the Federation sisterhood's sphere of operation. Larger scale, secular philanthropies were not. Some months later, the NFTS President, Mrs. J. Walter Freiberg, told Federation's 1929 Assembly:

> I beg to advise that with the approval of our Executive Committee, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods resigned from the National Council of Women. Our reason for doing so was two-fold: First, because the program of the National Council of Women holds no department of religious work, and secondly because the dues were raised from $25.00 to $100.00 per year. In view of the fact that we were unable to contribute or receive much benefit, due to the nature of the National Council of Women work, we thought it best to resign. As far as we were able to judge, this organization is interested chiefly in political and civic measures, and we, as a National Federation, are not.[68]

The resignation was also indicative of the changing times. Whereas the Federation had joined the National Council of Women in the excitement of the years just before the suffrage fight was won, when a sense of sisterhood united women of many faiths, by the late 1920s the vote had been achieved and much of the magic had gone. The conservative spirit of the day militated against many types of coalition. Most important, however, was the Federaion's understanding of its role and mandate:it was concerned with Jewish religious affairs, not "political and civic measures".

The 1930s brought a number of changes to the NFTS as well as to the Reform community. A paper delivered in 1930 by Mrs. David Lefkowitz of Dallas, a member of the NFTS Executive Board, touches upon two of these. Speaking on "The American Jewish Woman, her Status in the Community and in Congregational Life", Lefkowitz addressed "the field of religious endeavours":

> The Jewish woman was always close to the religious life, even as she always kindled the Sabbath lights; but she held no position of public influence in the Synagogue or in related work until the last two decades. Now, she claims and receives the fullest measure of influence and recognition in the conduct of the affairs of the Jewish community in America. The reason for this change is, I believe, two-fold. It has come about, first because of the intellectual preparation to which she has submitted in the twentieth century. The college-bred Jewish woman, the intelligently trained female administrator is abroad in the land. She naturally assumes leadership over her sisters and through this newly trained group the power and effective influence of the Jewish woman has grown immeasurably. The Colleges and Universities each year are sending out hundreds of Jewish women to direct the current of tremendous energy of their sisters.

What the speaker was describing was the growing professionalization of what had been an all-volunteer arena of Jewish social and organizational work. By the 1930s the sphere of volunteer activity was being greatly reduced and female professionals were finding their way into newly developing institutions. June Sochen has noted that

> the complexity of the communal structure and the variety of services provided by the Jewish community required centralization of all activities. Federations consolidated boards, streamlined function, and eliminated overlapping as best they could. Women's divisions in the federations, which began to appear in the 1930s, came into existence primarily as fund-raising arms to the myriad of social services organizations financed by the federation.[70]

Some of these new professionals took over the administration of the NFTS. In 1929 Rabbi George Zepin, the UAHC's executive secretary who had served the Federation in the same capacity since its birth, was replaced at the NFTS by Helen L. Strauss.

Another reason for such a change in the area of Jewish women's religious work, according to Lefkowitz, was the growth of the organization. After detailing the activities of the Federation she adds:

> But best of all, through the sisterhoods the women of Israel are coming to know more and more of their Jewish heritages, are turning more loyally to the synagogue, and are bringing back into the Jewish home some of the most beautiful of the previously banished Jewish ceremonials.

This return of the "banished" ritual marked the major religious realignment taking place within the Reform movement during the '20s and '30s. Whereas Classical Reform had dispensed with much traditional ritual and practice, the growing Neo-Reform conception called for a re-evaluation of Reform's 19th century premises about what was worth retaining within Jewish tradition. The culmination of this process would be in the Reform movement's restatement of its principles, the Columbus Platform of 1937, which allowed for a wider interpretation of Jewish tradition. It is interesting to note that as early as 1930 a prominent NFTS Executive had publicly applauded the Neo-Reform tendencies.

The NFTS was proud of the position of women within the Reform movement and the large degree of autonomy and respect extended to the Federation. At its 1931 assembly, the first session was a joint meeting with delegates of the UAHC and the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods formally opening the larger XXXII Council of the Union. As part of her greetings to that convocation, the Federation's president, Martha Levy (Mrs. Maurice) Steinfeld chose to emphasize the equality of the sexes as a Reform tradition. She recalled the guiding hand of Isaac Mayer Wise:

> For it was Isaac M. Wise who first enfranchised the American Jewess in the Congregation, recalling her from the isolated gallery to her rightful place at the side of the man worshipper. "She must be given equal rights with the man in the synagogue", he said. "Her religious feelings must be allowed full scope for the sacred cause of Israel".[71]

Wise was seen as the great visionary emancipator of Reform women, and the Federation was aware of its indebtedness to his championing the cause of female equality within Judaism. Steinfeld reasserted the change in women's religious role. "There is a difference", she said:

> The woman of the past looked out upon a narrow sphere of activity; today the woman gazes upon a wide arena. In the past, women's works "praised her within her gates", today, "the entire community rises to call her blessed". In the past, the Jewish woman served only her individual home. Today, the Synagogue, the communal home of the people receives much of her time and attention. She participates in the Administration of the Synagogue itself. A woman trustee is no longer a novelty. The day of her inferiority is a memory of the Dark Ages.[72]

That there was indeed equality in certain areas is clear. There were women occupying various positions within the synagogue. Almost all of them were Sisterhood members - though that made good sense in view of the sisterhood's image as the vehicle for a female religious role. What is intriguing is that while Sisterhood members were active in administrative capacities, their role in temple ritual apparently remained limited. This is indicated by the rarity of women's direct involvement in the religious service, remarked on in the Federation's Religious Committee Report of October,1930:

> We wish to report an unusual happening this past holiday season when Mrs. Isaac Born of Indianapolis occupied the pulpit of her congregation for the Children's Service on Yom Kippur. Likewise Mrs. J. Walter Freiberg and Mrs. Louis I. Egelson read portions of the Haftorah at the Rockdale Avenue Temple, on Yom Kippur.[73]

While the "unusual happening" may refer in particular to participation in the Yom Kippur service, that in itself is worthy of note. Though an earlier report (1928) mentions that "reports tell of our own members occupying the pulpits and preaching Sisterhood ideals", the most common involvement in the service was "furnishing flowers for the Altar".[74] The Sisterhood "Religious Committee" became the "Committee on Religious Extension" by 1935. Its role, as defined by the Manual For Sisterhoods, issued in 1954, was to encourage Sisterhood members "to enter into the religious (ie. ritual) life of the congregation":

> If the rabbi requests the women to present the candle-lighting service at Friday evening worship services, he looks to his committee [the Sisterhood committee] for the names of participants. Some congregations have two participants every Friday evening, a Mother and a daughter, one to light the candles and one to lead the prayer. One sisterhood cooperates with the rabbi in appointing weekly a husband and a wife who served as "lamplighter" and "cupbearer" for the candle-lighting and Kiddush services.[75]

The yearly "Sisterhood Service" offered members a chance to participate more fully, though it was a once-a-year experience. Still, said the 1930 report, it "is often a revelation of what the women may do if they ever enter the rabbinate. It is the opportunity which our Sisterhood members should take to express themselves and become an active part of congregational life".[76]

A highlight of the Ninth NFTS Assembly in 1931, was an address by Lily Montagu, the pioneer of Liberal Judaism in England and founder of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. In her speech, "Women's Part in the World Union Movement", she described the importance of woman's Jewish role as educator and role model to her own and other children, and especially her work to create and maintain a vibrant Jewish environment at home. Though some of her comments remained tinged with the rosey language of the "Cult of Jewish Womanhood" when discussing women's home role, she did not ignore the broad range of responsibility that called for the Progressive Jewish woman's time and activity. She added:

> I lay particular emphasis on our responsibility, as women, in this work, because Progressive Judaism has given us a position of equality with men in religious responsibility. Have you realized what a difference the confirmation of girls made in the history of our corporate life? You in America have had this privilege for several generations, so you take it as a matter of course. But, I can tell you, that preparation of boys and girls, on identical lines for confirmation, produced nothing less than a revolution in religious thought in our country. Then our Temples and Synagogues (gave) us equality and membership.[77]

Equality for women meant added responsibility and duty, as other Reformers had declared decades before. Montagu also spoke of the need for American and English Progressives to act as role models for others:

> On the question of woman's position in the Synagogue, for example, there exists at the moment the greatest variety of custom in the countries federated together in the cause of Progressive Judaism. It was my privilege to preach in the Reform Synagogue in Berlin, but Germany, the mother of Progressive Jewish thought, has numbers of Liberal Synagogues in which the women are segregated in a gallery, while the men take part in the service from the body of the hall. Do you see how our testimony may stimulate the advancement of other groups?

Montagu gave Reform women a sense of international duty and influence, and perhaps made them realize the uniqueness of their "equal" position. This added feeling of deep indebtedness to the movement, may have made Reform women reticent to press for additional concessions - especially female ordination. Many may have felt that further emancipation could only come with time and out of the reasonableness and justice inherent

in Reform ideology. Such a feeling was reinforced by the acceptance of women - NFTS officers - on the boards of Reform institutions. Mrs. David Lefkowitz, as Third Vice President and Chairwoman of the Federation's Committee on Religious Extension in 1936, was also a member of the UAHC's Board of Managers.[78] Two years later Mrs. Leon L. Walters became the first NFTS President (and woman) to be elected to the HUC Board of Governors.[79] The recognition of the NFTS contribution to both the Union and the College was a large part of the reason for Federation members appearing on the various Reform boards. It is more difficult to say what the attitude of male board members was toward them as women. The NFTS had certainly proved its organizational and programatic abilities and supported both the Union and College with generous financial gifts. What is clear is that women were in these bodies because of their involvement and position within the Federation, not necessarily as skilled, capable people. The unbalanced representation on the various boards would only become a public issue later, in the 1960s.

In 1933 Jane Evans became the Executive Secretary (later Executive Director) of the NFTS. One of the reasons she accepted the position was her feeling that, as the shadows of Nazism spread across Europe, Jews should become more active in support of their communities.[80] In her first report to the Federation's Executive Board she spoke of her conception of the organization:

> The pattern of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, as reflected in the activities of its various committees, is a modern projection into practical deed, of the ideals of our forebears. We are faced with the challenge and responsibility of creating a program that will express an intelligent enthusiasm for Judaism. Such an enthusiasm contents itself only when translated into positive action. We must remember that within our heritage is the message of the Prophets of Israel, who interpreted religion in terms of service.[81]

Of the effects of the Depression on the NFTS, Evans later said,

> I suppose it would be glamorous to say the pressures of the '30s made the NFTS more mindful of the need for social justice, but it wouldn't be completely true. From its earliest days NFTS had been acutely aware of such problems as peace, world relations, social justice and education for a better national and international life. It happened that the '30s for us included continuing expansion despite the great economic distress of the early part of the decade. We should not take all the credit for this. American Reform

> Judaism through each decade was growing in the United States in organizational strength and numbers and we with it.[82]

Evans remained as the Federation's professional leader for over forty years, always believing that the professional staff was to work behind the scenes to build up the organization's lay leadership.[83] During World War II she was loaned as Executive Director to the National Peace Conference and participated in that body's delegation to the United Nations. In 1959 she received an award of achievement from the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations. Jane Evans' work typified that of the growing body of dedicated Jewish professional women that came of age during the difficult years of Depression, war and its aftermath.

By 1938 the NFTS had grown to include 363 sisterhoods - approximately 55,000 women "throughout the English-speaking world" - and declared itself "the largest Jewish woman's religious group" in the world. In 1936 the Federation had instituted a Sabbath morning radio program, "Synagogue on the Air", to reach Jews who had no opportunity for formal Jewish contact. Sisterhood members were well aware of the dislocation of European Jews and in 1939 the NFTS formed a Special Committee to Aid Refugees.

Throughout the war, the Federation continued its regular programs and added a host of other activities. It co-operated with the NCJW and the Joint Distribution Committee in aiding war refugees; it supported the Jewish Welfare Board and USO by aiding those in uniform. Members were active in all facets of life on the "home front", particularly in the Red Cross. A unique fundraising drive was instituted in 1940 on behalf of Liberal Jewish Refugees in Palestine to enable them to reorganize their congregational life. Member sisterhoods were encouraged to collect silver coins for this purpose at all meetings. The international outlook apparent within the Federation was given focus in the organization's newsletter Topics and Trends:

> It seems quite natural that in seeking aid, the Liberal Jewish mothers in Palestine should turn to us, the Liberal Jewish mothers of America. In assisting these struggling congregations in their new home we are helping fellow Jews even while we rebuild a pillar of the structure of Liberal Judaism. In Palestine, Reform is obviously coming to grips with problems of daily life and human destiny.[84]

The program carefully skirted the issue of Zionism which remained an item of hot debate in Reform circles. Sisterhood women were asked to help their refugee Liberal Jewish counterparts in Palestine, "Mother to Mother". It was a humanitarian, not a political issue.

The post-war years saw the NFTS dedicate itself to the Union's headquarters building project - "The House of Living Judaism" - in New York. The Federation was instrumental in raising funds for the cause, and the structure was dedicated in 1951.

The 1950s and early '60s were the years of what Betty Friedan has called the "Feminine Mystique". This later incarnation of the Cult of True Womanhood created a new mystique surrounding a woman's exclusive role as wife and mother. Caring for her husband and children, maintaining the home with all the latest labor-saving devices, the American housewife was pictured as the ideal of all women. At the same time the move to the suburbs in which many Reform Jews took part, created the setting for urban Jewish life that still predominates. How did these factors affect Reform women and the NFTS? While many suburban women (according to Friedan) found themselves overwhelmed by their attempts to live up to the '50s-style "True Woman", their major sense of dismay seems to have been a lack of some meaningful, creative outlet. For a great number of women, being exclusively a housewife, was not living up to the advertising.

Those Reform women who were deeply involved in sisterhoods <u>had</u> that outlet available to them at least to some extent. Sisterhood provided an arena in which they could excel and feel reaffirmed. It allowed them to learn and practise intricate skills, socialize and expand their horizons. Its higher executives often sat as equals on the synagogue boards. Critics might point out that many groups were mere social clubs and were part and parcel of the Feminine Mystique which relegated women to roles centering around the home that did not interfere with the "real world" of men. Some sisterhoods indeed were little more than social clubs - yet even there, certain skills could be learned, power could be exercised and women could feel that they were more than simply the appendage of husband, children and material possessions. A social life that was a woman's own - made up of <u>her</u> friends, not necessarily those of her husband or those they had in common - could also provide a sense of control over one's own life. Jewish women

just as other American women around them, were doubtless affected by the slick sell of the Mystique-peddlers. Yet sisterhood-involvement, by providing an opportunity for self-expression and development might have served to counteract the "happy housewife" propaganda with the obvious truth of female capability.

In examining the NFTS Manual For Sisterhoods (1954), both the influence of Cult/Mystique as well as the reality of women's possibilities are evident. While originally organized to "lend a helping hand to the male members of the congregation", the sisterhood had matured to a point of concern "with every interest of the Temple and its religious school" and the "religious educational needs of its members".

> Most sisterhood members are homemakers and so they are ever mindful of their role as mothers, of their duty to give their children religious faith, a healthy respect for all creeds, and a sense of responsibility to their fellow men.

Yet, there was more involved than being a proper mother:

> Because a good Jew must be concerned with the welfare of his fellow men, the Sisterhood encourages its members to participate in the civic tasks of its community; it emphasizes study by its members of public affairs, and is concerned with departments of work which make for better living in the world.[85]

Sisterhoods would provide interested women with a chance to be leaders, to speak in public (the Manual included detailed instructions for this down to what to wear), and to contribute to the improvement of their community. Some of what the Sisterhood woman did at Temple strongly resembled her areas of expertise in the home - according to the Mystique. Hence, "In most Sisterhoods, kitchen work is a necessary activity" (though some used such work as a source of fundraising). "Many women who are new in the community make their first and most lasting friendships while working in the Temple kitchen".[86] Just as the woman was supposed to keep her home spotless, so with her larger home, the Temple. "Most Sisterhoods supervise annual housekeeping and refurnishing, as well as the daily care of Temple property. A sisterhood should pride itself on the attractiveness of its meeting room; no matter how old and inadequate in size a Temple building may be, immaculate neatness and good housekeeping are always possible". This belief that women still had certain natural areas of proficiency on occasion hearkened back to the Cult's view of women's "special" sensibility. In this

1957 report, the President of the UAHC spoke of the Federation's place on the newly formed Commission on Social Action "where the heightened sensitivity of our Jewish womanhood has prodded our conscience into ever greater endeavors to heal the hurt of humankind".[87]

When the NFTS celebrated its Golden Jubilee Aniversary in 1963, it could look back upon half a century of dedicated work. Two years before, in 1961, the Federation had passed a resolution urging that the long dormant issue of women's ordination be studied and a definitive stand be taken at the next Biennial. In its 50th year therefore, the NFTS called for the first time upon the leaders of the CCAR, UAHC, and HUC-JIR to join with those of the NFTS "to determine appropriate action for the ordination of women as Rabbis".[88]

In a special anniversary message, Mrs. Irving E. Hollowbow, President of the NFTS, spoke of the organization's growth:

> Today the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods is a fellowship of 605 groups throughout the United States including Hawaii and the Virgin Islands, and in the cities of Canada, Cuba, Panama, Netherlands, West Indies, United Kingdom, Union of South Africa, Australia, India, and New Zealand. NFTS membership, now over 105,000, is dramatic proof of the ever-increasing role women are playing in Jewish and communal life.[89]

Hollobow perceived the tensions that existed in the life of Reform women, yet asserted the strength of continuity:

> If she lives in the suburbs, she may be caught in the trap of a multitude of duties concerned not only with her own family but with many other community efforts and drives.
>
> Her schedule is long. She has less freedom, less leisure, but if she were to come face to face with the Sisterhood member of 1913, she would certainly share with her an awareness of the centrality of the synagogue in Reform Jewish life . . .
>
> They would recognize each other in terms of devotion to service - service to their families, service to the synagogue, service to the Jewish community, service to humanity everywhere.

"But what of the time ahead"? she asked. Temple life and society itself are becoming "enormously fragmentized":

> As women return in increasing numbers to the business and professional world, changes are already reflected in the nature of their role in organizational life. Meetings are held not so much for entertainment and fellowship as for programs of productive and meaningful service.

Once again society's image of women was beginning to change. Yet this time women themselves would take an active part in the type and extent of change. The role of women in both general and religious society was coming under close scrutiny. The sisterhood woman, with a foot in each world, would become both the changer and the changed.

By the 1960s, Jews who had moved out into the suburbs during the previous decades had established themselves, their families and their congregations. A sociological study was commissioned in the first half of the decade by the American Jewish Committee. A suburban area surrounding a large midwestern city was chosen and labelled "Lakeville" for purposes of anonymity. The community had five synagogues: four Reform and one Conservative. The study's authors, Sklare and Greenblum, noted a number of particulars concerning the religious role of Jewish women.

Intrigued by a numerous group of respondents whose synagogue attendance exceeded their home observance, the authors reported this as a sign of a "pervasive acculturation" representing "a decisive break with the Jewish sacramentalism of old":

> The most striking example of such a break is the type of woman who joins the congregation for Sabbath worship but does not perform the mandatory ritual of lighting the Sabbath candles in her home. According to Jewish tradition, such behavior is anomalous. It would seem that hersacramental pattern has been influenced by the environment, with its stress on public worship, for instead of observing one of the three mandatory "womanly" mitzvot, this woman performs an act which is optional for her sex: that of attending a religious service.[90]

What else is apparent here is the legacy of Reform ideology - at least among the women of that denomination. The system of divinely-inspired mitzvot that dictated the traditional Jew's religious life was greatly de-emphasized in Reform. Public worship was the way modern Jews expressed their religion as did their Christian neighbors. Indeed rabbis and women's organizations had urged Jewish women to retain many home rituals to provide their family with a domestic Jewish environment. Yet the increased attention to public worship was not lost on many of them. For many acculturated Jews throughout the 19th and 20th centuries - if they were concerned with any sort of Jewish identity - the focus of their Judaism was the synagogue, not the home.

Another reason for women's increasing focus on the synagogue may have been the adverse effects of the Feminine Mystique on suburban women. Whetеher or not they were inclined to light candles on Sabbath evening, the Synagogue represented a chance to get out of the home, to meditate, to be stimulated by a sermon or presentation and to socialize. For these women, life on the suburban frontier was similar to that lived by women a century before in the growing cities of the American West. To those 19th century women, church (and often synagogue) attendance was the high point of their week, offering the same opportunities then as the Lakeville women found in their places of worship. Such factors may be responsible for another occurence the study notes. The Classical Reform temple in Lakeville introduced vesper services late on Friday afternoons. Since the temple held its major services on Sunday, the vesper service was proof of "the persistence of the feeling that Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath". It was therefore not publicized and yet "from one to eight persons come, all women".[91] Sklare and Greenblum provide the following analysis:

> This suggests that in Classical Reform it is the woman who is the most traditional and the most pietistic. A similar tendency is observed among the Catholic and Protestant laity. The sex composition of the vesper service thus demonstrates again the far-reaching acculturation of the (temple's) constituency to general religious norms.[92]

This "acculturation" includes the Cult idea that women are the more religiously inclined sex, a view that is, as we have seen, at variance with the traditional Jewish model. It is therefore not surprising that in the Classical Reform temple we find the same image of woman as existed in 19th century Reform. Praise of woman as the "foundation of society" echoed through church and temple in the era of Mystique just as it did during the high times of the Cult of True Womanhood.

The Lakeville study also noted the greater involvement of women than men in organizational life. Eight of ten women belonged to one or more Jewish organizations that were not connected with their synagogues and half the women were active in more than one (only six of ten men were involved in one or more groups, and only one third had more than a single affiliation).[93] A full quarter of the women surveyed were on an organization's board or executive. The authors continued:

> The usual reasons cited for the new predominence of women are: 1) that the responsibilities of the man in business and professional life makes it difficult for him to be active in communal affairs, 2) that the lack of such responsibilities on the part of the woman makes it easier for her to be active, and 3) that since the woman has a small family and is not gainfully employed, she is motivated to search for meaningful activity in fields of endeavor such as communal affairs.[94]

Are these reasons valid, they asked? Men were indeed less involved than women in all organizational work, Jewish and secular. In addition, time for such involvement must come from leisure hours, and the middle-class Jewish suburban woman had not only a greater amount of time and flexibility than the man but was also more strategically situated. These remain "secondary considerations" to the authors. Many men had ample leisure time and chose to spend it in areas which were "personal, non-philanthropic and intended for amusement". Such a use of male time, note Sklare and Greenblum, is not traditionally "Jewish". Thus they conclude "that changes in the area of values, rather than in the character of occupational life, are the strategic considerations".[95]

Such a change in values did not suddenly spring up in the suburban Jewish communities of the 1960s. It is in fact, a continuation of the trend begun by Jews who found themselves in an America of industrial and general economic growth. Many no longer had time for their traditional philanthropic activity, hence it was inherited by the women. It would seem that the values were changed by economic realities, not the other way around. Indeed, the values never changed - they were merely transferred from the sphere of one sex to the other.

For the housewife of the 1960s, a very similar dynamic operated. Yet she had even less reason to remain at home, which she was still told was her "place", than her 19th century predecessors. New technology had "freed" her, yet for many the question remained, "free for what"? Synagogue - or organizational involvement - was the answer for many Jewish women. Whereas men sought recreation in their time away from business, women sought a serious business-like outlet for themselves in their leisure hours. As the study reported:

> A greater proportion of women . . . appear to seek involvement in instrumental organizations - groups that give them an opportunity to affect

> the lives of others. The evidence indicates that women are more commonly attracted to organizations with concrete and tangible goals than to those that only stress conviviality.[96]

This was further proof of a change in sex roles:

> According to traditional (Jewish) norms males are the more serious sex - the sex whose horizon is not limited to the frivolous or the personal - and communal responsibility is uniquely the province of those whose life is devoted to the pursuit of the serious. But in Lakeville we find that is is the woman more than the man who desires transcendence, or at least who does so in the area of communal affairs. In the words of a young college-educated mother of two small children who finds ORT (a Jewish organization with heavy female support) to be her most satisfying affiliation, "I really have the feeling that this is the one thing I do that isn't for myself or my children. It's really helping others".

Yet it is precisely her involvement in helping others that strengthens her sense of worth and self-image. The issue was not one of female religious proclivity, as Cult and Mystique would have us believe. It was a matter of self-affirmation and confidence. For women it was involvement in female organizational life, what had been left to them as part of their "religious role", that gave them a sense of definition and possibility.

2) Jewish Feminism - Reinventing the Religious Role

How did the rise of the contemporary women's movement affect Jewish women? To be sure, many of the movement's major spokeswomen were Jewish - but was a Jewish feminist the same as a feminist who was Jewish? Jewish Feminism, the movement to liberate Judaism of female stereotypes and sexual inequality, developed some years after the rebirth of general feminism in the 1960s. In fact, Judith Hole and Ellen Levine (in 1971) took particular note of the "noticeable lack of organized feminist activity" within the Jewish religious community in contrast to the involvement of Christian women.[97] They suggested several reasons for this:

> A good portion of the feminist attack within the Christian religious community is against the symbolic image of women articulated by Christian theology. A parallel "theological" or "symbolic" image of women does not exist in Jewish teachings. For example, Judaism has no Doctrine of Original Sin

> which blames women's sexuality for the Fall of Man; nor is there a Jewish woman who symbolically combines virginity and motherhood as does Christianity's Mary.[98]

Another explanation took into account that Jewish women traditionally had a specific role to fill and therefore "had a significant part to play in religious life". The feminist counter to such thinking was that "the religious importance attached to women's duties in the home represents nothing more than the bestowing of religious sanction on the generally prevailing assumption that woman's proper place is in the home". The last reason presented by the authors was the historical need for Jews as an oppressed minority to present a "united front" to the world. Where moves for "women's rights" did exist, they noted, care was taken to distinguish between those aims and the larger feminist movement. Sally Priesand, soon to become the first female rabbi, was quoted by Hole and Levine, stating that she was not a supporter of women's liberation:

> I don't need it. But I do think that the feminist movement is important because it is time for us to overcome psychological and emotional objections. We must fulfill our potential as creative individuals.[99]

A 1970 resolution of the NFTS was also quoted, which called for "greater recognition of women in all levels of Reform Judaism". Yet the statement denied that its motives were based

> . . . on feminist activism . . . or on leadership for its own sake. Rather, we firmly believe that in these days of crisis when the institutions, beliefs and values of religion are on trial for their relevance to the complex world of today, men and women together, both individually and through their organizations, have an equal, vital responsibility.

The reasoning given by Hole and Levine makes a good deal of sense, though they are wrong in asserting that Judaism lacked stereotypes of normative female behavior. These stereotypes were built up through the body of Jewish law, folklore and custom, not, as they correctly point out, in an all-prevading scriptural symbol like Mary. Jewish women <u>had</u> been given a specific religious role, and did contribute to Jeish survival through it. But that role, however much it was glorified,

was assigned to them by men. As in Christian systems, Jewish women had a "place" to which they were limited. In addition, as we have seen, the Christian view of women affected the Jewish conception - "True Womanhood" had been an ideal for all women.

Jewish feminism was organized in the early 1970s. As was the case among Christian religious feminists, a number of Jewish women at first addressed the issue individually. In 1971 Judy Timburg wrote of the positive role of women in shtetl culture, contrasting it with contemporary life:

> It is ironic that in America, where women are supposed to be more "free" than women of a traditional society like the shtetl, the options she is free to choose all have something wrong with them. In America there is no feminine role that is truly honored, and women are very often torn between the low self-esteem that comes of being "only a housewife" and the dissatisfactions of ill-paid, ill-valued work which takes her almost completely away from her family. In America, self-esteem requires "achievement". Naturally, women are trying to liberate themselves from a role society half values. This is not a specifically Jewish problem, but again, given the Jewish woman's traditional involvement in the family it could be especially demoralizing to her.[100]

Many writers spoke of the possibilities of, and the need for, change within Judaism. Mary Gendler summed up her own position:

> I insist on the right to be woman, a Jew and a Jewish woman. I will not relinquish my tradition, despite its rigidities, until I am absolutely convinced that no efforts can make it bend. But neither will I stand passively by while the Conservative and Orthodox movements continue to consider me a second-class citizen. Change is always hard, and the familiar is comfortable, even if it is unjust. It is especially difficult to relinquish power and privlege. But this must come within Judaism, I am convinced, or else the religious commitment of women, as well as men, will continue to wither. Children whose religious involvement is solely outside the home seldom develop a deep feeling for it. But perhaps, just perhaps, if women became more deeply conscious of their exclusion from certain aspects of religious life and press for change, if men will begin to exchange some of their power-in-the-world for some participation-in-the-home, if men and women begin to develop a kind of sharing which will enable each to develop a generally neglected other-side of himself, perhaps this might be just the revitalizing spark which could rekindle the dimming light of religious committment to Judaism.[101]

Other Jewish feminists stressed this need for shared responsibility within all aspects of Judaism. It was not just a matter, they argued, of bringing women into previously male positions, but of also bringing men to realize the need for their involvement in the home - a theme current in the general women's movement as well.

What of women's role in ritual? As feminists of other faiths had asked, so too Jewish women began to deal with the reality of religious theological motifs and practices. Martha Ackelsberg wrote:

> In the area of ritual, for example, one must ask, What might more equal participation mean? Would equal participaton of women in religious ritual mean spiritual fulfillment? Are the rituals themselves so infused with masculine values that women would feel uncomfortable participating? Do we need to develop rituals to express women's dialog with God? Do we need rituals which would introduce and reinforce new ways of looking at relationships between women and men - since the male-female relationship is often used as a model for God-human relationships - new ways of understanding or conceptualizing the relationship between the human and the Divine?[102]

Jewish feminist theologian Judith Plaskow further stressed the immediacy of such restructuring. The impetus had come from the outside: "a secular movement for the liberation of women has made it imperative that we raise certain Jewish issues now, because we will not let ourselves be defined as Jewish women in ways in which we cannot allow ourselves to be defined as women".[103] Social norms had changed, women's role in society had increased and many Jewish women expected these trends to influence traditional Judaism. As Judy Timberg argued:

> Somewhat connected to the hollowness of the mother role in America is the question of women's exclusion from the orthodox religious realm. It is a religious problem that the world doesn't divide up between men and women as it used to. Young women have more education now, and they are not trained for the life that traditional women knew; they will not be as well compensated for being subordinate in the religious sphere. Women want to explore their Judaism more intellectually than women have done in the past, and they want to play a more central part in the religious life of the community. Their liberation will involve exploring new forms of religious life in a way that responds to Jewish tradition.[104]

The promise of women's rewards that were based on a female social situation in which they were exclusively wife and mother could no longer speak to a growing number of Jewish women. For them subordination in the religious realm was indefensible. The deep theological underpinnings of Judaism had to be examined, Jewish feminists argued. Symbols and language used in Jewishliturgy had to be imbued with a new, non-exclusive life. On the matter of masculine language in prayer - and the indication of a male God - Rita Gross has written: "A God language does not really tell us about God, but it does tell us a considerable amount about those who use the God language".[105] Many Jewish feminists have shared much of the same view as have their Christian counterparts. They have recognized the implications of a continued use of a male-oriented language and symbols - and the degree of sensitivity that change requires. Gross wrote:

> It takes courageous honesty to recognize all links between male God language and the androcentric model of humanity, with its consequent eclipsing of women. It also requires a thorough consciousness of the subtle ways in which linguistic conventions shape and limit world view and reality constructs. Because they are so automatic, even in highly reflective people, linguistic conventionalities are among the most potent factors in shaping people's perceptions and then limiting them to that socially constructed reality - as if it were inevitably the way things are. Thus we see that the conventions of theology are not so innocent or arbitrary as they seem. Therefore, they must be reimagined, not so much because they are theologically inadequate, although that too is true, but because they are socially destructive, and Judaism demands that socially destructive forms be reversed.[106]

Part of the process of "reimagining" women's religious role in Judaism was the creation of new rituals and ceremonies for women. Particularly in need of address many felt, was the glaring lack of life-cycle ceremonies for women as compared to those for men, especially in the younger years: brit milah (the welcoming into the covenant - circumcision) , pidyon ha-ben (redemption of the first-born from service in the Temple) , bar mitzvah (the public coming of age). The early Reform response to this inequality - as well as to the "orientalism" of such rites - had been to dispense with pidyon ha-ben and substitute and equalized confirmation for bar mitzvah. A move abandoning

circumcision never advanced beyond most radical reform circles.

For more traditional Jews in the 1970s, including many Reform Jews for whom a return to Jewish ritual was meaningful, the equality of male and female children was of great importance. An expression of this was found in the 1976 anthology The Jewish Woman which grew out of a special issue of Response on the subject three years earlier. The book included articles and/or samples of new rituals involving women: a covenant welcome for female infants, the development and importance of bat mitzvah, equalized marriage contracts, new interpretations of mikveh, Rosh Chodesh (the first day of the Hebrew month) as a woman's holiday and a Haggadah of women's liberation.[107] While some of these were not precisely "new" (bat mitzvah had been introduced in the United States in the 1920s), the advent of the women's movement had lent them a new immediacy.

Jewish feminism grew out of the ferment of the student/women's movements. Many of its first spokeswomen were Jews who had been a part of the Jewish radical or counterculture movements. The establishment of the first havurot (communities) in the early 1970s had allowed for various experiments in ritual and general Jewish life. Women's equal participation was de rigueur, even in otherwise traditionally oriented groups. Some Jewish feminists came from secular or assimilated Jewish backgrounds, or often the Conservative movement, and were determined to bring full equality into organized religion. Out of the New York Havurah, a group called Ezrat Nashim emerged in 1971, to challenge the Rabbinical Assembly and the Conservative movement as a whole to recognize and expand women's religious role. If the first wave of Jewish feminists came mostly from outside organizational Judaism, the second wave was a joining of forces between early activists and women within Jewish denominations who had become sensitized to the issue through their actions.

The main focus of Jewish feminism recently has been the Conservative movement. It was within that movement with its premise of "tradition and change" that many Jewish women, while encouraged to expand their knowledge of Judaism, found themselves seated with men, yet excluded from ritual participation. While some traditionalist feminists urged a generally unyielding orthodoxy to reconsider women's role, most saw a greater chance for change within Conservatism.

Reform's view of halacha as discardable prevented these women from joining that movement, though its religious emancipation of women was sometimes cited as an example. Reform women, as Hole and Levine pointed out, had long felt themselves to be the most "liberated" of Jewish women. Within Reform the effect of the women's movement was to bring to a head a number of issue that had been simmering on the movement's back-burner for decades.

3) The Reform Jewish Woman - Recognition and Rabbinical Ordination

i) Recognition - the UAHC and the NFTS

In her 1963 message for the Jubilee year of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, Mrs. Irving Hollobow had voiced her concern over the efforts of women on the sisterhoods. By 1966 her concerns had become concrete problems. The Federation's top executives and professionals addressed a letter to the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, detailing their worry:

> Today, joining a woman's organization is not, as has been the case in the past, automatic. After all, domestic help in the home is no longer readily available and presently well educated, energetic and highly motivated women are today returning in ever increasing numbers to the worlds of the professions, business or education. Thus, all women's organizations - and not just the Sisterhood - are compelled to rethink and face new problems which demand changes in techniques, structure and goals.[108]

Women's volunteer organizations, faced with a declining membership, were becoming more competative, hence the NFTS asked that the Union help it by encouraging new congregations to establish sisterhoods. Eisendrath urged the Union's executive to agree to this and submitted a resolution affirming such action and also supporting the NFTS' quest for membership in national Jewish "umbrella agencies".[109] That such support was necessary may indicate a view held by such agencies that the NFTS, as a part of the Union which was already a member, did not warrant independent membership.

In concluding his report on the Federation, Eisendrath gave voice to his concern over the lack of female representation within Reform decision-making bodies:

> I believe we must certainly search out, through our regional structure and otherwise, outstanding women in the Reform movement. We must face the realities of life: women are here to stay. Let us no longer close our masculine eyes to the inescapable truth that we have far too long ignored their justifiable complaint that they are not accorded equal status beside men for equal performance in too many of our congregations, at the regional and at the national levels. I therefore urge the members of this Board, within their own temples and within their own regions, to encourage and promote full participation of women and to exert their efforts to see that those who seek and accept responsibility be accorded commensurate recognition. In this effort we shall continue to rely on our NFTS to bring to the attention of the appropriate parties those of their members whose leadership we do not wish to deny ourselves.[110]

Such a statement is indeed noteworthy. The president of the congregational union of Reform Judaism in America was admitting to the fact that sexist attitudes had relegated women in Reform to a less-than-equal status. What is more, he was using the power and prestige of his position to call for an immediate improvement in the situation.

The next year, 1967, Eisendrath again used his report to urge that women be given a more equitable representation on the temple and UAHC boards: "Surely by now, women have earned the right to take their place alongside men in the mainstream of our Reform Jewish movement".[111] He warned of the problems caused for the NFTS by the pervasive view of sisterhood as fundraiser and urged that members be involved "in the substantive programs of the congregation itself". He also quoted Jane Evans and Merryle Rukeyser (the NFTS President), who stressed that the Federation needed to be represented on Union Committees as well as in the membership of national Jewish agencies under its own name:

> No mention of all the meetings at which NFTS women are present reduces the deep sense of frustration and ever mounting anger felt by NFTS leaders over the second-class citizenship bestowed upon them by the UAHC and agencies of Reform Judaism. NFTS should be recognized in its <u>own</u> right - and not just through sufferance by inclusion in UAHC delegations . . .

> To do less shouts to the world and to the Jewish woman that membership in the National Council of Jewish Women or in Hadassah (who had their own seats in the national agencies) does indeed give more status and recognition that membership in Sisterhood and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.[112]

From such a statement, we may gather that the Union was not willing to allow the NFTS to claim membership on its own. The "second-class citizenship" charge within the Reform movement itself echoed an NFTS resolution passed the same year at its 26th Bienniel which "urgently requested" that the Union rethink its structure of committees and commissions, to grant the NFTS rightful representation in its own name.[113] It would seem that the Federation, perhaps emboldened by the newly reborn woman's movement, was no longer willing to be a mere auxiliary but was beginning to demand that Reform live up to its claim of representing women's equality in Judaism.[114]

By 1970 there had been little change within the movement on the issue of women's representation. Eisendrath again chastised those who continued to see the NFTS as a mere fund-raising organization:

> The dominant male group of our movement continues to feel that women are good enough to raise money for projects we formulate and approve, but not good enough to share in the formulation of policy at the synagogue, regional or national levels in anything like proportional representation to their numbers and their investment of time, energy and money.[115]

The influence of at least the popularized version of the women's movement is evident as well, though Eisendrath clearly stated that Reform had its own serious soul-searching to do:

> It is always easy for us men to cop out on this perfectly apparent fact of life with snide jokes about Women's Lib and the like. But such jokes are no longer funny, and no longer becoming to a movement whose self-image is one of liberal thought, just action, equality, and moral motivation. We see ourselves as we should be, but not as we always are.

In spite of his repeated pleading women were not any more in evidence than they had been in previous years. Eisendrath was not afraid of stating this fact plainly:

> Year after year I have called upon our National Board and the boards of all congregations to take advantage of the brains, experience, energies,and knowledge of their female members by greatly increasing their representation at all policy-making levels. Despite my pleas, only five of our nearly 700 congregations have women presidents, only two - one ex-officio, the president of the NFTS, are on this board of 180 individuals.
>
> It is true that we cannot compel our congregations to move with the times with respect to the problem of women, and also of youth. But we are in a weak position even to try, with our own Board so lopsidedly weighted with men.

What the courageous leader of the UAHC was calling the movement to face was a problem contributed to in large part by Reform itself. By setting up the NFTS as an equal "sister" to the UAHC, sisterhood involvement had been designated the area in which Reform Jewish women were to act out their role. Hence sisterhood presidents had ex-officio seats on most congregational and Union boards, as did their executives on committees and other bodies. While providing a wide range of innovative and valuable programming to the Union, it seems clear that the general perception of sisterhood was that of an auxiliary fund-raising group. In other words, sisterhoods organized women to do traditionally "female" things - fund-raising, involvement with youth and its education, the handicapped, cooking and housekeeping - within a larger congregational/Union framework. When the women's movement began to grow, the questions and criticisms posed were also seen by perceptive men and women to apply to the UAHC's treatment of its female members. While we have seen that in the early years of reborn feminism the media image of feminist-as-bra-burning-hater-of-men was shunned by Reform women (cf. Hole and Levine above), the real message of the women's movement was beginning to seep through. Just as the National Organization of Women stressed "women's rights" over "liberation" from the outset, so Reform women and their male supporters urged the extension of equal rights to women outside of (but also within) their sisterhood role.

The sisterhood image had allowed for an expression of women's role within the Reform movement, yet even that expansion had prescribed limits set by the popular view of women. With the beginning of substantial change in that view during the 1960s (including the idea of "woman as person" with a multitude of talents that extended beyond the

prescribed sphere), Reform was faced with criticism from the NFTS and, more generally, from men and women who called for a full recognition of female ability. Reform had long prided itself on giving women "equality" within Judaism. Yet to maintain that stance, the Reform woman's role had to change to reflect society's developing conception of female equality. "Equality" had meant something different in 1913 than it did in 1970 and those with foresight understood that Reform roles for women would have to reflect that. Eisendrath summed this view up by calling for a committee to examine the matter and recommend ways of implementing a "change of picture" on all levels of the Union: "We must stop dragging our feet on this subject and stop mouthing the same old tired bromides and act now to get women out of what many of them call "slave labor, kitchen squad" activities and into the mainstream of our work".[116]

In 1971 the 28th Biennial of the NFTS passed its first resolution reflecting a growing women's consciousness; it called for women's participation in political decision-making and the holding of office, recognition and honor for child-rearing and improved child-care for women who worked.[117]

Reform men and women struggled with the changing concept of women's equality and found that there was indeed room for change and development within their Jewish movement. Reflecting the spirit of the times and its own interpretation of Judaism, Reform in the 1970s proved itself both strong enough and flexible enough to allow its women - and its men - to grow. The final symbol of women's equality in Reform Judaism was female ordination, and it too had come about.

ii) Woman as Rabbi - The Last Barrier Falls

Shortly after the decisions of the CCAR and HUC concerning women's ordination in 1922, Martha Neumark wrote in the Jewish Tribune:

> The present attitude of some of the laity is to be regretted, in view of the fact that women rabbis will benefit them incalculably. Women can aid in the solution of the problem [of resistance to their entry into the rabbinate] by devoting themselves to Jewish study, by fitting themselves for ordination. The general community can help by showing a willingness to accept women as their spiritual leaders.[118]

Venerable institutions change very slowly. It was 1939 before the issue of female ordination arose again within a Reform context - at the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR), an "interdenominational" rabbinical seminary founded in New York by Stephen S. Wise in 1922 (it merged with HUC in 1950). Helen Hadassah Levinthal successfully completed the full academic course for rabbinic ordination, her thesis topic being "Woman Suffrage from the Halachic Aspect". The daughter and granddaughter of rabbis, Levinthal herself did not receive ordination. Her father, Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal, wrote later that "many in the faculty felt that while Helen did excellent work, the time was not ripe for the JIR to ordain a woman".[119] Her classmate, Earl Stone, was more specific about the reason for Levinthal's not being ordained: "Helen completed the entire course, but was not granted ordination solely because the late, revered Professor Chernowitz refused to ordain a woman".[120] Levinthal received her Master of Hebrew Letters degree and a special certificate which stated that she had completed the course - but which did not declare her to be a rabbi. Her achievement - or lack thereof - received widespread attention in the media. When, some months after graduation she agreed to preach on the High Holy Days from the vacant pulpit of Brooklyn's B'nai Shalom congregation - on her condition that a rabbi was engaged to supervise the services - Time magazine noted that

> the first day's sun of year 5700 brought something new - a woman in the pulpit. Helen Hadassah Levinthal, comely in an academic gown and four-pointed choir-singer's cap, preached at the three big holiday services, as near to being a rabbi as a female might be. Last summer, at Manhatten's Jewish Institute of Religion, she was the first woman anywhere to pass a course of studies for the rabbinate.[121]

Another unique situation arose in 1950 in the Reform congregation in Meridian, Mississippi. When Rabbi William Ackerman died in November of that year, his wife Paula was asked by the congregational leadership to assume the role of spiritual leader of the congregation. "I have no idea or intention of ever taking on a career at my age, or state of health", she wrote in January, 1951, adding that she would only consider serving as a "Rabbi" in Meridian, and then only on "an interim basis"

until a permanent rabbi was found.[121] Ackerman was concerned about her lack of training for such an endeavor, her "meager knowledge of Hebrew" which she said was good enough for conducting the service, but reading the Torah was "another thing". She was aware of her limitations, and also her strengths, "As for the sermons", she wrote, "I don't intend to preach philosophy or higher criticism of the Bible - they've asked me merely to give them some of the faith I have in my heart - the Jewish way of life I've lived every day of my life - that shouldn't be too hard". The congregation's president wrote to Maurice Eisendrath and asserted that "in the eyes of practically all of the members of our congregation she is qualified and we want her".[123] Ackerman acted as her community's leader from 1951-1954 and was aware of the potential implications of her position. She was quoted in Time saying, "I have accepted this assignment . . . with the greatest humility . . . I am glad to pioneer in this movement, which we hope may lead to the ordination of women".[124]

It was not the isolated experiences of women such as Levinthal or Ackerman that brought on the next development in Reform's move toward accepting women as rabbis. By the mid-1950s other factors were making themselves felt. At the 1955 meeting of the CCAR, its President Barnett R. Brickner, a signatory to the 1922 resolution on the subject, announced that he was bringing the issue of women's ordination up for reconsideration. "In the discussion that took place in 1922 I expressed my opposition to such a proposal. But since then our needs have changed, and I have changed my mind. Many Christian denominations have also changed their minds and now ordain women".[125] He listed a number of prominent Christian institutions that accepted women's ordination and asked rhetorically: "Is there anything in our missing Reform "Shulhan Aruch" that prohibits us from ordaining women? Does it not accord with our liberalism"?[126] Reflecting on Reform's history and its contemporary practice, he added:

> The Reform Movement pioneered in granting equality to women. Women not only sit on our Boards but soon one of the oldest Reform congregations will elect a woman as its president. Why should we grant women degrees only in Religious Education, qualifying them to be educational directors, yet denying them the prerogative to be preachers as well as teachers? They have a special spiritual and emotional fitness to be rabbis, and I believe that many women would be attracted to this calling.

> Furthermore, there is a shortage of rabbis. New congregations are increasing, and many a small town languishes for want of a spiritual leader.

Brickner in conclusion called for a committee to re-evaluate the Conference's stand on the subject.

His remarks reveal that several things had happened since 1922 to prompt a re-examination of the issue. A number of Protestant denominations and institutions now accepted women's ordination, and there was a growing acceptance of women in the ministry as in other professions. A shortage of rabbis may also have made the matter more acceptable as they became more necessary. Finally, Brickner returned to the argument used by the earliest Reform supporters of female ordination: Reform as a liberal movement with its emphasis on equality and social justice could do no less. His mention of women's "special fitness" for the rabbinate may have been at once a use of the traditional Cult/Mystique imagery and a rebuff to those who challenged women as being unfit for the rabbinate. The time had come.

The following year, the eight-man committee, including Maurice Eisendrath and Nelson Gluechk, the President of HUC-JIR, gave its report to the Conference. The report reviewed the 1922 discussions, quoted Reform support for women's equality back to its European beginnings, and dismissed the idea of women's "freedom" in the home as balancing her silent role in religious affairs: "The emancipation of women applies to life within the synagogue as well as to life outside the synagogue".[127] The Committee asserted:

> In view of women's parity with men, we believe that the unwarranted and outmoded tradition of reducing woman to an inferior status with regard to ordination for the rabbinate be abandoned. Specifically, we believe that she should be given the right to study for the rabbinate, that she should be ordained if and when she has properly completed the course of study, and that she should then be admitted into the CCAR upon application for membership.
>
> The question before us is purely academic at this time . . . We believe that the time has long since passed when a person's sex should constitute a bar to self-expression in any area of human endeavor. The only proper passport to participation in any profession is adequate training and proven capability, regardless of sex. During the last few centuries, the position of women has undergone an enormous revolution. At long last, we must

> remove the final barrier in her way to becoming a teacher in Israel, a rabbi, of an equal status with men.[128]

Again it was stressed that other "liberal denominations" had already made such a move - "We are not among the first liberal religionists to take this step". It was apparently a consideration that many women had been ordained by Christian denominations and that the experience of those groups that had done so was generally positive. Precedent had therefore been established. This concern betrays the still cautious approach of many rabbis to the women's ordination question. The Conference then tabled the committee's recommendations "so that those who have an opposite point of view may have an opportunity to present a report". However, the CCAR Yearbook shows no evidence of such a report ever coming forth, nor any further discussion of the matter. Thus apparently nothing was done about the issue until another impetus from the general community brought the idea closer to its final fruition. The increasing return of women to the labor force in the early 1960 contributed to a changing public perception of "women's work". If women were involving themselves in areas that had previously been male preserves, some Reform Jews began to question the lack of movement on the issue of female rabbis. At the meeting of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in Chicago in November 1963, a resolution was passed urging the major Reform organizations to grant women the right to serve as rabbis. Jane Evans in an interview with a New York Times reporter pointed out that "despite decades of devoted service by women in every phase of American Reform Judaism, they still have not achieved full equality . . . they are denied the right of ordination as rabbis".[129]

It was somehow fitting that the official women's organization of Reform Judaism should take such a stand on their Golden Anniversary. Sisterhood had proved that women could help to support the movement and the individual synagogue, now they claimed the right to lead them spiritually as well. At a time when the world found itself beneath the shadow of a possible nuclear war, Evans said "religion itself is on the firing line of the frontier between what men can achieve technologically and what they must achieve spiritually". Women, she felt, "are or should be particularly sensitive to these problems

of advancement and wider horizons" and they "certainly are equally qualified with men to be teachers of the spirit".[130] Evans conceded that women themselves might find it difficult to adjust to female rabbis. The reasons for this "while hard to define, probably include the conservatism of women in matters of religion and the hesitancy of being accused of feminism in an area of relationships of God to man and man to God". It would seem that Evans and others like her were aware of the magnitude of changes that were potential in allowing women to become rabbis. The direct introduction of a female element into Reform Judaism could and would change both "man and God".

Other convention delegates demonstrated this conservatism. One said she felt that women should be able to pursue a career in the rabbinate if they wished to, but added: "Perhaps I'm old-fashioned, but I like to see a man as the head of a home, a synagogue and country".[131] Still another argued that women should be allowed to study "but I don't think the time is right for them to be ordained". Despite such reservations Jean Wise (Mrs. Albert) May, daughter of Isaac M. Wise and a woman long active in the NFTS, spoke for the majority when she declared, "Reform Judaism is not afraid of change. We are certain that women can qualify as rabbis".[132] Both Maurice Fisendrath and Nelson Glueck agreed. The former told the Times reporter that he found it paradoxical "that the liberal revolutionary movement of Reform Judaism should, in this regard, lag behind several of the forward-looking Protestant denominations which have ordained women as ministers to the enrichment of the church and the Christian fellowship". Glueck added that there was no reason "whatsoever why a woman should not be ordained as a rabbi if she passed all the necessary qualifications of scholarship and has the proper personality". In spite of such statements, there was a lack of women interested in the rabbinate, or discouraged by the potential demands of being trailblazers or pioneers. A general ambivalence toward the idea of woman-as-rabbi within the Reform community marked the years until the late 1960s. Then with the rise of the women's movement, a new immediacy was given to the idea of the woman rabbi.

Finally, after her acceptance as the first female rabbinical student in 1968, Sally J. Priesand, five years later, became the first woman to

be ordained a rabbi by a Jewish seminary. Priesand came from a Conservative background, yet that seemed to have little bearing on her decision to enter the rabbinate. She recalled that when, at sixteen, she broached the subject to her father, he encouraged her to achieve her goal.[133] While HUC's president, Nelson Glueck, also supported her - "Dr. Glueck always told me how proud he would be to ordain me"[134] there were those on the college's faculty, as well as in the student body, who initially did not take her ambition seriously. Priesand said of some of her professors that "occasionally I sensed that some of them would not be overly upset if I failed".[135] As a student serving small congregations on a biweekely basis through HUC, she found that there was resistance to her assumption of the full rabbinical role - particularly from women. Yet at her final student pulpit she was given full status: "I do bar mitzvahs, I preach, I lead services. At one service, I asked a woman to read from the Bible. People seemed surprised when she was called. But it was almost as if they had forgotten that I was a woman". Proof that, while it might be difficult at first, a woman rabbi could find acceptance even if female congregants' involvement was still rare enough to elicit surprise. Approaching her ordination and looking at the prospects for employment, she found that some congregations refused to even interview her. Priesand commented, "since I had not expected anyone to welcome me with open arms, I was able to cope with the situation".[136] She was accepted as the assistant rabbi at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York, a job that allowed her to function in the complete range of rabbinic roles. In a 1974 interview she said that she had been "extremely well-received" by the members of the congregation.[137] Priesand saw her participation in a lecture series a "lesson in consciousness-raising [that] gives women the courage they need to demand complete and full participation in synagogue life". An article that same year in Jewish Week noted:

> Rabbi Priesand is proudest, however, of her unofficial capacity as "role model" for young Jewish girls throughout the country. She receives numerous calls and letters from women interested in a rabbinical career and takes great satisfaction in knowing that "little girls now know they have the option of becoming rabbis and cantors if they so choose".[138]

A few days after her ordination, Maurice Eisendrath gave his yearly report to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Board of Trustees. In it, he discussed the tremendous changes in the world and added:

> Not the least of these changes, and one that was long overdue, is the emergence of women at the very cutting edge of our religious movement. We have just ordained our first woman to bear the noble title of rabbi. I commend the College-Institute for this trail-blazing act of courage too long delayed . . . We are deeply grateful therefore, not only for Rabbi Sally Priesand's fortitude, manifest during these pioneer years of her training, but also for this tangible demonstration that Reform is still is a verb, still resilient enough to clamp down what may well be the last vestiges of male chauvinism, still retaining within its establishment institutions - so frequently and erroneously denigrated - the will and the vitality to pierce the leaden curtain of habit and emerge full center on the stage of the present.[139]

Again Eisendrath pointed to women's advance and called for a response:

> Within another year or so we shall add two women cantors to our fold, and hopefully, many more women of Jewish passion and talent will follow these three. But this is not enough, and so, like an old refrain, I again urge our nominating committees to seek out and bring into our congregational, regional, and especially national boards increasing numbers of such examplars of the distaff side who can so immeasurably enrich our own labors.[140]

The final bastion of male supremacy in Judaism had fallen. The symbolic power of this event was great: Rabbi Priesand had allowed Jewish women - in all denominations - to glimpse the beginning of a new possibility and a new future.

Eisendrath had also recalled his classmate, "brilliant daughter of one of our professors, who completed all HUC requirements for ordination but who, out of sheer faculty timidity, was refused this coveted goal of ordination". Reform had come far in "nearly half a century". His classmate's name was Martha Neumark.

Conclusion - The Challenge of Change

Since the rebirth of the women's movement in the 1960s, there has been increasing pressure for the change of women's role in society and religion. If the success of a movement is measured by the extent of its effect, modern feminism has won some impressive victories. The opportunities available to women in today's world are broader than at any previous time in history. Yet, though women are gaining wider acceptance in previously "male" positions - in the professions, trades, business and the clergy - there is still a long way to go before true equality is achieved.

Is the Cult of True Womanhood dead? Hardly. It is so much a part of the tradition of contemporary society that it continues to exist not only in "conservative" institutions, but in new and more disturbing forms in advertising and the mass media. Whatever the stereotype, whether the classic Cult vision of wife/mother or the more recent mass-produced sex-goddess, it restricts the woman-as-human-being to certain prescribed channels. And she is judged - and often judges herself - on the basis of how well she conforms to the male-dictated image. It is not that the present-day women's movement has destroyed these images, but rather that feminists have made <u>them</u> the issue, questioning not only their veracity but their sources as well. As feminists continue their criticism of social assumptions about women and as the population becomes more aware of the harm done to all people and all societies by the existence and propagation of sexism, positive change will continue. If, however, a less hospitable mood develops, as has been the case before in history when reaction follows a more liberal era, the gains of the women's movement may be strongly challenged. How the improved position of women will fare in times of conservatism and economic change remains to be seen. We may see a repetition of the "forty years in the desert" that followed the achievement of suffrage in 1920. Or we may be witness to the creation of a new, vibrant society with equality for all its members.

The position of Jewish women since the Enlightenment has closely parallelled that of her gentile contemporaries. As women in general society have expanded their roles, so too Jewish women have moved forward. It would seem that in the 1970s a legacy of the Enlightenment has been challenged by Jewish feminists. Whereas the talented,

sensitive salon women of Berlin found Judaism oppressive and fled, modern Jewish women - heirs to a more recent history of change in the world - have in many cases refused to adapt themselves or to seek religious satisfaction outside of Judaism, but have called for changes in Judaism itself. Today the Conservative movement is wracked with dissension over the question of women's increased participation, an issue brought to light by the women themselves. According to a 1979 study of women's role in the American Synagogue, while Reform and Orthodox are generally uniform in respectively encouraging and opposing female involvement, the Conservative movement is clearly split over the issue.[1]

Jewish women have come far in their changing religious position. In his 1976 landmark study, Community and Polity, Daniel J. Elazar notes the changes American views of "equality" have had on the female Jewish role.[2] Women have ceased to be restricted to expressing their Judaism at home, their role having been expanded to include the synagogue and the organization. There remain "male preserves" in American Jewry, notably the rabbinate (though that is changing in the Reform and Reconstructionist movements), but women are gradually becoming more evident in their participation: "For the moment the very basic congregational decisions remain in the hands of men, but this may well be changing". Though more Jewish women are working or have careers, "heavy fund raising remains mainly a male activity, no doubt because the men are the ones who decide where the big money is spent".[3]

In Reform Judaism, despite the recurrent pleas that were made by leaders like Maurice Eisendrath, women are similarly just beginning to be involved in major decision-making on the various levels of the movement. In an address to the CCAR convention in 1979, Lillian Maltzer, president of the NFTS remarked:

> I believe that some of the fault lies within women themselves. We have in many instances not recognized our own impediments. We are not conditioned to be aggressive and many women (still untouched by the feminist movement) perceive the ideal to be that which is described but not endorsed by Marjorie Bell Chambers, the head of the National Advisory Committee for Women. She says, "The stereotype still remains. Women are supposed to be soft-spoken, passive, dainty - all those things that most of us aren't under any circumstances!

> But you'd better follow the traditional pattern if you want to be acceptable". Such an attitude is about as useful today as an appendix, but it can be a major deterrent to women's participation in the responsibility of leadership. Men and women who cling to this picture of femininity are unable to accept women in any capacity. They exhibit negative attitudes toward females in any authoritative role, e.g., physician, educator or rabbi.[4]

The ambivalence of Reform women toward the women's movement has vanished to a large extent. Maltzer evinced an approving familiarity with feminist issues when she addressed the problem of sexism and its wider implications for Reform:

> When women in congregations are accepted with respect for each one as a person without a sex label, congregations will be better prepared for rabbis, educators, cantors and administrators of either gender, and will reject economic discrimination against women professionals as a means of solving their budgetary problems.[5]

The Reform movement has attempted to increase women's participation on the UAHC Board, but the problem has not been easily rectified. Board representation - outside of ex-officio seating for the NFTS, for example - remains a reward for financial contribution. As Elazar noted above, this remains almost exclusively a male preserve. There has been more recognition extended to <u>women</u> who control large sums, but they remain a small number, as they are in general society. Barring the introduction of a more democratic mechanism for UAHC Board representation, women will not be seated in significant numbers until they become major contributors. Such a development is not unlikely given the entry of women into higher paying jobs.

While there are more women serving as congregational presidents and in other areas, some Reform Jews are beginning to tackle the large issues spoken of by feminist theologians. In 1975 <u>The Gates of Prayer</u>, the movement's new prayerbook was introduced. Harvey J. Fields, a member of the CCAR Liturgy Committee, wrote a companion booklet with suggestions for the prayerbook's use. He noted: "Reform Judaism's long-standing recognition of the equality of the sexes is reflected in the avoidance of masculine references whenever possible".[6] While indeed equivocal language such as "ancestors" was substituted for

"fathers", and the matriarchs occasionally accompany the patriarchs, such sensitivity was not extended to changing the Hebrew prayers. More importantly, God remained "He" throughout. The changes were applauded by many (and damned by others), yet some believed that further change was necessary. In 1976 the newly formed Task Force On Equality of Women in Judaism of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues prepared a Glossary of Substitute Terminology (equivocal for male) to be used in conjunction with the old Union Prayerbook which was still in wide circulation and usage. In a discussion group during the 1979 CCAR convention the following ideas were expressed:

> We need to go further in removing male/female oriented roles in the ritual aspects of the service. The way in which God is referred to as a male God does not give the woman a choice. Criticism of this comment was made: The image of God as a role model is not as important as who is physically in front of the congregation. Others disagreed.[7]

There was further criticism of Reform efforts as being ineffective, including the following observation:

> We have a kind of non-halachic halacha by which Jews live, i.e., role stereotypes. Women frequently are not permitted to take on certain roles, or they are made to feel uncomfortable in them. There is a great reluctance to see women as professionals. (This applies to all professions.) Rabbis have made every other issue regarding minority groups a priority. We do not seem to give the women's issue the same kind of priority.

It would appear that in spite of a far-ranging CCAR resolution on "Women in Reform Judaism" (1975, see Appendix B), as well as other endeavors, some Reform Jews feel that there remains much to be done. Reform membership mirrors general society in this. Though many of its leaders and others within the movement today are pushing for a final achievement of equality between the sexes, most are willing to move slowly on the issue. Though Reform Jews as a group have usually been far more liberal than American society as a whole, the changing of deep-seated custom and thought can only happen slowly.

The NFTS too has been faced with the changes of the 1970s. Lillian Maltzer noted in her 1979 address that more than 75% of the

women then involved in congregational work in one UAHC region had come into their leadership roles through their activity in Sisterhood.[8] She showed that the NFTS had faced the changing role of women in society:

> Has Sisterhood changed since its inception? Only in the intensity with which it works. Our membership has changed. Women are better educated today, and thanks to the Women's Movement, their image of womanhood has changed. They no longer submit to the perception of others that they belong in the temple kitchen. They have united in the open door of the synagogue, not only to welcome new members as in the past, but to take the teachings of the synagogue into the community. In our own right, once and for all making statements of principle for 125,000 women, we join other religious organizations in the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, and the Religious Committee for ERA. We are represented on all the commissions of the UAHC-CCAR, lending strong support to positions which we have helped define. We share in the entry of Reform Judaism to the World Zionist Organization through ARZA and in our strong support of WUPJ. In other ways, large and small, too numerous to mention, we make our presence <u>felt</u> (if not always known and acknowledged) in every aspect of the influential establishments of Reform Judaism.[9]

Yet despite its continuing, positive role and the respect it has won for itself, the NFTS today faces the same dilemma that most surviving volunteer women's organizations confront. Such groups had their golden years in a period when most women had time for such involvement, particularly during the day. With a greater number of women working, will there be time for Sisterhood? Will a younger generation of women wish to become involved? Those discussing Maltzer's paper asked, "Should we phase Sisterhoods out of business? When we eliminate sexism in our society will there be a need for Sisterhoods, or should men and women work together? Sisterhoods today", they asserted, "could be advocates for women's rights".[10] Sisterhoods will have to change, states Eleanor Schwartz, Jane Evans' successor as NFTS Executive Director.[11] But they do have a role to play - they will not disappear. The phenomenon of two working parents affects the Jewish family and while Judaism may be able to exist without the synagogue, it cannot exist without the family. A new orientation is necessary for the temple, the community and their constituent organizations - they must actively support the family. Women are beginning to plan their lives sequentially, Schwartz says:

school, work, children and then a return to work. Sisterhood can aid them in this, providing women with a support group, helping them to grapple with ways to retain a Jewish component in their lives and families. The role of the NFTS has indeed changed with women. Yet it also remains an organization stressing its founding aims: promoting Judaism to and through Reform women. Whether or not the sisterhood still retains that name, in the coming years it will continue to serve its valuable and important purpose to women and Judaism.

The symbol of women's equality within Reform Judaism is the female rabbi. As feminist theologians have noted, the entry of women into the previously male clergy is a powerful statement. Sally Priesand's ordination attracted widespread attention. Priesand is no longer the only woman rabbi: in 1974 the Reconstructionist seminary ordained a woman and since then a growing number of women have been entering and graduating from the two institutions. How has Reform dealt with its endorsement of women rabbis? Lillian Maltzer addressed this issue:

> We have come so far as compared to other religious bodies that we are in danger of becoming complacent. No real effort has yet been made to prepare our congregations for female rabbis in the pulpit, while our College-Institute prepares large numbers of women for ordination.[12]

Reform has attempted to create mechanisms of support for female rabbis as well as to encourage congregations and other Reform bodies to accept their services. As growing numbers of women rabbis begin to look for work, these mechanisms become even more important. Some years after Sally Priesand's ordination, the CCAR set up a Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate to examine ways in which Reform could best deal with the particular problems of female rabbis themselves and the change they represented for the movement as a whole. A meeting in 1976 of UAHC and CCAR representatives came up with several suggestions for facilitating their acceptance.[13] Two "Task Forces" would be set up. In the UAHC it was felt that members should be exposed to women in rabbinic roles in a "natural" setting:

> The stress was to try to get away from a theatrical and circus-like atmosphere and to give our women the opportunity to appear as rabbis and teachers performing the normal rabbinic functions. The UAHC Task Force will attempt to devise a number of programs and projects which would expose our women students in a natural setting to the laity of our movement.

The CCAR group would "concern itself primarily with devising projects and programs addressed to the acceptance of women rabbis by the members of the CCAR".

What such feverish activity indicates, of course, is that women are not being universally accepted as rabbis within the Reform movement. To their credit, the major component organizations of Reform Judaism have attempted to aid both female rabbis/rabbinic students as well as established male rabbis and the Reform Jewish community in adjusting to a new reality. Many Reform Jews - both rabbis and lay people - still have trouble relating to women as rabbis. The general cultural and traditional Jewish stereotypes remain pervasive and powerful.

Sally Priesand herself encountered this again in her move to a new pulpit in 1979. Having served as a trail blazer of female ordination she found that there was a new issue to confront - the acceptance of a woman rabbi. She felt that much of the resistance she encountered as a seven-year veteran rabbi looking for a new post was due to the congregation's rejection of her because of her sex. No congregation would accept her as its senior rabbi and she finally settled for a part-time solo position. "We still have a long way to go before women are truly equal", she told a reporter.[14] It has been said that much of Priesand's difficulty was due to the fact that once again she was unique - the only woman rabbi who had been in the field long enough to comtemplate a move up the rabbinical career ladder (in the Reform movement, a rabbi's opportunity for moving into a larger congregation is tied to the length of time she or he has been working since ordination).

After seven years in the rabbinate and this most recent frustration, Priesand revealed a new militancy: "The Reform movement has taken the first step. There's no turning back. A basic principle of our movement is complete equality for women". The president of the UAHC, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, agreed:

> It is easy to ordain women. It is more difficult to alter attitudes. I agree that unless we open all of our pulpits to women, the ordination of women will only be a symbolic recognition of women as responsible Jews.
>
> I am committed to do everything in my power to making Reform congregations equal-opportunity employers.

He added: "Attitudes, however, are not that easy to change. You can't do it by fiat".[15] Schindler is correct in this. It is precisely because attitudes will not change overnight that various Task Forces and programs were instituted to raise consciousness within the Reform movement itself. Yet for Priesand such a view hid the seeming ambivalence of the Reform leadership itself. "Words must be supplemented by deed", she declared

> If the Reform Jewish community is unable to install women in roles of leadership, as examples to others, then what we're doing is giving a double message to our congregations.
>
> On the one hand, the Reform movement is telling its congregations to accept women as rabbis, but by its action the movement is conveying an entirely different message.
>
> For now, disproportionately few women are represented in the upper echelons of the Reform movement. Ordaining women as rabbis is not enough.
>
> We need women on the faculty of the Hebrew Union College. We need women on the Placement Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. And we need women as officers in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.[16]

Whereas some had seen women's ordination as the final stage of Reform's committment to female equality, female ordination would appear, rather, to have reopened the whole question of women's place in the movement in a way that has not been done since the earliest utterances of the German Reformers on the subject. Just as the general women's movement today is calling for a comprehensive re-evaluation of "traditional" sex roles, so too Reform Jewish feminists - rabbis and lay people - are demanding that Reform take counsel with its soul.

Throughout its history Reform Judaism has shown an ease with which it incorporates new ideas and social trends. Unhampered by halachic structure, it has striven to realize the Biblical calls for social justice to which it sees itself heir. Yet despite its religious freedom and its often stated committment to female religious emancipation, Reform has generally reflected the views of society on the subject. Within Reform, therefore, objection to female participation cannot rightly be based on Jewish law itself. It has rather been prejudice derived from a combination of an exclusively male Jewish tradition - including those vestiges of "orientalism" which Reform has denounced

for so long - and the views of the surrounding culture. Had female ordination been purely a matter of religious law, one would have expected Reform to have ordained its first woman rabbi at <u>least</u> a century before it has. Custom and external environment have proven more effectively restrictive than halacha.

It is also intriguing to note that the clamor for women's involvement comes at a time when Reform is returning to many of the traditions it has shunned. Thus the opportunities for women's participation are greater than ever before as women not only take part in Confirmation, but celebrate their Bat Mitzvahs and partake of all revived rituals. There is simply more to do - and women want a part in doing it.

We have seen the religious role of the Reform Jewish woman develop and change alongside that of her non-Jewish sister. The present-day women's movement has added depth and a new urgency to the old cry for equality. Will reaction sweep away the gains of women - Jew and gentile - that have come over many generations? That would seem to depend on how fundamentally society and religion have been affected. It is far too early to tell if the position of women in society has definitively changed; while there are indications that it has in the new opportunities available to women, there are indications to prove that it has not, such as the still un-ratified ERA and the anti-feminist tone of the neo-conservatives. History is sometimes a mischievous teacher. One can point to the achievement of suffrage - or the years of reaction that followed. And yet women's position has steadily improved throughout modern history. There is certainly some reason to believe - and much reason to hope - that this will continue.

Reform Judaism has thus come full circle, re-examining its roots for new clues about its present and future. Reform women, given the greatest freedom within their sex in Judaism, are probing the old currents alongside men and are adding a new voice to discussion and debate. The movement stands on the threshold of rebirth. Renewed in the spirit of its fathers <u>and</u> mothers, redesigned to provide all of its members with equal opportunity and responsibility, it might indeed evolve into a new Judaism to meet a new age. It cannot stay the same. Jewish survival today demands not a retreat to the past but a new

fusion of ancient and modern rhythms. As women play a larger role in partriarchal religion and society, religion and society will change. Conceptions of God and humankind will also change. And perhaps men and women will look, each into the other, and seeing their own reflection, join together in a spiritual partnership to recreate religion and human civilization.

Appendix A

Suffrage and the Jewish Woman

As Deborah Grand Golomb has noted, historians have yet to examine in detail the anti-Semitic elements within the suffrage movements and their relation to Jewish women's lack of participation in the cause (op. cit. p.55). The anti-immigrant agitation within the movement inevitably pictured the newly arrived Eastern European Jews as examples of "foreigners" best kept away from the vote. While such attacks were not specifically anti-Semitic, Jews, even Americanized, middle-class German Jews, were fearful of their tone. In additiion, the established Jewish community felt a tie to the newcomers, even if they were usually horrified by the East-Europeans' poverty and customs.

Within the predominantly Christian suffrage movement anti-Judaism was certainly apparent, but usually confined to assaults of the religion as a basis for contemporary subjugation of women. "Judaism" often served as a code-word, taking the place of the intended "Christianity" when an attack on the latter might have alienated some suffragists. Thus Stanton used "Judaism" in the resolution submitted to the NWSA in 1885. In The Woman's Bible several disparaging remarks are made about Judaism in connection with biblical passages that were used to prove women's inferiority. One commentator on the difference between the two creation stories in Genesis adds: "My own opinion is that the second story was manipulated by some Jew in an endeavor to give 'heavenly authority' for requiring a woman to obey the man she married" (quoted in Golomb, p.56). The second president of the NWSA, a minister, preached a sermon on Christianity's support for equal rights at the International Council of Women in 1888. She potrayed the wonderful vision that came to Paul, "this Jew, bound by the prejudice of past generations, weighed down by the bigotry of human creeds, educated in the school of an effete 'philosophy' "(Golomb, p.56). This anti-Judaism enabled suffragists to attack the basis of organized Christianity without endangering potential church support. Some, like Stanton, saw the biblical myths as the root of society's oppression of women.

While some Jewish women were involved in the suffrage movement, notably Hannah Solomon and Maud Nathan of the NCJW, most were not. A perceived combination of the movement's anti-Judaism, anti-family stance and

a general middle-class preference for the status quo kept the majority of Jewish women from actively supporting suffrage. The American Jewess reflected Jewish women's ambivalence toward the issue. In an 1895 editorial Rosa Sonneschein wrote:

> If we conceive, as we justly may, as independent spirit in woman, with a separate and distinct conception of her interests and rights, we will find that the struggle of the majority is not for political emancipation. Especially must this be said of Jewish women, whose aspirations do not lead them to study the science of legislation. As a rule a Jewess is content to leave to her husband and sons the wisdom of election and selection for political office. Her aim is for social and religious equality.
> (The American Jewess, II [October 1895], p.63)

Yet if the Jewish woman's interests were to be merely in social and religious emancipation, The American Jewess remained fascinated with the suffrage movement's leaders. Sonneschein declared: "Today the name Susan B. Anthony stands foremost amongst those who have built up a new creed for women", and defended her against attack, calling one critic a "prince of infidels" (AJ I [May 1895], p.101). In December, 1895, Sonne schein proudly announced the first publication of a poem honoring Elizabeth Cady Stanton, of whom she wrote:

> The life and work of this blessed woman is known wherever the breath of liberty has touched humanity. The Pioneer of Woman's Suffrage, the defender of the eternal laws of truth and right, is so dear to the heart of the nation that words can not add to the praise extorted by her living example of true womanly worth. (AJ II, [December, 1895], p. 138)

The editor was obviously not acquainted with Stanton's views on Judaism at this time! Sonne schein was apparently willing to separate the leaders from the cause, yet like many Jewish women, she was doubtless not anti-suffrage.

Jewish women's organizational support for suffrage was also undecided. A pro-suffrage speaker was invited to the National Council of Jewish Women's 1914 convention, and in 1917 a speaker declared, " . . . the scope of the Jewish woman's activities has broadened to include every phase of that worldwide revolt against artificial barriers which we call feminism" (C. Baum, P. Hyman, S. Michel, The Jewish Woman in America [New York, 1976], p.52). In spite of such sentiments, the con-

vention turned down a resolution endorsing the suffrage amendment. The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods did not formally discuss the issue before the amendment's passage, although the first speaker at the 1923 Biennial tied its achievement to further religious emancipation:

> The position of women has undergone a great change in the past twenty-five years by reason of economic and social conditions, and the enlightenment of man. Now with her enfrachisement she has shown her capability in many fields, education, medicine, law, civic, in official position in city, state and nation. We want to add the ministry. Surely there is a place for her in religion (Proceedings of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods V (1923), p.90)

At the same meeting, the new president of NFTS, Hattie M. Wiesenfeld, declared:

> This is woman's age! With the granting of suffrage our influence has grown apace. On all sides we are asked to espouse and recommend one cause or another. All reforms, of whatever, character, first or last, must have the sanction and endorsement of the women of the country (ibid., pp. 104-5).

These statements indicate that while some Jewish women may have been dissuaded for one reason or another from joining suffrage groups, they were not against the idea itself and were pleased with the amendment's passage.

Among most Reform rabbis suffrage was seen as a matter for individual rather than united action. Stephen S. Wise was one of those active in its support. As a rabbi in Portland, Oregon, he gave the opening prayer at the 1905 NAWSA meeting in that city (I.H. Harper ed., The History of Woman Suffrage V (New York, 1922) p. 141) He further helped to organize the Men's League for Woman Suffrage in New York in 1910 (ibid., VI. pg. 484), and in May of 1914 was the principal speaker of the "Suffrage Week" celebration sponsored by three women's suffrage organizations (ibid., p. 569). At the Seventh Conference and Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in Budapest during June, 1913, Wise was one of two U.S. representatives in a discussion on the last day: "Woman Suffrage and Men's Economic, Ethical and Political Interest in it" (ibid., p. 847). Wise's pro-suffrage stand was not surprising in light of his powerful interest in social justice, supporting the organization of labor and other progressive reforms.

His collegues in the CCAR were hesitant about recommending group action. At the Conference's 1913 meeting a resolution favoring "woman suffrage" was drafted by six rabbis. It called on the Conference to "place itself on record as a body in sympathy" with suffrage and recommended "that its members individually in their pulpits, and through their ministry, advocate and advance the cause of women's equal political suffrage with man's" (Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis XXIII, [1913], p.120). The Committee on Resolutions felt "that this is a matter for the individual Rabbi and [deemed] it inadvisable for the Conference as a body to take action" (ibid., p.133). Two years later a shorter resolution was proposed, this time by eleven rabbis, including two who had sponsored the 1913 statement. Since, "the question of Woman Suffrage will be presented to the voters of a number of states in the course of the year", they urged that the Conference record itself as being in favor (ibid., XXV, [1915], p.133). The Resolutions Committee recommended that the CCAR stand by its 1913 position, which it did. Finally, in 1917 eighteen rabbis, including five who had introduced the 1915 statement and one who had sponsored the 1913 resolution, and including Wise and the Executive Secretary of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, George Zepin, proposed:

> Whereas, the Central Conference of American Rabbis recognizes the justice of thorough-going democracy, and,
>
> Whereas, the Central Conference of American Rabbis recognizes that in a country which upholds democratic ideals and principles, it is unethical to exclude women from active participation in choosing leaders, and
>
> Whereas, the Jewish people have reason to know the hardship and bitterness of unjust and proscriptive political discrimination, and,
>
> Whereas, in Peace and War, women have always shown their loyalty, patriotism and eagerness to serve their country in every way possible,
>
> Be it Resolved, that we, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, hereby feel it to be our solemn duty as ethical leaders of our various communities, as preachers of a religion which has stood throughout the centuries for justice and righteousness, to assert our belief in the justice and righteousness of the enfranchisement of the women of our country. (ibid., XXVII [1917], p. 175)

Some rabbis objected to the Conference's interference in what they saw as a matter of individual decision for rabbis in their respective communities. A motion to reaffirm the 1913 stand was lost, as was one to table the resolution. The CCAR passed the statement and was finally on record in support of women's suffrage.

It is of interest to note that American Jewish women did not make suffrage part of their organizational platform, unlike their European sisters. In Germany, the Jüdisher Frauenbund had supported suffrage since its establishment in 1904. In Britain, where suffrage was a highly inflammatory issue, the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage was founded in 1912 to unite the "large number of Jewish men and women who were in the movement . . . No reason existed why the Jewish point of view would not be represented in this question, nor why a Jewish society should not work alongside those of other faiths" (First Annual Report of the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage 1913-1914, (London,1914), p.9). The League published a pamphlet, "Some reasons Why The Jew Should Desire Woman Suffrage", which declared "the Emancipation of Woman is consistent with the Jew's religious aspirations, with his sense of justice, and with his desire for spirituality". The League's Council of Directors and Executive Committee boasted the membership of Lily Monatgu, as well as fifteeen "liberal" and "traditional" rabbis. Such a Jewish mobilization behind women's suffrage was more likely in Britain where Jews themselves had only recently been granted full emancipation (1890) and therefore could feel some sympathy with the aims of women.

In America the suffrage issue remained separated from the realm of the Jewish woman's religious role. While Jewish women's organizations marshalled biblical and other evidence in support of their involvement in philanthropy and synagogue work, there seems to have been little or no desire to extend this beyond community suffrage. The suffragists railed against an oppression that many Jewish women with their specifically Jewish involvements may not have felt. Others may well have been hesitant in a time of strident xenophobia to take an active part in so controversial an issue as suffrage. Finally there was the concern over the apparent anti semitism within some suffrage circles.

When suffrage came to women, Jew and Gentile alike, it was generally welcomed. For many reasons the majority of Jewish women had not actively fought for suffrage, yet they were flattered and proud when it arrived.

Appendix B

Resolution of the Central Conference of American Rabbis - 1975

Women in Reform Judaism

WHEREAS the Central Conference of American Rabbis is a professional organization we address ourselves to special concerns of the rabbinate as a profession, and

WHEREAS the Reform movement has affirmed the religious equality of women, and

WHEREAS the Central Conference of American Rabbis had expressed its support of the Equal Rights Amendment, and

WHEREAS we firmly believe that women should be full and equal partners in all areas of synagogue and community life,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we express our concern that, despite the basic principles of our Movement, there are still Reform congregations in which family memberships are listed by the man's name only. We call upon all members of the CCAR to review all policies and programs of our synagogues and communal institutions to insure that men and women share equally in responsibilities and opportunities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge all our members and congregations to nominate, elect and appoint qualified women to positions of leadership within the synagogue and community, to invite women to participate in every aspect of synagogue ritual including Aliyot and the privilege of carrying the Torah during the Hakafot. We call for greater sensitivity to the feelings and needs of women in liturgical language and practice. We stress the need to provide customs and ceremonies which are meaningful to both men and women. We urge our congregations to institute a Bat Mitzvah ceremony comparable in every way to the existing Bar Mitzvah ceremony and to introduce other life-cycle ceremonies for females equivalent to those now conducted for males. We emphasize the importance of encouraging young girls to participate in the life of the synagogue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon all our members and congregations to review their religious school curricula and textbooks to be certain that traditional stereotypes are not being reinforced without presentation of new role models and that young girls are not being made to feel that their place is solely in the home. We direct the Commission on Jewish Education to develop new materials which stress the numerous contributions women have made to Judaism and humanity and which emphasize the possibilities that exist for female participation within the Jewish community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we express once again our total support of the ordination of women. We call upon the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion to continue to seek qualified female candidates for the rabbinate and cantorate, and we urge our congregations and all others who employ Rabbis and cantors to choose their spiritual leadership not on the basis of sex but in terms of individual ability and competence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the HUC-JIR and the UAHC the WUPJ and the CCAR to nominate, elect and appoint more women to their governing bodies in keeping with the historic commitment of our Movement to the religious equality of women.

Notes to Part I

1. C.M. Henning, "Canon Law and the Battle of the Sexes", R.R. Reuther, ed., Religion and Sexism, (New York, 1974), p. 280.
2. Ibid., p. 295.
3. Ibid., p. 302.
4. Ibid., p. 307.
5. H. W. Puckett, Germany's Women Go Forward, (New York, 1930), pp. 163-63.
6. M.A. Meyer, The Origins of the Modern Jew, (Detroit, 1967), p. 106.
7. M. Hargrave, Some German Women and Their Salons, (London, 1912), p. 140.
8. Ibid., p. 141.
9. E. Moltmann-Wendel, Liberty, Equality, Sisterhood, (Philadelphia, 1978), p. 43.
10. Ibid., p. 44.
11. P. Hyman, "The Other Half: Women in Jewish Tradition", E. Koltun, ed., The Jewish Woman, (New York, 1976), p. 108-9.
12. C. Baum, P. Hyman and S. Michel, The Jewish Woman in America, (New York, 1975), p. 5.
13. Ibid., p. 9.
14. J. Katz, Out of the Ghetto, (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 84.
15. C. Baum, et al. p. 19.
16. S.R. Hirsch, Judaism Eternal, V. 2, (London, 1960), p. 4.
17. S.R. Hirsch, The Nineteen Letters, (New York, 1970), p. 128.
18. Meyer, p. 91.
19. Ibid., p. 105-6.
20. Ibid., p. 118-19.
21. Ibid., p. 148.
22. D. Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, (New York, 1930), p. 111.
23. Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v. "Confirmation".
24. Ibid.

25. M.A. Meyer, "Jewish Religious Reform and Wissenschaft des Judentums; The Positions of Zunz, Geiger and Frankel", Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, XVI, (1971), p. 28.

26. D. Philipson, "Abraham Geiger As Reformer", Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook, XX, (1910), p. 280.

27. Ibid., p. 281.

28. W.G. Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism. (New York, 1963), pp. 252-53.

29. Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v. "Confirmation".

30. Philipson, Reform Movement, p. 138.

31. Ibid., p. 218.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. 182.

34. Ibid., p. 184.

35. Plaut, p. 253. The rest of the Breslau discussion can be found on pp. 254-55.

36. Philipson, Reform Movement, p. 245.

37. Ibid., p. 355

38. M.A. Kaplan, The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany: The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904-1938, (Westport,Conn. 1979), pp. 62-63.

39. K. Anthony, Feminism in Germany and Scandinavia. (New York, 1915), p. 181.

40. Kaplan, p. 60.

41. Anthony, p. 182.

42. Kaplan, p. 61.

43. Ibid., p. 44.

44. Ibid., pp. 61-62

45. Philipson, Reform Movement, (1930), p. 299.

46. Ibid., pp. 309-21.

47. Ibid., pp. 320-21.

48. M.A. Meyer, "Caesar Seligman and the Development of Liberal Judaism in Germany at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century", Hebrew Union College Annual, XLI, (1970), pp. 535-36.

49. W.G. Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism, (New York, 1965), p. 72.

50. Kaplan, p. 152.

51. Ibid., p. 156.

52. Ibid., p. 159.

53. D.L. Niewyk, The Jews in Wiemar Germany, (Baton Rouge, La., 1980) p. 121.

54. Ibid.

55. Kaplan, p. 159.

56. Philipson, Reform Movement, pp. 398-400.

57. Kaplan, p. 163.

58. Letter from Wolfgang Hamburger to Jacob Marcus concerning Regina Jonas, July 12, 1972, Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

59. S. Priesand, Judaism and the New Woman, (New York, 1975), p. 67.

60. Letter from Wolfgang Hamberger . . .

61. Letter from Alexander Guttmann to Jacob Marcus, December, 1973, Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

62. Letter from Wolfgang Hamburger . . .

63. Kaplan. p. 41.

64. Ibid., p. 30.

65. B. Pappenheim, The Jewish Woman in Religious Life, (London, 1913), reprinted by the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, p. 6.

66. Ibid., p. 9.

67. Kaplan, p. 44.

68. Ibid., p. 157.

69. Ibid.

Notes to Part II

1. R. Thompson, Women in Stuart England and America, (London, 1974), p. 9.
2. E. Hahn, Once Upon a Pedestal, (New York, 1974), p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 14.
4. A.W. Calhoun, A Social History of the American Family, V. 1, (Cleveland, 1917), p. 87.
5. Thompson, p. 82ff.
6. Ibid., p. 94.
7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Ibid., pp. 94-94.
9. N.F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood, (New Haven, 1977), p. 136.
10. J. Sochen, Herstory, (New York, 1974), p. 73.
11. Ibid., pp. 79-81.
12. A.W. Calhoun, A Social History of the American Family, V. 2, (Cleveland, 1918), p. 79.
13. Sochen, p. 93.
14. Calhoun, V. 2, p. 86.
15. Ibid., p. 89.
16. Sochen. pp. 139-40.
17. B. Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", M. Gordon, ed., The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, (New York, 1973), p. 224ff.
18. Ibid., p. 238.
19. Ibid., p. 241.
20. Ibid., p. 225 and passim.
21. Ibid., p. 229.
22. Ibid., p. 232ff.
23. Ibid., p. 231.
24. Ibid., p. 226.

25. Ibid.

26. Cott, p. 146.

27. Ibid., p. 140.

28. Ibid., p. 148.

29. The role of women in the Sunday School movement is detailed in A.M., Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools", Feminist Studies, IV, (October, 1978), pp. 62-80.

30. In B.B. Zikmund, "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity", R.R. Reuther and E. McLaughlin, eds., Women of Spirit, (New York, 1979), p. 207ff.

31. See M.F. Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth Century America", Journal of the American Academy of Religion, XLVIII, (1980), p. 209.

32. Cott, p. 157.

33. J.R. Marcus, The Colonial American Jew 1492-1776, V.2, (Detroit, 1970) p. 950.

34. Ibid., pp. 562-63.

35. Ibid., pp. 992-93.

36. Ibid., p. 970.

37. Ibid., pp. 1067-68.

38. Ibid., p. 1067.

39. S. Henry and E. Taitz, Written Out of History, (New York, 1978), p. 215.

40. A.L. Lebeson, Recall To Life, (New York, 1970), pp. 43-44.

41. Marcus, p. 976.

42. Lebeson, p. 58.

43. Marcus, p. 905.

44. Ibid., p. 1030.

45. R. Gay, Jews in America, (New York, 1965), pp. 28-29.

46. M.U. Schappes, ed., A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875, (New York, 1971), p. 116.

47. Lebeson, p. 64.

48. R. Glanz, The Jewish Woman in America: V.2 The German Jewish Woman, (New York, 1976), pp. 17-18.

49. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

50. Ibid., p. 11-13

51. Ibid., p. 19.

52. C. Reznikoff and U.Z. Engelman, The Jews of Charleston, (Philadelphia, 1950), pp. 82-84.

53. Ibid., p. 201.

54. Lebeson, p. 69.

55. Ibid., p. 76.

56. D. Philipson, ed., Letters of Rebecca Gratz, (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 244-45.

57. Henry and Taitz note the extent of her fame and influence pp. 235-46. Several of her works were published in America, and philanthropist Jacob Schiff established a New York library branch in her honor (p. 236).

58. Ibid., p. 238. The Reformers used a similar argument.

59. Ibid., pp. 238-39.

60. J.R. Rosenbloom, And She Had Compassion, (Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1957), p. 319.

61. C. Baum, P. Hyman and S. Michel, The Jewish Woman in America, (New York, 1975), p. 38.

62. Rosenbloom, p. 222ff.

63. Ibid., p. 244ff.

64. Reznikoff, pp. 149-50.

65. Rosenbloom, p. 56.

66. Ibid., pp. 74-75.

67. Baum, et al., pp. 36-37.

Notes to Part III

1. J. Sochen, Herstory, (New York, 1974), pp. 425-26.

2. I.J. Benjamin, Three Years in America 1859-1862, I, (Philadelphia, 1956), p. 89.

3. A. Porterfield, Feminine Spirituality in America, (Philadelphia, 1980), p. 68.

4. H. Bushnell, Women's Suffrage, (New York, 1869), p. 57.

5. S.M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, (New York, 1978), p. 21

6. R.C. White, Jr. and C.H. Hopkins, The Social Gospel, (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 14-15.

7. C.N. Degler, At Odds, (New York, 1980), pp. 298-327.

8. Rothman, p. 22 and passim.

9. Porterfield, pp. 99-153.

10. These philosophies as well as that of Christian Science are succinctly dealt with in M.F. Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth-Century America", Journal of the American Academy of Religion, XLVIII (1980), pp. 207-31.

11. Porterfield, pp. 155-76.

12. Rothman, pp. 64-65.

13. Quoted in D.G. Golomb, "The 1893 Congress of Jewish Women: Evolution or Revolution in American Jewish Women's History"? American Jewish History, LXX (1980), p. 57.

14. Rothman, pp. 63-93.

15. Ibid., pp. 74-81.

16. Ibid., p. 67.

17. Ibid., p. 69.

18. White and Hopkins, pp. 123-25.

19. J. Papachristou, Women Together, (New York, 1976), p. 157

20. Ibid., pp. 66-67.

21. Sochen, pp. 175-77.

22. Ibid., pp. 178-80.

23. Papachristou, p. 83. Sochen's version (p. 180) adds "in Christ Jesus".

24. Ibid., p. 84.

25. Quoted in A.S. Kraditor, Up From The Pedestal, (Chicago, 1968), pp. 114-115.

26. Ibid., p. 115.

27. Ibid., p. 116.

28. Papachristou, p. 86.

29. E.C. Stanton, et al, The Woman's Bible II (New York, 1898), p. 214.

30. Papachristou, pp. 149-53.

31. See Appendix, "Suffrage and the Jewish Woman".

32. Papachristou, p. 152.

33. Ibid., pp. 152-53.

34. Ibid., p. 115.

35. M. Ewens, "Removing the Veil: The Liberated American Nun", R. Ruether and E. McLaughlin, eds., Women of Spirit, (New York, 1979), p. 257.

36. V.L. Brereton, and C.R. Klein, "American Women in Ministry: A History of Protestant Beginning Points", Ibid., p. 306.

37. Ibid., p. 304.

38. Ibid., p. 309.

39. Ibid., p. 302.

40. Ibid., p. 310.

41. Ibid., p. 311.

42. Ibid., pp. 311-12.

43. Ibid., p. 312.

44. The Reform Advocate, (April 29, 1893), p. 209.

45. The American Jewess I, (August 1895), pp. 236-38.

46. Brereton and Klein, pp. 312-13.

47. Ibid., p. 314.

48. The Occident, (May 5, 1845), p. 137.

49. The Jewish Messenger, (March 7, 1884), p. 4.

50. I.M. Wise, Reminiscences, (New York, 1945), p. 49.

51. Ibid., p. 56.

52. Ibid., p. 116.

53. Ibid., p. 117.

54. Ibid., p. 145.

55. Ibid., p. 212.

56. The Occident, (December, 1851), p. 477.

57. Wise, pp. 258-60.

58. The Israelite, (August 10, 1855), p. 36

59. D. Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, (New York, 1967), p. 485, p. 77.

60. The Israelite, (August 17, 1855), p. 45.

61. The Occident, (January, 1856), p. 496.

62. Ibid., (February, 1856), p. 541.

63. E.G. Hirsch, "The Modern Jewess", The American Jewess, I, (1895), p. 11.

64. The Occident, (May 1846), p. 99.

65. Ibid., (July, 1846), pp. 190-91.

66. Wise, pp. 335-36.

67. The Israelite, (August 29, 1856), p. 58.

68. Ibid., (January 8, 1856), p. 58.

69. The Occident, (September 13, 1860), p. 154. The "New York Temple prayerbook" containing shortened services had been issued by Rabbi Leo Merzbacher (1810-1856) of Temple Emanuel, in 1855. He arrived in the U.S. in 1841 and the Encyclopedia Judaica calls him "the first U.S. Reform rabbi".

70. Ibid., (November 15, 1860), p. 207.

71. Ibid., (November 22, 1860), p. 214.

72. Ibid., (December,1867), pp. 423-24.

73. Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v. "Confirmation, The Rite of"

74. D. Philipson and L. Grossman, Selected Writings of Isaac Mayer Wise, (New York, 1969), p. 68, 106.

75. J.G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise, (New York, 1965), p. 254.

76. Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v. "Confirmation, The Rite of".

77. K.Kohler, "The Origin and Function of Ceremonies in Judaism", Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis XVII (1907), p. 226.

78. J. Morgenstern, "Were Isaac M. Wise Alive Today", Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, XXIX, (191), p. 229.

79. S.D. Temkin, The New World of Reform, (Bridgeport, 1971), p. 51.

80. Ibid., p. 52.

81. Ibid., p. 53.

82. Ibid., pp. 54-55.

83. M.U. Schappes, A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, (New York, 1971),p. 308.

84. The Occident, (December 13, 1860), p. 232.

85. The Occident, (January 10, 1861), p. 256.

86. J.R. Marcus, The American Jewish Woman 1654-1980, (pre-publication manuscript, 1980), pp. 40-41.

87. Ibid., p. 41.

88. Ibid., p. 62.

89. Ibid.

90. The American Israelite, (September 8, 1876), p.4.

91. The Jewish Messenger, (August 5, 1881), p. 4.

92. Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, III, (1893) p. 40.

93. Philipson, Reform Movement, p. 485, n. 77.

94. Marcus, Document 62.

95. R. Glanz, The Jewish Woman in America, I, (New York, 1976), pp. 147-48.

96. W.G. Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism, (New York, 1965), p. 34.

97. S. Berrol, "When Uptown Met Downtown: Julia Richman's Work in the Jewish Community of New York,1880-1912", American Jewish History, LXX, (1980), p. 40.

98. Golomb, pp. 53-54.

99. Ibid., p. 54.

100. Ibid., p. 60.

101. Ibid., p. 61.

102. The Reform Advocate, (July 22, 1893), p. 442.

103. Golomb, p. 61.

104. Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress (Philadelphia, 1894) p. 9, My emphasis.

105. Ibid., p. 10.

106. Quoted in A.L. Lebeson, Recall To Life, (New York, 1970), p. 202.

107. Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress, p. 12.

108. Lebeson, p. 207.

109. Ibid., p. 62.

110. Ibid., p. 63.

111. Ibid., p. 121.

112. Ibid., p. 106.

113. Ibid., p. 231.

114. Ibid., pp. 244-45.

115. Ibid., p. 250.

116. Ibid., pp. 264-65.

117. The Reform Advocate,(August 12, 1893), p. 501.

118. Ibid., (October 7, 1893), p. 127.

119. Ibid., (May 9, 1896), pp. 238-40.

120. The American Jewess, I, (May 1895), p. 66.

121. Ibid., (June, 1895), p. 153.

122. Ibid., p. 155.

123. Ibid., IV, (December, 1896), p. 137.

124. Ibid., p. 138.

125. Ibid., II, (April, 1896), p. 380.

126. Ibid., p. 381.

127. Ibid., IV, (November, 1896),pp. 67-76. The proceedings of that conference were to include a bitter disappointment for this exceptional woman. One of the conference's last items of business was a discussion over accepting The American Jewess as the official organ of the NCJW. Several speakers, including Rosa Sonneschein, praised the idea, yet Sadie American must have spoken for many when she called the endorsement "the most unfortunate thing the Council could do".

> The Council stands for religion and philanthropy, The American Jewess, so far as I have read its pages, stands for story-writing and for the publication of papers of women . . . When the Council has an organ, it should be exclusively an organ to serve Judaism as such, and it should be a religious journal and nothing else.
>
> (Proceedings, pp. 395-96)

The motion to select the magazine was rejected. The blow must have been painful for Sonneschein. In the following years the journal continued to print news of the NCJW, however editorial criticism of the Council was included as well. A biting satire of a Council meeting, complete with uncomplimentary portraits of its leaders ("Mrs. Tenderheart, Mrs. Moneybag, Mrs. Firebrand . . .") appeared in the February 1898 issue (pp. 209-213) under the editor's name. The American Jewess ceased publication in 1899. One of the reasons for its early collapse was its failure to receive official Council support. Rosa Sonneschein went into what Lebeson has called "personal eclipse". She died three decades later, on March 5, 1932, eighty-five years old and forgotten.

128. Proceedings of the First Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women, (Philadelphia,1897), p. 407.

129. Ibid., p. 27.

130. Ibid., p. 28.

131. Ibid., p. 373.

132. Ibid., p. 37.

133. Ibid., p. 308.

134. Ibid., p. 14.

135. Ibid., p. 355.

136. Ibid., p. 349.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid., p. 379.

139. Ibid., p. 122. De Sola had attempted to raise the Sabbath question on the second day of the convention. Solomon cut her off.

140. Ibid., pp. 381-82.

141. Ibid., p. 383.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid., p. 386.

144. Ibid., p. 388.

145. Ibid., p. 187.

146. Ibid., p. 195.

147. Ibid., p. 207.

148. The following information is taken from a paper by D. Goldhamer, "History of the National Council of Jewish Women", (Hebrew Union College - Cincinnati, 1971), on file with the American Jewish Archives.

149. This is largely the thesis of Ellen Levi Elwell, Phd. candidate at Indiana University, conveyed to the author in conversation in December, 1980.

150. Preceedings of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, I, (1913-1915), p. 13.

151. Ibid., p. 18.

152. American Israelite, (January 16, 1913), p. 4.

153. Proceedings of the NFTS, I, p. 24.

154. The Sentinel, (January 15, 1915).

155. Chicago Journal, (January 20, 1915)

156. Proceedings of the NFTS, I, p. 47.

157. Ibid., p. 48.

158. Ibid., III, (1919), p. 31.

159. Ibid., V, (1923), p. 90.

160. H. Parzen, Architects of Conservative Judaism, (New York, 1964), p. 66.

161. Marcus, pp. 145-46.

162. N.F. Pratt, "Transitions in Judaism: The Jewish American Woman Through the 1930s", American Quarterly, XXX, (1978), p. 687.

163. The Jewish Messenger, (August 5, 1881), p.4.

164. Reform Advocate, (November 11, 1893), p. 201-2.

165. The American Jewess, IV, (October 1896), p. 12.

166. Ibid., (December, 1896), p. 142.

167. Glanz, p. 125.

168. Quoted in Heller, pp. 571-72.

169. M.A. Meyer, A Centennial History of the HUC - JIR, (Cincinnati, 1976), pp. 98-99.

170. J.Z. Lauterbach, "Responsum on Question, 'Shall Women Be Ordained Rabbis?'", Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, XXXII, (1922), pp. 156-77.

171. Ibid., p. 51.

172. S. Priesand, Judaism and the New Woman, (New York, 1975), p. 63.

173. J. Morgenstern, "The Achievements of Reform Judaism", Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, XXXIV, (1924), p. 280.

Notes to Part IV

1. B.S. Deckard, The Women's Movement, (New York, 1975) p. 289.
2. J. Papachristou, Women Together, (New York, 1976), pp. 198-99.
3. Deckard, p. 289, p. 285.
4. Ibid., p. 287.
5. Papachristou, p. 205.
6. Quoted in S.M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, (New York, 1978), p. 187.
7. Ibid., p. 178 and passim.
8. Deckard. p. 299.
9. Rothman, pp. 209-18.
10. Ibid., pp. 221-22.
11. Papachristou, pp. 216-18.
12. Ibid., pp. 218-19
13. B. Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, (New York, 1963), p. 364 and passim.
14. C.P. Gilman, His Religion and Hers, (New York, 1923, Reprinted Newport, Conn., 1976), p. 217.
15. Ibid., p. 292.
16. Ibid., p. 293.
17. V.L. Brereton and C.R. Klein, "American Women in Ministry: A History of Protestant Beginning Points", R.R. Reuther and E. McLaughlin, eds., Women of Spirit, (New York, 1979), p. 315.
18. Ibid.
19. E. Janeway, ed., Women: Their Changing Roles, (New York, 1973), p. 126. This is an invaluable collection of New York Times articles about women from the early 1900s to 1972.
20. Brereton and Klein, p. 316.
21. Ibid., pp. 316-17.
22. Ibid., pp. 317-18.

23. Ibid., p. 319.

24. K. Bliss, The Service and Status of Women in the Churches, (London, 1954), p. 10.

25. Ibid., p. 16.

26. Ibid., p. 78.

27. Ibid., p. 175.

28. Ibid., p. 185.

29. Ibid., p. 187.

30. Ibid., p. 196.

31. Ibid., pp. 197-98.

32. Brereton and Klein, p. 319.

33. Ibid., pp. 319-20.

34. Ibid., pp. 320-21.

35. R.C. Prohl, Woman in the Church, (Grand Rapids, Mi., 1957), p. 79

36. Quoted in M. Daly, The Church and the Second Sex, (New York, 1975), p. 118.

37. Ibid., p. 119.

38. Ibid., pp. 119-20.

39. Ibid., p. 120.

40. Ibid., p. 122.

41. J. Hole and E. Levine, Rebirth of Feminism, (New York, 1971), p. 373.

42. R. Reuther, "Entering the Sanctuary: The Struggle for Priesthood in Contemporary Episcopalian and Roman Catholic Experience, II The Roman Catholic Story", in Reuther and McLaughlin, p. 374.

43. Hole and Levine, pp. 374-75.

44. Ibid., p. 377.

45. I have slightly ammended the list in Hole and Levine, p. 378.

46. Daly, p. 153.

47. E. Janeway, Between Myth and Morning, (New York, 1974), pp. 28-29.

48. Friedan, p. 339.

49. E. Moltmann-Wendel, Liberty, Equality, Sisterhood, (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 90.

50. J.L. Mackenzie, S.J., The Two-Edged Sword: An Interpretation of the Old Testament, quoted in Daly, p. 181

51. Daly, p. 38.

52. N.R. Goldenberg, Changing of the Gods, (Boston, 1979), p. 6

53. Ibid., p. 4-5.

54. Ibid., p. 8-9.

55. J. Sochen, "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish Women as Communal Volunteers", American Jewish History, LXX, (September, 1980), pp. 30-31.

56. The Jewish Woman, IV (February, 1924), pp. 5-6, 20.

57. Ibid., (April, 1924), p. 5.

58. Ibid., p. 35.

59. Ibid., (October, 1924), p. 16.

60. Ibid, V, (March, 1925), pp. 6-8.

61. Ibid., (June, 1925), p. 14.

62. Ibid., XI, (October, 1931), p. 8.

63. Ibid., V, (June, 1925), pp. 6-8.

64. Ibid., (October, 1925) pp. 45-46.

65. Ibid., IX, (April-June), 1929), p. 7.

66. Ibid., (October-December, 1929), p. 3.

67. Sixteenth Annual Report of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, IX, (April, 1929), p. 56.

68. Ibid., p. 99.

69. D. Befkowitz, Synopsis of a Paper . . . on "The American Jewish Woman, her status in the Community and in Congregational Life", (1930). In the collection of the Klau Library, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

70. Sochen, p. 30.

71. Eighteenth Annual Report of the NFTS, XI, (April, 1931), p. 107.

72. Ibid., p. 108.

73. Ibid., p. 34.

74. Sixteenth Annual Report . . ., P. 25.

75. R. Jacobson, Manual For Sisterhoods, (New York, 1954), p. 98.

76. Eighteenth Annual Report . . . , p. 33. The first mention of a "Sisterhood Sabbath" is found in a 1916 Religious Committee Report to the NFTS Executive Board. There it is reported that "One Sisterhood secured the consent of the rabbi and the congregation to set aside one Sabbath in the year as "Sisterhood Sabbath", and requested a special sermon for that day". (Proceedings of the NFTS, II (1917), p. 45) Five years later the Committee noted that "Several Sisterhoods have adopted the idea of a Sisterhood Sabbath. On one Friday evening or Sabbath during the year the services include a special Sisterhood message", (Proceedings . ., V, (1923), p. 23) At this time such a service appears to have included a "special sermon" or "message" probably on a Sisterhood theme. Whether or not the women themselves actually participated in these services is unclear; however, the latter Committee Report also includes mention of a "number of small towns" where a HUC student conducted services during the winter months: "In the summer, however, in order to open the Temple on the Sabbath, one of the Sisterhood members reads the services. This plan has been adopted very successfully by many sisterhoods throughout the country". (p. 63). It would seem, therefore, that women in some congregations were participating and even leading services on occasion. The 1930 report gives the impression that by that year the Sisterhood Service involved the participation of sisterhood members. The service had become an institution by 1954 when the Manual For Sisterhoods suggested:

> Sisterhood Sabbath should be an annual event and held at approximately the same time every year, for example, on the Sabbath preceding Mother's Day. It may be a Friday evening or a Saturday morning service. The service may be that of the Union Prayerbook or it may be a special one such as is available from NFTS. Various members read the service, recite special prayers and deliver the sermon. It is, of course, clearly understood that any plan for a Temple service must have in advance approval of the rabbi and the Temple Board (o.p. cit., pp. 99-100).

77. Ibid., p. 145.

78. Topics and Trends, II, (May-June, 1936), p. 3.

79. Ibid., IV, (March-April, 1938), p. 4.

80. From a conversation of the author with Jane Evans, July 1980. On file in the American Jewish Archives.

81. Twenty-First Annual Report of the NFTS, XIV, (September, 1934), p. 18.

82. Quoted in The Days of Our Years, NFTS Golden Jubilee volume (1963)

83. Conversation with Jane Evans . . .

84. Topics and Trends, VI (March-April, 1940), p. 1. The NFTS had not had an official organ of its own before 1934 when Topics and Trends became its bi-monthly newsletter (Previously Federation news was published in the Union Bulletin which had been discontinued). In its first issue both NFTS President, Martha Steinfeld (who died before its publication), and Honorary President Carrie Simon referred to the need for such a periodical (Topics and Trends, I, (September-October, 1934), p. 2). A lack of formal communication between the NFTS and its member sisterhoods had apparently led to differing views on the role of the sisterhood. Steinfeld wrote that while "The Federation interferes as little as possible with its local constituents", this otherwise fine policy "has sometimes allowed the local constituent to become too deeply engrossed with its own problems". Topics and Trends would help local sisterhoods keep in touch with NFTS objectives and programs, providing information and news. "Above all", Steinfeld added, "it is hoped that TOPICS AND TRENDS will make clear that the successful Sisterhood in one among whose members there is a heightened sense of spiritual values, a deep devotion to Jewish ideals, and an intensified feeling for social justice".

85. Jacobson, p. 5.

86. Ibid., pp. 121-22.

87. Report of the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the XLIV Council, p. 13.

88. Index of Resolutions 1913-1977, pp. 18-19.

89. Quoted in The Days of Our Years.

90. M. Sklare and J. Greenblum, Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier, (New York, 1967), p. 62.

91. Ibid., p. 140.

92. Ibid., p. 347, n.12.

93. Ibid., pp. 255-56.

94. Ibid., p. 257.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., p. 258.

97. Hole and Levine, p. 375.

98. Ibid., pp. 375-76

99. Ibid., p. 376.

100. J. Timberg, "Are Jewish Women Oppressed?" in J.N. Porter and P. Dreier, eds., Jewish Radicalism, (New York, 1973), p. 252.

101. M. Gendler, "Women and Judaism - Time for a Change", Ibid., pp. 269-70.

102. E. Koltun, ed. The Jewish Woman, (New York, 1976), p. xvii.

103. J. Plaskow, "The Jewish Feminist: Conflict in Identities", Ibid., p. 3.

104. Timberg, p. 253.

105. R.M. Gross, "Female God Language in a Jewish Context", in C.P. Christ and J. Plaskow, eds., Womanspirit Rising, (San Francisco, 1979), p. 170.

106. Ibid., p. 171.

107. Koltun, pp. 21-92.

108. Quoted in Report to the UAHC Board of Trustees, (1966), p. 18.

109. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

110. Ibid., p. 19.

111. Report of Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President, To the Board of Trustees, (1967), p. 16.

112. Ibid., p. 17.

113. Index of Resolutions . . . , p. 20.

114. The UAHC had established a men's auxiliary - the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods - in 1923. Founded mainly as a federation of synagogue men's groups to support the Jewish Chatauqua Society's educational endeavors, activity in the NFTB was not the sole definition of the Reform male's religious role. Men who had no Brotherhood connection were involved as executive officers of temples and the Union. The Brotherhood therefore, was not the central focus of the Reform Jewish man's religious role which the Sisterhood was for a woman.

115. Report of Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath . . . , (1970), p. 29.

116. Ibid.

117. Index of Resolutions . . . ,p. 21.

118. Quoted in S. Priesand, Judaism and the New Woman, (New York, 1975) p. 64.

119. Letter from Israel H. Levinthal to Jacob Marcus re. Helen Levinthal Lyons, April 14, 1972, Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

120. Letter from Earl Stone to Alfred Gottschalk, May 10, 1971, Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

121. Time, October 2, 1939.

122. Letter from Paula Ackerman to Jacob D. Schwarz, January 9, 1951, "Women Rabbis", Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

123. Letter from Sidney Kay to Maurice Eisendrath, January 11, 1951, in Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

124. Time, January 22, 1951.

125. "President's Message" Yearbook of the CCAR LXV (1955), p. 92.

126. Ibid., p. 14.

127. "Report of the Committee on Ordination of Women", Yearbook of the CCAR, LXVI, (1956), p. 92.

128. Ibid., pp. 92-93.

129. New York Times, November 20, 1963.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid.

133. B'nai Brith Messenger, April 28, 1972.

134. New York Times, April 13, 1972

135. Israel Today, June 17-30, 1972.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

138. Jewish Week, May 4, 1974.

139. Report of Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath . . . (1972), pp. 3-4.

140. Ibid., p. 4.

Notes to Conclusion

1. D.J. Elazar and R.G. Monson, The Evolving Role of Women in the Ritual of the American Synagogue, (1979), a study by the Center for Jewish Community Studies.

2. D.J. Elazar, Community and Polity, The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry, (Philadelphia,1976), pp. 113-115.

3. Ibid., p. 115

4. L. Maltzer, "The Role of Women in Positions of Jewish Leadership", Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook, LXXXIX, (1979), p. 141.

5. Ibid., pp. 144-45.

6. H.J. Fields, Opening the Gates of Prayer, (New York, 1975), p. 2.

7. Following Maltzer's paper, p. 147.

8. Maltzer, p. 143.

9. Ibid., p. 144.

10. Ibid., p. 147.

11. In conversation with the author, July 1980.

12. Maltzer, p. 145.

13. Minutes of meeting sent as part of a memorandum by Eugene Mihaly to Deans Barth, Ehrlich and Spicehandler, September 22, 1976. "Women Rabbis" - Nearprint File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

14. New York Times, December 9, 1979. Other quotations are also from this article.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

CCARY - Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis

HUC-JIR - Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

LBIY - Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook

NCJW - National Council of Jewish Women

NFTS - National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods

UAHC - Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Material from the American Jewish Archives

Correspondence File:

Ackerman, Paula, Letter to Jacob D. Schwarz, January 9, 1951.

Guttman, Alexander, Letter to Jacob Marcus, December 1973.

Hamburger, Wolfgang, Letter to Jacob Marcus concerning Regina Jones, July 13, 1972.

Kay, Sidney, Letter to Maurice Eisendrath, January 11, 1951.

Levinthal, Israel H., Letter to Jacob Marcus, re. Helen Levinthal Lyons, April 14, 1972.

Stone, Earl, Letter to Alfred Gottschalk, May 10, 197.

Rabbi Abram and Carrie Simon Collection:

Chicago Journal, 1915.

The Sentinel, 1915.

"Women Rabbis" - Nearprint File:

Clippings:

B'nai Brith Messenger, April 28, 1972.

Israel Today, June 17-30, 1972.

Jewish Week, May 4,1974.

New York Times, November 20, 1963.

New York Times, April 13, 1972.

New York Times, December 9, 1979.

Time, October 2, 1939.

Time, January 22, 1951.

Other:

Memorandom from Eugene Mihaly, to Deans Barth, Ehrlich and Spicehandler, September 22, 1976.

Unfiled as of March 1981:

Evans, Jane, Conversation with the author, July, 1980.

Periodicals:

The American Hebrew, 1881, 1893.

The American Israelite, 1855, 1856, 1876, 1913.

The American Jewess, 1895-1899.

CCARY, 1893, 1917, 1922, 1955, 1956, 1975, 1977, 1979.

The Jewish Messenger, 1881, 1884.

The Jewish Woman, 1924, 1925, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931.

The Occident, 1845, 1846, 1851, 1855, 1860, 1861, 1867.

The Reform Advocate, 1893, 1896, 1908.

Topics and Trends, 1934-40.

Printed Sources

General:

Bliss, K., The Service and Status of Women in the Churches, London, 1954.

Christ, C.P., and Plaskow, J., Wom nspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, San Francisco, 1979.

Daly, M., The Church and the Second Sex, New York, 1975.

Deckard, B.S., The Women's Movement: Political, Socioeconomic and Psychological Issues, New York, 1975.

Friedan, B., The Feminine Mystique, New York, 1972.

Gilman, C.P., His Religion and Hers, Westport, 1976.

Goldenberg, N., Changing of the Gods, Boston, 1979.

Greer, G., The Female Eunuch, New York, 1972.

Hahn, E., Once Upon a Pedestal, New York, 1974.

Henry, S., and Taitz, E., Written Out of History, New York, 1978.

Hole, J., and Levine, E., Rebirth of Feminism, New York, 1971.

Janeway, E., Between Myth and Morning - Women Awakening, New York, 1974.

————, ed., Women: Their Changing Roles, New York, 1973.

Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, First Annual Report, 1913-1914, London.

Katz, J., Out of the Ghetto, Cambridge, Mass., 1973.

Kohler, K., "David Einhorn, The Upcompromising Champion of Reform Judaism", CCARY, XIX, 1909, pp. 215-67.

————, "The Origin and Function of Ceremonies in Judaism", CCARY, XVIII, 1907, pp. 205-229.

Koltun, E., ed., The Jewish Woman, New York, 1976.

Lansberg, M., and Kohler, K., "The Rite of Confirmation", The Jewish Encyclopedia, IV, pp. 219-20.

Lerner, B., "Women in Three Jewish Systems", Rabbinic Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1979.

Loewe, R., The Position of Women in Judaism, London, 1966.

Mendes, Rev. H.P., The Position of Woman in Jewish Law and Custom, New York, 1884.

Moltmann-Wendel, E., Liberty, Equality, Sisterhood, Philadelphia, 1978.

Morgan, R., ed., Sisterhood is Powerful, New York, 1970.

Morgenstern, J., "The Achievements of Reform Judaism", CCARY, XXXIV, 1924, pp. 247-81.

Osborne, M.L., ed., Woman in Western Thought, New York, 1979.

Parzen, H., Architects of Conservative Judaism, New York, 1964.

Philipson, D., The Reform Movement in Judaism, New York, 1907, (3rd ed., 1967).

Plaut, W.G., The Rise of Reform Judaism, New York, 1963.

_____, The Growth of Reform Judaism, New York, 1965.

Priesand, S., Judaism and the New Woman, New York, 1975.

Prohl, R.C., Woman in the Church: A Restudy of Woman's Place in Building the Kingdom, Grand Rapids, 1957.

Rothman, S.M., Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices 1870 to the Present, New York, 1978.

Ruether, R.R. ed., Religion and Sexism, New York, 1974.

Ruether, R.R. and McLaughlin, E., eds., Women of Spirit, New York, 1979.

Tavard, G.H., Woman in Christian Tradition, Notre Dame, Ind., 1973.

Thomson, D., Europe Since Napoleon, New York, 1974.

Germany:

Anthony, K. Feminism in Germany and Scandinavia, New York, 1915

Evans, J.R., The Feminist Movement in Germany, London, 1976.

Hargrave, M., Some German Women and Their Salons, London, 1912.

Hirsch, S.R., Judaism Eternal, V.II, London, 1960

Hirsch, S.R., The Nineteen Letters, New York, 1970.

Kaplan, M.A., The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany: The Campaigns of The Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904-1938, Westport, Conn., 1979.

Meyer, M.A., The Origins of the Modern Jew, Detroit, 1967.

_____, "Caesar Seligman and the Development of Liberal Judaism in Germany at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century", HUC Annual, XLI, 1969-70, pp. 529-554.

_____, "Jewish Religious Reform and Wissenschaft des Judentums: The Positions of Zunz, Geiger, and Frankel", LBIY, XVI, 1971, pp. 19-41.

Niewyk, D.L, The Jews in Weimer Germany, London, 1980

Pappenheim, B., The Jewish Woman in Religious Life, London, 1913.

Philipson, D., "Abraham Geiger as Reformer", CCARY, XX, 1910, pp. 246-83.

Puckett, H.W. Germany's Women Go Forward, New York, 1930.

America:

Baum, C., Hyman, P., and Michel, S., The Jewish Woman in America, New York, 1975.

Bednarowski, M.F., "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth-Century America", Journal of the American Academy of Religion, XLVIII, June, 1980, pp. 201-31.

Beifeld, M., "A Study of the American Jewess", Termpaper, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1972.

Benjamin, I.J., II, Three Years in America, 1859-1862, Philadelphia, 1956.

Berrol, S., "When Uptown Met Downtown: Julia Richman's Work in the Jewish Community of New York, 1880-1912", American Jewish History, LXX, September, 1980, pp. 35-51.

Boylan, A.M., "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools", Feminist Studies, IV, October, 1978, pp. 62-80.

Bushnell, H., Women's Suffrage:The Reform Against Nature, New York, 1869.

Calhoun, A.W., A Social History of the American Family, Vols, I and II, Cleveland, V. I -1917, V. II -1918.

Cott, N.F., The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835, New Haven, 1977.

Degler, C.N., At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present, New York, 1980.

Earnest, E., The American Eve in Fact and Fiction, 1775-1914, Chicago, 1974.

Eisendrath, M.N., Report of the President of the UAHC, 1957, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1972.

Elazar, D.J., Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry, Philadelphia, 1976.

Elazar, D.J., and Monson, D.G., The Evolving Role of Women in the Ritual of the American Synagogue, 1979.

Elwell, E.L., "Jewish Women's Religious Expression: The Founding and Early Programs of the National Council of Jewish Women (1893-1908)", Paper presented to the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December, 23, 1980, Unpublished.

Flexner, E., Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, Cambridge, Mass., 1975.

Gay, R., Jews in America, New York, 1965.

Glanz, R., The Jewish Woman in America: Two Female Immigrant Generations, 1820-1929, Vols, I and II, New York, 1976.

Goldhamer, D., "History of the National Council of Jewish Women", Termpaper, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1971.

Golomb. D.G., "The 1893 Congress of Jewish Women: Evolution or Revolution in American Jewish Women's History?", American Jewish History, LXX, September, 1980, pp. 52-67.

Gordon, M., ed., The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, New York, 1973.

Graziani, B., Where There's A Woman: 75 Years of History as Lived by The National Council of Jewish Women, New York, 1967.

Heller, J.G., Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought, New York, 1965.

Hirsch, E.G., My Religion, New York, 1925.

Jacobson, R., Manual for Sisterhoods, New York, 1954.

Jewish Women's Congress, Papers, Philadelphia, 1894.

Karff, S.E., ed., Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion At One Hundred Years, Cincinnati, 1976.

Kraditor, A.S., ed., Up From the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism, Chicago, 1968.

Learsi, R., The Jews in America: A History, New York, 1972.

Lebeson, A.L., Recall To Life - The Jewish Woman in America, New York, 1970.

Lefkowitz, Mrs. D., "The American Jewish Woman, her status in the Community and in Congregational Life. Synopsis of a paper read on Tuesday morning, July 22nd, 1930." n.d., n.p.

Lerner, G., The Female Experience: An American Documentary, Indianapolis, 1977.

Marcus, J.R., Memoirs of American Jews 1775-1865, Vols, I, II, and III, Philadelphia, 1955.

_____, The Colonial American Jew 1492-1776, Vols. I, II, and III, Detroit, 1970.

_____, The American Jewish Woman 1654-1980, Unpublished Manuscript, 1980.

Mervis., L.J., The Social Justice Movement of the American Reform Rabbis, 1890-1949, Doctoral Thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Pittsburgh, 1951.

Morgenstern, J., "Were Isaac M. Wise Alive Today", CCARY, XXIX, 1919, pp. 224-58.

Morison, S.E., The Oxford History of the American People, New York, 1965.

NCJW, Proceedings of the First Convention, Philadelphia, 1897.

NFTS, Proceedings, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1929, 1931, 1934, 1935-37, 1941, 1946.

NFTS, Index of Resolutions 1913-1977, New York, n.d.

NFTS, The Days of Our Years,(Golden Jubilee Volume), New York, 1963.

New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, Task Force on Equality of Women, Glossary of Substitute Terminology, New York, 1976.

Papachristou, J., Women Together, New York, 1976.

Philipson, D., ed., Letters of Rebecca Gratz, Philadelphia, 1929.

Philipson, D., and Grossman, L., Selected Writings of Isaac Mayer Wise, New York, 1969.

Porter, J.N., and Dreier, P. eds., Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology, New York, 1973.

Porterfield, A., Feminine Spirituality in America: From Sarah Edwards to Martha Graham, Philadelphia, 1980.

Pratt, N.F., "Transitions in Judaism: The Jewish American Woman Through the 1930s", American Quarterly, XXX, Winter, 1978, pp. 681-702.

Reznikoff, C., The Jews of Charleston, Philadelphia, 1950

Rosenbloom, J.R., "And She Had Compassion: The Life and Times of Rebecca Gratz", Doctoral Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1957.

Schappes, M.U., ed., A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875, New York, 1971.

Schwartz, G.G., and Wyden, B., The Jewish Wife, New York, 1969.

Sklare, M., and Greenblum, J., Jewish Identity On the Suburban Frontier (The Lakeville Studies, V. I), New York, 1967.

Sochen, J., Herstory: A Woman's View of American History, New York, 1974.

_____, "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish Women as Communal Volunteers", American Jewish History, LXX, September, 1980, pp. 23-34.

Stanton, E.C., et al., The Woman's Bible (Part II), New York, 1898.

Swerdlow, P., "The American Jewess in the Second Quarter of the Twentieth Century: An Attempt to Discover Whether There is a Typical American Jewess. Her Nature and Characteristics". Master's Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1964.

Temkin, S.D., The New World of Reform, Bridgeport, 1974.

Thompson, R., Women in Stuart England and America: A Comparative Study, London, 1974.

White, R.C., and Hopkins, C.H., The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America, Philadelphia, 1976.

Wise, I.M., Reminiscences, New York, 1945.