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INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY JEWISH SABBATH LITURGIES

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

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DIGEST

The objective of this thesis (as defined in its Introduction) is to present, in an unbiased way, the major ideological and theological underpinnings of five institutionally-distinct movements existing in contemporary American Judaism as found in the official Sabbath liturgy of Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform and Polydox services.

Divided into five chapters, each movement's ideological structure is outlined (after a brief history of each movement) and its liturgy is analyzed on the grounds of its God concepts, attitude toward revelation and salvation, basis of religious authority, meaning of prayer and concept of the Sabbath. Conclusions at the end of each chapter are designed to show how the ideology and theology of each movement compares with its Sabbath liturgy, with the standard of internal consistency used in their evaluation.

The major findings of this thesis are summarized in a chart which demonstrates graphically how these five movements stand on critical issues of ideology and theology with an eye toward the most complete presentation possible of their similarities and differences.

The chart is designed to present both beliefs and liturgical practices of each movement, producing a mosaic of current American Jewish religious life.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary American Jewish religious scene presents five institutionally distinct movements: Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Polydox. These movements are distinguished, first of all, by differences in a number of basic religio-philosophical concepts. These conceptual differences in turn produce correspondingly different liturgical materials and approaches.

The objective of this study is to present in an unbiased way the major ideological and theological underpinnings in the respective Sabbath liturgies.

The Sabbath liturgy -- as opposed to some other forms of religious expression -- has been chosen for consideration for two major reasons. First, the concept of Shabbat has always occupied a central position in Jewish religious tradition. Second, the Sabbath liturgy is the most representative of all Jewish common services because it presents the combination of constant and special (festival) elements in Jewish worship.

The scope of this study would not allow us to pay equal attention to the full range of beliefs, rituals, and religious practices existing in each movement. We will concentrate, instead, only on such fundamental issues as the concept of God, the problem of religious authority (related to the different perceptions of Torah and revelation), the definition of salvation, the attitude towards

prayer, and the meaning of Sabbath. Analyzing the liturgical message of various prayerbooks , we will be more interested in their manifest content than in their symbolism, structure and choreography.

But, most of all, we will focus on the ideological consistency of each movement and on the coherence between proclaimed theoretical views and their practical representation in liturgical materials.

CHAPTER ONE: ORTHODOX JUDAISM

I. Ideology

Definition

The term "Orthodoxy" first appeared in respect to Judaism in 1795 and became widely used from the beginning of the 19th century in contradistinction to the Reform movement. In later times other terms, such as "Torah-true Judaism," "Traditional Judaism," "Normative Judaism," began to be used in reference to the same religious movement which constitutes a direct continuation of Pharisaic Judaism. Today the term "Orthodox" is used to designate a Jewish religious community which maintains that it has obligatory beliefs (dogmas) and practices that every member of the community must follow.

Despite that insistence on uniformity, the contemporary American scene presents, according to some estimates, about 30 different religious groups which are loosely united under the term Orthodox. Among these groups one can find a wide variety of ideological differences on such issues as synagogue practice, relationship to general culture, relations with non-Orthodox Jewish communities, relationship to Zionism and Israel, attitude toward Halachan. For the purpose of our study, however, American Orthodox Judaism can be viewed as a monolithic religious movement united by its basic theological beliefs.

The Concept of Theistic Absolutism

The fundamental religious concept of Orthodox Judaism is commonly called theistic absolutism. It is the notion that God is an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent person who is directly concerned with the individual and collective welfare of men. This concern is expressed by a providence that guides and controls the affairs of man both through ordinary (natural) and extraordinary (miraculous) causation. According to this doctrine, God is both immanent and transcendent, i.e. He is in the universe and involved in all its processes but He is also beyond the universe. If there were no universe there would still be God, but without God there could be no universe. Theistic absolutism says also that God is one, that He is eternal, that He is the Creator of the universe, and that He is wholly good.

The Concept of Verbal Revelation

Orthodox Judaism is based on the belief in the factuality of the Sinaitic experience as recorded in the Bible. According to that belief, in the revelation which Moses and the Jewish people received at Sinai, God made manifest to them His will and the commandments He wishes the Jews to observe. Here, and in other revelations to Moses, the Pentateuch and the Oral Law were revealed.

This form of revelation to which Orthodox Judaism subscribes, can be called "verbal revelation." It is conceived to be a direct communication from God to man, a

communication of ideas contained in words, in which equal sanctity is attached to the words and to the ideas. Thus, according to the notion of verbal revelation, since revelation is the literal word of God, it must be considered entirely infallible and altogether insusceptible to change or alteration except through some subsequent verbal revelation.[1]

The literal understanding of the supernaturally-revealed character of both the Written and the Oral Law is clearly presented by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, a prominent leader of Orthodox Judaism in nineteenth century Germany. "Let us not delude ourselves," says Hirsch.

> The entire matter reduces itself to this question: Is the statement, "And the Lord spoke to Moses," which introduces all the laws of the Torah, true or not? Do we not believe that God, the Almighty and All-Holy God, spoke thus to Moses? Do we mean what we say when, in the circle of fellow-worshippers, we point to the written word of the Torah and declare that God gave us these teachings, and that these teachings are the teachings of truth and that they thereby implanted in us everlasting life? Is all this a mere mouthing of high-sounding phrases? If not, then we must keep those commandments, fulfill them in their original and unabbreviated form. We must observe them under all circumstances and at all times. This word of God must be accepted by us as an eternal standard, transcending all human judgment, as the standard according to which we must fashion all our doings. Instead of complaining that it is no longer in conformity with the times, we should rather complain that the times are no longer in conformity with it. 2

The Basis of Authority

The notions of God as Creator and of infallible verbal revelation are fundamental for the concept of religious authority in Pharisaic-Orthodcx Judaism. The argument can be presented as follows:

1) There is a God, Yahweh, who has created the universe and all that is in it, which includes all members of the human race.

2) As the Creator of all human beings, God possesses rights in humans superior to their own rights in themselves.

3) God, therefore, has the right to absolute authority over every human person.

4) Exercising his authority, God has through revelation issued commandments that the Jews, as people with whom God has special covenental relations, are to obey.

5) These commandments revealed by God to Moses have been transmitted through an unbroken chain of tradition and are now in the possession of the Orthodox Jewish community and particularly of its hierarchy.

6) In revealing His commandments, God has also delegated elements of His authority over the members of the Jewish community to the Orthodox religious community and particularly to its hierarchy.

7) The Orthodox Jewish community, and particularly its hierarchy, now possesses elements of God's own rights in the members of the community, which are superior to the rights they possess in themselves. Thus the Orthodox Jewish religious community, or its hierarchy, possesses <u>absolute authority</u>, by right, over members of the community, and may consequently, command and compel their obedience without their consent.

8) In revealing His will, God has not only made known the commandments that the Jewish people are to obey, and in addition transferred absolute authority over them to the Orthodox religious community and its hierarchy, He also commanded them to use this absolute authority to bring about obedience to God's commandments by all members of the community.

9) Therefore, the Orthodox community, or its hierarchy, being in possession of elements of the Creator God's supreme rights in His creation, is morally justified in exercising absolute authority over members of the community.[3]

Common Service: Its Origin, Time-Schedule, and Major Types of Prayer

The problem of authority is of much significance to our study because it has a direct bearing on the structure and content of a common service, i.e. a service which constitutes the acknowledged public liturgy of a religious community. The common service possesses this status because it represents in its language and formulas the basic beliefs and values subscribed to by the religious community and comprises the essence of the community's religion.

How does a service become the common or acknowledged public serivce of a religious community? The answer depends on the structure of authority in a particular religious community. Since, as we have shown above, in Pharisaic-Orthodox Judaism there is some person or group of persons who are established as absolute authorities and who claim

that their decisions are based ultimately upon a verbal revelation from deity; this person or group of persons have the power to determine what the common service of the community shall be.[4]

The idea of an authorized common liturgy did not exist in the Biblical period of Jewish history. "The history of the early development of the liturgy is veiled in obscurity, since it is not until the Mishnaic period (about 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.) that there is any attempt to establish a definite form for Jewish prayer."[5]

It is irrelevant for the purpose of this study to enter into a discussion of the technical details of the small variations which can be found in existing minhagim or "uses" of the synagogue liturgy, and which have been developed since the Mishnaic period in various parts of the world. Although many distinct varieties of Orthodox services are preserved today by some American congregations, the differences are not really significant.

> The arrangement varies, the substance is not identical in every part, and the phraseology is often unlike in passages otherwise the same in content. To some extent the two main rites of minhagim extant -- the Ashkenazic and the Spanish -- may represent ancient differences between early Palestinian and Babylonian usages. But on the whole the rites contain the same main features which were fixed once for all by the Gaonim. These authorities succeeded the Amoraim, who compiled the Talmud in the fifth century of the current era. The Gaonim held sway in the Persian schools for several centuries, and the Gaon Amram, at about the year 870, prepared a Seder or Prayer Book, with which our present services are in general agreement in so far as the main elements of the liturgy are concerned.6

But even before the appearance of the first written prayer book, the statutory character of Jewish liturgy was firmly established: "The structure, as well as the standard elements of the services were already fixed in the second century C.E. in Palestine, and were accepted by all Jewish communities in the world."[7] The proper way of conducting common services was of such importance in traditional Judaism that, according to the Talmud, God Himself showed Moses the "Seder Tefillah" -- the order of prayer.[8] The word "order" means in this context both the time of services and their basic structure.

There are three daily services throughout the year: in the morning (Shaharith), in the afternoon (Minha), and in the evening (Maariv). The reason for worshipping three times daily was originally to serve as a substitute for daily sacrifices: Shaharith and Minha represented the morning and afternoon sacrificial offerings. The evening service was established as a substitute for the sacrifices that were burned at night.[9] After the morning service on Sabbaths (as well as on the festivals and New Moon days) there is an additional service (Musaf) in commemoration of the additional sacrifice offered at the Temple on these days.[10]

The liturgy of each traditional service consists of four types of prayers: the prayers of petition in which God is entreated to grant man's request; the prayers of thanksgiving for favors received; the penitential prayers, asking God for forgiveness of sins; and the doxology, the prayers of praise.[11]

Concept of Prayer

If in relation to the problem of religious authority Orthodox Judaism can be characterized as a form of theistic absolutism, in relation to prayer its theology may be termed "conversation theism." It is based on the premise that

> God receives, is directly influenced by and responds to the prayers of men much as a human person receives, is influenced by, and responds to conversation. Prayer is direct conversation with God. Such conversation is not only possible, but is the primary means of salvation. This distinguishes conversation theism from other concepts of theism, as the concept that man may engage in direct conversation with the Deity, and that such conversation brings special favor in this world and immortal expectation for the next. 12

Traditional Judaism conceives prayer as the expression of child-like trust in God, of submission and resignation to the will of God, and as the proper means of union with God. Thus prayer plays the role of link between God and man, and it is perceived as a natural human activity.

> It is an instinct that springs eternally from man's unquenchable faith in a living God, almighty and merciful, Who heareth prayer, and answereth those who call upon Him in truth; and it ranges from half-articulate petition for help in distress to highest adoration, from confession of sin to jubilant expression of joyful fellowship with God, from thanksgiving to the solemn resolve to do His will as if it were our will. Prayer is a Jacob's ladder joining earth to heaven; and, as nothing else, wakens in the children of men the sense of kinship with their Father on High. 13

Prayer as a Duty

Traditional Judaism distinguishes between two types of prayer: voluntary (tefillat reshut) and obligatory (tefillat

chovah). This distinction can be traced to the sacrificial cult in the Temple period when some offerings were not a matter of legal requirements but the acts of free will, and some other sacrifices were mandatory and were considered to be the fulfillment of an obligation which man has towards God.

The concept of obligatory prayer has presented a problem in traditional Judaism because there is no direct Biblical commandment to this effect. An obligation to pray was derived at by means of the rabbinic exegesis. The logic of the argument is presented by Moses Maimonides in his "Code of Jewish Law":

> It is a positive precept to pray each day, as it is said: "And ye shall serve the Lord your God . . ." (Ex. XXIII, 25). Tradition teaches that the service spoken of here is prayer, as it is said: "And to serve Him with all your heart" (Deut. XI, 13). "What is the service of the heart?" ask the Sages, "prayer!" 14

In other words, when the Bible commands Jews to serve the Lord with all their hearts, it is really a commandment to pray. Thus prayer came to be regarded as a divine commandment, an obligation, a mitzvah. In this way, obligatory prayer became a part of a total system of observance based on verbal revelation and on divine commandments, and it is a system to which Orthodox Judaism still adheres today. Rabbinical Judaism emphasized the importance of voluntary prayer which must be performed in the right spirit; not as a fixed task that has to be done, but as a fervent pouring out of the soul of the pious man which

comes from the heart which is truly moved.[15] It is also said that a man should pray only when he has a longing to do so in his own heart.[16] But interestingly enough, some modern Orthodox theologians value the obligatory statutory prayer much higher than the irrepressible spontaneous "ourpouring of the soul." Here is how, for instance, the relationship of voluntary to obligatory prayer is described by Rabbi Eliezer Berkovitz:

> When a man, overwhelmed by the impact of a specific experience, seeks the nearness of God or bursts forth in halleluyah or bows down in gratitude, it is prayer but not the service of God yet; it is a human response to a potent stimulus. But when he prays without a stimulus of a specific occasion, acknowledging that man is always dependent on God, that independently of all personal experience God is always to be praised and to be thanked then -- and only then -- is prayer divine service of the heart. 17

Keva vs. Kavvanah

The problem of the obligatory vs. the voluntary in prayer is directly connected to another old issue in traditional Judaism, namely the tension between the concepts of keva and kavvanah. The term kavvanah has no exact equivalent in the English language. It has been translated as "concentration," "devotion," "intention," or "inwardness." The concept implies a total concentration on the act of prayer, so that one reaches a state of worship that encompasses all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's might. For the Rabbis, kavvanah was the absolute prerequisite of true prayer. "Prayer without kavvanah is like a body without the soul."[18] The Rabbis of the Talmud recognized

the critical importance of sincerity and spontaneity for genuine prayer. The Mishnah quotes a definitive statement by one of the Sages: "If a man makes his prayer a fixed task, it is not a (true) supplication."[19] And the Talmud defines "a fixed task" as prayers which consist of an established liturgy with nothing new added.[20] On the other hand, the Rabbis stated that one cannot wait for the rare moments of inspiration when one engages in prayers of self-expression, because this may result in not praying at all. As Israel Abrahams put it: "What can be done at any time and in any manner is apt to be done at no time and in no manner."[21]

The gradual crystallization of authorized parts of the worship service brought about that facet of Jewish liturgy which the ancient Rabbis called keva, the fixed, the routine, the traditional. But affirming the necessity of the keva aspect of Jewish communal worship raised a serious dilemma: If the highest form of prayer is spontaneous prayer, the prayer of kavvanah, how can keva, a fixed prayer routine, be approved? A view of modern Orhtodox Judaism on this issue is well presented by Rabbi J. H. Hertz:

> The prayers had become statutory, and were nc longer spontaneous outbursts of devotion. But be it remembered that only divinely-favoured individuals are capable of spontaneous prayer; the overwhelming majority of mankind must have their prayers -- if these are to serve a spiritual and ethical purpose -- written or spoken for them in fixed, authoritative forms. Prescribed prayers, moreover, have their real, lasting and

> irreplaceable value. Heiler, the greatest authority on the psychology and history of Prayer, writes: "Formularies of prayer can kindle, strengthen and purify the religious life. Even in prayers recited without complete understanding, the worshipper is conscious that he has to do with something holy; that the words which he uses bring him into relation with God. In spite of all externalism, prescribed prayer has acted at all times as a mighty lever in the spiritual life." 22

Another attempt to harmonize the ideas of keva and kavvanah has been made by Prof. Abraham Joshua Heschel. If we use words in our prayer, says Heschel, we must realize that words, even our own words, are really external to us -- only slightly less external than the words which others have written for us. But, to the extent to which man may derive inspiration from the use of words in the first place, to that extent man may, on occasion, feel that the words which the great men of prayer have composed for him may be even more adequate to his needs than the words for which man may have to grope himself.[23] According to Heschel, therefore, it is not at all impossible to use the traditional and fixed words with all the inwardness and the urgency of a spontaneous prayer.

The Language of Prayer

The dialectics between keva and kavvanah are pivotal for the understanding of a long-lasting discussion about the proper language of prayer. The traditional Jewish legal literature states clearly that one may pray in any language which he understands, whether that language is the "Holy Tongue" (Hebrew) or any other vernacular. The Mishnah lists two major prayers: the Shema and the Amidah among

the ritual and liturgical passages which "may be recited in any language."[24] Maimonides in his "Code of Jewish Law," says:

> All the benedictions may be said in any language, provided one says them according to their essential character, as ordained by the Sages. And, if one has deviated from the formula, as long as he has mentioned the Name of God and His Kingdom and the subject matter of the benediction, even in the vernacular, he has fulfilled his obligation.

Even the Shulchan Arukh, the authoritative code of Jewish law considered binding by Orthodox Judaism, leaves no doubt about the legitimacy of prayer in the vernacular:

> A man can pray in whatever language he desires. This applies to prayer offered in a congregation. But an individual should pray only in the Holy Tongue. However, there are those who say that the latter provision applies only to him who voices his own needs, such as one who prays on behalf of a sick person or on account of some other suffering in his own household; but that in the case of the prayer which is fixed for the whole congregation, even the individual may recite it in any language. And there are those who say that even the individual voicing his own needs may do so in any language he desires, except in Aramaic. 26

In spite of the clear position of the traditional legal authorities on the issue, when the early Reformers of the nineteenth century began to use the vernacular for portions of their services, the defenders of Tradition attacked them as heretics. Orthodox leaders of that time were forced to borrow their arguments from numerology and mysticism in order to deny the idea which had been sanctioned even by the Shulchan Arukh. But today the retention of Hebrew as the language of prayer is defended by Orthodox

Judaism on different grounds. The major arguments can be summarized in the following way (not necessarily in the order of importance):

1) Since for many centuries the Hebrew language was withdrawn from secular life, it became Leshon ha-Kodesh, the Holy Tongue. Its usage in the liturgy brings a sense of mystery, increasing both the solemnity and emotional appeal of the service. Even for a person who can read Hebrew but does not understand the meaning, it is a "special" language for a very "special" communication. "It carries the overtones of eternity, the intimations of a transcendent reality -- just because its sounds do not translate themselves, for him, into any objective references to mundane existence."[27]

2) The Hebrew language as used in the synagogue services contributes to the cohesion of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. It serves also as a link between Jews in Diaspora and in the State of Israel.

3) Any translation of Hebrew prayers, however good, cannot capture the full flavour and multitude of meanings of the original. (To demonstrate this point, Rabbi Louis Jacobs has provided thirty different interpretations of Shema yisrael adonai elohenu adonai echad, ranging from the second century through the twentieth.)[28]

4) The retention of Hebrew in services and rituals provides the major impetus for its study and for Jewish education in general.

The dilemma of Hebrew vs. the vernacular as the proper language of common services, is solved today by the majority of American Orthodox congregations in the following fashion: they use prayerbooks with accurate English translations printed alongside of Hebrew texts which are predominantly used in the services.

II. Liturgy

The Concept of Sabbath

The traditional Jewish Sabbath liturgy expresses fully the main ideas of Sabbath presented in the Bible, Talmud and subsequent Rabbinical literature: physical and spiritual rest and joy, spiritual elevation, and instruction in Jewish religious and ethical principles. Foremost among the Sabbath theme is the contrast between the decalogues in Exodus and Deuteronomy which provide two different reasons for the observance of the Sabbath.[29] In Exodus the commandment for Sabbath rest is based on the idea that God rested on the seventh day from His universal task of creation; in Deuteronomy, because God led the Jewish people out of Egypt. The Sabbath thus encapsulates the tension between the universal and the particular in traditional Judaism, the uniqueness of God's love for Israel joined to His love for all creation. In addition there is a difference in wording between two commandments. The command in Exodus 20:8 begins, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" while in Deuteronomy 5:12 it says, "Observe the

Sabbath day to keep it holy." Liturgy follows the tradition which explains that both forms were communicated by God simultaneously, i.e. the Fourth Commandment in Deuteronomy, though differing in form, does not imply anything that was not revealed by God on Mt. Sinai.[30]

The Sabbath is personified as a Queen and as a Bride, to be welcomed each week with radiant joy.[31] Following the Midrashic simile of the architect who has plans for the whole structure before beginning the building, traditional liturgy presents the Sabbath as the end and the pinnacle of the Creation, for which end everything else was made.[32] The weekly hallowing of the Sabbath is viewed as a sign of a perennial renewal of the Covenant that God established with the Patriarchs.[33] The Sabbath is endowed by God with a blessing and thus it is specifically marked off as a day consecrated to God and the life of the spirit.[34] The Sabbath is seen also as evidence that God has chosen Israel and sanctified it above other nations.[35] Since the day when "God rested from all His work," was so precious to the Creator, He "called the Sabbath day a delight."[36]

The Concept of God

The concept of God in the Orthodox liturgy corresponds directly to the theology of conversation theism. In the words of Rabbi J.H. Hertz,

> We address God as a Person. That is a fact of fundamental importance. Our God is not a mere physical Force, an unconscious Being chained in mechanical laws and deaf to prayer. Judaism proclaims a God Who is a conscious Personality,

> Who made and knows human heart, Who hears and answers those who cry unto Him . . . Each individual worshipper approaches God in direct speech, as his Father, Guide, Friend." 37

On the other hand, Rabbi Hertz tries to explain many anthropomorphic and anthropopathic references to God in the traditional Jewish liturgy by saying that they are "employed in the Bible to make intelligible to the finite, human mind that which relates to the Infinite."[38]

In contradistinction to views of Moses Maimonides who claims in his "Guide of the Perplexed" that aside from the fact that God's existence cannot be denied, nothing is known of God except what He is not, conversation theism speaks of God in terms of positive attributes. God is perceived as a gracious and merciful Father,[39] who by His creative word established the world and all natural order,[40] and who reveals His will in human, and particularly Jewish, history.[41] He is a great, mighty and revered God[42] who is jealous and angry at those who serve other gods and worship them.[43] He is King, Helper, Saviour, and Shield.[44] God is not only protecting and saving[45], He is also the God of vengeance.[46] God is omniscient: "He watcheth and knoweth our secret thoughts, He beholdeth the end of a thing before it existeth."[47] God is Eternal[48] and Unique[49]: "He, the Father and Sustainer of the lives and spirits of all flesh, the everlasting Power who guides the destinies of men and nations, is One, because there is no other God than He; but He is also One, because He is wholly unlike

anything else in existence. He is thus the Sole and unique God."[50] Therefore, it is a man's duty to love God,[51] to praise Him,[52] to thank Him,[53] and to Him alone is it right to pray.[54] Man shall have complete trust in Divine Providence and shall not fear.[55]

The Doctrine of the Chosen People

The doctrine of the Chosen People is based in the traditional liturgy on the idea of God's special love for Israel.[56] Because of His love, God has chosen Israel and hallowed it above all nations;[57] for the sake of Israel, He does miracles and wonders;[58] and as a special gift He revealed to Israel His Torah and taught Israel His precepts, laws, and judgments.[59]

The Concept of Revelation

The idea of super-natural verbal revelation constitutes a cornerstone of the traditional Jewish liturgy because such revelation is "the obvious inference and corollary of the character of Deity held by all who believe in a Personal God and Father in Heaven; in prayer to Whom, in worship of Whom, and in communication with Whom, the highest moments of our lives are passed and lived."[60] The liturgy confirms that the Torah received by Moses at Sinai is infallible and absolutely true.[61] This also includes the Oral Tradition which "Moses . . . received on Sinai, and handed . . . down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed down to the Men of the Great Synagogue."[62] The content of

Divine Revelation is everlasting and will not be altered.[63] It contains specific commandments which must be faithfully obeyed and transmitted by Israel from generation to generation.[64] Through obedience to God's will, i.e. to the commandments, mitzvoth, Israel becomes "holy," i.e. separated from the things that are base and inferior, and becomes at one with all things that make for righteousness and goodness.

The Doctrine of Reward and Punishment

The doctrine that obedience to the will of God and to His commandments is rewarded and disobedience punished, is bound up in the traditional liturgy with a basic belief in a God of Justice. Because God is just, He will not treat the righteous and the wicked in the same manner.[65] But reward shall not be the motive for virtue -- the motive shall be love, a free enthusiasm in obeying the will of God: "Be not as servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward . . ."[66] Following the Pharisaic tradition with its belief in immortality, the Orthodox Jewish liturgy presents the system of Divine Justice as working not necessarily during the human lifetime but in Eternity: "Know that the reward of the righteous will be in the time to come"[67], i.e. in the Hereafter. In Rabbinical idioms, this world is a vestibule, the Future World is man's true home, and there he is brought into justice for his deeds on earth.

The Concept of Salvation and Messianic Hopes

The concept of Salvation in traditional Judaism does not mean an idea of redemption from sin in this world, and

deliverance from its consequences thereafter. (For these conceptions, the words "repentance for sin" and "forgiveness of sin" are commonly used.) According to Rabbi J.H. Hertz, "In Siddur . . . salvation denotes either deliverance from distress and peril, or freedom from the moral expansion of our higher nature. It is something that saves us from our lower self, illumines and regenerates our soul, and makes us willing instruments of God's Eternal plan."[68] The liturgy depicts God as the only source of salvation,[69] and the One who "causeth salvation to spring forth."[70] In addition, the concept of salvation in traditional Judaism and its liturgy has distinctive eschatological overtones and is directly connected with the Messianic hopes and expectations.

Modern Orthodoxy retains unimpaired both traditional doctrines: that of the personal Messiah and that of the Messianic Age. J. Klausner[71] thus describes the difference between what he calls the "Messianic expectations" and a more explicit "belief in the Messiah." His definition of the Messianic expectation is: "The prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which there will be political freedom, moral perfection, and earthly bliss for the people of Israel in its own land, and also for the entire human race." His definition of the belief in the Messian is: "The prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which a strong redeemer, by his power and his spirit, will bring complete redemption, political and spiritual, to the people of Israel, and along with this, earthly bliss and moral perfection to the entire

human race." In fact, the Orthodox liturgy blends together both doctrines described above, and connects them directly with the ideas of the world to come and the resurrection of the dead.[72] In Traditional Jewish theology there has never been agreement on the order of events in the Messianic future, or on its major components which were hotly disputed during various historical periods. But modern Orthodox Prayer Books absorbed and preserved the following major elements: God is the ultimate source of the Messianic future;[73] in order to redeem Israel, God will send a Messiah who will be a scion of the Davidic house;[74] the Messiah will rebuild the Temple, gather in the dispersed ones of Israel, and restore the sacrificial cult;[75] the dead will be resurrected;[76] and the Kingdom of God will be established on earth.[77]

III. Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that Orthodox liturgy reflects faithfully all the basic concepts of Orthodox theology.

Since every period of Jewish history left its imprint upon the traditional prayer book, it contains some discernible internal contradictions (e.g. in its conceptions of the Messianic future). Through the centuries, the traditional Jewish liturgy has undergone a constant process of addition and whatever was admitted into the liturgy, almost always remained there to stay. Thus an Orthodox Prayer Book contains some prayers which are completely devoid today

of any meaning (e.g. a prayer for the welfare of the heads of the Babylonian academies).[78] The preservation of such prayers in a common service demonstrates the fundamental intransigence of modern Orthodoxy.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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3. Reines, Elements. op. cit., pp. 44-46.

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5. Ismar Elbogen, "Liturgy." In: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, v.VII, p.139.

6. Israel Abrahams, A Companion to the Authorized Daily Prayerbook, (New York, Hermon Press, 1966) pp. 2-3.

7. A.Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy and Its Development, (New York, Schocken Books, 1967) p.XVII.

8. Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashana 17b.

9. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 26b.

10. Numbers 28:9.

11. For the detailed structure of traditional Sabbath services, see Jacob J. Petuchowski, Guide to the Prayerbook, Cincinnati, HUC-JIR, 1967, pp. 55-56.

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13. J.H. Hertz, The Authorized Daily Prayer Book, (London, Shapiro Vallentine & Co., 1959) Introduction, pp. X-XI.

14. Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoth Tephillah 1:1.

15. See: Avoth 2:18.

16. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 3b.

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23. A.J. Heschel, Man's Quest for God, (New York, Scribner's Publishing, 1954) pp. 64ff.

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29. The Authorized Daily Prayer Book. Translated by S. Singer. (London, Eyrr and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1925) pp.114, 124, and throughout.

30. Ibid., p.111.

31. Ibid., pp.111-112.

32. Ibid., p.112.

33. Ibid., p.114, 139.

34. Ibid., p.117.

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36. Ibid., p.130.

37. J.H. Hertz, The Authorized Daily Prayer Book, op. cit., p.10.

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43. Ibid., p.113b, and elsewhere.
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50. Hertz, Prayer Book, op. cit., p.438.
51. Singer, Prayer Book, op. cit., pp.8, 41, and throughout.
52. Ibid., pp.126, 169, and throughout.
53. Ibid., p.160, and throughout.
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55. Ibid., p.3, and elsewhere.
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57. Ibid., p.148, 169, and throughout.
58. Ibid., pp.3,4, and throughout.
59. Ibid., p.96, and throughout.
60. Hertz, Prayer Book, op. cit., p.252.
61. Singer, Prayer Book, op. cit., pp. 3, 147, 148, and throughout.
62. Ibid., p.184.
63. Ibid., p.3, and elsewhere.
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65. Ibid., pp.3, 16, 147, and throughout.

66. Ibid., p.184.

67. Ibid., p.190.

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70. Ibid., p.132, and elsewhere.

71. J. Klausner, The Messianic Idea in Israel. (New York, 1955) p.9.

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CHAPTER TWO: CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

I. Ideology

Definition and Ideological Vagueness

"Conservative Judaism" is a term that has been applied rather loosely to that trend in Judaism which is regarded as holding a midway position between Reform and Orthodoxy. The founders of Conservative Judaism had no intention of starting a new wing in Judaism. Their purpose and their philosophy were clearly expressed in the name they applied to themselves. They were conservative and their objective was to conserve the Jewish tradition. Such prominent leaders of the movement as Sabato Morais, Solomon Schechter, Louis Ginzberg, and Cyrus Adler, asserted on many occasions that they represented a tendency and not a party. The Conservative movement has always clung to the position that it is not a denomination in the Jewish fold. It holds that it is Judaism.

The Conservative movement marks a trend in American Jewish life which arose during the forties in nineteenth century Germany, and was known at first as "Positive- Historic Judaism," a term coined by Rabbi Zachariah Frankel. In America, it was used first by Sabato Morais to describe the congregation Mikve Israel of Philadelphia as the citadel of Orthodoxy. In his first appeal for the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York in 1896, Morais used the terms "Orthodoxy" and "Conservatism" interchangeably.[1]

According to Rabbi Robert Gordis, the designation "Conservative Judaism" was

> borrowed from English-speaking orthodoxy in Great Britain with which it had a slight accidental connection . . . While it partially indicates that the goal of the movement is the conservation of Jewish tradition, it fails to do justice to its essentially progressive and dynamic character . . . Conceivably, other designations like "progressive" or even "liberal" would be more truly descriptive of the movement than "conservative," but these have been preempted by other groups in greater or lesser degree." 2

Since from the time of its inception and for a long time after, the accredited leaders of the Conservative movement denied that it constituted a new alignment in Judaism, they made a virtue of necessity and refused to set forth any systematic ideological program. The ideological vagueness of Conservative Judaism has been frequently criticized by its own prominent members.

According to Rabbi Moshe Davis, "The unresolved, recurring question at every convention [of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, the professional association of Conservative rabbis] was: What is Conservative Judaism?"[3] Rabbi Milton Steinberg replied to the question "What is Conservative Judaism?" in the following way:

> In practice it is kind of middle-of-the-roadism. . . between Orthodoxy and Reform. This in a nutshell is the program. As to the theory, it is regrettably difficult to put it precisely. Truth to tell, Conservatism has still not formulated the philosophy on which it stands. 4

The same position is upheld by Rabbi Solomon Goldman:

> . . . [in Conservatism] one can never be quite certain that he is speaking for anybody but

> himself. Conservative Judaism has nowhere been defined . . . One searches . . . for even a trace of an attempt to deal with fundamentals . . . These essential considerations seem either to have been overlooked because of the pressure of more "practical" affairs, or to have been studiously avoided because of excessive politeness . . . 5

Rabbi Max Routtenberg in his Report to the Rabbinic Assembly stated:

> We are constantly being asked, "Where do you stand?" and by our answers reveal that we are not standing at all but doing some adroit side-stepping. 6

While Conservative rabbis debate the matter, the laity voices its concern, too. Julian Freeman of Indianapolis, a prominent layman who has been exceptionally interested in ideology, has stated that:

> What further complicates the matter is that ten different Conservative rabbis will have ten different ideas of Conservative Judaism. I speak from personal experience when I tell you that in interviewing approximately ten Conservative rabbis who were candidates for our pulpit, each and every one of them had a different slant on Conservative Judaism. 7

It would be wrong to claim that the Conservative movement has not made attempts at ideological clarification. We can point out at least two publications which purport to explain the ideology of Conservatism. One, edited by Rabbi Theodore Friedman, consists of excerpts from the writings of the Jewish Theological Seminary Presidents (such as Cyrus Adler and Louis Finkelstein), as well as of many prominent Conservative shcolars and rabbis.[8] The other item, written by Rabbi Robert Gordis, is called "Conservative Judaism: An American Philosophy."[9] In it the author reviews the theories of various rabbis and scholars whose

ideas are assumed, in sum, to constitute the ideology of the Conservative movement. However, Rabbi Gordis' attempt to present Conservatism as a coherent ideology is based on glossing over some of the contradictions and points up only the areas of agreement. It seems that the comment which he made about Friedman's collection is relevant to his own work:

> Our failure to evolve a philosophy has led to several unhappy consequences. Conservative Judaism has been accused of seeking to straddle the issues by making a principle of unclarity. Some of our most articulate voices have sought, therefore, to evolve a new philosophy and program of action . . . Characteristically, when the National Academy for Adult Jewish studies wished to publish a manual on Conservative Judaism, it could only issue a collection of papers concerning which it confesses that "the points of view expressed are often at variance with one another." 10

Despite the fact that the Conservative movement is seen by many of its members as inchoate and amorphous, there are, according to Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, "three discernible groups or schools of thought in the Conservative movement, which, for the purposes of discussion may be designated respectively as Right, Center and Left."[11]

The right wing of the Conservative movement is practically indistinguishable, in Rabbi Kaplan's opinion, from Orthodoxy with just some minor adjustments made:

> The Rightists subscribe to the thirteen principles of the Maimonidean creed. In retaining the principles concerning the personal Messian and bodily resurrection, they reserve to themselves the right to interpret those principles figuratively. They permit themselves such liberties of belief concerning the authorship of the Torah as an Ibn Ezra, for example, permitted himself. These liberties, of

> course, are very limited, and intended only for the initiated. On the whole, they accept the traditional belief with regard to the supernatural origin and character of the Torah . . . Their theology coincides almost entirely with that formulated in Joseph Albo's Ikkarim . . . In the matter of ritual practice, they are guided in the main by the Shulhan Aruk which they regard as authoritative and binding . . . In the prayer-book they would not permit any tampering with the traditional text of any part of the service. They do not accept the Sabbath and Festival Prayer-book published by the Joint Prayer Book Commission of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue, because of the changes it has introduced in the petitions for the restoration of the sacrificial cult . . . 12

Since the theology and liturgy of the Right wing of Conservatism coincide in their basic parts with those of Orthodoxy, and the Left wing is under the strong influence of the Reconstructionist movement,[13] we will equate henceforth, for the purposes of this study, the Conservative movement with its Centrist group. Following Rabbi Kaplan, we will define the Centrist group in the Conservative movement as "the continuation of the school of thought, first articulated by Zacharias Frankel and later transferred to this country by Solomon Schechter."[14]

Rabbi Frankel's ideological platform, namely "Positive-Historical Judaism" (or simply "Historical Judaism") is described in the following way by Rabbi Robert Gordis:

> . . . Frankel believed . . . that traditional Judaism through the ages was not static and unchanged, but, on the contrary, the product of historical development. This complex of values, practices and ideas, however, was not to be lightly surrendered, for the sake of convenience, conformity or material advantage, masquerading as love of progress. A positive attitude of reverence and understanding toward traditional

> Judaism was essential. Changes would and should occur, but they should be part of a gradual organic growth. 15

The fundamental views of "Postive-Historical Judaism" and the relationship between this school of thought and the contemporary Conservative movement are clearly formulated by Milton Steinberg:

> . . . the nearest approach (of Conservatism) to an ideology is the phrase "historical Judaism," a key idiom of its original founders. This would seem to mean two things. First, Judaism is a historical phenomenon, that is to say, it is possessed of a rich and valuable past . . . "Historical Judaism" has another significance. Judaism, it implies, is a phenomenon in history, a growing evolving organism . . . it must change in conformity with a changing world. 16

The Concept of Revelation and the Problem of Authority

The evolutionary principle, proclaimed by the Historical School, contradicts the belief in divine revelation; the one is a naturalistic concept, while the other is a supernatural doctrine. Those members of the Historical school who clung to tradition attempted to reconcile the two ideas by reinterpreting the doctrine of revelation in rationalistic terms. They explained it as a metaphor, a subjective experience, an inspired thought, or even as divine guidance in historic destiny.[17] The Conservatives have followed a similar pattern. Kaplan stated:

> One thing is certain. The Center group no longer believes in the divine revelation as a historical event but as a theological concept. That difference is far more revolutionary than it sounds. As a historical event, "revelation" . . . denotes a miracle that was visible and audible at a particular time and place. As a theological concept "revelation" denotes a natural experience of the human mind which reacts to anything as opening up new vistas of meaning and holiness. 18

The same view is expressed even more expressively by Rabbi Jacob Agus:

> The naive picture of revelation as consisting of "the Lord dictating and Moses transcribing" is taken to be no more than a symbolic representation of the process of Divine inspiration, that is itself beyond the power of human comprehension . . . The Torah contains the Word of God, especially when it is understood by way of total self-identification with the historic experience of Israel, but the detailed precepts, phrases and words of the Holy Scriptures are not all in their bare literalness, the word of God. 19

Despite the authoritative opinions of Rabbis Kaplan and Agus, the views on revelation in the Conservative movement are far from being unanimous. Rabbi Robert Gordis who is widely recognized as one of the leading spokesmen for the Conservative movement, presents a desperate attempt to combine the evolutionary position of the Historical School with a traditional belief in the Sinaitic revelation. On one hand, according to Gordis, "revelation is a never-ending process, suffering all the vicissitudes of human life because human beings, weak and imperfect and varying widely in their profundity and insight, are creative partners with God in the process."[20] On the other hand, Gordis believes that "the theophany on Sinai may be conceived of literally, mystically, or philosophically, but it represents a basic historical fact without which all the subsequent history of judaism and, indeed, of the Jewish people is inexplicable."[21] Rabbi Gordis does not provide any explanation of what establishes the Sinaitic revelation as a "historical fact" except the literal

reading of Pentateuch; and if this reading is correct how is it compatible in its entirety with any other interpretation, suggested by Gordis? Generally speaking, this type of argument is reminiscent of Voltaire's famous saying: "If God did not exist, He would need to be invented."

Defining its concept of revelation is, obviously, of paramount importance to the Conservative movement because it is directly connected to the problem of authority. The problem is clear: If verbal revelation of Sinai is discarded, what can be substituted as a sanction for the mitzvoth? In other words: If God does not command us to observe, who or what does? The solution to this problem has been the concept of "Catholic Israel" -- an idea formulated by Solomon Schechter. According to this conception, neither reason nor verbal revelation is the basis for observance; rather it is "the conscience of Catholic Israel," i.e. the religious practice currently in vogue.

Since the majority of the Jewish people, or "Catholic Israel," observed the mitzvoth at the time when Schechter elaborated this idea, following group patterns meant conforming to tradition. One could observe Jewish law on the basis that he was merely adhering to the customs and ceremonies of his people rather than because of any belief in a system of supernaturally-sanctioned legislation. It was also stressed that observance of the rituals contributed to group integration and survival. Schechter explained the concept as follows:

> It is not the mere revealed Bible that is of the first importance to the Jew, but the Bible as it repeats itself in history, in other words, as it is interpreted by Tradition . . . Since then the interpretation of Scripture or the Secondary Meaning is mainly a product of changing historical influences, it follows that the center of authority is actually removed from the Bible and placed in some living body, which, by reason of its being in touch with the ideal aspirations and the religious need of the age, is best able to determine the nature of the Secondary meaning. This living body, however, is not represented by any section of the nation, or any corporate priesthood, or Rabbihood, but by the collective conscience of Catholic Israel as embodied in the Universal Synagogue. [22]

A very important corollary of Schechter's position is the one that has a bearing on a concept of individual salvation. According to Orthodoxy, what the Jew must do to achieve salvation is clearly set forth in the supernaturally revealed teaching of the Torah, as interpreted by the Sages. Orthodoxy demands absolute faith in Jewish tradition, and, in return, it provides the Jew with a detailed regimen of conduct leading to salvation. According to Schechter's views, the Jew should so identify himself with the Jewish People, or with the "Synagogue," that he will become imbued with its historic consciousness and its world-outlook, and thus he will achieve the good and meaningful life that makes for salvation.

This premise has been sharply criticized by Mordecai Kaplan because it promises more than it fulfills:

> That principle sounds as though it really affords both inspiration and guidance to the modern Jew, as though it provides the way to his self-fulfillment, in that it enables him to achieve the syn-

> thesis of what is best in his tradition with what is best in the modern world. Upon careful scrutiny, however, that principle turns out to be a method of salvation by evasion. It evades outward difficulties and inner conflicts, instead of coming to close grips with them. 23

Kaplan proceeds to explain that the tendency to escape the need of grappling with the harsh realities of life is not new:

> Traditional religion, with its outworldliness, which placed the purpose and center of human life in the hereafter rather than in the here and the now, offered that type of escape. "The safest refuge from time" it has been said, "is eternity." But now that the ideal of eternity has lost its hold on the human mind, another method of escape from the world which is too much with us is being tried. That is the salvation through history. The safest refuge from the present has come to be the past. 24

The concept of Catholic Israel can be also criticized from a different angle. One of its major objectives was to combat the innovations introduced by the Reform movement. Since most of Jewry at the time was observant, the Reformers could be accused of not following the practices of Catholic Israel. At present, however, most Jews are not observant, and in this sense it is the traditional Jews who can be perceived as deviants from Klal Israel. Sensing the inadequacy of Schechter's views for the present conditions, the Conservative movement is forced to make a radical readjustment in the Catholic Israel idea. Rabbi Gordis, for example, redefines its meaning in the following manner:

> Catholic Israel includes only those who have remained loyal to various Jewish traditions, as well as individuals who are "sensitive" to their lack of observance and to the problem of tradition in general. 25

The new concept is of course a contradiction in terms -- Gordis admits that it excludes the majority of Jews[26] and, consequently, only a handful of Conservative Jewry, other than the rabbis, qualify for membership in a redefined Catholic Israel. Thus, proclaiming that "the theory [of Catholic Israel] as set forth by Frankel and Schechter proves unworkable in practice,"[27] Gordis offers a substitute which is even less sound.

Another attempt to interpret Schechter's ideas and to make them acceptable for the present day, is made by Rabbi Mordecai Waxman. He offers a concept of "vertical democracy" which, in his view, is "complimentary" to the ideas of Catholic Israel and Historical Judaism:

> The Conservative movement has tacitly recognized that even in an age which desires democracy in its institutions, the concept of democracy must be refined. Vertical democracy is a recognition that it is not only the present generation which has a voice in ongoing institutions. The past and the future must be allowed an equal vote. Thus, in evaluating Judaism in the present, we are constrained to let all the weight of past decisions play upon our own thinking and we are impelled so to treat Judaism that it will live on for future generations. [28]

Waxman believes that ideas of the founders of the Conservative movement become

> meaningless unless they are accompanied by a further development, and that is a willingness to recognize that the principles of authority and interpretation . . . apply to our own day . . . Conservative Judaism holds itself bound by the Jewish legal tradition, but asserts the right of its rabbinical body acting as a whole, to interpret and to apply Jewish law. [29]

"To interpret and to apply Jewish law" is the task delegated to the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly.

But interestingly enough, its decisions are not binding for Conservative rabbis:

> The decisions and opinions of the Law Committee can therefore only be taken as the collective . . . judgements within the Rabbinical Assembly, judgements arrived at after due considerations of all the viewpoints represented in our movement. These judgements or responsa are channels marking the main current . . . of our thinking. We take them as studied directions rather than directives . . .
>
> Since no sanctions are to be imposed, and members are free to follow the majority or minority opinion, there is no need for a vote by the Convention on specific questions considered by the Committee . . .
>
> While we do not apply sanctions against members who refuse to accept even an unanimous decision of the Law Committee, such an unanimous decision is considered the official opinion of the Rabbinical Assembly and may be quoted as such. 30

Any change in the halakhah proposed by the Law Committee, must be sanctioned by the Tradition, i.e. it must be justified -- explicitly or implicitly -- by the Oral Law. Mordecai Kaplan traced this indecisiveness back to the principle enunciated by Zachariah Frankel that "no practice should be considered obsolete because there happen to be a number who do not observe it. The criterion should be the attitude of the community as a whole."[31] This premise, according to Kaplan,

> has proved the greatest stumbling block that Conservatism could have placed in the way of any intelligent solution of the practical problems involved in living as a Jew. It precludes deliberate change of law, and, above all, any legislation which might abrogate laws which have become irredeemably obsolete. 32

The authenticity of Kaplan's charge has been verified with the following statement by the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Law:

> We shall take proper note of the fact that certain laws are obsolete, e.g. the laws against shaving, because they do not meet with the approval of the people; yet we may not declare them null and void, as they are Scriptural commands. 33

Thus, the basic ambiguity of the Conservative movement is clearly demonstrated. No movement which refuses to nullify any Scriptural command, can call itself "modern" and claim that it is able to confront new situations and new conditions of life. On the other hand, no movement can be labelled totally faithful to Tradition if it concedes even in theory that some Biblical laws are obsolete. But it seems that the Conservative movement is still making protracted attempts to have it both ways.

The Concept of Sabbath

According to tradition, a Jew should observe the Sabbath because it is God's will that he do so. The Conservative movement, however, put the emphasis on the potential contribution of Sabbath observance to better mental health. The performance of a religious obligation becomes essentially a technique for achieving personality adjustment.

> The Sabbath in Jewish tradition and history occupies a preeminent position. It has nurtured the intellect as well as the soul of the Jew; it has counterbalanced his disappointments; and it has afforded him a blessed opportunity for personality adjustments.
>
> The significance of the Sabbath is very relevant to the life of the modern Jew. We continually

> carry with us the tension . . . of daily living, with disastrous consequences on our psychological and mental health. The Sabbath properly observed. . . offers us the opportunity . . . to preserve our psychological, physical, and spiritual equilibrium. Besides, Judaism is inconceivable without the Sabbath, its ritual, its observances, its leisure for study and meditation. 34

This appeal represents, in the words of sociologist Robin Williams, a reversal of the ". . . ends-means relation implied in the conception of religion as an ultimate value in experience."[35]

The attitude described above helps to explain a marked leniency in the observance of the Sabbath in the Conservative movement. Those who work on the Sabbath or engage in business because of economic necessity, need not labor under a sense of sin. And even those who have no such necessity are not expected to conform to the letter of the Shulchan Arukh.

II. Liturgy

What is Used

An analysis of the Sabbath liturgy used by the Conservative movement, presents, in some respects, the same problem as the analysis of Conservative ideology. The difficulty is described clearly by Rabbi Jacob Petuchowski:

> I have attended Conservative services which differed from the Orthodox only in that men and women sat together, and Psalm 145 was read responsively in English. (In addition, let me hasten to add, to having the cantor recite it in Hebrew as well . . .) Yet, I have also attended Conservative services with organ and choir, in which the liturgy was so curtailed that the Sabbath morning service of the old

> Union Prayer Book actually contained more "traditional" liturgical material than was used in those Conservative services.[36]

When in 1946, after years of effort, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue published jointly the first standard "Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book" (which will be referred to further on as "the SFPB"), it was not unanimously accepted.[37] As indicated above, Conservative congregations use a wide range of liturgical materials. And yet, it is sufficient for the purposes of this study to analyze the SFPB since it expresses "the viewpoint of Conservative Judaism and bears the official imprint of the Rabbinical Assembly."[38] The SFPB was prepared for publication by the Joint Prayer Book Commission under the chairmanship of Rabbi Robert Gordis, and it is based on a manuscript containing an English translation by Rabbi Morris Silverman.

Guiding Principles

According to Gordis, the Commission was guided in its work by three fundamental principles:[39]

1. The principle of continuity with tradition. This is based on the premise that "loyalty to tradition is the strongest bulwark against the centrifugal forces that threaten Jewish survival everywhere."[40] This principle is supposed, on one hand, to "prevent us from rashly laying hands on the product of the piety of earlier generations," and on the other hand, it "does not free us from the obligation to strive perpetually after fresh and creative devotional forms."[41]

2. The principle of relevance to the needs and ideas of our generation. This principle has two aspects. "There are modern ideals that are expressed inadequately or too briefly in the traditional liturgy, . . . and there are passages in the traditional Prayer Book that no longer seem to express the convictions and hopes of our day."[42]

3. The principle of intellectual integrity. This principle, basically, is the rejection of "the procedure of printing a traditional Hebrew text and a parallel English version that has little or nothing in common with the original."[43]

Basic Concepts

The editors acknowledged that the above principles were not easy to harmonize, and the ready product of their labor shows the almost complete hegemony of the first principle.

The SFPB does not substantially differ either in form or in content from an Orthodox prayer book. The basic structure of the traditional Sabbath liturgy and the traditional concept of Sabbath are left intact (although the late Friday night services are widely accepted by Conservative congregations.) The concept of God is completely faithful to conversation theism. The doctrine of reward and punishment is not altered. Whatever differences there may be between Orthodox ideas of revelation and salvation on one hand, and the views of Conservative rabbis on the other, are not reflected in the SFPB. The Prayer Book remains loyal to the concept of verbal revelation at Sinai and to the idea of eschatological salvation.

The editors found it necessary to justify the retention of two other fundamental doctrines: that of the Chosen People and of a personal Messiah. According to Rabbi Gordis, the doctrine of the Chosen People is "a psychological necessity as well as a historical truth, an indispensable factor for Jewish survival today."[44] Gordis recognizes that "this idea has been vulgarized in many circles, so that it is often confused with the myth of racial superiority and the doctrine of national chauvinism."[45] But he argues that "in every instance the prayer book associates the election of Israel not with any inherent personal or group superiority, but with the higher responsibilities which come to the Jew as the custodian of Torah and the devotee of the Jewish way of life."[46] The whole argument seems to be a defense from expected criticism by Mordecai Kaplan who at that time was still officially affiliated with the Conservative movement and who had unequivocally rejected a doctrine of the Chosen People.[47]

The doctrine of a personal Messiah has been retained on different grounds. The editors remind us that a prayer book is couched in poetry and not in prose, and consequently "it must be approached with warm emotion and not in a mood of cold intellectuality."[48] (Apparently, the principle of intellectual integrity excludes somehow, in the editor's view, "cold intellectuality." Probably, for the sake of clarity, it should be called "the principle of warm intellectual integrity.") Thus, the editors believe that

> . . . the emphasis in the Prayer Book upon the Messiah need not mean for us the belief in a personal redeemer, but it serves superbly as the poetic and infinitely moving symbol of the Messianic age. To have eliminated reference to the Messiah from the Prayer Book would have meant the impoverishment of the Jewish spirit, the loss of one of the most picturesque elements of Jewish belief, culture, music and art. The Prayer Book, like all poetry and truth, has things in it too exalted for literalness. 49

Following the same logic, the Prayer Book Commission found it possible to preserve some traditional concepts providing them with new interpretations. In such a way, the word avodah which used to refer to the sacrificial system "may quite properly mean for us the entire system of public religious worship;"[50] and the phrase mehayyai hametim ("Who revivest the dead") is rendered "who calls the dead to everlasting life" which is "linguistically sound and rich in meaning for those who cherish the faith in human immortality, as much as for those who maintain the belief in resurrection."[51]

In a few instances, however, the editors recognized that "reinterpretation is impossible and the traditional formulation cannot be made to serve our modern outlook."[52] Thus, the passages dealing with animal sacrifices intended as study material in the traditional liturgy were deleted. But the Commission has decided against the deletion of the Musaf service (which features prominently the motif of animal sacrifices) because it "would mean destroying the entire structure of the traditional liturgy."[53] To solve the problem, the petition for the restoration of animal

sacrifices in the Sabbath Musaf was converted through a modification in the verb tense to an historical memory -- a stage in Jewish worship, and not a hope for the future.[54]

Another section of the Prayer Book where, in the editor's view, re-interpretation would not suffice, is to be found in the preliminary benedictions of the Morning Service where some negative expressions were reworded in the affirmative. Thus, instead of the male worshipper blessing God for "not making me a woman," he now expresses gratitude for "making me in Thine image." Similarly, the phrases "for not making me a slave" and "for not making me a heathen" are altered to "for making me free" and "for making me an Israelite."[55]

Language of Prayer

From the moment of its inception, the Conservative movement devoted itself to the preservation of Hebrew as the main language of prayer. "We pray in Hebrew," wrote Rabbi Gordis, "not because God understands no other language, but because it is our language, and, therefore, moulds the content as well as the form of our thought. Our holiest sentiments must be expressed in the tongue that links us with our ancestors and our brothers everywhere."[56]

However, this sentiment hardly reflects the reality of the Conservative movement. The National Survey conducted by the United Synagogue in 1950 (i.e. four years after the publication of the SFPB), showed that only 10% of Conservative laymen stated that they could fully understand the Hebrew text.[57]

An obvious gap between ideal and reality does not embarrass the Conservative leaders. They are even proud of their handling of the problem:

> English reading in the service . . . is not a principle of Conservative Judaism but rather a realistic recognition that most Jews do not understand Hebrew and many do not read it. The retention of Hebrew in the service and the concentration upon it in the Conservative religious school, on the other hand, come out of the recognition that the Hebrew language is a cardinal binding force in Jewish life and a major element in Jewish history. Thus the Jewish need is at once recognized and the national principle and historical outlook are maintained. 58

One is left to wonder why -- with constant "concentration" on Hebrew in the Conservative religious school -- only 10% of Conservative membership can understand their liturgy . . .

III. Conclusion

In 1977, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, writing on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary, gave a rather caustic evaluation of Conservative practices. He said:

> When we turn to more theoretical questions, theological and ideological, we fare no better. Are the Jews a chosen people? Yes -- and no. Does the Jewish people have a covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Well, yes and no. Is reward and punishment a central teaching? Yes and no. Do Conservatives believe in ha-olam ha-ba? Yes and no. Do they believe in the Messiah of the House of David who will come to redeem Israel from exile? Yes and no. Is the Torah revealed? Yes and no. Should Conservative Jews believe in God as a Supernatural Being? Well . . . 59

It seems to us that the bitter sarcasm of the above statement is well justified. Conservative Judaism has not

yet been able to create a logically sound system of beliefs and practices. So far the victory belongs to those in the Conservative movement who argue that elasticity in doctrine makes for an umbrella-type, all-embracing movement, while a definite ideological commitment may foster exclusiveness. This is probably true. And consequently, Conservative Judaism has become the most convenient movement for a multitude of people who pay a lip service to the "age-old Jewish tradition" and can feel no restrictions on their beliefs and behavior. In other words, it is a natural affiliation for many people who are too "rational" to stay Orthodox and too "hypocritical" to become Reform. It can accordingly be said that the growth of Conservatism can be ascribed more to its perceptive psychology than to its amorphous philosophy.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Cf. Cyrus Adler, "Sabato Morais" in Jewish Theological Seminary, Semi-centennial (New York, 1939) pp. 34-36.

2. Robert Gordis, Conservative Judaism, An American Philosophy. (New York, Behrman House, 1945) pp. 9-10.

3. Moshe Davis, "Jewish Religious Life and Institutions in America," in: The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion, ed. by Louis Finkelstein, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1949) v.I, p.430.

4. Milton Steinberg, A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem, (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1945) p.165.

5. Solomon Goldman, A Rabbi Takes Stock, PP. 4-5, quoted from: Marshall Sklare, Conservative Judaism (New York, Schocken Books, 1972) pp. 223-224.

6. Max Routtenberg, Report, in R.A. Proceedings, XIII, 1950, p.36.

7. Quoted from: Marshall Sklare. Conservative Judaism, op.cit., p. 227

8. Theodore Friedman, Ed., What Is Conservative Judaism? New York, National Academy of Adult Jewish Studies, n.d.

9. See Note 2.

10. Robert Gordis, "The Tasks Before Us," Conservative Judaism, I, I (January, 1945), p.4.

11. Mordecai Kaplan, Unity in Diversity and Change. The Development of Conservative Judaism. (New York, The Burning Bush Press, 1958) p.219.

12. Ibid., pp. 219-220.

13. See infra, Chapter Three

14. Kaplan, Unity in Diversity and Change, op. cit., p.220.

15. Gordis, Conservative Judaism, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

16. Steinberg, op. cit., p.165.

17. David Rudavsky, Modern Jewish Religious Movements (New York, Behrman House, inc. 1979) p.338.

18. Kaplan, Unity in Diversity and Change, op. cit., p.221.

19. Jacob Agus,Guidepoints in Modern Judaism (New York, Bloch Publishing Co., 1954) pp. 89-90.

20. Robert Gordis, Understanding Conservative Judaism, (New York, The Rabbinical Assembly, 1978) p.69.

21. Ibid., p.67.

22. Solomon Schechter, Studies in Judaism/First Series/ (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1896), pp.XVII-XVIII.

23. Mordecai Kaplan, The Greater Judaism in the Making (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1960), pp. 369-370.

24. Ibid., p.371.

25. Robert Gordis, "Authority in Jewish Law," Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, vol. VIII (New York, 1944), p.79.

26. Ibid., p.72.

27. Ibid., p.72.

28. Mordecai Waxman, "Ideology of the Conservative Movement." In: Jacob Neusner, ed., Understanding American Judaism, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975), vol. 2, p.254.

29. Ibid., p.255.

30. R.A. Proceedings, XIV (1951), pp. 98-99.

31. Kaplan, The Greater Judaism in the Making, op. cit., p.376.

32. Ibid., p.376.

33. Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly, vol. V, 1938, p.185.

34. Sabbath Observance Kit, #1 (New York: United Synagogue, 1952).

35. Robin M. Williams, Jr., American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951), p.337.

36. Jacob Petuchowski, "Conservatism -- Its Contribution to Judaism," in: Judaism, vol. 26, No. 3, 1977, p.352.

37. See supra, p. 33

38. Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, The Rabbinical Assembly of America, The United Synagogue of America, 1962, Foreword, p.IV.

39. Ibid., p.VI.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p.VII.

44. Robert Gordis, Understanding Conservative Judaism, op. cit., p.144.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p.145.

47. See infra., p. . . .

48. SFPB, op. cit., p.IX.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., p.VIII.

51. Ibid. (See also SFPB, p.138, and elsewhere).

52. Ibid., p.IX.

53. Ibid.

54. SFPB, pp.140-141.

55. Ibid., p.45.

56. Gordis, Conservative Judaism, op. cit., p.27.

57. National Survey (New York: United Synagogue, 1950), p.18.

58. Mordecai Waxman, Ideology of the Conservative Movement, op. cit., p.251.

59. Ira Eisenstein. "Inherent Contradictions in Conservatism." In: Judaism, op. cit., p.342.

CHAPTER THREE: RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM

I. Ideology

History and Approach

The founding of the Reconstructionist movement may be dated from the establishment of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in January 1922. The society served both as a synagogue center and as a forum for ideas expounded by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan. Kaplan's ideological system, known as Reconstructionism, presents an ingenious philosophy of American Judaism which reckons with the conditions prevailing in American Jewish life.

For more than forty years the Reconstructionists themselves maintained that they were a school of thought concerned with evolving a philosophy which would cut across partisan lines, rather than with forming a new religious movement. Kaplan and his disciples among the Conservative rabbis retained their original affiliation with the Rabbinical Assembly, and Kaplan stayed on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary where he taught from 1909 to 1963.

The first full exposition of Kaplan's philosophy was published in 1934, in his Judaism as a Civilization. In 1940, Kaplan established the Reconstructionist Foundation which maintains its own press and aims to advance Reconstructionist doctrines. The year of 1968, when the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College was estab-

lished in Philadelphia, can be viewed as a turning point in the movement's history.

According to Rabbi Ira Eisenstein,

> Long before Reconstructionism became a "movement" Kaplan referred to it as such. What he had in mind was a "school of thought;" only later did he change the connotation, with the establishment of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. 1

Since Mordecai Kaplan is the founder of Reconstructionism and his writings provide the major outline of the Reconstructionist ideology and program, our discussion of the Reconstructionist movement will center around Kaplan's ideas.

The core of Kaplan's ideology is his definition of Judaism as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. Judaism, in Kaplan's view, is "something far more comprehensive than Jewish religion. It includes that nexus of a history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, esthetic values, which in their totality form a civilization."[2]

Professors Sidney Morgenbesser and David Sidorsky point out[3] that Reconstructionism has been deeply influenced by both European and American philosophical and sociological ideas. The most important of these is, probably, the view of the great French Jewish sociologist Emile Durkheim, that religion is fundamentally the expression of the social existence of a group and the instrument of its cohesion and survival. In addition to Durkheim's view, Morgenbesser

and Sidorsky mention also the influence of W. Robertson-Smith's related theory of religion; Simon Dubnow's emphasis on the importance of the local Jewish community in the Diaspora; Ahad Ha-Am's contention that creative Jewish life outside of the independent Jewish state (that he envisioned) would depend on the emergence in that state of a "spiritual center" that would radiate its influence throughout the Diaspora, as well as his secularist reinterpretation of Jewish ethics; and the insistence of the nineteenth-century Historical School that Judaism's major institutions evolved naturally out of the changing historical situation and the emergent needs of the Jewish people.

According to Morgenbesser and Sidorsky, however, the chief influence in the development of Kaplan's Reconstructionism has been America, with its tradition of political democracy, social egalitarianism, naturalist and humanist philosophy, and Jamesian pragmatism. It is the American ideas, the authors insist, that are crucial in Reconstructionism inasmuch as they serve as the criteria whereby Reconstructionism assesses and reevaluates any American Jewish movement or proposal.

These major influences on Kaplan's ideology can be traced in his summary of the main principles of Reconstructionism:

> It takes for granted the religious character of Jewish civilization. It looks to Israel as destined to become the cultural center of the Jewish People. It regards the naturalistic approach to religion more fruitful than the supernaturalist. It upholds freedom of thought as against dogmatic authoritarianism. It advocates

> the democratic organic community as against the unrestricted license of individuals or groups to act unilaterally on policies that involve the interest of all Jewry, and as equally against any hierarchical control that is not responsible to Jewish public opinion. 4

General Concept of Religion

Kaplan defines religion as "the process by which a People or Church seeks to enable its members to fulfill the purpose of human life, as it conceives that purpose."[5] Any religion, in Kaplan's opinion, must be subjected to the principle of relativism which means that "for a thing to be seen or understood for what it really is, it must be viewed in its context in time and space."[6] To refuse to accept relativism, says Kaplan, is to refuse to accept the clear implications of the Copernican view that the earth moves around the sun. It means accepting as absolute "notions that were designed to orient human beings to a conception of the universe now known to be false."[7] Among such notions Kaplan lists an idea that the world has been designed solely for man; that upper regions of the world are inhabited by a God who exercises providential care over human beings, rewards and punishes them, and who suspends the laws of nature if He wishes to intervene in behalf of His obedient servants. The whole spirit of the argument against relativism in religion, states Kaplan, "is part of the nostalgia which looks back with regret to that cozy world in which, for so many centuries, man was at home."[8]

Kaplan perceives as mutually contradictory the assumptions that 1) Judaism has a true conception of God, and 2) this

conception must be, exclusively and forever, the possession of the Jewish People. "For a conception of God to be true," states Kaplan, "it must be universally apprehensible by the rational mind. It cannot, therefore, be exclusively and for all time the possession of any one People. Conversely, if the so-called Jewish conception of God is a subjective notion characteristic of a peculiar Jewish mentality, it cannot have objective validity; it cannot be true."[9] According to Kaplan, what distinguishes the Jewish religion from all others is not a particular conception of God, but particular "sancta," that is, particular objects, persons, events, places, etc., that have been hallowed by the historic experiences of the Jewish People. Other religions have their own "sancta," and each group of "sancta" represents a distinct culture or civilization. "Hence what permanently differentiates the Jewish religion from other religions is the fact that it represents the Jewish culture or civilization and articulates the self-consciousness of the Jewish People."[10]

Since, in Kaplan's opinion, Jewish religion is not necessarily truer than any other, he provides a pure pragmatic response to the question of why anybody should insist on adhering to it:

> The answer is that, to make the most of our own lives, we must reckon with the circumstances in which we find ourselves, cooperating with them, if they are satisfactory, and endeavoring to change them, if they are not. That means that, from a psychological and ethical standpoint, we must live our lives within our own religious civilization. Our attitude to our religion should

> follow the rule: Our religion, right or wrong; if right to be kept right, of wrong to be set right. 11

The Rejection of Supernaturalism

Expressing throughout his writing many particular dissatisfactions with the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements, Kaplan directs his major criticism against the basis of all of them, namely, the varieties of super-naturalism and consequent spatio-temporal God conceptions. "Supernatural religion," writes Kaplan, "is the astrology and alchemy stage of religion."[12] The only way in which Jewish religion can satisfactorily adjust to the modern world is by abandoning supernaturalism. Thus,

> To survive the present crisis the Jewish religion will have to transform itself from an other-worldly religion offering to conduct the individual to life eternal through the agency of the traditional Torah, which is regarded as supernaturally revealed, into a religion which can help Jews attain this-worldly salvation. 13

Rabbi Kaplan's rejection of supernaturalism is complete and extends as well to the supernatural God-idea. Attempting to avoid the pitfalls of both supernaturalism and reductive naturalism, Kaplan develops a concept of "transnaturalism" which he defines in the following way:

> Transnaturalism is that extension of naturalism which takes into account much that mechanistic or materialistic or positivist science is incapable of dealing with. Transnaturalism reaches out into the domain where mind, personality, purpose, ideas, values and meanings dwell. It treats of the good and the true. Whether or not it has a distinct logic of its own, is problematic. But it certainly has a language of its own, the language of simile,

> metaphor and poetry. That is the language of symbol, myth and drama. In that universe of discourse, belief in God spells trust in potentialities for evil that inhere in his animal heredity, in his social heritage, and in the conditions of his environment. Transnaturalist religion beholds God in the fulfillment of human nature and not in the suspension of the natural order. Its function is not to help man overcome the hazards of nature, but to enable him to bring under control his inhumanity to his fellow-man. 14

Kaplan's polemic against supernaturalism, as expressed in the foregoing passage, comes out of his effort to evolve a theory of religion which does not imply the suspension of the natural order. Supernaturalism, as he understands it, is the world view that God is not subject to any empirical law of nature and can, therefore, suspend the natural order at any point in time. And the miracles recorded in Scripture involve, according to Kaplan, precisely this contravention of the laws of nature. Kaplan rejects the historicity of these miracles and the logic of supernaturalism inherent in the Jewish supernaturalist tradition. He rejects that logic because it is based on what he regards as the assumptions of the unphilosophical mind. Accordingly, he explains:

> Natural has a specific meaning which is intended to correct one of the basic assumptions of the unphilosophic mind. It denotes the fact that the action of each thing is conditioned by the law of its own being. That law cannot be altered by any will acting from without. To the unphilosophic or unscientific mind all things appear as being acted upon extraneously by quasi-human wills or a single quasi-human will. Philosophical apologetics aside, God is conceived in Scriptures and in rabbinic literature more or less anthropomorphically. His will, though infinitely superior in power, justice and goodness to that of man, resembles it in the

> consciousness of the specific purposes it seeks to achieve. From that viewpoint nothing possesses a law of its own being. 15

Kaplan's rejection of supernaturalism, therefore, is based on his contention that modern philosophy and science have cumulatively established the autonomy of the natural order.

The Conceptions of God and Salvation

Having rejected completely the notion of supernaturalism Kaplan provides another basis of Jewish religion and, consequently, its necessary reconstruction. "The initial and hardest step in the process of religious adjustment at the present time," says Kaplan, "is to grow accustomed to the idea that it is possible to have religion without subscribing to the supernatural character of its origin."[16] Or again, "Only religious fundamentalists and unimaginative pedants would insist upon limiting the name and conception of God to the God of supernatural revelation."[17]

On the other hand, it is clear that strict naturalism is also inadequate for Kaplan because he believes that it is incapable of "dealing with" the phenomenon of human values. And it is precisely the need, as Kaplan sees it, for a transcendent foundation for human values that gives rise to his conception of God as the power that makes for salvation:

> From the adoption of the frame of human values, which derive their significance from man's striving for salvation, perfection or self-transcendence, it is but one logical step to the belief in God as the Power that impels man to pursue that course and that enables him at least to come within sight of its destination.

> We experience the reality of God in whatever gives us sense of life's worthwhileness, despite the evils that mar life, and in whatever drives us to follow our sense of moral responsibility, regardless of consequences. 18

The concept of salvation in Kaplan's theology is based on the assumption that religion is a manifestation of the general will to live: "For human beings the will to live becomes the will to salvation, to the achievement of the good life."[19] "Religion is thus Man's conscious quest for salvation or the achievement of his human destiny."[20] All men seek to find patterns of meaning and roads to salvation in the various environments they inhabit. Religion is part of man's adaptation to the world, of his adjustment to life.

Thus, for Kaplan, religion as the manifestation of the will to self-fulfillment and salvation is a universal phenomenon of man's existence. It is as much a part of the acculturation process as self-awareness. In fact, just as "man becomes aware of himself as a person engaged in a struggle against dangers and difficulties, he also becomes cognizant of the help of a Power or powers to conquer obstacles."[21]

It can be seen from the foregoing not only that religion is a manifestation of the will to live but also that it involves, in one way or another, a conception of God. Kaplan insists that one must not fail to distinguish the belief in God from a particular conception of God. Belief in God is the "basic substance of religion and is a constant factor in it," while, on the other hand, the

conception of God "is a cultural formulation of that belief."[22] Religion cannot be thought up or manufactured, without reference to a cultural matrix to which it applies and from which it in fact stems.

Religion is then, for Kaplan, unthinkable without a cultural origin and referent. True, indeed, that the quest for salvation is a general manifestation of all human life, but there is no unstructured quest. One's culture, one's people, color and shape that quest, and give it the identifiable features which make it unique to a particular society or civilization. All men seek salvation, but no man seeks it outisde a cultural frame. Kaplan is absolutely clear on this point and does not allow any ambiguities to appear:

> That is why, though the quest for salvation is common to all mankind, the particular values that constitute one's salvation and the particular method by which one seeks it, is determined by the civilization of the people to which one belongs. This accounts for the existence of the various religions of mankind. Every religion is an aspect of a particular civilization. It is that aspect of a civilization which aims to render it worthwhile, both for the group as a whole and for each individual in it. 23

The Problem of Authority

Kaplan's views on religion and salvation obviously determine his position on the issue of authority. Kaplan is convinced that "it is impossible for Jews whose thinking is along modern lines, to base Jewish religious belief on dogma"[24] which is defined as "a doctrine which is asserted and adopted on authority, as distinguished from that which is a result of one's reasoning or experience."[25]

Kaplan does not believe that the elimination of dogmas would destroy the Jewish religion:

> All that would be destroyed would be the authority which commands belief on the basis of status. The authority based on a knowledge of tradition and persuasiveness in expounding the values of traditional doctrines and practices would continue to function. 26

Addressing himself to the problem of religious observances in contemporary Jewish life, Kaplan insists that "in the absence of all coercive power, it must be clear that a voluntarist approach is necessary, one that depends not on external authority to enforce its standards, but on the authority of spiritual conviction of the value of these standards."[27]

In the "Guide to Jewish Ritual" published by the Reconstructionist Foundation, the authority of traditional Jewish law is categorically rejected. It is stated that ritual should not be treated as law but as "a means to group survival and enhancement on the one hand, and on the other, a means to the spiritual growth of the individual Jew."[28] The individual is given total freedom to decide for himself which rituals or "folkways" to practice and which to discard. In the exercise of his freedom he is urged to strive for a balance between his personal needs and the needs of the Jewish group. It is emphasized, however, that the "circumstances of life are so different for different Jews, their economic needs and opportunities, their cultural background, their acquired skills and inherited capacities are so varied that it is unreasonable to expect all of them to evaluate the same rituals in the same way."[29] The final

criterion for the choice of ritual observance, it is noted, should be the self-fulfillment of the individual Jew. Thus, for example, the "Guide" suggests that work is permitted on the Sabbath "which the individual is unable to engage in during the week, and which constitutes not a means to making a living but a way of enjoying life."[30] What matters, according to the "Guide," is not "the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath but the extent to which these ceremonies help one to live and experience the Sabbath."[31]

The Meaning of Sabbath

In its treatment of the Sabbath observances, the "Guide" is faithful to the general concept of the Sabbath in Kaplan's philosophy. The Sabbath is viewed by Kaplan as one of the sancta of the Jewish people, i.e. as one of "those elements in the life of a people which emphasize what it must do in order to achieve its divine destiny."[32] The concept of sancta, in Kaplan's view, permits the change from revelational to naturalist religion:

> One does not, for example have to believe that God actually rested on the seventh day after six days of creation in order to experience the religious value of the Sabbath. As one of the sancta of Jewish life, the meaning of the Sabbath can be reinterpreted in terms that enable it to retain its sacredness for us, even though we no longer accept the Biblical version of its origin. 33

II. Liturgy

The Concept of Prayer

According to Kaplan, Reconstructionism "does not hold that there is only one true and infallible conception

of God to which all ought to subscribe. There is, therefore, no single conception of God to which Reconstructionism is committed."[34] But because of the pervasive influence of Kaplan in the Reconstructionist movement, his own conception of God as "Power that makes for salvation," is widely recognized as the official theological formulation of Reconstructionism.

Inevitably, the question arises: "How can one pray to a God conceived in such intellectual and abstract terms?" Kaplan recognizes that the conception of God as the Power that makes for salvation can be perceived as "so remote from everyday experience as to fail to motivate moral and spiritual action, and certainly too remote to lead to worship. How, it may be asked, can one worship a what?"[35]

The answer, in Kaplan's view, depends on how we conceive of the proper act of prayer and worship:

> We do not pray to the fact which spells God. When we pray we announce the fact which spells God. That is why over ninety per cent of the liturgy consists of God's praises. Their purpose is not to flatter God, but to arouse in ourselves the will and the courage to avail ourselves of those resources of the world and those abilities of man that point to God. Even prayers of petition usually begin and end with a berakah that praises God as the source of the boon that is asked. But the prayer of petition also has its place in worship. It can be so formulated as to make us aware that our legitimate wishes, insofar as they coincide with the divinity in the world and man, may come true, particularly if they are wishes for the ability to live the good life and for strength and courage to wish-stand the worst that may befall us. [36]

Defining the function of prayer, Kaplan states that "prayer aims at deriving, from the Process that constitutes God, the power that would strengthen the forces and relationships by which we fulfill ourselves as persons."[37]

Kaplan recognizes that we cannot address God "in terms of scientific or philosophical abstractions, like process or energy, any more than we ordinarily use such terms in thinking about ourselves."[38] We use simple words in talking about ourselves, and "one would not address one's neighbor in terms of all the processes which make him the person that he is; one would address him simply as you. For similar reasons, we address God in prayer as Thou."[39] Kaplan's conception of prayer implies, obviously, that it is only subjectively efficacious and not objectively so. This means that it affects the one who prays, giving him faith, courage, or hope. Prayer will not change the natural order of things or any external condition.

The Sabbath Prayer Book: Guiding Principles and God-concept

In 1945, the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation published the Sabbath Prayer Book (which will be further referred to as "the SPB") under the editorship of Rabbis Mordecai Kaplan, Eugene Kohn, Ira Eisenstein, and Milton Steinberg. It was offered to the Jewish public "in the hope that it will advance our religious purpose to reconstruct and revitalize Jewish life."[40] What was advanced immediately instead, was an outburst of hatred and fanaticism.

During the summer of that year some 200 Orthodox rabbis assembled at the Hotel McAlpin, in New York City, and put a ban on the prayerbook and on Kaplan. The interdicted prayerbook was publicly burned. Faculty members of the Jewish Theological Seminary (at which Kaplan was professor of homiletics), while deploring the action of the Orthodox, registered their strong disapproval of the SPB. Thus Rabbi Kaplan's open adversaries and his colleagues correctly assessed the new prayerbook as the symbol of a revolution in Jewish theology.

In some sense, the introduction to the SPB may be regarded as even more trenchant than the prayerbook itself:

> If prayer is to be genuine and not merely a recital of words, the worshipper must, of course, believe in God . . . . He must be able to sense a reality of God vividly, as an intense personal experience. Our ancestors possessed such a sense of the reality of God. The modern Jew, however, is disturbed by the current conception of nature. Nature is generally viewed as blind, mechanical and unresponsive to man's prayers. This veiw of nature leaves in his mind no room for God or for worship. Therefore it is necessary for a modern Jew to strive to formulate his idea of God in terms which can serve to inspire him with faith and courage, and which at the same time conform to his knowledge of the world . . . For purposes of common worship . . . it is essential to arrive at an idea of God, broad enough to bridge the differences in individual outlook and capable of resolving the inner conflicts which paralyze the impulse to pray. 41

As has been mentioned above, the idea of God offered by the editors of the SPB "as the basis of a common faith for the Jews of our day,"[42] was not received warmly by Orthodox and Conservative rabbis. The conception of God suggested by the editors, corresponds directly to

Kaplan's theological views. God is perceived as "a universal spirit that transcends and uses nature in some such way as the human spirit transcends and uses the bodily organs of men:"[43] as "a Power both in and beyond nature which moves men to seek value and meaning in life;"[44] as "the source of our will-to-salvation."[45] If such concepts of God were not enough to alienate traditional theists, the editors of the SPB decided to modify and/or eliminate a number of other major doctrines.

The Treatment of Traditional Doctrines

In order to preserve the continuity of Jewish liturgical tradition, the editors of the SPB retain the classical framework of the Sabbath services, but they decided that all "ideas or beliefs in conflict with what have come to be regarded as true or right should be eliminated."[46] The editors reject the practice of reading into traditional prayers meanings completely in variance with what they meant to those who framed them. "Not that prayers need be prosaic in their literalness, but their figures of speech must have clear and true meanings."[47] The editors present their position in clear and unambiguous terms:

> People expect a Jewish prayer book to express what a Jew should believe about God, Israel and the Torah, and about the meaning of human life and the destiny of mankind. We must not disappoint them in that expectation. But, unless we eliminate from the traditional text statements of beliefs that are untenable and of desires which we do not or should not cherish, we mislead the simple and alienate the sophisticated. The simple will accept the false with the true, to the detriment of their spiritual growth. The sophisticated will feel that a Jewish service has little value for people of modern

> mentality. Rather than leaving such questionable passages to reinterpretation, we should omit or revise them. 48

In keeping with the foregoing, the editors have modified six major doctrines of the traditional Jewish liturgy:

1. The Doctrine of the Chosen People. The SPB eliminates the ideas that "the Jews constitute a divinely chosen nation" and that "the history of mankind revolved about Israel."[49] It acknowledges instead that not only Israel but other peoples as well can and should be "dedicated to the purpose of testifying to the reality of God and of serving Him."[50] The Prayer Book "exhorts Israel to live up to the best of which it is capable, but avoids comparison of Israel's achievements and capacities with those of other groups."[51]

2. The Doctrine of Revelation. The idea that God supernaturally revealed the Torah, in its present text, to Moses on Mount Sinai, is flatly rejected. The Torah is perceived as a human document, recording the experience of the Jewish people in its quest for God: "The truth is not that God revealed the Torah to Israel, but that the Torah has, in every successive generation, revealed God to Israel."[52] The study of Torah with the purpose of seeking God and discovering religious truth, are seen as the central act of worship.

3. The Doctrine of the Personal Messiah. The belief in the advent of a personal Messiah is substituted with a hope for a future Golden Age which is thought of in terms of "universal redemption through the struggles, hopes,

vision, and will of all good men."[53] The restoration of Israel's national home does not mean the end of Diaspora. The hope is voiced that Jews would be permitted to live in peace and freedom in the lands of their nativity.

4. The Doctrine of the Restoration of the Sacrificial Cult.

Instead of the prayers for the reinstatement of animal sacrifice, the Prayer Book contains a prayer "that we may learn to make sacrifices of our resources and energies in behalf of worthy causes."[54] All references to the distinctions between Kohen, Levi and Israelite are omitted.

5. The Doctrine of Retribution. The text is so modified as to emphasize that "the material prosperity and well-being of society depends on its conforming to the Divine law of justice and righteousness."[55]

6. The Doctrine of Resurrection. The idea that the dead will one day come to life is completely rejected. The Prayer Book affirms the belief in the immortality of the soul in the sense that "the human spirit, in cleaving to God, transcends the brief span of the individual life and shares in the eternity of the Divine Life."[56]

Supplementary Prayers and Readings

The stress upon relevance and new form and content is confirmed by the fact that the SPB includes a supplement that is more extensive than the Sabbath services themselves. The supplement consists of readings, poems and prayers by contemporary, recent and medieval writers, on a wide range of subjects. These readings are intended to be incorporated into the services in such a manner that they constitute

a central theme. Interpretive material, intended to give added meaning to traditional prayers and/or substitute for them, is embodied in the service. For example, both maariv aravim and ahavat olam can be read in the interpretive versions, [57] and the Shema is preceded by a meditation on the "Unity of God and Our Love for Him."[58]

III. Conclusion

The SPB demonstrates a remarkable degree of consistency between the theology of the Reconstructionist movement and its liturgical expression. The only major drawback is presented by the notion of God. For many people, no amount of reinterpretation will resolve the contradiction inherent in the situation of addressing an impersonal Process or Power with prayers presupposing One "who hearkens unto prayer." In addressing the problem, Reconstructionism tends to minimize prayers of petition in favor of meditations, readings and statements of belief. Study becomes prior to prayer, knowledge takes precedence over doctrines:

> With the increase of man's control over the forces of nature, physical and mental, the function of worship is bound to diminish in the area of petition and to increase in the area of thanksgiving and religious meditations . . . In the synagogue, the principal occasion for worship should be the study of Torah . . . This too is in accord with a deeply rooted tradition that the study of Torah is of greater religious importance than prayer. [59]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

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2. Mordecai M. Kaplan, Judaism As a Civilization (Philadelphia and New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, Reconstructionist Press, 1981), p.178.

3. Sidney Morgenbesser and David Sidorsky, "Reconstructionism & the Naturalistic Tradition in America," In: Reconstructionist (Feb. 18, 1955), p.33-42.

4. Mordecai Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1956), p.441

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6. Ibid., p.148.

7. Ibid., p.149.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p.174.

10. Ibid., p.175.

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14. Mordecai Kaplan, Judaism without Supernaturalism (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1958), p.10.

15. Kaplan, Judaism As a Civilization, op. cit., pp. 314-315.

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17. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, op. cit., p.192.

18. Kaplan, Judaism without Supernaturalism, op. cit., p.25.

19. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, op. cit., p.173.

20. Ibid., p.172.

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22. Ibid., p.182.

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25. Ibid., p.159.

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29. Ibid., p.6.

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31. Ibid., pp.17-18.

32. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask, op. cit., pp.487-488.

33. Ibid., p.488.

34. Ibid., p.456.

35. Ibid., p.457.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p.103.

38. Ibid., p.103-104.

39. Ibid., p.104.

40. Sabbath Prayer Book (New York: The Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1945_, Preface.

41. Ibid., pp. XVII-XIX.

42. Ibid., p.XIX.

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44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p.XX.
46. Ibid., p.XXIII.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., pp. XXIII-XXIV.
49. Ibid., p.XXIV.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p.XXV.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., p.XXVI.
54. Ibid., p.XXVII.
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56. Ibid., p.XXVIII.
57. Ibid., pp. 28-32.
58. Ibid., pp.33-34.
59. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask, op. cit., p.461.

CHAPTER FOUR: REFORM JUDAISM

I. Ideology

Early History

The origins of today's American Reform Judaism lie in the social, political, and intellectual transformation undergone by Central European Jewry when it began the process of emancipation. A segment of the Jewish community during the first decades of the nineteenth century sought to reform Judaism in such a way as to adapt it to the new situation of the Jewish community no longer physically and intellectually isolated from its environment. The early reformers did not seek to establish a separate denomination; they were interested in influencing the religious life of all Jews. They wanted to make worship services aesthetically satisfying; they sought to render theology and ritual more compatible with their philosophical principles, moral sensibilities, and political loyalties. However, only a portion of European Jewry, mainly in Germany, was won over to the ideas of the reformers, so that by midcentury the larger German communities were split into traditional and liberal factions.

During the 1840's congregations subscribing to the European modifications in theory and practice were established in the United States. By 1873, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise was able to bring together a nucleus of liberally oriented synagogues in a Union of American Hebrew Congretations

(UAHC). Both the UAHC and the Hebrew Union College (HUC), the rabbinical seminary established by Wise in Cincinnati two years later, were intended to encompass and serve the broadest spectrum of American Jewry. But the pressure of the more traditionally inclined segments of American Jewry, on the one hand, and of more radical reformers, on the other, soon drove both of these institutions into a more separatist and more narrowly defined position. By the end of the century, the UAHC, the HUC, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR, established in 1889) had become the institutions of but a single branch of American Jewry, that of the Reform Jews.[1]

From Pittsburgh to Columbus

Reform Judaism has always shown more interest in theological issues than other Jewish denominations currently on the American scene. It has been noted by many authors that, of the classic trilogy of Judaism -- God, Torah, and Israel -- which, according to the Zohar, are one, Orthodoxy in modern times has laid primary emphasis on observance of Torah, Conservatism and Reconstructionism have placed the major stress on the people Israel and its culture or civilization, and Reform has been chiefly concerned with God and His moral will. Consequently, the Reform movement has a special need to give an account of its position in theological terms.

The first complete statement of principles produced by the American Reform movement, was formulated and adopted at a meeting of Reform rabbis held at Pittsburgh in 1885,

and it became known as the "Pittsburgh Platform." Technically, however, it was not an official Reform pronouncement. When the CCAR was established four years later, it was proposed that the Pittsburgh statement be published in the first "Year Book" as a kind of manifesto. This proposal was defeated; instead, an appendix included in the "Year Book" contained a summary of pronouncements made at various rabbinical conferences and synods during the nineteenth century, including the Pittsburgh Platform, all to serve as "the basis of American Reform Judaism."[2]

The nucleus of the Pittsburgh Platform was contained in the proposal presented to the conference by Dr. Kaufman Kohler. In its final version, the platform consisted of eight sections, each of which attempted to express clearly the standpoint of Reform Judaism on one major issue.[3] (1) The sanctity and sincerity of other religions was acknowledged, at the same time as Judaism was described as presenting "the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages." (2) The Bible was "the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as priest of the one God." The concept of literal inspiration was not mentioned; by implication it was abandoned and the value of the Bible was founded on its use as "the most potent instrument of religious and

moral instruction." (In the discussion Kohler's motion to amend this section by including the words "divine Revelation" was defeated, because of ambiguities in the interpretation of the idea of revelation.) (3) Only the moral law in the Bible was to be regarded as binding; of the other parts of the Mosaic legislation the platform accepted "only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization." (4) Dietary laws and regulations concerning priestly purity and dress were explicitly rejected. (5) The traditional Messianic concept was transformed into a universal hope for "the establishment of the Kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men." This change was combined with the rejection of the idea of Jewish nationhood; the Jews were designated "a religious community." (6) Judaism was declared "a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason." Interfaith cooperation with Christianity and Islam was welcomed. (7) While retaining the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the Reform rabbis cast out the belief in bodily resurrection and the doctrine of punishment in the life after death. (8) The participants, very much in tune with their time, introduced a plank calling for social justice: "In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation . . . we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the

problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society."

Twenty years after the adoption of the Pittsburgh Platform, Rabbi David Philipson, a prominent historian of the Reform movement and one of the participants in the conference, called it "the most succinct expression of the theology of the Reform movement that had ever been published to the world."[4] But by 1937 the character of Reform Judaism began to change. The transformation in the Reform pattern of thought may be attributed to a number of historical and sociological factors, principally to the rise of anti-Semitism both in Europe and the United States, the collapse of Emancipation, the growth of Zionism and the changed social composition of American Reform.

The demand for a new formulation of Reform Jewish principles was supported on different grounds. Some people perceive the Pittsburgh Platform as incomplete, containing no mention of prayer, the synagogue, or Jewish education. Others thought that its naive optimism, which saw in the "modern age of culture" the prelude to the messianic era, was incongruous in the days of Hitler. The growing influence of Reconstructionism is evident in the statement made by Rabbi Barnett Brickner:

> What is a religion but the collective representation of a people throwing out a standard by which it measures the totality of life? As formal religion, based on revelation, begins to lose its hold, the Jewish people project a new ideal in which the whole of life is subsumed. We call it spiritual Zionism. In it, we have God, we have religion and all the values that religion participates in . . . " 5

A revolutionary change in the basic attitude of the Reform movement towards Zionism and the national character of the Jewish people, can be seen in the arguments presented by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. Against anti-Zionists who held that the mission of Israel requires the scattering of the Jewish people among the nations, and against Zionists who responded by ridiculing the mission idea, Silver argued that the mission was wholly compatible with the establishment of a Jewish state.[6]

After two years of heated discussions, at the CCAR convention held in 1937 at Columbus, Ohio, American Reform rabbis adopted the new "Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism," which came to be known as the Columbus Platform.

The new platform was divided into three major sections:
1. Judaism and Its Foundations, summarizing Reform's conception of Judaism, God, man, Torah and Israel;
2. Ethics, defining the relationship between ethical conduct and religion; and asserting Reform's dedication to social justice and peace;
3. Religious Practice, affirming the necessity for participation in Jewish community activity, for prayer in both Hebrew and the vernacular, and for strengthening Jewish education and religious observance in home and synagogue.

In many respects the Guiding Principles retained the salient teachings of the Pittsburgh Platform. It reaffirmed the Jewish God-idea as Israel's most important contribution; it posited a fundamental harmony between Judaism and

science; and it reiterated Reform's dedication to the Mission of Israel, the idea of social justice, the principle of progressive development in Judaism, and the affirmation of its belief in the immortality of the human soul.

But the new platform also departed significantly from its predecessor in recognizing the value of the Oral as well as the Written Law as sources for Reform Judaism, in calling upon all Reform Jews to assist in the rebuilding of Palestine, in confirming the existence of a united Jewish people, and in outlining the areas of religious observance incumbent upon Reform Jews in such a way that it could be approved of even by some strong opponents of Reform. As Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, a prominent leader of the Conservative movement, has noted, the platform makes no effort "to indicate the way Reform Judaism deviates from th Orthodox or Conservative interpretation of Judaism. And, indeed, the platform does not contain much to which Orthodox and Conservative groups can take exception. It is rather in its implications than by its direct statements that it deviates from tradition."[7]

The Current Theological Trends

The postwar period witnessed a new growth of Reform interest in Jewish theology and a wider divergence in opinions on the most fundamental theological issues.

A portion of the Reform rabbinate continued to favor the rationalism which dominated the earlier period of the movement. Although the enthusiastic faith in moral progress voiced by previous generations of Reform Jews

was shattered first by the Holocaust and then by the racial and international conflicts of the postwar period, the notion of progressive revelation, meaning that each succeeding age advances in its understanding of the divine, has been maintained by members of this group. However, this universalistic, rationalistic theism of Classical Reform, which posits a providential God who is the source of order and moral action in the universe, has been increasingly challenged from opposite directions.

On one hand, there is a growing number of Reform rabbis who hold humanistic and naturalistic positions. This is not a novelty in Reform Judaism. Rabbi Abraham Cronbach, for example, stated frankly a long time ago that to him the word "God" is not descriptive of a metaphysical Reality, but is an emotional (or, as he puts it, "dramatistic") word in which men sum up their own highest ideals and yearnings.[8]

What is new, is the number of such rabbis. A recent study showed that 28 percent of Reform rabbis regard their theological stance as either non-traditionalist, agnostic, or atheistic.[9] Two factors may be seen as most responsible for this growth of nontheistic, nonsupernaturalistic positions. First, Biblical criticism and psychoanalytic reductionism have continued to provide severe challenges to the traditional doctrine of revelation even in its modified form. Second, the Holocaust

has seemed to many people so irreconcilable with any comprehensible notion of divine providence as to render theism untenable.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there has emerged from the Reform rabbinate a group of theologians propounding a far more traditional and particularistic theology than had been characteristic of the movement heretofore. The central concept of this circle, influenced by Franz Rosenzwieg and Martin Buber, has been the covenant between God and the Jewish people, originating in biblical times but renewed and freshly understood in each generation. They maintain that God cannot be defined by human reason or His existence proven, He can only be encountered. Though allowing for biblical criticism, the approach is openly supernaturalistic, affirming a personal God Who can and does speak to modern Jews even as He spoke to their biblical ancestors -- provided only that they listen, and study the classical texts of Judaism. Prayer retains its traditional significance as a dialogue between God and the worshipper, removing the necessity of altering or radically interpreting the theistic cast of the traditional prayer-book.

The fundamental difference between these two polar trends in Reform Judaism can be most clearly seen in their approach to the problem of revelation. Thus, Rabbi Ronald Gittelsohn, an outspoken advocate of the naturalist position, believes that

> God reveals himself to men through men. Such revelation can take place in the laboratory or the space capsule, at the artist's easel or the composer's desk, as often as on the mountain top or in the sanctuary. It can come through mystic speculation, through intuition, through reason, through the study of empirical data or through a combination of these . . . Whenever Essence of Reality rises to a level of creativity or comprehension never reached before in the pursuit of truth, beauty, or moral excellence, then and there the Divine has revealed itself to man again. 10

Rabbi Jacob Petuchowski, representing the ideas of those who espouse Covenant theology, realizes clearly that nothing short of "a revolution in theological thinking" can move American Reform Judaism to beliefs in factuality of the Sinaitic revelation and a traditional perception of a covenant relationship between God and Israel: "It is one thing to pass expedient resolutions in favor of ceremonies. It is quite another to reinstate the God of Israel as the 'Giver of Torah', when the very raison d'etre of Reform, as a denomination is represented as the emancipation from this belief."[11]

According to Petuchowski,

> Reform Jews who are unwilling to give up their faith in God may find that, in the final analysis, their "God talk" is religiously meaningful only to the extent to which God can be said to have revealed Himself to man. God and His Torah are interrelated. If one takes God seriously, one must take revelation seriously, and vice versa. 12

It is not quite clear what is meant by Rabbi Petuchowski when he speaks about taking "revelation seriously" because he himself has stated elsewhere that love is "the only content of Revelation," and the remainder of the Torah, its specific laws and commandments, is regarded by him

as human appropriation and interpretation.[13] Covenant theology leaves unanswered such questions as: What does revelation precisely mean? How are we supposed to understand the statement that God reveals Himself to man? What is the part played by man in receiving divine revelation? Where is a border line between revelation and interpretation? Rabbi Harold Schulweis has put the issue forcefully and clearly:

> All the younger theologians who have capitalized Revelation may be asked the same question: Where does the Revelation and human appropriation begin? It is a question particularly pertinent to them because in actual fact they neither hold an Orthodox interpretation of Revelation nor do they attempt a radical break with its claims. They admit biblical criticism, are prepared to reject miracles and myths in their literal sense and acknowledge that "every single word any prophet ever spoke is shot through with human interpretation," but will then strangely conclude that "had there been no event of divine revelation there would have been no human interpretation" (Emil Fackenheim). How this or that law in the Torah developed, is left to biblical scholarship; for the new theologian it is enough to maintain that, behind the literary history of the Pentateuch, there was "the impact of the Love of God, the momentum of Revelation which, in a profound sense, enables us to this day to offer our praise unto Him who is the 'Giver of the Torah'" (Petuchowski). A distinction between revelation and interpretation is abstractly stated only to be collapsed into indiscernibility in the existential situation. We are left to be content with the faith <u>that</u> something must have happened without knowing <u>what</u> happened . . . Both Revelation and Law are revered, but they remain <u>forms</u> of belief without content, criteria or concreteness. 14

And even Rabbi David Polish, who shared Dr. Petuchowski's theological views, is moved to agree: "The laws of nature

are revealed when man discovers them. Man unearths them. God reveals them. The twilight zone between discovery and revelation is dusky and obscure."[15]

"A Centenary Perspective" and the Problem of Authority

By the beginning of the 1970's, differences over the basic ideological issues had "deeply split Reform Judaism to the point that it appears . . . more a loosely knit 'organization' than a 'movement' in the proper sense."[16]

In 1971 representatives of the CCAR, UAHC, and HUC-JIR (Jewish Institute of Religion) began to work on what was hoped would become a new platform for American Reform Judaism. It was to be completed in time for the centennial celebration of the UAHC in 1973. Many position papers were produced and a great deal of discussion followed them, but the promised "new document for a new age" was not forthcoming. The differences among the committee members on basic issues were apparently too wide to be bridged.[17] Only in 1976 was a CCAR committee able to formulate a document which reflected on the accomplishments and failures of the past and roughly defined the parameters of Reform in the present. On June 24, 1976, it was adopted by the CCAR convention in San Francisco under the title "Reform Judaism: A Centenary Perspective."[18] Thus, for the first time since 1937, the Conference articulated formally its sense of "the spiritual state of Reform Judaism."

According to Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, a chairman of the committee which produced "A Centenary Perspective," amid the controversy that was troubling the Reform movement, the objective of the document was "to overcome polarization" and "to discover and verbalize whatever significant unity remained."[19] The committee recognized that its task was more limited in scope and claim from that of previous platform writers. The committee members did not try to write "a dogma or creed which would supersede the right of individual Reform Jews to think for themselves."[20] They knew that "their colleagues would be outraged if the document made any pretense of setting the standard of what all Reform Jews must now believe."[21]

The committee was seeking to produce a strong and positive statement, realizing that "the danger of trying to speak for so many people was that, in the effort to offend no one, the resulting statement would be bland to the point of being contentless."[22] On the other hand, "the committee was determined to try to face directly the major problems of Reform Judaism."[23]

Being faithful to its stated objective to record the "sense of the unity of our movement today," "A Centenary Perspective" devotes only three very brief and quite generally stated paragraphs to Reform theological positions on God, the people of Israel, and Torah. But these statements of belief are preceded by a most significant introductory paragraph, devoted to diversity in the Reform movement:

> Reform Jews respond to change in various ways according to the Reform principle of the autonomy of the individual. However, Reform Judaism does more than tolerate diversity; it engenders it. In our uncertain historical situation we must expect to have far greater diversity than previous generations knew. How we shall live with diversity without stifling dissent and without paralyzing our ability to take positive action will test our character and our principles. We stand open to any position thoughtfully and conscientiously advocated in the spirit of Reform Jewish belief. While we may differ in our interpretation and application of the ideas enunciated here, we accept such differences as precious and see in them Judaism's best hope for confronting whatever the future holds for us. Yet in all our diversity we perceive a certain unity and we shall not allow our differences in some particulars to obscure what binds us together. 24

With the insertion of this paragraph, the committee made, in the words of its chairman, "a strong, even ringing, affirmation of the Reform commitment to individual freedom."[25] According to Rabbi Borowitz, the paragraph's assertion of "the Reform principle of the autonomy of the individual" is "unparalleled in the rest of the document . . . All that follows in these sentences on Reform diversity is derived from that statement and . . . much of what follows in the document as a whole."[26] In Rabbi Borowitz's view, the inclusion of the paragraph was deemed to be necessary because "Reform Jewish diversity reached a new and intense level in recent years over an issue which can be called freedom versus Halachah,"[27] or, in other words, over the problem of authority in Reform Judaism. "It will be easiest, if somewhat oversimplified," continues Borowitz, "to connect each of the divergent views with a single protagonist."[28] He proceeds with the analysis of positions

held by Professors Alvin Reines and Jacob Petuchowski, both of the Cincinnati school of the HUC-JIR. Borowitz believes that "the polarization of Reform Judaism in recent years tended toward these extreme, contradictory positions."[29] He finds the Reines and Petuchowski positions intellectually incompatible because

> from the former standpoint, any effort to introduce discipline into Reform Judaism would violate the most fundamental of Reform principles, that of personal freedom, and thus is anathema. From the other point of view, to encourage people to be so self-legislating that they can claim the religious right to violate some of the most sacred remaining practices of our people is an utter perversion of the title Judaism. 30

"A Centenary Perspective," despite all its good intentions, its "dialectically balanced" approach to the contemporary "two-premised Reform Jewish faith," [31] and despite a three-volume set of commentaries, provided by Rabbi Borowitz, has not apparently been able to bring a "sense of unity" on the issue of authority in Reform Judaism. As Rabbi Sidney Regner stated in 1979, "the question of authority is still an unresolved problem. There are those who speak of Reform halachah . . . It is difficult to understand what is meant by the term . . . Who in fact determines what so-called Reform halachah is? The matter becomes purely subjective."[32]

It is interesting to note that Dr. Reines has proceeded to formulate his own original religious philosophy of Judaism called Polydoxy,[53] and Dr. Petuchowski is no longer a member of the CCAR.

The Concept of Sabbath

The ongoing struggle with the problem of authority is evident in Reform's handling of the issue of Sabbath. Despite many loud requests at the present time the CCAR has not produced a comprehensive guide for Reform Jews. However, in 1972, the CCAR did publish "A Shabbat Manual," a guide for Sabbath observance.

In addition to some historical background, some purposes of Sabbath observance, home services, and Sabbath hymns, the Manual includes a listing of "mitzvot:" Sabbath prescriptions and proscriptions for Reform Jews. While the authors used the traditional term mitzvah, theological differences did not allow them to call mitzvot "divine commandments." They spoke of them instead as "options and opportunities" to enrich celebration and observance of the Sabbath, leaving open their relationship to the will of God.

The Manual discusses five major purposes of Sabbath observance which have developed from the Jewish past and which continue to have relevance for the modern Jew. The Sabbath affords us the opportunity of having an awareness of the world, "the marvel of the universe which God has created."[34] Because of the unique relationship between the Jews and their God, Shabbat speaks of a regard for human dignity. The Jews were slaves and therefore "we strive to help all who suffer from every form of bondage and degradation in the world."[35] There is also a theme of identity with the Jewish people in that Shabbat "calls

upon each Jew to help further the high and noble purposes of the covenantal community and to use the precious hours of Shabbat . . . to deepen the unique historic fellowship of the Jewish people."[36] But Shabbat is also for the individual and another purpose of its observance is the enhancement of the person through Kedushah (holiness), Menuchah (rest), and Oneg (joy). The spirit of Kedushah separates Shabbat from the other six days "so that those who observe it become transformed by its holiness."[37] The rest, or Menuchah, of Shabbat is "more than relaxation and abstention from work. It is a condition of the soul, a physical and spiritual release from weekday pressures which results in serenity."[38] The Oneg of the Shabbat, or its joy, "enhances our personal life and leaves us truly enriched for the week ahead."[39] The fifth purpose of Shabbat observance is a dedication to peace. Peace is the mood of the day in order to teach "its centrality in the Jew's hope for the world today and for the future."[40]

The CCAR Shabbat manual was clearly based on the premises that permissiveness in Reform Judaism was hampering a "Sabbath revival," and that the Reform Jewish Community wanted guidance in the celebration of Shabbat in order to renew the Sabbath's influence upon their lives and those of their children. The ten years which passed since the Manual's publication have not given us any evidence that these premises were correct: despite all the information and directions provided by the Manual, no upsurge

has been reported either in synagogue attendance or in general observance of Sabbath by American Reform Jewry.

II. Liturgy

A Response to New Demands

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, a founding father of the American Reform movement, stated categorically in 1890 that the CCAR undoubtedly had the right "to declare and decide, anyhow for our country, with its particular circumstances, unforeseen anywhere, which of our religious forms, institutions, observances, usages, customs, ordinances and prescriptions are still living factors in our religious, ethical and intellectual life, and which are so no longer" . . . In keeping with this claim, he declared that "the united rabbis of America have undoubtedly the right and the duty to produce a uniform form of worship for all our houses of worship."[41]

The response to Wise's declaration was the publication in 1895 of the "Union Prayer Book" which for 80 years served, in its three revised editions, as the official liturgy of American Reform.

The last revised edition of the "Union Prayer Book" was published in 1940, and by the late 1960's the demand became clear for a new Reform prayerbook which would "recall the tragedy of the Holocaust, reflect upon the miracle of Israel's rebirth, and offer guidance and hope to our people in these fearfully perplexing times."[42]

In response to that demand, in 1975 the CCAR published "Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook" (which further on will be referred to as the "GOP").

Variety as a Basic Principle

The ideological foundation of the new prayerbook has been presented by its editors in the following way:

> Today, Reform Judaism can be best described as offering options -- of belief, practice, theology, and identity, within an atmosphere more hospitable to Israel, Jewish peoplehood, ritual, and variety in religious belief. "Gates of Prayer" reflects these options. The Liturgy Committee took the view from the outset that no one service or set of services could hope to satisfy the need of contemporary Reform Jews. 43

In this respect the new prayerbook represents a sharp departure from its predecessor. Whereas the earlier Reform prayerbook had shown a more or less uniform theology and practice, the "Gates of Prayer" frankly revealed the marked disagreements within the Reform community. Thus, it includes ten services for Sabbath evening which reflect (at least, to some extent) a whole gamut of contemporary Reform views and inclinations: neo-Orthodox leanings, Covenental theology, Classical Reform, mystical trends, religious naturalism, humanistic orientation, and the concept of equivocation.

Critical Analysis

Despite all its attempts to provide a broad variety of liturgical material for its diverse constituency, the "Gates of Prayer" has not been able to satisfy everyone. It has been severely criticized from opposing sides:

for going too far away from Jewish tradition and for not going far enough in meeting indiviaual needs for religious expression.

In the opinion of Dr. Alvin Reines,[44] individual passages in the GOP may differ in style or even contradict one another on minor points, but the book as a whole expresses fundamentally a single theology, namely the same "conversation theism" which is reflected in Orthodox and Conservative prayerbooks. Reform Jews who subscribe to other theological viewpoints, cannot use the GOP authentically because, despite its apparent emphasis on variety, none of its services, taken in their entirety, departs from a single, particular concept of God. The Sabbath Evening Service VI contains a few passages written in equivocal language,[45] but it includes also a section "for the Reading of the Torah."[46] which clearly represents the traditional theistic position.

Dr. Reines' assessment of the GOP is confirmed by textual analysis. In correspondence with the doctrine of conversation theism, the GOP describes God in anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms. God is seen as a person, the absolute all-powerful[47] creator and ruler of the universe,[48] miracle working,[49] all-knowing (conscious of the world as well as of Himself), and all-merciful.[50] God thus relates directly to every individual person and thing, and exercises providence over all of them.[51] There is only one concept of God which is true

and shall be subscribed to.[52] Except through God, there is no soteria, that is, salvation or redemption for humanity.[53] God has chosen the Jews from among all peoples by giving them His Torah,[54] which is infallible and its contents are absolutely true.[55] The covenant which, according to Torah, God has made with the Jewish people, is eternal.[56] To keep from being punished, the Jews must obey the Mitzvot or divine commandments.[57] Prayer, conversation with God, is an essential redeeming act that saves human beings from doubt, anxiety, and mental pain.[58] Still, despite having been created in the God's image, having received the Torah, and having the capacity to communicate with God, a human being has little power and is of little worth.[59]

While Dr. Reines cannot accept the "Gates of Prayer" as the Reform book of common service because of its single and unequivocally-expressed theology, Dr. Petuchowski criticizes it sharply from the opposite direction:

> Truly, the publication of "Gates of Prayer" must be seen as a milestone not only in the history of the Reform Liturgy, but also in the history of American Reform Judaism itself. It is a milestone which marks the termination of the common worship and of a commonly held body of religious beliefs. The unity it feigns is an artificial unity. It is the result of the workmanship of the bookbinder, not the product of a unity of hearts. 60

Although Dr. Petuchowski is pleased that "Gates of Prayer," taken as a whole, "in addition to all of its innovative components contains an impressive amount of traditional liturgical material never before included

in an American reform ritual,"[61] he notes with sadness "the mercilessly butchered versions of some traditional prayers (butchered not for the sake of dogma, but solely for the purpose of providing 'variety' for its own sake)."[62]

According to Dr. Petuchowski, "there seems to be only one theme of the traditional liturgy which does not appear at all in this volume: the pleas for the restoration of the sacrificial cult."[63] Even the notions of Satan[64] and the Davidic Messiah[65] have found their way back into this Reform prayerbook.

III. Conclusion

"Reform Judaism made its first appearance on the stage of Jewish history as a movement for liturgical reform, and ever since, Reform Judaism's changing theological emphases and nuances have been reflected by successive editions of the prayerbook."[66] What is reflected by the "Gates of Prayer"? Two major trends seem to be obvious. First, there is a definite desire to take a few steps back from the rational radicalism and fierce universalism of Classical Reform. Second, it is clearly recognized that the contemporary Reform movement contains in its ranks people with great diversity of beliefs and opinions on every significant theological issue. The differences are so deep and broad that members of the Movement seem to be united more by practical considerations than by ideological loyalties. The only common denominator which can be found in today's American Reform, is a negative

one, namely the rejection of a strict Orthodox position. In this sense, the "Gates of Prayer" is, probably, the only kind of prayerbook which could be published by the Reform rabbinical organization -- that is, an anthology. It is aimed at the broadest audience possible and is, therefore, full of compromises. And, as with all compromises, it cannot satisfy completely any person with clearly defined views.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

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47. Ibid., p.421, and elsewhere.

48. Ibid., pp.298,405, and throughout.

49. Ibid., pp.132, 404, and elsewhere.

50. Ibid., p.133, and throughout.

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55. Ibid., pp.419-421, 424, and throughout.

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61. Ibid., p.12.

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CHAPTER FIVE: POLYDOX JUDAISM

I. Ideology

Definition and Origins

Polydox Judaism is the youngest among American Jewish denominations. Its foundation was laid in 1970 when a group of rabbinic students at Hebrew Union College decided to establish the Institute of Creative Judaism (ICJ) which would "devote itself to research, development and distribution of educational and liturgical materials, appropriate to a free and creative Jewish community."[1] In 1975 the ICJ began to publish on a regular basis its own bulletin, "Polydoxy," to supplement its work in liturgy and curriculum and to facilitate greater understanding of the nature of Polydox Judaism. The first National Gathering of the ICJ in March of 1978 was marked by the formulation of fundamental principles of the Polydox Jewish Confederation, a religious community of Polydox Jews.

Polydox Judaism, as well as Reconstructionism, is essentially the brain-child of one person, in its case -- of Dr. Alvin J. Reines. The term "polydoxy" has been coined by Dr. Reines for the description of a religious community where each member's right to religious autonomy is taken as ultimate. A religious system can be characterized as "polydox" (or termed a "polydoxy") if it subscribes to these two essential principles:

1. There exists no authority, whether a person or document, that has issued commandments that members of the community subscribing to the religious system must obey, i.e. there is no entity with the right to absolute authority over an individual.

2. All such members remain within the presumption of their own radical religious freedom or self-authority, i.e. each member is his/her own ultimate religious authority whose freedom is limited only in that it ends where another's freedom begins.[2]

The full meaning of the concept of Polydoxy can be best understood in comparison to Orthodoxy which is seen by Dr. Reines as an authoritative dogmatic form which is secured in its authority by virtue of its possession of a "true doctrine:"

> As the name implies, an orthodox religion is one that possesses one or more fundamental principles of belief, or of belief and practice which are regarded as "true doctrine." The true doctrine is obligatory upon every member of the orthodox community . . . If the member of an authoritarian (orthodox) religious community refuses to believe or act as the community commands, he is condemned as a sinner or heretic and subjected to punishment.[3]

Polydoxy, on the other hand, as its name implies, holds that there are "many ways" or "many doctrines:"

> In the polydox liberal religion . . . no principle of belief or practice, with the single exception to be noted, is obligatory upon its members. All beliefs regarding the great subjects of religion, (such as, for example, the meaning or non-meaning of the term "god") and all ethical and ritual practices are equally valid so far as the polydox religious community is concerned. The one obligation required of the polydox religionist is his commitment to the ethical principle of

> individual religious freedom that is ultimately necessary for the very existence of the polydox community itself. This principle may be stated in terms of a covenant, a freedom covenant: "Every member of the polydox liberal religious community pledges himself to affirm the creedal, ethical, and ritual freedom of all other members in return for their reciprocal pledges to affirm his own." In the polydox community, the individual's religious freedom ends only where the other person's freedom begins. 4

According to Dr. Reines, Polydox Judaism has its origins in the method and conclusions of scientific research into the Jewish past which was initiated by Jewish scholars in the 19th century and continues until the present day. The method of this research presupposes the right to free inquiry or freedom. The conclusions of such research establish two fundamental points which are basic to Polydoxy. The first is that Scriptures are at least in part, and perhaps entirely, of human authorship and, therefore, fallible. The second is that Jewish religious systems have changed over the course of time, that is, Jews in every age have reformulated their Jewishness to respond to new intellectual, social, political, and economic conditions. Thus, Polydoxy is seen as a contemporary reformulation of Jewishness that elevates the freedom presupposed by Jewish scientific scholarship to a basic right of the entire community.[5]

The Need for Polydox Judaism

The birth of Polydox Judaism has been forged by the perception of American Jewish life which is characterized by Dr. Reines as "crisis consciousness."[6] According to Dr. Reines, American Jewry faces today the threat of extinction,

and some fundamental and far-reaching changes are necessary to reverse the present trend and to ensure the survival of the American Jew. The word "crisis" means, in this context, "a turning point for better or worse." It is recognized that potentiality for the "better," for survival, does exist, and thus, crisis consciousness is supposed to lead "to productive ends, to reevaluation and creative new action, not to paralysis and despair."[7]

The present crisis of American Jewry, in Dr. Reines' view, can be observed in a significant decline in synagogue affiliation and attendance at services, in the constantly rising average age of those who participate in religious activities, in the falling enrollment in religious schools, and in the increasingly limited prospects for professional advancement in the rabbinate.[8]

The crisis consciousness of American Jewry and the accompanying awareness of the need for change, are often blocked, according to Reines, by a number of misconceptions widely disseminated among different groups of American Jews. The most important among these misconceptions are the following:

1. American Jewry is not in any danger; it is indestructible and has a most brilliant future.
2. The very existence of the State of Israel ensures the survival of American Jewry.
3. Only traditional, authoritarian, and legalistic forms of Judaism can enable American Jewry to survive.

4. The loyalty of Jewish children towards Judaism can be ensured by their indoctrination in religious schools (as opposed to education which provides the objective information necessary for the exercising of free choice).
5. The need of Jewish liberal religionists for a national organization is served by the national Reform Jewish institutions, which represent the liberals' interests, express their beliefs and values, and support their hopes and aspirations.
6. Non-religious Jewishness and non-religious Jewish organizations are adequate by themselves to perpetuate American Jewry.
7. The impending extinction that threatens American Jewry is in no way the fault of established American Jewish religious institutions, but is to be blamed entirely upon the Jewish laity which is specifically guilty of a growing rate of intermarriage and a low birth rate.[9]

Repudiating these misconceptions, Dr. Reines sees the basis for their promulgation in the institutional and organizational structure of the American Jewish community. Information regarding American Jewry is controlled almost entirely by organizations and institutions, dependent for their support on showing how well they are serving the American Jewish community. It is understandable that these organizations and institutions would be reluctant to foster crisis consciousness in American Jews and, therefore, confess that under their leadership, policies, projects,

and expenditure of financial resources, American Jewry is approaching a crucial point of its existence.[10]

This critical analysis of present conditions of the American Jewish community and the existing safeguards for its survival, has led Dr. Reines to the following conclusion:

> The key to American Jewish survival, then, is a Jewish religion that can be believed in by the great numbers of American Jews who cannot accept the Judaism of Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and national institutional Reform . . . Many Jews, particularly those of the younger generations, already subscribe to this religion without having identified it and given it a name. It is a silent Judaism that resides unspoken within them, in their minds and hearts. This silent Judaism is a religion of freedom, of individuality and of creativity. It is Polydox Judaism. 11

It is clear from the above statement why, in Dr. Reines' opinion, there is an urgent need in the American Jewish community for the Polydox Jewish Confederation. The Polydox Jewish Confederation (PJC) has been called upon to satisfy "the profound demand of great numbers of American Jews for a religious community whose principles they can with authenticity affirm. In addition, the PJC promises to make a basic contribution to American Jewish survival. Yet perhaps the most compelling reason for the PJC is that . . . Polydox Jews simply cannot fulfill adequately and responsibly [their] moral obligations without a sovereign liberal Jewish community."[12]

The Concept of Authority

Central to the nature of Polydox Judaism is its conception of authority, its appropriate location and its proper limitations.

It is taken as a self-evident proposition that every person has the right to be free, or in other words, every person is presumed to be her or his own authority, with the right to determine her/his own beliefs and actions without external compulsion.[13]

According to Reines, there are two basic ways in which an external entity can acquire the right of authority over an individual. One is by the person voluntarily transferring authority over herself or himself to the external entity ("conditional authority"); the other is by the external entity coming into possession of such authority in a manner that is independent of the person's consent, and which can be exercised even against the person's will ("absolute authority").[14] A moral right to absolute authority in a religious community has been historically based upon the theological foundation of a theistic God and verbal revelation, which in the case of traditional Judaism is exemplified by the Pentateuch.[15] Insofar as Polydox Judaism (or, in fact, any other religious community) accepts the conclusions of scientific research that Scriptures are at least in part of human authorship and, therefore, fallible, it must logically reject the notion that any entity possesses absolute authority over community members.

Since the sole source of authority in a polydox community is the self-authority of its individual members, a question can be raised about the nature of religious leadership that is appropriate for such a community.

Dr. Reines' response[16] is that the only way in which one member of a Polydox community can attain the authority to exercise leadership over other members is for the latter to transfer authority voluntarily to the leader from her or his self-authority. Such authority, in contradistinction to the absolute authority of the leader in an Orthodox community, is conditional authority.

It is quite obvious that the only authority that a member of a polydox community can transfer to the community leader is that which she or he possesses. No member, or group of members, although a majority, can, therefore, transfer to the leader, authority over a member who declines to transfer to the leader authority over herself or himself.

It is assumed, however, that the members of a polydox community will all agree to transfer to the community leader such elements of authority as contribute to the efficacy of the community in fulfilling its fundamental purposes. These include the right to impart factual information or express personal moral opinions to the community at large, to conduct appropriate services, and to officiate at life-history ceremonials and rituals.

The Concepts of Religion and Soteria

The concept of religion in Polydox Judaism is based on the notion that the word "religion" has no single or absolute meaning although "the definition of 'religion' to which the presently dominant Western religious institutions subscribe, either explicitly or implicitly, is

'belief in God,' in which the term 'God' is understood as meaning 'theistic absolutism.'"[17]

This "standard" definition of religion cannot be accepted by Polydox Judaism because, according to the Freedom Covenant, every member of the Polydox community has the right to subscribe to whatever meaning of the word "God" she or he believes true. It is recognized that the Jews in the course of their religious history have subscribed to a wide variety of different and conflicting veiws regarding the word "God." These views have ranged from polytheism to pantheism and from monotheism to agnosticism. Since Polydox Judaism is based on theological freedom and allows all views on the word "God," it has been moved to develop "a definition of religion that includes the option of theistic absolutism, but to which theistic absolutism is nevertheless unessential."[18]

A new definition of religion, proposed by Dr. Reines, is based on three fundamental features of the human person: finity, infinite conation, and the conflict between awareness of finity and infinite conation. Dr. Reines' explication of the above notions can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Finity is a pervasive feature of the human person which means that "all structures and powers of the human being, psychic and physical, are finite; they come to an end before reaching an ideal state, always falling short of perfection and self-sufficiency."[19] Basic categories of human finity include: psychic finity, physical finity,

territorial finity, and existential finity. "The natural consequence of existential finity is death, the most dramatic of all instances of finity."[20]

2. "Infinite conation is the intense willing within humans that wants without limit or end whatever is conceived or imagined to be pleasurable."[21] Thus, infinite existential conation is the will to live forever, the desire never to die.

3. The awareness that one is finite and the passionate desire to be infinite, existing simultaneously within a person, are two mutually incompatible, antagonistic -- clashing -- forces. "This conflict between the awareness of one's finity on the one hand, and infinite conation on the other, is referred to as the 'conflict of finitude,' or simply as 'finitude.'"[22] The conflict of finitude is an inherent problem of the human being, and it takes place on both a conscious and an unconscious level. Unresolved in a person, the conflict of finitude annihilates the meaning of existence.[23]

The negative moods produced by finitude, such as terror, despair, anxiety and melancholy, create intolerable psychic pain, and an urgent need, therefore, to deal with the conflict. The way in which a person deals with the conflict of finitude is termed by Dr. Reines as the person's "response to the conflict of finitude," and this is a core of Reines' definition of religion and its function:

> Religion is the human person's response to the conflict of finitude. Stated more fully:

> Religion is the human person's response to the psychic conflict produced by the awareness of finity and infinite conation, the passionate desire not to be finite. The ideal purpose of a religion is to provide a response to the conflict of finitude that enables a person to resolve the conflict and thereby attain a state of ultimate meaningful existence that the conflict's negative moods would otherwise destroy. The state of ultimate meaningful existence that is attained when the conflict of finitude has been resolved will also be referred to as "soteria" (from the Greek word for salvation). Thus the function of a religion is to produce soteria. 24

According to Reines, there are three major categories of responses to finitude, or religions: the infinite response (which can be subdivided further into the infinite personal response and the infinite relational response); the discognitive response; and the finite response. Jews over the ages have subscribed to various religious systems: "The pantheistic Kabbalist and Hasidic systems are infinite personal response religions. Pharisaic Judaism is an infinite relational response religion. Pentateuchal (Torah) Judaism, and the Judaism of Ecclesiastes, the Sadducees, and Maimonides are finite response religion."[25]

Despite the fact that the finite response is often connected with a belief in God, even a supernatural God, the religions of theistic absolutism "look upon the claim of the finite response to bring soteria as hubris and sinfully presumptuous. They insist that without the gracious and miraculous gift of infinite existence from the theistic absolutistic deity there can be no soteria."[26] Consequently, states Reines, only a Polydoxy, which affirms its members' right and freedom to choose whichever response to finitude

they wish, provides a viable alternative for persons who cannot subscribe to the infinite response, and who refuse to deal with the conflict of finitude in the unauthentic matter of a discognitive response (which includes psychosis, neurosis, alcoholism, drug addiction, and suicide):

> It is only the polydox community, which teaches and approves of all responses to the conflict of finitude, that can institutionalize the finite response, and create the environment of affirmation, approval, and insight that is necessary for the finite response to bring soteria. 27

The Concept of Shabbat

Polydox Judaism finds inappropriate for itself the concept of Shabbat being upheld by conversation theism, i.e. the view of Shabbat as a day that is endowed supernaturally with a special holy quality. Having rejected the concept of verbal revelation, Polydoxy cannot accept the notion of Shabbat as a temporal and physical occasion, whose special significance is revealed explicitly in the commandments of the Torah, in obedience to which certain kinds of behavior shall be pursued or avoided.[28]

The concept of Shabbat, proposed by Dr. Reines is termed "Shabbat as a state of being." Reines believes that the essence of the Shabbat as a symbol used in the literature and liturgy of the Jewish continuum, is "a state of being that may be characterized as soteria, a state of intrinsically meaningful personal being."[29]

Shabbat as a state of bieng can be fully realized today only by a Jewish community which rejects Orthodox, or traditional, symbolism that has led to the degeneration of the Sabbath:

> Festivals placed by the Jewish calendar into a routine, working day of the civil calendar cannot long overcome its destructive resistance . . . Hence, the Sabbath of traditional essentialism, a festival of fundamental importance, could not surmount the fact that Saturday, in the civil calendar, is an important commercial day . . . The "seventh day" can hardly serve as a symbol that evokes a mood of deep spiritual peace when the total environment uses the self-same day as a symbol that incites to feverish pursuit of mundane goals. 30

Reines believes that the answer to the problem of Sabbath for our time must come from creating a new symbolism which can yield a meaningful Sabbath experience since "symbolism can only flourish when it exists in an organic unity with its environment . . . The potent symbol must be rooted in the authentic ground of man, the economic, social, and educational matrix from which his existence emerges and on which his life lies embedded."[31] In order to enable the Sabbath concept to have true significance for the individual, it is necessary to lift the Sabbath from the seventh day, Saturday. Being encompassed by economic and social conditions that make Saturday yet another weekday, cannot evoke a meaningful Shabbat. "Shabbat will be conceived of as a state of being and thus freed of its necessary connection with the 'seventh day.' The Shabbat will enjoy multiple causation: for some, the 'seventh day' will bring about Shabbat; for others, a deeply personal measurement of time."[32]

Thus, a concept of the Sabbath in Polydox Judaism must remain open to the individual. Regardless of the day, the hour, or the moment, the Sabbath as a state of being

can have relevance for the Jew unencumbered by old symbolism or mundane pursuits of a weekday-like Saturday.

II. Liturgy

The Requirements for a Common Service Book of Polydox Judaism

Since in a Polydox community every person has the right to her or his own theological beliefs, the essential characteristic of Polydox common services is that they are theologically open, that is noncreedal and undogmatic. The major benefit of a Polydox common service book is seen by Dr. Reines in the fact that "there is concrete ethical instruction and moral discipline to be gained from employing a book for religious expression whose very existence points to the freedom covenant that underlies a polydox community: the mutual affirmation of every member's freedom and authenticity despite diverse theological positions.[33]

According to Reines, there are several general requirements to which a Polydox common service book shall correspond:[34]

1. The polydox common service book cannot be a prayerbook alone. Since there are Polydox Jews who do not believe that deity is open to personal address, common services must lend themselves to other meanings than that of conversational theism.
2. A polydox common service book, accordingly, must be written in consciously equivocal language, i.e. in the language that espouses no one particular theological viewpoint, but is harmonious with all. Language shall be employed

in a way which will leave the participants free to fill their minds and hearts with their personal beliefs and feelings.

3. A polydox common service should not necessarily constitute (in whole or in part) the essential soterial act of a Polydox religious system. It may constitute such an act for those members of the Polydox community who are conversational theists; for others, the service will rather point to or evoke the essential soterial act.

4. A polydox common service book shall meet the approval of every member of the community or their representatives. "Inasmuch as every member of a polydox community is his own ultimate religious authority, he has the right to decide upon a service that will publicly claim to represent his religious convictions."[35]

The Structure and Content of "The Community Service Book"

"The Community Service Book"[36] (which will be referred to further on as "the CBS"), published by the Institute of Creative Judaism in 1981, exemplifies the Shabbat liturgy of Polydox Judaism.

One of its most notable features is the omission of the word "God" both in Hebrew and English. According to Dr. Reines,

> The reason is that in popular usage the word God is not an open term. This is so despite the fact that the word God has historically been and continues to be employed by theologians, philosophers, and scientists in an open fashion, that is, in many different senses and with various uses. Among the Jews, the word God has been and is employed

> by naturalists and agnostics as well as by supernaturalists and theists. Yet despite the word's actual status as an open term, the popular culture, owing to doctrinaire and simplistic early religious education, has made "God" into a closed term with only one meaning, that of a "human-like supernatural person." Accordingly, since the word God is by and large not understood as the open term it actually is, it is generally omitted from equivocal services. 37

Accordingly, the CSB substitutes the word "God" with such expressions as "the power that makes for light and life," "the wellspring of life," "the ground of being," "power of being," "fountainhead of creation, wisdom and understanding," "compassionate spirit," and "the spirit that brings cosmic peace."

The Community Service Book contains five Sections: Opening Section, Mediant Section, Torah (and Haftorah) Section, Kiddush Section, and Concluding Section.

An "Opening Section" is a variation of the Kabbalat Shabbat which includes a candle-lighting ceremony with a blessing for "the wellspring of life, ground of being, by whose power we kindle the Sabbath light."[38]

A "Mediant Section" corresponds in its structure to "the Shema and its blessings" and "the Seven Benedictions" sections of traditional Jewish liturgy, but with a completely revised text (both in Hebrew and in a strictly literal translation). Thus, for example the Shema is rephrased as "Hear, O Israel: human unity is unity divine. Blessed is the peace of unity forever and ever."[39] The Sabbath theme is strongly developed in accordance with the concept of Shabbat as a state of being.

A "Torah (and Haftorah) Section" reflects Dr. Reines' position on the functions of the Torah in Polydox Judaism:

> Among them is the Torah's status as the symbol par excellence of the Jewish quest for ultimate meaning and values. The Torah also provides a rich source of theological, ehtical, and ritual insights that enrich the options from among which the Polydox Jew is free to choose. 40

Torah and Haftorah blessings emphasize the ideas of wisdom, truth and goodness.

A "Kiddush" Section is based on "the recognition that life is both joy and sorrow."[41] It celebrates the Sabbath as a time of peace which is "preeminent among hallowed occasions, a symbol of the saving of humankind."[42]

A "Concluding Section" consists of variations of the Aleinu and Mourners' Kaddish. The latter glorifies "the compassionate spirit" and expresses a hope that "the spirit that brings cosmic peace" will "bring peace unto us and all Israel."[43]

III. Conclusion

The Community Service Book is completely coherent with the ideology of Polydox Judaism. Having been written in equivocal language, it preserves only a few small fragments of traditional liturgy which are open for ideological interpretation. Striving to provide an authentic mode of religious expression for people with completely different theological views, it presents a most radical break with the traditional form of Jewish common services. What follows can be perceived as a major internal contradiction: an almost

complete revision of traditional texts can alienate those members of the Polydox community who have a strong emotional attachment to some fundamental traditional formulae (such as the Shema), although they may support wholeheartedly the basic principles of Polydox Judaism. This gap between intellectual and emotional commitments of many American Jews may become a hindrance to the growth of the Polydox Jewish community, for having been philosophically accepted (at least, implicitly) by large segments of the Reform, Reconstructionist, and even Conservative movements, Polydoxy may be rejected as too revolutionary in its liturgical expression. If this danger is recognized by the Polydox community, it can be easily averted. Or one can even argue that the danger does not really exist since, by definition, there is no such thing as "the authorized Polydox liturgy," and the Community Service Book, which we have chosen for analysis, presents merely one of many possible modes of religious expression in Polydox Judaism.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

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2. Alvin Reines, Elements in a Philosophy of Reform Judaism, op. cit., p.91.
3. Ibid., pp.38-40.
4. Ibid., p.41.
5. Alvin Reines, Questions and Answers on Polydoxy (St. Louis, ICJ Research Society, n.d.), p.1.
6. Polydoxy, vol. 3, Numbers 2/3, 1978, p.1.
7. Ibid., p.2.
8. Ibid., pp.4-5.
9. Ibid., pp.2-3.
10. Ibid., p.5.
11. Ibid., p.8.
12. Ibid., p.10.
13. Reines, Elements . . ., op. cit., p.2.
14. Ibid., pp.2, 38.
15. See supra, p.
16. Alvin Reines, Authority in Reform Judaism and Its Analogues (unpublished manuscript), pp. 13-14.
17. Alvin Reines, "The word 'Religion,'" In: Polydoxy (Cincinnati, ICJ, 1979), vol. 4, No.2, p.1.
18. Ibid., p.3.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p.4.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p.6.

24. Ibid., pp.6-7.

25. Ibid., p.14.

26. Ibid., p.15.

27. Ibid.

28. Reines, Elements . . ., op. cit. p.112.

29. Ibid., pp.113-114.

30. Alvin J. Reines, "Halacha and Reform Judaism." In: Dimensions, IV (Spring 1970), p.23.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Reines, Elements . . ., op. cit., pp.110-111.

34. Ibid., pp. 111-112.

35. Ibid., p.110.

36. The Community Service Book, (St. Louis: Institute of Creative Judaism, 1981).

37. Reines, Questions and Answers on Polydoxy, op. cit.,

38. The Community Service Book, op. cit., p.I-A-2.

39. Ibid., p.I-B-3.

40. Reines, Questions and Answers on Polydoxy, op. cit., pp.3-4.

41. The Community Service Book, op. cit., p.I-D-I.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p.I-E-3.

SUMMARY

A great variety of ideological beliefs and religious practices exists today on the American Jewish scene and, having been analyzed in this study, can be graphically presented by the following table:

BELIEFS & PRACTICES	MOVEMENT: Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform	Polydox
Belief in Supernatural Deity	yes	yes	no	open	open
Belief in Verbal Revelation that Bestows Absolute Authority	yes	yes/no	no	no	no
Acceptance of Absolute Authority	yes	yes/no	no	yes/no	no
Affirmation of Individual Autonomy	no	no	yes/no	yes/no	yes
Following Traditional Observances & Rituals	yes	yes	yes	yes/no	open
Sabbath as a Temporal Event	yes	yes	yes	yes	open
Belief in Efficacy of Prayer	yes	yes	no	yes/no	open

BELIEFS & PRACTICES	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform	Polydox*
Preservation of Some Traditional Doctrines in the Liturgy:					
Supernatural Salvation	yes	yes	no	no	no
Personal Messiah	yes	yes	no	no	no
Jews as Chosen People	yes	yes	no	yes	open
Immortality of the Soul	yes	yes	yes	yes	open
Resurrection of the Body	yes	yes/no	no	no	no
Restoration of the Sacrificial Cult	yes	no	no	no	no
Retribution	yes	yes	no	yes/no	no
Sabbath Liturgy: Structure & Language					
Preservation of Four Traditional Sabbath Services	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Preservation of Traditional Order in Common Services	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Usage of Both Hebrew and Vernacular	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

* Our analysis of the Polydox liturgy is related to only one example: the Community Service Book.

BELIEFS & PRACTICES	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstruc-tionist	Reform	Polydox
Preservation of Traditional Hebrew Liturgy	yes	no	no	no	no
Direct Correspondence between Hebrew & Translation	yes	no	yes/no	no	yes
Usage of Equivocal Language	no	no	yes/no	yes/no	yes
Reading of Torah and Haftorah	yes	yes	yes	yes	optional

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