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Since the Second World War

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**A History of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues  
Since the Second World War**

Joel Myles Mosbacher

This is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
1998

Referee, Professor Karla Goldman

*For Elyssa  
who carried me through  
and Ari  
who brought me home*

THESIS DIGEST:  
A HISTORY OF THE UNION OF LIBERAL AND PROGRESSIVE  
SYNAGOGUES SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

JOEL M. MOSBACHER

This thesis is a study of the history of the Liberal Jewish movement in Great Britain. The paper begins with the breakaway of the West London (Reform) Synagogue from the existing Orthodox community. Next in the narrative, the author continues with a description of the beginnings of the Liberal movement, from Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore to the 1940's.

In the following chapters, the author explores the complex relationships between the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (ULPS) and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB), and the even more difficult relationship between the ULPS and the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate. Although these communal tensions are continuously evolving, they are considered here in light of surrounding events in various time periods. In certain periods, for example, the relationship between the ULPS and the RSGB is clearly adversarial, while at other times the movements are so closely linked that the possibility of merger is considered. Unfortunately, the relationship between the Liberal movement and the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate is almost always strained.

The stand of the ULPS on the issue of Zionism is an evolving one, and the author addresses the changing attitudes and provides some possible explanations for the changes. In addition, the role of youth and youth provision for the Liberal movement is considered in various stages of development. The events of the Second World War affect not only the direction of the ULPS as an adult body, but also that of the young people in its constituent congregations.



In the conclusion, the author comments on some late developments in the ULPS and Anglo-Jewry generally, and attempts to look at the possibilities for the future of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	vi
INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER ONE: LIBERAL BEGINNINGS	1
Reform Under Attack	3
The Founders: Montefiore and Montagu	5
Early Services of the Jewish Religious Union	8
A Separate Movement	12
"The Three M's"	13
Reform vs. Liberal Judaism	13
The Jewish Religious Union and the Liberal Jewish Synagogue	16
Early Expansion and the Role of Lay-Ministers	17
Tension with the Orthodox Establishment	17
Communal Tension	19
Zionism in the Liberal Movement	20
CHAPTER TWO: THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH	
Effects of the Second World War	24
The Jewish Religious Union is changed to the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues	27
Changes in the Provision for Young People	28
Changes and Expansion in the ULPS	32
Conflict with the Orthodox Establishment	36

The Role of the Board of Deputies of British Jews	37
Zionism	40

### CHAPTER THREE: REFLECTION AND REFOCUSING

Time for Reflection	51
The Growth of the Youth Movement	58
Shifting Attitudes towards Zionism	60
Rabbinic Leadership in the Union	67
Ties with the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain	72
The Changing Structure of the Union	74
The Union and the Liberal Jewish Synagogue	79
Communal Tension	80
The Tercentenary	86
Changing Liturgy	87

### CHAPTER FOUR: CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP AND OUTLOOK

Leo Baeck College	93
Peggy Lang	95
Sir Louis Gluckstein	96
Relationship with the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate	96
Religious Shifts within the ULPS and in the larger Anglo-Jewish Community	105
Synagogue and Leadership Development	109
Zionism	112
ULPS Joins the Board of Deputies	115
ULPS Moves to its Own Space	116
FLPJYG becomes ULPSNYC	117

Kadimah Summer School	118
ULPS and the RSGB: Different Cultures	119
Rabbi Brichto's Impact	122
The 75th Anniversary	122
CHAPTER FIVE: RETURNING TO ROOTS	
Return to Tradition	124
Merger Efforts	128
Relationship with the Orthodox	137
Congregational Development	141
Change in Leadership	144
ULPSNYC	145
Zionism	149
Education in the Union	151
Leo Baeck College after Thirty Years	151
Redevelopment of the Montagu Centre	153
"Where We Stand"	154
The Five-Year Plan	154
CONCLUSION	156
BIBLIOGRAPHY	161

## Preface

This thesis is actually a work of almost six years. I first came into contact with Liberal Judaism in 1992, when I was hired jointly by the North American Federation of Temple Youth and the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to serve the ULPS as Fieldworker to the liberal youth movement. I knew little when I was hired about what my actual job would be, and I knew even less about the movement I was going to serve. But I went with high hopes and an open mind.

The experience turned out to be a profound one on many levels. I met many wonderful people with whom I found wonderful friendships which have continued across the miles and the years. Most relevant for this work, I actively learned for the first time that there were Liberal Jews outside of the United States. Growing up as a Reform Jew, I attended a UAHC summer camp and participated in NFTY. I must have missed the lesson about Liberal Judaism outside of my little world. When I first began to work in London, I met people who showed me just how naive I had been. That first taste of world Liberal Judaism lit a fire within me, and ever since, I have made it a part of my "sermon" to speak about Progressive Jews in other countries.

This project has been the most comprehensive one I have ever undertaken, and the process has been entirely rewarding, from beginning to end. Ever since I began studying history at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the subject has fascinated me. I have been privileged to study with some of the finest Jewish historians anywhere in the world during these four years, and I will forever be grateful to them. I was especially inspired by being fortunate enough to study with Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, whose *menschlikheit* and brilliant mind have been a blessing to so many generations of HUC-JIR students.

There are many people to whom I owe a great deal of thanks for the work I have been able to accomplish during this time. I must begin with my life partner and friend, Elyssa. For ten years she has challenged me to be more than I think I am, and supported me in everything I have undertaken. She has always had an incredible amount of patience for me, even during these exciting and trying months of pregnancy. She is not only a wonderful partner, but a terrific editor and writer, and her help in revising and improving this thesis has been invaluable. And our beautiful Ari has, in his own way, given me some sanity in these last trying weeks.

Dr. Karla Goldman has given generously of her knowledge, encouragement, and support in advising me in my work, and I am indebted to her for helping me learn not only about the subject matter, but also about the process and challenge of writing history. I look forward to having many other opportunities to learn from her.

An incredible number of people supported this research in England. From the first moments I began to consider this project, Rosita Rosenberg was a great source of encouragement and resources, and I cannot thank her enough for the time and effort she put into opening doors for me, in addition to the generosity of her own time and memories she shared with me. The entire Rich family welcomed me into their home and into their lives for the second time, and I simply could not have made the trip, so far from home, without their loving support. Danny, Tammy, Tom, Emma, Joe, and Claire each gave of themselves, in every way they knew how, to make me feel comfortable in their home, and I hope some day to return the favor in some small way.

The staffs of the Montagu Centre and the Peggy Lang Resource Centre were incredibly helpful and remarkably patient with my silly questions and annoying photocopying requests. Despite the fact that I essentially "moved in" for a month, they gave me all of the room that I might have wanted, and made me feel

welcome. The Union officers and professional leadership opened the doors of the ULPS Archives, and without their openness this work simply would not have been possible. A special thanks also to Josie Kinchin for transcribing the numerous tapes of the ULPS Oral History Project done by Clive Winston and Bryan Diamond. This was only another in a long line of moments in which Josie gave her support to the author.

Thanks also to Bryan Diamond, archivist of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, for his guidance and support. To all those who generously gave of their time to be interviewed: Rosita Rosenberg, Rabbi Danny Rich, Rabbi Lawrence Rigal, Greta Hyman, Walter Woyda, Rabbi John Rayner, John Rich, Rabbi Mark Goldsmith, Geoffrey Davis, Rabbi Sidney Brichto, and Rabbi Bernard Hooker; your words brought to life the pages of my research, and your memories breathed spirit into my work at times when it might have been tedious.

To the members of the Kingston Liberal Synagogue, thank you for adopting me during the time of my research and my stay with Rabbi Rich. Thanks also to the staffs of the London Metropolitan Archives and the University of Southampton Parkes Library who unselfishly shared the time and resources at their disposal.

My father-in-law Donald Pattow gave generously of his time and energy to meet me in Chicago to help me make final edits to this work. But he brought more than his vast knowledge as an English professor and experience as a great teacher. He brought as well a belief in my ability to do the work well. I literally do not know if I could have completed the work without him.

Lastly to my classmates, the Ordination Class of 1998, I offer grateful thanks for your support and encouragement all of these five years. I hope that we can continue to work closely together for years to come, regardless of the geographic miles which may separate us. May we all go from strength to strength.

## Introduction

The development of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (ULPS), and its antecedent, the Jewish Religious Union (JRU), mirrors the evolution of religious attitudes in Great Britain in general, and most certainly that of the larger Jewish community in the United Kingdom. Over the past nearly one-hundred years, the JRU and the ULPS have made significant contributions to the greater liberal Jewish world with regard to liturgy and ideology. For example, the ULPS's prayerbook Service of the Heart became one of the central texts upon which the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) based its own Gates of Prayer. From an ideological standpoint, the ULPS asserted the validity of patrilineal descent long before the UAHC. The relationships between these organizations and communities-- between the ULPS and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB), between the ULPS and the UAHC, between the ULPS and British Jewry in general, and so on-- have all undergone dramatic and radical changes over time.

British Liberal Jews generally trace their roots to the 1840's and the founding of the West London Synagogue. Ellen Umansky argues, however, that although the West London Synagogue is considered by many historians to be the first "Reform" synagogue in England, it in fact established neither a new religious movement nor an ideology which would sustain it. At the time of its founding, the liturgical changes made by the Reformers were significant by British standards. But over time, what was once radical became entrenched, and reforms came fewer and further between. The motivation of the foundation of British Reform seemed to be more social and political than religious. Its members wanted to found a synagogue which was closer to their homes in London's West End, and the West



London Synagogue, the first Reform synagogue, would fill that role. Over the following decades, the synagogue added some liturgical reforms, including an organ in 1859, a mixed choir, omission of the prayer for restoration of the sacrificial offerings, and some prayers in English. Aside from these changes, however, the style established by the early "Reformers" was maintained.

The Reform movement did not expand greatly, perhaps because the synagogues in England which called themselves Orthodox soon began to meet the challenge of Reform by adopting much of its program of decorum and modernization.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Orthodoxy had its chief rabbi, a position which the average Englishman could understand. The Orthodox model of a chief religious figure overseeing a federated structure of congregations echoed the structure of the Church of England. The British respected authority and tradition, and had little patience for radical religious reforms. For the most part, British people, whether they are believers or not, have viewed the centralized Church structure as the standard. Because of this fact, the Orthodox Jewish establishment found acceptance in Great Britain more easily than the liberal movements. In 1880, the West London Synagogue, itself, decided that it had gone too far, and publicly stressed that the reforms which had been instituted in the early period would be the final changes, that the synagogue would break no further from tradition.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1890's, experimental reforms growing out of dissatisfaction with the existing movement led to the formation of a new religious union. Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore envisioned a revitalized Anglo-Jewry. They combined their different ideas of how to make that dream a reality, and they also brought together their contacts with those in the Jewish community who were looking for another path to reform Judaism. Montefiore was already a well-respected thinker and

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<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey Alderman, Modern British Jewry, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 178.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 179.

influential member of the Jewish community. He was ambitious for change. He sought a liberalization of outlook, which he thought would make Judaism more appropriate to the intellectual and religious climate of the day.<sup>3</sup> Lily Montagu offered outstanding organizational and motivational skills along with being a member of a prominent family in the Jewish community. Montagu did not envision the creation of a new movement. She dreamed of an enlightened Judaism which she hoped could flourish within the existing communal framework. Both Montagu and Montefiore hoped to reach out to those British Jews who had lost a sense of religious dedication as a result of alienation from orthodoxy and the attractions of secular life.<sup>4</sup>

The Jewish Religious Union was formed in 1902 by a "broadly based, respected, and devoted leadership."<sup>5</sup> In the services of the JRU, men and women were seated together, the prayer service was primarily in English, and a mixed choir was not uncommon. In many ways, the JRU was much more like Reform Judaism in the United States than it was like any form of British Jewry. The liturgy often departed radically from the tradition, avoiding references to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, a return to Zion, and resurrection of the dead. The radical nature of the JRU quickly placed it at the margins of British Jewry. It would not, as Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore had hoped, succeed in catering to both the tradition-minded Jew and the Jew who had wandered away from tradition. Its constituents would be drawn primarily from those Jews who were disenchanted with Orthodoxy. By 1909, the JRU's executive committee had begun to realize that it could only survive if it left behind Lily Montagu's dream of working within the contemporary movements of British Jewry.<sup>6</sup> Montagu and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 217

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1988), 210.

<sup>6</sup> Meyer, 211.

Montefiore had hoped to bring together influential Jews from different streams, and their plan worked, but only for a short while. Once the JRU began to take shape liturgically and ideologically, the Orthodox knew that they could not be a part of it. The leaders of the JRU formally founded an independent movement in 1911. This schism between the Jewish Religious Union and the rest of British Jewry, although radical, led to another period of steady growth and development through World War I and the inter-war period.

This early period of the movement, from its beginnings as a departure from the British Reform movement through the 1940's, has been well documented in books such as Ellen Umansky's Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism. The lives and works of the founders of the Liberal movement, Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore, have been studied, and their contributions to the new movement considered in some depth. The later period, however, from World War II to the present, has not been so well researched, at least in published studies. Most of the works which consider the history of the ULPS cover the early period in depth and then make only passing comments on the later period. Accordingly, this thesis will address some significant later developments in the history of the ULPS.

Because the Liberal movement has undergone interesting and important transformations since the Second World War, the author hopes to trace the development of this portion of its history. In the post-W.W.II period, the newly-renamed Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, for that matter) began to grow at a much faster rate: "From a combined six congregations in 1940 they had together reached nearly fifty by 1977 with membership well over 30,000."<sup>7</sup> Events in Europe had made many Jews reconsider their place in Western culture. Many people who had drifted

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<sup>7</sup>Meyer, 347.

away from Judaism were trying to find their way back. But they could not reconcile their beliefs and practices with those found in Orthodox synagogues and therefore they were drawn to the Liberal movements.<sup>8</sup>

The Jewish Religious Union began as a break-away movement from Reform Judaism. In the past fifty years, however, the relationship between the ULPS and the Reform movement has been a complex and changing one. At times, the movements have been far apart, such as on the issue of patrilineal descent. At other times, the two Liberal movements have been close enough to consider merging into one stronger union. This tension has often been detrimental to both movements, at the same time that it has also pushed both towards greater creativity and self-definition.

The drive for communal unity has been an ongoing struggle for British Jewry. At the founding of the JRU, the Orthodox community, led by the Chief Rabbi, was critical of what it deemed the movement's divisive attitude toward British Jewry. The tension level between the Orthodox and Liberal communities has varied throughout the past 50 years, dependent in large part upon the level of desire of each succeeding Chief Rabbi for "unity" within the Jewish community.

In the early days, the ULPS had been anti-Zionist, which was largely a reflection of Claude Montefiore's de-nationalized theology of Judaism.<sup>9</sup> Over time, however the Zionist influence of the American progressive Rabbi Stephen S. Wise in the United States began to make its influence felt in England.<sup>10</sup> After World War Two, the liberal movement began to change its anti-Zionist stance. Over the past 50 years, the ULPS has gradually become strongly Zionist with a thriving Zionist youth movement.

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<sup>8</sup>Chaim Bermant, Troubled Eden, (London, Vallentine-Mitchell, 1969), 236.

<sup>9</sup>L. Cohen, Some Recollections of Claude Goldsmid Montefiore: 1858-1938, (London, Vallentine-Mitchell, 1969), 106.

<sup>10</sup>Bermant, 236.

Among the major questions to be considered in this thesis are:

1. How did the vision of Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore manifest itself in the development of the ULPS?
2. How has the relationship between the ULPS and the RSGB developed over time, in light of the complex beginnings which gave rise to the schism at the turn of the century?
3. How has Liberal Judaism dealt with the challenges of existing in a predominantly Orthodox Jewish community?
4. How has the Youth Movement of the ULPS reflected and/or driven the path of the "parent" movement?
5. How has the place of Zionism in the ULPS evolved?
6. How has the ideology of the ULPS been reflected in its two most recent prayer books?
7. In what directions is the ULPS heading in the foreseeable future?

The first chapter of the work is intended to provide background for the main period of study. The chapter begins with the breakaway of the West London Synagogue from the existing Orthodox community. The narrative continues with a description of the beginnings of the Liberal movement, from Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore to the 1940's.

The second chapter traces the crucial years of the war and the years until 1950, when the Liberal movement made major shifts in focus, as did Jewish movements throughout the world.

The third chapter addresses the period between 1950 and 1965, which Rabbi John Rayner calls years of consolidation in the movement.<sup>11</sup> They were also critical years in the sense that the oldest founders of the Liberal movement died and new and different types of leaders took their places.

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<sup>11</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview with the author, July 1997.

Chapter four explores development in the Liberal movement from the mid-1960's to the late 1970's. This period was marked by a geographic relocation of the ULPS offices to their own headquarters, as well as a shift in the way members and leaders of the ULPS talked about their relationships with the State of Israel.

The final chapter brings the narrative up to the early 1990's. The period encompasses a serious debate about the possibility of merger with the Reform movement.

In the conclusion, the author will comment on some later developments in the ULPS and Anglo-Jewry generally, and attempt to look at the possibilities for the future of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues.



## Chapter 1: Liberal Beginnings

By 1840, a segment of cultured British Jews had begun to find the orthodox services conducted at the Bevis Marks and Duke's Palace Orthodox synagogues distinctly distasteful. The inordinate length, the tiresome repetition, and the complete absence of decorum which marked the religious services of those days were fast estranging some of the most respected families in Anglo-Jewry.

Moreover, some saw the movement of many London Jews to the city's western neighborhoods as an opportunity to establish a branch synagogue, with a service more in harmony with their acculturated views of religion. Permission was asked of the Sephardic Bevis Marks authorities to take such a step but permission was repeatedly denied. Nonetheless, some of the leading members of Bevis Marks and Duke's Palace took matters into their own hands and established the West London Synagogue of British Jews. They compiled a new prayer book, which greatly abridged the traditional liturgy and which omitted many objectionable and antiquated passages. Sermons in the vernacular became a regular feature of the service, and an organ and a mixed choir were introduced. The observance of second days of festivals and most other rabbinical laws were abolished.

The reformers met with bitter opposition from the Orthodox community at the beginning. The new synagogue's adherents were excommunicated; they were denied the rites of burial and marriage by the established community. But the opposition of the Orthodox was gradually disarmed by the conciliatory and conservative policy of the reform leaders. In 1903, The Times in London noted that "so moderate are the bounds within which that movement has been kept that scarcely a single change of first rate importance has been introduced since the forties."<sup>1</sup> Despite the protests of some of the more progressive members, the West

<sup>1</sup>The Times (London), January 1, 1903, p. 8.

London Synagogue stood still, in the hope that the Orthodox community would come up to it, and then all might go forward together.

This hope went unfulfilled, at least in the nineteenth century. The Orthodox did not move towards the Reform community in any meaningful way. Despite an expressed desire by some to the contrary, the service remained largely in Hebrew. On the other hand, many of the cosmetic liturgical reforms made by the movement were adopted by the orthodox community, which blurred the apparent distinctions once again.<sup>2</sup>

In 1880 British Jewry was remarkably centralized. Power in the community was held largely by a few of the wealthiest families, with names such as Rothschild and Montefiore. Shortly after the turn of the century, however, social and geographic factors had come to play a part in breaking down the ties between those who were expected to lead and those who were expected to follow. Chaim Bermant notes that "extremes of wealth and poverty within British Jewry were at their starkest during the early years of the twentieth century."<sup>3</sup>

During this period the Rothschilds could still claim to have primacy as the lay leaders of British Jewry. But from their palaces in the Buckinghamshire it was difficult to maintain a close rapport with the Jewish masses, into whose midst they made occasional, semi-regal visits and for whom they became little more than distant sources of financial support.<sup>4</sup> As a result, influence within the Jewish community began to spread to a wider range of people.

The growing openness of British society and the social and professional ascent of greater numbers of Jews helped break down social hierarchies. Jews flourished in the professions, including the armed forces and the civil service. Sir Lionel Abrahams rose to become Assistant Under-Secretary at the India Office in

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Chaim Bermant, Troubled Eden (Great Britain: Valentine Mitchell and Co., 1969), 212.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



1911. There was a flowering of artistic and literary talent in the Jewish community.<sup>5</sup> As Jews became more educated and prominent in the larger British community, they gained influence in higher social circles as well. It was in this atmosphere of spreading Jewish authority and prominence that Claude Montefiore and Lily Montagu began the movement that would later become the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues.

### **Reform under attack**

The emerging Reform Judaism was not without harsh critics. Like the Orthodox movement before it, Reform Judaism became entrenched over time. Reform Judaism, too, having questioned the tenets of traditional Judaism, found itself in due course subject to heretical defiance from within its own circle. In the early years of this century, Claude Montefiore, a member of the prominent Montefiore clan and a biblical scholar, and Lily Montagu, whose father had been president of the United Synagogue (Orthodox), were at the hub of a study circle that met regularly at the West London Reform Synagogue. Their discussions were free and wide-ranging, so much so that they found themselves drifting towards a theological position that was out of harmony with the Reform movement to which they belonged.

Montagu and Montefiore had met when Montefiore became the editor of the scholarly Jewish Quarterly Review. The membership of their discussion group, which would form the core of the Jewish Religious Union, included leading Orthodox Ministers such as Simeon Singer and A.A.Green. They met on Shabbat afternoons for a kind of choral evensong with tea. They were accompanied on the organ, and men and women sat together, all of which could be overlooked by traditional Jews because they do not meet in a formal worship setting. What could

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 211.

not be overlooked were the ideas which were discussed with the tea, and especially those of Claude Montefiore.<sup>6</sup> In 1892 he had given the Hibbert lectures at Oxford on the "Origin of Religion as Illustrated by the Ancient Hebrews," and there he had frankly accepted the findings of those Bible critics who had questioned the authenticity of the Holy Bible. "The Bible," he said, "contained the highest truth, but not every word of the Bible was true."<sup>7</sup>

"The appeal of Liberal Judaism was that I understood the services from A to Z," observed Marjorie Moos. This last surviving member of the seven people who dug up the first turf at the site of the new synagogue recalled clearly the early worship services:

Parents and children sat together. The service was very largely in English, though the most important prayers were still in Hebrew. The whole feel of the service was much more friendly, much more a family thing... I wanted to be in a synagogue where I could worship. The other great appeal of the Liberal movement was that there was no bar mitzvah. At sixteen you had to take a confirmation exam. It was at that age that children were considered old enough to understand enough of their religion to really be able to carry it on into future generations. The teaching was very high class. We made no difference between the boys and the girls, and expected our youngsters to understand what their faith was about, to know their history and their Hebrew.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Founders: Montefiore and Montagu**

Montagu, in her role as founder of the Union, had a strong desire to make the ideas articulated by Montefiore into a basis for practical Jewish life. Having concluded that "Judaism was doomed, unless it was a living influence in Jewish

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<sup>6</sup>Bermant, *Troubled Eden*, 232.

<sup>7</sup>Obituary, *Jewish Chronicle* (London), October 7, 1938.

<sup>8</sup>Brook, *The Club*, 130.

thought and conduct,"<sup>9</sup> Montagu maintained that external changes in the worship service were insufficient. Instead, she insisted, more radical theological changes needed to be made. These included belief in progressive revelation, stress on the universal mission of the Jewish people as witnesses to God's reality, replacing belief in a personal Messiah with belief in a future messianic age, upholding the eternal nature of Judaism's moral teachings, and presenting its ceremonial laws as a possible means towards holiness rather than as important goals in and of themselves. External reform, such as prayers written in the vernacular, organ music played during the worship service, and family pews replacing traditional sex-differentiated seating might well be introduced but their primary significance, she felt, should be as reflections of the new theological stance which they represented.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, Lily Montagu discovered that such internal and external kinds of changes had already been instituted by Reform Jews in Germany and America. Moreover, she learned that the efforts of a growing Reform movement had proved to be highly successful. Encouraged by this discovery, she began to act on her own desire to offer the Anglo-Jewish community a new understanding of Jewish religious faith. Her intent was not to form a schismatic movement, as the American and German reformers had done, but rather to institute change from within the existing community structure. She sought to establish Liberal Judaism not as a potential rival to preexisting forms of Judaism, but instead as a complement to preexisting forms, as one way among many in which Jews could express their religious identity within the modern world.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Eric Conrad, Lily H. Montagu: Prophet of a Living Judaism (New York: National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 1953), 43.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>11</sup>Conrad, Lily H. Montagu, 45-46.

In an essay entitled "The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today," which appeared in the January 1899 issue of the Jewish Quarterly Review, Montagu pointed to the religious indifference prevalent within the Jewish community. She maintained that the re-animation of Judaism depended upon the reformulation of religious ideas.<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after the article's appearance, Montagu wrote a letter to leading members of the Anglo-Jewish community in order to ascertain how much support the proposal outlined in "The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today" might receive. Among the recipients were N.S. Joseph, Claude Montefiore, Israel Abrahams, and a number of her own relatives. Montagu asked four questions which she hoped would help to further develop her program.

- 1) What are the vital principles of the old Judaism that must be preserved in the new?
- 2) If those 'vital principles' do not include belief in the miraculous Divine Revelation heretofore accepted, what is the authority on which we are to rely in judging right and wrong?
- 3) What forms and ceremonies should be retained on account of their historical or ethical or sanitary value?
- 4) What is to be the special function of the Jew under the new Judaism?<sup>13</sup>

Though she failed to record either the names or number of those who responded favorably or the kinds of answers she received, the responses to her letter convinced her that there was a significant group of Jews who shared her liberal religious views.<sup>14</sup>

The Jewish Religious Union was founded in 1902 when Miss Montagu gathered together

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<sup>12</sup>Ellen Umansky, Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism (New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 166.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 168-9.

a group of Jews and Jewesses, who, while believing in the essentials of Judaism, and in the mission of Israel, were not satisfied with the official teaching and statutory services of the Orthodox Synagogue, and who wished to make their Judaism a religion which would guide and inspire their lives, and which would come into line with modern thought.<sup>15</sup>

One might claim, with some justification, that the relatively small size of today's Liberal Jewish movement (it would come to represent less than ten percent of British Jewry) indicates that Lily Montagu achieved only moderate success. Yet Lily Montagu never sought to establish a movement that would rival Orthodoxy either in numbers or in claims of authenticity. Her efforts were aimed exclusively at those Jews for whom Orthodoxy had no appeal. Liberal Judaism, for her, represented an alternative to, rather than a replacing of, Orthodoxy.<sup>16</sup>

Claude Montefiore's goal in helping to found the Jewish Religious Union was to initiate radical reform of the traditional synagogue service and of religious relations of Jews and Christians. The West London Synagogue, which had existed for over half a century, had made only conservative changes, and was not actively inspired by any reformist philosophy. Montefiore's guiding principle was progressive revelation. He found it impossible to believe that the Law of Moses was handed down from Mount Sinai and was all divinely inspired.

Montefiore was proud, both as a Jew and an Englishman, of his freedom to select those elements of Jewish practice which were in harmony with his fundamental English culture. As described by Professor Norman Bentwich, Montefiore hoped to create "a happy and serene freedom, ready to pick and to choose, to accept and reject, to adapt and to adopt, to purify or universalize."<sup>17</sup> He believed that freedom should be the essence of Liberal Judaism. The members of the Jewish Religious Union could break away from the rabbinical style, which in

<sup>15</sup>Report to the World Union, 1929. Speech probably delivered by JM DuParc, JRU Secretary. Found in ULPS Archives.

<sup>16</sup>Umansky, *Lily Montagu*, 209.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.



the Middle Ages multiplied commands and prohibitions. He felt that they should harmonize Jewish religious rites and institutions with the writings of the prophets, emphasizing the prophetic element while minimizing the priestly and legal elements. Liberal Jews were free to accept the results of Biblical criticism and to construct a Judaism which was independent of the date or the authorship of the Bible's books. They would, however, make these changes in order to preserve historical continuity, wedding doctrine to form.<sup>18</sup>

### **Early Services of the Jewish Religious Union**

The first services based on these liberal principles were held in rented public halls,<sup>19</sup> usually the Wharnccliffe Rooms of the Great Central Hotel (now the headquarters of British Railways, opposite St Marylebone Station). In 1903 the group sought permission to hold services in an Orthodox synagogue, which was denied, or in the West London Synagogue, which was granted only on conditions which were deemed to be unacceptable, among them that "arrangements shall be made for the separation of sexes during the Services."<sup>20</sup> Because they could not use existing synagogues, the group was "destined to become an entity on the radical wing of the religious spectrum of Anglo-Jewry."<sup>21</sup> Although respected United Synagogue (Orthodox) Rabbis associated themselves with the movement in its first year, they resigned as soon as they realized that the founders were doing more than starting an independent movement with the vague aim of "encouraging Judaism."<sup>22</sup> The founders of the Jewish Religious Union were, in their opinion, rebelling against Orthodoxy.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>19</sup>Report to World Union, 1929.

<sup>20</sup>Rabbi John D. Rayner, "Montefiore, Montagu, Mattuck: Pioneers of Liberal Judaism", in Anne Kershner ed., 150 Years of Progressive Judaism in Britain (London: The London Museum of Jewish Life, 1990), 24.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>22</sup>Lindsay, The Synagogues of London, (London, Gareshead Press, 1985), 37.

The Liberal discussion group faced heavy opposition from the Reform Movement represented by the West London Synagogue as well. At least in part, criticism of the new Union from this quarter grew out of struggles being faced by the West London Synagogue, the flagship congregation of the British Reform Movement on Berkeley Street. There was a sense that the the Liberals would undermine an already tiny non-Orthodox Jewish community. An editorial in the Jewish Chronicle expressed the frustration of one Reform Jew over the efforts of the group. The writer argued that because Judaism was "a very small body of religionists," it would not be able to survive an endless series of "disintegrating movement(s)." Specifically, the writer wrote:

I am humiliated when I see at Berkeley Street the sparse attendance of male worshippers, and I would implore those who are responsible for this new movement to concentrate their efforts on endeavoring to increase that attendance. I am brought to shame when I speak to my orthodox friends on Ritual Reform and they point to the attendance at the ordinary Sabbath morning service at Berkeley Street as their answer.... Until we revive among the present members of Berkeley Street that religious fervour which animated its founders, all our talk about supplementing the Synagogue service by way of intensifying attachments to the Jewish religion is futile and mischievous. Yours obediently, AN OLD REFORMER.<sup>23</sup>

The Jewish Chronicle itself seemed to encourage the ideals of the new Union. In an editorial, it applauded the efforts of the group:

We willingly concede that it is not out of the spirit of rebellion that they have begun their movement, but out of a pure and unselfish regard for the welfare of their faith and race. None of the gentlemen who have prominently associated themselves with the Union could have desired to encourage schism and faction in a community which already has its fill of differences.... The ultimate objects of the Union are entirely laudable. It wishes to bring the stragglers into the main army, without, if we may so express it, interfering with the army's principles and plan of campaign....<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Letter to the Editor, Jewish Chronicle (London), February 21, 1902.

<sup>24</sup>Editorial, Jewish Chronicle (London), October 24, 1902.

Furthermore, the Jewish Chronicle's appreciation of the efforts of the group's leaders grew in part from its dismay the state of the Jewish community at the turn of the century:

Let anyone look around and ask himself whether the present situation is a sound and healthy one. Synagogues that are like a waste upon every day of the year except one, men and women who grow up only to slide through a neutral zone into materialism and unbelief; preachers bewailing aloud the defections they are powerless to correct-- these are the commonplaces of our communal life. They are admitted on all hands, and by none more emphatically than the Chief Rabbi himself.<sup>25</sup>

The group sought in its religious services to provide an alternative to the depressing picture which the Chronicle painted. Claude Montefiore conducted the services of the new Union without a hat or *talit*, and with men and women sitting together. In 1909 its leaders labeled their new movement "The Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism," and the Jewish press referred to it as a "new sect" or even as a "new religion." The Chief Rabbi called it "a menace to Judaism."<sup>26</sup> The Union initially held its services on Saturday afternoons in the Great Central Hall. Its liturgy immediately came under attack. The accusation was made that "the trail of the Church is over it all.... The synagogue, as we have always known it, has been left far behind."<sup>27</sup> English hymns were sung to Anglican tunes, and the English liturgy was written in universal tones, such that people of any religion could join with equal commitment. Such departures from Jewish tradition caused quite a stir in the community. The reforms were denounced by some, embraced by others. The services attracted large crowds, and so it seemed that they supplied a need.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Lindsay, The Synagogues of London, 37.

<sup>27</sup>The Times (London), January 1, 1903.



The Jewish Chronicle challenged the Jewish Religious Union to be radically different from its predecessors, to step away from merely cosmetic changes in liturgy and worship services and to move towards meaningful reform. The Chronicle criticized the initial religious services of the Union, saying that they

can never meet the feelings of the main body of Jews. If future generations were driven exclusively to such colourless services as those of last Saturday afternoon, we should be within measurable distance of the last chapter of the great Jewish drama. The services of the Union... are for an unsympathetic few whose particular case they are supposed to meet, and not for the loyal many.... One cannot but look with something almost akin to weariness at the programme of the Union.<sup>28</sup>

A small number of Jews, the Jewish Chronicle stated, may have found the "somewhat anemic" service to their liking, but many more remained unmoved. In addition to his dismay at the blandness of the new services, the editor of the Jewish Chronicle also expressed the feeling that the JRU was not going far enough in its reform. The additions of musical instruments, mixed choirs, hymns and anthems in the vernacular had all been tried before, he pointed out, and had been acclaimed as the solution to all religious ills, "only to be tried and found wanting."<sup>29</sup> If the organ and the anthem were the only things that had been lacking, surely they would have already been added and would already have solved all problems. The Chronicle concluded: "Let us hope that the new Union will preach the thing and not the expression-- that it will show Judaism as a force consistent with our daily lives and our secular studies, capable of inspiring our actions and moralizing our intelligence."<sup>30</sup>

One of Claude Montefiore's own mentors from his time in Germany was Solomon Schechter. Having moved to America, Schechter now was critical of his

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Editorial, Jewish Chronicle (London), October 24, 1902.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

former pupil's efforts. "What the whole thing means," he observed, "is not liberal Judaism but liberal Christianity."<sup>31</sup>

Maxwell Stern, the third president of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, recalls this story about A.A. Green, who began as a supporter of the Jewish Religious Union:

The best story of course is the one about A A Green, the minister of West Hampstead Synagogue who attended one of our services and by chance found himself sitting behind two of his own members and they were talking quite loudly and he patted them on the back and said "Members, friends, friends, do be quiet, remember you're not in synagogue now."<sup>32</sup>

As criticism of the Liberal religious services was rising, the time came to make a break with the past and admit that Liberal Judaism could not be all things to all Jews.

### **A Separate Movement**

Ultimately, in March 1911 it was decided to form a new and separate congregation that would make bold reforms in liturgy and take new views on Jewish law. It was clear that the hope of inspiring change across Anglo-Jewry was not to be realized. A little building in Hill Street was purchased for the Jewish Religious Union. This first synagogue building served the community until 1925. Rabbi Israel Mattuck, who had previously held ministerial posts in the United States, was invited in 1911 to take up the leadership of the Jewish Religious Union and to occupy the pulpit of the first Liberal Jewish Synagogue in England.<sup>33</sup> Rabbi Mattuck, a product of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, brought with him, as one of his successors observed, "a more humane

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<sup>31</sup>R. Apple The Hampstead Synagogue, 38.

<sup>32</sup>Maxwell Stern, Interview by Bryan Diamond, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.

<sup>33</sup>Report to the World Union, 1929.

understanding of Jewish law, which made Liberal Judaism different from Orthodoxy and Reform in its attitudes towards Jewish status, marriage, and divorce."<sup>34</sup>

### **"The Three M's"**

Though very different individuals, Montagu, Montefiore and Mattuck, known as "The Three M's," proved a most effective trio. The Liberal movement made rapid strides, and although more than 60 years its junior, it soon came to rival the Reform movement in size and influence.<sup>35</sup> "The Three M's" had one purpose-- to arrest the drift away from Judaism, to keep Jews Jewish. Their method was to create prayers which were clearly understood and which could "stimulate the minds and emotions of their generation,"<sup>36</sup> and to allow women to pray together with men and to share in the reading of the service. These practices differentiated the Jewish Religious Union from the Reformers of the West London Synagogue.

### **Reform vs. Liberal Judaism**

Both the Liberal and Reform movements tended to attract the older, more settled, more prosperous Anglo-Jewish families, and as such, they also attracted families which were none of these things but which wanted to give the impression that they were all of them. There was a certain status associated with being a member of either the West London Reform Synagogue or the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. Such memberships were points of progress, if not, as their critics claimed, "out of Judaism," then at least up the social ladder. It was a road that

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<sup>34</sup>Letter to Editor by Rabbi Sidney Brichto, Jewish Chronicle (London), December 18, 1977.

<sup>35</sup>Bermant, Troubled Eden, 233.

<sup>36</sup>Letter to Editor by Rabbi Sidney Brichto, Jewish Chronicle (London), December 18, 1977.

reportedly led to a "better class of people."<sup>37</sup> But there were also numerous genuine disciples of Claude Montefiore who had thought their way into the Liberal movement, for, as one of them put it, "Liberal Judaism was the one living and enduring form of religion possible to people brought up in English institutions and Western culture."<sup>38</sup>

The Liberal Jewish movement did not remain a socially exclusive clique, as had the Reform movement in the nineteenth century. Under the guidance of Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore it grew, acquired other patrons of status such as Louis Gluckstein (long-time president of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue) and Basil Henriques, and became a religious refuge for anti-Zionists in the inter-war period. Even more than that, it was during the inter-war years that Liberal Judaism "captured the imagination and support of those within Anglo-Jewry who were searching for something 'modern' in terms of religious observance."<sup>39</sup> Three new synagogues opened in the 1920's, in north London, south London, and Liverpool. In 1926, Montagu, Montefiore, and Mattuck took the first steps towards the establishment of what would become the World Union for Progressive Judaism. In the 1930's other Liberal synagogues were founded in Brighton and Birmingham.<sup>40</sup>

There was a large movement of Jews into the suburbs of London during the inter-war period. Those who moved were not, historian Geoffrey Alderman stresses, "seeking to escape from Judaism, and certainly not from their identity as Jews."<sup>41</sup> Rather, they sought to escape from a particular form and intensity of Judaism and of Jewish life which had suited their grandparents and parents but

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<sup>37</sup>Bermant, *Troubled Eden*, 235.

<sup>38</sup>Lucy Cohen, *Some Recollections of C.G. Montefiore*, 61.

<sup>39</sup>A.J. Kershen, ed. *1840-1990: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Progressive Judaism in Britain* (London, 1990), 14.

<sup>40</sup>Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 353-4.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 215.

which did not suit them. In suburbia, the Jews could face their Gentile neighbors on more equal terms. An editorial in The Times noted:

Whatever the strength of his Judaism the middle class Jew who settles outside the largely Jewish areas is bound to see more of the Gentile, and I think it would be rather an exception to find a Jewish family established for more than a few years in London outside the Jewish areas of East London and a few smaller settlements who had not Gentile friends as well as acquaintances.<sup>42</sup>

This movement out to suburbia affected the JRU as it affected all the streams of Anglo-Jewry. It presented a challenge: either the movement needed to expand geographically with the Jewish community or miss the opportunity for growth and possibly lose membership. The JRU would respond by establishing new congregations, especially in the North of London.

In London itself, by 1939 the Liberal Jewish Synagogue boasted a membership (1,627) greater than that of the West London Reform Synagogue (1,386).<sup>43</sup> But the 1930's were also years of growth for the Reform movement, fueled by the influx of German refugees, among whom were a number of important Reform rabbis, such as Werner Van-der-Zyl and Ignaz Maybaum, who strengthened British Reform Judaism with a more robust, distinctive, and radical German Reform ideology.<sup>44</sup> The Reform movement was guided by Rabbi Harold Reinhart, a graduate of the American Reform center at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, who in 1929 became the Senior Minister at West London. Under his direction a new prayer book was completed in 1931, and a new headquarters was opened in 1934. Rabbi Reinhart's deep animosity towards Rabbi Mattuck,

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<sup>42</sup>The Times (London) December 8, 1924, 15.

<sup>43</sup>S. Sharot, Reform and Liberal Judaism in London: 1840-1940, Jewish Social Studies 41 (1979), 222.

<sup>44</sup>Rabbi J. Romain in A.J. Kershen, ed., 1840-1990: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Progressive Judaism in Britain, (London, RSGB/ULPS, 1990), 44.



generated much tension between the movements and probably impeded closer cooperation during this period.<sup>45</sup>

Over time the Liberal movement became more democratic. One of the institutions which influenced this shift was the West Central Synagogue, which Lily Montagu had founded in Tottenham Court Road in 1928. Having other Liberal synagogues allowed greater participation from a larger number of synagogue leaders. Another, more potent influence was the St. George's Settlement Synagogue in the East End. Its presiding genius was Basil Henriques. The synagogue brought a number of young working-class Jews into both the Liberal and Reform movements and as they graduated out of the working class and the East End and into the suburbs, they created new congregations which replicated much of the radicalism of the Liberal Judaism, "without any of its hauteur."<sup>46</sup>

### **The Jewish Religious Union and The Liberal Jewish Synagogue**

Despite the influence of these other congregations, the Jewish Religious Union and the Liberal Jewish Synagogue remained almost indistinguishable. While other Liberal synagogues were formed, the senior rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue remained the head of the JRU. The primacy of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue continued into the 1950's as long as it maintained its policy of matching the total funds raised by all of the other synagogues, which continued into the 1950's. The offices of the JRU were housed in a classroom at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue on St. John's Wood Road, and would remain there until 1970. When the opinion of the Liberal Movement was sought or recorded, more often than not, the report would contain the statement "St. John's Wood said..." implying

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<sup>45</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>46</sup>Bermant, *Troubled Eden*, 237.

once again that there was little, if any, distinction to be made between the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and the Liberal movement in general.<sup>47</sup> Dorothy Edgar *nee* Mattuck recalled her early days on "Hill Street which, strictly speaking is the LJS rather than the JRU but in those days, the two were not easy to differentiate from each other since exactly the same people were involved in both. Miss Montagu, my father Rabbi Mattuck as he then was, ran both of them and with Claude Montefiore."<sup>48</sup>

### **Early Expansion and the Role of Lay-Ministers**

The Liberal movement placed a high priority on founding other congregations. Dorothy Edgar recalled that her father (Israel Mattuck) and later on her husband (Leslie Edgar, the second Senior Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and leader of the ULPS) preached one after the other at all these outlying congregations, some of which had ministers and most of which did not: "They went to West London frequently, to South London and frequently to North London and over to Dublin when that congregation was founded and to Liverpool very many times." There was, of course, an enormous shortage of rabbis-- the movement's few spiritual and temporal leaders had to do all the JRU work, the work of the LJS, and the work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.<sup>49</sup>

To fill the roles that might otherwise be played by ordained rabbis, the movement relied heavily on lay ministers, many of whom almost single-handedly established many of the congregations which now are among the largest congregations in the Union.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Rabbi Sidney Brichto, Rabbi John Rayner, and Greta Hyman, interviews by author. July 1997.

<sup>48</sup>Dorothy Edgar *nee* Mattuck, interview by Bryan Diamond, ULPS Oral History Project, February 11, 1994.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, Greta Hyman, interviews by author. July 1997.

### **Tension with the Orthodox establishment**

Orthodox members of the United Synagogue held stormy meetings on the subject of the founding of the Jewish Religious Union. There seemed at first to be a general disinclination on the part of the Chief Rabbi and those around him to proceed to extreme measures against the JRU. The lesson of 1841 was not lost on them. They feared provoking a split in the community, which might have shaken the United Synagogue itself.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1930's Orthodox Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz believed that he could contain the progressive movements under his Orthodox umbrella. This belief led him to attend the opening of West London Reform's extension, the Stern Hall, in 1934, and to declare that the Liberal Jewish Synagogue was a body of persons professing the Jewish religion so that it might be certified by the President of the Board of Deputies for the purpose of appointing a marriage secretary.<sup>52</sup> During World War Two, perhaps because of the presence of large numbers of non-Orthodox American Jewish servicemen, he extended further courtesies to the progressives. For example, he included Louis Gluckstein in his "Jewish War Services Committee" and he eventually acquiesced in the appointment of non-Orthodox clerics, such as Reverend Leslie Edgar (Associate Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue), as an armed forces chaplain.<sup>53</sup>

These concessions to the progressives, which the Orthodox Chief Rabbi claimed were made in order to preserve communal unity during a period of great crisis for British and world Jewry, caused outrage among the practicing Orthodox, towards whom Hertz applied a policy of counter-productive confrontation. As Orthodoxy was swept by a tide of non-observance and secularization which

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<sup>51</sup>The Times (London), January 1, 1903.

<sup>52</sup>Alderman, Modern British Jewry, 354

<sup>53</sup>B. Homa, Footprints in the Sands of Time (London, Gateshead Press, 1990), 197-9.



characterized inter-war Jewry, its remaining adherents become more bold and more outspoken against Hertz's progressive conservatism.

Hertz's efforts to hold British Jewry together came under increasing strain during what turned out to be the last five years of his life. Perhaps it was only the extreme nature of the war emergency and the awareness of the desperate situation of European Jewry under the Nazis that induced others not to challenge his authority in a more open fashion.<sup>54</sup> Towards the end of his life, Rabbi Hertz's attempts at building communal unity were impeded by those around him. As a widower he came increasingly under the influence of his son-in-law, Solomon Schonfeld, who in 1944 felt strong enough to take the public position that the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (UOHC), though affiliated to the Board of Deputies, should act independently of it.<sup>55</sup> A formal Orthodox caucus within the Board had been established as far back as 1934.<sup>56</sup> This tension within the Board of Deputies would continue to play itself out over the years.

### **Communal Tension**

One of the underlying themes of politics in the British Jewish community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the tension created by the desire of the established, Anglicized ruling elites to keep their control of community organization and leadership, and the determination of the newer immigrants that they should have a measure of influence as well. At certain times, the drama was played out in explicit conflicts, over issues such as *kashrut*. At other times, issues of importance themselves were nonetheless used for ulterior

<sup>54</sup>Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 355-6, 359.

<sup>55</sup>Jabotinsky Institute, Tel Aviv, Papers of Abraham Abrahams, 2F, file 5/5: Jewish Telegraphic Agency report of annual general meeting of the UOHC, Feb. 1944, quoted in Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 359.

<sup>56</sup>*Jewish Chronicle* (London) November 9, 1934, p. 23.

purposes; communal unity was at stake, and everyone knew this. Of these issues, by far the most important was Zionism.

### **Zionism in the Liberal Movement**

In the early days, owing largely to the views of founding father Claude Montefiore, the Liberal movement was anti-Zionist, or at least non-Zionist. He saw Judaism as a religion, not as a people. For example, the ritual of the movement was revised in 1931 to remove references to the return to Zion or to the coming of the Messiah.<sup>57</sup> It is often suggested that while both the Reform and Liberal movements remained largely immune to Zionism, the former was primarily non-Zionist, whereas in the Liberal movement opposition to Zionism was nearly an article of faith.<sup>58</sup> Rabbi Sidney Brichto differed with the view that has generally been portrayed in the annals of the movement. He believed that while both Mattuck and Montefiore were anti-Zionist, they did not consider their position to be a matter of Liberal Jewish policy. He observed that "the neutrality of the movement on this subject enabled Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig, a convinced Zionist, to be appointed as Dr. Mattuck's associate minister."<sup>59</sup> Rabbi Bernard Hooker agrees with these sentiments:

One of the great early Zionists of our movement was Rabbi Perlzweig. He was one of my predecessors at North London funnily enough. He was at that time an assistant to Rabbi Mattuck of all people. (It's a credit to the LJS that it employed two people, one, Mattuck - who was a very strong anti-Zionist - and the other, Perlzweig who was a very strong Zionist).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>W.D. Rubenstein, A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain, (London, MacMillan Press, Inc. 1996), 239.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>59</sup>Rabbi Sidney Brichto, interview by author, July 1997. *Also*, Letter to Editor, Jewish Chronicle (London), December 18, 1977.

<sup>60</sup>Rabbi Bernard Hooker, interview with Bryan Diamond 1994, ULPS Oral History Project. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

It is crucial to understand the ambivalence with which the larger Anglo-Jewish community approached the issue of Zionism. For the entire community, the process of accepting and embracing the creation of a Jewish State was a gradual one.

In the early days of British Zionism, wealthy British Jews showed their support by giving generously towards the maintenance of poor Jewish communities which were permitted to exist in Ottoman Palestine. The *Chovevi Zion* Association of England was not founded until 1890. Its aims found expression in the adoption of two Palestinian-Jewish settlements and in petitioning Her Majesty's Government concerning the conditions under which such settlements might operate.

Theodore Herzl made a few visits to England, once in 1895 and again in 1896 and 1898, to raise support and funding for his plan. His ideas were met with divisive debates within *Chovevi Zion*. The organization disintegrated and was succeeded by the English Zionist Federation in 1899. Most of its early support, interestingly, came from the provinces. Before the First World War, Zionism in Britain could claim-- according to the EZF's own figures-- the support of fewer than six percent of the Jewish population of Great Britain.<sup>61</sup>

The earliest available evidence of genuine widespread support for Zionism among British Jews is a petition in 1915 calling for the establishment of a "publicly recognized, legally secured home for the Jewish people in Palestine," signed by some 50,000 members of the Jewish community.<sup>62</sup> By then, of course, what had seemed nearly impossible but a few years earlier-- British control of Palestine-- now seemed eminently possible.

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<sup>61</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 220-225.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

The Orthodox Chief Rabbi, Joseph Herman Hertz, was himself a Zionist, although at the time of his candidacy for the Chief Rabbinate, "he had been careful to reduce public awareness of his Zionist commitment to the lowest of profiles."<sup>63</sup> At the time, there was great hostility to the idea of Jewish nationalism among many of the leaders of the United Synagogue. Hertz's election was indicative of a radical change in direction by the community at large.

Claude Montefiore's extreme opposition to Zionism, at least the Weizmann version which he disliked so strongly, was in the name of anti-nationalism. The question was posed by Montefiore (then President of the Anglo-Jewish Association) in November 1916, "How can a man belong to two nations at once?... No wonder that all anti-Semites are enthusiastic Zionists."<sup>64</sup> The positive thrust of his thinking was to show the world, Jew and Gentile alike, that Judaism was a universal religion and not a tribal creed.<sup>65</sup>

The older ruling elites in Anglo-Jewry and all those who declared themselves English men and women of the Jewish persuasion all condemned the British Cabinet's Balfour Declaration. On the other hand, immigrants and provincial communities eager to cut at the power of the ruling elites supported the declaration. In short, Zionism became the battleground upon which numerous smouldering and pre-existing conflicts were fought out. Surveyed from the perspective of the late 1940's, British Jewry was united neither communally, politically, socially, nor religiously. British Jews proclaimed their loyalty to their country of residence but in general supported the efforts of the *Yishuv* to rid itself of British rule.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>S. A. Cohen, English Zionists and British Jews: The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895-1920 (Princeton, 1982) 145, 190-1, quoted in Alderman, Modern British Jewry, 220.

<sup>64</sup>"An Englishman of the Jewish Faith", Fortnightly Review, November 1916, 823, quoted in Alderman, Modern British Jewry, p. 232.

<sup>65</sup>Lindsay, The Synagogues of London, 37.

<sup>66</sup>Alderman, Modern British Jewry, 318-9.

Events on the Continent made many Jews reassess their place in Western culture. "The German persecution," wrote Montefiore in 1935, "and the anti-Semite increase in so many countries, acting and reacting upon the growth of Zionism, have put a stopper upon the growth of pure Liberal Judaism in my time or indeed for a long time."<sup>67</sup> He was unnecessarily pessimistic. During the late 1930's the position of Zionism as a focus of division within British Jewry had dramatically changed, though the process of change was a gradual one. Time and again during the 1930's and 1940's, the subject was hotly debated in the JRU's own journal, the Liberal Jewish Monthly. It is beyond contention that the rise of Nazism, the refusal of the British Government to adopt a more generous policy on the admission of refugees into Britain, and the professed unwillingness of the communal leadership to mount a challenge to this policy helped to cement a larger measure of support for Zionism.<sup>68</sup> The newly-renamed Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, however, would continue to take an ambiguous stand on the issue of Zionism for many years to come.

By the 1940's, total membership in the Liberal and Reform movements reached six thousand, about one-sixth of the total affiliated London Jews.<sup>69</sup> The influence that Progressive Judaism would have on the larger Anglo-Jewish community continued to grow over the years. With increased visibility would come both increased cooperation and increased tension between Progressive and Orthodox Jews, and between the Liberal and Reform movements. The challenges which the war presented to both movements would test their abilities to change with a changing world.

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<sup>67</sup> Lucy Cohen, Some Recollections of C. G. Montefiore, 218.

<sup>68</sup> Alderman, Modern British Jewry, 306.

<sup>69</sup> Meyer, Michael, Response to Modernity, 219.



## Chapter 2: The War and its Aftermath

### Effects of the Second World War

The outbreak of the war in 1939 caused a tremendous disruption of Jewish life in Britain, although nothing like that inflicted on the rest of European Jewry. At the beginning of the war children and some mothers were evacuated from London and other large towns. The heavy bombing which began in the autumn of 1940 brought a more general dispersal, which led to the founding of large communities in towns like Oxford which had previously had no, or only small, Jewish communities. One general effect of the evacuation was to plunge Jewish children, used to the routine of life in a more or less traditional Jewish environment, into a non-Jewish home life. In spite of the efforts of community organizations, formal Jewish education of children was reduced to a minimum. A similar disruption was caused by the call-up of both men and women into the armed forces. A third cause of disruption was the internment of enemy aliens for some months. After internment, some 4,000 refugees from Central Europe joined the Pioneer Corps and other units. The effects of wartime conditions, however, were not wholly negative. The need to deal with education under evacuation conditions led to a reappraisal of the aims and structures of Jewish education, that continued to resonate after the war. In addition, the dispersal of Britain's pre-1933 Jewish community probably helped the Central European refugees to integrate more quickly into the main community at the end of the war.<sup>1</sup> Because the general

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<sup>1</sup>V.D.Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858 (Great Britain: Valentine Mitchell and Co., 1980), 229-30.



community was in upheaval, the refugees were able to find a place along with the returning native British Jews.

Significant consolidation occurred during the Second World War in both the Liberal and Reform movements. In 1942 the six independent Reform Synagogues came together as the Associated British Synagogues, which would become the Association of Synagogues in Great Britain four years later. In spite of war and evacuation two new Liberal synagogues were founded and in 1944 the Jewish Religious Union changed its name to the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. After the war, the number of congregations continued to grow, and the movement gradually developed an organizational structure.

The Liberal Movement approached the impending end of the war as a time of challenge. The leaders of the movement knew that the men and women of the service would soon be returning, many having literally grown from children to adults during the span of the war. Rabbi Mattuck outlined the challenges in no uncertain terms in the pages of the Liberal Jewish Monthly. He argued, for example, that "When the Jewish men and women in the Forces return to their homes, those of them who bring back a revived interest in religion will want something more than, and different from, traditional formalism."<sup>2</sup> The specific challenge was "that there is, and will be, an increasing number of Jews, especially among the younger ones, whose need Judaism can meet, and from whom it can evoke the response of loyalty, only in its Liberal form. That implies a responsibility, and entails a task, for Liberal Jews and the organizations of Liberal Judaism."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, April 1944.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Mattuck believed that this new interest was an opportunity for Liberal Judaism. The Liberals believed that a revolution in religious awareness was underway. The Education Act of 1944 required that "religious instruction shall be given in every county school, and in every voluntary school."<sup>4</sup> This was the first time that religious education would be mandatory in the schools. This indicated to the Liberals that the British public must genuinely have become more concerned about religion, otherwise such an act would not have been passed. Mattuck stated his belief that "the present cause of this revived interest in religion is the present tragic state of the world."<sup>5</sup> For some, this tragic state was cause for great despair. To others, the threatened collapse of civilized society challenged Anglo-Jewry to become increasingly aware of the need for higher levels of conduct and increased standards of value.<sup>6</sup>

The Union believed strongly in the unique opportunity of the moment. Out of a genuine sense that Liberal Judaism had singular gifts to give the Jewish world, Union leaders decided to take an active, rather than a passive, stance:

The Council of our Union has formulated a plan of work after the war to spread Liberal Judaism, and the machinery has been organised for it.... Many of the young men and women in the Forces have shown a new, or reviving, interest in religion.... The second fact is that Liberal Judaism is the interpretation of Judaism which is most likely to accord with their religious outlook and interest.... It is up to our Union to work for its spread, to enlarge its strength and to increase its influence.<sup>7</sup>

There was much discussion and debate in the pages of the Liberal Jewish Monthly as to what the movement ought to do, and how it ought to do it. The Monthly invited young lay people, many of whom were now veterans, to offer their points of view as to how Liberal Judaism might attract the attention of their generation.

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<sup>4</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, January 1947.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1944.

There was a clear recognition in the Liberal Movement that the war affected many different sub-groups of the Jewish community in a variety of ways, and that an effective campaign to reach out and spread the message of Liberal Judaism would need to address these various groups. Returning veterans, many of whom were unfamiliar with Liberal Judaism, were a prime target for outreach. In addition, the movement made its best effort to bring back together those who had been a part of the Jewish Religious Union prior to 1939, and who, for reasons of safety, had been sent out of the major cities and major Jewish centers. The destruction of European Jewry was devastating for those more recent immigrants whose relatives had perished but it had a traumatic effect on the community as a whole, as shown by a continuing, indeed increasing, preoccupation with the spiritual and historical significance of the unique tragedy. The losses of European Jewry also meant that British Jewry for a time became not only the leading but the largest Jewish community in Europe (until the 1960's when immigrants from north Africa greatly enlarged the French community.)<sup>8</sup>

### **The JRU is changed to the ULPS**

One of the first steps the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal and Progressive Judaism took on the way to redefining itself towards the post-war world was its decision in 1944 to change its name. The primary cause for the change was the sense that the old name "The Jewish Religious Union" did not clearly indicate the nature of the organization. According to the Liberal Jewish Monthly in June 1944, "The Jewish Religious Union Council and constituents are considering a suggestion to change its name to one that will clearly indicate that it is the union of Liberal and Progressive Jewish Congregations."<sup>9</sup> In 1944 the Union

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<sup>8</sup>Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858, 229.

<sup>9</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1944.

was renamed the "Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (formerly the Jewish Religious Union)," retaining the subsidiary name out of sentiment and for the sake of historical continuity. The Jewish Religious Union was the name adopted in 1902 when the organization did not definitely stand for Liberal Judaism. When later the JRU adopted the principles and aims of Liberal Judaism its name was extended to "The Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism." In the late 1930's, to meet the wishes of some of its members, "and Progressive" was added after "Liberal." But the whole title was considered cumbersome. The new name had the merits of clarity and comparative brevity. An editorial appearing in the The Liberal Jewish Monthly in 1944 said that "it is tautological, 'Liberal' and 'Progressive' mean the same thing; but since some prefer the one adjective and others the other, what is verbal tautology becomes humanly necessary. And the new name indicates the comprehensive scope of the Union."<sup>10</sup>

### **Changes in the Provision for Young People**

The war experience had also highlighted the vulnerability and importance of young people. The young leaders of Anglo-Jewry went off to war, and many did not return. Those who did return were changed profoundly, and the provisions for young people made by Jewish movements needed to change correspondingly. The Youth Association of Synagogues in Great Britain was founded in the late 1940's to provide facilities and guidance for young men and women in their twenties, and many of the early members of the YASGB went on to become the leaders of the Reform Movement in later years.

Prior to the war, many Liberal congregations had long-established organizations called Alumni Clubs as a kind of youth group for teenagers. "Youth

<sup>10</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1944.

Clubs had really flourished from age 16 before the war, because this was a time when young people finished school at age 16, and most did not go on to university. There were not just social activities at the clubs-- there were discussions, and serious programs about religion and all sorts of things."<sup>11</sup> After the war, these Clubs expanded their focus to include activities for those aged 20 and over. The current Director of the ULPS, Rosita Rosenberg, credits the Alumni Club affiliated with the South London Liberal Synagogue for bringing her into the Liberal movement after the war. Prior to the war, her family had been affiliated with an Orthodox congregation. She had been among those young people evacuated from London during the war. When her family returned to the city, her parents began "nagging" her to join a youth group because they were worried that she did not have any Jewish friends. Rosita began to look for social outlets, and the Ner Tamid Club of South London was one of the places she felt most comfortable. The friends she made there remain among her closest friends. "I also see that there is a number of those people, many of those people that I came in with... many of those people now, of my generation and people after my generation in the youth movement are now rabbis and leaders in our movement."<sup>12</sup> The ULPS saw the youth club as a critical factor which could energize the young men and women who were returning from the front in connecting to the Liberal movement.

Lily Montagu was a driving force in working with young people. Marjorie Moos, who was involved for eight decades of her life with the Liberal movement, recalled that Montagu was far better at this work than her co-founders:

...she worked with young people and she was marvelous with them. CJM (Claude Montefiore) was just as nice as a school head-master when he took over in our synagogue and guided all that, he was just

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<sup>11</sup>Walter Woyda, interview with author, July 1997.

<sup>12</sup>Rosita Rosenberg, interview with Bryan Diamond 1994, ULPS Oral History Project. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.



as interested but she had club mentality which was with the workers. Workers who wanted something other than their work, do you see what I mean, it's not the same as coming to Sunday School but CJM was on the intellectual side, you see.<sup>13</sup>

Montagu had always been committed to helping young people, and specifically to giving them opportunities to learn and live the lessons of Liberal Judaism. She established a Club for girls who were working in tailors domestic workshops. The West Central Club, which later became a mixed club, had dances, social, and educational programs for its members. In 1919, she and her sister established a home for the club, which became a center for all kinds of work in connection with social service organizations and many different social problems-- educational, domestic, health, and religious. The club became a mixture of community center and social club. Its building was completely destroyed in a bombing raid during the war, but the organization carried on its work.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, clubs to support and teach young people have a long history in the Liberal Movement. In 1913, Basil L. Q. Henriques opened the Oxford and St. George's Club with 25 boys between the ages of 14 to 18 in one of the worst slums in London. This eventually developed into the Bernhard Baron Settlement which by 1939 had a membership of more than 3,000 of all ages and both sexes.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Walter Woyda argued that "Everything changed after the war, however. Education mostly went to age 18, people were generally more well off and could allow their children to go to school longer. And universities became wide open. And so there was not enough of a young community to keep the clubs going."<sup>16</sup> The various Alumni Clubs gathered in 1947 for a Conference of Youth Groups, and the event was deemed so successful that a Federation of Liberal and

<sup>13</sup> Marjorie Moos, interview 1994, ULPS Oral History Project. Transcript by Josie Kinchin. Ms. Moos served as the Director of the Correspondance Courses of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue.

<sup>14</sup> Liberal Jewish Monthly, February 1948. Also, interview by the author with Mr. Geoffrey Davis, July 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Liberal Jewish Monthly, February 1948.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Woyda, interview with the author, July 1997.



Progressive Jewish Youth Groups (FLPJYG) was set up. The feeling was that the clubs needed a "togetherness" which would facilitate holding conferences, access to other parts of the ULPS and the World Union, and equal footing with the youth movement of the Reform movement. There were joint conferences with the Reform youth and "away-conferences" each year.<sup>17</sup> It was hoped that such a federation would aid in the spread of Liberal Judaism to the next generation of leaders.<sup>18</sup> The Federation's first conference was held in October 1949, and the subject discussed was "Judaism and Citizenship." Leaders of the movement, both lay- and rabbinic, spoke to the Federation. The Rev. Leslie Edgar, Dr. Mattuck, Basil Henriques, the Rev. Philip Cohen, and the Rev. Bernard Hooker were among those who spoke on topics ranging from the Jewish meaning of justice to "Our present tasks as Jews and Citizens."<sup>19</sup> By 1950, FLPJYG had eight constituent youth groups associated with individual congregations.

One of the problems which the Youth Clubs faced (and continue to face today) was that it was "very difficult to find the people qualified to implement such a programme."<sup>20</sup> Many of the young people, who previously might have served as leaders for the younger generation, now were more likely to be found away at university. Mr. Walter Woyda's comments about the shortcomings of the Union in the 1950's were remarkably similar to his criticism in an interview with the author in 1997.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, February, 1947.

<sup>19</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, January 1950.

<sup>20</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1948.

<sup>21</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, May, 1950, and Interview with the author, July 1997. One of the most fascinating elements the author noted in his research of the youth movement of the Union was in comparing the comments of Mr. Walter Woyda, first chairman of FLPJYG (which began in 1947), with Mr. Woyda's comments in an interview in 1997. In May 1950, Mr. Woyda wrote an article for the Liberal Jewish Monthly criticizing the Union for "lacking the vision and foresight which have been shown to us so brilliantly by those who founded our Movement." He questioned the role which changes in ceremonial matters should play in the over-all view of Liberal Judaism. He felt that too much was being made of these changes, and that not enough was being done to keep Liberal Judaism moving. In 1997, Mr. Woyda's

## Change and Expansion in the ULPS

The post-war period was a time of growth and change in the Union. An example of this could be seen at London's Liberal Jewish Synagogue, still the central address of the Union. In 1945, the congregation reported:

The Friday Evening Services, which were inaugurated on October 5th, are proving very successful. The Congregation includes many young people and a number of non-members of the Synagogue as well as members.... The LJS Religion School is now giving instruction to 220 children, 60 of whom attend the Sunday classes. Correspondence lessons are sent to children in Scotland, Wales, and Paris, as well as all over England.<sup>22</sup>

The January 1944 Liberal Jewish Monthly reported the formation of a new synagogue-- the Southgate and Endfield Progressive Jewish Congregation. And the 14th Annual Report of South London Liberal Synagogue reported a "further substantial increase in membership, which is all the more remarkable in present circumstances for a Synagogue in its situation. The Religion School has been reopened; and there was a full programme of activities." Clearly, Jewish communal life continued at least in some ways during the war, and as the war's end drew nearer, communities which had all but closed up began to be reinvigorated.

For many years before the war, and continuing afterwards, the Union made an effort to reach out to those Jews in far-flung provincial communities, or to young people away at boarding-school, by operating a correspondence school.<sup>23</sup>

An additional move towards expansion was the introduction in 1949 of a "Spread Liberal Judaism" campaign and the Union began to hold public meetings,

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critique of the Union was remarkably similar. In his view, the Union had stagnated and lost sight of what was important to the founders of the movement, namely, a sense of motion and progression.

<sup>22</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly "In our Congregations", December 1945.

<sup>23</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1948.

primarily in communities that had no synagogues or other Jewish organizations. Meetings were held in cities such as Blackpool, Leigh-on-Sea, Wembley, and Chingford. The Union solicited interest through advertising, word of mouth, and connections made by current Union members. The organizing secretary of North London Progressive Synagogue, Mr. E. Kranz, made arrangements for getting the Liberal Jewish Monthly into a number of public libraries in the district. The June issue of the Monthly in 1947 inquired "Have you friends in Newcastle or Sheffield?" The advertisement went on to offer help in forming a congregation or information on Liberal Judaism to anyone who was interested. Lily Montagu, Rev. Leslie Edgar, and Union officers went out to these various communities to lecture on the meaning of Liberal Judaism and to answer questions.

At the time, the Liberal and Reform movements had a so-called "gentleman's agreement," that in order to allow each movement to grow, they would avoid competing with each other. Neither would attempt to establish a congregation in an area where a synagogue associated with the other movement already existed. The Liberal movement tended to focus largely on the London area, while the Reform movement established centers in some of the other major cities of Great Britain which had large Jewish populations, such as Manchester and Leeds. From the Liberals' point of view, this agreement ultimately worked against them, because the Reform movement also established many communities in London as well, while the Liberals did not establish congregations in the other major centers.<sup>24</sup> The Union's decision not to focus on other major centers of Jewish population meant that, in the 1960's and beyond, when the ULPS did decide to try to expand its reach in the provinces, it focused its resources in relatively small Jewish communities, hoping to raise interest.

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<sup>24</sup>Walter Woyda, interview with the author, July 1997. Mr. Woyda was the first chairman of FLPJYG, and has been a long-time member of South London Liberal Synagogue.

The movement began its own training scheme for lay ministers, teachers, and speakers in 1948, with Israel Mattuck as the Director of Studies. The course was two years in length, and was taught, at least initially, on Monday evenings from 8 to 10 p.m. "The aim of the course," according to the Liberal Jewish Monthly, "is to prepare those who attend it to serve in a Ministerial capacity in existing or new Congregations, or as speakers at meetings to spread knowledge of Liberal Judaism.... Those who complete the Course and pass an examination will be eligible for the Lay Minister's certificate issued by the Union."<sup>25</sup> The importance that Lay Ministers played in the history of the ULPS cannot be underestimated. There was no liberal rabbinic training program for British Jews before the 1950's. The only available options were study the orthodox Jews' College in London or going abroad to receive *semicha*. Lay Ministers served diligently in many of the congregations which grew to be some of the most influential congregations in the movement today.<sup>26</sup>

Both the Liberal and Reform communities benefited from the presence in London, after the war, of Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck, who became the President of the World Union for Progressive Synagogues.<sup>27</sup> Joan Finkel, who was a teenager in Dublin when a liberal congregation was founded there, recalls both the tension surrounding the foundation of the congregation, and the role played by Baeck:

...as a teenager I wasn't allowed to attend a meeting that the late Dr. Mattuck was invited over to address because it was feared that there would be violence. There was an enormous outcry from the Orthodox against this proposed move to have a Liberal or Reform Progressive movement in Dublin. In the event, I don't think there was any violence. However we were very

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<sup>25</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, April 1948.

<sup>26</sup>Bernard Hooker, interview 1994, ULPS Oral History Project. Transcript by Josie Kinchin. Additional information gained in phone interview with the author, July, 1997.

<sup>27</sup>Geoffrey Alderman, Modern British Jewry (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 354.

fortunate, not terribly long after we started, in having Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck come to Dublin and he addressed a public meeting....<sup>28</sup>

By 1949, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues felt confident that it was growing at a strong level. There were increases across the board in synagogue attendance and membership. Growth could be seen within existing congregations, and with the founding of new ones since the end of the war. The leaders of the movement attributed the growth to two main factors. The first factor was as they had predicted: some Jews who were seeking a religious home for the first time found it in Liberal Judaism. Secondly, many Jews who had been affiliated with Orthodox communities now found themselves disillusioned and found new meaning in Liberal Judaism.<sup>29</sup>

In April 1950, Rabbi I.I. Mattuck stated the three practical aims of the movement:

1. To establish an effective adherence to Judaism in those who have turned away from it and are indifferent to it
2. To make religion paramount in the group life of the Jews
3. To proclaim the universal message of Judaism so as to contribute its influence to the religious life of the general community<sup>30</sup>

This statement of purpose, nearly fifty years after the beginning of Lily Montagu's study circle, was very similar to the original goals outlined by the founders.

The organizing Secretary of the movement, Mr. H. Solomons, reported to the Annual General Meeting in 1950 that "the Liberal Movement has made great strides, not merely in increased membership, but also in prestige and standing. It was recognized as a force in British Jewry, with a viewpoint to which

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<sup>28</sup>Joan Finkel, interview with Clive Winston April 28, 1995, ULPS Oral History Project. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

<sup>29</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, November, 1949.

<sup>30</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June, 1950.



consideration had to be given."<sup>31</sup> As the ULPS continued to grow in numbers, it would grow in its influence in Anglo-Jewry as a whole.

### **Conflict with the Orthodox establishment**

The struggle between the traditional orthodox Jewish power structure and the Liberal movement ebbed and flowed during this period. In the February 1944 issue of the Liberal Jewish Monthly, Rabbi Dr. Israel Mattuck commented on a variety of communal conflicts which were being debated concurrently. He decried the claims of "the leaders of Orthodox Jewry to a hegemony over the whole community. If the claim should succeed it would seriously infringe religious freedom."<sup>32</sup> Rabbi Mattuck also expressed frustration at the fact that in Palestine all control of marriage was in the hands of the Orthodox chief rabbinate. "The Chief Rabbis of Haifa and Tel Aviv have refused it to the ministers of the Liberal Jewish congregations in those cities. Comment is superfluous."<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, an issue related to the war itself caused controversy within the Jewish community. Reverend Leslie I. Edgar, C.F., who would later become the Senior Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and head of the ULPS, was appointed by the Chief Rabbi to do the work of the Senior Jewish Chaplain, Dayan Gollop, who was ill. Many Orthodox Jews, as the Liberal Jewish Monthly reported, "joined in the protest; others, however, wrote to express appreciation of Mr. Edgar's work in the Chaplaincy. As the appointment was made, and accepted, only with the understanding that it was temporary, the controversy will come to a natural end. But it has shown the intolerance which militates against communal unity."<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, this kind of incident would

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<sup>31</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1950.

<sup>32</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, February 1944.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.



repeat itself in many forms in the years that followed. Almost every small action which would seem to promote closer connections between communal factions ended up as fuel in the ongoing battles

Chief Rabbi Dr. Hertz died in January 1946 and was succeeded in May 1948 by Rabbi (later Sir) Israel Brodie (1895-1979). The first Chief Rabbi to be both born and educated in Britain, Brodie had served for many years in Melbourne and as a chaplain in both world wars. A quiet, gentlemanly and conciliatory person, Brodie was appointed at a time of strain between Jewry and the British government over the Palestine conflict but his main problems proved to be within the community.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Role of the Board of Deputies of British Jews**

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has been a central institution in Anglo-Jewish communal life. The Board of Deputies of British Jews was founded in 1760 and initially consisted of representatives of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, who had formed themselves into a committee to present their homage to King George III on his accession to the Throne. Very shortly after this they were joined by representatives of the Ashkenazic congregations, and then amalgamated into a joint board. The original Deputies were representatives of synagogues, and as such had no authority over the Anglo-Jewish community as a whole. It had no sanction by which it could enforce its will. It was established as a purely consultative body. The Board's efforts, however, in the fight for Jewish emancipation in Great Britain, contributed to its realization in 1860. The Board was recognized by numerous governments as the authentic voice of Anglo-Jewry, and its President was designated in many Acts of Parliament as the primary

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<sup>35</sup>V.D. Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858, 241-2.

communal representative in issue relating to Jewish civil rights.<sup>36</sup> Its status as a consultative body shifted gradually as it was given more authority by the British government. Among the issues over which it was given communal authority was control over Jewish marriage.

The issue of Marriage Secretaries was often an issue of heated debate which remained unresolved for many years. In order for a marriage to be registered as a Jewish marriage, the Board of Deputies had to authorize a congregation or community to appoint a marriage secretary. The Reform movement had obtained the right to appoint a marriage secretary in the 1880's, but only after an involved legal battle in which the British Government itself intervened. The Jewish Religious Union had, for all the years of its existence, registered marriages through the West London (Reform) Synagogue. In 1935 the Liberal Jewish Synagogue was granted a marriage secretary, and all Liberal marriages were then to be certified through the offices of the LJS. The Liverpool Liberal Jewish Synagogue received permission to appoint a marriage secretary in 1939.

In the 1940's, however, other Liberal synagogues petitioned to have their own marriage secretaries. In 1947, North London, South London, and Brighton all applied for their own certification. A sub-committee of the Board of Deputies recommended that the Board amend its constitution. This amendment would permit the President of the Board to certify, without reference to Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities, that Liberal Synagogues were bodies of persons "professing the Jewish religion" and consequently entitled to appoint marriage secretaries. The orthodox Beth Din was strongly opposed to the measure, and it succeeded in defeating it. They objected to the Liberal practice of allowing divorced Jewish women to remarry without benefit of an Orthodox *get* from

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<sup>36</sup>Colonel Louis H. Gluckstein, president of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, in Liberal Jewish Monthly, January 1947.

previous divorces. The measure was referred back to committee.<sup>37</sup> Dr. Julian Morgenstern, the former president of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati wrote a letter commenting on the action of the Beit Din. "It is incomprehensible to me and distressing that the authorities of Orthodox Judaism in Great Britain should have taken [this] action.... This would be comprehensible, of course, in the Orient. But that a stand and a procedure so bigoted and fanatic should be possible in a modern, enlightened Britain passes all understanding...."<sup>38</sup> Morgenstern went on to criticize the President of the Board of Deputies, supposedly the representative of all Jews to His Majesty's Government, for yielding to the pressure of the Beit Din.

The orthodox caucus, on 24 April, 1949, succeeded (by seventy-eight votes to sixty) in defeating at a meeting of the Board of Deputies a motion put forward by the progressives that would have obliged the President of the Board to certify from that point on, for marriage purposes, synagogues designated by the President of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue.<sup>39</sup> The issue would remained unresolved for several more years.

Behind this seemingly limited issue lurked much more serious ones. Were Liberal and Progressive Jews, whose religious precepts incorporated a substantial rejection of orthodox criteria for Jewish identity, Jewish marriage and divorce, and conversion to Judaism, still "persons professing the Jewish religion"? If the Reform and Liberal movements were allowed representation on the Board, and were therefore taxed for the privilege, why should their ecclesiastical authorities not have a status in its deliberations, equal to that enjoyed by the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations or the spiritual leader of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews? Indeed, the question of equal authority on the Board is one which still rages today. As Deputy Chief Rabbi, during the interim period between

<sup>37</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, January 1944.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1949.

<sup>39</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London), April 29, 1949, pp. 1, 19.

Chief Rabbis, Dayan H.M. Lazarus had been strongly set against appeasing the progressives. When, in May 1948 Israel Brodie was appointed the new Chief Rabbi, he proved to be equally obstinate.<sup>40</sup>

The progressives walked out of the Board after their marriage proposal was defeated the following April, and refused to elect deputies for the 1949-52 triennial session. They were joined by the West London (Reform) Synagogue in this boycott.<sup>41</sup> The ULPS published a five-page paper concerning its position regarding marriage and divorce in the Liberal Jewish Monthly in 1949. It spelled out precisely how the views of the Liberal movement differ from those of the Orthodox.

### **Zionism**

All of the issues which have been discussed so far in this chapter were significant in their own ways during the war and immediate post-war years. But there was one issue which at various times riveted, united, and divided British Jewry during this period in a way unequalled by any other-- the question of Zionism.

During the 1930's, the mood of the community swung largely in Zionism's favor. The process was, however, a gradual one. It is beyond contention that the rise of Nazism, the refusal of the British Government to adopt a more generous policy on the admission of refugees into Britain, and the professed unwillingness of the communal leadership to mount a challenge to this policy served to bolster support for Zionism. So, too, did the perceived failure of the Board of Deputies to adopt a stronger, more pro-active position *vis-a-vis* domestic fascism.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Alderman, Modern British Jewry, 360.

<sup>41</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London), May 13, 1949, 6.

<sup>42</sup>Alderman, Modern British Jewry, 306-07.

Young people were, in many ways, the driving force behind the Zionist movement. It was among young people, particularly, that Zionism, like Communism, held an attraction as a vehicle through which mounting anger at the many and varied varieties of appeasement practised by the communal leadership could be expressed, and acted out.<sup>43</sup>

British Zionism gained adherents in the 1930's, but there needed to be communal change for this to happen. Its political and practical aims had to be incorporated within a wider social and cultural framework of activities.<sup>44</sup> Zionism, in short, was becoming not only acceptable, but fashionable; more than that, it was displacing traditional religious values and Yiddish-based culture norms as a major weapon of communal self-identification and self-preservation.<sup>45</sup>

Opponents of Zionism retreated to the protective cover of the Anglo-Jewish Association, with which the pro-Zionist Board of Deputies conducted a war of words (in private and occasionally in public) until, in April 1947, the Association withdrew its representation on the Board. The social worker Basil Henriques (1860-1961) joined Louis Gluckstein, Sir Jack Brunel Cohen, Rabbi Israel Mattuck, and others in forming the short-lived Jewish Fellowship (7 November 1944-7 November 1948) to uphold "the principle that the Jews are a religious community" and that there were no grounds "for forming a Jewish state." The Fellowship attracted some nominally orthodox Jews, such as Robert Waley Cohen and Ewen S. Montagu (then a Vice-President, and from 1954 to 1962 the President of the United Synagogue), and at least one practicing orthodox member, Emile Marmorstein. But its guiding lights-- principally Henriques and Gluckstein-- were leading members of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. In opposing the re-establishment of the Jewish State they thus had a common cause (though on very

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>44</sup>D. Cesarani, Zionism in England, 163-66, in Alderman Modern British Jewry, 309.

<sup>45</sup>Alderman Modern British Jewry, 309.



different grounds, of course) with the ultra-orthodox Jews who also balked at Israel's Declaration of Independence.<sup>46</sup>

It has been said that the proclamation of the State of Israel gave consolation to the Jewish people for the tragedy of the Holocaust. In Britain, Zionism itself became, in the immediate post-war period, a central component of the social theology for many British Jews, something to which, on the level of pure emotion, the majority could subscribe without wishing themselves to make *aliyah*. Geoffrey Alderman argues that it is important to note, however, that "some of the victories of the Zionist lobby at the Board of Deputies were achieved by the narrowest margins. And we would be much mistaken in supposing that its triumph at the Board of Deputies reflected its triumph as a mass movement in the purely political sense."<sup>47</sup>

Not all of Britain's Jews were immediate "converts" to Zionism. The pages of the Jewish Chronicle in the 1930's and 1940's were filled with dissenting views from nearly every camp in the debate. The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, and especially most of its visible leadership, stood strongly against the idea of a Jewish State. In those days, the Union had a reputation for being anti-Zionist. In the very early days of the founding of the Jewish State, its anti-Zionism was based, as far as the rabbis were concerned, on its concept of universalism as opposed to nationalism. It was difficult to explain how this yearning for a nationalist concept of the Jewish people could succeed without losing sight of the wider universalist one. All of the leaders of the Union recognized that a home was needed for refugees from Nazi persecution which were still flooding in. As Bernard Hooker remembered in 1994,

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid. 314-15.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. 314.



there was always a problem regarding the whole problem of Zionism, particularly when [the Zionists] fell foul of the British authorities in Palestine creating a sort of rift between those who felt ultra-British and those who felt that they still had some sort of loyalty to the Jewish people. And certainly I think that's why people like Louis Gluckstein were claimed to be rather non-Zionist in their view and that spread a good deal through Mattuck and other people throughout the Union.<sup>48</sup>

By no means were all Liberal Jews, or even all the leaders of the Liberal movement, anti-Zionist. Rabbi Leo Baeck wrote a cover article for the March 1947 issue of the Liberal Jewish Monthly in which he called Zionism one of the driving forces behind a revival in spiritual and intellectual forces within Judaism. "It was among those forces, indeed the most conspicuous and the most rousing...."<sup>49</sup>

The issue of universalism was key to the anti-Zionists in the Liberal movement. It seems unlikely to have been an accident that the Liberal Jewish Monthly in March 1944 quoted Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, on the meaning of Liberal Judaism. In explaining why Progressive Judaism in America began deliberately using the term "Liberal Judaism," Eisendrath gives as one of the reasons: "Liberal Judaism has the connotation of something continuously progressive; something dynamic rather than static; something broad and inclusive and outreaching rather than exclusive and narrow."<sup>50</sup>

The fact that it was the British who occupied Palestine made the question of Zionism all the more complicated for British Jews. When the King David Hotel was bombed by Jewish activists and many British soldiers were killed, and when three young British lieutenants were hung by a Jewish group in Palestine, the backlash in Britain was strong. That backlash made it particularly complicated for

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<sup>48</sup>Bernard Hooker, interview by Bryan Diamond June 21, 1994, ULPS Oral History Project. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

<sup>49</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, March 1947.

<sup>50</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, March 1944.

Jews who were anti-Zionist to change their mind, and even for previously uncommitted Jews to commit themselves to the Zionist cause.<sup>51</sup> The outbreaks of violence in Palestine, according to the February edition of the Liberal Jewish Monthly, "caused horror and indignation throughout the Jewish community. The overwhelming majority of Jews throughout the world [were] appalled by this criminality...."<sup>52</sup>

Generally, however, although there were often backward steps in the progress towards a Jewish State, the pro-Zionist voices on the Board of Deputies seemed to be optimistic in their outlook on the situation:

A favorable vote by the House of Representatives on the Palestine resolution requesting the abrogation of the British White Paper of 1939 was predicted by Sol Bloom, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, according to a Washington report published in the New York Journal American. Mr. Bloom added that the question would thus be brought to a climax to enable President Roosevelt to discuss the matter with Mr. Churchill at their next meeting.<sup>53</sup>

The Chronicle that day also reported that over 760,000 pounds sterling had been raised to that point in 1944 for the United Palestine Appeal. The money that came in for the Zionist cause continued to increase. By November of 1944, the Chronicle reported that Great Britain had moved up to second place in contributions to the Jewish National Fund.<sup>54</sup>

The election in December 1939 of staunchly pro-Zionist Professor Selig Brodetsky as president of the Board of Deputies meant that Zionists were in a majority on the Board, and probably in the community as a whole. However, the widespread opposition to the 1939 White Paper on Palestine was exacerbated by

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<sup>51</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>52</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, February 1947.

<sup>53</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London) November 17, 1944.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., November 24, 1944.

the adoption by an extraordinary Zionist Conference in New York in May 1942 of the 'Biltmore Programme', calling for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine after the war. "A carefully planned campaign to return Zionists to the Board of Deputies led in July 1943 to a decision to disband the Joint Foreign Committee, in which the non-Zionist Anglo-Jewish Association had been in partnership with the Board since 1878."<sup>55</sup> In November 1944 the Board adopted as its policy that Palestine should become a 'commonwealth' within the British Commonwealth. In the meanwhile, however, tensions were heightened by a conflict between the Mandatory government and the Jewish *yishuv* in Palestine, beginning with the assassination of Lord Moyne in 1944 and culminating in Britain's giving up of the Mandate in 1947. The events leading up to the end of the Mandate brought out the divergence between the Zionist majority and the non-Zionist, or even moderate Zionist, Anglo-Jewish Association. The Anglo-Jewish Association, active during these years, took on the anti-Zionist role of the League of British Jews after the First World War. Lipman argues that "once the State of Israel was formed, the Anglo-Jewish Association welcomed it and the fellowship was dissolved."<sup>56</sup> To say that the AJA welcomed the founding of the State may be a bit of an exaggeration, as we shall see below.

The Board of Deputies became the battleground for all of the various tensions and opposing views on the Zionist issue. Varying groups who felt excluded from the Board accused it of being leaderless and lacking sensitivity to differing views. One example of this comes from a letter to the editor in the February 4, 1994 Jewish Chronicle. "It is strange that in the new Jewish Fellowship, a movement designed ostensibly to bring about a religious revival in

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<sup>55</sup>Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858, 240.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

Anglo-Jewry, the element which sacrifices most for the maintenance of Judaism-- namely Orthodox Jewry-- should be so little represented."<sup>57</sup>

The adoption of the Biltmore program by the Board of Deputies brought it under more criticism from the Liberal movement which ironically criticized the Board for failing to promote Jewish unity. The Biltmore program urged that Palestine should be made a Jewish State or Commonwealth "after a transitional period during which the Jewish Agency shall have complete control over immigration, with the recognition of the principle that every Jew anywhere shall have the indefeasible right to settle there."<sup>58</sup> The Union leadership believed and reported in the Liberal Jewish Monthly that by adopting the Biltmore program, the Board had aligned itself with one side in the controversy "which has more than any other issue caused division among Jews.... The Board by taking sides has aggravated the division. The pity is all the greater because there was a chance for a programme which would have won assent from all sections of the community."<sup>59</sup>

The ULPS seemed to note very closely how the American Reform Jewish community handled the Palestine issue, reporting significant events in the Liberal Jewish Monthly: "The Executive of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has decided to formulate its attitude towards the resolution adopted by the American Jewish Conference in favour of making Palestine a Jewish State. It is left to each constituent congregation to determine its own attitude."<sup>60</sup>

Despite the general opposition from the leadership of the Liberal movement, discussion of the issue raged in all circles of the movement, not the least among the young people. The Youth Group at Southgate and Enfield was treated to a paper from Mrs. B. Pinsker on "Should the Jews have a National

<sup>57</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London), Letters to the Editor, "Leaderless Jewry: Voices but no personality" February 4, 1944.

<sup>58</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, December 1944.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, March, 1944.

Home?"<sup>61</sup> The pages of the Liberal Jewish Monthly were filled issue after issue with letters to the editor on the subject. Sometimes these correspondents agreed strongly with Rabbi Mattuck's strong statements, and at other times some lay people reported themselves at odds with the leadership on this issue.

Rabbi Mattuck had much to say on this issue, and he took ample opportunity in the monthly journal of the movement to express his views. He argued that there seemed to be "a wide-spread desire for Jewish unity" which came from a general feeling that such unity will solve all of the community's problems. Mattuck pointed out that the drive for unity is worthless unless all acknowledge that there are differing views which divide the Jewish community:

There are two divergent points of view of what should be the Jews' normal position. Some want a normal position for them as nation; but others want a normal position for them individually. The first would require the Jews to be organised as a political unit with all that it implies; the second would require that the Jews in every country should have the status of its nationals with all rights and responsibilities of citizenship with full participation in its national life, distinguished from their fellow-citizens by their religion.<sup>62</sup>

According to the second view, which Mattuck clearly favored, Jews throughout the world would constitute a religious community, with no political significance or purpose to their existence, but with a history and function centered in religion rather than nationalism.

Mattuck believed that a British Jew could not support the cause of a Jewish State and remain a British citizen. In his words, each attitude "hinders the full development of the other." By this time, Mattuck accepted that there might be a brief period of time in which one could be both a British citizen and a Zionist, but he insisted that such a period of transition could not be maintained permanently when some Jews would live in a Jewish State and others would be nationals of

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, April 1944.



another country. At this point, Mattuck was definitely not opposed to Jewish settlement in Palestine. In fact, he claimed that "if political aims are eliminated, all Jews could co-operate in the economic, cultural, and religious development of Jewish life in Palestine."<sup>63</sup>

The June 1948 issue of the Liberal Jewish Monthly reflects the conflict felt by the non-Zionists, probably all over the world-- not only in Great Britain. On the one hand, those non-Zionists wanted to continue to criticize the Jewish national idea. On the other hand, the idea had essentially been realized, and Jews were now fighting to keep it alive. Even non-Zionists felt for the plight of those fighting the Independence War in Israel. An editorial by Rabbi Mattuck expressed regret that "the Jews of Palestine are, unhappily, having to fight for their very existence." He wrote that it would be "irresponsible for any Jew, because he owes no national allegiance to such a State, and because he may have preferred that there should never have been any such State, to say: 'It is no concern of mine.'" But Mattuck reiterated his position that "the religious destiny of the House of Israel is far greater and more important than the national destiny of the State of Israel." This was hardly a wholehearted embrace of the new Jewish country. But it indicated an acceptance of perhaps an inevitable reality-- that the State would be founded and would affect the rest of the Jewish world.<sup>64</sup> Yet, in his New Year Message to the Union in October 1948, Mattuck made no reference, explicit or implicit, to the State of Israel.<sup>65</sup> He would continue to feel conflicted until his death.

In his 1983 pamphlet "Progressive Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," Rabbi John Rayner argues that "after [the founding of the State], much of the old debate became academic. The original aim of the Zionist movement... had been achieved, so there was no longer much point in carrying on the controversy

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1948.

<sup>65</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1948.



over its desirability or otherwise."<sup>66</sup> The debate may have been largely academic, but it did continue to rage in the ULPS.

In the autumn of 1948, at the Annual General Meeting of the Union, there was discussion of whether the Union ought to have an official position on the Jewish State. Rabbi Mattuck began the discussion by stating that the Union had always "adopted an attitude of neutrality on the question of Zionism, leaving it to the individual to think out his own position."<sup>67</sup> Lay leaders and ministers followed. Some, like Mr. H. Bab of the LJS, observed that since there were so many different attitudes among the various congregations it would not be right for the Union to speak for all. Mr. P. Barr, also of the LJS, asked for further research, and suggested that the ULPS Council remain "disinterested in the question of a Jewish state, for that was a matter outside religion."<sup>68</sup> Mr. B. Woyda of South London argued that there was in fact no Jewish State in Palestine-- rather there were two states in the making, one with a Jewish majority. The Council should not take a stand, he said, until the nature of the State was known. The Rev. E.K. Sawady of St. George's Settlement suggested that "it [was] not a question of whether we were Zionists or not. To do nothing would be very dangerous to the Union. People came to the leaders of the Congregations and asked what was their attitude. We must define our attitude."<sup>69</sup> The question, he suggested, was whether the new State would help to promote Judaism. The resolution to take an official position with regard to the Jewish State ultimately lost. But there were clearly differing points of view within the ULPS at this time, and out of this debate would gradually evolve a more positive attitude towards Zionism.

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<sup>66</sup>Rayner, Rabbi John, "Progressive Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," LJS Publications, 1983, 11.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

The British government itself, with Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary, refused to recognize the State of Israel when it was proclaimed and did not do so until the end of January 1949. After the establishment of diplomatic relations, better, although still reserved, relations followed between the two governments.<sup>70</sup>

The re-establishment of the Jewish State, and its official recognition by the British Government, mark a convenient watershed also in the history of modern British Jewry. A particular feature of the affairs of Anglo-Jewry during the 1940's-- certainly as they were perceived both by those who were and by those who were not located at the epicenter of events-- was the underlying feeling that the community was badly organized, and even that it was descending into chaos.<sup>71</sup> By the end of the decade there was in fact a multiplicity of Zionist 'groups' on the Board of Deputies itself. Zionism, in fact, had not been and was not a unifying force among British Jews; but now that Jewish statehood was a reality, the precise role of Zionism in communal affairs had to be redefined. British Jewry itself was in a state of socio-economic transformation and associated demographic change. Religious pluralism was a fact of life. Lip-service was conventionally paid to the need for communal unity. An increasing proportion of British Jewry came to regard the promotion and protection of diversity as of higher importance than communal unity, but there was no agreement even that this ought to be regarded as a priority; As Lipman has noted, "This conflict, between those who pursued unity and those who championed diversity, was to be the major theme of the history of the Jews in Britain over the next forty years."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858*, 241.

<sup>71</sup>*Jewish Chronicle* (London), February 4, 1944.

<sup>72</sup>Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858*, 318-20.

### Chapter 3: Reflection and Refocusing

This chapter examines the development of the Liberal movement during the period spanning from 1950 to just before the Six-Day-War in 1967. This was a period in many ways focused on internal affairs for Anglo-Jewry. Increased by an addition of some 55,000 refugees from Central Europe, Anglo-Jewry probably reached its highest numbers in the early 1950's. An estimate made then put the total at 450,000.<sup>1</sup> The 1945 election, which brought Labour to power for the first time with an absolute majority in the House of Commons, returned an unprecedented number of Jewish MP's. There were several Jewish Cabinet ministers in the 1945-51 and 1964-70 Labour governments.<sup>2</sup> The entire Anglo-Jewish community thrived in the post-war period. Having worked to redefine itself in the aftermath of the near-destruction of continental European Jewry, British Jewry now began to settle into a new reality. The State of Israel continued to be the center of attention, and in many ways it served as a unifying focal point for many Jews. Jews had a large influence in British society, and were respected in intellectual circles as never before.

#### **Time for Reflection**

Upon its 50th anniversary in 1952, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues paused to consider its contributions to the British Jewish community. Rabbi Israel Mattuck asserted that one of Liberal Judaism's greatest contributions was that it challenged the very roots of both "authoritarian religious organisations... and atheistic totalitarianism."<sup>3</sup> Liberal Judaism was, in Mattuck's

<sup>1</sup>V.D Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858, 233.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>3</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, February 1952, 17.

opinion, a position which stood out against artificial traditionalism to which he saw some Jews reverting. In addition, it provided a viable option for those who felt alienated from tradition. An unattributed editorial piece in the Liberal Jewish Monthly in early 1952 echoed this theme when it said that "the slogan of *K'lal Yisrael* is particularly dangerous to Liberal Judaism,"<sup>4</sup> when it was used to force traditional observance on all Jews and to prevent religious progress.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, the Liberal Jewish Synagogue grew immensely, as did many congregations in the ULPS. The LJS reached a membership of 3,200 during Rabbi Edgar's time. Some reasons why the membership reached such a height in this period were the return of the Forces, a renewed interest in religion, the idealism that was around then, the hope of building a new and better world after the war, and lastly the high post-war birth rate sometimes called the "Bulge." And when those factors worked themselves through, there was a period of decline in membership of the flagship congregation of the ULPS. The main reason for the decline was the proliferation of Liberal and Reform Synagogues in areas of higher Jewish population, especially in the North of London.<sup>5</sup>

On September 23rd, 1951, the restored Liberal Jewish Synagogue was re-consecrated. The building had been largely destroyed by a blast from a German bomb in November 1940. Two services had to be held-- so great were the numbers of people who wished to attend the reconsecration. In his booklet Some Memories of My Ministry, Rabbi Leslie Edgar recalled the impressiveness of the occasion, especially the first re-consecration service when the scrolls were brought in to be placed in the ark. The first scroll was borne by Rabbi Leo Baeck. Distinguished

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., March 1952, 32.

<sup>5</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview by Clive Winston, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

lay-leaders of both the United Synagogue (Orthodox) and the Sephardi community were present. A portion of the service was broadcast on the BBC.

Rabbi Edgar had become the Senior Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in 1948, when Rabbi Israel Mattuck decided to become Minister Emeritus and to dedicate himself primarily to writing. Rabbi John Rayner recalls that Rabbi Edgar took on an enormous burden in taking over for his father-in-law, Rabbi Mattuck. Mattuck was a perfectionist, a masterful meeting-leader. He always spoke from notes, rather than from a text. Dr. Mattuck was a great preacher, very dramatic, as was the style at the time. Rabbi Edgar's leadership was powerful, but in a more quiet mold.<sup>6</sup>

By 1951, considerable progress had been made also in the rebuilding of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues as a whole. As previously stated, during the war much of the membership had inevitably been scattered. By the early 1950's, this membership had come back together to re-establish synagogues which had been strong before the war. In addition, though they faced many difficulties, the movement had succeeded in establishing four new congregations in Dublin, Southend and District, Wembley and District, and Blackpool. Among the difficulties the Union faced, one of the most important was the shortage of Ministers. Throughout the next decades, great help was provided by lay Ministers as well as Rabbinic Students from the United States. Rabbi Edgar was invited to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1951 to receive an honorary degree. During that visit, then-President of the College-Institute, Professor Nelson Glueck, agreed to send students to England for periods of research during which time they would also help with ministerial work.

Rabbi Mattuck died on April 3, 1954. The loss to the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and the ULPS was enormous. He had been the first Liberal Rabbi in

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



the country. He had helped build the LJS and the movement, and helped found the World Union for Progressive Judaism of which he was, for many years, a most effective and admired Chairman. In England generally, he was a well-known national figure. An obituary in the Liberal Jewish Monthly observed that Mattuck "was made so by his powerful eloquence, his brilliant mind, marvelously analytical and profound, and which made his speeches, writings and sermons on contemporary problems or on deep religious and philosophical subjects, notable and noted far beyond the Jewish Community."<sup>7</sup>

The Union's leadership, both rabbinic and lay, continued to evaluate its development in this period. The Union's Council began to consider purposely creating break-away congregations from some of its largest congregations in hope of better serving Jewish communities. Some expressed a fear of growing too large. Mr. G. R. Lever felt that Liberal Jews must always be "a minority within a minority," and, as "Liberal Judaism was rather intellectual" its appeal must be limited. He preferred a small membership of people who "lived up to their Liberal Judaism."<sup>8</sup> This tension would continue to echo through debates in the ULPS Council in years to come. There was always a group of people who felt the need to push the Union to reach out to a broader membership. They argued that if the Union did not continue to grow despite opposition from the Orthodox community, it would soon decline. Others, who recalled the ideals of "the three M's," argued that quality, and not quantity, should be the ULPS' goal. Reflecting on the challenges that the Union had had to face in the fifty years since it was founded, Lily Montagu recalled in 1952 that there had been many times when "a few of our number discussed the possibility of surrender in face of the bitter opposition which was experienced. But... we persevered."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, 37.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, April 1952. 55.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, October 1952.



Looking to the future, Rev. (now Rabbi) John Rayner asserted in 1953 that Liberal Judaism might very well be uniquely able to ensure the continuance of Judaism as a whole, and that that fact placed a tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of the Union and its constituents.<sup>10</sup> In response to this challenge, he called for a plan of study, regular prayer, and social service which would offer a wide range of opportunities for Jews to connect to Liberal Judaism.<sup>11</sup> In January 1959, the Union established a "Course of Jewish Study by Correspondence" intended to equip those who participate "with an all-around Jewish knowledge."<sup>12</sup> This correspondence course would grow and continue to be successful as the Union grew.

The Union established a Golden Jubilee "Fifty" Fund beginning in 1952. Its stated goals were to encourage the formation of new Liberal Jewish Congregations, to establish a Training College for Ministers and Teachers, and to enable Religion Schools of the various congregations to extend their facilities for the religious education of children.<sup>13</sup>

By 1952, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues had sixteen constituent congregations.<sup>14</sup> Throughout this period, Liberal and Progressive congregations continued to form and develop. In 1950, the Leicester Liberal Jewish Group formed. In 1965, the Woodford Liberal Jewish Group raised £10,000 to build a synagogue building for the congregation.<sup>15</sup> Congregations in the north of London began to thrive, as well. The Pinner Liberal Congregation rose from an initial membership of 17 families to over 50 in the first years of its

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<sup>10</sup>Rev. John Rayner, Address given to the Federation of Women's Societies in the Progressive Synagogues of Great Britain. Reprinted in Liberal Jewish Monthly, February 1953.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Reprinted in the Liberal Jewish Monthly, March 1953.

<sup>12</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, January 1959.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. "Golden Jubilee Supplement," October 1952.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Jewish Chronicle (England) January 22, 1965.

existence.<sup>16</sup> And members of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, seeing a need to serve some of its 3,000 member families in a more local fashion, helped to establish satellite congregations. Members of the North London Progressive Synagogue also helped found Wembley Liberal Synagogue in this period. The Liverpool Congregation built its own new building in 1965.

Not only were new congregations founded in this period, but new programming was created. In 1955, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues formed a Social Issues Committee as a result of a resolution submitted to the Union by the South London Liberal Jewish Congregation. South London felt the Union could play a greater role in the life of the community and the nation if it took more active part in matters of social importance. Among the first efforts of the committee was entertaining commonwealth students from overseas. Also high on the agenda were efforts to provide Braille literature, blood-drives, hospital and prison visits, as well as to address the issue of trade unions in a public way.<sup>17</sup>

In 1956 The Union also began to publish a series by Rev. John Rayner on "The Beliefs and Practices of Liberal Judaism," with "an emphasis on the practices rather than the beliefs."<sup>18</sup> This seemed to symbolize the beginnings of a significant change in the attitudes of Liberal Judaism-- away from being mainly a movement focused on the intellect and towards a movement of religious practice based in Liberal ideology. Rev. Rayner set out the religious background to rituals of daily worship, Shabbat observance, *tefillin* and *mezuzah*, *kippah* and *tallit*, and *kashrut*, suggesting that there were valid reasons for and against partaking in all of these rituals. It was up to the Liberal Jew, he explained, to examine each of these rituals to determine whether he or she would observe them. If they chose

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid. March 19, 1965.

<sup>17</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, November 1955.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., February 1956.

not too, Rayner argued, they should have in place some other way of "responding to the challenges" of modern life "without the aid of the ancient custom[s]." <sup>19</sup> His ten-part series covered a wide range of Jewish beliefs and observances, ranging from philosophical debates and history of Liberal Judaism to life-cycle ceremonies. These articles, along with other work that Rev. Rayner was doing in this period, clearly placed him at the fore of the movement's intellectual leadership.

In the effort to lay the groundwork for the future of the Union, Rev. Rayner and Rev. Herbert Richer addressed the Union's Annual General Meeting in 1956. They suggested that one of the most significant challenges facing Liberal Judaism was that the average Liberal Jew did "not take his Judaism seriously enough.... their Jewishness is not very strong and does not go very deep." <sup>20</sup> This criticism was the basis for Rayner and Richer's emphasis on the need for Jewish education as a way to facilitate the expansion of Liberal Judaism. If the young people and members of the congregations were well-educated, they argued, that would be the best advertisement for the Union.

Lily Montagu remained a very loyal secretary of the Union, and she constantly tried to keep the ULPS aware of what was happening in the wider Progressive Jewish world. Rabbi Hooker remembers her telling him about the small New Zealand community: "Wherever she found a few Jews living she said it was important for us to bring Liberal Judaism to *them*." <sup>21</sup>

Lily Montagu died in 1963 at age 90, marking the end of an era. The obituary in the Liberal Jewish Monthly recalled that "it was a letter from her pen which launched the Liberal Jewish Monthly in this country and for more than

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., July 1956.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., June 1956.

<sup>21</sup>Rabbi Bernard Hooker, interview with Clive Winston, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

three score years she continued to write letters for the cause of Liberal Judaism."<sup>22</sup> Of course, Lily Montagu was not just a woman of writing. She also took action, and she used personal example as the best way to influence others. She inspired the birth of the Union, and her influence would continue to be felt in the years to come.

In April, 1964, the Union set out "The Guiding Principles of Liberal Judaism" under four main headings: Jewish Ethics, Theology, The Jewish People, and Rites and Practices. These guidelines would become the basis for debate and discussion in the ULPS among both rabbis and lay-leaders.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Growth of the Youth Movement**

The young people of the Federation of Liberal and Progressive Jewish Youth Groups (FLPJYG), too, debated the future of the Union. At their Annual Conference of 1952, they discussed "The importance of Being a Liberal Jew," "Our Attitude to Assimilation and Intermarriage," and "Judaism and Nationalism." They were addressed by Herbert Richer, John Rayner, Rabbi Leslie Edgar, Rabbi J.J. Kokotek, and others.<sup>24</sup>

The youth movement also began a series of inter-club discussions under the title "Your Judaism?" A different discussion was held each month at a different Union congregation. Topics included "Are Observances Really Necessary," "The Jewish Woman-- Out of the House of Bondage?", "Judaism and Communism," and "In Search of God."<sup>25</sup>

The youth movement also debated what the nature of FLPJYG should be. The affiliation of all synagogue youth clubs was the first priority, but L.

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<sup>22</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, May 1963.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., May 1964.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., December 1952.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., October 1953.

Lassman also felt that it was crucial to forge a strong link between the Religion Schools and the youth movement. John Lazarus also asked for consideration to be given to the question of whether members of FLPJYG should be required to accept the principles of Liberal Judaism. He admitted that such a "test" might result in smaller youth groups, but he expressed the opinion "that a good group of 20 was far better than a bad group of 40."<sup>26</sup> Others disagreed with Mr. Lazarus' suggestion of a sort of theological test for membership. Such a test never came to be, but the debate over the direction of the youth movement mirrored, in some ways, the debate in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues as a whole over what it meant to observe the principles of Liberal Judaism.

In October 1954, the Liberal Jewish Monthly began to include a monthly "Youth Page" on the activities of young people in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the Youth Section of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. A review of these pages from the mid-1950's onward suggests that the young people in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues were engaged in serious dialogue about the meaning of Liberal Judaism and the role they should play in its promotion.

In 1962 the Union appointed a special sub-committee on youth to examine the progress of the Federation of Liberal and Progressive Youth Clubs. Among the committee's recommendations were that each synagogue should have its own Adult Youth Committee, and that the ULPS should appoint a paid Youth Advisor to help in the work of local clubs and the national movement. Mr. and Mrs. John Cross offered to serve in this capacity on a voluntary basis until a paid Youth Advisor could be appointed.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., December 1953.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., December 1962.



This period saw the growth of the FLPJYG from infancy into adolescence. At the same time that the members of the parent movement, the ULPS, were reevaluating their goals and strategies for growth, so the members of the youth movement began to try and find a national identity for the first time. FLPJYG became more than simply a collection of individual youth clubs. It became a national movement.

### Shifting Attitudes Towards Zionism

In the larger Anglo-Jewish community, mobilizing political and financial support for Israel became the main communal and social activity, the one cause that often seemed to transcend all divisions within the community.<sup>28</sup> It may have seemed to many that Israel was a unifying force for the entire Jewish community, but tensions remained. The question of loyalty to Israel was put to the test in this period, most notably by the Suez Crisis of 1956. Within the ULPS, changes in leadership during this period resulted in a dramatic shift in the Union's public attitude towards Zionism.

Whereas Israel Mattuck and Claude Montefiore had taken and maintained strongly anti-Zionist stances throughout their years of leadership in the union, Rabbi Leslie Edgar took what he termed "a more moderate-- or, if you will, middle of the road line."<sup>29</sup> Edgar had been persuaded by the teachings of Mattuck and Montefiore and had shared their desire for Judaism to be a world religion and the Jewish community to be almost exclusively distinguished by its religious purpose and character. But the horror of the Holocaust reshaped the parameters of Edgar's idealism. He felt, at the very least, as he later recalled, that "the old universalistic

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<sup>28</sup>Lipman, 231.

<sup>29</sup>Edgar, 40.



vision had to be modified in view of the wholly unexpected resurgence of barbaric nationalism in Germany and the appalling horror of the Holocaust."<sup>30</sup>

Edgar's stance on the issue of Zionism was important to the direction of the movement. Rabbi John Rayner characterizes Rabbi Edgar's approach to Zionism as "pragmatic and conciliatory yet high-principled."<sup>31</sup> Edgar resisted pleas by factions both in the ULPS and in the United States to lead a continued anti-Zionist movement and sustain an anti-Zionist philosophy. This led to a measure of tension between Edgar and a number of members of the Union who otherwise were among Edgar's closest friends. Edgar went so far as to become a founding-member of the Anglo-Israel Association in 1949, and subsequently founded the Liberal Jewish Synagogue's chapter of Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Edgar saw his position in accordance with Leo Baeck's doctrine of "Two Complementary Focal-Points" in Jewish life. Edgar agreed that a strong Israel and a strong Diaspora community were complementary and mutually important. He sought to promote Progressive Judaism in Israel so as to combat the influence of extreme Orthodoxy which was and remains dominant.<sup>32</sup>

There were those in the Union who felt that the transition in the post-war years to a more positive attitude towards the new Jewish State was proceeding too slowly. The primary spokesman for this point of view, which "usually went hand in hand with a demand for more Hebrew and traditional ritual"<sup>33</sup> was the Rev. Herbert Richer. At the Annual General Meeting of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues in 1956, Rabbi Richer expressed his belief that the Union had lost adherents and potential adherents over the years because of its attitude towards Zionism:

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, "Progressive Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," LJS Publications, 1983, 12.

<sup>32</sup>Edgar, 39-43.

<sup>33</sup>Rayner, 13.

I believe that we should review our attitude to the State of Israel. I think that, in the past, some of the best elements in the Jewish community have been lost to our movement because of that attitude. They were dissatisfied with Orthodoxy but found no home in Liberal Judaism because they believed our movement to be associated with anti-Zionism.<sup>34</sup>

The conflict of 1956 between Israel and Egypt, and the takeover by Egypt of the Suez Canal found Britain and Israel in an unpredictable and undeclared military alliance against Egypt. The Suez crisis produced a crucial test of attitudes for Anglo-Jewish leadership. When on 1 November 1956 the Labour Party challenged the government over the Suez Crisis, all 17 Jewish Labour MP's, including the president of the Board of Deputies and Zionist Federation, followed the party line, opposing support of Israel. While Jewish MP's were forthright against the party line in speaking up for Israel, when it came to a vital vote they opted for their party and for what they considered their constituents' interests, rather than their more strictly Jewish interests.<sup>35</sup>

In December 1956, the Liberal Jewish Monthly published an editorial strongly criticizing both Israel's and Great Britain's actions in the Suez crisis, calling them *prima facie* acts of aggression against Egypt. The Monthly must have received tremendous correspondence in response to the editorial, because the first 4 1/2 pages of the January 1957 issue were dedicated to the editor's defense of both the right of Jews everywhere to criticize Israel generally and a defense of his position in this particular instance. These articles represent a remarkable change in atmosphere. At this point in time, there certainly was no unity in the Union on Zionism in general, or on the Suez crisis particularly. But it is hard to believe that such a public debate could even have taken place in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues only a few years earlier. That the Monthly, and by

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<sup>34</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, Vol. XXVII, No. 6, pp 99f. Quoted in Rayner, 13.

<sup>35</sup>Lipman, 231.

extension the Union, would have to defend itself against assertions of having a "hostile attitude to Israel" symbolizes the changes which some of the ministers and laity had undergone in the ten years since Israel had been established.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to understand that it is not so easy to identify definite shifts in attitude movement-wide. It may be true to say that this period saw the first practical manifestations of organized support for Israel at the synagogue and Union level. But even before this point, there were individuals within the Union, and individual efforts at individual synagogues, who had taken a more pro-active stance on Zionism.

After the Suez crisis, there was a practical change in the movement's attitude towards Zionism and the State of Israel. The first Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues Israel Tour was led by Rev. Herbert Richer in 1959. Rabbi Richer had been leading Israel trips for North London Progressive Synagogue since 1956. A section of the 1963 Annual Conference of the movement was devoted to relations with the State of Israel.<sup>37</sup> These events mark a shift of remarkable proportions in the stance taken by Liberal Jews towards the Jewish State.

Rabbi Rayner argues that "in the twenty years between 1948 and 1967, Progressive Jews, by and large, in so far as they had not done so previously, made their peace with Zionism."<sup>38</sup> There were some lingering doubts, he suggests. There was residual anger about the way the State had come about, concerns over the Arab refugee problem, and doubt about the appropriateness of Israel's military response to ongoing Arab border raids. There was also consistent frustration with the manner in which successive Israeli governments discriminated against

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<sup>36</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, December 1956, January 1957.

<sup>37</sup>"Pointer," September 1965, 3.

<sup>38</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, , "Progressive Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," LJS Publications, 1983, 4.

Progressive Judaism, and this contributed to the slow development of Zionism in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues.

The focus of Progressive Judaism during its first fifty years in England usually centered upon Judaism as a religion. This was a direct result of the leaders who helped form the Union. Zionism, on the other hand, had always been primarily a secular ideology speaking of a Jewish nation, which was not how most Liberal Jews imagined themselves. Several lay-people expressed their "dismay at the seeming Zionistic flavour" of the 1963 Biennial Conference of the Union. N. Roe and Brigadier and Mrs. Goldstone argued that Zionism was restrictive-- that Liberal Judaism was universal, and that the Union should be focused on the universal as it always had been.<sup>39</sup>

But Liberal Jews largely came to adjust themselves to the reality of the existence of the State and even to take pride in it. Rabbi Rayner observed that "our main attitude to the State of Israel was in those twenty years (1948-1967) a very positive one.... We basked in the glory of [her] achievements and didn't mind at all, when non-Jews praised them, taking just a tiny bit of the credit for them."<sup>40</sup>

Rabbi Rayner says that it mattered little in this period how one defined oneself. British Jews, even those who defined themselves as Zionists, were likely to remain in Britain, and even those who considered themselves non-Zionists were likely to be supporters of the State of Israel. The feeling seemed to be that it was a waste of energy to fight over issues which had become largely semantic. Many were inclined to look for issues which brought Jews together instead, saying, "Zionism is dead; long live the State of Israel."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1963.

<sup>40</sup>Rayner, 16.

<sup>41</sup>From a talk on 'The Future of Progressive Judaism' by Rabbi John D. Rayner at the 16th International Conference of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, Amsterdam, July 6, 1970. Quoted in Rayner, "Progressive Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel," LJS Publications, 1983, 14.

Rabbi Bernard Hooker recalled that Lily Montagu often expressed a kind of support for Liberal institutions in Israel. She told him that she supported organisations like Leo Baeck School in Haifa: "This was her one big thing in Israel that she wanted to support and pushed. And I remember also in Jerusalem there was Tovia Ben-Horin's small congregation, which was one of the only Liberal congregations at that time functioning in Israel. That too received our support."<sup>42</sup> In the early 1950's, Rabbi Hooker, who was then serving in London, and Rev. Herbert Richer decided that they would get together to organize large tours of ULPS members to travel to Israel. Rev. Richer had been leading trips for some time on his own initiative, and eventually these were brought under the auspices of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. Rabbi Hooker recalled that some of the people who went on the early ULPS Israel trips had been among those known to be rather anti-Zionist, "and I must say that that changed many of their minds. Once they had seen the country for themselves, gone to visit kibbutzim, seen the people's problems, many of them came back with a very different point of view."<sup>43</sup>

Rabbi Hooker recalled an amusing story of a visit to Tovia Ben Chorin's Liberal congregation in Jerusalem. Some of the Tour members apparently came out a little disillusioned because the service was in Hebrew:

And when I explained to them, "Well that's good Liberal policy because we would expect to pray in the vernacular." But they didn't realise that the vernacular there was Hebrew. So it just shows how it's difficult for peoples' minds to adjust to new situations.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Hooker, Rabbi Bernard, interview by Clive Winston, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994, transcript by Josie Kinchin.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



Perhaps it is significant that only after the death of Israel Mattuck in 1954 did an article about "Prospects for Liberal Judaism in the State of Israel" find its place on the front page of the Liberal Jewish Monthly. And, interestingly, the first such article to appear was written not by a minister serving the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, but rather Rabbi Herbert Weiner of South Orange, New Jersey, USA.<sup>45</sup>

In 1965, Rabbi Rayner gave a sermon in which he stated that the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues "can no longer be 'neutral' towards the State of Israel."<sup>46</sup> He called upon congregations and their members to play an active role, along with all other sections of Jewry, in supporting the organizations which assist the State of Israel.

The Six Day War in June 1967 effected a profound change in the attitude of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues towards the importance of Israel as a Jewish State, as opposed to it simply being a country which Liberal Jews felt a duty to support the development of Progressive Jewish institutions. Greta Hyman said that the war made a large difference to her previously anti-Zionist attitude. She, along with Jews all over the world, was shocked at the realistic possibility that Israel might be destroyed. Four months after the war, she visited Israel for the first time on the ULPS Israel Tour. She said that between the war and that visit, her attitude was completely changed.<sup>47</sup> The war clearly made a profound emotional impact on the movement. The success of Israel in winning the war seemed to bring reflected glory upon Jews everywhere which enabled them to have renewed confidence as Jews.

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<sup>45</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1955.

<sup>46</sup>Rayner, 17.

<sup>47</sup>Rabbi Mark Goldsmith, Colloquium Paper: "The Change in Attitude towards Zionism and Israel in the British Liberal Jewish Movement in the 1960's," 1995.



By Chanukah of 1967, editorials were appearing in "Pointer" which seemed almost to decry older Liberal Jewish attitudes towards Israel. An article appeared which compared the victory of Israel in the Six Day War to the events celebrated in the Channukah festival. The article noted that "last June dormant loyalties were rekindled and certain comfortable illusions of latter-day "hellenisers" (sic) were disturbed."<sup>48</sup>

The leaders of the ULPS-- Rabbis John Rayner, Herbert Richer, and Bernard Hooker, and later Sidney Brichto, and lay-people such as Sir Louis Gluckstein-- may have disagreed on a great many issues over the years. They may have seriously debated the exact manner in which the Union should go forward in offering support to the State of Israel. But despite their differences, they succeeded in dramatically altering the way the Union publicly spoke about the Jewish State. And programmatically, in a period of twenty years, they created a culture in the Union which Montefiore and Mattuck may barely have recognized.

### **Rabbinic Leadership in the Union**

The entire question of rabbinic leadership for both the existing and developing ULPS congregations was of crucial importance during this period. Rabbi Bernard Hooker reflected with interest upon the "Minister's Conferences" of the time. The conference was not composed, as it is now, of rabbis exclusively. Most of the spiritual leaders of ULPS congregations were lay ministers:

The most outstanding one was Sir Basil Henriques who was an outstanding juvenile magistrate but he was a very keen supporter both of the Reform synagogues and of our synagogues. I personally think he was much more Liberal than people imagined. He spoke at many of our wider functions and was well respected throughout the community.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>"Pointer," Winter 1967/1968, quoted in paper by Rabbi Mark Goldsmith.

<sup>49</sup>Hooker interview.

There were many other people serving in the role of lay-minister. They included S. F. Rich in South London, S. Solomons in Southgate and Archie Fay of Brighton, who served as a lay minister for many years. And of course Lily Montagu herself was a lay minister. Rabbi Rayner points out that Lily Montagu may well have been the first woman in any Jewish denomination anywhere in the world to regularly deliver the sermon and lead services in a synagogue. "She tended to read sermons, but the content, style, and spirituality of the woman were such that people listened attentively."<sup>50</sup> They all attended Ministers' Conferences regularly, and although they were chaired first by Rabbi Mattuck and then by Rabbi Edgar, Rabbi Hooker recalled that all of the leaders had a certain amount to say there.

Hooker noted that "meetings seemed to be carried out in a less hurried way than they were later on, and also that the lay people seemed to be better represented, precisely because lay ministers were present at the actual Ministers' Conferences but I must say that I found them very interesting."<sup>51</sup>

Beginning in 1948, the Union formally trained lay-ministers to serve in congregations where there was either no- or only occasional-formal rabbinic presence. As previously noted, rabbinic students from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in the United States helped by spending periods of time working in Liberal congregations. Greta Hyman, who was then serving as Organizing Secretary of the ULPS, worked very closely with these young men, helping them and their families to feel comfortable in England. She recalled dinner parties with rabbis-to-be such as David Powell, Stanley Relkin, Ed Maline, Michael Barenbaum, Michael Abraham, and others.<sup>52</sup> Ms. Hyman and others that

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<sup>50</sup>Rayner interview.

<sup>51</sup>Hooker interview.

<sup>52</sup>Greta Hyman, interview by Clive Winston, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994 transcript by Josie Kinchin.

this author spoke with recalled fondly the time they spent with these young men, and the importance of the work they did in their time in England. Throughout this time, there was no forum for training Liberal ministers in Britain. Compounding the problem was the fact that the Second World War had meant the end not only of the Orthodox yeshivot of Europe, but also the Liberal training seminary in Germany as well. Jews' College was at the time the only choice for rabbinical ordination in Europe, and, being an Orthodox institution, it was not a viable one for Liberal or Reform Jews.

One very strong impetus for change in this situation came not from either the Liberal or Reform movements, nor from their constituent congregations, but rather from the young people of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

The Youth Section of WUPJ was founded in 1951. At its first British conference, during which American theologian Eugene Borowitz addressed the gathering, members discussed the future of Progressive Judaism and concluded that the most urgent need was for a new leadership of rabbis, teachers, and youth leaders. A call was formally expressed for a college to train these leaders. This message was passed on by John Rayner, who had been integrally involved in founding the Youth Section, to Lily Montagu, and through her to the head of the RSGB, Rabbi Harold Reinhart. According to John Rayner, Reinhart did not reply for quite a while, and nothing came of this initial effort.<sup>53</sup> But a process had been put in motion.

Ministers such as John Rayner, Herbert Richer, and David Goldstein, all of whom would become guiding lights in the ULPS, were being tutored individually by rabbis in the ULPS. As Bernard Hooker put it, "certainly Rayner, Richer and Goldstein had a good deal of private tuition with people like Mattuck and I must

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<sup>53</sup>Rayner interview.

say we produced some very good ones in those three...."<sup>54</sup> The movement continued to look for new recruits to help supply adequate leadership for new congregations being formed.

Some ministers who were serving Union congregations at the time were, like Hooker, men who had come over from the Orthodox community. Others were German refugees who had had a Progressive education in Europe or Americans who came over "on a sort of lend-lease idea."<sup>55</sup> At that time, it seemed unlikely that the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the Reform movement would find a way to work together to create a unified institution. Rabbi Hooker recalls "all sorts of late evenings, some of them secret sessions in which different cliques of people got together seeing how it could be worked out, most of it without any real success."<sup>56</sup>

It is interesting to note that, at times, an effort was made to place "blame" on laypeople for the shortage of ministers in all denominations of Judaism. An unsigned editorial in the Liberal Jewish Monthly in January 1952 raises the question of a general apathy towards religion as a reason why young men are hesitant to enter the rabbinate: "That attitude is probably responsible for the position of mere functionaries given to Ministers in many Jewish congregations."<sup>57</sup> The editorial also points to the problem of inadequate remuneration in challenging congregations to reconsider how they treat their clergy.

The ULPS decided on its own to fund a tutor-- Rabbi Abraham Spiro-- to create a training program for Liberal Rabbis. Rabbi Edgar was very keen that this should be done, and, for fear that there would be too many distractions in London

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<sup>54</sup>Hooker interview.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, January 1952, 3.

that the college be located not in London but in Oxford or Cambridge. In June 1953 the Union began to advertise a program for "Training for the Liberal Jewish Ministry."<sup>58</sup> The Monthly followed up with a series of editorials by men who chose to train for the Liberal ministry, such as David Goldstein and Lawrence Rigal, entitled "Why I decided to train for the ministry."<sup>59</sup>

Rabbi Spiro was extraordinarily knowledgeable. He made a tremendous impact in his lectures at Oxford and Cambridge. A library began to be collected, and tremendous moneys needed to be raised. Disagreements raged between Spiro and Sir Louis Gluckstein, chairman of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and a driving force in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, about how to proceed, and Spiro angrily left for America. Thus this attempt to found a college, too, proved abortive.<sup>60</sup>

It was in the circle of German-refugee Rabbis, together with a number of their British-based counterparts and some lay-leaders in the Reform movement, that the desire for such a college was made a reality. The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain on its own established the Jewish Theological College in 1956 with five students in a couple of rooms at the West London Synagogue. It was renamed after Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck upon his death a few months later.

Hope for the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to establish its own College for the training of Liberal Ministers faded. Such an acknowledgement by Lily Montagu and Leslie Edgar is hidden away in a comment on page eight of the May, 1961 issue of the Liberal Jewish Monthly. The piece described the two-fold problem of acquiring qualified teachers to train Ministers and the finances to make it possible. Montagu and Edgar admitted that from a financial standpoint, "there appears little prospect at present of fully implementing such a scheme, but

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., June 1953.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., June, November 1959.

<sup>60</sup>Rayner interview.



its eventual possibility should be borne in mind in any far sighted planning for the future of our Movement."<sup>61</sup> A change in the Union's plans was not so far in the future.

In early 1962, a suggestion to become cosponsors of the Leo Baeck College came before the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. After a lengthy debate about how the Liberal movement would be able to maintain its identity if it participated in a joint college, the ULPS finally agreed to join with the RSGB in the venture in 1964 with a couple of provisos: that a principal should be appointed as soon as possible, and until then a joint committee, with an Honorary Director of Studies, should be gathered. The ULPS overwhelmingly agreed that joining the Leo Baeck College was the best move for the Union. Only two dissenting votes were cast against the motion, and those two votes were later withdrawn. This cooperation became the single most important source of closer association between the ULPS and the RSGB.

### **Ties with the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain**

That closer association, brought about by a common college for new rabbis, almost inevitably brought about discussion and rumor of impending merger between the movements. Many wondered how the two movements would be able to maintain separate identities when their rabbis were being ordained by the same college. At various times, the joint venture served to highlight alternately the similarities and differences between the ULPS and the RSGB. Representatives of each of the movements made it perfectly clear that they had no intention of merging. The Ministers' Assembly of the RSGB, for example, stated in 1965 that

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<sup>61</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, May, 1961.



although they had met with ministers of the ULPS and exchanged views, there was no merger imminent or even contemplated.<sup>62</sup>

Others, however, thought that the merger idea should be given serious consideration. American Rabbi Chaim Stern, who served as acting Senior Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in the early 1960's, expressed his hope that ULPS and the RSGB would ultimately merge.<sup>63</sup>

Ben Moss, Vice-Chairman of the St. George's Settlement Synagogue, gave a speech in which he wondered why there needed to be two Progressive organizations "both working hard and conscientiously, both catering for the same spiritual needs of people who can see no real difference between them, no fundamental distinctions of doctrine."<sup>64</sup> Moss argued for, at the least, much closer cooperation between the ULPS and the RSGB.

The Leo Baeck College was not the only instance of cooperation between the movements. The RSGB and ULPS also worked together to create a joint chaplaincy service to serve Progressive Jewish university students. Dr. R. Jessel, deputy president of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, pointed to these collaborations when he called for some form of federation - though not necessarily an amalgamation - of the two movements.<sup>65</sup>

Underlying the cooperation between the movements, however, there always remained a certain level of tension as well. Many of the lay- and rabbinic leaders to whom this author spoke referred to an unwritten "gentleman's agreement." Rabbi Rayner explained the agreement this way:

There's always been a problem-- we're competing for the same 'customers.'  
We used to have a 'gentleman's agreement'-- that neither of us would

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<sup>62</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London) June 18, 1965.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid. July 2, 1965.

<sup>64</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1960.

<sup>65</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London) February 5, 1965.

establish a synagogue in a community where the other already had one. The facts of this are in dispute between the two sides.<sup>66</sup>

This tension would remain unresolved, and would intensify as the rate of growth of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain gradually began to outpace that of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues.

### **The Changing Structure of the Union**

The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues was, in Rabbi Hooker's words, "at that time... a much looser knit organisation than it is today. It wasn't so bureaucratic, it didn't have all the different institutions which are attached to it now."<sup>67</sup> The only paid staff person in the movement for many years was an organizing secretary. The first of these was Stanley Solomons who combined his work with the Union together with serving as a Labour Party organizer. Eventually he was followed by Greta Hyman in 1956, and she was joined by Rosita Rosenberg in 1961.

The Union continued to be very much under the influence of its strongest element, which was the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St. Johns Wood. The LJS was literally and figuratively the address not only of a synagogue, but of the synagogue movement itself. The leaders of the LJS often spoke for the Union. In particular, Rabbi Hooker recalled "the rabbinic leadership of Rabbi Mattuck and Leslie Edgar and the lay leadership of Sir Louis Gluckstein, who was a very dominant character and he governed a good deal of the work of the Union. We had our periodic Union council meetings but they almost inevitably rubber stamped what the Executive Council were saying."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Rayner interview.

<sup>67</sup>Hooker interview.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

Rabbi Hooker was asked in the early 1960's to establish a committee to make formal recommendations for the future of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. He later admitted that he was asked to do so because he had been severely critical of the progress the ULPS had been making. "they said to me, 'All right put your hand where your mouth has been and get on with it,' so I did."<sup>69</sup> Rabbi Hooker started off putting advertisements in the Jewish Chronicle under the heading "Liberal Jewish Advance," feeling that the Union needed positive publicity to let the public know that the ULPS was on the move. In those advertisements, the Union both publicized ongoing events and described what the basic views of Progressive Judaism were.

By the mid 1960's, the membership of the Union was growing at a rate of 10% per annum, and some members were even debating whether the ULPS was getting too large. Membership numbers in some of the congregations were getting so large that synagogue councils began to wonder whether they would be able to maintain an intimate atmosphere for all their members.<sup>70</sup> Hooker worked on addressing the need for new congregations. New congregations began to develop in places like Woodford and Finchley. Northwood grew out of Wembley and eventually, congregations like Barkingside emerged from North London. These synagogues, which began at this time as "satellite congregations," have since grown into thriving congregations.

When Rabbi Edgar retired from the Rabbinic Conference in 1963, the question arose as to who should take over. Rabbi Edgar asked Rabbi Rayner to head it. Rabbi Hooker was asked to handle the administration, and Rabbi J.J. Kokotek led the Rites and Practices Committee. Rabbi Rayner was convinced by his "American colleagues" that the Conference should become more democratic,

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

and that the Chair of the Conference should be democratically elected from time to time. Rayner said he would not take over unless he was elected, much to the dismay of Rabbi Edgar. When the vote was taken, Rayner and Hooker received equal votes, and they decided to split the term. Since that time, the Chair of the Rabbinic Conference has served a rotational term of term of two years.<sup>71</sup>

In June 1961, Leslie Edgar retired partially from the Senior Ministry of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and as President of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. He was made Minister Emeritus of the synagogue, and he retired fully in 1965.<sup>72</sup>

Rev. John Rayner was asked to succeed Leslie Edgar as Senior Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. Rayner, with what he called "uncharacteristic courage," responded "only if you give me two years' leave of absence in the next five years for further study."<sup>73</sup> The Liberal Jewish Synagogue Council agreed. In 1963 Rayner went to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. There he concentrated almost entirely on Talmud and Rabbinic Literature, and earned his formal Rabbinic *semikha*.

In 1963, Rabbi Hooker's committee made several suggestions. One of the detailed recommendations for the Union was that it appoint a full-time Executive Director, "somewhat on the lines of Rabbi Eisendrath in the USA."<sup>74</sup> Rabbi Hooker felt at first that he was perceived to be trying to position himself for such a role, although he insists that this was not his intention. "The chairman of the [ULPS] council said to me... "Would you consider taking it on yourself?" and I said, "No".<sup>75</sup> Hooker recommended Sidney Brichto, who at the time was working as one of the American rabbis assisting John Rayner.

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<sup>71</sup>Rayner interview.

<sup>72</sup>Edgar, 58.

<sup>73</sup>Rayner interview.

<sup>74</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1963.

<sup>75</sup>Hooker interview.

Rabbi Brichto, working with the Rev. Rayner at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and studying at University College in London since 1961, joined the Union as Executive Director and Vice-President in 1964. He felt it was very important that the post be both an appointed position: Executive Director, and an elected position: Vice-President, so that the Union had the opportunity to either give or deny him a vote of confidence every two years.<sup>76</sup> Among his first responsibilities was to conclude negotiations with the Leo Baeck College and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain to ensure an equitable partnership at the College.<sup>77</sup>

In 1961, the Rev. John Rayner wrote an article in the Liberal Jewish Monthly entitled "Is Liberal Judaism Too Intellectual." His answer was mixed. He admitted that there might be some substance to the charge that the sermons, lectures, books and pamphlets published by the Union were often "cold, analytic, ruthlessly rational. Too often they convey criticism of this or that feature of Orthodox Judaism rather than love of Judaism itself." He argued that Liberal Judaism had now moved out of its infancy and the need to defend itself at every turn, and should now focus on "stimulating Jewish faith, intensifying Jewish education and revitalising Jewish observance."<sup>78</sup>

Apparently the format of the Liberal Jewish Monthly itself was deemed to be too intellectual and intimidating. In December 1962, the journal got a new look and a new editor, Rabbi Bernard Hooker. At the time people like Peggy Lang of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue had been doing most of the editorial work for the Monthly and accumulating most of the articles. Rabbi Edgar had occasionally acted as Editor, along with a few other others, but there were complaints (especially from Rabbi Hooker!) that it was a bit too highbrow for most people.

<sup>76</sup>Rabbi Sidney Brichto, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>77</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1964.

<sup>78</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, November 1961.



Rabbi Hooker said that the Monthly was quite a nice journal but that average ULPS members just were not reading it, except perhaps for a few who were the more academically inclined. Rabbi Hooker strongly believed that the Union needed to reach the masses if it wanted to bring Liberal Judaism into a more popular frame of mind:

I'm proud to say I did completely alter it, first of all I put a nicer cover, each month it was a different colour, secondly it was a smaller size so that it was more easily handled, it was of a more modern print and the articles were much more in keeping with the sort of topics which everyday people would be interested in.<sup>79</sup>

Among the topics covered in the revamped publication in the mid-1960's were issues such as whether the ULPS should have women serve as Rabbis. Different members of the movement were asked their opinions about the issues. Rabbi Hooker made sure that all of the different ULPS congregations were represented by either the contribution of an article or their own congregational report. Also included were puzzles, quizzes, youth activities and so on.<sup>80</sup> Then in 1965 the Monthly was changed again altogether and renamed the ULPS News. Initially, the new-look Monthly included such columns as "Ask the Rabbi," perhaps in an effort to make the publication more attractive and accessible to lay people. The vibrant debates which covered the pages of the Liberal Jewish Monthly since 1945 were gradually eliminated, leaving the primary publication of the ULPS as largely a forum to report events and activities. The Union published "Pointer" from 1965 to 1971 as its scholarly publication, and it always struggled financially.

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<sup>79</sup>Hooker interview.

<sup>80</sup>Hooker interview.



### The Union and the Liberal Jewish Synagogue

Even as founding leaders like Rabbi Mattuck died, and Rabbi Edgar retired, more and more rabbis came into the movement gradually spreading the influence of the movement's leadership. Previously, the power structure of the Union flowed almost entirely from "St. John's Wood," as many referred to the joint offices of the ULPS and LJS. Once the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues chose to appoint an Executive Director who was not simultaneously committed to serving the LJS, the tenor of the relationship changed. Rabbi Brichto was considered "a Union man"<sup>81</sup> and he brought in much more Union representation. The result was that the Union rabbis and the synagogue officers felt that they had a much greater say. Many of them had resented the Liberal Jewish Synagogue being the central spotlight or the central influence of the Union. Rabbi Hooker recalled that many of them felt that the LJS was "a bad example of what Liberal Judaism was" because when the Orthodox among them went to the LJS, many would say, "Well you know I went to that synagogue and it was cold, there were people without hats on, and this, that and the other."<sup>82</sup> Many in the ULPS began to say with more assertive voices that the LJS was not necessarily the only example of what Liberal Judaism stood for. If one went to a synagogue like Northwood or Finchley, or Belsize Park, one would have seen quite a different service, quite a different group of people. The services in these congregations tended to include more Hebrew, for example. Rabbi Hooker and others made sure that the community understood that these synagogues also represented Liberal Judaism.

Many in the Union began to shy away from the idea of the exclusive center of activity being at Liberal Jewish Synagogue. Of necessity it had to be the

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<sup>81</sup>Hooker interview.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

center in years gone by, because of its ability to offer rooms, and often the personnel-- such as Peggy Lang-- for the movement's office. But many in the ULPS began to realize that there needed to be a center which was independent of the LJS.

Greta Hyman, long-time organizing secretary of the ULPS, recalled the offices of the ULPS at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. The Union had one large room in the LJS. Greta called the conditions "appalling":

My worst memory was that on Friday before Shabbos came in, I had literally to open all the cupboards and put away all our records, I locked the filing cabinets, physically lift the typewriters - and they were heavy old typewriters - and put them in the cupboards and any other records were moveable, I had to put away because that room was going to be used by the religion school at the weekend.<sup>83</sup>

Another one of the recommendations made by Rabbi Hooker's Development Committee in 1963 was that a Union central address (what would become the Montagu Centre) be established at the site of West Central Liberal Synagogue. This plan would require development moneys outside of the existing Union finances.<sup>84</sup>

### **Communal Tension**

Meanwhile, tension with the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate continued. In 1953, Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie issued an instruction to the ministers under his jurisdiction not to admit as Jews the children of mixed marriages in which the mother was the non-Jewish party. This incensed the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, which had long recognized the principle of patrilineal descent, and insisted on equal rights for the children of such marriages.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Greta Hyman, interview by Clive Winston, ULPS Oral History Project. 1994.

<sup>84</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, October 1963.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., March 1953.

Many in the ULPS hoped to put the tension with the Orthodox behind. Having struggled with Orthodox authorities for fifty years, it was felt, it was time to move on to new struggles. Rev. Bernard Hooker acknowledged that since the ULPS was founded as a revolt against Orthodoxy, it was only natural that it would concern itself with Liberal-Orthodox relationships. But, he believed, the initial phase had come to an end: "It is pathetic as well as dangerous that too many Liberal Congregations are still looking over their shoulder at Orthodoxy... out of fear that the Orthodox might complain or view [them] with disfavour."<sup>86</sup> Rev. Hooker listed what he considered to be Liberal Judaism's tasks in changing the atmosphere. He recommended that Liberal Judaism inform the community of the opportunities of Liberal religious experience, that the Union show a more active interest in the affairs of the wider Anglo-Jewish community, establish more effective ways of publicizing the Union, and encourage youth activity. Despite Rev. Hooker's exhortations, and efforts to follow his recommendations, unfortunately this tension would not soon be lifted.

The debate over the issue of Marriage Secretaries for ULPS congregations continued to rage in this period. If a given congregation did not have permission from the Board of Deputies to solemnize marriages, a civil registrar had to attend Liberal Jewish marriages. The Board of Deputies would only give such permission with the support of the Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Dr. J.H. Hertz had given approval for the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and the Liverpool Jewish Synagogue to have their own such secretaries in the 1940's. But efforts to extend this right to other congregations throughout this period were successfully opposed by Chief Rabbi Brodie.

The ULPS felt this to be an incongruous and unjust situation: Liberal Congregations were represented on the Board of Deputies, and yet the Board

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., July 1955.

would not give them a certification which would acknowledge them as being "persons professing the Jewish religion." For a period, the ULPS withdrew from the Board. Eventually a compromise was worked out in which the Board agreed not to oppose any Parliamentary legislation which the Union might initiate in order to secure the right to appoint its own Marriage Secretaries.

In February 1959, this goal was accomplished by Parliamentary legislation. The success was thanks in large part to Sir Louis Gluckstein, President of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, as well as to Sir Keith Joseph and Lord Cohen who steered a bill through the House of Commons and the House of Lords, respectively.

The Union acknowledged that for practical purposes, it did not make that much of a difference whether individual synagogues had their own Marriage Secretaries, except that it was a more convenient arrangement. It was primarily a matter of principle that the right be established. Furthermore, it was the first time that statutory legislation was established which acknowledged that, in addition to Orthodox and Reform Jews, there were also Liberal Jews in England, and that those Jews were entitled to the same consideration in matters of rights as all sections of the Jewish community.<sup>87</sup>

Religious tension of another kind within the community crystallized in the 'Jacobs Affair' of the 1960's, which attracted extensive coverage in the British media. Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs, widely respected as a scholar, had questioned the literal inspiration of scripture and argued that there was a human element in its composition. A minister of the New West End Synagogue, Jacobs became a tutor at Jews' College but his appointment as principal and his subsequent reappointment to his former congregation (which required the express certification of the Chief Rabbi) were both vetoed by Orthodox Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie.

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., April 1959.

Jacobs became a minister of an independent New London Synagogue but, contrary to some predictions, this did not give rise to a widespread movement in Britain on the lines of American Conservative Judaism.

Chief Rabbi Brodie retired in 1965, and there was a feeling that among the most difficult challenges facing the next Orthodox Chief Rabbi would be the internal tensions in the British Jewish community. Rabbi Brodie had imposed a boycott of non-Orthodox ministers, and this created an atmosphere of animosity which was perhaps unmatched in all the years of the complex relationship between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in England.

In the vacuum between Chief Rabbis, rumors and tensions grew around the attitude of Orthodox authorities towards the marriage ceremonies performed by Liberal and Progressive rabbis. Rabbi Sidney Brichto wrote a "Letter to the Editor" in the Jewish Chronicle in December 1965 in an effort to halt these rumors. He challenged any Orthodox authority to state publicly and categorically that Liberal marriages, between two Jews whose eligibility for Jewish marriage is unquestioned, were invalid.<sup>88</sup>

That public statement took less than two weeks to emerge from the Orthodox *Batei Din* of Manchester and London. *Dayan* Morris Swift of the London *Beit Din* said that Reform and Liberal marriages could be considered valid, but no more so than those performed in a register office, which are not valid marriages according to Jewish law. This statement was followed by similar statements from the chairman of the rabbinate of the Federation of Synagogues, Rabbi Michael Fisher, as well as Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schenfeld, presiding rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. The Sephardic *Haham*, Rabbi Dr. Solomon Gaon, declined comment.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London) March 12, 1965.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., December 17, 1965.



These statements caused a debate in the entire Jewish community. The pages of the Jewish Chronicle were filled with letters-to-the-editor and op-ed pieces on the issue. Some Orthodox rabbis, among them both affiliated and independent ministers, opposed the *Beit Din's* comments. The Ministers' Conferences of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain released a joint statement condemning the *Beit Din's* position. The statement concluded:

Unless the present Orthodox leaders are persuaded to refrain from abusing their ecclesiastical authority-- whose basis should be Torah, of which it is said that all its paths are peace-- through the sowing of dissension and the infliction of grief in the household of Israel, Anglo-Jewry will find itself the victim of self-imposed religious persecution and oppression, which must lead to the decline of Jewish communal life.<sup>90</sup>

Letters-to-the-editor on the pages of the Jewish Chronicle expressed a range of opinions. Norman Cohen asserted that Rabbi Brichto and the Liberals were attempting to engineer an artificial crisis when they knew that this issue was one which was not at all new. Others expressed outrage at the "vehement and brutal intolerance of the remarks of some of our Orthodox leaders on the subject."<sup>91</sup> The Jewish Chronicle asked a "random selection" of United Synagogue members what they thought of the *Beit Din's* ruling, and the responses were about equally split between those supporting and questioning the ruling.<sup>92</sup>

The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the representative body of Jews from across the religious spectrum, headed by Solomon Teff, undertook to try to address the issue of communal cohesion without getting involved in the religious

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., December 24, 1965.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.



matters themselves. This would prove to be an unsuccessful tactic, as membership and participation on the Board would become a weapon in the religious debate.<sup>93</sup>

Reform and Liberal ministers demanded assurances from the Chief Rabbi's office that the next Chief Rabbi would take a different attitude towards non-Orthodox Jews. Rabbi Selvin Goldberg, a Reform minister, declared that if such assurances were not forthcoming, a delegation of Reform and Liberal ministers would appoint their own representative for whom they would seek recognition on State or civic occasions. Such a move would directly challenge the Chief Rabbi, who ordinarily would be recognized by the British Government as Jewry's sole religious representative at national or Royal functions.<sup>94</sup> The ULPS, too, expressed its hope that whoever was appointed would dedicate himself to "promoting greater understanding and unity between the religious sections of Anglo Jewry."<sup>95</sup> Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits was named the new Orthodox Chief Rabbi in 1966. Rabbi Jakobovits ultimately offered a conciliatory approach to non-orthodox Jews but firmly opposed any watering down of orthodox standards, for instance on marriages and conversions.<sup>96</sup> The debates highlighted in this period continue, with ebbs and flows, through the present day. And although the RSGB and the ULPS cooperated in the Leo Baeck College and other important ventures, it seems that nothing brought them together more powerfully than anger over the actions of the Chief Rabbi and his office. In this and all periods, when the Chief Rabbi or the *Dayanim* of the Orthodox *Beit Din* attacked Reform or Liberal Jews, they generally responded publicly with one voice.

Rabbi Sidney Brichto was unafraid to openly challenge the Chief Rabbinate, and he would do so often in his tenure as Executive Director and

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid. January 21, 1966.

<sup>94</sup>Sunday Times (London) September 5, 1965.

<sup>95</sup>Jewish Chronicle (London) September 10, 1965.

<sup>96</sup>Lipman, 241-242.

Vice-President of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. His first editorial after being appointed to his new post was entitled "What is Wrong with the Chief Rabbinate."<sup>97</sup> In it, he challenged not so much the individual Chief Rabbi, but rather the institution as a whole and its status in the larger British society. In his first sermon to the Union as Executive Director, he expressed his surprise that "as a community, as a religious force, British Jews do not act as free men,"<sup>98</sup> despite the fact that they have full acceptance in British society. He made a comparison with Church authorities:

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Woolwich do not jeopardise the position of the Church of England when they differ on theological matters. On the contrary, such religious controversies cause people to think and re-evaluate their religious beliefs. If there were opportunities for Jews to discuss their real differences, far more Jewish men and women, boys and girls would take interest in their religious heritage.<sup>99</sup>

His audacity made some in the Union angry, but he felt that he was doing what was right, and the ULPS continued to support him for many years in his post.<sup>100</sup>

### **The Tercentenary**

An event of great significance for all of Anglo-Jewry took place in 1956. The Tercentenary of the return of Jewry to England, after the expulsion under Edward the First in 1290, was celebrated. Although some Jews had always managed to remain in England, the vast majority had been expelled and it was only in 1656, through the work of Manasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam and his petition to Oliver Cromwell, that Jews had been able to return to England and a Spanish and Portuguese Congregation was established.

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<sup>97</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, April 1965.

<sup>98</sup>Reprint of sermon, Liberal Jewish Monthly, May 1965..

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Rabbi Brichto, interview with the author, July 1997.

When the time came for the communal celebration of this anniversary, tension was caused by some in the Orthodox community who wished to exclude Liberal Ministers from participating in the ceremonies. Rabbi Edgar was asked by the organizing Committee to carry a Torah scroll in the procession around the Synagogue. Edgar was proud of the fact that although "the extreme Orthodox objected... to their credit, the Tercentenary Committee stood firm and insisted that all sections of religious Jewry should be represented in the Scroll Presentation."<sup>101</sup> The affect of this controversy was that the service was changed from a large Ashkenazic synagogue to the Sephardic Synagogue in Bevis Marks, which in any case seemed appropriate considering that it had been the Sephardic community which had been the first to organize a congregation in London after the return of the community. The smaller size of Bevis Marks, however, meant that many Jews were deprived of the opportunity to be present at the ceremony.<sup>102</sup>

### Changing Liturgy

There were powerful divisions within the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues over the issues of Zionism and "neo-traditionalism," and the leaders of the Union were acutely aware of these tensions. Rev. John Rayner sensed that the division in the ULPS over Israel and over tradition seemed to pose a threat to the very unity of the movement. Some of the older established congregations seemed happy to carry on as before. ULPS congregations at the time were using Israel Mattuck's Liberal Jewish Prayerbook, Volume I, and many people held the *siddur* in high regard. Most congregations used it together with a hymn supplement composed largely of English hymns. Many looked forward to singing *Unto the Hills I Lift Mine Eyes* and *The Lord is My Shepherd*. And even when they were

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<sup>101</sup>Edgar, 38.

<sup>102</sup>Edgar, 38-39.

singing *Adon Olam*, if they could not read it in the Hebrew, they would find it in transliteration in the Liberal Jewish Prayerbook. The Hebrew knowledge of most congregants at the time was almost non-existent, and many felt threatened by the introduction into Liberal services of a large percentage of Hebrew prayers.

Rabbi Hooker recalled times when critics would come from the outside and say, "'They use English hymns,' 'It all reminds me of a church' and things of that sort. But many of them felt they could really actively participate in that way."<sup>103</sup>

But an increasing number of suburban synagogues, especially the North London Progressive Synagogue, began to feel a need for a more traditional service and prayerbook, and also a more Zionist ideology. Rabbi Rayner was concerned that the polarization over traditionalism and Zionism could actually lead to the breakup of the ULPS. Two congregations-- South End and Blackpool-- actually did change to affiliate with the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. He saw the best solution as an effort to integrate "neo-Zionism as well as the neo-traditionalism, even while remaining staunchly faithful to the essential principles of our liberalism."<sup>104</sup> Rev. Rayner's solution to the problem was to create a new liturgy incorporating aspects of all the trends. He sought to produce a prayerbook which would bridge the gap between the more radical and the more traditionalist voices. He had suggested his plan for a new prayerbook in 1955, but it was determined that what was needed even more pressingly was a new Haggadah. He worked with John Rich on that project, which was published in 1960.

When Rev. Rayner left to spend two years in Cincinnati, Ohio at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion to earn his rabbinic ordination, Rabbi Chaim Stern came to the Liberal Jewish Synagogue for the interim period.

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<sup>103</sup>Hooker interview.

<sup>104</sup>Rayner, 13.

During the period of overlap in London after Rabbi Stern had come and before Rev. Rayner left for the United States, they discussed Rev. Rayner's ideas for a new prayerbook for the ULPS. It became clear that the two men shared a passion for liturgical creativity. Thus began a voluminous correspondence across the oceans between Rev. Rayner and Rabbi Stern, in which they shared their ideas for a new *siddur*. The correspondence continued even after now-Rabbi Rayner returned to the LJS and Rabbi Stern returned to the United States. The cooperation was an extremely productive and creative one.<sup>105</sup> Rabbi Sidney Brichto suggests that the joint effort was so successful because Rabbi Rayner had a strong vision of what he wanted overall in the prayerbook, and Rabbi Stern was an extraordinarily gifted poet.<sup>106</sup>

Service of the Heart, which was published in 1967, was a result of their efforts. It may have been the first prayerbook of any kind-- Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform, to offer a creative liturgy for Israel Independence Day.<sup>107</sup>

Rabbi Rayner also sought to create a *siddur* which would be truly be a Union prayerbook, not only a Liberal Jewish Synagogue Prayerbook, and it needed, therefore, to satisfy the needs of all the congregations and make allowance for the variety of outlook and practice which existed in the ULPS.<sup>108</sup> Service of the Heart much more closely adhered to the structure of the traditional service than the previous Liberal Jewish Prayerbook, and restored a number of passages which previously had been omitted.

On the more radical side, however, Service of the Heart represented a great leap beyond its predecessor. The English translations all appeared in

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<sup>105</sup>Rabbi Rayner, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>106</sup>Rabbi Brichto, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1963.



modern English, which was a first in modern Jewish liturgy. Since then, numerous other prayerbooks have followed suit. Also, the ULPS amended the Hebrew text itself. When the Central Conference of American Rabbis revised its prayerbook in the early 1970's, it borrowed much from Service of the Heart, but it did not choose to revise the Hebrew.<sup>109</sup> Between John Rayner and Chaim Stern, they wrote many new prayers and created thematic sections such as "Thanksgiving," "Social Justice," and "Peace" for the volume, many of which would be incorporated into the CCAR's new prayerbook.

The most important change, in Rayner's opinion, was that "we tried to make the new prayerbook more traditional than the previous one, without it being any less modern."<sup>110</sup> The change that was most commented upon was the change from "thees" and "thous" to "yous," and all the related changes. At the time, "it apparently seemed like an incredibly radical idea, and no doubt there are some who wish we had stuck to 'thous' and so on, but they're now a small minority. That particular stylistic change was accepted remarkably quickly, actually."<sup>111</sup>

At the LJS, Rabbi Rayner instituted some changes early on. Among them was the introduction of Friday evening services. Previously, there had only been a Friday night "Alumni Service" once a month. He also introduced singing Kiddush in Hebrew, where it had previously been read in English, and a havdallah service, which was fairly unknown to members. He instituted a Yom Ha'atzmaut service, a Tisha B'av service, which reinterpreted the Fast Day as a commemoration of the various tragedies in Jewish history, with an emphasis on the Holocaust. In 1963 he introduced also a Tikkun Leil Shavu'ot. The idea was to develop an observance of the evening on Shavu'ot, partly based on the traditional Tikkun, partly on the Passover seder, in an effort to revive what Rayner considered a much neglected

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<sup>109</sup>Gates of Prayer, Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1972.

<sup>110</sup>Rayner interview.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.



festival. He invented new rituals for observance, including using five substances which are compared with Torah in midrashic literature-- water, milk, honey, oil, and wine. "Rabbi Brichto teased me at the first seder," Rayner recalled, "it was all done lightheartedly-- that having invented this ritual I should be made to drink a potion if all these substances."<sup>112</sup> Rayner promised him that, someday, when the movement had developed a proper "Seder Shel Shavu'ot," it would include the following passage:

Thus was Rabbi Brichto wont to do in the days when the Liberal Jewish Synagogue stood. He would take two pieces of bread and put some caviar between them, and eat them together, in order to fulfill that which is written in the Torah, 'A man shall not survive on bread alone.'<sup>113</sup>

Ironically, the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, Rev. Rayner's pulpit, being the oldest, was also in some ways among the slowest to accept change back towards tradition. The LJS Council discussed and debated the introduction of Bar Mitzvah - they were among the last to do so. There was a prolonged discussion. Rabbi Rayner recalled that "gradually we did make the congregation a little bit more conscious of Jewish tradition, and of K'lal Yisrael. And I think we made the services a little more informal, a little more joyful."<sup>114</sup>

Rabbi Brichto challenged those who criticized the increased use of Hebrew in the services. In response to a letter to the editor in 1963 which suggested that it was a bad sign if the religion depends on the Hebrew language. He argued that Hebrew should be central to the Jew and to Judaism. "Is it not sad that Liberal Jewish students would be embarrassed by a lapse in their French but can view their total ignorance of Hebrew with equanimity, and even some pride?"<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Liberal Jewish Monthly, June 1963.

Rabbi Brichto's leadership would be crucial to the future of the Union for years to come. His vision and his courage would help carry the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues through some of its most serious challenges yet to come. Brichto was unafraid to stand up against critics of any type. His outlook was different than those who came before, and he would leave a unique imprint on the future of the movement.

## Chapter 4: Changes in Leadership and Outlook

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues faced changes on many different levels. For example, The Union offices finally moved into their own space, which was at least as important on a symbolic level as it was practical. Some of those lay-leaders who had helped put the Union on solid footing in the post-war year died. And the Leo Baeck College came into its own, making bold moves which affected the larger Anglo-Jewish community.

### Leo Baeck College

In October 1974 the Jewish Chronicle reported that Mr. Jonathan Sacks, a rabbinical student and part-time lecturer in philosophy at Jews' College, had started teaching concurrently at the Leo Baeck College. At the same time, the "Leo Baeck College Newsletter" welcomed "the opportunity of introducing one of the thoughtful young traditionalists of Anglo-Jewish life to our students and faculty."<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi N.L. Rabinovitch, at the time principal of Jews' College, declined to say whether Sack's appointment at Leo Baeck College had been taken up with his consent, saying only that the engagement "does not call for any comment."<sup>2</sup> Sacks told the Jewish Chronicle that he had accepted the Leo Baeck post because he was "concerned that there should be no barriers to Jewish learning."<sup>3</sup> It was this sort of open attitude that gave Liberal Jews hope when Sacks was eventually appointed Chief Rabbi in the early 1990's.

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<sup>1</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," October 29, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The College developed the Lily Montagu Scholarship Fund in 1976, which raised £75,000, which went towards training grants for rabbinic students.<sup>4</sup>

The early history of the College can be traced through the contributions of Rabbis who gave of their time to help create and direct the program. For example, Rabbi Dr. Samuel Sandmel, Distinguished Service Professor of Bible and Hellenistic Literature at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, spent his sabbatical year at Leo Baeck College in 1968-69 during which he assisted with the first of several major fund-raising appeals, and helped establish an effective curriculum.<sup>5</sup>

In 1966 the Leo Baeck College decided to accept women for rabbinic training. At the time, The Jewish Chronicle quoted Rabbi John Rayner as saying that he imagined it would be very difficult for a woman to serve as the sole rabbi of a congregation, and that perhaps they would be more likely to fill positions such as educational director, or perhaps they would find roles as associate ministers.<sup>6</sup> The Daily Telegraph also picked up the story of the College's decision to accept women. The newspaper quoted Rabbi Rayner as specifically saying that it might be difficult **at first** for women to find positions as Senior ministers, but that he hoped that ultimately the situation would be overcome.<sup>7</sup>

The decision by the College to accept women sparked a debate which played itself out on the pages of the "Jewish Chronicle." Letters to the Editor on both sides of the issue made their cases. One correspondent did not object to the idea of having women rabbis, but felt that it was unlikely that any congregation would hire them. The same letter allowed that women were already well able to

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<sup>4</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," February 20, 1976.

<sup>5</sup>Anne Kershen, 150 Years of Progressive Judaism in Britain, 38.

<sup>6</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," December 12, 1966.

<sup>7</sup>"Daily Telegraph," December 31, 1966.

preach, but questioned whether women have "the requisite discretion" to act as counsellors, psychologists, and so on.<sup>8</sup>

Jaqueline Tabick received a tremendous amount of publicity upon her ordination from the Leo Baeck College in July 1976. News of the first woman rabbi in Britain was considered so stunning that it was covered in "The Daily Mail" newspaper. In her ordination ceremony, unlike her classmates, she chose not to wear a *tallit*, saying that the garment "is traditionally for men." "The Daily Mail" noted that the Church of England was well behind the Progressive Jews. The Methodists ordained their first woman in 1973, and the Church of Wales voted in April 1974 in favor of having women in the priesthood.

The paper quoted a young woman member of the congregation who said that "most of us agree it is a very good idea to have a woman [rabbi]. But whether people will be willing to talk to her as freely as they would to a man remains to be seen."<sup>9</sup>

### **Peggy Lang**

In September 1974, Ms. Peggy Lang died. A typographer by profession, she joined the Liberal Jewish Synagogue on 1938. In 1945, she became full-time organizing secretary of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, working closely with Rabbi Israel Mattuck and Lily Montagu. Ms. Lang took over production of both the "Liberal Jewish Monthly" and other ULPS publications. In addition, she created and edited the Liberal Jewish Synagogue newsletter.

In 1965, she became editor of ULPS publications and started both the "ULPS News and "Pointer," both of which she edited until her retirement in June, 1971. She was responsible entirely for the design and typography of the Hebrew

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<sup>8</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," January 6, 1967.

<sup>9</sup>"The Daily Mail," July 30, 1974.

and English text and the production of both "Service of the Heart," and "Gates of Repentance." Her work was of critical importance to the Union and the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, and in tribute, the resource center and library of the Union were named in her honor.<sup>10</sup>

Rosita Rosenberg recalled Peggy Lang as "a wonderful woman, totally devoted to Liberal Judaism... I used to think that she knew everybody." Rosenberg used to be amazed when she would mention someone to Lang who would know that "they were somebody's brother-in-law's sister and somebody's sister-in-law, somebody's aunt, uncle and so forth." In her own long career in the ULPS, Rosita has sometimes had experiences where she remembers who a certain person is, that "'Oh I know them, they're somebody's sister' and I think, my God, I'm getting like Peggy but I don't think I will ever know as many people as Peggy ever knew... she was wonderful and loved by everybody."<sup>11</sup>

### **Sir Louis Gluckstein**

Sir Louis Gluckstein died in October 1979, after a lifetime of political involvement in the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, the Anglo-Jewish community in general, and in the political life of British society as a whole. He served for 14 years in the House of Commons, and represented the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues on the Board of Deputies for 20 years. He served during a period when strong support for Zionist aims grew among a large section of the Board. By his outspokenness as an anti-Zionist he often drew upon himself the attacks of Zionist-minded members. He resigned from the Board in 1948, saying that the Board had ceased to represent Anglo-Jewry when the Zionist caucus

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<sup>10</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 9, 1974.

<sup>11</sup>Rosita Rosenberg, interview for ULPS Oral History Project, 1994. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.



captured it. Gluckstein served as chairman of the council of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue from 1938 to 1963.<sup>12</sup>

### **Relations with the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate**

The period between Chief Rabbis in 1966-1967 was one of hope and trepidation among Liberal Jews with regard to their relationship with Orthodox Jews and the Orthodox Chief Rabbi. The Chief Rabbinate of Rabbi Israel Brodie had been filled with acrimony and friction, and the hope was that such tension could be mitigated with the new Chief Rabbi.

Rabbi Sidney Brichto recalled that in 1967 he caused "a lot of mischief because in a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* - without authority - I challenged any orthodox rabbi to say that our marriages were not valid according to Halachah and the Reform had decided not to talk about these things." Member of the Orthodox *Beit Din*, Dayan Swift, responded by saying that Reform marriages were not valid, even though Brichto had referred only to Liberal marriages. But the big headline in the *Jewish Chronicle* was "Reform Marriages Are Invalid." The Reform movement was very upset, says Brichto, "because they were thrown in together with us and suddenly it was no longer the Reform being the more conservative element and the Liberals being more radical" - it was as if the Progressives were now, as a group, considered to be having invalid marriages. Eventually, Chief Rabbi Jakobovits said that Progressive marriages were valid in the sense that children of a couple who could have gotten married in an orthodox synagogue but who got married in a Liberal synagogue were Jewish and therefore to that extent, the marriage was valid.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>"*Jewish Chronicle*," November 2, 1979.

<sup>13</sup>Sidney Brichto, interview for ULPS Oral History Project, 1994. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

In September 1966, Greta Hyman and Rosita Rosenberg, the joint organizing secretaries of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, went to work doing some publicity for the Union by way of an letter to the "Jewish Chronicle." At the time, there was uncertainty in the larger Anglo-Jewish community as to who the next Chief Rabbi would be. In their letter, Hyman and Rosenberg explained briefly the structure of the Union, how there was no "Chief Rabbi" making decisions for the entire movement, and how lay leaders and rabbis worked closely together to steer the direction of the movement. The letter clearly intended to differentiate the Union from the United Synagogue, not only in religious observance, but in its commitment to democratic process.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, so open were the attacks on Liberal Judaism at the time that an Orthodox minister, Rev. Leslie Hardman, in an address he had been invited to give at annual conference of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues in 1967, attacked some of the basic concepts of Liberal Judaism. He claimed that Liberal Judaism was in danger of becoming a new religion if it insisted on throwing out and abandoning what it referred to as "rigid legalism." Hardman warned that establishing a code for Liberal Jews which would cover all aspects of their religion would formally make the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues a different religion.<sup>15</sup>

Once Rabbi Dr. Jakobovits had been appointed to be the next Chief Rabbi in 1967, the Liberal movement at once began to attempt to get a sense of whether he intended to be more combative towards the Liberals, or whether he would be more conciliatory. The leaders of both the Reform and Liberal movements wrote a letter of welcome to Jakobovits which was published in the "Jewish Chronicle."

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<sup>14</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 23, 1966.

<sup>15</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 29, 1967.

They extended a hand of welcome to him on the assumption that he would be inclusive of Reform and Liberal Jews during his tenure.<sup>16</sup>

The question "Who speaks for Anglo-Jewry?" was one which came into focus at this time. Liberal Jews challenged Jakobovits on his claim that his office commanded the loyalty of an overwhelming majority of Jews.<sup>17</sup> Rabbi John Rayner wrote an editorial questioning Dr. Jakobovits' "misapprehension... that he has been appointed to act as spokesman of the entire Anglo-Jewish community." Rayner states that if there is such a thing as a spokesman of Anglo-Jewry, at least for secular purposes, it would be the democratically elected president of the Board of Deputies. He argued that, like the Christian community, the Jewish community has not one but several spokesmen.<sup>18</sup>

Also at that time Progressive Jews were arguing for equal rights on the Council of Christians and Jews, arguing that the Chief Rabbi should not be the sole representative of Anglo-Jewry. David Goldberg and Rabbi Brichto made a proposal in negotiations with the Chief Rabbi Jakobovits that was a kind of a compromise: the Progressive movements would withdraw their insistence on formal representation on the Council. Instead, the Reform and Liberal movements would set up a committee on Jewish relations which would become an advisory committee to the Chief Rabbi. This came about because Rabbi Jakobovits maintained that there should not be another person equal to himself who would be a second president of the Council of Christians and Jews. The power of the Council came from the Head of the Church of England, the Head of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and other religious leaders. Rabbi Jakobovits expressed concern that if there were more than one Jew on the Council, namely the Chairman

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<sup>16</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," January 13, 1967.

<sup>17</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," January 6, 1967.

<sup>18</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," February 24, 1967.

of the Reform and Liberal movements and the Chief Rabbi, the non-Jews would be confused and it would be divisive.

The committee on Jewish relations which was established by the Progressive movements would meet at the Chief Rabbi's home but the convenor of that committee would be a Progressive rabbi who would always be the former chairman of the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis. Rabbi Sidney Brichto recalled that "before this time, the two movements had long discussions - Reform and Liberal committee meetings with Louis Gluckstein and Judge Alan King-Hamilton to decide what kind of relationship the movements would have with the Chief Rabbinate and how they would establish our position as legitimate expressions of Judaism within the Anglo-Jewish community."<sup>19</sup>

In March, 1967, the vice-principal of Jews' College, Rabbi Dr. J. Ross, agreed to sit on a panel with Rabbi J.J. Kokotek of the New Liberal Synagogue and Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London Synagogue. Rabbi Ross argued that it was the Liberal left which had torn the "umbrella" under which British Jews had always been located. Rabbis Kokotek and Gryn responded by asserting that the rigidity of the official Orthodox "umbrella" stifled serious discussion of the genuine differences of opinion between the different sections of the community.<sup>20</sup>

Rabbis Brichto and Jakobovits exchanged a fascinating series of letters on the subject of Orthodox-Liberal relations in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues' publication "Pointer" in early 1967. Rabbi Jakobovits wrote to Rabbi Brichto that "while you can eat in my home and worship in my synagogue without qualms, I cannot eat or worship in yours without offending my religious dictates." Rabbi Brichto responded by saying that although it was true that an Orthodox Jew could not eat in most Liberal Jewish homes, there is no reason why such a Jew

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<sup>19</sup>Brichto interview, 1994.

<sup>20</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," March 10, 1964.

could not worship in a Liberal synagogue, where such worship does not interfere with one's normal devotions. So, too, Brichto argued, it is wrong to say that a Liberal Jew has no qualms praying in an Orthodox synagogue. Liberal Jews are uncomfortable with prayers for the restoration of sacrifices, separation of men and women, etc. "But we attend out of love for *K'lal Yisrael*,<sup>21</sup>" he said. Rabbi Brichto looked back upon this exchange favorably in a 1997 interview, feeling that it was a great victory in getting Rabbi Dr. Jakobovits to agree to such a public exchange in a Liberal journal.<sup>22</sup> This exchange was followed in the autumn of 1967 by a tea hosted by the Orthodox Chief Rabbi exclusively for rabbis and ministers of the ULPS.<sup>23</sup> The tea followed a cancelled engagement at which Rabbi Dr. Jakobovits was to have addressed the Rabbinic Conference of the ULPS in a more public forum. The Chief Rabbi cancelled this engagement because of a large amount of negative publicity associated with it.<sup>24</sup>

For the first time in the history of Anglo-Jewry, young people from Reform and Liberal backgrounds held a youth service at an Orthodox synagogue in June of 1967.<sup>25</sup> It is hard to say which was more surprising-- the fact that the service was held in an Orthodox synagogue or the fact that Liberal and Reform youth jointly led a religious service. As the two youth movements discovered common new areas of interest, cooperation increased.

In February 1975, Rabbi Dow Marmur, then vice-chairman of the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis and minister of the North-Western Reform Synagogue, proposed to the Orthodox community a joint approach to conversions. Rabbi Marmur quoted two leading Orthodox authorities in the United States, Dr. Eliezer Berkovits (Orthodox), and Rabbi Theodore Freedman (past president of the

<sup>21</sup>"Pointer," Spring 1967.

<sup>22</sup> Rabbi Sidney Brichto, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>23</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," October 6, 1967.

<sup>24</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 9, 1967.

<sup>25</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," June 23, 1967.



Rabbinical Assembly) that non- Orthodox conversions can be acceptable to Orthodox Jews since "differences in interpretation of the *halacha* were not permitted to rupture the unity of the Jewish people."<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Marmur suggested the possibility of a joint Beth Din for conversions. The Chief Rabbi's office responded favorably to Rabbi Marmur's effort to open dialogue. "At a time like this," a spokesman said, "far from accentuating and perpetuating our differences, we ought to make a supreme effort to narrow and eliminate them."<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, Rabbi Marmur's statement in this matter were published in the monthly journal of the RSGB. He clearly made an effort through his statement to distinguish Reform from Liberal attitudes in this matter. The Jewish Chronicle made special note of this when it contacted him directly. Rabbi Marmur confirmed that "Reform Rabbis in Britain already demand circumcision for male converts.... I mention our readiness to introduce ritual immersion for the sake of Jewish unity."<sup>28</sup>

The leading article in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues journal "Pointer" immediately rejected the possibility of the reintroduction of *tevilah* as a means of obtaining Orthodox recognition of Progressive conversions:

We freely chose to go outside the Law wherever the law clashes with our dictates of reason and justice.... It would be positively Messianic to achieve a Jewish unity that incorporates and respects diversity of worship and belief. But not at the price of sound principles and rightly-held convictions.<sup>29</sup>

The article goes on to list the reasons why the founders of Progressive Judaism did away with ritual immersion as a step in the process of conversion "because it is ethically unedifying, spritually irrelevant and in modern times has,

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<sup>26</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," February 7, 1975.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>"Pointer," April, 1975.



ironically, Christian rather than Jewish connotations. Their reasons are still valid today."<sup>30</sup>

This statement put a public face on an important ideological distinction between Reform and Liberal Jews. Some would argue that it also indicated a difference in political strategy. Rabbi John Rayner, along with others, argued in an interview with the author that the Reform movement has always been willing to take a centrist position. If the Reform movement can do something to position itself to be attractive to the unaffiliated, or to disenchanted members of the United Synagogue, it has often done so, he argues.<sup>31</sup> As a result, Reform liturgy is more traditional, its attitude toward *halacha* somewhat more stringent in matters of personal status..

The ULPS was by no means united on this issue. Rabbi David Goldberg was the editor of "Pointer," and so was most responsible for the lead article expressing the ULPS's opposition to the plan. Rabbi Sidney Brichto, on the other hand, also on the "Pointer" editorial board, disclaimed the views expressed in the article. In an article in the May 1975 "ULPS News," Rabbi Brichto argued that Liberals should consider keeping an open mind on "the possibility of rethinking our principles"<sup>32</sup> if the Orthodox were prepared to do the same. He suggested that most Liberal converts would be willing to undergo *tevilah* if it would result in them being recognized as Jewish by the entire Jewish community. Rabbi Albert Friedlander of the Westminster Synagogue expressed his view in the Jewish Chronicle that "the acceptance of *tevilah* and *get* could become part of the Progressive life style.... A more traditional attitude is entirely in line with Progressive ideas as long as it is not a way of accepting Orthodox authority."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview with the author, July, 1997.

<sup>32</sup>"ULPS News," May, 1975.

<sup>33</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," April 4, 1975.

In May of 1975, Reform and Liberal rabbinical authorities agreed to opening a dialogue with their Orthodox counterparts in an attempt to heal the sectarian divisions within Anglo-Jewry. The effort would especially focus on the issues of marriage, divorce, and conversion. The initiative, which followed exploratory talks which had begun in March between the Chief Rabbi and Reform representatives, went forward with the consent of Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits.

The initiative was met with mixed reactions at best from the Orthodox community. The Chief Rabbi made it clear that he would go forward with the dialogue, but his own Beth Din "deplored what they call 'the overtures to the Reformers.'"<sup>34</sup>

While on some levels relations seemed to improve during the early portion of Chief Rabbi Jakobovits' tenure, difficulties remained and flared up. In 1968, Rabbi Jakobovits refused to allow a united Orthodox and Progressive communal service on Israel Independence Day. Instead, separate Orthodox and Progressive services were held. Rabbi Jakobovits defended his action saying that sharing the pulpit "with those who fundamentally reject traditional Judaism as I understand it, would be an act of betrayal and a gross hypocrisy."<sup>35</sup> An unsigned editorial in the Jewish Chronicle criticized the Chief Rabbi for speaking of a desire for communal unity, while failing to act as if that is what he truly desired.<sup>36</sup> The unity which had seemingly been engendered by the crisis of the Six-Day-War was short-lived.

Largely as a result of anger caused by the Chief Rabbi's decision on the Israel Independence Day Service, the Rabbinic Conferences of the RSGB and the ULPS formed a Council which then appointed Rabbi Dr. Werner Van der Zyl for a two year term as official spokesman for communal purposes. According to its own

<sup>34</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," May 9, 1975.

<sup>35</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," April 19, 1968.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

leaders, the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis was "not intended to denigrate the position on national occasions of the Chief Rabbi, who, representing the larger part of the Jewish community, may well be asked to represent the whole of Anglo-Jewry.<sup>37</sup>" But the intent of the council was to ensure that the Progressive movements would have a voice in the Jewish community. Rabbi Jakobovits declined to comment on the formation of the council. The Progressive movements were no longer content to be regarded by some as "second-class citizens."<sup>38</sup> The Council made some inroads over the years, but the status of relations still seemed to depend more on the character and attitude of the Orthodox Chief Rabbi.

One Orthodox and three Progressive Synagogues did join forces in 1973 to hold a joint Israel Independence Day service for the first time.

In 1973 a debate raged between the Chief Rabbi and the Progressive movements over the joint-presidency of the Council of Christians and Jews. Since its foundation in 1942, the council had presidents from four Christian churches, plus the Chief Rabbi as the sole Jewish representative. Although this inequity upset Progressive leaders for a long period of time, it was only in 1973 that the Standing Committee on Relationships with Anglo-Jewry (headed by Judge Alan King-Hamilton, QC) made a formal approach to include Progressive Jews in the joint-presidency. The King-Hamilton Committee was formed by the Reform and Liberal Movements to address such inequities in the larger Anglo-Jewish community. The Committee requested that the chairman of the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis be included among the presidents of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ)<sup>39</sup>. The request was denied by Rabbi Jakobovits. Instead, he agreed to meet regularly with representatives of the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," August 27, 1973.

to discuss issues related to the CCJ. The meeting was formally called "a consultative committee on Jewish-Christian relations."<sup>40</sup> It was a small beginning.

### **Religious Shifts within the ULPS and in the larger Anglo-Jewish Community**

The Jewish Chronicle reported in 1966 that *bat mitzvah* was on the rise in many circles within the Anglo-Jewish community. The earliest such observance in England, according to the paper, was held in 1864 at the Bayswater (Orthodox) Synagogue. A series of Chief Rabbis had supported the practice, but some Orthodox circles of the middle 1960's were beginning to frown on it. Some congregations objected to the idea of girls taking part at all in a Jewish service.

With the growth of communities in the suburbs, with large numbers of young married couples, the ceremony became very popular in other Liberal congregations. In Orthodox communities where such ceremonies took hold, the *bat mitzvah* was usually held during a non-statutory, non-Shabbat, non-festival service. A special Sunday service was often held for the purpose.

In Reform and Liberal congregations, confirmation for boys and girls had always been practiced at age 16, with *bar mitzvah* being discouraged. In the 1960's, however, *bar* and *bat mitzvah* began to be a more common practice in these synagogues.<sup>41</sup>

This trend was alluded to and praised in 1968 by Rabbi David Freeman, then-minister of the Birmingham Liberal Synagogue. Rabbi Freeman asserted that since Progressive Judaism had established itself on the Anglo-Jewish scene, reforms could be carried out internally: "The abolition of tradition for its own sake is no longer valid. It is a process of sifting and rethinking which will culminate in a Judaism for the present time, without any adjectives."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," February 8, 1974.

<sup>41</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 30, 1966.

<sup>42</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," April 26, 1968.

Not every member of the ULPS agreed that the movement towards tradition was a positive one. In a 1997 interview with the author, Mr. Walter Woyda, long-time active member of the South London Liberal Synagogue, expressed his view that such a return to "neo-traditionalism" went against everything that the founders of the Jewish Religious Union had intended.<sup>43</sup>

The Union's biennial conference in November 1970 had the provocative theme "Are we still Liberal?" The delegates generally agreed that "Liberal Judaism isn't what it was." Those who applauded the return to traditional practice and those who deplored them agreed on this one fact. An article by Rabbi John Rayner in "Pointer" argued that the rate of change in various periods in the history of the movement was varied: "1902-1912 was a period of experimentation, 1912-1948 a period of building, 1948-1961 was a period of consolidation, and the period since 1961 has been one of reorientation. In the last period, therefore, change has been most rapid."

Rabbi Rayner attributed the changes to both external and internal causes. From an external standpoint, the impact of the Holocaust, the Second World War, the establishment of the State of Israel, and developments in philosophy, science and technology all had a tremendous effect on the movement. Internally, the growth of the movement, the widening spectrum of its membership, the influx of European immigrants, the death of its founders, the emergence of new and mostly young leaders, and the democratization of the movement each made a large impact in their own ways to the changes in the Union.

In his article, Rabbi Rayner argued that on a number of fronts, the ULPS had taken a step or two back towards traditionalism, such as allowing itself to be influenced by *halacha*, expressing greater concern for *k'lal yisrael*, exploring deeper relationships with the State of Israel, and appreciating anew the value of

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<sup>43</sup>Walter Woyda, interview with the author, July 1977.



ritual and symbolism. In other areas, such as theology, Rayner suggested, a case could be made that modern Liberal Jews were more radical than were the founders of the Jewish Religious Union. Rabbi Rayner also argued that "traditionalism is not incompatible with liberalism. The opposite of liberalism is not traditionalism but orthodoxy." He answers the question "Are we still liberal?" with yet more questions:

Do we or do we not exercise our freedom honestly, conscientiously, and forthrightly? Has the pendulum swung as it has because we have learnt from experience, gained greater insight, achieved a truer perspective, become more mature?<sup>44</sup>

Rabbi Rayner would answer his own questions in the affirmative. Not everyone in the ULPS agreed with him then or now.

Some, like Rabbi John Rayner, argued that the founders of Liberal Judaism may have, in some cases, "thrown out the baby with the bath water." John Rich was not willing to accept this idea: "Our greatest danger today is a loss of nerve, a loss of confidence in the rightness of Liberal Judaism." He suggested that a return to tradition was putting Liberal Judaism on the spectrum of Judaism as a "watered-down Orthodoxy." Even if resisting tradition meant that the ULPS would never gain more seats on the Board of Deputies, and never become a mass movement, Rich believed, it was most important to keep faith in principles of Liberal Judaism.<sup>45</sup>

In December 1974, a disagreement broke out within the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues regarding ritual clothing. In the ULPS News, Rabbi Brichto expressed his opinion that it should become customary for all males to cover their heads during services and to wear *talitot* at morning services.

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<sup>44</sup>"Pointer," Winter 1970-1971.

<sup>45</sup>"Pointer," Spring 1971.



An opposing view was expressed by Rabbi John Rayner. During a sermon at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, he argued that to worship with head uncovered is as much a Jewish custom as the opposite. Rabbi Rayner cited historical precedents for worship with head covered and for worship with head uncovered. Thus the Liberal Jewish Synagogue created a compromise: those on the *bima* would cover their heads, while head covering would be optional for the rest of the congregation. "This might seem inconsistent, but it has two advantages. It keeps the options open and it helps to demonstrate how unimportant the whole matter is, for, 'man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart.'"<sup>46</sup> This debate about religious attire would continue.

Interestingly, a little over a year later, Rabbi Rayner recommended to the Liberal Jewish Synagogue Council that women be allowed to wear *talitot* if they so desired. He continued to maintain the position that there should be no compulsion, and that men, too, should be permitted to come to the *bima* without a *talit* if they have an objection to wearing one.<sup>47</sup>

Rabbi J.J. Kokotek, of the traditional-leaning Belsize Square Synagogue, (Belsize Square would later leave the ULPS and join the RSGB.) called on all Progressive communities to reintroduce the observance of *Tisha B'Av*. In the ULPS News in July 1976, Kokotek argued that, when he was a young man, not all Jews had freedom and security. On those grounds alone, Progressive Jews should maintain the observance as "a commemoration of the suffering, indignities, and tragedies of the Jewish people throughout the vicissitudes of a long and painful history."<sup>48</sup>

### Synagogue and Leadership Development

<sup>46</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," December 20, 1974.

<sup>47</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," January 23, 1976.

<sup>48</sup>"ULPS News," July, 1976.

By 1967, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues claimed a total membership of 12,500 in its congregations in Britain.<sup>49</sup> It made claims, along with the Reform movement, to be gaining as members many Jews who had previously been members of Orthodox congregations. The Union said that many had been turned off by the rigidity of the London *Beth Din*, and turned on to the ULPS out of a desire for a greater freedom of theological thought. The United Synagogue and the Federation denied these claims. By this point, the ULPS had 23 affiliated synagogues.<sup>50</sup>

Rosita Rosenberg, Greta Hyman, and Rabbi Sidney Brichto worked hard to establish congregations during this period. When Brichto became Director at age 28 in 1963, he did not wait for people to come to the Union: "we went out and sort of formed the congregations and I remember being criticised by the RSGB for being a "Movement." They saw themselves as an Association of Synagogues of Great Britain and suddenly they saw the ULPS developing."<sup>51</sup> In the Reform movement, Brichto said, things happened but "you didn't make them happen." At the time, the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain did not have a director. They appointed Raymond Goldman after Brichto's directorship began. According to Rabbi Brichto, everything was very lay orientated in the RSGB. They decided not to appoint a rabbi because they thought a rabbi would have too much control-- Brichto said they did not want "another Sidney Brichto." Several rabbis applied for the job including Dow Marmur and Lionel Blue, and they were rejected because the Reform movement did not want a rabbi with a high profile.<sup>52</sup>

Brichto recalled those first years as "heady years and very, very exciting. We formed about 6 or 7 congregations within the period of 7 or 8 years. We were

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<sup>49</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," July 28, 1967.

<sup>50</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 29, 1967.

<sup>51</sup>Brichto, interview for ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.

<sup>52</sup>Brichto, interview for ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.

always out on the run and we had problems with our own congregations who felt we were splintering off and taking their members away." The Liberal Jewish Synagogue did not want congregations being formed here and there because they were not gaining new members at the time. They said that the Union would be taking away old members, which Brichto said was not true. The first congregation which Rabbi Brichto helped to form with the assistance and the inspiration of Bernard Hooker was the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue in North London. NPLS, which was first served by Andrew Goldstein as a student rabbi, became one of the largest congregations in the Union. Rabbi Andrew Goldstein still serves as the congregation's spiritual leader.<sup>53</sup>

In 1966, Rabbi Frank Hellner from the United States was inducted as the first permanent minister of the Finchley Liberal Synagogue.<sup>54</sup> In 1974, having celebrated its 21st anniversary, the government granted permission to the synagogue to build an extension to its synagogue buildings.<sup>55</sup>

After three years as a congregation, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue was consecrated in its new building in February 1967. The congregation purchased the facilities of what was previously a Methodist church.<sup>56</sup>

In late 1975, the Kingston Liberal Synagogue purchased its own building, a 100-year-old school in Long Ditton. Its members spent several months rehabilitating the building, and converting the structure into a synagogue hall.<sup>57</sup>

In Redbridge, a suburb of London, a new congregation was formed in 1976. It was formed to fill a void-- there was no synagogue in the area at the time. The closest congregation was St. George's Settlement Synagogue, which at the time had approximately 600 members, one-third of whom lived in Redbridge. The area was

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 30, 1966.

<sup>55</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 13, 1974.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," letter to the editor from Pamela Fletcher Jones, February 27, 1976.

also being served by the Woodford Liberal Synagogue and the South-West Essex Reform Synagogue at Newbury Park.

Rabbi Bernard Hooker returned to Great Britain in 1976 after serving for ten years as the spiritual leader of the 850 family Jamaican Jewish community. Upon his return, Rabbi Hooker took up the post of minister of the North London Progressive Synagogue. Hooker was a graduate of Jews' College, and had come to the Progressive movement in 1948 when he became the minister of the Birmingham Liberal Synagogue. He took an appointment at Wembley Liberal Synagogue in 1961, where he served until he left for Jamaica. In his address at his induction service at North London, Rabbi Hooker called for closer unity among the various streams within Anglo-Jewry "in these times of difficulty for the Jewish people."<sup>58</sup>

Some members of the movement argued, during this period and beyond, that the role of the lay leadership in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues was diminishing. John Rich, a member of South London Liberal Synagogue, made the case in "Pointer" in the winter of 1969. A movement which was founded largely by lay-leaders, the Union's early ministers, he argued, had been happy to listen to lay views on matters which later came wholly under the control of the rabbis of the movement. Rich was critical of the return to tradition and ritual, and the increased sensitivity of clergy about lay participation in matters which, in their view, were properly theirs.<sup>59</sup>

### **Zionism**

In 1966, for the first time in its history, all the congregations of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues conducted a High Holiday Appeal for

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<sup>58</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," February 7, 1976.

<sup>59</sup>"Pointer," Winter 1969-1970.

Israel. Previously, some individual Liberal and Reform congregations had held similar appeals, but it had never been done on such a wide scale.<sup>60</sup> This appeal represented a remarkable shift in attitude towards the State of Israel. Rabbi Brichto argues that the Union was never wholly anti-Zionist--that it was, rather, ambivalent towards Zionism. The High Holiday Appeal of 1967 marked a critical shift in that attitude.

The Six-Day-War, by all accounts, erased nearly all ambiguous feeling towards Israel on the part of Liberal Jews, and for a moment, at least, it seemed to unite the entire Anglo-Jewish community in the cause. Past divisions were put aside. In the main, Orthodox and Liberal elements joined amicably in pledging themselves to help Israel.<sup>61</sup>

Rabbi Jakobovits held a conference of ministers from all shades of Jewish religious opinion to discuss the Middle East crisis. Such a conference was probably a first in the history of Anglo-Jewry. The conference appealed for daily prayer, asked that family festivities and celebrations be toned down, and that communal building fund drives be postponed for the duration of the crisis.

Perhaps the best evidence that a dramatic shift had taken place within the Union was that Liberal synagogues were as full of jubilant worshippers as any other synagogues on the Sabbaths following Israel's victory. This was an indication that Liberal Jews had come to recognize Israel as an integral part of Jewish life and concern.<sup>62</sup>

Sidney Brichto and John Rayner each submitted letters to the editor of the Jewish Chronicle in the aftermath of the war. Rabbi Rayner challenged the State of Israel to turn now from the view that Israel must rely on military strength alone for her future security. He said that the key to Israel's future security depended on

<sup>60</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 16, 1966.

<sup>61</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," June 10, 1967.

<sup>62</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," letter to the editor by Rabbi Sidney Brichto, December 18, 1977.



"amity with her Arab neighbors."<sup>63</sup> Rayner argued that Israel should "make a magnanimous gesture in relation to the Arab refugees, and offer technical aid to help solve the economic problems of the whole area."<sup>64</sup> On the home front, Rayner said he would like to see a joint commission of rabbis from all movements working together to help support Israel.<sup>65</sup>

Sidney Brichto chose to address the General Assembly of the United Nation's condemnation of Israel as an aggressor. Rabbi Brichto suggested that although Israel had won the war, she would now be alone in fighting for an enduring peace. He challenged Anglo-Jewry to stand behind Israel in her work for peace as it had stood behind her in war. Brichto said that Anglo-Jewry should refrain from offering unsolicited advice, and instead trust Israel's "judgement to assess properly the needs of the situation arising out of her victory."<sup>66</sup> In this sense, Rabbis Brichto and Rayner disagreed; Rayner felt free to criticize Israel's actions and offer suggestions for her future, where Brichto chose to reserve such judgements.

Rabbi Lionel Blue was one of the speakers at a forum held at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in 1968 called, "Israel-- The Challenge to European Jewry." Rabbi Blue also felt no qualms about criticizing Israel's policy while insisting that he was still "an Israeli patriot who was striving for Israel in the best way he knew how."<sup>67</sup> At the forum, Rabbi Blue stated that he did not "care who owns the Holy Places. They are not worth a single life as far as I am concerned. There is no inherent holiness in bricks and mortar and bits of wood and stone."<sup>68</sup> Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London (Reform) Synagogue responded, saying that first "we

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<sup>63</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," June 23, 1967.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," May 16, 1968.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.



have to identify ourselves with the deep emotional mood that is in Israel.... then we shall be able to allow ourselves the luxury of criticizing."<sup>69</sup> This debate would continue in both the Liberal and Reform movements.

Rabbi Brichto remembered the first meetings at the Chief Rabbi's home. He remembered it most vividly because "it was the 6-Day War in 1967 and suddenly everybody became a Zionist - even Louis Gluckstein! At the Liberal Jewish Synagogue on the Friday after June 6th the service was packed." Brichto said that:

everybody was coming to synagogue to thank God for the miracle of the Jewish salvation because everyone thought that the Jews would be wiped out at the end of May because the United Nations had pulled out their troops and how could poor little Israel defend itself? The Egyptians were moving their troops - suddenly there was an enormous victory and we were all Zionist then. It was an incredible feeling at the time and that brought Liberal Judaism into the mainstream.

Rabbi Brichto had always been "very Zionist,"<sup>70</sup> and helping move the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues into the mainstream was one of the goals of his tenure as Director of the Union.

In 1967, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues Israel tour grew to one hundred and twenty participants. It was led by Rev. Herbert Richer and Rev. Harry Jacobi. This level of participation marked a significant increase from previous tours organized by the Union.<sup>71</sup>

### **The ULPS Joins the Board of Deputies**

After a hiatus of nearly twenty years, Rabbi Brichto convinced the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to re-join the Board of Deputies in 1967.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Brichto, ULPS Oral History Project.

<sup>71</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," November 3, 1967.

"Everyone congratulated me because I was one of the few rabbis at the time who had the chutzpah to want to be a deputy. For some reason, being a deputy in those days was a great *koved* and there was Trevor Chinn and I." The first meeting of the Board of Deputies that Rabbi Brichto and Trevor Chinn went to was the Sunday after the victory of the 6-Day War. Rabbi Brichto recalled the experience as boring-- "we spent all that time reading the Sunday Times and the Sunday Observer and we were bored out of our minds by the proceedings and Trevor Chinn never came again."<sup>72</sup>

From 1969 until 1971, a debate in the Board of Deputies resulted in a split of that organization unlike any previously known. The controversy surrounded Clause 43 of the Board of Deputies' Constitution, which dealt with the authorities the Board should consult in its decision-making process. Previously, the Constitution required the Board to consult with the *Haham* of the Sephardic community and the Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazic community. In 1969, both the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain threatened to resign from the Board of Deputies unless the Constitution was changed to include their religious leaders among those the Board should consult. After a tremendous amount of meetings, debate, and threats and counter-threats, the Board voted to alter its Constitution in 1971. The amended clause granted the religious leaders of the Progressive movements the right to be consulted on all religious matters, although it retained the prerogative of the Chief Rabbi and the *Haham* as sole religious guides of the Board. As a result of this compromise, the ultra-Orthodox Federation of Synagogues withdrew from the Board of Deputies in 1971, and returned only in 1973, when vague promises were made to attempt to revisit the issue.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Brichto, ULPS Oral History Project.

<sup>73</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," April, 1973.

### **ULPS Moves to its Own Space**

In 1970, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues moved into its own space-- the Lily Montagu Centre in Whitfield Street. The building had belonged to the West Central Liberal Synagogue. The synagogue, which had gotten smaller in membership over the years, agreed to share space with the Union at the Montagu Centre. Rabbi Hooker recalled that "people felt that was a much more neutral central spot, where people could now feel that we were not just an appendage but that now we were a movement with its central headquarters in a neutral position. I think that that was a very important thing, a very important aspect of our activities."<sup>74</sup>

Rosita Rosenberg remembered that she and Greta Hyman were "over the moon at this wonderful spacious building we were going into." The new offices replaced the two rooms that Union offices had been crammed into at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, where they had had to ask permission of the then-secretary to make photocopies. "And here we were going into this brand new building, choosing carpets, curtains, desks with the then treasurer, Norman Goodman, saying to us, 'Have it now because we'll never get new stuff again.'" It was very exciting move for the Union. It was seen as an exciting development that at a time when other Jewish organizations were migrating northward, almost out of London altogether, the ULPS was coming into the West End. Rosita Rosenberg characterized that as "incredibly important for the Union. Not the issue about being separated from the LJS, that's a different issue, the issue of being in a central situation."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Rabbi Bernard Hooker, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

<sup>75</sup>Rosita Rosenberg, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994. Transcript by Josie Kinchin.

## **FLPJYG becomes ULPSNYC**

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, fewer people in their late teens and early twenties were running youth groups for their own age group. This phenomena could be seen through all youth organisations in Anglo-Jewry at the time. There was a period of time in the early 1970's when the Union had almost no youth groups. There also was almost no national youth movement to speak of. Rosita Rosenberg, who was involved in the rebuilding of a youth structure, remarked in 1994 that "I'm glad to say that together with a number of other people and that includes Clifford Cohen and Sidney Brichto and some of the young people in our movement... we actually all got together and decided that we must do something about reviving the youth movement." The core group did a lot of campaigning, finding people, running a day conference for synagogue youth leadership in 1973. All of the work resulted in the formation of a new youth movement. At the time, Rosita recalled, they were not sure what to call the new youth movement. They decided to call it ULPSNYC--"it was just that ULPSNYC sounded nice - like Beatnik which was a very popular name at the time, and Nudnik. So we decided first to call it ULPSNYC and then afterwards we decided what ULPSNYC stood for." They decided that the acronym stood for the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues--Network of Youth Clubs, "but equally it could have stood for National Youth Committee or anything else we fancied and not a lot of people know that, as they say, that we thought of the name first and decided what it meant afterwards."<sup>76</sup>

## **Kadimah Summer School**

In the summer of 1970, Rabbi Andrew Goldstein and his wife, Sharon, established the Kadimah Summer School, which served members of Northwood

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<sup>76</sup>Rosenberg, ULPS Oral History Project.

and Pinner Liberal Synagogue as well as from other ULPS congregations. Over the years, Kadimah grew in size and in participation from various congregations. Eventually, the camp came under the auspices of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, and it continued to be run by Andrew and Sharon Goldstein for many years. The camp was run by a core of adults, many of whom worked for many years to make the program meaningful and enjoyable for the 200 or more young people who attended each summer. Kadimah provided a wonderful Progressive Jewish camping alternative for the young people who chose to spend two weeks in the provinces.

#### **ULPS and RSGB-- Different cultures**

Rabbi Brichto said that the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain as a movement was always more political than the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. "In fact, people vied for power. There were contested elections. Liberal Judaism is like the prophet - don't send me - if you pick me, I'll go but I don't want to go. There was never any contested elections in the ULPS because you had to beg people to take office."<sup>77</sup>

Rabbi Brichto recalled the early years of his appointment as a time of positive work with lay leadership: "my first years were so enjoyable because my relationship with the officers was wonderful. It was team-work and there was no friction." There was friction on theological issues, and about Israel. Rabbis John Rayner, Sidney Brichto and David Goldberg had constant disputes about Israel. Politically, the Union "was a very happy family" as compared to the Reform Movement. Unlike the RSGB, in the ULPS "there was no right wing and left wing, there weren't the Edgwares who were desperate to make the movement more traditional and synagogues like West London who were desperate to keep it middle

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<sup>77</sup>Brichto, ULPS Oral History Project.



of the road." Brichto recalls that the Liberal movement, even with South London, which was fairly left wing, and North London, which was very traditional, was able to maintain a balance.<sup>78</sup>

Brichto argued that the RSGB was very political because, as he saw it, its major ambition was to "inherit" members who left the United Synagogue, and therefore it had to be middle of the road.<sup>79</sup>

As early as 1968, there were calls in some circles for the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain and the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to consider the possibility and feasibility of merger. The idea of forming an umbrella organization under which the two movements would cooperate was strongly supported in an unattributed editorial in the Winter 1969-1970 edition of "Pointer." The practical advantages were felt to be potentially be very great, "not the least being that the uncommitted and the waverers of Anglo-Jewry would be confronted with a clearer choice: between undeviating adherence to the Tradition and its responsible adjustment to present needs, between rigidity and fluidity, between medievalism and modernism."<sup>80</sup> The editorial admitted that the biggest obstacles included institutional rivalries and vested interests, and unfavorable stereotypes. Also, the writer suggests, that "the winds of oecumenism (sic) are still blowing too softly. Anglicans, Non-Conformists, and even Roman Catholics are saying that the disunity of the Christian Church is a scandal and a disgrace."<sup>81</sup> But there was no sense of urgency to heal the rifts.

The call seemed to emanate more out of the Liberal movement than the Reform movement. Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London Synagogue said that the matter was not discussed by the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis, or by the

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<sup>78</sup>Brichto, ULPS Oral History Project.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>"Pointer," Winter 1969-1970, 3.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.



Reform Ministers' Assembly. Mr. Geoffrey Davis, then-chairman of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, felt that "when the time was ripe there could well be a move to bring the movements closer together."<sup>82</sup> Mr. Nat Preston, a council member of Wembley Liberal Synagogue, argued that there was more of a difference from one synagogue to the next than between the movements as a whole. On this ground alone, he suggested, it was wasteful of effort and purpose that there should be two distinct Progressive movements. Mr. A Summers, chairman of Edgware Reform Synagogue, said he felt that his congregation would not agree to merger on the grounds that the ideologies were not the same. Rabbi Michael Leigh, also of Edgware and District Reform Synagogue, argued that the differences between the Liberal and Reform movements were far greater than the Liberals were admitting, and that a merger would call for greater compromise than the Reform movement could afford.<sup>83</sup> Rabbi John Rayner admitted that the time might not yet be ripe for such a merger, but suggested that

those who deliberately seek to prevent or delay it should ask themselves whether they are not rendering a grave disservice to the greater cause of Judaism.... for surely that cause demands that those who have broadly the same approach to Judaism's present-day tasks should pool their spiritual-- and, incidentally, organizational-- resources.<sup>84</sup>

Rabbi David Goldberg of Wembley and District Liberal Synagogue, suggested that it was not ideology but communal politics, rivalry, personalities, and mutual ignorance that prevented a mutually beneficial merger.<sup>85</sup> There was no closure to this argument in 1973. Merger was an option that would be seriously debated

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<sup>82</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," August 24, 1973.

<sup>83</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," letter to the editor by Rabbi Michael Leigh, September 14, 1973.

<sup>84</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," letter to the editor by Rabbi John Rayner, September 7, 1973.

<sup>85</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," September 28, 1973.

again ten years later. Not suprisingly, similar stands would be taken by similar lay-people and rabbis.

### **Rabbi Brichto's impact**

Rosita Rosenberg, who succeeded Rabbi Sidney Brichto as Director of the ULPS, felt that the appointment of Sidney Brichto as Director and Executive Vice-President was an immensely important thing for the Union "to go into the situation of having someone leading the movement and coming up with new and creative ideas." One of the most creative ideas he had, she said, was the ULPS Evening Institute which he developed even before he became Executive Director. The Evening Institute has continued to thrive until the present day, with a series of different principals. Over the years, leading rabbis of the Union have been principal lecturers of the institute. Rosita Rosenberg says "it's been one of our real success stories and a number of students, Jewish and non-Jewish, Progressive and non-Progressive Jews that have passed through the evening institute. Adult education is very important and that was one of Sidney's original ideas."<sup>86</sup>

By the Autumn 1967 registration, the Evening Institute had grown to more than 200 people under the auspices of the Leo Baeck College.<sup>87</sup>

As to why Brichto was so successful Rosita recalled that it was likely his "American style" of holding no punches back if that is what it would take to get a task done or a vision fulfilled. He also brought in a sense of the need to fundraise, "which was considered a dirty word in the Liberal movement when I first came in,

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<sup>86</sup>Rosenberg, ULPS Oral History Project.

<sup>87</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," October 20, 1967.

I think he jolted a lot of people into giving money to the Union and certainly was enormously helpful and very creative and very powerful personality."<sup>88</sup>

### **The 75th Anniversary**

In 1977, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues celebrated its 75th Anniversary. Rabbi Brichto reflected at the time the founders of the movement would be gratified that the Union had become integrated into the general Jewish community.<sup>89</sup> This had been a large issue in Rabbi Brichto's agenda, and there was a lot of opposition to it. His drive to get the movement to be a part of the Board of Deputies as well as other communal organizations was one in which he believed passionately, and he was not to be dissuaded.<sup>90</sup> Rabbi Brichto further made the case that although there had been an increase in tradition and ritual in the movement, there had been "no concessions to the Orthodox, no abandonment of principles."<sup>91</sup> The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues remained, in his view, very much left of the center in the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Lastly, he pointed out, Lily Montagu would have been "very proud that it is a Liberal congregation which has accepted a woman as its spiritual head."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Rosenberg, ULPS Oral History Project.

<sup>89</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," letter to the editor, December 18, 1977.

<sup>90</sup>Rabbi Sidney Brichto, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>91</sup>"Jewish Chronicle," December 18, 1977.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter 5: Returning to Roots

### Return to Tradition

Over the years, Rabbi Bernard Hooker, former Rabbi of the North London Progressive Synagogue, has seen many changes in the Union. "As far as things like any ceremonial or ritual changes are concerned, I have seen what some people call a 'going back to tradition' occurring in many areas of Liberal Jewish activity." He attributes some of the change to his view that the movement is being influenced by new graduates of the Leo Baeck College "where the college students seemed to have grown under much more traditional influence." He fears that the younger rabbis' main concern is that "they are more acceptable to the Orthodox or to the United Synagogue elements if they show they can be just as traditional as they are. I think that's wrong." Rabbi Hooker argues that Liberal Jews exist because they are different in many respects. They must emphasize these differences, not just for the sake of differences, but to make sure that when people choose to be involved in Liberal Judaism "it doesn't have to be a parrot-like imitation of Orthodox Judaism." He is concerned that having women wear kippot and tallit is not so much about equality or increasing a sense of spirituality, but rather about "showing that we can be just as orthodox." Hooker does not feel a need for those types of rituals. He says that Liberal Judaism has always taught "that God will listen to your prayers whether your head is covered or uncovered, in your bath or in your shower, wherever it might be." Liberal Judaism has always said that "you must feel free to follow whichever practise you want. What I do object to is when they look askance at those who don't do it - that's a different thing you see."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Hooker, interview, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.

A continuing swing back towards tradition was marked at the Union's biennial conference in 1981 in Rabbi Andrew Goldstein's review of the Liberal Jewish response to the 1970's. In spite of the fact that the economy was upset and there had been new waves of antisemitism, there was a turn to the right among Jews generally, which, according to Goldstein, resulted in a deepening of Jewish identity. One manifestation of that turn to the right was that Liberal Judaism introduced more traditionalism into its religious services.<sup>2</sup>

In the same issue of ULPS News, Mr. Walter Woyda was critical of the change, saying that in the early days Liberal Judaism had fought for human rights, but of late had abdicated that role and the movement had become insular, concentrating only on Soviet Jewry and Israel. He argued that the Union should be fighting for the oppressed in all lands. He said that the return to tradition was a retrograde step.

Rabbi Frank Hellner said that he could not accept the nineteenth century Liberalism of Claude Montefiore, Rabbi Dr. Israel Mattuck, and Rabbi Dr. Leslie Edgar, which claimed that Jews should be universalists and not Zionists. With the resurgence of nationalism, he said, "one cannot love mankind without loving the Jewish people."<sup>3</sup> This move towards particularism was echoed by many in the younger generation in the movement.

Mr. Charles Middleburgh stated that there needed to be a new radical response in the 1980's to "retraditionalize" Judaism to encourage change combined with more tradition which was "not mere blind totemism."

Rabbi Sidney Brichto described the ULPS as a "broad church" which encompassed all shades of opinion. He said that continuing discussion in the

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<sup>2</sup>ULPS News, December 1981.

<sup>3</sup>Jewish Chronicle, March 13, 1981.



Union would find a path between the old and the new concepts of Liberal Judaism.<sup>4</sup>

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue in 1981 became the last synagogue in the ULPS to introduce Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The issue was a controversial one which caused many years of congregational debate. The Council of the LJS decided to introduce the ceremony with certain conditions: the ceremony should be understood to represent the beginning of adolescence and not legal majority and the child and parents would sign a document affirming that the child would continue in the Religion School through the Confirmation year.<sup>5</sup>

The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues launched a campaign in 1985 to encourage Liberal Jews to increase their knowledge of Shabbat. The main thrust was directed towards the religious schools in the movement, but written appeals were also made to parents asking them to consider increasing their Shabbat observance, and giving them information and practical help.<sup>6</sup>

Rabbi Brichto urged the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to return not only to ritual but to Jewish meaning. He explained that the emphasis on "Yiddishkeit, on the trappings," was insufficient. Jewish leadership needed to be made more aware of, and synagogues more receptive to, spirituality. He criticized the tendency to allow Jewish identity without religious identity to "carry us along." He argued that children need to see the essence of Judaism and not just the rituals. He challenged the ULPS to become a community of believers, not only of people who observe rituals.<sup>7</sup>

The Union announced plans for a new prayerbook to replace the 1967 Service of the Heart in 1991. Rabbi Rayner said the prayerbook would address the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>ULPS News, December, 1981.

<sup>6</sup>Jewish Chronicle, January 11, 1985.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., October 3, 1986.

desire of many Liberal Jews for a more traditional approach to Judaism. The prayerbook was completed in 1994 under the title Siddur Lev Chadash, and the title is most appropriate. Almost everything in this prayerbook is new.

The first thing that strikes one about Siddur Lev Chadash is that, for the first time in the history of liturgy in the ULPS, the *siddur* opens from right to left. This was an indication that almost nothing about Service of the Heart was untouchable to the compilers and editors of Siddur Lev Chadash.

...Service of the Heart marked a big step towards the restoration of traditional structures and texts. At the same time, it made some radical emendations and included a substantial amount of novel material. Now... we feel able to go a good deal further in *both* directions.<sup>8</sup> (SLC p. xvii)

It is interesting to compare the style of Siddur Lev Chadash to that of Forms of Prayer, the 1977 prayerbook of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. While SLC does not quote often from the Reform prayer book, it is clear that SLC was positively influenced by the stylistic choices represented in Forms of Prayer. Two examples of this are the quantity of liturgical choices, and that a complete version of the *שמע* appears in the back of SLC as it does in Forms of Prayer.

While the compilers of Siddur Lev Chadash clearly felt comfortable making a large number of innovative changes in the content of their prayer book. They also went back to much older rabbinic sources to uncover old-new versions of benedictions that spoke to the theology they upheld. Included in the new prayerbook are both new interpretive readings on various themes written by Rabbi Stern and older Rabbinic texts, Genizah materials, etc. Those who gathered the materials for SLC clearly searched out traditional materials that would support contemporary ideas and ideals.

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<sup>8</sup>Siddur Lev Chadash, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1993, XVII.

We believe today that the great majority of our members are willing to go along with anything that can enhance their spiritual life as Jews, whether it comes from ancient or from modern sources, provided only that it is chosen conscientiously....<sup>9</sup>

### **Merger Efforts**

In the early 1980's, the Reform and Liberal movements formally considered the possibility of merger. The discussion began as a result of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain's invitation to the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to join them in a new venture. The RSGB decided to move its headquarters to Manor House in East Finchley, in the northern part of London. The Leo Baeck College had purchased the Manor House in late 1980, and intended to move there from its original home in the West London Synagogue.<sup>10</sup> The Reform movement decided to join the Leo Baeck College at the site, and invited the ULPS to complete the Manor House complex in 1981. The leaders of the Reform movement sought to persuade the Union to take this step on the basis that "living together would soon lead to an amalgamation of both Progressive wings of British Jewry."<sup>11</sup> The ULPS undertook its own feasibility study on the Manor House project and concluded that, although the idea was a visionary one, it represented too great a financial risk without any guarantee that such an amalgamation would actually occur. At that time, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues initiated the idea of merger talks, to which the Reform movement agreed.

Some of the players in the 1984/1985 merger talks were very similar to those who had debated the possibility of merger in the newspapers back in the middle 1970's. For the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, Rabbis

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<sup>9</sup>Siddur Lev Chadash, XVII.

<sup>10</sup>Jewish Chronicle, January 2, 1981.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Letter to the Editor by Rabbi Sidney Brichto, April 5, 1984.

Sidney Brichto and John Rayner once again pushed the idea of merger very strongly as beneficial to both movements and for the future of Progressive Judaism generally.

A survey of letters to the editor of the ULPS News indicates that both lay leaders and rabbis were divided in their attitudes towards the possibility of merger. Sheila King Lassman said that everyone knew that there would be obstacles to merger, but she believed "that the RSGB and ULPS can find the vision, courage, and goodwill to leap well clear of them and provide a stronger balance to the ever increasing rigidity of Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy."<sup>12</sup> Others were not so sure that merger should be the ideal. John Rich argued that the two movements were alike but unique. He did not want to see the two Progressive movements "become a larger, diluted milk-and-water single body in which the loss to each movement of its unique characteristics will far outweigh any unproven financial or administrative gains...."<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Jerome Karet, chairman of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, made his own impassioned appeal to the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues for unification of the Reform and Liberal movements at the ULPS's bi-annual conference in May 1983. He said that "unprovoked attacks from Orthodox circles" made it imperative that there should be a strong and healthy alternative which would appeal to British Jews. If the two movements pooled their resources, thus avoiding a duplication of effort, they would strengthen a united movement.<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London Synagogue asserted that there was little from an ideological standpoint that separated the movements. This fact,

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<sup>12</sup>ULPS News, November, 1983.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., December, 1983.

<sup>14</sup>Jewish Chronicle, May 13, 1983.

he suggests, is supported by the training of ministers for both movements at the Leo Baeck College.<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Michael Leigh and some of the members of his Edgware Reform Synagogue spoke loudly against the merger. From the time when official discussions were first beginning between Reform and Liberal representatives, representatives of the Reform congregation stated their feeling that "appetites for merger on both sides were waning."<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Leigh was a member of the Reform team that discussed the challenges to the merger, and all indications are that he took the opportunity to attempt to prevent a merger. As he stated at the Edgware Reform Synagogue Annual General Meeting, Rabbi Leigh was sympathetic to those of his members who had joined from the Orthodox. Having made that jump, he said, he was concerned that they would "feel cheated about the possibility of making another shift downwards, I might say, towards the Liberals."<sup>17</sup> Mr. Maurice Michaels the -chairman of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, was unwilling to discuss the possibility of merger at the RSGB Annual Conference in 1984, he said only that it was his intention "to pursue closer cooperation with the ULPS in areas where we already cooperate and in other areas where we might profitably cooperate."<sup>18</sup> Such non-committal statements did not bode well, regardless of the work of the joint committees which had been set up to determine possible challenges if a merger were to go forward.

Other voices were calling for an intermediate sort of relationship. Rabbi S. Franes of the Glasgow New (Reform) congregation said that he did not favor a merger, but rather what he called "maximum-cooperation." Although in reality a merger might not make a tremendous practical difference, Rabbi Franes feared

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., February 7, 1984.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., April 5, 1984.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>ULPS News, October 1984.



that an amalgamation might be detrimental to the image of Reform Judaism in smaller communities, primarily because of the fact that the British public does not distinguish between the Reform and the Liberal communities.<sup>19</sup>

Working groups and committees were set up to determine the challenges to such a merger. Nearly all the committees came up with a favorable report, with the exception of the youth committee. The RSGB Youth were very Zionist and the ULPS Youth was not. In addition, the youth movements differed in attitudes towards tradition and ritual observance. The Reform Synagogue Youth (RSY) felt very strongly about *kashrut* and Shabbat observance on their youth weekends, whereas ULPSNYC did not strictly adhere to these principles.<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, the effort toward merger was unsuccessful. The joint committees created a report which addressed the challenges which would face the movements if they chose to merge, and that report, according to Rabbis Rayner and Brichto, was apparently leaked to members of the Reform movement, according to Rabbis Rayner and Brichto. The report was to have been formally received by a joint executive committee of the RSGB and ULPS, but by the time that meeting arrived, loud opposition to the committee's report had already been voiced by influential conservative members of the RSGB. The RSGB indicated that they were unwilling to continue the process. Rabbi Brichto admitted that he was sorry that the ULPS "gave in" so easily to the opposition of a small minority of the RSGB. He expressed regret that the Union failed to challenge the Reform movement more intensely, to move forward with the ideas in the report.<sup>21</sup> In Rabbi Rayner's judgment, the merger could have come off, except for unfortunate circumstances at the end which led the RSGB executives to say no.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>*Jewish Chronicle*, April 5, 1984.

<sup>20</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.

<sup>21</sup>Rabbi Sidney Brichto, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>22</sup>Rabbi Rayner, interview, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.



The official line on the collapse of the talks was that "basic differences" which would have required taking "too broad a stance making it difficult to generate policy and to provide any direction."<sup>23</sup> Given the distinct disagreements over formal ritual matters, the remaining question was whether the Liberal and Reform movements could agree upon acceptable compromises.

The Reform movement and the Union disagree on the Jewish status of the children of an intermarriage. The ULPS allows for patrilineal descent, while the RSGB maintains the traditional view that only the child of a Jewish mother is born Jewish. The working committee had suggested a compromise whereby the status of a child would be considered as in doubt regardless of parentage and that a declaration of intent before a rabbinic court would bestow a status of Jewish by presumption. Under this plan, when a child had completed its basic Jewish education, he or she would participate in confirmation ceremony which might be similar to a conversion ceremony, after which the status would be definite.

On the issue of conversion, the Reform movement insisted on *milah* (ritual circumcision) and *tevilah* (ritual immersion), while the Liberal movement does not insist on these rituals. The working committee recommended that each movement recognize the converts of the other, and that the matter be reconsidered after five years.

Liberal and Reform rabbis both discouraged mixed marriage, but Liberal rabbis were permitted to perform a blessing in the home of the couple provided that they made a commitment to raise the children as Jews. This was unacceptable to Reform rabbis. The committee recommended that the Liberal rabbis would cease this practice if a merger went forward.

The Reform movement required a *Get* for remarriage, whereas the Union did not. In this matter, the working group suggested that if there was a merger,

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<sup>23</sup> Jewish Chronicle, March 15, 1985.

both movements would require such a writ of Jewish divorce provided that the principle of equality was observed. There would be two *Gittin*-- one by the husband and one by the wife.

Lastly, the Reform movement teaches *kashrut* as a positive value and sets standards for its observance at public functions. The ULPS says that the dietary laws are not a Liberal principle and that any teaching of it is from a neutral standpoint. The Union required that divergent views on *kashrut* be openly expressed.<sup>24</sup>

Many people had expressed the view back in 1964, when the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues first joined the sponsorship of the Leo Baeck College, that when the first group of rabbis had come through the College together there would no longer be any difference between Reform and Liberal Judaism, or between the movements. The merger talks were one example of proof that such complete blurring of lines had not happened. Rosita Rosenberg suggested that, if anything, the merger talks showed that the movements were further apart than they had ever been: "It made it quite clear to me that the major difference between the two movements wasn't so much the things that you could put on bits of paper, like one had a mikveh and one didn't and one had a certain view of proselytes and one had a get and one didn't."<sup>25</sup> Rosenberg argued that the differences had more to do with mood and style, with the Reform movement wanting to claim an authentic middle ground while the Liberal movement was satisfied with its place on the radical left wing of Anglo-Jewry. According to Rosenberg, "It was a shame because in America everybody manages to work together under one umbrella, on the other hand I think the created tension between the two movements sometimes certainly aids us." As far as Rosenberg is concerned, the tension means that the

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Rosita Rosenberg, interview, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994

two movements cannot afford to get complacent. "We can't ever sit back and be complacent because its a friendly rivalry, we get on very well and we run the Leo Baeck College together and the Centre for Jewish Education together and all sorts of other things like Friends of Progressive Judaism but we're rivals, we're rivals for the same market."

Rosita Rosenberg expressed her view in 1994 that perhaps England just was not the best place for a Liberal radical movement to grow. Despite all the wonderful ideas and principles that the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues has which are desirable, including "integrity and common sense and logic as well as understanding of our Jewish heritage," in fact, Rosenberg argues, "in England most people want the easy way and they want to belong to a middle of the road organisation and so I think it's true to say, in my opinion, that the stronger the Reform movement gets the weaker the Liberal movement will get." She said that the ULPS may have to accept the fact that real growth was not attainable, and that the Union should strive for "quality and not quantity although it would be nice to have both." When the ULPS temporarily relocated in 1992 to allow for the rebuilding of the Montagu Centre, Rosenberg took time to read a number of the old documents, including some plans from the 1960's and 1970's about how to make the Union membership grow. She now believes that "on the whole English Jews don't want to think too much about their Judaism so they either want to belong to United Synagogue or if they're not satisfied with United Synagogue on the whole they would go to the Reform movement." She says that the people that perhaps used to come to the Liberal movement, academics and so forth, have tended to be more attracted by secular Judaism. She believes that although the ULPS has a wonderful product to sell, there just might not be so many customers in the market: "The important thing is to keep the customers we've got, to keep their next generation as well, and I think that's what we have to work at and if we

don't become the leading organisation in the United Kingdom, we have to accept that but what we are are, therefore, thinking Jews."<sup>26</sup>

Rosenberg reflected on the ULPS' decision not to join Leo Baeck College and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain at the Manor House complex. She said that she was very pleased that when the Sternberg Centre at Manor House was opened, the Union resisted the invitation of the Reform movement to join them, "because I don't believe Progressive Judaism only exists in North West London, I think we have to be in the centre of London and I'm really delighted, not only as Director but personally, that people can come in here from all over and they're just coming into the centre" of London.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the failed merger efforts, the movements continued to cooperate on many matters. They worked together on education, holding annual joint conferences on education throughout the 1980's. In addition they established together the Center for Jewish Education, which provided resources and teacher-training seminars for both movements.

In the aftermath of the merger talks, Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London and Rabbi John Rayner of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue decided to initiate closer relations between their congregations. At the time, the LJS was beginning a major renovation project, and the West London Synagogue offered to lease space to the Liberal synagogue during the duration of the building project.<sup>28</sup>

In 1984, as a result of a joint Israel Independence Day celebration, an organization called ECAPS was formed. The Eastern Counties Association of Progressive Synagogues consisted of urban Essex Liberal and Reform congregations, as well as the Settlement Synagogue, the Harlow Jewish community, Southend Reform synagogue, and the Reform community in

<sup>26</sup>Rosita Rosenberg, interview, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Jewish Chronicle, July 26, 1985.

Cambridge. The aim of the organization was to develop a modern Jewish voice in the area. ECAPS congregations developed joint programs in adult and youth education, social action, and joint worship services several times each year. This organization continued to be a model for Reform/Liberal cooperation for many years.

Arguments about whether the movements should merge continued sporadically. Rabbi Jonathan Romain continued to make the case in favor of merger. he suggested in 1987 that over the years Reform had become more radical while Liberal had become more traditional, to the point where they had become virtually the same.<sup>29</sup>

Rabbi Richard Hirsch, Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, told the executive of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain in 1987 that he could not understand "for the life of me" why the Liberal and Reform movements continued to be separate in Britain.

The Reform and Liberal movements found many areas in which they could work together. In 1988, the two movements established an alternative to the 243-year-old Initiation Society, which trained and provided *mohelim* to carry out *brit milah* ceremonies. The newly-formed Reform and Liberal Association of Mohelim began with eight full members plus eight trainee mohelim, including one woman. Previously, Reform and Liberal Jews faced difficult challenges because they were forced to deal with Orthodox mohelim. The organization was set up to circumvent problems experienced by both parents of newborn Jewish boys, as well as converts to Judaism by Reform and Liberal rabbis, and to enhance the communal feeling at the ceremony.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., February 27, 1987.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., September 9, 1988.



In 1988, Mr. David Lipman, then outgoing chairman of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, renewed the call for a federation to be formed between the ULPS and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. He said the increased cooperation with the RSGB would not be complete until some sort of federation were formed.<sup>31</sup>

### **Relationship with the Orthodox**

The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues continued to be challenged by various Orthodox authorities as it had been since its founding. In November 1986, the latest attack came from Rabbi Isaac Bernstein of the Finchley (Orthodox) Synagogue. He declared that "there is no filth that some people won't peddle in the name of religion as long as they get new members.... There has never been such a vicious campaign against Torah."<sup>32</sup> He attacked those calling for middle-of-the-road Judaism, saying that it was not an ideal toward which to aspire.

At the ULPS Biennial Conference in Bournemouth, Rabbi John Rayner made the case that the Orthodox Jewish community was now in the minority in Anglo-Jewish life. While a majority of British Jews might belong to Orthodox synagogues, "it is only a relatively small proportion of them who lead a Torah-true life in the full Orthodox sense." The bigger divide, he suggested, was between the religious-- whether Orthodox, Conservative, or Progressive-- and the secular Jew. Whatever chance there was to win back some of those secular Jews, he argued, depended largely on what Progressive Judaism had to offer.<sup>33</sup>

While the Progressive Jewish relationship with Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits had begun with some promise, it soured badly in the late 1980's. Rabbi Sidney Brichto accused the Chief Rabbi of no longer reflecting the "moderate,

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1988.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., November 28, 1986.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., May 8, 1987.

tolerant aspect of Orthodox Judaism" that Progressive Jews felt he once had. Where Liberal and Reform rabbis had once met bi-monthly at the Chief Rabbi's home, now Rabbi Jakobovits seemed to "write off" Progressive Jews altogether.<sup>34</sup>

Rabbi Jakobovits reflected on his twenty years as Chief Rabbi in 1987. He felt that the differences in the Anglo-Jewish community contributed to "the aliveness of the community." But he said that he preferred to remain above the fray with Progressive Jews: "I could have wiped the floor with them, showing them up as disturbers of communal peace and unity, or indeed as rejecting basic Jewish teachings... but I do not believe in mudslinging."<sup>35</sup> Rabbi Jakobovits may have felt positive about the role he had played in communal unity, but these comments in the Jewish Herald brought him harsh attacks from Liberal Jews. They felt that Jakobovits' statement about Liberal Jews as "disturbers of communal peace and unity" was a slap in the face that was uncalled for. It seemed to reflect more of the acrimony which had been characteristic of communal relations at the time before Rabbi Jakobovits took up his post as Chief Rabbi, rather than reflecting the harmony that he claimed to have built in the interim.

Rabbi Sidney Brichto inflamed Orthodox and Liberal Jews alike when he published an article entitled "Halacha with Humility" in the "Jewish Chronicle" in October 1987. He argued that Liberals should be willing to compromise and give over authority to the Orthodox on matters of *halacha* in the name of *k'lal yisrael*. He suggested that Liberal Jews should allow an Orthodox *Beth Din* to be the final authority on all conversions, *gittin*, and *mamzerut*, with some compromises required on the Orthodox side. For example, Rabbi Brichto reasoned that the Orthodox *Beth Din* should only test a potential convert on their knowledge of the *halacha*, not on their observance of it. Anyone who was unwilling to compromise

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., July 13, 1987.

<sup>35</sup>Jewish Herald, (London), September 1987.

on these issues, Rabbi Brichto claimed, should "stop pretending that they are concerned for Jewish unity and recognise that all they seek is the protection of their own narrow sectional interests, no matter under what pious or idealistic banners they are paraded."<sup>36</sup>

The article infuriated many Liberal Jews, who felt that Rabbi Brichto was selling out basic Liberal principles. The ULPS Rabbinic Conference debated at length the issues which Rabbi Brichto had raised, and the question of whether individual members of the Conference had a right to publish articles in their personal capacity. Essentially it was agreed that rabbis have the right to express their personal views in public, but many disagreed with the content of Rabbi Brichto's letter.<sup>37</sup> The Conference ultimately resolved (after a discussion extending over two meetings) that the rabbis of the ULPS were willing to engage in dialogue with other religious authorities. It reaffirmed, though, that integrity was more important than unity, and that it would remain the sole policy-making and decision making body on religious matters in the movement.<sup>38</sup>

The statement also angered many Orthodox Jews who were unwilling to make the compromises he asked of them. The Chief Rabbi dismissed Rabbi Brichto's suggestions as "non-starters." He argued that they would turn rabbis into hypocrites.<sup>39</sup>

Rabbi Brichto continued to call for moderation, urging the Chief Rabbi to consider that there were moderate Orthodox rabbis in Britain and abroad who saw accommodation with "those who share a centrist position and consider toleration and cooperation between Orthodox, Conservative, and Progressive rabbis as the key to Jewish survival."<sup>40</sup> Brichto felt that the Chief Rabbi in Britain was much

<sup>36</sup>Jewish Chronicle, October 2, 1987.

<sup>37</sup>Minutes of ULPS Rabbinic Conference, ULPS Archives at the Montagu Centre, October 21, 1987.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, November 26, 1987.

<sup>39</sup>Jewish Chronicle, December 18, 1987.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, February 3, 1988.

more severe than any other Chief Rabbi anywhere in the world. He called on Rabbi Jakobovits to accept the pluralistic nature of Jewish life.

There were efforts made to create bridges between Orthodox and Liberal Jews. In an article in the "Jewish Chronicle" in 1988, Rabbi Colin Eimer put forward his case for closer contact with the Orthodox "in a framework of mutual respect and trust." He focused on the "pictures we paint of each other," suggesting that the first rule of dialogue was that each side must recognize those pictures. Any effort to bridge the gap would be dependent, he argued, on the premise that each side recognized the integrity of the other. "Hopefully," he wrote, "we will soon reach a time when the suggestion that an Orthodox and a Progressive rabbi can share a meal, a pulpit, or a platform is not seen as ludicrous, surprising or insulting."<sup>41</sup>

In 1989, Rabbi Jakobovits announced his retirement and the search for a successor began. The ULPS published a statement in "The Times" in December 1989 that the Chief Rabbi did not have authority to speak for their members.<sup>42</sup> Director of the Union, Rosita Rosenberg, said that the statement was issued at a time when Rabbi Jakobovits' successor was being chosen because "our relationship to the office of the Chief Rabbi is not dependent on the person who fills it."<sup>43</sup> The ULPS statement was met with anger on the part of Orthodox authorities. The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain refused to sign on to the statement, saying it caused confusion. Rabbi Louis Jacobs, minister of the Masorati (Conservative) New London Synagogue, said that his movement had the same relationship with the Chief Rabbinate as that of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. Rosita Rosenberg clarified for the "Jewish Chronicle" that the ULPS did not intend to detract from the status of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., February 24, 1988.

<sup>42</sup>The Times, (London), December 17, 1989.

<sup>43</sup>Jewish Chronicle, December 22, 1989.

or his authority over his constituents. The only intent was to clarify the ULPS' relationship to the Chief Rabbi, and to highlight that only the United Synagogue and its associated congregations were involved in the choice of a new Chief Rabbi.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who had once served on the faculty of the Leo Baeck College, was appointed Chief Rabbi. His appointment was met with tremendous optimism by leaders of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. They hoped that his days of teaching at Leo Baeck would have influenced him to be more positively inclined to good relations with Progressive Jews.

### **Congregational Development**

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues made another effort at congregational development. They called in a "roadshow." Rosita Rosenberg referred to it as "sort of going out on the road and shouting our wares without even knowing whether there's going to be people there or not."<sup>44</sup> The roadshows led to the formation of four new congregations: in Peterborough, Norwich, Maidstone, and Lincoln. Rosenberg found this work "immensely satisfying." Although the total number of members in all the congregations is not very high, she finds the situation wonderful, because the people who are a part really want to have a congregation-- they are very committed. And in many cases, the members are people who think Judaism has deserted them; a considerable percentage of the members are of mixed marriages or children of mixed marriages who think that Judaism did not welcome them. Rosenberg recognizes that the largest those communities may ever be is 30 or 40

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<sup>44</sup>Rosenberg, ULPS Oral History Project, 1994.



families, "so they're not the Northwoods or the Barkingsides or the Kingstons and one has to recognise that - it's a different situation."<sup>45</sup>

Thames Valley Progressive Synagogue became the twenty-fifth member congregation of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues in March 1983. The community, centered in Reading, created a religion school, discussion evenings, and coffee mornings in addition to religious services.<sup>46</sup>

In 1988, Kingston Liberal Synagogue, which was founded in 1967, appointed its first minister, student rabbi Danny Rich. The synagogue had a 250-strong membership at the time, which was involved in adult education, religious instruction, toddler groups, and many social events. In addition, there were youth clubs for three separate age groups.<sup>47</sup>

The South Bucks Liberal congregation in Amersham was founded by former members of the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue. The congregation was affiliated with NPLS for fourteen years before becoming a completely autonomous community with 35 families in 1990.<sup>48</sup>

Also in January 1990, Hertsmere Progressive Synagogue held an "open day" for unaffiliated families and individuals. The two-day event was attended by around 20-25 families and individuals from the area.<sup>49</sup>

In 1988, after 50 years of membership in the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, the Belsize Square Synagogue broke away from the Union to become independent. Religious and theological differences between the synagogue's German-style Reform and the English Liberal movement were too vast to maintain the relationship. On issues such as conversion, marriage, and Jewish status, as well as the form of the service, fundamental differences existed.

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>ULPS News, April 1983.

<sup>47</sup>Jewish Chronicle, August 28, 1988.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., January 5, 1990.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., January 19, 1990.

Belsize Square used the basic Orthodox siddur and none of the prayerbooks composed by the ULPS or RSGB.

Belsize Square had begun as a congregation for German refugees. Lily Montagu had encouraged the ULPS to take the fledgling synagogue under its wing. In the early years, the Union had helped the congregation financially, and those obligations had been repaid. In 1988, Belsize Square was the ULPS's second largest contributor, which made the separation particularly painful for the Union.<sup>50</sup>

In 1988, in order to try to get rabbis out into the smaller provincial congregations, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues set up a training program for lay leaders. The program was intended to train the lay people to lead services in large congregations, which would allow those rabbis to spend time aiding smaller congregations.<sup>51</sup>

These developments took place against a background of falling ULPS membership. From 1978 to 1988, the Union membership slumped from 12,000 to about 10,500, while membership in the RSGB rose from 33,000 to 42,000. More ominously, the Union ran budgets at a deficit of £15,000 and more in the late 1980's as a result of this decline in membership, which simultaneously demanded increasing facilities from the central organizations. At the Union's Annual General Meeting in 1988, Rabbi Brichto called for the ULPS to seek out those Jews whose needs were not being met by existing synagogues: "Unless we seek them out and find them and bring them back to their Jewishness, they will disappear," he warned.<sup>52</sup> This rallying cry echoed the call of Claude Montefiore and Lily Montagu nearly ninety years earlier.

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., March 4, 1988.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., October 14, 1988.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1988.

### **Change in Leadership**

Rabbi Dr. Leslie Edgar died in February 1984 at age 78. He had served the ULPS for over 50 years and made noteworthy contributions to the cause of Christian-Jewish fellowship. He had attended the Liberal Jewish Synagogue's religion school as a pupil beginning in 1916, and began as an associate minister at the LJS under Rabbi Dr. Israel Mattuck in 1931. Upon Dr. Mattuck's retirement in 1948, Dr. Edgar became senior minister. He served as emeritus minister for four years in the early 1960's, until ill-health forced his resignation. Rabbi John Rayner wrote in a comment in the Jewish Chronicle that "he will be gratefully remembered in the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, to which he gave a lifetime's service, and in many facets of Anglo-Jewish life and inter-faith endeavour."<sup>53</sup>

After twenty-five years as Director of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, Sidney Brichto stepped down in May 1989. Brichto stayed on as a vice-president of the Union. He was replaced as Director by Rosita Rosenberg, former long-time Organizing-Secretary and Administrative Director of the ULPS. This change marked the first time in which a rabbi was not the formal head of the Union.

According to Rabbi Brichto, this change resulted in interesting periods of give-and-take between the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain in terms of the sort of leadership each movement desired. The ULPS always had rabbis as its main leadership. The rabbis worked closely with lay-leaders, but ultimately Rabbis Mattuck, Edgar, and Brichto had been the voice of the movement. The RSGB had for most of its existence had lay-leaders serving as the head of the movement. The rabbis were always consulted, and certainly made their opinions heard. But, in Rabbi Brichto's words, "they didn't want to have a 'Brichto' as the head of the movement. They

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., March 3, 1984.

didn't want a headstrong rabbi." Over time, however, the RSGB saw that Rabbi Brichto could get an automatic kind of respect in communal life that RSGB lay-leaders had to work harder to earn. And so the RSGB decided in the early 1990's to appoint Rabbi Tony Bayfield as the first Rabbi Director. Meanwhile, lay-leaders in the ULPS began to feel over the years that the rabbis in the movement, especially Rabbi Brichto, had too much power. So when it approached the time for Rabbi Brichto to step down, there was a strong push to have a layperson to serve as Director. Hence, Rosita Rosenberg was appointed.<sup>54</sup> When Rosenberg retired in December 1997, the Union returned to its tradition of having rabbis as head, appointing Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh.

In June 1989, after 32 years of service with the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, and as its Senior Minister since 1961, Rabbi John Rayner retired as a full-time rabbi. He continued his duties at the synagogue on a part-time basis, as well as continuing to teach at the Leo Baeck College. Rabbi David Goldberg took up the position of Senior Minister of the LJS.

## **ULPSNYC**

ULPSNYC developed in a very interesting way. Rosita Rosenberg describes the path as one which "some people think is very good and in a way that other people think is not so good - every generation has to do whatever it wants to do for itself." Rosenberg remembers resenting interference from parents when she was a young person, so she knew that the ULPS could not interfere too heavily if the youth movement did not want them to. One of the primary structural differences in the youth provision of the ULPS has been the professionalization of the Youth Department: "In the old days, as they say, young people just did it all for themselves and they were very lucky in my generation and the next generation

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<sup>54</sup>Brichto, interview with the author, July, 1997.

if the then ULPS allowed us a corner of an office somewhere to do the duplicating on old fashioned stencil duplicator and we had sort of half a cupboard." Since those early days, the Union had now created an entire Youth Department which was funded at about £55,000 to help ULPSNYC.<sup>55</sup>

The youth movement began to see itself in a different role in the 1970's and 1980's both programmatically and structurally. Not only did it serve to create national events and formats for discussion. It also sought to offer support on a local level, helping to develop youth clubs in individual synagogues which previously had none. It formed a National Leadership Council in 1984, consisting of graduates of the youth movement aged 18-25 who served to guide the movement on a local and national level.<sup>56</sup>

The Union hired Tony Halle, long-time youth director of Southgate Progressive Synagogue, to be the Youth Director for the ULPS in 1977, and his work made a tremendous impact. By 1987, ULPSNYC held sixteen residential and synagogue based weekends, and visited nine congregations to conduct specially written creative services. Roughly five hundred young people from ages 8 to 21 took part in these programs.<sup>57</sup> In addition to working with young people directly, the ULPS Youth Department instituted training sessions for ULPS Youth Club leaders.

Robert Lobatto was hired as ULPSNYC's first full-time youth fieldworker in September 1989. He worked to build up the programs of existing youth clubs, and to help develop clubs in congregations which had no youth clubs.

ULPSNYC seemed to lead the way in Social Action projects for the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. Whether the issue was Soviet Jewry,

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<sup>55</sup>Rosenberg, interview, ULPS Oral History Project.

<sup>56</sup>Jewish Chronicle, Letter to the Editor by Robert Lobatto and Elliot Boyd of the ULPSNYC Executive, July 13, 1984.

<sup>57</sup>Jewish Chronicle, March 11, 1988.



Progressive rights in Israel, or care for the elderly in local congregations, the youth movement was at the fore of educational and practical programming. The youth movement received far more coverage in the "ULPS News" for its social action agenda than any other group in the Union. In fact, the proposal that the ULPS should have a social action committee or group was not made formally until the ULPS Biennial Conference in 1989.<sup>58</sup>

In 1989, ULPSNYC voted to federate with the Zionist Youth Council, an umbrella organization for Zionist youth movements across Great Britain. The decision meant that for the first time, young Liberal Jews would formally be affiliated as Zionists. The decision to affiliate to ZYC was prompted in part by the "Who is a Jew" debate which was raging in Israel at the time. The youth movement wanted to have a voice on the issue.

But according to Jon Boyd, former ULPSNYC chairman, the "Who is a Jew" issue was only part of the motivation. ULPSNYC was also searching for a new direction at the time. There was a real tendency for young people to drop out of ULPSNYC at age 16, whereas youth movements such as Habonim D'ror and Reform Synagogue Youth seem able to maintain their membership to a later age. According to Boyd, to a certain degree ULPSNYC felt that this difference was a matter of ideology. He said that "Habonim D'ror and RSY have some sort of definite ideology, whereas ours is rather wishy-washy...." Boyd believed that most people join Liberal congregations "because they represent an easy way out and not as a serious expression of Judaism."<sup>59</sup> This attitude was what ULPSNYC was trying to change, Boyd said. He wanted to see the decision making in ULPSNYC move to those who were graduates of the *Machon* year in Israel program, which he had just completed.

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<sup>58</sup>ULPS News, September 1989.

<sup>59</sup>Jewish Chronicle, January 13, 1989.

Leesa Mather and Abi Rappoport, sixteen-year-old officers of ULPSNYC at the time, talked about the social action projects and education projects the youth movement created, and how the movement was "not narrow-minded. We cast our net wide."

This is exactly what bothered Jon Boyd. He wanted to see older young people with a more focused ideology running the movement.<sup>60</sup> This tension, between the leadership of teenagers and the leadership of *Machon* graduates, created a difficult period for ULPSNYC.

In 1991, the Youth Department of the Union was completely restructured after a constitutional row in ULPSNYC and with the ULPS itself. The changes in the constitution were initiated largely by those young people who had attended the year-long *Machon* program in Israel. The initial proposals from the ULPSNYC *Mazkirut* (governing body, mostly consisting of graduates of *Machon*) to change the constitution were rejected by the ULPS Officers, who put forward their own plan. ULPSNYC, in turn, rejected this plan.

Eventually a compromise was reached. After fifteen dedicated years of service, Tony Halle retired as Director. The restructuring created the system that young people such as Jon Boyd wished for; however, because the new structure was youth-led, there was no place for Mr. Halle. In the new structure, young people in the 20-35 year age group played a greater role in determining the philosophy and practicalities of ULPS youth work. The plan included a new part-time post of Management Team Leader. Rabbi Danny Rich took up this post after many years of working with young people in the ULPS. The Team Leader would help in the development of long-term planning, formulating policy decisions regarding the youth provision in the Union, and creating and monitoring a budget for the department. The Team Leader also managed the Department's staff, which

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

consisted of the field worker and the newly created position of Activities Organizer. Also, a Secretary-Administrator was appointed to the department. A revamped Youth Advisory Committee served as a forum for the exchange of information on youth work and also involved both those under and over the age of 30.

In addition to the restructuring of the Department's staff, the Union, in cooperation with the North American Federation of Temple Youth, employed a graduate of NFTY to come to England to work for a year with ULPSNYC. The hope was that the NFTY graduate would bring some experience in successful youth work to help build and develop both the local synagogue youth clubs in the ULPS, and the national movement. The internship also provided a direct way for NFTY to recruit for its leadership camp in Warwick, New York, which would be beneficial for both NFTY and, in the longer term, for ULPSNYC. Lisa Silverstein was the first person to be hired for this internship, and she began her work in 1991. After two years on the job, she was replaced by the author.

### **Zionism**

British Jews, virtually without exception, identified passionately with Israel during that country's major crises in 1956, 1967, and 1973. But in the 1980's they were acutely sensitive when Israel was subjected to increasing criticism during the Lebanon war and the Palestinian *intifada*. Nor during the 1980's was British Jewry unanimous in its support for Israel government policy. The specter of dual loyalties, however, which haunted the anti-Zionists in the first half of the century did not appear; but, in the absence of any life and death confrontation between the two countries, it could not be said that it had been laid permanently to rest or had never existed at all.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>V.D. Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858, 231.

Religious schools within the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues increased their Israel curricula in this period. In 1988, Finchley Progressive Synagogue held an "I Love Israel" day for 270 eight to fifteen-year-olds from various ULPS congregations. The project was created by Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, long-time chair of the ULPS Education Committee. Running concurrently with the program for young people, was a "parents' *cheder*" held at the nearby Sternberg Centre, which offered opportunities to learn about Israel at the turn of the century, to discuss the West bank situation, and to study Israel in classical Jewish texts. The forty years since the foundation of the State of Israel had certainly seen a shift in education and attitude towards the State, and the changes began with the young people.

The Union began to work with a *shaliach* in the 1980's for the first time. Mr. Dudik Halfi was assigned to work with ULPSNYC, giving talks at various synagogues and helping to coordinate Israel trips for young people as well. This was a significant step in the development of Zionism in the ULPS, but perhaps especially in the youth movement. Such development would become critical as ULPSNYC became actively involved with Netzer-Olami in the late 1980's. The worldwide Progressive Zionist youth movement would become a central piece of ULPSNYC's identity into the 1990's. There was a large amount of resistance to this change from the parent movement. A fear was expressed that Progressive Jewish identity would become lost in a sea of Zionist identity.<sup>62</sup>

There seemed to be in this period an ambiguity about Zionism. There was a group within the ULPS which maintained their discomfort with making Israel a focus of the priorities of the Union. At the same time, the Union was increasing the Israel education of its young people.

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<sup>62</sup>Rosenberg, interview with the author, July 1997.

## **Education in the Union**

In 1985, the Union formalized a family education project under the guidance of Sally Goodis, director of education for the movement. Goodis served as a liaison to the various ULPS congregations, advising them about their educational programs.<sup>63</sup> Ms. Goodis also worked to develop programs which would break down barriers between able-bodied and physically handicapped people.<sup>64</sup>

Rabbi Pete Tobias was appointed the first part-time Education Coordinator of the Union in 1991. His task was to strengthen the ULPS emphasis in the religious schools of the Union. His main role was to make knowledge of practices and history of Liberal Judaism accessible and attractive to religious schools, to develop the awareness of the ULPS among young people, and to foster a feeling of belonging and a sense of pride in being a part of the Union.<sup>65</sup>

## **Leo Baeck College after Thirty Years**

In 1986, the College celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. At that time, its principal, Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, reflected on its history. By 1986, the Leo Baeck College had graduated eighty-four graduates, about half of whom were serving in Great Britain. The College was the only major rabbinic seminary to open in Europe since the Second World War. Rabbi Magonet called it "an ironic preview of our future breadth" that the first two students to enter the College represented such opposite poles within the community of 1986. Rabbi Michael Leigh of Edgware Reform Synagogue was a leading advocate of a Conservative Jewish approach, and Rabbi Lionel Blue, one of the most innovative and outward-

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<sup>63</sup>Jewish Chronicle, May 31, 1985.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., October 3, 1986.

<sup>65</sup>ULPS News, January, 1992.



looking figures in Anglo-Jewry.<sup>66</sup> By 1986, the vast majority of rabbis serving ULPS congregations were Leo Baeck graduates.

As far as the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues was concerned, it continued its support for the College. At the beginning of the relationship, the Union and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain had supported the College equally from a financial perspective. But as it became clear that the Reform movement's growth in membership was outpacing that of the ULPS, to the point of doubling it, that relationship was adjusted. The two movements began to support the College more proportionally, with the RSGB picking up approximately two-thirds of the burden, with the ULPS paying about one-third.<sup>67</sup>

The two movements continued to provide instructors. Rabbis Hugo Gryn of the RSGB and John Rayner of the ULPS continued to serve as vice-presidents of the College, as well as serving on its faculty. There still were no endowed chairs in any department, however, so the College continued to have "something of a hand-to-mouth existence."<sup>68</sup>

The graduates of the College made an impact on the greater British community in addition to their work in the Jewish community. Rabbi Alexandra Wright addressed a "Women in Publishing" conference in 1986, expressing her view that women of all religious denominations were battling for a place in male-dominated religious institutions. Ms. Bridget Rees and Ms. Janet Morley, from Women in Theology, urged the Church of England to follow in the steps of Progressive Judaism "and understand that a man's calling to the priesthood can also be that of a woman."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Jewish Chronicle, September 19, 1986.

<sup>67</sup>Rabbi John Rayner, interview with the author, July 1997.

<sup>68</sup>Jewish Chronicle, September 19, 1986.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*

Rabbis such as Julia Neuberger and Lionel Blue continued to make their presence felt on a national level. They appeared often in radio and television broadcasts, presenting their views on a wide-range of religious and social issues, in addition to being outspoken from their own pulpits.

### **Redevelopment of the Montagu Centre**

In 1983, the ULPS applied to the London Borough of Camden for permission to undertake a £1 million redevelopment of the Montagu Centre, which had become very run-down. The plans were to demolish the single-story building and basement which housed the West Central Liberal Synagogue, the ULPS offices, and those of the European Board of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and the Peggy Lang Educational Resource Center, and to replace it with a six-story building to house both these facilities and other offices and flats. The London Borough of Camden rejected the plans. The council's planning department said that the proposals "exceed the plot-ratio" for the area and would be considered an over-development of the site. Rabbi Sidney Brichto expressed his surprise and disappointment to the Jewish Chronicle, maintaining that the Union had done everything possible to meet the planning conditions.<sup>70</sup>

By the mid-1980's, the Montagu Centre in the West End had become so dilapidated that the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues considered moving to the soon-to-be renovated Liberal Jewish Synagogue. The LJS was slated for a redevelopment which would be completed in 1989. The Montagu Centre would need tens of thousands of pounds to repair. The West Central Synagogue, housed at the Montagu Centre, contemplated such a move as well.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Jewish Chronicle, December 12, 1983.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., October 17, 1986.

The plan was ultimately rejected in favor of an ambitious plan to redevelop the Montagu Centre itself, which was completed in 1993.

### **"Where We Stand"**

In late 1990, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues published the first seven pamphlets in a series entitled "Where we Stand." The pamphlets were intended to identify in a detailed way the places where Liberal departs from *halacha* in matters of the environment, animal welfare, mourning, pluralism, homosexuality, *kashrut*, and Jewish status. Certainly, some of the pamphlets were more controversial than others, and there would always be more pamphlets to write. Conservative Rabbi Dr. Chaim Pearl criticized the ULPS for failing to publish a pamphlet describing the Liberal's "special concept of Torah and *halacha*."<sup>72</sup> Rabbi Hillel Avidan, then-chairman of the ULPS Rabbinic Conference, responded that the purpose of the series was to state the Union's position on issues of current concern, "and I need hardly remind Dr. Pearl that theology ranks low among the current concerns of Anglo-Jewry."<sup>73</sup>

### **The Five-Year Plan**

In 1990, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues established a Five-Year Plan which aimed at setting targets and objectives for the next five years of the movement. The plan included a statement of what Liberal Judaism is, a strategy for growth in the movement, a plan for social action that the Union might undertake, a communications strategy between the ULPS and the congregations, a plan to increase the role of lay leadership involved in running Union activities, and more. The plan would be revisited and revised only two years later when the

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., January 11, 1991.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., January 18, 1991.

yearly increase in congregational assessments was deemed to be too steep by some congregations in the Union.

## Conclusion

It is difficult to say to what extent Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore would recognize the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues nearly 100 years after its humble beginnings in the Great Central Hotel. Surely in many ways they would find it familiar. A movement which began on a small scale, highly committed to the principles of Liberal Judaism, dedicated to keeping Jews Jewish, the ULPS remains all of these. There are differences, of course, and I believe that Montagu, Montefiore, and Israel Mattuck would be proud to be associated with most of the changes. They were, themselves, committed to creative and meaningful change in Jewish life, and in this regard, they would welcome the developments that we have observed. In their own day, they believed that they were witnesses to a stagnated Judaism, one which had lost its freedom to progress, and which had lost touch with many Jews. Some of their dreams have been realized. But many of the obstacles they faced, many of the battles they sought to win, remain for the leaders of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues to face today.

### **Struggles with the Orthodox Community**

Most difficult for the "Three M's" was the battle for a place in the Anglo-Jewish community. They faced verbal attacks from Orthodox Jews who believed that they had gone beyond the bounds of Judaism, and who did not wish to allow them to develop. They came up against opposition from the Reform Jews, away from whom they were also distancing themselves.

Sadly, in my estimation, this communal opposition remains the largest barrier against the growth of Liberal Judaism today. Over the past fifty years, there



have been moments of hope, when new Orthodox Chief Rabbis began their tenures with promises and gestures, and moments of great anguish, when those same authorities sought to marginalize Liberal Judaism out of disdain or fear. There have been moments when the Board of Deputies, ostensibly the organ of the broad spectrum of Anglo-Jewry, has acted more as the organ of the Orthodox community alone.

Unfortunately, this cycle of small victories followed by great strife seems unlikely to end in the short term. Orthodox Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who entered his position with promises of communal unity, has brought great anger upon himself with words of intolerance. In 1996, Rabbi Hugo Gryn who served the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain and the West London Synagogue for many years, died. Rabbi Sacks declined to attend the funeral, but agreed to attend a memorial service in Rabbi Gryn's honor organized by an interfaith gathering of religious institutions. At that memorial service, Rabbi Sacks praised Rabbi Gryn's memory, and he received grateful thanks from the Progressive movements for doing so. But privately, he wrote a letter to an Orthodox Rabbi in Israel who criticized Rabbi Sacks for speaking at the service. In the letter, Rabbi Sacks acknowledged his great pain at having to praise Rabbi Gryn. The letter was leaked to the Jewish Chronicle, and the repercussions of this painful doublespeak will continue to be felt for many years-- most likely for as long as Rabbi Sacks remains in his post.

The only choice for the rabbinic and lay-leaders of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues is to continue to stand strong on their principles. For nearly 100 years now, the leaders of the ULPS have been unafraid to challenge the Orthodox Chief Rabbis when Union leaders felt they were taking an unjust position, or when the Orthodox Chief Rabbis claimed to represent all of Anglo-Jewry when this was not the case. The ULPS is likely to remain a fringe

movement, which would certainly disappoint Lily Montagu. But it can remain a strong fringe movement as long as it does not compromise on its principles. Ideally the leaders of the Union will continue to take the high ground in this ongoing struggle, continuing to hold out hope for communal unity while not resorting to the kind of vicious attacks which have often emerged from the Orthodox camp.

### **Continuing Cooperation with Reform Synagogues of Great Britain**

Despite failed efforts at merger which were championed most publically by Rabbis John Rayner and Sidney Brichto, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues continues to build strong ties with the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. An example of the continuing cooperation between the clergy of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the RSGB was the 1993 report entitled "The Career of Rabbi in the Progressive Movements" by a joint group on Rabbinic Career Structures. The report was further evidence that the similarities between the two movements did not end with ordination from the Leo Baeck College.

The movements also cooperate closely in matters of Jewish education. The ULPS and RSGB jointly support the work of a teacher's resource center housed at the Sternberg Center which provides both practical materials and ongoing workshops to help develop better teaching skills.

The similarities between the two movements are far greater than their differences. There are real issues in the ways the movements view issues of personal status, but these may be the only issues truly dividing the movements. Perhaps compromises could be made over time concerning these matters. Indeed, in the merger talks of 1984/1985, the suggestion was made that, should the movements wish to move forward to merger, the personal status issues would be left to each rabbi decide for at least a five-year period, after which time the council

of rabbis would consider possible options. Given a chance, I believe, such a compromise would be workable.

The diversity of worship within each movement is so wide and overlapping that it would not be impossible to bring the ritual of all the congregations under one umbrella. The prayerbooks are more alike now than they have ever been since the publication by the ULPS of *Siddur Lev Chadash*. The Reform and Liberal communities have for many years held joint services on various occasions with great success. The joint Rabbinic training at Leo Baeck allows for a diversity of views on ritual and theological matters. In my view, the movements should be able to allow for a range of views as well if they were to merge.

The youth movements of the ULPS and RSGB also are closer in practice than ever. Both are now fully identified as Zionist, both are members of Netzer-Olami, and both continue to struggle with the role *kashrut* and Shabbat observance should play in the life of their movements and their members. They also participate together in university-age programs in Israel.

The ULPS has struggled financially over the past several years. This is a reality which cannot be ignored. The Union's Five Year Plan called for regular increases in the per capita dues to pay for increased programs, but already in 1993 several member-congregations came to the Union Council to say they would be unwilling or unable to pay the increases. This alteration of course resulted most visibly in the change in the *ULPS News* from a monthly to a bi-monthly publication. But a continuing reduction in the Union's budget will not allow the Union to expand or develop new programs and congregations. The question remains whether this trend will continue.

The ULPS and RSGB would both be well-served by merger. Their voice would be louder and their congregations stronger. But, as Rabbi John Rayner explains it, the merger will only come when both sides perceive the need. The

biggest obstacle to merger in the 1980's was a vocal minority, mostly in the RSGB, who felt that merger would require too much compromise. Perhaps the next time consideration is given to merger, the compromise will be deemed worthwhile for the benefits merger would offer the Progressive congregations of Great Britain. I believe that the strongest chance for the spread of the ideals of Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore may well lie in a such a federation. Ironically, Montagu and Montefiore might like the idea of trying to make change from within such an alliance. Perhaps they would make allowances for a wide variety of stands on the issues of personal status in the hope that one day their Liberal principles would prevail. The founders of the Liberal movement sought to bring Jews back to a rational Judaism, and the JRU/ULPS has done that successfully in one way for nearly a century. The Liberal movement, while not dominating the Anglo-Jewish community as Montagu and Montefiore might have hoped, has added greatly to the spectrum of the Anglo-Jewish experience. For example, the Liberal emphasis on the rational in liturgy and upon egalitarian worship, have made it possible for egalitarian Orthodox *minyanim* to emerge slowly in the past several years.

The JRU/ULPS has also brought a different voice to the Anglo-Jewish communal structure. The leaders of the Liberal movement have served as beacons of pluralism in a landscape dominated all too often by a loud, limiting, Orthodox voice. Perhaps maintaining the bold vision of the founders will take bold restructuring and repositioning. But in order to continue to bring people in, in order to continue to be an important voice at the table of Anglo-Jewry, bold steps may need to be considered. The Liberal movement has rarely refused a challenge.

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