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VISIONARY AND ACTIVIST

A BIOGRAPHY OF MAURICE N. EISENDRATH

by

Avi M. Schulman

Thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the
requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-
Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati

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Referee: Professor Michael A. Meyer

To Eve

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Digest

Maurice N. Eisendrath (1902-1973) was one of the most distinguished and influential rabbis of the twentieth century. A pulpit rabbi for seventeen years, he is most noted for his accomplishments as president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. During his thirty year tenure (1943-1973), the number of congregations affiliated with the UAHC doubled. He presided over the transfer of the movement's headquarters from Cincinnati to New York, which brought Reform Judaism into closer contact with other central institutions of American Jewry. Eisendrath was active in interfaith activities and was a vocal spokesman for social justice. Upon his insistence, the movement's Religious Action Center was established in Washington, D.C.

Eisendrath was a product of classical Reform Judaism. He began his rabbinic career as a staunch opponent of Zionism and ritual. However, he was sensitive to trends and events in American Jewry. One goal of my biography is to analyze how his view on certain issues such as Zionism and ritual modified during his lifetime.

The first part of the biography unfolds in chronological order, depicting Eisendrath's upbringing in the Midwest, his student days at the Hebrew Union College, his pulpit experiences in West Virginia and Toronto, Canada, and his activities while president of the UAHC. The second section focuses upon two primary themes in Eisendrath's life: the

struggle to achieve social justice and the attempt to build a bridge between Jews and Christians. The final part of the biography depicts his last years and concludes with an evaluation of Eisendrath's life and work.

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Introduction

Maurice Eisendrath's hands twitched spasmodically as he glanced at the three men seated with him around a small conference table. Shifting his body every few moments, he could barely sit still. The president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) did not allow himself the luxury of slumping in his chair; he held himself upright, poised to make a point. The rigidness of their boss's body and his agitated movements were familiar signs of nervousness to the three members of Eisendrath's coordinating staff who met with him on that warm Fall day in 1959. They had gathered to criticize a first draft of his "State of Our Union" speech, to be given at the 45th General Assembly of the UAHC scheduled to take place in Miami Beach that November. Eisendrath always relished the opportunity to discuss and review his biennial address with a few of his lieutenants: Jay Kaufman, Gene Lipman, and Al Vorspan. It was their job to evaluate the ideas expressed in his rough draft and to suggest ways of editing the huge, 120 page, double-spaced speech. In past years, he had loved the give-and-take of these sessions. Each staff member was free to speak his mind, challenging the president's ideas and honing the clarity of his language. Never had Eisendrath pulled rank on his subordinates and silenced their criticisms.

However, this time was different. The staff soon realized that Eisendrath's manner was unlike that of previous sessions. This time he was acerbic and antagonistic toward

anyone who suggested a way to improve his speech. Soon it was clear to his staff that Eisendrath had reached the limit of his patience on a number of issues, that he was unresponsive to their requests to modify the views expressed in his speech. For some time he had been absorbing the barbed criticisms of the Southerners in the UAHC who opposed his own and the Union's stands on civil rights. They did not want the Union president threatening their position in the South with his liberal pronouncements about the sin of segregation and the evil of racial hatred. Many Southerners felt that Eisendrath had no right to speak for them, and a number had threatened to leave the UAHC.

Eisendrath had also encountered opposition to the proposed establishment of a Religious Action Center in Washington, D.C. Some Reform Jews felt that social action was not an integral part of their Jewish identity and they adamantly refused to have their Union dues spent to support a staffed institution which would make social policy statements in their names.

The draft of Eisendrath's speech was belligerent. It seemed to his staff as if he were berating the delegates who would be at the biennial conference and bullying them to live-up to the high ideals of peace and brotherhood expressed by the prophets of Israel, rather than encouraging and supporting them in their struggles. His staff members were worried, for the delegates at the biennial were the lay leaders of the Reform movement. They volunteered their time,

serving on Temple boards and the various commissions of the UAHC. The staff felt that a negative speech by the Union president could seriously affect the delegates' morale and dampen their enthusiasm for working in the movement.

At past biennials, Eisendrath's "State of Our Union" addresses had served as the highlight of the convention. His speaking ability was unmatched. He spoke with hardly a reference to his text, for he memorized his speeches. In florid and alliterative phrases he would describe the activities of the Union. With his peerless ability to paint a picture of the new vistas Reform Judaism must embrace, he had in the past rallied the spirits of the delegates and united disparate factions into a unified whole.

But in 1959, Eisendrath did not want to merely depict the accomplishments of the Reform movement and exhort its members to labor on behalf of its causes. He was angry at Reform Jews who opposed civil rights for blacks and who would not work to establish justice in America. He was in no mood to accept his staff's anxious suggestions that he moderate his thundering accusations against his adversaries. The exchanges between Eisendrath and his aides grew uncharacteristically heated. Suddenly, he slammed his manuscript on the table and exclaimed, "Dammit! Don't you guys think I am smart enough to know what you are trying to get me to do? You want me to love four thousand people. I can't love four thousand people." In a quieter voice he added, "I don't throw love around."[1]

During the seventy-one years of his life, from 1902-1973, few people loved Maurice Eisendrath. Thousands respected him for his courageous stands on issues of public concern. He forcefully expressed his convictions, even when it was not politically expedient to do so. As a young rabbi in Canada in the early 1930's, he was an outspoken critic of Zionism and an advocate of pacifism. He promoted interfaith dialogue, and made provocative statements about Jesus as a Jewish prophet. In later years, despite heated opposition, he championed civil rights for blacks and supported international nuclear disarmament. In the last years of his life, he opposed United States involvement in the Vietnam War and criticized the corrupt Nixon administration.

Eisendrath was admired by many for his visionary qualities. He perceived in what direction the Reform movement should move. He, more than anyone, transformed the Union of American Hebrew Congregations from an insignificant service association located in Cincinnati into a nationally prominent religious organization centered in the House of Living Judaism in New York.

He was loathed, too. Some thought the was egocentric and vainglorious. To his detractors' minds, he loved the limelight, and they thought Eisendrath would do anything to see his name in the newspaper. He was also feared. A consummately skilled political infighter, his battles with opponents could be tumultuous and bruising. He rarely

accommodated others if he firmly believed that a matter of principle was at stake. Eisendrath only met his match in Nelson Glueck, president of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. For over twenty years, the two leaders bitterly struggled to achieve supremacy within the Reform movement.

Eisendrath inspired respect and admiration in some, dislike and hostility in others. But love was not an emotion he engendered, largely because he did not seek it. He contained himself, withholding his emotions from all but a few people. He was reserved and had no use for idle chit-chat. One former associate described him as a political radical, but socially a Victorian. He did not smoke or drink. He rarely cursed, allowing himself only an occasional 'damn' or 'hell.' The changes in sexual mores that began in the fifties completely eluded him. He believed in the sanctity of marriage, and privately expressed his disapproval of staff members who divorced.

Maurice Eisendrath was a man whom people felt strongly about, either positively or negatively. Though he died just over ten years ago, today he is scarcely remembered. His accomplishments are by and large unknown to the present generation of Reform Jews. His name conjures up vague reminiscences of a long ago past--a tall, crew cut figure carrying a Torah during a Freedom March, or raising his finger in resistance to the Vietnam War. It seems like a

bygone era when rabbis spoke unselfconsciously for social justice. Today, the tenets of universalism are questioned by a generation schooled in ethnic politics and tempered by the particular, unmet concerns of the Jewish people.

This biography will chronicle the successes and failures of a man who arguably did more to shape Reform Judaism than any other person in the post-World War Two period. It is not meant to be a panegyric to Eisendrath's finer qualities or a laudatory compilation of his notable achievements. Neither does it seek to justify those who would like to besmirch his reputation. A biographer can choose to be a coroner or an intimate of the deceased. I prefer the role of concerned observer. I never met Maurice Eisendrath, but I hope that this lack of personal acquaintance has enabled me to gain suitable distance by which to view the man both critically and compassionately.

To date, one biography of Maurice Eisendrath has been written. Rabbi Edward P. Cohn of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, completed his study in partial fulfillment of a Doctor of Divinity degree. His work is basically intended as a textbook for high school and adult education groups. Half of his book consists of lesson plans for these ages, drawing upon Eisendrath's life as an example for Reform Jews. I believe that my biography is distinguished from Cohn's by its more critical nature and by its greater comprehensiveness. In addition, I have utilized resources for Eisendrath which Cohn did not investigate.

It is highly unfortunate that an invaluable resource for Eisendrath's life has been lost to all researchers. His personal papers--letters and memos--were misplaced during a transfer of storage at the UAHC. Fortunately, many who personally knew him are still alive. In writing this biography I have relied upon the comments and insights of his second wife, Rita, former and present staff members at the Union, rabbis and colleagues, friends and foes. I have also pored over Eisendrath's voluminous speeches and sermons given during his nearly fifty years in the rabbinate. Finally, I have examined secondary sources which have aided me in understanding Eisendrath's thoughts and actions in the context of his time.

Chapter One

"Eisey": 1902-1926

Maurice Nathan Eisendrath was born in Chicago on July 10, 1902. He was the second child of Clara and Nathan Eisendrath. Juliette, his sister, had preceded his arrival by a few years. The origin of his first name is unknown. However, the fact that his middle name was the same as his father's was not at all unusual for the Eisendrath clan. It was customary for the males to carry their father's first names as their own middle names, signifying in English his Hebrew name: Moshe ben Natan, Maurice the son of Nathan.

There were two branches of the Eisendrath clan in America. Those of Dutch extraction settled in Milwaukee while those of German descent lived in Chicago. Both Clara and Nathan were American born. Nathan worked in the millinery supply business. They made their home in a three story flat on the North Side of Chicago. There were many Jews of German background in their neighborhood. The Eisendraths joined Temple Emanuel, a congregation composed at that time almost completely of Jews of German descent. They were both active in the affairs of the Temple. Nathan was a member of the board and Clara volunteered her services.

The parents dutifully sent Juliette, Maurice, and their younger brother, Arthur, to religious school. It was there, through his association with Rabbi Felix Levy, that Eisendrath decided at an early age to become a rabbi:

> I decided on a religious career when I was five, and I have never deviated . . . It was unpopular in those days for a Reform youngster to even think of becoming a rabbi, but I couldn't be deterred . . . I was greatly influenced by our congregation's young rabbi. He was very sympatico with children, and I admired him and wanted to be like him.[1]

The fact that Levy was the Eisendraths' next door neighbor and a close family friend helped to reinforce Maurice's positive image of the rabbinate. He was labeled a 'square' and a 'sissy' by his peers because he wanted to be a 'do-gooder.' Even his parents had trouble comprehending his eager desire to become a rabbi, but they never wavered in their support of his ambition.

As a child, Maurice was taken by serious matters like religion. Yet he also had interests in common with other boys his age. He loved baseball and attended games with his father and brother. He also enjoyed music. He went to concerts, kept a record collection, and became an accomplished saxophone player. His one handicap as a child was his frailty. Maurice was quite thin and had a great deal of trouble with his eyesight--a problem which later almost prevented him from completing rabbinic school. A childhood acquaintance's earliest memories of Maurice was of "him in knickers and not being able to see."[2] Marjory Hess, Felix Levy's daughter, also recalled that overall he was a normal kid. It was not until later in his life that he demonstrated the tremendous charisma and drive that characterized his rabbinate.

In 1914 the family moved to Pittsburgh where Nathan continued in the hat business. Maurice studied with J. Leonard Levy, rabbi of Congregation Rodef Shalom. Levy was famous in his day as a preacher and social activist. In later years Eisendrath remembered how this "towering figure of Reform Judaism"[3] influenced him. Unfortunately, Levy died a few years after Maurice met him.

As he grew older, Eisendrath entertained ideas of entering social work. He also felt he could have succeeded in medicine or law. Yet his childhood desire to become a rabbi persisted, and so at the tender age of sixteen he travelled to Cincinnati in order to begin his studies at the Hebrew Union College. His preparation for the rabbinic program was almost nil. He had little background in Hebrew, Bible, or rabbinic literature. Yet Eisendrath was far from unusual. Many students came to HUC with inadequate backgrounds and enrolled in the College's Preparatory Department. They were required simultaneously to earn their high school degree and later complete their undergraduate studies at the University of Cincinnati. Over the course of eight years of study in Cincinnati, Eisendrath graduated from three schools located on Clifton Avenue: Hughes High School, the University of Cincinnati, and HUC.

Eisendrath entered HUC in September of 1918. Only a month later he suffered a loss in his family. In October, students were sent home because of a terrible

epidemic of influenza. A day after he arrived in Pittsburgh his father died of the disease. Eisendrath was never particularly close with his father, yet the loss was not easy to bear. Conscious that as the oldest male he bore a responsibility for the welfare of his family, he was nonetheless encouraged by his mother and older sister to continue his studies. Clara was a dominant force in her son's life. She possessed an unusually perceptive mind, and those who knew both her and Maurice commented on how his perspicacity was an inheritance from her.[4]

Eisendrath returned to the College saddened yet more determined to succeed in his studies. The comfort tendered him by his classmates and teachers most likely assisted him during that difficult time. During Eisendrath's years at HUC the College was truly an intimate community. On the average there were less than one hundred students and about ten full-time faculty members.[5]

Until the dormitory was completed in 1924 students boarded with families. Despite their secular and religious studies and parttime jobs, the 'boys' found time to fraternize. Student activities included rooting for the HUC basketball team, producing plays, throwing Chanukah and Purim parties, and publishing a first-rate publication, the HUC Monthly. There was a distinctly masculine and carefree spirit that pervaded the College at that time.[6] A clear division was made between the inferior, naive lower

classmen and the more worldly, somewhat cynical upper classmen. Like other freshmen, Eisendrath had to be initiated into the student body. In January of 1919,

> at the 'Students' Recreation Chamber' of the College, six lowly and humble members of the freshmen class . . . were initiated into the mystic 'arcana' of the HUC student body. The freshmen performed the usual vocal, lingual and nasal antics ordinarily inflicted upon them. Everybody had a good time except the 'Freshies.'[7]

In time, Eisendrath found his own way to fit into the social atmosphere of HUC. He formed a jazz band, calling it the HUC-Stars (pronounced 'hucksters'). The band performed for several years at student functions, with Eisendrath directing the group, playing saxophone, and even occasionally singing. Social events provided the students an opportunity to 'let off steam' about life at HUC and Eisendrath did his best to add to the occasions. At one student banquet he regaled the crowd with a satirical song about the B.H. (Be Hutspadik) degree.* At another event he sang about the dilemmas of preaching on controversial subjects:

> I wish I knew what I should speak on
> I wish I knew what to preach
> If I should speak for labor
> I'll lose my job, I'd even lose my girl,
> The biggest macher's daughter
>
> I wish I knew what I should speak on
> I wish I knew what to preach
> If I should speak on justice
> I'd be a red, they'd even say I was
> A wicked bol-she-vi-ki.[8]

---

*the B.H. really stood for Bachelor of Hebrew

As was the common practice of the day, Eisendrath had a nickname, a diminutive of his last name. He was called "Eisey" by his fellow students. He even referred to himself as Eisey in a song he wrote about his saxophone playing entitled, "Hot Lips."[9] Eisendrath could be quite a cut-up at student parties. At one student dance the HUC Monthly reported that "a new style of dancing was introduced by George D. Taxay and Maurice Eisendrath--an adaptation of the Chinese 'Fang Schon on' trot and done in an inimitable way."[10]

These social events were pleasant diversions during an otherwise demanding schedule for the students. Besides their secular studies, students in the Preparatory Department carried a full load of courses at the College in subjects like Bible (taught to Eisendrath by Moses Buttenwieser, Henry Englander, and Julian Morgenstern), rabbinic literature (Solomon Freehof), history (Jacob Rader Marcus), and philosophy (David Neumark). During his early years at the College, Eisendrath excelled in his studies. He scored particularly high marks in Bible and Mishna. In 1923 he was awarded the Fleisher Prize "because of his scholarship and standing in the Preparatory Department."[11] In the years following his reception of the Fleisher Prize Eisendrath's grades dropped. He still earned good marks but not of the same high caliber as when he was a lower classman. No definitive reason is known for this slide.

It is possible to speculate that when he was younger the urge to excel was stronger because he had to maintain high marks in order to receive financial assistance from the College.[12] Perhaps his interest in scholarship slackened after 1923. In his early years Eisendrath entertained thoughts of becoming an academician. Yet he was uninterested in developing the Hebrew skills necessary to become an accomplished Judaic scholar. He neglected his Hebrew studies, preferring instead to read the classics of English literature and the important novels of the day. There is one other possible reason why his grades were not so high in his last few years at the College. When he reached the upper class level, he joined a group of students some of whom were able to bypass the Preparatory Department altogether because of their rich Jewish backgrounds. Hence the competition for good grades was even greater than it had been in his earlier years.[13]

Like many sensitive spirits who attend theological school, Eisendrath was consumed by doubts about his belief in God. He had difficulty squaring his childhood belief in a paternal, personal God with the more critical, scientific perspectives he was exposed to at the College and in his readings. Two men helped guide Eisendrath through this dilemma. The first was Moses Buttenwieser, Professor of Bible at HUC. "Through his unparalleled presentation of the moral passion of the Hebrew prophets,"[14] the young

Eisendrath learned that Judaism demanded right conduct more than right belief. Buttenwieser also taught his students to put in perspective their doubts about God; one could never rationally know God, yet one must trust in God despite ravaging trials of faith.

Another professor who had a significant impact upon Eisendrath was Eustace Haydon, Professor of Comparative Religion at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. It was during his summer studies in Chicago that Eisendrath exchanged his childhood perspective of God as a grandfatherly deity atop a cloud for one of an active cosmic force. It was from Haydon that Eisendrath absorbed a lifetime faith in "that spirit which suffuses the universe--which is, in the literal meaning of that term, veritably a universe and not a chaos--linking the soaring satellites and flaming suns with an Amos, a Beethoven, an Abraham Lincoln, an Albert Einstein."[15]

Eisendrath almost did not complete his studies at HUC, not because of any academic deficiencies or crises of the spirit, but due to his extremely poor eyesight. The College's physician, Dr. J. Victor Greenebaum, thought that his eyes were far too weak to cope with the strain of studying. Eisendrath despaired of ever achieving his goal of becoming a rabbi. Fortunately, HUC's president, Julian Morgenstern, recommended that he see the best occulist in Chicago. Dr. Snydacker was able to diagnose his condition

as severe congenital astigmatism and advised Eisendrath to improve his general health (he was five foot eleven inches and weighed 125 pounds) so that his eyesight would improve. Snydacker's prescription proved correct, though it cannot be said that Eisendrath applied himself assiduously to the task of improving his physique. He liked to swim. But he deliberately skipped the University gym courses he was required to take. On account of this, he almost did not graduate from UC. It was not until Morgenstern assured the University Dean that he would insure that in the course of two weeks Eisendrath would make up his four years of missed gym classes that the truant student was allowed to be a candidate for graduation. In later years Eisendrath remembered his two weeks of hard labor under Morgenstern's supervision:

> My college mates of that day may still recall the side-splitting spectacle of my ceaseless running, huffing, and puffing around the campus driveway or shakily raising dumbbells in the gym until I was blue in the face, as I so belatedly discharged my athletic requirements under the tireless coaching of Dr. Morgenstern.[16]

In addition to such 'academic' obligations, the students at the College were required to teach in nearby religious schools and to lead services at congregations too small to afford a fulltime rabbi. Eisendrath got his first taste of rabbinic experience in 1920 when he led High Holiday services in Fremont, Ohio. The congregation must have been delighted with the rabbinic leadership he offered them

for the president of the congregation wrote Dr. Englander, the College registrar:

> Mr. Eisendrath conducted our services in such a highly satisfactory manner that we would very much like to have him with us again next year if possible. He certainly has a wonderful future.[17]

In later years Eisendrath would have High Holiday pulpits in Helena, Montana; Muskogee, Oklahoma; and Butte, Montana.[18] In his last two years at HUC he had a bi-weekly in Owensboro, Kentucky. It is particularly interesting that Eisendrath once served Muskogee because it was the home town of his first wife, Rosa Brown Eisendrath.[19] An accomplished pianist, Rosa was pursuing graduate studies in music at the University of Chicago, where she roomed with Maurice's sister, Juliette. The couple dated for several years but postponed marriage until after Maurice finished his studies.[20]

Like many of his colleagues, Eisendrath aspired to be a prophetic voice unto his people and to the general society. The prophetic demand for justice was the sine qua non of Judaism. This was both a result of developments within Reform Judaism, wherein the prophets came to represent the living ethical spirit of Judaism as opposed to the decadent performance of rote rituals, as well as the fact that the Social Gospel movement influenced the rabbis' perceptions of their task. Given this preoccupation with the prophetic mandate, there was a tendency by students to portray any conflicts with authority figures at the College as a struggle between the sons of truth and light

with the surrounding forces of darkness. This is virtually what Eisendrath did when he expressed his feelings about the state of affairs at HUC in 1925.

There were a variety of factors that contributed to the conflict in 1925 between students and the then three-year president of the College, Julian Morgenstern. His aloof manner, his favoritism for some students over others, his lowering of admission standards at the College while paradoxically trying to raise academic standards, and his at times heavy handed imposition of discipline tended to alienate many students. On the other hand, just by nature of the institution there was a degree of tension between students and the administration.

> [Student] hostilities engendered by their own ambivalence about the rabbinate, their guilt about accepting scholarships and loans, and their need for self-assertion were bound to focus on the pervasive source of authority. As Morgenstern delegated none of his powers, all discontent necessarily was directed at him.[21]

In his essay, "The Supremacy of Self," featured in the February, 1925, issue of the HUC Monthly, Eisendrath presented the thesis that the true molders of civilization opposed the unholy doctrine of conformity and instead broke away from the masses in order to express a new and exalted vision of the self. Across the world individuality was being stamped out. "Strange as it may seem," he wrote, "this all pervading darkness has spread its ominous gloom even to religious institutions and theological seminaries."

Any deviations from the standard rule of conduct or thought might even "render one in imminent need of psychiatrical attention or at least of a rigorous regimen of gymnastics.* It would take brave souls to assert themselves against the elders who attempted to impose their false beliefs upon the young. "Respect for authority is not always laudable." It may be necessary to rebel against tyranny. "It is better to renounce those who guide a vessel, than to perish amid icy waves because of the pilot's ineptitude."[22]

And renounce Eisendrath did, with eloquent words that left little doubt about how he felt about the College's president. In later years, Eisendrath claimed that as a "restive and rebellious student" he led a revolt to have Morgenstern ousted because of his attempted imposition of discipline.[23] Yet it is a curious fact that Eisendrath chose to write his rabbinic thesis under the same man he once passionately denounced! Though his thesis was in the field of Bible, for reasons unknown Eisendrath did not work under his beloved teacher, Moses Buttenwieser. Perhaps Morgenstern had a greater expertise than Buttenwieser in the topic Eisendrath wanted to explore: "Universalism and Particularism in the Priestly Code with Special Reference to Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah." It is also possible that Eisendrath's conflict with Morgenstern prompted a special

---

*Emphasis added.

understanding between the two. Eisendrath's rebelliousness at Morgenstern's authoritarianism might have been balanced by a great respect for the man's intellect and ability. Finally, it must be mentioned that in those days the College president had great influence over post-ordination placements. It is possible that Eisendrath thought that working under Morgenstern would improve his job chances.[24]

Eisendrath's approach to the material was unoriginal but suitable. The primary purpose of the thesis was to trace the rise and interplay of the twin doctrines of particularism and universalism in Judaism. He attempted to show how Israel's religious history gradually progressed from narrow particularism toward the universalism of Deutero-Isaiah. After the "night of nationalism" there came the "dawn . . . of universal moral ideals."[25] In time, Israel's mission was established: to be a light unto the nations. As Yahweh's righteous suffering servant, Israel was to become by precept and example the teacher of humanity.

Eisendrath completed his thesis in May, 1926. By the end of his College days he seemed eager to leave the cloistered halls of HUC. In his senior sermon he gave voice to his feelings about entering the active rabbinate:

> With anchor weighed, adrift upon an unchartered sea, we too must set out for that shore, unnamed in any atlas, that shore which may never be attained; but in the sailing forth, in the sheer joy of having cast off from our earthly moorings, in the ecstasy of breathing the gale--in this alone can we satisfy the undying desire of the soul to fulfill itself, of the spirit, craving for completeness of life, yearning, ever striving to surpass itself.[26]

Eisendrath entered the Hebrew Union College a young lad of sixteen. Eight years later he was both older and somewhat wiser in the ways of the world.[27] Yet one aspect of his life never changed. He never lost his penchant for challenging entrenched authorities, drawing upon the prophets for inspiration.

Chapter Two

"Pulpit and Politics": 1926-1943

In the Fall of 1926, Eisendrath began his duties as rabbi of the Virginia Street Temple of Charleston, West Virginia. Though only two hundred miles from Cincinnati, the 24-year-old must have felt very remote from the center of American Reform Judaism. West Virginia, "The Mountain State," had never been settled by a sizeable number of Jews. In the nineteenth century, it was primarily an agricultural center, and few Jews were attracted to farming. In time, mining the state's rich bituminous veins of coal grew in importance, and even fewer Jews worked in the mines than farmed the land. In the 1920's, the total population of West Virginia was more than one-and-a-half million. Fewer than eight thousand Jews lived in the state.[1]

Many people were attracted to the business opportunities of Charleston. Unlike the bleak coal mining towns that dotted the eastern part of the state, Charleston was a prosperous city. Located at the confluence of the Kanawha and Elk Rivers, Charleston was an industrial city and an important business center. It was also a center of political influence, for in 1885 Charleston became the capital of West Virginia.

When Eisendrath arrived in Charleston, there were about 1,200 Jews living in a city of 51,000.[2] Of those Jews in the city who were affiliated, the majority associated with the Reform congregation while a smaller number belonged to the Orthodox Shul. The members of the Virginia Street Temple were proud of their Temple's history. Sixteen men founded

what was then called the Hebrew Educational Society in 1873. That same year they responded to Isaac Mayer Wise's call to form a Union of American Hebrew Congregations, becoming the first West Virginia congregation to affiliate with the Union. Over the years the congregation slowly grew in size until its members were able to afford the services of a rabbi. By far the most distinguished rabbi to serve the congregation was Israel Bettan. For ten years, beginning in 1912, this "brilliant, versatile, and dynamic leader"[3] ministered to his flock until he left to become professor of homiletics and midrash at HUC.

We obtain a colorful and cheerful picture of Jewish life in Charleston in 1926 from the pen of Rabbi Michael Aaronsohn, who served at that time as the National Field Representative of the UAHC. Following a tour of West Virginia, Aaronsohn jotted down some of his impressions in an article entitled "Coal, Cotton, and Congregations":

> Charleston, W. Va. is a man's town--the Kenova* for a river front and the mountains for a homestead. They have a robust congregation there for whom culture is a creed and hearty co-operation a joyous routine. There are hosts of happy children, too, in Charleston, and the mountains are their playground.[4]

Aaronsohn found the new two story annex to the temple structure, with its schoolrooms, office, assembly hall, and kitchen "ample and inviting." In fact he was thrilled with the structure:

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*Aaronsohn meant the Kanawha River

> We were jubilant with praise for the Temple Center. Here our priceless children will hear the word of lore and mystery amid rationally comfortable surroundings.

Unfortunately, in his brief comments on life in Charleston, Aaronsohn does not tell us much about Eisendrath. He only makes mention of how on a Sunday night "in company with Rabbi Eisendrath we joined a swarming group of merry folk celebrating the installation of their Orthodox leader."

During Rabbi Aaronsohn's visit, Eisendrath was still a bachelor. A few months later, he married Rosa Brown. For the next two years he busied himself tending to the everyday duties of the congregation. He was also prominent in civil work and in the affairs of the general community. As was common in those days, the Reform rabbi was the Jewish representative to the Gentiles. In time, Eisendrath became a veteran of the Rotary cum Kiwanis cum Lions cum Optimists circuit. However, he was not content to utter mere banalities of goodwill and the 'brotherhood of man.' In the Fall of 1928, the young rabbi characteristically took a forceful and vocal stand on a controversial issue of the day. Al Smith, Democratic governor of New York and a Catholic, was running for president against Herbert Hoover. Smith's religion was a major issue in the campaign, especially in a state like West Virginia which was settled predominately by Protestant immigrants.[5] One Friday evening in October, Eisendrath gave a sermon entitled "Shall a Roman Catholic Become President of the United States?" There was standing room only in the

packed sanctuary as Jews and interested Christians heard him outline his belief that if Americans truly believed in liberty they would not oppose a candidate for president because of his religion.

The next day, Eisendrath's sermon was front page news in Charleston. The entire sermon was printed in the local paper. His Board of Trustees was thrust into an uncomfortable position. While many upheld the principle of "freedom of the pulpit," others were uneasy about their rabbi taking a stand on an issue that could potentially threaten the Jews' status in the city. Eisendrath did not wait for his board to offer its endorsement of his proclamations, for soon after his sermon he accepted an offer from the state's Democratic Committee to stump for Smith.

Years later he recollected one chilling experience he had speaking in a public square before a hostile crowd:

> A large crowd had already gathered, some out of curiosity, for few, if any, had ever seen a rabbi before . . . Every face before us stared sullen, stolid, stony. Every lapel was adorned with a Hoover button. My wife . . . for the first and only time, requested that I delete a passage from an address. She whispered the suggestion that I might omit my peroration wherein I stated that 'If I had to choose between being ruled by the Pope of Rome or the Grand Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan . . . I would choose the Pope of Rome.'[6]

He gave the speech in its entirety, Pope of Rome, Grand Kleagle, and all. Not surprisingly, only a slight ripple of applause greeted the conclusion of his address.

In later years he would reflect that the brashness of youth and his naive certainty that he could help usher in the Kingdom of God compelled him to face that hostile crowd in a small town in the hills of West Virginia. Unlike others who mellowed considerably as they grew older, Eisendrath never lost his prophetic zeal or his penchant for taking controversial positions.

In 1929, Eisendrath accepted the position of rabbi of Holy Blossom Temple of Toronto, Canada. The fact that he was chosen to be the sole rabbi of a couple hundred member congregation at the age of twenty-seven attests to his drive, ambition, and skill. During his years in Charleston, he had gone on occasional speaking tours which helped him hone his oratorical abilities to some degree. But there must have been something special about the young man that impressed the Temple's board of trustees, who were much older than Eisendrath. He was a 'comer,' and the Board saw in him just the man to grow and develop with the congregation. In later years they would not be disappointed.

Canada and Canadian Jewry differed considerably from the new rabbi's homeland. The notion of a 'melting pot' did not exist in Canadian society. The dualism and tension between French Catholics and Protestants of Anglo background prevented the ascension of one dominant Canadian identity.

Ethnic diversity was acceptable and even celebrated to a degree unknown in the United States at that time.

Canadian Jews were by and large a generation closer to the Old World than their cousins in the United States. At the turn of the century, only 15,000 Jews resided in Canada. By 1914, that number had increased seven-fold to 100,000. The Canada Eisendrath came to know contained about 150,000 Jews.[7] One-third lived in Toronto and another third in Montreal.[8] The influence of the recent immigration to Canada promoted certain distinct characteristics of Canadian Jewry. Compared to their American brethren, they tended to speak more Yiddish in the home, provide a more intense Jewish education for their young, be higher per capita contributors to Jewish causes, and more likely than not, belong to an Orthodox congregation. They also were more supportive of Zionism than American Jews.

Unlike the prominence of Reform Judaism in the United States, Reform Judaism in Canada was virtually unknown. A survey conducted in 1935 uncovered 152 Jewish congregations in Canada. 140 were Orthodox congregations, mostly small ones. Nine out of the 152 congregations were Conservative and only three were Reform. All three were founded as Orthodox shuls by the year 1883. Holy Blossom was the oldest.[9] Founded in 1856, its metamorphosis from Orthodox to Reform took decades. In the 1880's the auctioning of Torah honors was forbidden; in the 1920's mixed family pews were introduced. That same decade the congregation joined the UAHC.

It is with these preliminary comments about Canadian Jewry in mind that we can begin to understand the impact that Eisendrath had on Holy Blossom in particular, and on Canadian Jewry in general. His arrival created quite a sensation, though not the type that any rabbi willfully chooses. Before settling in Toronto, Eisendrath had been asked to be a contributing editor to the Canadian Jewish Review. His first editorial was entitled "We Pacifists." In it he expressed his support for the so called Magnes line which called for the creation of a binational state in Palestine. Years later, Eisendrath recalled how his editorial rocked the Canadian Jewish community. Many could not comprehend how a young upstart American Reform rabbi could call for a binational state, especially in light of the riots between Arabs and Jews that had occurred that summer. The Yiddish press apparently labeled him a mamzer and a meshummed (a bastard and a traitor), and called upon his congregation's leaders to dismiss him. Members of the Canadian Zionist movement as well as the president of Hadassah of Canada also pressured Holy Blossom's Board of Trustees, but they resolutely refused to ask for their new rabbi's resignation. To add fuel to the fire, just a few weeks after his editorial appeared, Eisendrath shook up a great many of his congregants when he broke the custom of the congregation and led High Holy Day services without a head covering.[10] Whether consciously motivated to do so or not, Eisendrath

had quickly gained the attention of his congregants, and Canadian Jewry.

Eisendrath continually promoted himself throughout his fourteen year tenure as rabbi of Holy Blossom Temple. He utilized the Temple bulletin to a degree unknown by his predecessors. The bulletin contained his home address and phone number with the occasional reminder that despite the rabbi's busy schedule, he was always available for pastoral visits. The Holy Blossom Bulletin regularly contained a preview of the upcoming Sunday sermon, which was the most important address Eisendrath gave each week. The Sunday sermon typically concerned a topic of "worldwide proportion." Pressing questions about the topic would be raised followed by this terse appeal: "These urgent problems confronting non-Jew and Jew will be discussed in Rabbi Eisendrath's timely address this Sunday morning under the title . . ."

Eisendrath also utilized the bulletin in a novel way in order to keep his congregants informed about his activities. The bulletin frequently contained a paragraph entitled, "The Rabbi in the Community." The list of his speaking engagements was often extensive. In the course of a week it was not unusual for the rabbi to speak at six or seven different public events. More often than not, he addressed Christians. The February 12th, 1931 Holy Blossom Bulletin attests:

> Rabbi Eisendrath has recently addressed the St. Paul's United Church in Brampton; the Student's Christian Association at Hart House; the Y.M.C.A.; the First United Church and the Wesley United Church in Galt, Ontario; and the Men's Club of Parkdale United Church in Toronto.[11]

Unlike his predecessors, Eisendrath also utilized the bulletin to inform his congregants of his successes. "The Rabbi in the Community" often included words of tribute from admiring listeners. The following excerpt reflects the impression made by the first visit of a rabbi to the Christian Church in Ottawa:

> Rabbi Eisendrath, a brilliant Hebrew scholar, preacher and writer, held the large congregation absolutely silent for half an hour or more while he spoke on 'If I Were a Christian.' Every seat was filled, scores stood in the doorways, around the walls, in the corridors, vestry and choir room . . . wherever a spot could be found to hear the noted Rabbi.
>
> Long before the hour of service, the great auditorium was filled . . . In the congregation were representatives of every race and creed, including many of the Hebrew faith who had been specially invited by the minister of St. James.[12]

Though utilizing the bulletin for self promotion might have been unseemly to some of his congregants, the majority were probably proud of their young rabbi, agreeing with the sentiments expressed by one editorial in the bulletin:

> We were pleased to observe that many of the meetings he had addressed were Christians, many were civic . . . All this seemed to us to be in line with the essential duty of a rabbi in today's world. He has become the public relations man for the Jewish community. In hundreds of cities and towns the rabbi is the respected representative of the Jews, bringing to the general community some understanding of Jewish ideals, enlarging respect for Jews through his own lofty idealism.[13]

Eisendrath garnered praise as a speaker of exceptional talent and a voice to be listened to on issues of public concern. His Sunday sermons were packed with congregants as well as Gentiles who came to hear his eloquent addresses.

He rarely disappointed, for he prepared carefully for his sermons. He was a voracious reader, and his addresses demonstrated his familiarity with Jewish and non-Jewish sources. He memorized every speech, a fact that never ceased to amaze his listeners when they heard his florid prose. He was not a flamboyant speaker who attempted to overwhelm his audience with the magnetism of his presence. He projected thoughtfulness as he skillfully used reason and subtle emotion to move his audience.[14]

His impact upon non-Jewish listeners can scarcely be imagined today. Here was an educated man, a Jew well versed in the Bible but also conversant with the greats of English and world literature. Unlike the common immigrant Jew who spoke with the accents of the Old Country, this rabbi spoke without a trace of Yiddish. He was a handsome and proud man, who seemed in every way completely modern. And when they heard his elegant, inspiring addresses that often appealed to the shared spiritual heritage of Christian and Jew, his non-Jewish listeners must have been tremendously impressed.

A measure of Eisendrath's success as a public speaker can be gauged by the fact that in the middle of his second year in Toronto he was asked to be the first rabbi to conduct a weekly radio program. His "Forum on the Air" gave him even greater public exposure, for within a short time his half hour addresses were being broadcast from coast to coast.

He never hesitated to speak on a topic of public concern for fear that he was politicizing the pulpit. To those who advised him to avoid speaking about politics or economics, Eisendrath tartly replied in his sermon, "Pulpit and Politics," that "if Jewish tradition teaches us anything at all, it teaches us that religion must dominate the whole of life; that politics and economics must all be subject to its supreme and absolute command."[15] He added:

> If religion is to survive at all, . . . then it must storm the very citadels of political power and economic might with its spiritual preachment and moral protest until society be no longer organized for the empoverishment of the many and the enrichment of the few. For it is utterly futile to suppose that the spiritual life can flourish in such an environment; to suppose that individual souls can be regenerated and society saved as long as the multitudes are forced to exist amid such insecurity and squalor as desecrate by far the major portions of the earth.[16]
>
> For one cannot call himself after the name of Moses or Amos or Jeremiah and fail, even through political action, to battle for the rights of man and for the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness on earth.[17]

Eisendrath was never content to merely preach ethics from the pulpit. He was a forceful activist regarding issues of local, national and international concern. In Toronto he condemned the attempt to close Queens Park, which was the Canadian equivalent of London's Hyde Park. He also drew attention to the squalid living conditions of some residents of the city. He was eventually invited, in 1936, by the Lieutenant Governor to be a member of the Executive Committee of the Housing Centre, which would be a nucleus for slum clearance and housing developments.

From his early years, Eisendrath was a self described "absolute and dogmatic pacifist." Since childhood he had a revulsion against physical violence of any kind. He was firmly convinced that violence only begat more violence and that one did not fight fire with fire. "On the contrary, one fights fire with water."[18] In a sermon given in 1931, he unswervingly criticized those who relied upon might to achieve their ambitions:

> The Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and the persecuted martyrs of Rome* knew long centuries ago that the real enemy of man was not this tribe or clan or nation, but this reliance upon sword and spear and force and fortress. They knew that, while the chariots of Egypt and the horsemen of Assyria might triumph for the hour, in the end all those who place their trust in military alliances would themselves be destroyed thereby. They anticipated by many centuries the inescapable truth which only a few are yet beginning to discern, that our true foe today is not this people or that but the war system** itself that is our arch-enemy.[19]

Soon after his arrival in Toronto, Eisendrath helped establish a local chapter of the international organization for nonviolence, the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In the Summer of 1931, he and Rosa attended an international conference of the Fellowship in Holland. Later that same year they organized a disarmament rally in Toronto that was well attended.

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*Emphasis added. In his essay, "The Dilemma of a Pacifist," Eisendrath acknowledged that his pacifist convictions were not derived from Judaism. See Can Faith Survive?, page 72.

**Eisendrath's emphasis.

Yet the rise of the German National Socialist Party and the heinous policies against Jews instituted under the Nazi regime had a telling impact upon Eisendrath's pacifism. Events in Germany forced him to reevaluate his cherished ideals of nonviolence. Eisendrath visited Germany in 1931 and 1933. By the latter year he clearly perceived the venomous effects of Nazi propaganda and policies. Upon his return to Canada he gave a series of Sunday sermons that sought to expose Nazi libels against the Jews.

These sermons demonstrated his familiarity with Nazi literature as he summarily refuted every charge leveled against the Jew. But Eisendrath was perceptive enough to realize that Nazism posed a threat not only to Jews. In "Who is 'The Chosen People'?," delivered in 1933, he prophetically wrote:

> And if you be not politically naive, as are not a few who, even now see in the battle against the archfiend Hitler but a Jewish question, but a protest against his frenzied persecution of a few eternally 'troublesome Jews,' you will behold in the rise of National Socialism in Germany not a passing storm but the torrential tempest of an ego-intoxicated regime convinced that to it alone hath been given the right to dominate the whole of humankind.[20]
>
> What all this means for the future of our world; just how soon this delirious dream of the chosen German people may plunge us into another catastrophic war, no man would dare to prophesy.[21]

Eisendrath returned to Germany in 1935 and 1936. After every visit he sought to alert Canadians to the growing Nazi peril. Yet he was one of the few voices in Canada to cry out. Most Canadians were indifferent to Hitler and his followers.

In 1937, Neville Chamberlain became England's prime minister, and the Canadian government led by Mackenzie King earnestly backed Chamberlain's efforts to appease the dictator. That same year, antisemitic incidents in Canada increased.[22] On Halloween, Eisendrath opened his front door and found a swastika and funeral crepe nailed to it. "What happened on my doorstep is of little moment," he told the press, "but what is happening throughout Canada is vitally significant."[23] A month later, Eisendrath provoked the press to investigate the activities of the Nazi party in Canada.

As the condition of Jews worsened in Europe, Eisendrath worked with others to alleviate their plight. In the 1930's, Canada had virtually closed her doors to Jews. It is a sad commentary on Canada's compassion for the stranger that of 800,000 Jews seeking refuge from the Third Reich from 1933-9, Canada found places for only 4,000.[24] From the pulpit and as a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress Refuge Committee, he sought in vain to persuade government officials to liberalize their immigration policies.

In time, as events worsened and Canada eventually entered the world conflict, the young idealist reluctantly and painfully gave his support to the war effort. Even in his later years he was not convinced that he was right for having capitulated his beliefs in nonviolence. His anguished reflections upon the "dilemmas of a pacifist" are skillfully portrayed in an essay of the same title written in 1964.[25]

While Eisendrath's highminded idealism was shared by many other sensitive individuals in his generation in the early 1930's, his views on Zionism were quite unusual and controversial for a Jew in Canada at that time. His views on Zionism were not extraordinary for a Reform Jewish leader, but he was not in tune with most Canadian Jews. He was typical of most Reform Jews of his era. He grew up in a household and attended a temple that was hostile to Zionism. The settling of the ancient Jewish homeland was of little concern for Jews concerned with being a 'light unto the nations' through their dispersal in the Diaspora. While at HUC, a majority of his professors and fellow students were either anti-Zionists or non-Zionists. Eisendrath was dedicated to the eternal spiritual principles of Judaism, and opposed the hollow trumpeting of those Zionists who spoke of creating a national entity in Palestine. In 1934, he went so far as to compare some Zionists to Nazis. Venting his spleen, he proclaimed:

> A Jewish National State is what they seek, and he who would call a halt to this fulfillment of our enemies' most malicious libel is called a traitor; he who would concentrate our splendid Jewish energies upon what is ofttimes sneeringly dubbed 'the mission of Israel,' upon the building of a more decent homeland for <u>all</u> the children of men, is regarded--almost the very words of the Nazis themselves are sometimes used by the more odious of these Jewish jingoes,--as sabotaging Israel's nationalistic dreams.
>
> That is the concept against which some of us must continue to protest, even if we be made to stand alone contra mundum. That this vision of Jewish national rebirth, whether in Palestine or the Diaspora, has kindled new enthusiasm in Jewish

> life, especially among our Jewish youth; that Jewish cultural and spiritual activities are deserted while mass meetings are swarming with Jewish young men and women, is beside the point. Churches are likewise struggling for existence while youthful storm troopers or komsomols parade in endless battalions throughout their respective lands. Fascism appeals to youth. Communism appeals to youth. Hitlerism appeals magnificently to youth, and so does Jewish nationalism. Which only makes it quite as dangerous to the essential spirit of the Jew as Fascism, Communism and Hitlerism are to the essence of Christianity.26

Eisendrath came to regret this vitriolic statement for in later years he would support to some degree the goals of Zionism. How much his view of Zionism changed is open to interpretation. Eisendrath himself claimed that he underwent a radical transformation during his first visit to Palestine in 1935. Through contact with Labor Zionist leaders like David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett, Zalman Shazar, and Golda Meir, and through exposure to kibbutzim and moshavim, he felt 'reborn' as a committed friend of Palestine. Indeed, upon his return, he devoted a number of sermons to praising the efforts in Zion to rebuild the Jewish Commonwealth.

But that effort was viewed from afar. He was firmly committed to fostering Jewish life in the Diaspora. An excerpt from a sermon in 1936 indicates how he admired the chalutzim, not so much for reclaiming the Land of Israel, but for the example they might set for Jewish youth in the West:

> Instead of placing our trust in political programs and revolutionary propaganda, our miserably exploited toilers might likewise band together and begin themselves to build a better and more comradely life. Especially our youth . . . might well

> emulate the example of those youthful pioneers of Zion, set out upon some such cooperative quest even in the midst of our capitalist and competitive economy.[27]

His infatuation with Zionism seemed shortlived. One searches in vain through his writings in the years after 1936 for an address on Palestine or even a sermon discussing events there. Clearly his trip to Palestine had a marked influence upon him. He was no longer an anti-Zionist. Yet to what degree Eisendrath became a Zionist in the latter part of his life is a subject for further scrutiny in this thesis.[28]

One area of his belief system that changed very little over the years was his conviction that Jews and Christians should better understand each other. He was a tireless promoter of interfaith dialogue. He established cordial relations with clergymen of all Christian denominations. His closest friends in the clergy were members of the United Church--men like G. Stanley Russell, Claris E. Silcox, and Gordon Sisco. Silcox and Eisendrath were instrumental in creating the first Jewish-Gentile seminar held in Canada. It later evolved into the Canadian Conference of Christians and Jews, of which Eisendrath was co-chairman.

In 1937, Eisendrath and the Reverend E. Crossley Hunter embarked on a Goodwill Tour of Ontario. They visited towns and hamlets where Eisendrath would often speak on the "spiritual purpose of Christianity" while Hunter would address the contribution Jews could make to Canadian life. It was a

stirring event for many of their listeners, both Christian and Jew. One report noted:

> We have seldom seen a mixed audience so deeply moved . . . It brought a new vision to the minds of those present. The Jews were most enthusiastic; several of them said that they had never heard a Christian minister before. The atmosphere of the meeting was that of worship at its highest point.[29]

By the mid-1930's, Eisendrath was firmly established as a leader of Canadian Jewry. He was widely known by Jews both in Canada and in the United States. He was clearly a man on the move, a voice worth listening to. He frequently left Toronto for speaking tours or for study trips abroad. Yet despite his prominence, he still faithfully attended to the duties of his congregational post. One gains a sense of his manifold duties and whirlwind schedule from what the president of Holy Blossom Temple wrote in the Holy Blossom Bulletin:

> I'd like to tell you what the Rabbi has to do . . . The Rabbi must visit all the families of his flock; bring comfort to all the sick and afflicted; participate in all social functions of the Congregation; superintend the Religious School; organize classes of all kinds; assist the Sisterhood and Brotherhood; make speeches on every occasion; mingle constantly with non-Jewish organizations to maintain goodwill; attend the meetings of the Welfare Fund, Canadian Jewish Congress, Housing Committee, Toronto Symphony Orchestra Association, National Conference of Christians and Jews, our own Board of Trustees; address Service Clubs; speak in churches; conduct Sabbath morning Services; deliver an inspiring and breath-taking sermon every Sunday morning; and so I could go on almost endlessly.[30]

Rosa was vital for enabling her husband to carry on his work. She was his helpmate and closest confidante. Often

she reviewed and edited his speeches and sermons. She was devoted to him, and frequently traveled with him. If someone dared to express criticism of her husband's opinions, Rosa would angrily refute them. Some have suggested that she mothered Maurice a great deal, sheltering him from criticism. It is significant to note that they never had children. Some have suggested that this was the couple's decision. Having children would have tied them down and prevented them from having the freedom to travel and for Maurice to build his career.

One ambition Eisendrath harbored from the moment he arrived in Toronto was to build a new and larger Holy Blossom Temple. In 1936 he successfully convinced the Board to realize a decade old dream of the congregation--to move from their site on Bond Street in a dilapidated neighborhood of downtown Toronto to a northern suburb of the city. This was no small achievement for the rabbi of a congregation in the midst of the Depression in which one out of every three Canadian laborers were out-of-work.

Unquestionably, one of the highlights of his years in Toronto was the dedication of the new temple on Bathhurst Street on May 20th, 1938. It was a grand event, at which the Governor General of Canada brought greetings. Another speaker at the occasion was Eisendrath's former teacher, Julian Morgenstern.

The new temple attracted many new members. With the recent addition of 150 new members, bringing the total to over 500, and with the Temple's organizations enthused, Eisendrath wrote Julian Morgenstern in October of 1938: "Although all this means a terrific schedule for myself, I am enjoying the gratifying results."[31]

In the Fall of 1939, Maurice and Rosa were feted at a congregational dinner for their ten years of service to Holy Blossom Temple. In this same period, a book of his most notable sermons was published under the title The Never Failing Stream. At this high point in his career, Eisendrath could have planned on remaining at Holy Blossom Temple for another thirty or forty years, garnering greater influence and praise as a leader of Canadian Jewry. But Eisendrath was not content to remain in Toronto. In the words of an associate at that time:

> Eisendrath desperately wanted to get out of Holy Blossom. He was a very ambitious man. He wanted to be a great man. There was a fire that raged within him.[32]

He was looking to leave Toronto if a new position offered him more challenge and prestige. He seriously considered moving to Detroit in 1941 to become rabbi of Temple Beth-El, but whether the job was firmly offered to him, or whether he decided the time was not right, is unclear. In any case, he remained at Holy Blossom for two more years. Then, in 1943, a position opened that offered him the possibility of greater

responsibility and influence. He agreed to become the interim director of the UAHC. This move would change his life, and the course of Reform Judaism, forever.

Chapter Three

At the Union's Helm: 1943-1951

In order to accurately assess the situation of the Union in the early 1940's, the reader must strip off his or her present day perceptions of the UAHC. One must forget the Union camps, youth groups, and conclaves; outreach and social justice programs; regional rabbis and dozens of national staff members. None of these existed in the early 1940's.

One must also cease to think of the Union as some kind of amorphous monster, controlling the destiny of American Reform Jewry from its headquarters in New York in the House of Living Judaism. In the early 1940's, the Union was located on a floor and a half of the unpretentious Merchants Building in Cincinnati. Few took the organization very seriously; it certainly paled in comparison to the prestige attributed to the Hebrew Union College.

In order to understand the state of the Union in the early 1940's, the reader cannot think of the head of this organization as a significant leader of Reform Jewry. In 1941, Rabbi George Zepin was completing his thirtieth year of service to the Union as its secretary. He was "an inside man performing a desk job,"[1] dominated by the Union's executive board.

Maurice Eisendrath was instrumental in elevating and strengthening the Union as a significant force in American Jewish life. In the opinion of Rabbi Eugene Lipman, a

former Union staff member, "He did more to transform Reform Judaism, both in public image and in actual function, than any other single individual in the history of the movement."[2] This chapter will examine Eisendrath's role in transforming the Union in the years 1943-1951.

Isaac Mayer Wise labored for close to twenty-five years to organize a national union of American Israelites.[3] It was his dream to create an organization that united every Jew in America, yet regional friction between the Mideast and the East, and personality clashes between Wise and his rival, David Einhorn, prevented the realization of Wise's vision. In 1873 a small group of Cincinnati Jews, led by Moritz Loth who was an intimate of Wise, succeeded in attracting representatives from congregations in the West and the South to Cincinnati. On July 8, 1873, thirty-four congregations sent representatives to what became the first convention of the UAHC. They set forth as their primary objective the founding of a Hebrew Theological Institute. Their plan for governing themselves was simple. Each congregation would contribute one dollar annually per member. For every twenty-five members of a congregation, one representative would be sent to the Union council. The council would meet periodically in order to establish

Union policy. The Union would be run by the executive board, whose members were to be elected by the council.

The first goal of the Union, to establish a school to "preserve Judaism intact; to bequeath it in its purity and sublimity to posterity,"[4] was rapidly accomplished. The Hebrew Union College opened its doors in 1875. Isaac Mayer Wise served as its president for twenty-five years.

In its early years, the Union did little else but collect funds for HUC. Lipman Levy, a Cincinnati attorney, was the first staff member of the Union. He conducted Union business from his law office. Plans for the Union to provide resources for Sabbath schools and to assist in the growth of young congregations never developed.

In 1910, Rabbi George Zepin became the fulltime director of the UAHC. Actually the term 'director' is somewhat of a misnomer. In fact, for the thirty years that Zepin worked at the Union, his title was never more than 'secretary.' Regardless of his title, he worked tirelessly to develop and promote the Union. In the estimation of Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, he was a "brilliant organizer who had a broad vision of a Union embracing all of American Judaism."[5] With his assistance, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS), the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods (NFTB), and the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) were founded.[6] He also coordinated the Union's efforts to work with B'nai Brith in establishing

organizations for Jewish students on college campuses, and he started a program whereby Jews in remote areas of the country were serviced by circuit preachers. In addition to these activities, the Union's department of education, under the able direction of Emanuel Gamoran, became a leading innovator in the field of Jewish education.

Despite some successes in the first years of Zepin's tenure at the Union, by the late 1920's and throughout the 1930's the Union stagnated. Virtually no new congregations were joining the Union, and the total number of new members from 1926-1937 increased by only 2,000. The Depression unquestionably affected congregational and Union membership. However, another factor was probably more significant. In the opinion of one historian:

> To a large extent the successes and limitations of the Union . . . largely reflected [Zepin's] personality. Zepin was a model civil servant, wholly devoted to his duties, self-effacing, firm in his belief that it was his duty to guide and support his elected officers, and that the elected officers were entitled not only to take the decisions, but to appear to the world as having taken them. He had many ideas, but lacked the ability to inspire his officers to take action on them.[7]

In the late 1930's, the Union was unable to raise sufficient funds to meet its needs. This prompted the formation of a survey committee consisting of rabbis and lay people to evaluate the operation and effectiveness of the Union. In 1941 the committee made its report before the Union council. Rabbi Louis Mann of Chicago offered a scathing condemnation of the Union. His address, later

entitled "While the Union Slept," noted the Union's failure to raise money, to take over the sponsorship of the Hillels, to effectively use the media, and to be taken seriously by those active in antidefamation work. Mann indicated that the social prominence and financial security of many Reform leaders promoted complacency and prevented the Union from meeting the challenges of the day. Mann's suggestions to resolve these problems were direct: pension off and retire the professional staff and shake up the executive board.

Even before the meeting of the Union council, Zepin was aware that there would be a call for the changing of the guard. He submitted his resignation before the council met. Yet despite this action, he probably was unprepared for the fury of Rabbi Mann's address. In the words of Dr. Jane Evans, then executive director of NFTS, "'While the Union Slept' was a very cruel speech which amounted to a public excoriation of [Zepin's] life's work."[8]

Rabbi Edward Israel of Baltimore was selected to succeed Zepin in 1941. Israel was a dynamic figure who for years had championed the cause of the working person. He was an ardent Zionist, a member of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress and a former president of the Synagogue Council of America. His selection by the Union's executive board indicated their desire to have someone with prestige and influence head the Union;

someone who could raise morale and funds and get the Union moving.

Israel immediately indicated his desire to take charge at the Union by requesting that he be hired as the director of the Union, and not as its secretary. There is some indication that he was not satisfied even with the title of director, for a resolution drafted by Adolph Rosenberg, then chairman of the executive board, indicated that "he [Israel] may be given any other title at any time which is agreed upon between himself and the executive board."[9] This bit of historical data is significant, for it may have set the precedent for Eisendrath assuming the title of president of the Union.

Edward Israel also set in motion a process which Eisendrath would later complete when he proposed that the Union move out of Cincinnati. For years the Union had been located in the Merchants Building at 32 West 6th Street. It occupied a floor and a half of the building. Jane Evans recalled the headquarters as being a group of "unpretentious little cubbyholes with one big workroom in the back."[10] Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, who worked part time at the Union when he was a rabbinic student, gives a more vivid description of the Union headquarters:

> It gave you the sense . . . that this was a very old-fashioned, small, doughty outfit. It was a series of little custodial warrens in which certain rabbits took care of their little duties . . . (There was) a sense of Germanic prudence . . . and bureaucratic self-protection and stuffiness.[11]

It was not only the ignominious situation of the Union that prompted Israel to want a change of scenery. He was convinced, as were a number of prominent Reform Jewish leaders, that in order for the Union to gain strength and prestige, the Union could not remain centered in a city that was insignificant to most American Jews. As Israel put it, "we of the UAHC have 'missed the boat' because we weren't at the point from which boats were sailing."[12] There was a great deal of opposition to moving because of sentimental attachment to Cincinnati as the birthplace of nationally organized American Reform Judaism. There were also those who objected to the possible cost of relocating.

A committee met and was prepared to recommend to the executive board that the director be authorized to open an office of the Union in Washington, D.C. The nation's capital was chosen because of the extensive contacts Israel had developed while he was a rabbi in Baltimore. Tragically, Edward Israel never lived to see his vision realized. In October of 1941, just three months after assuming office, he died of a heart attack during a Union executive board meeting.

In his place the Union selected Dr. Nelson Glueck, Professor of Bible and Biblical Archaeology at HUC. Glueck was the "fair haired boy of America" in Dr. Marcus's phrase. He had a growing international reputation as a scholar. Handsome, regal, and dignified, Glueck possessed

charm and charisma. Though he had little congregational experience, the Union board was impressed with him and agreed to his request to retain his professorial post in addition to his Union duties.

Before he carried out any of his responsibilities at the Union, Glueck was called by the O.S.S. to undertake espionage work in the Middle East.[13] The executive board granted him a leave of absence. From July of 1942 until the end of the year, the Union lacked an effectiveleader. It was a troubled time for the Union and the Reform movement. George Zepin's resignation, Edward Israel's death, and Nelson Glueck's departure had all occurred within a year. A feeling of instability existed within the Union.

There was an additional problem within the Reform movement over the issue of Zionism. At the CCAR convention in March of 1942, a resolution was passed endorsing the formation of a Jewish army in Palestine.[14] This action alienated a number of Reform rabbis who were anti-Zionists. Three months after the CCAR convention, a group of them led by Louis Wolsey and Morris Lazaron, met in Atlantic City. They formed the American Council for Judaism whose goals were to emphasize the purely religious nature of Judaism and to pppose the political thrust of Zionism.

The Americal Council for Judaism provoked bitter debate within the CCAR. The UAHC was also affected, for a number of ACJ supporters were also UAHC board members. The

controversy caused by the creation of the ACJ was exacerbated by the fact that the United States was at war. Also, reports of atrocities against European Jewry were increasing. Many felt that this was no time for the Reform movement to be divided.

Given the schism within the Reform movement over Zionism, and Glueck's absence for an indeterminable period of time, the Union's leaders felt that they needed someone to act as an interim director of the Union. In January of 1943, Maurice Eisendrath was selected to fill this need. Just nine months later he replaced Nelson Glueck as permanent director of the Union. The crucial question that must be explored is what prompted these events?

There are two plausible interpretations of Eisendrath's selection to be the interim and then the permanent director of the Union. The first might be called the 'manipulation theory.' This hypothesis assumes that Maurice Eisendrath was a very ambitious and shrewd man. He had accomplished a great deal in Toronto, and was looking for broader horizons. Over the course of his fourteen years at Holy Blossom, he had established himself as a leading spokesman for Reform Judaism in Canada and the United States. He was quite active in the Reform movement. He faithfully attended the biennials of the UAHC.[15] At the biennial in 1941 he was given the honor of delivering the keynote address.

In his early years in the rabbinate, Eisendrath had been an infrequent attender at the CCAR conventions. But 1936 marked something of a turning point for him. From that year on he never missed a CCAR convention. At the 1937 convention in Columbus, Eisendrath delivered the conference sermon, entitled "Retreat or Advance."[16] In the late 1930's he served on the CCAR's Social Justice Commission. Some very prominent Reform leaders were also members of that committee. Edward Israel was the chairman and James Heller was the vice chairman. Men of stature like Barnett Brickner and Julius Mark also participated.

In the late 1930's, Eisendrath was appointed to serve on the HUC board of trustees. He made frequent trips to Cincinnati in order to attend board meetings. From the enumeration of all of these activities, we gain the picture of a man extremely well connected with all elements of the Reform movement.

There is evidence suggesting that already after Edward Israel's death, Eisendrath was seriously considered for the post of director of the Union. At a Union executive board meeting in 1943, Solomon Freehof indicated that he had served on the committee that selected Glueck the year before to be the director of the Union. Freehof stated that Eisendrath was the committee's second choice, not far behind Glueck.[17]

After Glueck left for Palestine, Eisendrath let it be known through discreet channels that he would be available to replace him. Once he was selected as the interim director, he sought to depose Glueck. Jacob R. Marcus recalled with indignation Eisendrath's attempt in Marcus's own home to manipulate him to convince his close friend, Glueck, to resign.[18] Eventually, of course, Eisendrath succeeded in his quest to become the fulltime director of the Union.

There is, however, another possible interpretation, which could be called the 'reluctant bridegroom theory,' for explaining how Eisendrath became the Union's director. There are those who suggest that Nelson Glueck took the job as director of the Union for only one reason: he was very ambitious and was concerned with building his reputation. Glueck lacked any vision of what the Union might accomplish. When the opportunity arose for him to undertake a mission for the O.S.S., Glueck willingly accepted.[19]

Given the controversy within the Reform movement centered around the existence of the American Council for Judaism, the Union leaders sought someone to temporarily replace Glueck. Eisendrath was a logical choice for he had a well established reputation within the Reform movement. He was approached about the possibility of taking a leave of absence from his duties at Holy Blossom. As he recalled in later years, it was with the greatest reluctance that

he left Toronto.[20] Though the congregation had a new building and the future looked promising, Eisendrath felt it was his duty to the Reform movement to fill in for Glueck. From January through October 1943 he still retained his post as rabbi of Holy Blossom Temple. During that period he returned to Toronto a number of times: for Pesach; to attend the funeral of Edmund Scheuer, a prominent member of the congregation; and to lead High Holy Day services.

During 1943 the Union was in further turmoil over two specific issues. The first involved Congregation Beth Israel of Houston and its attempt to protect the principles of 'classical' Reform Judaism against the inroads of Zionism.* The second issue of contention within the Union was whether it should participate in the American Jewish Conference, scheduled to begin the end of August. The leaders of the Conference were active Zionists, and some Union leaders feared that they would be pressured at the Conference to support measures that were antithetical to their beliefs.**

It became apparent to Adolph Rosenberg, president of the UAHC, to Solomon Freehof, president of the CCAR, and to the president of the Hebrew Union College, Julian Morgenstern, "that the Union could not be directed by remote control. There were too many crises for American Judaism and there was a need for a fulltime director, not one in absentia."[21]

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*see pp. 60-63.

**see pp. 57-59, 62-63.

Matters came to a head at the American Jewish Conference in late August, 1943. Glueck had flown back and was at the Waldorf Conference. Eisendrath recalled that Morgenstern and Freehof had a frank talk with Glueck, placing before him the plight of the Union and the necessity of there being a fulltime director. Glueck indicated that his duty was to the United States to remain in Palestine. On September 15, he tendered his resignation.

At the next meeting of the executive board, on October 3, Adolph Rosenberg read Glueck's letter of resignation. Rosenberg indicated that he had spoken with Glueck and that Glueck had expressed no mental reservations about resigning. Robert Goldman, past president of the Union, added that he too had spoken with the archaeologist and that Glueck felt it was unfair to Eisendrath to be a stopgap director and that he endorsed Eisendrath's nomination to become fulltime. At that meeting Eisendrath was unanimously selected to take over the reins of the Union.

It is open to interpretation whether Eisendrath actually maneuvered to obtain the director's post or whether he reluctantly agreed to succeed Glueck. Possibly a combination of both theories is correct. One sad result of the events of 1943 that is evident is that due to Eisendrath's elevation to the post Glueck once held, the relationship between the two men deteriorated. After his election, Eisendrath said about Glueck that "I feel we shall always have in him a

valiant comrade in spiritual arms."[22] An opponent in armed combat would be a more accurate description of their relationship in subsequent years.

The issue of the Reform movement's relationship to Zionism was the preeminent matter which Eisendrath had to attend to during the first years of his administration. Even before he became interim director of the Union, the existence of the American Council for Judaism had prompted heated debate within the movement. Eisendrath was sympathetic to some of the claims of Zionism: to provide a place of refuge for Jews and to serve as a model for Jews and Gentiles of the prophetic spirit in Judaism. Yet he strongly disagreed with those Zionists who declared that Jewish life in the Diaspora was corrupt and that only in Zion could the Jew be redeemed. What was of foremost concern for Eisendrath in the Reform movement's debate about Zionism was that there was a widening gulf in the movement between those who supported the American Council for Judaism and those who vehemently disagreed with its position. In a letter to Rabbi Solomon Freehof, dated October 19, 1942 (four months after the establishment of the ACJ), Eisendrath expressed his concern over the repudiation of the American Council by some Zionist rabbis:

> I imagine that you are as disturbed as am I by the most recent fuel which has been poured on the flaming fire that Atlantic City kindled. I refer, of course, to the Zionist rejoinder to the statement of the non-Zionist rabbis.

> For my own part . . . I for one deeply regret its publication before every avenue of reconciliation has been exhausted. I still feel that there may be a place for a 'third statement' which will attempt to bring together what I am confident is not an irreconcilable difference except on the part of a few extremists on both sides.[23]

In the difficult years that followed, Eisendrath achieved notable success in establishing a middle position that appealed to the warring factions within Reform Jewry. His overriding concern was to maintain the unity of the movement, quoting Abraham Lincoln's maxim that 'a divided house cannot stand.' He was convinced that a 'divided house' would prevent the Union from realizing its potential.

Eisendrath was quite concerned at the waning influence of the Union within America. American Jewry was rapidly changing and maturing. The children of Eastern European immigrants were assuming greater power in American Jewish life, yet a significant portion of the leadership of the Union feared that Reform Judaism might be "contaminated" by the Eastern hordes.[24] It was appalling to the new director of the Union that the Reform movement had yet to make a significant impact upon the Jews of New York, the single most concentrated population of Jews in the world. "Isolationism is bankrupt," he declared.[25] The Union had no right to abdicate its responsibility to participate in Jewish and human affairs by claiming that it was merely a religious organization. He was determined to bring the Union into the mainstream of American Jewish life. This meant in part that the Union must squarely address the issue of Zionism.

For this reason, he believed that it was imperative for the Union to participate in the American Jewish Conference. Over five hundred delegates representing over sixty national Jewish organizations were scheduled to meet in New York in order to unify American Jewry's efforts to alleviate the suffering of European Jewry and improve the situation of the Yishuv. Some members of the Union were justifiably concerned that the American Jewish Conference was going to endorse a pro-Zionist policy that was inimical to the beliefs of many Reform Jews. Eisendrath and a committee of rabbis and laity hammered out a compromise proposal which stipulated that the Union would participate in the American Jewish Conference but that the Union would not be bound by any of its resolutions without ratification by the executive board.

During the American Jewish Conference, the fears of the non-Zionists were borne out. A resolution overwhelmingly passed which called for unlimited immigration into Palestine and the recreation of the Jewish Commonwealth. Some members of the Union delegation to the Conference wanted to walk out, but Eisendrath helped persuade these delegates that to do so would cause irreparable damage to the Union's status among most American Jews.

The so-called Palestine Resolution of the American Jewish Conference was intensely discussed at the October 3rd, 1943 Union executive board meeting. Concerned that an

endorsement of the resolution might cause a further rift in the movement, Eisendrath went on record as wanting to postpone any ratification until the 1946 biennial. Although the board agreed, this deferral satisfied no one. A month later, Eisendrath felt compelled to call a meeting in Cincinnati of a number of Reform rabbis. They eventually agreed on a resolution on Palestine that clearly recognized the dilemma within the Union. They stated that "because in the congregations of the Union there are divergent opinions on the question of Zionism," the Union as an organization is unable to associate itself with certain parts of the Palestine Resolution. Their compromise solution was to urge individuals to determine their own attitude on the Palestine Resolution. The Union itself would remain neutral.[26]

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver furiously attacked Eisendrath for having been "intimidated by the determined opposition within the Executive Board," and due to his "blundering and inconsistencies" having failed to move the Union toward adoption of the Palestine Resolution.[27] Eisendrath was also subjected to recriminations from anti-Zionists. He encountered difficulties in finding a mid-ground for the Union:

> In addition to the verbal assault from militant Zionists like Silver, Eisendrath also endured bitter recriminations from other colleagues and laymen who resented the activities of all 'extremists' and urged Eisendrath to state clearly and unequivocally the neutrality of the Union on this whole issue. He was criticized for acting too aggressively and not aggressively enough. He was caught on both horns of a dilemma--moderation infuriated extremists in both camps, while extremism infuriated the moderates.[28]

At the same time that Eisendrath and the Union were debating the Palestine Resolution, a controversy erupted within Congregation Beth Israel in Houston, Texas. The issue, which began within the congregation in August of 1943, was whether the assistant rabbi would succeed the senior rabbi who was retiring. The assistant rabbi, Robert Kahn, was on leave in the service. It was known that Kahn favored the creation of a Jewish Commonwealth, a viewpoint contrary to the beliefs of a majority of the congregation's members. Thus they hired instead Hyman Schachtel to be their new head rabbi. Schachtel, who was a founding member of the American Council for Judaism, promised to uphold the tenets of classical Judaism. Yet due to opposition within the congregation to Schachtel's hiring, the congregation's board felt it was necessary to define what were the "true principles of Judaism." Their eventual delineation of the basic principles of Judaism was virtually identical to the Reform movement's Pittsburgh Platform of 1885. They refuted the Columbus Platform of 1937 which affirmed the "obligation of all Jewry to aid in (Palestine's) upbuilding as a Jewish homeland." Congregation Beth Israel declared itself part of a religious community and not of the Jewish nation. They neither prayed for nor anticipated a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.[29]

What was really troublesome was that Beth Israel adopted a two tiered level for members. Those who endorsed the congregation's basic principles could be voting members. Those who did not, which included a number of new members of East European background, could belong to the congregation but not vote. Proud of their accomplishment, the congregation's board sent copies of their platform to the Union and the CCAR.

Most rabbis condemned this attempt to exclude some members of the congregation from full membership because of their beliefs. Eisendrath sought to contain the controversy by seeking a meeting with Beth Israel's board. He was rebuffed.

On January 18, 1944, the Union's executive board voted to repudiate the Houston congregation for adopting an exclusionist policy for membership. Eisendrath concurred with this repudiation.[30] Yet despite the board's reprobation, a number of problems still remained. At stake was the issue of the authority of the national body to establish standards to which all congregations would adhere. Though the Houston congregation's policy was contrary to Eisendrath's understanding of Judaism, he also had to uphold the right of each individual and congregation to determine on some level what in Judaism was of value. Eisendrath was also concerned about the negative publicity being given the controversy. The actions of the Houston congregation focused the attention of non-Reform Jews on the split within the

Reform movement over Zionism and the division in the movement over the basic principles of Reform Judaism.

Congregation Beth Israel formally rescinded its basic principles only years later. Strangely enough, their steadfast avowal of the principles of classical Judaism may have accelerated a rapprochement between Reform Judaism and Zionism. As Greenstein notes, in 1943 and 1944 the magnitude of opposition to the American Jewish Council and to Congregation Beth Israel

> dramatized as nothing else could how outmoded and irrelevant the position of earlier Reform Judaism had become on the issue of Jewish nationalism, which was extremely difficult to defend any longer. It was an increasingly lonely task; and with polarization intensifying between the two sides, Reform laymen may now have found it far more comfortable to support the majority of their rabbis and lay spokesmen: and that meant an endorsement of Zionist objectives.[31]

At the 39th council session of the UAHC, held in Cincinnati in March of 1946, the Union was ready to resolve the debate over Zionism. Eisendrath spoke vigorously against any attempt to establish a Reform dogma, be it anti- or pro-Zionist. He was determined that Reform Judaism reflect a dynamic American Jewish faith, and thus it must encompass opposing viewpoints. He stated in no uncertain terms that "we shall not regard as traitorous to Reform--or as irreligious or un-American--those among us who uphold the Zionist philosophy; not as un-Jewish those who do not."[32]

At that biennial, the Zionist issue was thoroughly debated. The council endorsed a resolution to remain

uncommitted on the issue of the Palestine Resolution yet to remain in the American Jewish Conference. This endorsement was a victory for Eisendrath, for it was his hope that such a position would foster his goals of promoting harmony in the Union while maintaining its place in the deliberative councils of American Jewry.

Eisendrath's stature within the Union was increasing. He had guided the Union through three turbulent years. While evincing genuine concern for the viewpoints of all Reform Jews, he had firmly defended his own opinions. His repudiation of Congregation Beth Israel, and his advocacy of the necessity of Union participation in the American Jewish Conference, became synonymous with Union policy. He had demonstrated leadership in a time of turmoil. In later years the Union would more warmly embrace Zionism. Eisendrath had helped precipitate this process, in part because he was a lukewarm supporter of Zionism. However, his primary motivation was to demonstrate the Union's responsiveness to the concerns of American Jewry.

After the 1946 biennial coundil, Zionism no longer vexed the Reform movement. Eisendrath was now able to devote more of his time and energy toward strengthening the Union. He had ambitious plans to win the unaffiliated, establish new congregations, and build stronger regions. He wanted to reach out to Jewish youth, promote interfaith dialogue, and initiate programs in the field of social justice.

In the two years following the 1946 biennial, Eisendrath inaugurated two changes that he felt were necessary for elevating the status of the Union. The first concerned the title of his position. Dissatisfied with merely being the director of the Union, he believed that in order to establish the prestige of his position as the head of a national organization, and also to be in a better position to impress those who might contribute to the Union's coffers, he should be granted a more substantial title.[33] Immediately following the death in December of 1946 of Adolph Rosenberg, who had been president of the Union since 1943, the executive board voted to elect Eisendrath the new president of the Union. The highest lay leader of the Union, Jacob Aronson, was then designated the chairman of the executive board.

It was at that same meeting of the executive board that Eisendrath formally initiated a process which he hoped would succeed in greatly increasing the Union's influence. In December of 1946, the board approved Eisendrath's request to move out of Cincinnati and to relocate the national headquarters in New York City.

From the time of this endorsement until its final ratification at the Boston biennial in 1948, there was, in the words of Jane Evans, a "battle royale" over the proposed move. The principal arguments of the proponents were:

> 1. New York is the organizational center of American and World Jewry--therefore, the Union must have its Headquarters in New York in order to take its place in the councils of Jewish organizational life.
>
> 2. New York is the center of religious life--many Christian denominations . . . have their headquarters in New York City.
>
> 3. New York includes the largest Jewish community both in America and the World.
>
> 4. New York is the supreme focal point of contact with the constituent members of the Union.[34]

As was the case when Edward Israel proposed moving the Union to Washington D.C., the opponents of the move claimed that the Union should forever be located in the birthplace of American Reform Judaism. Some declared that Cincinnati, unlike New York, breathed the spirit of America's grass roots, and therefore was more suitable for a lay organization. The opposition group distributed to Union congregations brochures in which they urged defeat of the proposal.[35]

Power--who would direct the Union--was the real issue at stake, though this was never formally articulated by the opposing groups. The question was whether the Union would be controlled by a small number of wealthy Cincinnati German Jews who were insensitive to the needs of second generation Jews of Eastern European background, or whether it would reach out to those masses that were hitherto unaffected and untouched by the Reform movement?

Eisendrath cleverly sought to reduce the influence of the Cincinnati faction by increasing the size of the executive

board. He also successfully advocated that the executive board should more accurately reflect the concerns of the different regions of the Union. A new provision in the Union's constitution stipulated that more than half of the members of the executive board had to be elected by the regional organizations.

By the time of the Boston biennial, it was almost a foregone conclusion that the move would be approved. In his "State of the Union" address to the council, Eisendrath reviewed the arguments in favor of the proposed transfer to New York. He declared:

> We have won less than ten per cent of American Jewry to our cause. In those areas, West and South, where but 30 per cent of the Jews of America reside, we have gathered some 70 per cent of them into our fold. On the Eastern Seaboard with its 75 per cent of American Jewry, we boast a bare 30 per cent. We must end this incongruity which grows largely out of our erstwhile remoteness. Ours is the inescapable responsibility, strategically to station our heaviest artillery on that front line where must be fought the spiritual and moral struggle to enlist in our ranks the whole of American Jewry which, let us not forget, was the aim of our Founder and his faith-filled followers--not for the sake of mere numbers, but because of our indomitable conviction that what is good for us is also good for all American Jewry and for America itself.[36]

The motion carried. The NFTS raised money for the new building. Albert Berg of Temple Emanu-El in New York matched the NFTS funds. After considerable deliberation, a site was chosen at the corner of 65th Street and Fifth Avenue, right opposite Temple Emanu-El. A mansion located on the site was torn down and a seven story building was erected

in its place. The new headquarters, designated the House of Living Judaism, was dedicated in the Fall of 1951.

The move to New York symbolized the transitions taking place in the Union. From a dusty collection of cubbyholes in the Merchants Building in Cincinnati, the Union was now proudly housed in its own impressive building. Where once the Union's chief staff member was a man dominated by the executive board, Eisendrath had demonstrated his ability to lead the Union into the dynamic mainstream of American Jewish life. 1943-1951 were years of struggle and triumph for Maurice Eisendrath. The years ahead would contain more protracted conflicts and fewer clear cut solutions.

Chapter Four

Revival and Expansion: 1951-1963

Maurice Eisendrath had only been in charge of the Union nine years when the executive board elected him to head the organization for life. The vote was unanimous and clearly reflected the board's appreciation for the leadership Eisendrath had given the Union during a difficult time of transition. In announcing the board's decision, Dr. Samuel Hollander, chairman of the executive board, stated, "Since he became its president in 1943, the Union has experienced an unusual period of growth, adding more than 150 new dongregations to our membership rolls. It is the unanimous desire of the Board that Rabbi Eisendrath continue his consecrated and zealous devotion to the Union."[1]

Indeed the Union had grown considerably since Eisendrath became its director. From approximately 50,000 member families in 1943, the Union expanded in ten years to well over 150,000 families. From about 300 congregations, the Union ten years later numbered 460. The Union's income, which was less than $150,000 in 1943, had increased significantly, with the 1953 UAHC-HUC Combined Campaign totaling close to $1,400,000.[2] Similarly, the affiliates of the Union--the National Federations of Temple Sisterhoods, Brotherhoods, and Youth--reported substantial gains from 1943-1953. From these figures it is quite understandable why the executive board was pleased with Eisendrath's effectiveness as a leader and their desire to keep him at the Union's helm.

During the 1950's the Union continued to grow at a phenomenal rate. By the end of the decade it consisted of 585 congregations in North America, with a total membership of over one million. Within ten years the Union's budget and staff had expanded considerably. Given these considerable achievements, a primary question to examine is what was Eisendrath's role in promoting the growth of the Union?

The period following the Second World War is noted for the increased interest of Americans of all faiths in their respective religions. Analysts have commonly portrayed the postwar period as a time of "religious revival" in the United States. Across the country, Americans affiliated with churches and synagogues in unprecedented numbers. The Reform movement was not the only Jewish denomination to grow rapidly. The Conservative movement increased at a rate parallel to that of the Reform. For example, in 1937 the Union numbered 290 congregations with 50,000 member families. That same year the United Synagogue of America consisted of 250 congregations with 75,000 families. Nineteen years later, in 1956, the Union numbered 520 congregations with 255,000 member families. The United Synagogue consisted of 500 congregations with 200,000 families.[3]

The increased number of Jews who decided to affiliate with a congregation was not the only demonstration of a religious revival in postwar American Jewry. The number of Jewish children enrolled in religious schools jumped

dramatically. In 1950, 268,000 Jewish children received some form of religious instruction. Twelve years later the number rose to a peak of 589,000.[4] Following World War Two Jews also demonstrated a renewed interest in ritual and ceremonial observances. More Jews attended synagogue services on a regular basis and observed Shabbat in their homes.

While the preceding trends clearly indicated a Jewish revival of some nature in the postwar period, analysts disagree as to the revival's precipitating factors. The sociologist, Nathan Glazer, cogently argued in 1957 in his book, American Judaism, that Jewish behavior must be understood in the context of postwar American society. Americans were migrating out of the big cities and into the suburbs. This movement "reflected not only a rising American prosperity, in which Jews shared, but a change in the social structure of American life, in which occupations historically linked to the lower class and lower-class ways of life tended to be replaced by occupations linked to middle-class ways of life."[5] The newly settled suburban Jews were very concerned with appearing respectable to their neighbors. Joining a synagogue was the right thing to do for 'everyone else' belonged to a church or synagogue. Besides, sending one's kids to religious school alleviated the strain of explaining Judaism to the younger generation.

The historian, Bernard Martin, took issue with Glazer's thesis that general trends in American society primarily influenced the growth of Jewish denominations in the postwar period. Martin was more inclined to lend weight to internal dynamics within American Jewry. In particular, he thought that the establishment of the State of Israel and its consequent achievements enabled American Jews to take more pride in their heritage. He also believed that the fact of the Holocaust in the late 1940's and 1950's prompted a subconscious desire in American Jews to preserve Judaism.

Regardless of whether one puts greater emphasis on external or internal factors, it is agreed that in the postwar period the economic status of American Jews increased, thus enabling greater support for Jewish institutions. Second generation American Jews left neighborhoods that were once 75 to 90% Jewish and moved to suburbs that lacked a specific Jewish character. In their desire to find other Jews, and concomitantly in the inclination to appear respectable to their neighbors, Jews joined synagogues--both Reform and Conservative. However, what should not be overlooked in this discussion about postwar American Jewry is the role that an aggressive leader like Eisendrath had in identifying the condition of American Jews and promoting programs to gather unaffiliated Jews to the Reform movement.

In 1956, Rabbi Jay Kaufman, assistant to the UAHC president and Eisendrath's closest aide, responded to the charge that the Union's growth was largely the consequence of events uninfluenced by the Union's leader. In a letter to a board member Kaufman wrote:

> There are those who contend that the magnificent accomplishments of the last decade and a half were a consequence of events which made the Union's growth inevitable. From our close position inside its administration, both you and I know this is not true. The epochal events of the last dozen years have played a substantial role . . . but the Union would not have become what it is today in spite of these events, were it not carefully guided.
>
> Maurice steered the Union into the main stream of Jewish life and prevented it from becoming a small abortive sect when he faced the then violent subject of Reform and Zionism and succeeded in bringing the Union into the American Jewish Conference and into subsequent Israel centered activities until the present day. It would have been easier to have dodged this issue, but the consequences would have been grave. The same is true of the move to New York, the daring expenditures for new congregations in the shadow of older and protesting congregations, the emphasis on more emotionalism and ritual in Reform . . . and scores of such instances in which he collected calumny when by silence or compliance he could have won commendation.[6]

In the words of Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, Eisendrath was successful as a leader of Reform Jewry because he "had in the best sense an ideology of what Reform Judaism was and should be about." He had the ability to identify issues and trends and to project the importance of his concerns to his staff, the laity, and to the public. "He responded to the situation around him with energy, with a certain amount of vision and concern, and a good deal of resolution and determination."[7]

Eisendrath's concerns in the 1950's followed certain consistent themes. His chief concern was attracting to Reform Judaism the masses of Jews who were unaffiliated. He genuinely believed that Reform Judaism was an antidote to the "general paganization, despiritualization and demoralization of contemporary American life."[8] Yet it was also true that new members increased the financial support for and demonstrated the importance of the UAHC. He railed against established congregations who attempted to block the formation of suburban congregations for fear of competition for members.[9] Determined to assist the creation of new synagogues, Eisendrath called for a Synagogue Building Loan Fund, which was established in 1955. In later years he would call for funds for circuit-riding rabbis and mobile synagogues in order to contact Jews who had yet to establish or join a Reform temple.

A corollary to his desire to reach the unaffiliated was Eisendrath's insistence that the media be better utilized for outreach and publicity. He urged wider distribution of the Union's publications and the effective promotion of the Union on radio and television.[10] The Union hired a public relations director who had the job of insuring that Eisendrath and the Union appeared frequently in the media.

A theme that Eisendrath consistently sounded throughout the 1950's was his desire to see order established amidst the confusing array of practices in Reform temples.

> Hats on, hats off; one day Rosh Hashono and two days also; Ashk'nazic pronunciation and S'fardic; Kosher kitchens in so-called Reform social halls and non-Kosher; Bar Mitzvah encouraged and Bar Mitzvah barred; Confirmation at thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen; social action and no social action--these are but a few of the countless contradictions in Reform, or--Liberal temples--or synagogues.[11]

Eisendrath frequently quoted Isaac Mayer Wise's condemnation of Reform Jewish practice: "everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Some call this liberty--I call it license."[12] From as early as 1948, and throughout the 1950's, Eisendrath called for a definition of the principles and practices of Reform Judaism in America. His motivations were twofold. The first was his desire to bring internal consistency to the movement. The second was to make the movement more attractive to outsiders who derided the lack of discipline exhibited by Reform Jews.

Though himself not a demonstrably emotional person in public, it is a curious fact that in the 1950's Eisendrath appealed for a greater infusion of feeling and mystery into Reform Judaism. This was a response to newcomers to the movement, "many of them with a nostalgic love for the folkways, the music, the lore, and the language of our heritage"[13] who were put off by the cold rationalism of classical Reform Judaism. Fearful that a new orthodoxy was rearing its authoritarian head, many decried the attempt to establish uniformity in Reform principles and practices. Still others, raised in homes and temples that were fervently

antiritualistic, resisted introducing Jewish rites that seemed rooted in the irrational past. Eisendrath himself warned that rituals should not become a substitute for religion. In a particularly apt phrase, filled with his predilection for pungent alliteration, he stated that Isaac Mayer Wise did not seek to abolish all Jewish rituals,

> but neither did he permit the poetry of priestly pageantry to eclipse the behest of prophetic purpose . . . Rigid custom still dare not replace righteous conduct as the rudimentary requirement of Reform, nor can multiplications of forms supplant the magnification of Faith, nor can vehicles and vestitures displace virtue and personal piety.[14]

The repositories of Reform Judaism, the youth, continued to be an important concern at the Union. Though Eisendrath was never particularly comfortable relating to children, he supported the allocation of funds for the Union's youth and education programs. The Union's Education Department devised new textbooks that were widely used in religious schools of all denominations. In addition, the Union pioneered the use of filmstrips in the classroom. As an adjunct to the religious school, it encouraged youth groups as a positive expression of Jewish identity. The Union also initiated a camp program. In 1953, Eisendrath proudly announced the purchase of camping facilities in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. In subsequent years, the Union would add eight other camp facilities.

Another facet of Eisendrath's leadership of the Union in the 1950's was his attempt to define the Union's

relationship with the newly created State of Israel. In public he expressed his moral encouragement to the State, and castigated those elements of the U.S. government who favored an Arab position. As a concrete expression of the Union's interest in the country, Eisendrath led in 1953 a four week Union sponsored tour of Israel. He led another tour a few years later.

Yet despite these demonstrations of support, Eisendrath was one of the few American Jewish leaders in the 1950's to openly criticize the new state and its prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. In contrast to Ben-Gurion's call for the dissolution of the Diaspora, Eisendrath insisted that "Israel cannot be rebuilt through a repudiation of America. 'You cannot move a community to great action by playing its funeral march.'"[15] Of particular concern to Eisendrath was the manner in which Israel was becoming the primary focus of concern for American Jews, a substitute for religious commitment. In stinging words he denounced the "deification" of the state and the people, Israel:

> If we truly search and try our ways and examine that which prompts each one of us to maintain his Jewish identity, to contribute to UJA or Bonds for Israel, or even to join a synagogue, must we not, in the innermost recesses of our being, confess that sometimes, at least, it <u>is</u> an ethnic and national chauvinism, a loyalty to the peoplehood of Israel alone, to the statehood of Israel alone, to the body of Israel rather than to its soul or teachings or moral <u>mitzvos</u> that motivate our identification?

> I am not disparaging what Israel can teach a Jew, and what its restoration has meant to many, even to most Jews--and sensitive non-Jews too; but I am challenging this superficial denial of the whole destiny of the Jew which affirms that it was God, and faith in God, and fortitude because of God, which gave the Jew in centuries past, are capable of imparting to the Jew of today, similar spiritual courage and moral daring.[16]

Eisendrath firmly believed that it was the Union's destiny to be oriented to the Diaspora, and not to Israel. He had the audacity in 1949, less than a year after the creation of the State of Israel, to rebuke the national Jewish Welfare Funds for spending 99% of their funds for saving Jews abroad while neglecting the spiritual needs of Jews at home.[17] He also complained that the "great historic [Reform] congregations with their large rosters of unprecedented wealth"[18] were failing to provide enough funds for the Union to do its work. And though he always took care to praise the support the NFTS gave the Union, he could not contain his sarcasm when he noted in 1955 that it was only after a prolonged and heated debate that "the most affluent group of Jewish women in the world . . . raised its per capita dues from the munificent sum of fifty cents to the colossal figure of one dollar."[19] In his "State of Our Union" addresses, Eisendrath consistently reminded the council delegates that other Jewish groups were spending more money for their programs than the Union. He sometimes would chastise the members of the Union for not giving as generously as some Christian denominations such as the Seventh Day Adventists.

As a consequence of his desire to expand the Union's scope of activities and influence, Eisendrath pushed for funds to enlarge the Union's staff. He was dissatisfied that most of the Union's regions lacked fulltime directors.[20] Back at the House of Living Judaism, he had a few key staff members who had come from Cincinnati: Jane Evans at the NFTS, Rabbi Jacob Schwarz as the Director of the Department of Synagogue Activities, Rabbi Louis Egelson as Administrative Secretary, and Emanuel Gamoran in Education. With the exception of Jane Evans, by the end of the 1950's the older members of the staff had retired and a larger, younger, and more dynamic staff had been assembled.

Chief in influence was Rabbi Jay Kaufman. He was in charge of the day-to-day administration of the Union. According to most former staff members who were interviewed for this thesis, Eisendrath cared little for the mundane affairs of the Union, entrusting these matters to his exceptionally able and shrewd assistant. Kaufman was not only Eisendrath's aide-de-camp, but he also had a profound influence on Eisendrath's thinking. He was an ardent Zionist, had married a woman whose family came from Palestine, and had lived in Israel for two years in the late 1940's. According to one former Union staff member, "Jay Kaufman led Maurice into Jerusalem."[21] Though Eisendrath was never fully comfortable with Zionism or Hebrew--he never learned spoken Hebrew and was embarrassed when others spoke to him

in Hebrew--Kaufman guided Eisendrath toward recognizing the importance of Hebrew and Zion for all Reform Jews.[22] Similarly, though Eisendrath "never became a ritualist in today's sense of the word . . . he came a long way from his beginnings" because of Kaufman.[23]

In 1951 Rabbi Eugene Lipman joined the staff as the assistant director of the Department of Synagogue Activities. Blessed with "extraordinary gifts of mind and spirit,"[24] a year later he succeeded Jacob Schwarz as the fulltime director. Lipman not only promoted the creation of new congregations across the country, and provided established congregations with program resources, he also served as co-director of the National Joint Social Action Commission. The other co-director of this commission was another pivotal figure in the Union's staff, Albert Vorspan. Vorspan was plucked by Eisendrath from the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC), and became instrumental in aiding the Union president toconceptualize his positions on social action.

The coordinating staff of the Union was completed in 1957. In that year Eugene Borowitz joined the Department of Education, and within a year he replaced Gamoran as its head. In 1957 Rabbi Erwin Herman was contacted by Kaufman to come to the Union as Rabbi Samuel Cook's assistant at NFTY. Within a short while Herman became national coordinator of the Union's regions.

It is difficult to portray today the impact that these individuals had on the UAHC. In the first place, their very willingness to come to the Union indicated a change in the perception of the Union as a collection of bureaucratic hacks. As Borowitz put it, coming to the UAHC was an extraordinary act by a Reform rabbi:

> What rabbi ever thought of serving on the Union staff? That's no job for a Jewish boy! . . . When you're a rabbi in the community you were somebody in those days . . . The hope was you too might be Abba Hillel Silver.

But according to Borowitz, part of Eisendrath's "genius" was that he "sought out ambitious, energetic young men and pretty well turned them loose."[25]

There was a great deal of improvising that took place at the Union in those years. Programs did not unfold according to a set plan. Instead, Eisendrath gave his staff free rein to try out their ideas. Some worked, others did not, but what remained was a sense of esprit-de-corps, that the Union was at the forefront of new, creative, and exciting activities. In later years the Union's staff would be larger and less intimate. It was not without a fair amount of nostalgia that a number of staff members talked about the 1950's as the 'salad days' of the Union.

Eisendrath's working relationship with his staff was that of a managed democracy. He did not bother his staff much on daily matters, unless there was a budgetary concern. Yet if a member of the coordinating staff needed to speak

with him, he made himself accessible and listened carefully to the issue at hand. He did not want his staff to accede slavishly to all his requests. Instead he sought their challenges and stimulation. He loved to thrash out an issue in a small group. He enjoyed debating and proved himself a master at argumentation. Though these small group discussions could become heated, Eisendrath did not personalize fights. He could distinguish between personal and work relations. Yet there was a degree to which Eisendrath personalized his relationship with a few staff members. Some have noted that since he had no children of his own, he related to some of the male staff members as the sons he never had. This was particularly the case in his relationship with Gene Borowitz and even more so with Jay Kaufman. When both men left the Union in the 1960's for other positions, Eisendrath felt betrayed and deeply hurt.*

To many outsiders, Eisendrath was a reserved and imposing figure. But those close to him saw a different side of the man. Ruth Buchbinder, his secretary for many years, gave the following account of her first meeting with Eisendrath:

> I didn't like him because he reminded me of Stephen Wise whom I couldn't stand . . . He even looked like him. He was in a big office. It reminded me of what they said about Mussolini--about half a mile to his desk.[26]

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*See chapter 7, pp. 137-140.

As she became more familiar with her boss, she realized that he had a "marvelous sense of humor." He loved to be needled at staff parties. A favorite butt of their jokes was the length of his addresses and his failure to adhere to his own principle that 'brevity is the soul of wit.'[27] Evidently he took the kidding very well. Yet at heart he was a very shy man. In social situations he often seemed ill at ease. He hardly drank, was a terrible story-teller, and was discomforted when someone told an off color joke. In short, he did not mix easily with others.

Some former staff members blamed Rosa for protecting him too much. Erv Herman commented that Rosa

> kept him in a cocoon. Maurice enjoyed that. He was Rosa's husband and child. He was totally dependent upon her; seen not to be able to get along comfortably in the practical aspects of the world and was perfectly content to be shielded from society by Rosa.[28]

Despite the criticism of Rosa expressed by some, there was no question in anyone's mind that the two were deeply devoted to one another. As in his days in Toronto, Rosa even travelled with him on his frequent trips.[29]

Both Rosa and Maurice craved solitude. In the 1950's, the Eisendraths purchased an estate in a rustic, secluded area north of Scarsdale, in Purdys, New York. There Eisendrath could engage in his favorite pasttime of reading. Most every summer the two of them returned to a tiny island they had bought in northern Ontario. Their cabin was without a phone or running water. For six weeks they would stay there,

almost completely cut off from the rest of the world. Eisendrath's only contact with the Union was when he would speak with Jay Kaufman once a week. On the island, Eisendrath could gather his thoughts, work on his addresses, and plan for the future. His retreats at Purdys and the island were a fulfillment of his counsel written many years earlier when he was a student at HUC:

> The religious leader . . . must retire to that Ivory tower of solitude, beyond the painful coarseness and desolating barrenness of noisy and confused cities, that through the perspective of distance he might weigh the world objectively, rationally, dispassionately . . . Out of the darkness which enshrouds us we must formulate . . . a language, out of the black depths, each of us must compose a melody, sweet and ravishing, that the raucous cacophany of our time be transmuted into symphonic poems, into extravagant, rhapsodic diapasons.[30]

During his tenure at the Union, Eisendrath garnered many honors. He was awarded an honorary LL.D. from his alma mater, the University of Cincinnati. In 1959 he was chosen Clergyman of the Year by the Religious Heritage of America, based on a poll of 500 Christian ministers and religion editors.[31] In 1960 he was awarded the first spiritual Freedom Citation from the Chapel of the Four Chaplains. These awards were undoubtedly a source of satisfaction and pride to Eisendrath, and gave honor to the UAHC. But there was one distinction that the Union president dearly wanted

which he never achieved in his lifetime. He never became the sole, undisputed spokesman for American Reform Judaism. As long as Nelson Glueck headed the Hebrew Union College, Eisendrath was unable to achieve absolute supremacy within the Reform movement.

The two men held radically different views of the relationship between the Union and the College-Institute (in 1950 the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York merged with HUC). In the succinct words of Michael Meyer:

> Unlike his predecessors, Glueck did not conceive the College to be a ward of the Union; unlike those who came before him, Eisendrath did not see the principal role of the Union to be support of the College. Each believed his own institution should possess primary influence. Eisendrath was of the opinion that the Union, representing the collective will of Reform Jewry through its biennial assemblies, was the fundamental organization of the movement, and as such should control all its national activities, including its centers for the training of rabbis . . . Glueck, on the other hand, regarded the College-Institute as an autonomous academic institution with only the loosest ties to the UAHC . . . Eisendrath and Glueck, both capable and ambitious men, were each intent on zealously guarding their institution's prerogatives and on seeking to extend its influence--if necessary at the expense of the other.[32]

The areas in which Eisendrath and Glueck clashed were numerous and pervasive. There were always battles over money. Part of this friction was due to the College-Institute's dependence upon the Union for funding. Most of the College-Institute's funds came from dues paid to the Union by member congregations (entitled MUM, for Maintenance of Union Membership), and from yearly contributions to the Union-

College Combined Campaign. Like Eisendrath, Glueck was an aggressive leader who wanted to expand the facilities and influence of his institution. In 1946, HUC expended $400,000. Four years later the figure had doubled. Glueck fought for a greater share of MUM and the Combined Campaign. He obtained leverage over Eisendrath and the Union by threatening to conduct a separate campaign for the College-Institute, which might have succeeded since it was more prestigious to give to an academic institution than a service organization. Glueck eventually succeeded in winning for the College-Institute half of MUM and the Combined Campaign. Of course Eisendrath resented these depletions from the Union's coffers.

One of the most severe and prolonged conflicts between the two was over control of the California College of Jewish Studies. In 1947 the Union established a school in Los Angeles for teacher training and adult education. A year later, HUC-JIR gave the school academic credibility by attaching its name to it. The Union continued to provide most of the funds. In 1953 Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin was hired to fulfill two functions: to direct the Western region of the UAHC and to serve as dean of the California school. Although initially neither Glueck or Eisendrath cared much about the California school, once the school sought accreditation in 1957, each wanted to extend his turf by controlling the school. Zeldin was in the difficult position of appeasing both Eisendrath and Glueck. Much later he recalled one ludicrous skirmish between the two men over who was the final authority at the school:

> Eisendrath to Glueck: 'Where were you all those years that I invested all that money in the College?'
>
> Glueck to Eisendrath: 'Well how much did you pay for it?'
>
> Eisendrath mentioned an outlandish figure of hundreds of thousands of dollars.
>
> Glueck in a moment of pique said, 'O.K., I'll pay you back for all of that!'
>
> Eisendrath to Glueck: 'If you want to, I don't want to do it!'[33]

The capping incident came in 1958. Apparently Glueck appointed a board for the HUC-LA campus without consulting Eisendrath or Zeldin. This was intolerable for Zeldin, and he resigned. Following this occurrence, the College of Jewish Studies, under Union control, split off from HUC-LA. The training of educators remained under the supervision of the Union until years later when in 1968 the California School of Jewish Education was incorporated into the Los Angeles campus of HUC-JIR.

There were numerous other clashes between the two men, some petty, others substantial. For example, the UAHC holds title to the Cincinnati campus of HUC, which gives the Union leverage over the College-Institute. Glueck tried to wrest control of the title from the Union, but failed. Perhaps in retaliation, Glueck ended the long standing custom of having Union officials sign HUC diplomas. For his part, Eisendrath minimized the role given the College-Institute at the Union biennials and gave little publicity to HUC-JIR in the pages of the Union's publication, American

Judaism. Another battle between the two was over the Union's representation on the College-Institute's Board of Trustees. By charter, the Union is entitled to appoint over 50% of the College's board. By agreement, only three appointees by the Union could come from the Union's own board. When Eisendrath tried to increase the number to four there was a tremendous uproar.[34]

Eisendrath demanded fealty from his staff. He could not brook any insubordination when it came to his struggle with Glueck and the College-Institute. To serve loyally meant in part to nurture lay leaders who would support the Union. Rabbi Solomon Kleinman, former director of the Western Region of the Union explained that "Maurice loved you if you could produce for him a lay leader who would either . . . give big money or become a strong force in the deliberations of the Union vis-à-vis the conflict with the College."[35] The struggle between the two men polarized the lay leadership of the Reform movement. In 1958 the president of the CCAR, Rabbi Jacob Rudin, was alarmed by the manifest division between the Union and the College-Institute. He exclaimed in his president's message:

> Reform Judaism cannot afford the instability of uncertain peace nor the luxury of unamiable controversy. This is not a contained, limited struggle. Reform Judaism in America is the casualty. Everybody gets hurt. Every national interest is endangered.[36]

Glueck and Eisendrath were, in Al Vorspan's opinion, like "two vipers in a bottle." They were the same

species of proud, ambitious, determined, capable, egotistical men. At times one gained national prominence, such as when Eisendrath made controversial remarks about issues of public concern. When Glueck gave the benediction at John F. Kennedy's inauguration, or when in 1963 he appeared on the cover of Time magazine, Eisendrath's mood darkened. Yet he would emerge even more determined to gain ascendancy as the recognized spokesman for Reform Judaism.

Yet their relationship was not merely filled with envy and ugly competition. In an interview conducted in 1972, two years after Glueck's death and a year before his own, Eisendrath downplayed his conflict with Glueck. Eisendrath indicated that it would have been a miracle if two men, heading their respective institutions, had not disagreed. More often than not, Eisendrath recalled that their disputes were over money. Their fights were

> sometimes bitter, but we usually came to a harmonious agreement. I don't think we were enemies. We each respected the other. There were times when I felt that deep inside I was very fond of Nelson Glueck.[38]

There is evidence to suggest that Glueck had warm regard for Eisendrath. In a revealing letter, prompted by the tragic death of Barnett Brickner in an automobile accident in Spain in 1958, Nelson wrote Maurice:

> Let us count our blessings while we may, my friend. How can we be so foolish as to be angry at one another? I clasp your hands and vow to do everything possible,--so inwardly I believe I always have,--to work with you for our single cause. There are times

> when we will not see eye to eye, but let it be regarded as honest difference of judgements and let no one whisper in our ears that it is animosity. Life is difficult and short. The work is great and the cause is enduring and the workers are all too few. And however much we succeed in advancing the work of God entrusted to us, it must inevitably fall far short of what remains to be done. And so I salute you and Rosa with all my heart and pray for your health and well-being and for the blessing of everything we hold dear. Your success is my gain, and your happiness my enduring hope.[39]

Whether Maurice Eisendrath and Nelson Glueck eventually resolved the conflicts in their relationship is open to question. Some report that there was animosity between the two up until Glueck's death. Others say that in later years there was a mellowing in their relationship. Regardless of whether they did or did not reach some harmony in their later years, their rivalry was a mixed blessing for the development of the Reform movement. On the one hand, the bitter struggle for supremacy between Eisendrath and Glueck served to polarize and demoralize the lay leaders of the Reform movement. Yet it must also be stated that the intense competition between the president of the UAHC and the president of the College-Institute spurred the growth of the respective institutions they headed.

In sum, the postwar period was a time of renewed identification of American Jews with Jewish institutions. In particular, the UAHC enjoyed an unprecedented period of expansion. To some extent, Eisendrath's inspiring leadership succeeded in gathering unaffiliated Jews to Reform Judaism.

He energized an organization that had achieved little national prominence in preceding decades. By the end of the 1950's, Eisendrath had gained honor and distinction as the dynamic leader of an organization of more than one million Jews. A central concern of the Union president in this period has yet to be discussed. In the 1950's and the decade following, Eisendrath became a leading spokesman for social action. His concept of social justice and his activities in this area are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five

"With Moral Indignation and Righteous Protest"

One of Maurice Eisendrath's reasons for becoming a rabbi was his simple desire to do good in the world. He was raised in a classical Reform tradition which believed in the ultimate perfectability of human beings. Though the world was filled with corruption and immorality, it could be redeemed if each individual heeded the holy demand to do justice and love mercy. The messianic age would be achieved, not by a personal messiah, but by the righteous action of each individual. Central to Judaism were the biblical prophets, for their message was the most sublime ever heard in Israel; they emphasized the transcendent God of the universe over the particular God of a single people. This God demanded action rather than worship, justice rather than obedience. Put into the formulation of classical Reform thought, the essence of Judaism was ethics and not the fulfillment of ritual obligations.

For the most part, Eisendrath's youthful idealism changed little throughout his life. We have seen how, for various reasons, his views of Zionism and ritual modified. But his belief never wavered that ethics were the core of Judaism. He was disinclined to characterize Israel as God's chosen people. Rather, he referred to Israel as a "choosing people," confronted with the choice to assume the special responsibility to act on behalf of righteousness. One person interviewed for this thesis skeptically remarked that Eisendrath was compelled to stress acting ethically

(most commonly referred to as social action) as the most important part of being Jewish because he had no other choice, he was not a ritualist or a Zionist, a Hebraist or a scholar. However it is possible to reverse this proposition. Perhaps it is precisely because Eisendrath believed so strongly in social action that these other facets of Jewish identity were less significant to him.

As a rabbi in Canada, improving the conditions of others was very important to Eisendrath. He called for clearing the slums of Toronto and providing better housing for the poor. He was also active on behalf of Jews seeking to flee Europe. From the pulpit and in parliamentary circles, in the press and in private meetings, the rabbi expressed his views on social issues. One of his most shining moments in the 1930's was when he addressed the CCAR convention in 1937 in Columbus, Ohio. In his sermon, entitled "Retreat or Advance?," he acknowledged to his fellow rabbis that "we are tired liberals, most of us," fatigued by constant opposition to the prophetic quest. Yet in a rousing conclusion, he exhorted his comrades to lead their flocks to the Promised Land:

> And great indeed is the temptation to temporize, to ooze sweetness and light, to 'salve with pastor oil' the caprices of the congregation, to outshout the aspiring politicians and professional jingoes who seek to hold the mass in the palm of their hands.
>
> Far different must our true rabbinic function be . . . that War is wrong; that human exploitation is wrong, that economic inequity is wrong; that dictatorships,

> of the right or of the left, . . . are wrong; that rigid custom, instead of righteous conduct, that a multiplication of form rather than the magnification of faith, is wrong; that to confuse means with ends, husk with kernel, vehicles with virtues, fleshpots with goals and spiritual ideals, is wrong; that retreat rather than advance, that sheep-like following rather than God-like leading is wrong--such must be the burden of our ministry.[1]

During his years as a pulpit rabbi (1926-1943), Eisendrath was involved in promoting social justice, though it was not the overriding concern it was to become in later years. In Toronto he was more known for his work in promoting interfaith understanding, which perhaps to his mind was a component of social action. As the head of a congregation, he also had manifold pastoral duties to which he had to attend. Even after he obtained the post of director of the Union, his most immediate concern was improving the condition of the Reform movement, which in part entailed consolidating his position as the Union president and promoting the move of the Union's headquarters to New York. He considered it vital that the Reform movement enter the mainstream of Jewish life in America, which meant taking a more positive view of Zionism, and the significance of ritual and emotion in worship. Yet even in his earliest statement as the director of the Union, Eisendrath indicated that he wanted the organization to fulfill his notion of the mission of Israel:

> A comprehensive knowledge of our heritage demands that we make the effort, as did Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, as did the rabbis of our Talmud and the writers of our Midrash, as did a Judah ha-Levi . . . all of whom, despite their zealous particularism,

> designed to make of Israel a 'goy kodosh,' 'a holy people,' nonetheless never lost sight of the particular function of the Jews as a 'mamleches kohanim,' as a kingdom of priests consecrated to the service of mankind.
>
> And this unique synthesis [of universalism and particularism] of which I speak is not only our own, but the world's most pressing need.[2]

Of course Eisendrath was not expounding a new theme to those gathered in the HUC chapel that day. Reform rabbis had for many decades sermonized about the 'mission of Israel' to the nations of the world.[3] What was unique about Eisendrath was not his conviction that Jews should behave ethically as an example to the world, but the seriousness with which he engaged this idea, coupled with his outstanding ability to articulate his belief. In 1946, at the Union biennial, he lamented that everyone talked about social justice--rabbis preached and resolutions were passed--but nothing really happened. He regretted that the Union had "surrendered" the field of social action to non-religious, civic agencies such as the American Jewish Committee. He opined that religious organizations such as the Union, and not secular agencies, should undertake the work of the prophets. As a further condemnation of the state of affairs, the Union president expressed his embarrassment that many church groups had committees on social justice and peace while Jews were represented solely by their civic agencies. He therefore made a recommendation that a commission on social action be formed, possibly in conjunction with the CCAR, which would have an executive secretary and a budget with which to implement its program.[4]

In 1948 Eisendrath outlined some of the concerns he felt the commission should address. "With regard to the conflict between Labor and Management; . . . in the tangled, troubled realm of race relations; in the sordid international game of power politics; in the face of the impending immoral use of atomic power; religion, Judaism, Liberal, prophetic Judaism, must have its say; must speak its mind; point the finger, name the name, and do the righteous deed!"[5] What is most noteworthy about this statement is that with the exception of the conflict between labor and management, over the course of the next twenty years, race relations (civil rights), international politics, and nuclear war were precisely his most vital concerns in the field of social action.

In 1949 a joint commission with the CCAR was organized. During its first three years the commission did very little. It was not until 1953 that the joint commission became effective. Two events prompted the intensification of the Union's social action program. Of greatest importance was the atmosphere of fear and suspicion generated by the investigations of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Eisendrath loathed the senator from Wisconsin, and felt that his actions were provoking a "deepening moral crisis" in the American spirit that the Union needed to combat with effective social action programming. There was also a development within the Union which influenced Eisendrath to strengthen the social action program. The Union employees wanted to unionize. The

executive board balked at this proposal. This prompted Eisendrath to realize that there was a significant gap between the liberal stands taken by the board and the General Assembly, and their willingness to effectuate their pronouncements.[6] The first step he took was luring Al Vorspan away from the National Community Relations Advisory Council in order to become the executive secretary of the UAHC-CCAR Joint Commission on Social Action. This move surprised some people. Vorspan was not a rabbi, yet he had been chosen for a newly created position on the Union staff. The selection of a professional in the area of social action and public relations sent a message to many that Eisendrath was determined to place social action at the top of the Union's agenda. In 1953, the Union president was concrete in outlining the purpose of the commission: "to stimulate similar social action committees in every one of our constituent congregations, to provide syllabi for study and action on the local scene, to prepare religious school texts so that our children and youth may have a clearer and more tangible appreciation of the bearing of liberal prophetic Judaism upon the moral, social, economic, political and international problems which everywhere confront and trouble them."[7]

Under the leadership of Eugene Lipman, director of the joint commission, and Vorspan, the commission undertook its work with seriousness and purpose. In 1955 it expanded to

include the NFTB, NFTS, and NFTY. The commission stimulated the formation of social action committees in temples. 1956 marked the publication of Vorspan and Lipman's Justice and Judaism. This textbook explored the Jewish concept of social action, especially as it related to domestic and international issues.

By 1956, the issue of most pressing concern to Eisendrath was civil rights for blacks. Two years earlier, the Supreme Court in the landmark decision of Brown vs. the Board of Education had struck down the legal segregation of students on the basis of race. The implications of the Court's decision were far reaching, though it would take many years until greater equality would be achieved between black and white Americans. Eisendrath encountered significant opposition to his outspoken pronouncements about racial justice, especially from Reform congregations in the South. The following controversy over an article that appeared in the National Jewish Post on June 22, 1956, gives some sense of the antagonism to Eisendrath's application of the prophetic mandate to achieve racial justice. In the newspaper article, Eisendrath expressed his support of the boycott of Montgomery (Alabama) city buses. He also advocated establishing a Union social action committee in the South. Myron J. Rothschild, president of Temple Beth-Or of Montgomery wrote Eisendrath a stinging reply:

> I am fully acquainted with the thinking of the vast majority of reformed [sic] Jewry in the Southeast and as such I do not hesitate to say to you that we do not wish an office of the Social Action Committee established in the South. We do not need it. Our thinking is so entirely different from yours, that we have come to the conclusion that we really do not need your advice. I will be charitable in my thinking and say that we think you simply do not understand the problems of the South.[8]

He accused Eisendrath of endangering the welfare of all Southern congregations by stirring up a potential "tremendous wave of anti-Semitism" with his remarks. In order that others might be informed of his views, the congregational president sent a copy of his letter to the Union's executive board.

Eisendrath's reply to Rothschild is a masterpiece of judicious restraint coupled with a firm defense of his principles. He began by attacking Rothschild's contention that he was a spokesman for the South, noting that the South was not a monolith. Though Eisendrath conceded that he did not know the South as well as some, "one did not have to live in Nazi Germany to be certain that our brethren were bestially butchered." What truly bothered him was that people like Rothschild were unwilling to admit that there was even a problem regarding white-black relations. Rather than feeling "chagrin and shame and a deep sense of both personal and corporate guilt concerning the existence of prejudice and bigotry, exclusion and segregation," too many felt "smug self-righteousness." This was an attitude Eisendrath

declared he would never cease to condemn. Southern Jews should be prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of their beliefs:

> Our fathers sought no such 'good will' at any price but rather pursued God's will at any cost, certainly of economic loss, ostracism, exile, and even death. If surrender to majority opinion had been the standard of Jewish practice, then we would not be discussing this matter as Jews today.[9]

He concluded his letter to Rothschild with the wish that they reach some "common understanding in brotherly forbearance."

Two years later, in 1958, the board of trustees (the new title for the executive board) of the Union struck a more conciliatory tone with the Union's Southern congregations. They passed a resolution commending the brave actions of many Southern rabbis and congregations in the struggle for human equality in their area. Yet Eisendrath felt that neither the Southern Jews, nor those in the North, with its more subtle forms of discrimination, had gone far enough. The 45th General Assembly was scheduled to meet in the South, in Miami, in November of 1959. The Union president wanted to invite Dr. Martin Luther King to address the assembly. He had great respect for King, and likened him to "the Gandhi of our nation and of our generation."[10] However, there was intense opposition to Eisendrath's proposal, and the invitation had to be withdrawn. Frustrated and angry, he did not heed his support staff's counsel that he tone down his Union address. Nowhere do we see better Eisendrath's identification with the prophets of old than when he loosed his wrath upon his people for their shortcomings:

> And surely, while none can fail to discern some little progress in this realm [civil rights], it must still be admitted, as the prophets averred with regard to Israel--"they have healed but slightly the hurt of My people"; thus slightly, none can deny, has the hurt of the Negroes--also God's children--been healed.
>
> And with regard to the . . . desideratum, which whispers to my sense of propriety, of derech eretz to avoid this theme because of our convening for the first time in this center contiguous to the deep South, I could not evade the stinging reminder that the sin of segregation--as sin it is--is the monopoly of no region, for brotherhood is indivisible. What I have in mind, as I plunge once more into this heinous transgression of God's Fatherhood and man's all inclusive brotherhood is the whole vast miasma of venomous racial hatred and segregation which rises like a stink in God's nostrils.[11]

In later years, Eisendrath's deep concern for achieving equal rights for all Americans rarely slackened. He marched with Reverend King and urged the Union to pass resolutions which expressed its commitment to racial justice. Even in the mid- and late 60's, when Jews reacted with frustration and pain to the rejection of their assistance by some black leaders, Eisendrath continued to seek to ameliorate the conditions of black people. In 1966 he stated:

> Regrettably some of these charges [of black militancy and antisemitism] are at least partially true . . . Nor can we condone such conduct which has characterized some segments of the Negro community. We cannot condone irrational antagonism, indiscriminate name-calling, irresponsible sloganeering, hoodlumism, or wanton violence . . . [Yet] Jews--who, not as any quid pro quo, but as an absolute, unequivocal mandate, are bidden to 'love our neighbor as ourself' whether or not that neighbor requites our love and whether or not that neighbor may conceivably have caught the disease of anti-Semitism from his white milieu.[12]

In 1969 he expressed his view that there was some merit in the call for reparations for black Americans. He opined, "call it reparations or simple justice, but some form of restitution we do owe to those whose blood and enslavement in menial jobs and incarceration in stinking, fetid, rat-infested slums are indebted for our own prosperity."[13] His unchanging liberalism prompted him to continue to address the issue of civil rights long after many Jews had turned their attention to more particular Jewish concerns.

For three years, from 1959-1962, Eisendrath's principal concern in the field of social action was not a national or international issue but was the controversy surrounding the creation of a national Religious Action Center (RAC) for the Reform movement. Prior to the 1959 biennial, Emily and Kivie Kaplan had pledged $100,000 toward the creation of a center for social action. Eisendrath, and a vast majority of the board of trustees, favored creating a Center for Religious Action (as the RAC was first called) in Washington, D.C. He drew attention to the fact that a number of Protestant and Catholic groups were already represented in the nation's capital. It was envisioned that the RAC would serve as a branch of the Joint Commission on Social Action, furnishing information about the Union's position on issues and sponsoring seminar workshops.

At the 1959 biennial the General Assembly approved the creation of the RAC. A year later a building was purchased on Massachusetts Avenue. But a determined and vocal opposition to the RAC developed. Five congregations, the most prominent of which were the Washington Hebrew Congregation and Temple Emanu-El of New York, passed resolutions condemning the RAC. Their criticisms and concerns varied:

> Some were vehemently opposed to social action altogether, holding that the application of Jewish ethics to social issues and daily life was the duty of the individual and not of the synagogue or of the Reform Jewish movement. Some were strongly opposed to the idea of a social action center in Washington, fearing it would smack of 'lobbying' and would involve Reform synagogues in 'controversial' issues. Some Southerners objected because of UAHC positions on desegregation. The American Council for Judaism loosed a wild charge that the Center was part of some dark trend toward 'monolithic' institutions. One or two others, unconcerned with social action one way or the other, saw in the issue an opportunity to challenge the leadership and basic direction of the UAHC.[14]

Due to vocal opposition, the leaders of the Union decided to have delegates at the next General Assembly reconsider the building of the RAC. Prior to the biennial, held appropriately enough in Washington, D.C., there was a flurry of propaganda. The Washington Hebrew Congregation distributed its Statement of Principle for Reform Jewish Congregations which steadfastly denied that the Union could represent one million Reform Jews on legislative, economic, political, and social issues. The Washington congregation

denied that regarding these concerns there was a "Reform Jewish viewpoint or even a Jewish viewpoint." Varied "backgrounds, experience, and beliefs lead Reform Jews to take many different positions on social, economic, and political questions."[15] The limit of the Union in the area of social action was to perform study and research.

On its part the Union published and distributed a pamphlet entitled Twenty Questions on Reform Judaism and Social Action. The anonymous author conceded that every congregation in the Union had the right to protest a decision by the General Assembly. In fact, according to the Union's constitution, no congregation was bound by UAHC statements or decisions. Yet the pamphlet drew attention to the mandate for the RAC given at the 1959 biennial as proof of the desire of Reform Jewry to increase its presence in the nation's capital.

As promised, a debate about the RAC took place at the 1961 biennial. Rather than taking the unpopular position of opposing social action in general, the opponents of the RAC fought a rearguard battle by seeking limitations on the Center's operation. According to an eyewitness,

> Even in the early stages of the debate it became evident where the sentiments of the delegates lay. The opposition to the Center was singularly unpersuasive. The vote was overwhelming--approximately 1,200 to 100. A triumphant roar of gratification echoed through the hall, almost drowning out the chairman's announcement that the amendments were defeated and the main resolution carried.[16]

Eisendrath was enormously pleased when the Religious Action Center was formally dedicated on November 30, 1962. In his own words, it had been "a bitter, costly struggle,"[17] but he was gratified that the people in the Reform movement in favor of social action had prevailed.

The battles for civil rights and the Religious Action Center were Eisendrath's primary social action concerns from 1955-1965. In 1965 he began to articulate his views on a subject which few Jewish leaders had yet dared to consider: Vietnam. Eisendrath's opposition to the war in Vietnam must be viewed in the context of his overall view of war. As portrayed in chapter two, he was initially a pacifist, who only under the onslaught of the Nazi terror felt forced to modify his belief in nonviolence and give his support to Canada's war effort. In the postwar period, though no longer a pacifist, the Union leader expressed his outrage and opposition to the use of military might--both Communist and American. He viewed religion in general, and Judaism in particular, as uniquely qualified to build bridges between people of differing nationalities. In December of 1957 he embarked on a five month world tour in order to meet leaders of all faiths and discuss ways of achieving world peace. He met with Prime Minister Nehru of India, Prince Mikasa of Japan, General Chiang Kai-shek of Nationalist China, and Prime Minister Menzies of Australia. In 1966 Eisendrath succeeded in convening and co-chairing the first National

Inter-Religious Conference on Peace. He was also instrumental in organizing the first International Conference on Religion and Peace, convened in Kyoto, Japan, in 1970.

Following the Second World War, Eisendrath felt a particular urgency to bring about world peace, for he recognized that the introduction of the atom bomb brought with it the potential destruction of the entire world. In 1950 he offered this morose analysis of the conflict in Korea:

> The cold war which is now so speedily catapulting all of us into the hot war, which we have so tremblingly feared will this time be no comparatively harmless 'kinderspiel' of rifles and bayonets, cannons and tanks, . . . but will unfold the more adult pastimes of nation hurling atom bomb at nation until by mutual self-destruction and world annihilation 'they learn war no more.'[18]

In the late 1950's, Eisendrath spoke with increased passion about the horror of nuclear war. It was his fervent belief that:

> The searching of our own souls and our return unto the Lord--as Creator and Protector of all mankind, . . . Adonay Echod, the 'One God of all'--must inevitably lead us still further in our mission to be a 'light unto all nations.' Is any of us so jingoistic that we pray in our synagogues . . . to the God of the United States of America only?[19]

> We must awaken from our seeming stupor and our selfish immersion in pleasure and profit to take more seriously the warnings of an increasing number of scientists concerning the terrifying race toward world suicide . . . We must . . . transcend narrow national self-interest in seeking, even at the price of certain risks and sacrifices, to remove from our time the harrowing threat of world incineration.[20]

Eisendrath unequivocally opposed the resumption of nuclear testing and appealed for a comprehensive plan for complete disarmament.

In 1964, Lyndon Baines Johnson was overwhelmingly elected to the presidency as a peace candidate, pledged to bring an end to the hostilities in Southeast Asia. Yet 1965 marked an increased escalation in the United States' involvement. In March of 1965, Johnson ordered the landing of two Marine battalions at Danang in order to bolster the 20,000 American soldiers already in Vietnam. This action was akin to opening a door slightly; the crack grew slowly wider and wider until at the peak of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War close to half a million American troops were stationed there.

In his May 1965 report to the board of trustees, Eisendrath condemned the American attempt to "stroll the world like 'a star-studded Texas sheriff' to impose our brand of law and order upon the entire world."[21] He expressed his support for a resolution calling for a peaceful settlement to the conflict and for unconditional discussions by all concerned bodies. Six months later he spoke about Vietnam to the delegates of the Union's General Assembly. He was careful to align himself with those who had also criticized America's actions. He cited the Pope's plea for peace before the U.N. and an editorial in the New York Times. He stated that it was a right of every American to dissent from the position of the American government.

On this, perhaps more than on any other issue he had ever brought before the General Assembly, Eisendrath sensed he was in the minority. Hence his cautious comments in his 1965 "State of Our Union" address. In 1965 few Americans, and few Jews, opposed the war. Most people accepted the government's statements that U.S. combat troops were necessary to assist the democratic country of South Vietnam in its fight for survival against the communist aggressors from the north. The Tet offensive, which had the effect of awakening many Americans to the duplicitous statements of the American government, was still three years away. In 1970, the revelation of the secret invasion of Cambodia, and the sickening shootings at Kent State, turned even more Americans against the war. But in 1965 Eisendrath was a lonely voice of conscience. Only a few other Jewish leaders such as Rabbi Jacob Weinstein, president of the CCAR, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of the Jewish Theological Seminary, opposed the war.[22]

It is to Eisendrath's credit that he had the courage to speak against the escalation of hostilities in Vietnam at the 1965 biennial. A resolution was passed calling for a ceasefire in Vietnam and for negotiations between the hostile parties. These demands must have been exceedingly controversial, for they were almost buried in a more generally worded resolution about achieving world peace.

Through most of the mid to late 60's, the organized American Jewish community remained divided about the war. Eisendrath consistently voiced his outrage and pain throughout the latter part of the sixties. He condemned the war not only because it brought violence and destruction to the Vietnamese people, but also because it was wreaking havoc at home. He linked the war in Vietnam to America's urban blight, decrying the commitment of funds to the military rather than to the war against poverty. In the wake of race riots during the summer of 1967, he declared, "there is an epitaph which will haunt us long after we escape the mire in Vietnam: 'here lies the American city, doomed to decay and despair, a tinderbox for violence and insurrection.'"[23] Eisendrath was unstinting in communicating to the delegates of the 1967 biennial his belief that

> as more and more of our young men are drafted and torn to bits in the maw of Mars, as more and yet more 'bombs bursting in air' sear the flesh, sometimes of cunning, cruel and sadistic adversaries it is true, but perhaps even more frequently of innocent men, women and children in their rice paddies and villages . . . we ought to split the sky with moral indignation and righteous protest.[24]

Eisendrath encountered fierce opposition from other Jews for his public stand against the war. In newspaper editorials and regional meetings, people challenged his position.[25] Within the Reform movement, the most hostile opposition to Eisendrath on this issue came from Temple Emanu-El of New York. In May of 1967 the temple's board

of trustees voted to withdraw from the Union because Eisendrath had made "unauthorized and impossible" statements about the war while purporting to be a spokesman about Vietnam for the entire Reform movement.[26] The board of trustees found particularly "offensive" the Union president's open letter to President Johnson in the Winter issue of American Judaism. In the letter, Eisendrath protested Johnson's refusal to meet with religious leaders whose views of the war differed from the president's. He criticized Johnson's alleged attempt to cow the Jewish community by threatening that Jewish opposition to the war would bring cuts in U.S. aid to Israel. What may have been particularly upsetting to Emanu-El's board was Eisendrath's veiled comparison of Johnson to the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus:

> If he [Antiochus] wanted to wage a war, no matter how small and weak the opponent might be nor how superior his destructive weapons, he demanded one hundred per cent consensus . . . But those stubborn mulish Jews refused . . . Rallying to the heroic challenge of a few of the troublesome Jewish leaders, they revolted and defeated the conformity-craving Antiochus.[27]

Eisendrath later apologized to the Union's board of trustees for any offense committed by writing his open letter to the president. According to a New York Times article, he reportedly said that as an "emotional and zealous person he sometimes said or wrote things in the heat of the moment he might wish to recast later."[28] Nonetheless, Eisendrath was incensed by Temple Emanu-El's secession from the Union. In the past he had had his difficulties with the congregation

and its rabbi, Julian Mark. After the temple withdrew from the Union, he really took the congregation to task. In a board report he raged about the struggles between the Union and the temple that had begun the moment Isaac Mayer Wise had called for the formation of a Union! His tirade lasted for nine printed pages. It most likely took cooler heads to bring together the two warring factions a year later.

Temple Emanu-El's withdrawal from the Union did little to dissuade Eisendrath from continuing to voice his opposition to the war. In 1969 he endorsed, along with other prominent antiwar activists, a one day moratorium on Vietnam to be held October 15th. Later, he berated the Nixon administration, charging that while Nixon pledged to draw all Americans together, he encouraged his hatchet men, like Vice President Spiro Agnew, to "drive them wrathfully apart." He warned that the administration was injecting the American public with "carefully calibrated viruses of hate."[29]

As much as Eisendrath was a virulent critic of the government's conduct of the war, he never went so far as to call for any substantial changes in the American political system. He was a political liberal, whose politics were grounded in the Judaic quest for justice and peace. The American values of equality and the right of each individual to pursue happiness were coexistent with his understanding of Judaism. It was precisely out of his love and respect

for these Judaic/American values that he evaluated Vietnam and the civil rights struggle as moral crises in the American spirit. Though he might have denied it outright, Eisendrath assumed the prophet's task of awakening the people to their errors. A reaffirmation of traditional values, rather than a revolutionary call for a new society, motivated Eisendrath.

Some have questioned his sincerity in regard to the public stands he took. He has been criticized as one who sought the public limelight, even making controversial statements in order to draw attention to himself. One interviewee recalled with displeasure Eisendrath's eagerness to be photographed with Martin Luther King, as if this confirmed the Union president's stature as a leader in the civil rights movement. This same person noted that while Eisendrath was an excellent spokesman for certain causes, he hardly put himself on the line. He was never arrested during a demonstration. When he finally did participate in a demonstration such as a freedom march, it was a relatively safe thing to do. Eisendrath himself once faulted his willingness to assume more risky positions. In May of 1967 he wrote:

> Not that I am particularly proud of my role in the grave moral issues that confront our nation . . . I feel not pride but chagrin that I have said so little, my deeds have been so puny. I have not prophetically pioneered, but I have gingerly followed the lead of others. I have been neither as radical or revolutionary as these times demand. I have never stood alone as my understanding of Judaism and my conscience should have demanded.30

He concluded these remarks with an expression of admiration for Abraham Joshua Heschel, who represented to Eisendrath a real prophet who unreservedly expressed his anguish about the moral issues of the day.

Yet there must have been something more than a desire to be in the limelight that prompted Eisendrath to hammer away at issues of conscience, even after many had wearied of the struggle. He faced considerable opposition to his stands, both inside the Union and by Jews unaffiliated with the Reform movement. His strong sense of inner conviction enabled him to persist in his frequent attempts to have his views prevail. Rabbi Joseph Glaser, former director of the Union's Northern California Region, remembered the first biennial he attended. It was in Miami in 1959. Eisendrath had already given an hour-long "State of Our Union" address which "took a hell of a lot out of him." He had also met with the board. Nonetheless, he called for a midnight staff meeting:

> He came in looking fresh as a daisy. 'We must organize to pass a resolution on nuclear disarmament.'
>
> I was amazed. I had expected some kind of in-house matter such as dues to be paid by congregations to the Union. But his concern was quite elsewhere that night. That's when I knew he was for real. A man of principle, courage, and social conscience; someone really in the prophetic tradition.[31]

In Eisendrath's opinion, assuming the cloak of the prophet was the chief obligation of a rabbi.[32] In that regard he was a model for many Reform rabbis who aspired to play

the prophetic role. He also influenced thousands within the Reform movement. In the fifties and sixties, one's social activism became a litmus test of Reform Jewish identity. Yet two events prompted a reexamination of the Reform Jewish commitment to social action. The rejection by blacks of Jewish participation in the civil rights movement left some Jews feeling betrayed and hurt and wondering why they should work on behalf of others. In addition, Israel's isolation prior to June, 1967, and its subsequent victory in the Six Day War, provoked many Diaspora Jews to abandon universal causes in favor of all out support for the Jewish state. Though the times were changing, Eisendrath was too set in his ways, too identified with the cause of social action, to adapt suitably. He became increasingly isolated as a leader of Reform Jewry. This process will be further chronicled in chapter seven.

Chapter Six

"Jesus--Man of My People"

Promoting Jewish-Christian understanding was a primary concern of Maurice Eisendrath throughout his years in the rabbinate. He firmly believed that united social action was the key to interfaith relations. He decried gatherings of Christians and Jews that accomplished nothing; condemning "hypocritical cookie-pushing, back-slapping interfaith teas and sham interreligious dinners, replete with saccharine speeches that face no realities and build no substantial bridges."[1] The Union president had considerable support from Jews as long as his focus on interfaith relations was social action. Yet he encountered significant opposition from many Jews when he expressed his view on a subject central to the relationship between Jews and Christians: Jesus. The primary purpose of this chapter is to depict the controversy surrounding Eisendrath's remarks about Jesus in 1963 and to examine his thinking about the significance of Jesus for Jews.

On November 16, 1963, Maurice Eisendrath delivered his customary "State of Our Union" address to the delegates of the General Assembly of the UAHC. They listened attentively as the Union president spoke at length about the accomplishments of the Reform movement and the challenges it faced in the years ahead. Toward the end of his long address, their attention was suddenly keenly focused on his remarks about the relations between Christians and Jews. All were aware that the Catholic Church, under the direction of

Augustin Cardinal Bea, had recently discussed revising official Church doctrine regarding the culpability of Jews for the death of Christ. In Chicago, Eisendrath expressed his reactions to the work of the Ecumenical Council:

> The mind is staggered and the heart is enkindled simply by the prospect of the possible implications of the Catholic Church's official disassociation from the age-old charge of deicide levelled against the Jewish people . . . This could have so enormous an effect on Jewish life here and throughout the world as to lead not only to a repudiation of anti-Semitism but also to a positive Christian thrust against it.[2]

Eisendrath was not content to allow merely the Church to re-examine its doctrines. In typical bold fashion, he called upon his fellow Jews to evaluate their own statements and interpretations of the significance of the life of Jesus. "Have we examined our own books, official and otherwise, to reappraise our ofttimes jaundiced view of him in whose name Christianity was established?" he asked rhetorically. He then stated categorically that, to his mind, Jesus was a Jew, who offered a lofty yet simply stated message that was thoroughly grounded in prophetic and rabbinic thought. How long would it be, he continued, until Jews would reclaim Jesus as one of their own and would even admit that Jesus' influence was beneficial, not only to pagans, "but to the Jew of his time as well, and that only those who later took his name in vain profaned his teaching?"[3] Eisendrath concluded his remarks by recommending that the Union's Commission on Interfaith Activities undertake a special study

of the issue of Jesus. In his opinion this study would serve as a contribution to the ecumenicity Jews asked others to effect on behalf of Jews.

Reactions to Eisendrath's appeal were swift and heated. While some rabbis privately expressed their support of his views, those that gained the most press coverage vehemently opposed him. It comes as little surprise that Nelson Glueck criticized Eisendrath, for at that time the two men were still locked in their bitter rivalry. Time magazine highlighted the fact that Glueck scathingly rebutted the Union president's comments at the biennial during a closed-door session of the HUC-JIR board of trustees. Eisendrath's remarks, he said, made it seem "as if American Reform Judaism was prepared to put Jesus in a central role as a great rabbinical leader."[4]

Glueck had another concern about Eisendrath's remarks which was not publicized in the Time article. The president of the College-Institute had fought a difficult battle with the Israeli Orthodox establishment over the creation of a branch of the HUC-JIR in Jerusalem. He eventually succeeded, and in 1963 the doors of the school had finally opened. Glueck was acutely sensitive to the possibility that Eisendrath's statements could be interpreted by Orthodox Jews in Israel as paving the way for American Jews to assimilate and even apostatize. Concerned that Eisendrath's remarks "would set back the progress of Liberal Judaism in Israel for forty or

fifty years,"[5] Glueck felt compelled to object strongly to the Union leader's comments. Glueck later noted with satisfaction that his objections were featured prominently in Israeli newspapers.

Nelson Glueck had due cause to suspect that Israeli Orthodox Jews would accuse Eisendrath of being an envoy of assimilation, for that charge was made by an Orthodox rabbi in America. Rabbi Norman Lamm, writing in the Rabbinical Council Record, never mentioned Eisendrath by name, but clearly had him in mind when he castigated a Reform leader for overreacting to the proposed changes in Church doctrine. This Reform leader's elation and gratitude represented an utter abandonment of sensible judgment, he said. It was vulgar and degrading and represented the worst in galuth-psychology. Lamm found it unnecessary to "berate such blasphemous people who have the temerity to call themselves 'rabbis.'"[6] In Lamm's opinion, the Jews owed the Church nothing. "Only a subservient, obsequious, negative personality who has no self-respect will thank his tormentor for calling-off his playful tortures." Christian anti-Semitism was not a Jewish problem but a Christian problem, to be resolved by Christians. The question was not 'Who will absolve the Jews?' but 'Who will absolve the Church?'

An editorial in the Congress Bi-weekly, published by the American Jewish Congress, was only slightly milder than Lamm in excoriating Eisendrath for linking his remarks about

Jesus to the Ecumenical Council in Rome. It said that the Council's proposed removal of the charge of deicide against the Jews would be an act of historic justice, which should elicit from Jews deep satisfaction. However, an exaggerated show of gratitude was unseemly. Furthermore, the Council's proposed action did not obligate the Jewish community to respond quid pro quo. The editorial concluded with the following remarks:

> It is highly dubious whether the Christian world, which is concerned with the divinity of Jesus, will look with special favor upon Jews for elevating Jesus to the rank of a Jewish prophet. As for Jews, their pantheon of prophets is already crowded.[7]

The only even tempered criticisms of Eisendrath that appeared in the press were by two Reform rabbis. Rabbi Leonard Winograd of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, complained in a letter to the editor of the National Jewish Post that Eisendrath's call for a re-evaluation of Jesus was incongruous with his concern about the growing intermarriage and assimilation rate of American Jews.[8] Rabbi Balfour Brickner, a member of the Union's staff, was quoted in Newsweek as saying that "Jews are just as suspicious of Christian theology as they have always been. No attempt should be made, now, to equate the Roman Catholic ecumenical spirit and reforms within Judaism."[9]

Eisendrath was no stranger to controversy. Strongwilled, argumentative, and forceful, he was characteristically unwilling to retract one word of what he said before the

Union's General Assembly. At first his public response to the criticisms levelled at him was mild. In the December 2, 1963 issue of Newsweek, he reported that his remarks at the Union biennial were both a response to the Vatican and to the times. He stated:

> I do firmly believe a new mood is welling up in the world. My thought is just to remove those areas of discord and irritation that can be removed.[10]

The last comment portrays his motivation as simple and noble. However, within a year, he availed himself of the opportunity to rebut his critics and to more fully express his view of Jesus. In his book, Can Faith Survive?, published in 1964, he wrote a chapter entitled, "Jesus--Man of My People." He began by describing an incident that occurred while he was a rabbi in Toronto. In 1934 he claimed that he touched off an explosion when he preached from the pulpit of the Holy Blossom Temple that Jesus was fully conscious of being a Jew:

> His [Jesus'] noblest teachings were illustrated by citations from the Jewish scriptures, his most solemn admonitions and his most tender words were directed solely to his Jewish brethren. Jesus would not have been Jesus had he not profoundly loved the people from whose loins he sprang and from whose heart his life blood had been drawn, had he not been fully and gratefully conscious of his Hebraic heritage.[11]

In his sermon, Eisendrath also claimed that Jesus remained a Jew, even during the moments of his agonizing death.

Eisendrath recalled that, as when he had made unpopular remarks about Zionism in 1929, the Canadian Yiddish press

branded him a mamzer and a meshummed. It did not help his cause that the Christian press misinterpreted his sermon, finding him a promising convert to the Christian fold. At that time, Eisendrath felt he could withstand the Jewish attacks upon him because he understood that a large percentage of Canada's Jews were foreign born and had a historically conditioned antipathy toward Jesus. But in 1964 he wrote that he was shocked by the reactions to his "innocuous" statement before the General Assembly. In contrast to his Canadian audience thirty years before, most of those gathered in Chicago were native-born, and had not experienced any virulent forms of antisemitism. Most were college graduates whom he supposed did not harbor a ghetto mentality about Christianity. Hence he was stunned by the absence of a broad, liberal response to his request to study the relationship of Judaism and Jesus objectively. His "harmless appeal" was "greeted with an almost visceral and vehement rejection,"[12] primarily by rabbis to whom it seemed that the very mention of the name Jesus was still forbidden.

In his essay, Eisendrath acknowledged the objections raised by others and skillfully debated their opposing arguments. He recognized that Jews have long suffered at the hands of Christians and had many reasons for being suspicious of developments within the Church. Yet he called upon Jews to draw a sharp line between the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus. Though the New Testament

consisted of miracle tales, and was often self-contradictory, Eisendrath was certain that Jesus was a historical personality, born in the Galilee, reared as a Pharisee, and influenced by John the Baptist. A wandering teacher, he was hailed as the messiah, then seized and executed by command of Pontius Pilate. It was Paul who created the religion called Christianity. Paul conceived of Jesus as the Son of God and declared that salvation was only available through belief in him. The Gospels' hostile portrayal of Jews was due to the struggles between Judaism and the nascent Christian Church.

Eisendrath was deeply concerned about the harmful effect that the Gospels' hateful depiction of Jews had upon Christian children. He wrote that "childhood suggestion is the most lasting and no amount of later culture and superficial propriety will wipe clean that first unhappy picture of the Jew."[13] Eisendrath considered it the responsibility of Christians to rewrite the Gospel tales. Jews, and many Christians, were "weary of this dreary, demonic record of discrimination and death."[14] But just as Christians were reevaluating their relations to Jews, so too could Jews reciprocate

> not just as any quid pro quo which could be a gratuitous insult to any church that could be so cheaply bribed as well as to any Jew who would so brazenly barter his conviction, but to share in the opening of windows to let in more fresh air, to stretch forth one's own hands to match the outreach of the nobler spirits of our day.[15]

Eisendrath was convinced that he could discern the real Jesus through the study of history. He argued that Jesus was not an apostate, but a loyal and devoted son of Israel. This conclusion, he claimed, was "the irrefutable findings of contemporary Biblical science."[16] He cited a host of Christian scholars such as Julius Wellhausen, George Foot Moore, Shirley Jackson Case, and James Parkes whose viewpoints substantiated his own. He also quoted a number of notable Reform Jewish leaders such as Isaac Mayer Wise, Stephen S. Wise, Leo Baeck, Solomon Freehof, and Nelson Glueck (!) whose comments about Jesus were warm and approving.[17]

In Eisendrath's view, the religion of Jesus was pure and unadulterated Judaism. Jesus was beloved by the Jewish people of his time. He was "one of the noblest, most loyal and faithful Jews who ever lived, a Jew who combined in his majestic personality 'all that was best and most enchanting in Israel--the eternal people whose child he was.'"[18] Though Jews of this age have rejected the theological Christ, they should not, Eisendrath insisted, reject Jesus the man. Eisendrath believed that Jewish life could be richly enhanced by his restoration to a proper place among Jewish teachers and sages. The pantheon of Jewish prophets was not full, he declared. "Who cares what the Orthodox prate or what the non-Jews will say?" he asked. Parables about Jesus could be included among the stories of Moses and Hillel. Even the Sermon on the Mount could be read in the

synagogue. It was Eisendrath's conviction that a reexamination of Jesus by both religions could lead to further understanding. Jesus might serve as a bridge between Christianity and Judaism, not as the basis for a merger or a submersion of one faith within another. But he did hope that such a reevaluation would lead to an end of the age-old enmity between the two faiths.

Regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with Eisendrath's views of Jesus, one must try to understand why his remarks about Jesus at the 1963 biennial aroused such strong feelings. Eisendrath was dismayed by the intolerance exhibited toward him, and he wondered aloud why such a stir had been created, especially since he acknowledged that his perspective on Jesus was not particularly original. In this regard he was essentially correct. He was following the viewpoint of many Reform rabbis before him who attempted to reclaim Jesus as a Jew and an outstanding Jewish teacher.[19] In 1925 Stephen S. Wise preached a sermon at Carnegie Hall in which he declared:

> Shall we not say that this Jew is soul of our soul and that the soul of his teaching is Jewish and nothing but Jewish? The teaching of Jesus the Jew is a phase of the spirit which led the Jew Godward.[20]

Leo Baeck, in his essay, "The Gospel as a Document of the History of the Jewish Faith," wrote that Jesus lived

> in tense and excited times and helped and labored and suffered and died: a man out of the Jewish people who walked on Jewish paths with Jewish

> faith and hope . . . Jewish in every feature and trait of his character, manifesting in every particular what is pure and good in Judaism.[21]

Eisendrath was not the first to lament that the religion of Jesus had been twisted into the religion about Jesus. Paul was often cited by Reform leaders as the culprit for perverting the pure Judaism of the teacher from Nazareth. Scholars like Kaufmann Kohler and rabbis like Joseph Krauskopf, J. Leonard Levy, and Emil G. Hirsch disparaged Paul, largely in order to prove the Jewishness of Jesus.[22] Yet despite Paul's misdeed, a number of Reform leaders, Eisendrath included, admired Christianity's achievements in the world for it was through Christianity that Jews became a people of world importance.[23]

What Eisendrath neglected to acknowledge in his essay about Jesus in Can Faith Survive? was that he selectively incorporated the views of some Reform Jewish leaders while ignoring others. An examination of literature by Reform rabbis about Jesus demonstrates that for every positive assertion made about Jesus, there is an opposite, negative interpretation. Julian Morgenstern published an article in the American Israelite in 1905 in which he scornfully condemned those who adulated Jesus as a great teacher and reformer: "It is painful to hear the same gush and twaddle year after year arising partly out of ignorance and lack of historical discriminative ability and partly out of our sycophantic desire to appease the religious scruples of our

Christian brother irritated by our denial of the god-head of Jesus."[24] Max Raisin, in 1941, bitterly attacked Reform Jews who acclaimed Jesus as a Jewish prophet and notable teacher. Raisin believed that Christianity ultimately sought to convert Jews and any Reform Jewish leader who spoke approvingly of Jesus would weaken Judaism and provide the impetus for assimilation and conversion. In addition, reclaiming Jesus would not stop antisemitism for it was rooted in Christendom. Christianity was an idolatrous religion that worshipped a God-made man. Raisin believed that Jesus no longer belonged to the Jews. "He had been stolen from us and the theft is irrecoverable."[25]

Eisendrath asserted that he could reclaim the 'real,' historical Jesus through the "irrefutable findings of contemporary Biblical science." Yet Eisendrath himself recognized in his essay, "Jesus--Man of My People," that there were many different Jewish interpretations of Jesus--a renegade Jew, an apocalyptic prophet, a destroyer of his father's faith, a rabbi, an Essene, a Pharisee, or a combination of any of these possibilities. His own view of Jesus was not completely consistent throughout his lifetime. As a congregational rabbi he customarily gave a sermon about Jesus, Christianity, and Judaism around the time of Christmas. He never changed his view that Jesus was born, raised, lived and died a Jew. Yet over the years there were a few subtle alterations in his perceptions.

For example, in 1928 he stated his view that certain Jews may have been implicated in Jesus' arrest:

> Maybe some Jews were instrumental in betraying him, mayhap a few aristocrats in Jewry found his teachings imprudent and unsafe, mayhap some of the more powerful deemed his doctrines radical, dangerous and bolshevistic. Perhaps they did join the rabble who turned this troublemaker in Israel, this conscientious Jewish objector over to the authorities in Israel.[26]

Yet nine years later, when the situation of Jews in Europe had worsened considerably, he gave a very different interpretation of the events that transpired before Jesus' death. Aware that Nazis were utilizing the Gospel of John, in which Jews are held responsible for Jesus' conviction, as justification for persecuting Jews, Eisendrath sought to exonerate all Jews of any connection with the crucifixion. Eisendrath portrayed Jesus as a political agitator who threatened the Roman authorities. If indeed Jesus had made a so-called triumphal entry into Jerusalem, then the Romans had all the occasion they required for the arrest and execution of Jesus. Eisendrath declared "that the Romans were coerced by a Jewish mob into crucifying Jesus against their will is on its face incredible."[27]

In the 1930's, Eisendrath was fond of portraying Jesus as a rebel, a symbol of social conscience. In 1931 he gave a sermon entitled, "If Jesus Came Again," in which he depicted how if Jesus, the Jewish rebel, were to appear in the 20th century, he would be received with great hostility by both

Christians and Jews. Jesus would not feel comfortable in a church for he would be disturbed by the fictional accounts of his birth given in the Gospels and the false doctrine that only through belief in him could eternal salvation be acquired. And if Jesus sought admittance to a synagogue,

> where he once learned the sonorous, Hebrew tongue and the exalted Judaic teachings from his rabbinic masters he would be scorned by the Orthodox because of his iconoclasm and unfettered spirit which spurned the law and renounced its pious peccadillos while in Reform temples his uncompromising hatred of all injustice, luxury and greed would brand him as a troublemaker in Israel and he would be driven from its capitalistic gates.[28]

Yet apparently, in later years, Eisendrath downplayed his earlier depiction of Jesus as a rebel and a troublemaker.[29] Instead he spoke of the similarities of Jesus' teachings to Reform Judaism. Both Jesus and Reform Judaism followed in the tradition of Israel's prophets, emphasizing the inner principles of Judaism over superficial displays of religiosity. Both Jesus and Reform Jews were unconcerned with fulfilling the letter of the law. As Eisendrath stated in an interview in 1958, for Reform Jews what counts is "not what we do or don't do, but why."[30]

> Asked then if Christianity, in its asserted current emphasis on prescribed creeds and liturgy, might be veering from Jesus's [sic] way, while reform Judaism is moving closer to the simple faith he preached and practiced, Dr. Eisendrath smiles and says:
>
> 'To some degree there might be an analogy. But being outside the Christian faith, I wouldn't attempt to say.' Concerning Jesus, however, he adds: 'I think he would feel very much at home in a reform Jewish congregation today.'[31]

Thus, though Eisendrath depicted Jesus as a voice of rebellion in the 1930's, twenty years later Jesus was more like a prototypical Reform Jew. One might even go farther and say that Jesus, in Eisendrath's view, was not only a Reform Jew but a Reform rabbi!

It is very difficult to determine how Eisendrath's selective view of Jesus developed and why it underwent change. There are no documents which inform us as to his motivation for his request placed before the General Assembly other than his self-vindicating essay, "Jesus--Man of My People." A few people who were Union staff members in 1963 indicated in interviews that Eisendrath was advised not to make any comments about the undertakings of the Catholic Church. Yet characteristically, he did not heed the advice to avoid the potentiality of a public brouhaha. It is conceivable that Eisendrath found this possibility attractive. He liked being the subject of public attention. And he probably did sincerely believe that an evaluation of Jesus and Reform Judaism might lead to closer relations between Christians and Jews. His actions throughout his life bespoke his zeal for creating bridges between the followers of the two faiths.

Yet there is still a question that remains. On other occasions Eisendrath had expressed his view of Jesus without creating a storm of controversy. Why the angry denunciations of his view following his remarks in Chicago? Eisendrath

felt maligned and subject to vicious attack. He noted that his experience was similar to that of Stephen S. Wise following a sermon Wise gave at Carnegie Hall in 1925.* The two episodes are remarkably similar. Wise's favorable comments about Jesus provoked the Yiddish press and some rabbis to harshly condemn him. Some were dismayed that he spoke at all about Jesus. Wise was accused of being superficial, facetious, and a sensationalist. Some thought he was trying to curry favor with Christians. As with Eisendrath, it was Wise's imputed motivation, and not the substance of his address that was the primary subject of attack.[32]

Given that other rabbis had made public pronouncements about the significance of Jesus for Jews, why did Wise's and Eisendrath's remarks arouse such hostility? In part, both men had the kind of personalities that sparked public controversy. They held strong opinions and were masters at expressing themselves in public. Convinced of the justice of their cause, their combative natures did not shy away from a fight. During their long and distinguished careers, they had both been embroiled in a number of disputes, and so their pronouncements about Jesus gave their foes another opportunity for denunciation.

When Wise spoke at Carnegie Hall and Eisendrath in Chicago, there were other dimensions to their speeches

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*see page 123 for an excerpt from Wise's sermon

besides the fact that they were addressing the people before them. Both Wise and Eisendrath were prominent rabbis, acclaimed leaders of their people. As Reform rabbis, they--more than their Conservative and Orthodox colleagues--served as spokesmen for Judaism to the Christian community. Their speeches were not intended solely for internal Jewish consumption. Christians were also being addressed.

Eisendrath underestimated the latent tension in the relationship of Jews to Christians.[33] While he was attempting to recover the historical Jesus, he never really understood the significance of Jesus to Jews as a symbol of Christian persecution. It is true that Eisendrath was aware of the history of sufferings Jews had experienced at the hands of Christians. Yet the emancipation of European Jewry and the freedom enjoyed by Jews in the United States stimulated Jews like Eisendrath to reappraise their perceptions of Jesus and Christianity. Professor Samuel Sandmel's remarks about Isaac Mayer Wise's attitude toward Jesus apply also to Eisendrath:

> The age old antipathy . . . was inconsistent with an age of enlightenment and broad horizons . . . There was no spiritual or physical ghetto in the United States, and Jews and Christians lived side by side in a relatively high state of harmony and good will. Christianity inevitably intruded into the consciousness of Jews and so did Jesus.
>
> [Wise] was moved so to write because no Jew breathing the free air of America could refrain from coming to grips in some way with Christianity and with Jesus . . . Wise wrote because he had to write; he could not be the leader of an American Jewish community and not do so.[34]

It is quite possible that Eisendrath believed that his call for an assessment of the relation of Reform Jews and Jesus would move the Jewish community toward adopting a more enlightened, less ghettoized view of Christianity. It may be because Eisendrath was American born and had never personally encountered intense antisemitism, that he never seriously questioned a tenet of 19th century Reform Judaism--that the Jew was the moral leavening in the greater society whose duty it was to promote brotherhood among all people. He was fundamentally optimistic about the role of the Jew in the world. Not even the Holocaust affected his rosy outlook. He once had some rather harsh words for those Jews who did not support the cause of universal brotherhood. In a pamphlet entitled, A Jewish Platform of Good Will, published by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, he wrote:

> Even to this day [1953] there are undoubtedly some who, smarting at the memory of centuries of nightmarish incarceration in ghettoes and more recently in barbedwire concentration camps, fight shy of movements of good will and remain aloof from such desirable efforts to build human brotherhood as the National Conference of Christians and Jews. For some of these the vivid recollection of pogrom and yellow badge, of ritual murder and mass cremations, may seem still too recent to permit them to 'love all one's neighbors as one's self.'
>
> These few are not true to their Torah, are not obedient to the Jewish Moral Law. Though their motivation may be understood, though a sympathetic sensitive understanding of the valley of the shadow through which their people and sometimes their very selves have passed cannot be overlooked, nevertheless their heritage as Jews precludes any such seclusive reaction.[35]

It is doubtful whether many Jews living in 1953 or 1963 could devalue the devastating effects of the Holocaust or those sufferings that preceded it. The hostile response to Eisendrath's remarks at the Chicago biennial indicated that for many Jews, Jesus was not an idealized Reform Jew or Jewish prophet or Jewish teacher. Jesus was the symbol, par excellence, of Christianity and the potential fury non-Jews could direct at Jews. Eisendrath never really comprehended this viewpoint.

On the subject of Jesus Eisendrath was unable, more than with any other proposal he placed before the General Assembly, to inspire his listeners to change their views. This failure never seriously affected his standing within the Reform movement. Yet it does demonstrate the following point. As a social activist, Eisendrath was very successful in motivating people to take progressive stands on issues in the public eye such as racial justice, Vietnam, and nuclear war. But when he called for Jews to reevaluate the relation of Jesus to Judaism, he did not succeed. He failed because of his inadequate conception of Jesus and because on this issue he did not understand the feelings of American Jews.

Chapter Seven

Slowed Steps: 1963-1973

By the mid-1960's, Maurice Eisendrath had reached a pinnacle in his career as president of the UAHC. He was recognized as one of the two major spokesmen for a movement of more than one million American Jews. He had helped shape the Union into an effective organization, providing direction and resources in the fields of education, worship, synagogue administration, and social justice. Eisendrath himself was a forceful advocate of liberal positions on the issues of race, Jewish-Christian relations, and in the mid-sixties, Vietnam. The purpose of this chapter is to portray the last ten years of his life, from 1963 to 1973. The focus will be less on Maurice Eisendrath, the public figure, and more on the private man. In the final decade of his life, he faced some considerable trials. This chapter will depict how he endured and even overcame his tribulations.

During their five month global tour for peace in 1958, Rosa had taken ill while they were in India. For close to a month, she was in and out of the hospital with an undisclosed ailment. It is possible that at that time she was already suffering from the cancer that would eventually kill her. Though Rosa was a woman of uncommon courage, she once said to Maurice, "If I ever have it [cancer], I don't want to know."[1] Eisendrath was determined that she not know. During her protracted illness he spent endless time with her. In the final weeks of her life he practically stopped working.

He would come to the House of Living Judaism for a few hours, leaving most of the daily decisions to the staff.

Rosa died on July 2, 1963. In a memorial tribute, Albert Vorspan praised her as a woman who gladly forsook her own promising musical career in order to be a helpmate to her husband. Despite her own considerable achievements in communal life--she had been active in the World Council of Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the American board of the World Union for Progressive Judaism--she preferred to be known simply as the wife of her illustrious husband. Their marriage of thirty-six years was a happy union of "two strong and individual personalities." Though they had no children, the Union was, in effect, their child. She was far from being "the cautious stereotype of the organization wife;" she despised compromise when principle was at stake. Rosa "had opinions and convictions, always strong and forceful," that "stemmed from a stubborn and unflinching integrity." No small part of Maurice's own strength, courage, and willingness to champion controversial causes "was drawn from the reservoirs of spirit of this remarkable woman who was always at his side--his stay and his support."[2]

Rosa's death affected Eisendrath very deeply. He was depressed for months and withdrew from public appearances. He tended to only the bare minimum of his responsibilities at the Union. As one associate depicted the impact Rosa's passing had on him:

> Maurice thought that his life had come to an end. Rosa did everything but breathe for him. She was his mentor and critic. He reviewed everything that he wrote before her. Rosa's death . . . left him bereft not only of a lifemate but of the only support system that existed for him.[3]

Maurice and Rosa had never cultivated close personal friends. His immediate family was scattered around the country and he had not been in close touch with his mother, sister, or brother. He was helpless and worried about the myriad of details that assaulted him. He did not know how to handle himself when alone. Four months after her death, Eisendrath appeared before the assembled delegates at the 1963 General Assembly and in his opening remarks spoke about the loss he felt at his wife's passing:

> Surely there is none among this deeply understanding convocation of treasured friends and ardent co-workers who is not aware of the vast emptiness that yawns so painfully within my being; the gaping, hollowed-out void that has sucked the spark from my as yet seared and shackled spirit. Nor will any among you fail to forgive me for this personal indulgence; for prefacing whatever message may flow from my now long-silent lips and disquieted heart, with these words of mournful threnody over that precious soul who, during the now twenty years of our labors together within this Union, bore with me every frustration and failure, rejoiced in every forward stride which together we have made, hand-in-hand and heart-to-heart.[4]

Approximately a year after Rosa's death, Eisendrath remarried. Rita Hands Greene had known "the Rabbi" since she was a student in Holy Blossom Temple's religious school. Eisendrath had confirmed her and later presided at her wedding to another Holy Blossom confirmand, the actor Lorne Greene.

The couple eventually divorced, but she was in occasional contact with the Union president. Upon hearing of Rosa's death, she wrote a consolation note that touched the grieving rabbi. They corresponded and sometime later they began seeing each other. In June of 1964 they were married in a small, private ceremony held in Toronto.

Marrying Rita brought a number of changes to Maurice's life. She had two children by her previous marriage and he responded warmly to becoming an instant father and grandfather. An intelligent and vivacious woman, Rita enlivened his life. He admired her grace in large groups and she helped ease his awkwardness in social situations. Rita arranged for parties in their Manhattan apartment, acquainting Maurice with artists and intellectuals with whom he normally never came into contact. She filled the void in his life, bringing him renewed hope and purpose. Their marriage was filled with devotion and love.

1964 marked another happy occasion in Eisendrath's life, the publication of his book, Can Faith Survive? The Thoughts and Afterthoughts of an American Rabbi.[5] The book consisted of sixteen chapters on topics ranging from Reform Judaism, the State of Israel, pacifism, birth control, capital punishment, Jesus and Jewish-Christian relations, and the struggle to maintain one's religious faith in the midst of a secular world. Most chapters began with a lengthy quotation from a sermon or public address

he gave while a rabbi in Toronto. What followed was Eisendrath's depiction of how his thinking on a particular subject developed during his years in the rabbinate. He was not afraid to admit that his perspective on such issues as Zionism and the role of ritual had changed considerably. UAHC advertisements for the book declared: "Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath asks . . . the questions that haunt Jewish life in America."[6] The Union also published a guidebook which demonstrated how Can Faith Survive? could be utilized in confirmation and adult education classes.

The 1960's marked other changes in Eisendrath's life. By 1965 few of the original support staff members from the 1950's still worked at the Union headquarters. Some left agreeably, others under a cloud of tension and suspicion. Eugene Lipman was the first to leave. He left on good terms with Eisendrath when he departed for Washington, D.C., in order to become rabbi of Temple Sinai. A few years later Erwin Herman moved to California where he continued working for the UAHC as national director of the regions. He also assumed the responsibility of the directorship of the Pacific Southwest Region.

Eugene Borowitz's departure from his post as director of the Department of Education was an entirely different matter. In Eisendrath's eyes, Borowitz did not merely leave the Union, he defected to the enemy camp when he took a position as a faculty member of the New York campus of HUC-JIR.

It was bad enough that he was deserting the Union's cause; going to work for Nelson Glueck was downright criminal! Though the two were once close, after Borowitz left the Union his relationship with Eisendrath became icy, at best.

Jay Kaufman's resignation from the Union in 1965 was an even worse blow to Eisendrath than Borowitz's departure. Many commented that Kaufman was the closest thing to a son that Eisendrath ever had. The two were very close. Kaufman was instrumental in building the Union's staff and was its chief operating officer. He was Eisendrath's "point man" during the numerous controversies in which the Union president was embroiled. In 1957 Kaufman was rewarded by his election to the newly created post of vice-president of the Union.[7] In certain respects he seemed a logical choice to succeed Eisendrath as Union president. He was extremely able and politically savvy. He was well acquainted with Jewish leaders both in the Diaspora and Israel. There are some who say that Rosa saw Jay as a threat to her husband since he had quickly risen to the post of vice-president. There is little question that Kaufman was ambitious and did aspire to become the next president of the Union. Yet many noted that Kaufman was very loyal to his boss. At a World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) meeting in Israel in 1962, Solomon Freehof approached Kaufman, asking him whether he was in line for the Union presidency. Kaufman wrote a memo to Eisendrath stating: "I indicated that it would be many

years before I personally would even let you talk about retirement, let alone plan on it."[8]

By the mid-1960's Kaufman had been at the Union fifteen years. Though he apparently was not impatient for Eisendrath to announce his retirement, he did want some assurance that when that time came, he would be designated as Eisendrath's successor. Eisendrath would not give him that assurance. Perhaps he thought Kaufman was inappropriate for the job; though a highly intelligent man, he could be abrasive. It is also possible that by 1965, Eisendrath already favored as his successor Rabbi Alexander Schindler, former Union director of the New England Council and then director of the Education Department. Kaufman waited for some assurance from Eisendrath but his boss was not forthcoming. Finally, Kaufman confronted Eisendrath with the demand that he be designated his successor or else he would leave the Union. At that point Eisendrath did not even try to talk him into staying. Kaufman felt betrayed and crushed by what he felt was Eisendrath's lack of loyalty. He left the Union in order to become the executive vice-president of B'nai Brith.[9] Though Eisendrath did not fight to keep Kaufman on the Union's staff, he was deeply affected by the departure. His widow stated:

> Maurice felt like he was a son and when Jay left the Union Maurice was heartbroken. Jay felt that he needed to be a boss and when he had the opportunity he took it. I can't say now that I blame him, but at the time it was awful. It was the year after we were married . . . and I had the feeling the end of the world had come.[10]

In the wake of Kaufman's departure, Albert Vorspan, the only original member of the coordinating staff of the 1950's still in New York, was named to the new position of director of programs at the Union. His duties included coordinating and supervising the internal service departments of the Union. Yet there was not much chance that Vorspan would be chosen eventually as the next president, for Eisendrath strongly believed that a rabbi should head a religious organization. In 1967 Schindler was elected vice-president of the Union. On account of his personality, capabilities, and status as a rabbi, he was perceived as the logical person to succeed Eisendrath.

1967 was somewhat of a watershed year for Eisendrath and world Jewry. He was sixty-five years old. The Union, into which he had poured so much of his drive and energy, required much less of his attention. Its reputation was secure, its place in the councils of American Jewry assured. In short, the Union was no longer the challenge for him it had once been.

The Reform movement, which he had striven to lead for twenty-five years, was undergoing significant changes. The Six Day War had a profound effect on Jews throughout the world. Eisendrath expressed his solidarity with Israel in its "desperate, heroic struggle for survival," and exulted in her triumphant victory.[11] Yet he was dismayed when that triumph turned into ugly chauvinism on the part of the Israelis.

Eisendrath also worried that Israel was becoming a vicarious Jewish identity for Reform Jews. A story told by Rita Eisendrath illustrates this point:

> Just after the Six Day War . . . we were in a taxi and the driver's name was obviously a very Jewish sounding name. The driver said, 'Isn't it wonderful what our country is doing!?' Maurice said, 'Our country? You mean the United States?' The driver responded, 'No, Israel!' Maurice said, 'Yes it's wonderful. Are you Jewish?' The driver replied, 'Yes.' Maurice inquired, 'Do you belong to a synagogue?' He said, 'No. My wife is Catholic.' So Maurice asked, 'What makes you consider yourself Jewish?' And he said, 'Well, I'm always Jewish. I was born Jewish!'
>
> Maurice was furious. He didn't let it out but when we got out of the car he said, 'You see, that's the kind of guy that calls himself a Zionist . . . He is getting some sort of a thrill from having a Jewish state and knowing that his name is Jewish but his wife isn't Jewish and his kids aren't Jewish and he doesn't belong to a synagogue! What makes him Jewish? Because he was born that way?'[12]

Eisendrath also was concerned that Jews were withdrawing from the challenge to achieve justice in America. A mood of particularism, and not universalism, dominated American Jewry. Part of this "retreat" he traced to the "deep hurt felt by Jews at the relative silence of the non-Jewish world in the face of Jewish suffering in Russia and Jewish peril in the Middle East."[13] He nonetheless exhorted Jews to remain with blacks and Christian groups in the struggle to fight racism, environmental decay, and the Vietnam War. Yet he was unable to prevent the retreat by Jews from the social action front. As his secretary of many years stated:

> He never changed his liberal view . . . He saw it going conservative and more and more to the right, and he saw himself, rightly or wrongly, as more and more isolated even from the world within which he operated.
>
> He felt himself to be a (kind of) hangover liberal . . . He lost interest in the Union and began to see it as a failing force for those things in which he believed.[14]

It is questionable whether Eisendrath viewed the Union as a "failing force" on issues of social concern. There is no indication in his public addresses of any condemnation of the Union for its shortcomings. But there is some indication that, beginning in the late 1960's, he felt increasingly isolated. He was uncomfortable with the growing emphasis on tradition within the Reform movement. Reform Jewish young people were experimenting with a variety of rituals--wearing kippot and tallitot, observing kashrut--that were totally foreign to their upbringing. Eisendrath saw the move toward traditionalism as a reflection of the disenchantment people felt in their ability to rationally solve their problems.[15] Some were even speaking of formulating a Reform Jewish 'Halacha.' In Eisendrath's opinion this concept was completely misleading, for Halacha to his mind was not "'a' law but 'the' law." He could support the idea of "certain fundamental, basic, minimal requirements incumbent upon the Reform Jew,"[16] but it should never be entitled 'halacha.'

Yet despite his sense that his definition of Judaism was no longer heeded by Reform Jews, in the end what really

curtailed Eisendrath's leadership of the movement was his health. In 1970 he underwent three major surgeries within ten months. The first was for a strangulated hernia. A few months later he underwent his first operation on his back. After his second back operation there was some question whether he would ever be able to walk again. He had to undergo a long and painful rehabilitation, working with a physiotherapist, exercising every day, and giving himself time to rest. It is a credit to Rita that she motivated him to regain his ability to walk. Slowly, with her assistance, he was able to move from a wheelchair to a walker to an orthopedic cane.

He still kept up with Union affairs. Even when he was in the hospital his secretary came practically daily. He read his mail and dictated. Despite his infirmities, he even travelled abroad on Union business. But the Union was increasingly directed by Alexander Schindler, and Eisendrath felt comfortable delegating authority to his vice-president.

Eisendrath had planned since 1968 to retire in 1973 when the Union celebrated the centennial of its founding. Not surprisingly, the Union president worried about what he would do in retirement. In 1972 he had been elected president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. He had been a vice-president of the organization since 1952, but waited to become its president until he felt he had the time to

raise funds on its behalf. He had plans for the World Union: to travel and visit its constituent congregations, assessing their needs and how they could be served best. He also wanted to enroll in an ulpan (a course in Hebrew language instruction), for he wanted to improve his conversational Hebrew.

Besides the WUPJ, Eisendrath talked of writing a book and perhaps working on an educational TV series. He had ideas and plans and yet he was depressed about the future. Throughout his life he had been involved in one cause or another, always active and in the public eye. Now he was worried that once he retired he would be forgotten. He would no longer carry any major responsibilities nor be asked to speak.

Eisendrath was scheduled to formally hand over the reins of the Union to Alexander Schindler at the 1973 biennial in New York. As November grew near, Eisendrath worried about the presidential sermon he was to deliver on Friday evening. He wanted to depart from the Union with an address that would leave people with a lasting, affectionate view of him. But a fire still burned within him; there were issues he could not avoid raising. He would make it clear that he advocated amnesty for those who avoided the draft, for it was imperative to "manifest Jewish compassion toward those for whom it was ethically repugnant to rain down napalm, defoliation, and anti-personnel bombs

upon the many innocent peasants below." Eisendrath could also not refrain from expressing his judgment of the Nixon administration. In the wake of the Senate Watergate hearings, he was unsparing in his criticisms:

> How can we teach our children the Jewish values of honesty and compassion when 'sneers and leers' are voiced not by press and TV, as alleged, but by those highest in office, an administration so indifferent to the dishonesty and pervasive corruption that have blackened the White House; so insensitive to the aged and the dispossessed, the disabled veterans of Vietnam; so obsessed with so-called 'national security' as to defend the most unforgivable concealment and the most blatant fabrication? We have been led--or misled-- to within an inch of a dictatorial police state.[17]

It was clear from the tone of his address that Eisendrath was in favor of impeaching the President, a stand which undoubtedly was controversial for many Americans at that time.

Eisendrath had other beliefs and convictions--about the Arab-Israeli War, Zionism, Reform Judaism, Women, Youth--which he wanted to communicate to the biennial delegates, but he never delivered the sermon. On Friday afternoon, on November ninth, just hours before he was scheduled to speak, he died in his hotel room. There was no autopsy performed. It is assumed that he died swiftly of a heart attack.

The shocking news was announced to the delegates by Rabbi Schindler. Then before a hushed and grieving assembly, he read the sermon his predecessor would have delivered that evening. The biennial continued, though

muted in spirit. On Sunday a memorial service was held in Central Synagogue. Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn lamented the loss of his longtime friend. He spoke of the public figure, "bold, brave, sometimes even a little brash, strong, resolute, courageous, always prophetic." He was a man who was dynamic and creative, willing to change with a changing world. Gittelsohn also praised the private Maurice: "soft, tender, loving, considerate and passionate--always kind" to the privileged few who knew him.[18]

Maurice Eisendrath's sudden death was wrenching and traumatic for his wife, his family and friends, and in a less tangible way, for the Union he led for thirty years. Ten years have now passed since he died. Time and distance permit the concerned observer to gain some perspective on his life. The final chapter of this thesis will evaluate the man and his accomplishments.

Chapter Eight

Summary

During his lifetime, Maurice Eisendrath received numerous awards, citations, degrees, and tributes that acknowledged his contributions as a leader of Reform Jewry and a spokesman for international peace. These honors testify to the respect and appreciation others once had for him. He has not been completely forgotten. There are still signs of his presence. There is an Eisendrath Auditorium in the Holy Blossom Temple. A poorly rendered bust of him is located in the lobby of the House of Living Judaism. In the same building, on the tenth floor, a flattering oil portrait of the former Union president gazes out on the chairs and tables of the boardroom. A Union sponsored program for Israeli and American high school students is entitled the Eisendrath International Exchange program. Students who spend a summer at the Religious Action Center are called Eisendrath interns. These are traces of the man's life, and yet a portrait, an auditorium, a program containing his name do not serve to inform a new generation of who he was and the values he held dear. The truth is, ten years after his death, Eisendrath is scarcely remembered by the movement he led for thirty years. Today, only his family, a few friends, and historians are mindful of his accomplishments.

One can surmise reasons for this state of affairs. Perhaps his personality affected the desire to perpetuate his memory. Many perceived him as cold and authoritarian.

He seemed more comfortable behind a lectern than in a group. He was somewhat of a prude and did not mix in the chummy atmosphere of a party. A debate about issues was easier for him than a personal conversation. He was an intense and lonely man. Throughout his life he held to the myth that the great leader of civilization must withdraw from society and climb the mountain alone in order to clarify his vision.

Eisendrath's climb through life was not easy. He lost his father at a relatively early age. His ambition to be a renowned Reform Jewish leader was in part fired by his desire to please the mother who supported him. At the age of twenty-four he began his duties as a congregational rabbi. Thrust into the position of serving congregants who were much older than he, he hid his insecurities by adopting an aloof and formal manner. Only with Rosa was he able to let down his guard. She responded by protecting him, serving as a barrier between the public and her husband. This pattern continued throughout their married life. As he assumed ever greater responsibilities, Rosa became the sole repository of his private emotions--a pattern he continued with his second wife, Rita. Eisendrath could be kind and attentive to some people. He was warm and solicitous toward his family and a few associates. Yet he was incapable of communicating intimately with the Jews he strove to lead. He wanted respect, and he received it, but respect denotes a distance between people. A man who was unable to project warmth is not warmly remembered.

Perhaps Eisendrath is not recalled much these days because he is no longer a model for Reform Jews. He lived in a time when donning the prophetic mantle was seen as the chief responsibility of a rabbi. His was a day when rabbis utilized their pulpits for addressing not only their congregants, but American Jewry as a whole. Stephen S. Wise, Barnett Brickner, Edward Israel, Abba Hillel Silver, were national leaders, rabbis worthy of emulation. But the postwar period brought dramatic changes in the Reform rabbinate. The rabbi, as leader of a congregation, could no longer claim to be the primary Jewish representative. The federations challenged and ofttimes succeeded in influencing American Jewry because they held the pursestrings of the community. Eisendrath combatted this trend, deploring how secular agencies sought to represent the real interests of Jews. The Union president never renounced the singular importance of rabbinic leadership. Though in title he was the head of an organization, he never ceased to think of himself as a pulpit rabbi. The Union was his pulpit and he was the rabbi of all of Reform Jewry. His "State of Our Union" address had all the importance of a High Holy Day sermon, with his congregation consisting of one million people. As a rabbi, he felt it was his duty to speak his mind, to point the finger, name the name, and call for social action. He was never more attuned to his conception of Judaism and his role as a rabbi than when he thundered against the sin of

segregation and decried the physical and moral devastation wrought by American involvement in the Vietnam War.

We can admire Eisendrath's unwillingness to compromise on issues of conscience. He courageously battled the reactionary elements in his movement and in society who opposed his stands. He had a remarkable ability to communicate his passion for justice. Under his leadership, over the years, the General Assembly passed a number of progressive resolutions. Yet it is debatable whether at any time his positions were adopted by a majority of Reform Jews. What is certain is that today few Reform Jews aspire to be prophets. The Biblical prophets no longer are the essence of Judaism. While it is important to express our convictions on social issues, we are skeptical of those who utilize a few passages from a particular prophet as justification for a course of action. Today we listen to a plurality of voices--"lawgivers and prophets, historians and poets . . . rabbis and teachers, philosophers and mystics"*--gifted Jews of every age that speak to us with wisdom. And while in the past a rabbi like Eisendrath could serve as an uncompromising voice of conscience from atop the mountain, today quieter voices are sought. For many, the primary task of a rabbi is to be a guide, a pathbreaker for other Jews who seek the treasures of our heritage. Intimacy and not distance,

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*from the 1976 Centenary Perspective

empathy and not rebuke, pastor and not preacher are in our age the desirable qualities of a rabbi. It may be that Eisendrath is no longer remembered because the mode of rabbinic leadership he espoused is no longer appropriate for Reform Jews in the 1980's.

When Eisendrath is remembered today it is primarily for his accomplishments as president of the UAHC. It is no exaggeration to say that he was the most important organizational leader of the Reform movement since Isaac Mayer Wise. To some extent, he was a reflection of the times in which he lived. He rode the wave that swept Edward Israel into office in 1941. Eisendrath perceived, along with others, that for the Union to flourish it must harness the energy of the new leaders of American Jewry: the second generation of American born Jews of Eastern European background. He modified his views on Zionism and the importance of ritual in Judaism because of the exigencies of his day. As for the phenomenal growth of the Union in the postwar period, one can argue that Jews flocked to Reform congregations less out of religious conviction than from the desire to demonstrate their respectability to others by belonging to a religious institution. Yet Eisendrath was no mere reflection of the age in which he lived. He was a doer and a builder. It is conceivable that the Union never would have transferred from Cincinnati to New York, nor recruited hundreds of thousands of new congregants,

nor enlarged its budget and staff, nor built the Religious Action Center in Washington, D.C., nor gained in prestige and influence in American Jewish life had it not been for Maurice Eisendrath.

Is it unjust that a man who accomplished so much in his lifetime is scarcely remembered today? I posed this question to the dean of historians of American Jewry, Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus. His response gives pause for thought:

> Goethe says somewhere that 'nobody is remembered sixty years after his death.' Of course Goethe was an exception. Who remembers Kohler? Who remembers Morgenstern? Who remembers Glueck? Nobody is remembered . . . It is perfectly normal that a man is forgotten except by the historian who makes a special study.

Marcus may be right. Yet his answer engenders another question: Why should a historian make a special study of a person's life? The purpose of a biography is to honestly depict someone's life so that we may ultimately learn about ourselves and the human endeavor. The one primary lesson to be learned from this biography of Eisendrath is that he was eminently human. He had strengths and foibles. He loved some and loathed others. He was ambitious and had goals--some of which he realized. Like most people, Eisendrath had a dream of a more just and peaceful world. What set Eisendrath off from most was the magnitude of his dream and his determination to realize it. Most are content to mouth prayerful words of hope for a

better world. He despised pieties, for his dreams beckoned him to act. Toward the end of his life he was asked, "For what would you like to be best remembered?" After a long pause he said, "That I helped move humanity and Jewry facing tiller forward toward the messianic era."[1] His answer wholly reflects the man: a Jew with universal concerns, both altruistic and vain, a visionary and an activist. Perhaps his response was phantasmagoric. Mayhap his dream spoke truth.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Rabbi Eugene Lipman in recorded interview conducted by author in Washington, D.C., June 8, 1983.

CHAPTER ONE "Eisey": 1902-1926

1. New York Sunday News, November 10, 1968, American Jewish Archives (AJA) Eisendrath Collection. Levy served Temple Emanuel from 1908 until 1955. After his death in 1963, at the CCAR convention Eisendrath paid tribute to his lifelong friend. He characterized Levy as a learned scholar, generous to all, and especially devoted to his family. See CCAR Yearbook, 1963, pp. 129-130.

2. Mrs. Marjory Hess in recorded interview conducted by Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, Port Washington, New York, November 3, 1983.

3. Maurice Eisendrath in recorded interview conducted by Rabbi Daniel Syme, New York, New York, May 10, 1972, deposited in the AJA. Eisendrath did not mention any specific influences J. Leonard Levy had upon him.

4. Clara earned a livelihood in the millinery business. In later years Maurice helped support her. She outlived her son, dying at the age of 104.

5. For a fuller depiction of life at HUC from its founding until 1976, see Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years, ed. by Samuel Karff (Cincinnati, 1976), pp. 1-283.

6. My favorite excerpt from a column in the HUC Monthly written by "Schlemiehl" is from the November, 1924 issue: "I would like to give you an impression of the Freshman class, Abe, but space does not permit . . . They have one thing in common and that is 'chutzpah.' Their favorite tricks are hiding the paddle and locking the dormitory at night (with me on the outside), pouring water from the windows upon the heads of sedate seniors, calling for bacon with their eggs at breakfast, kidding Dr. Cohon and challenging the faculty to a golf tournament, singing college songs of twenty-seven different colleges simultaneously while holding a shirt tail parade on the second floor, etc., etc. Yes, the boys are a bit playful, Abe, but then boys will be boys especially at the Hebrew Union College;" pages 12-13.

7. HUC Monthly, February, 1919, p. 94.

8. This ditty was written by Eisendrath probably in 1922. It is in the AJA Eisendrath Collection.

9. This song was also probably written in the Summer of 1922:

Hot Lips

There's a guy at H.U.C.
Just as Eisey is he known
He is sure a pest
Never lets us rest
From his sax-o-phone
When he toots that cur-sed thing
He im-a-gines that he is cute
But this I will tell
I think it sounds like -- but

Chorus:

He's got hot lips
When he plays jazz
He's got some pep
Like no one has
He [?] his toes
And shimmies too
Boy how he goes
He's sure cu-koo
Just watch him prance
And try to dance
He wrote this song
He should be hung (give him poison)
But just the same - he sure is game
And he's right there
With two hot lips.

AJA Eisendrath Collection.

10. HUC Monthly, June, 1922, pp. 235-236.

11. HUC Monthly, January, 1923: "And we're happy to say the Fleisher Prize has been awarded. Maurice Eisendrath, because of his scholarship and standing in the Preparatory Department has been the lucky recipient. Mazel Tov, Eisey! For the rest of the class, tough mazel!"

12. "Though tuition remained free, dormitory and living expenses for the year in Cincinnati were beyond the capacities of most students and their families. In addition, for undergraduates, there was tuition to be paid the University of Cincinnati. Due mainly to the generosity of various sisterhoods around the country, scholarships were available for a large portion of the student body, distributed according to the faculty's evaluation of both academic performance and general attitude toward the College." From Meyer, "A Centennial History," p. 107.

13. The most gifted scholar in Eisendrath's ordination class was Bernard Bamberger.

14. Maurice Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive? The Thoughts and Afterthoughts of an American Rabbi (New York, 1964), p. 5.

15. Ibid., p. 6.

16. Ibid., p. 5. Eisendrath received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1925 and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

17. Letter of B. Joseph to Dr. Englander, September 23, 1920, AJA Hebrew Union College Collection.

18. This information is from the AJA Hebrew Union College Collection.

19. On September 27, 1922, the president of the Muskogee temple's sisterhood, Mrs. Phil Brown (not Rosa's mother, but of unknown relation to Rosa), wrote to Clara Eisendrath about how pleased the congregation was with "Morris" (sic) and expressed the hope that he return to Muskogee so that they can show their great affection for him. "His desire to please his Mother is also our desire." AJA Eisendrath Collection.

20. In the early years of the Morgenstern administration, there were almost no married students. See Meyer, "A Centennial History," p. 105.

21. Meyer, "A Centennial History," p. 101.

22. Maurice Eisendrath, "The Supremacy of Self," HUC Monthly, February 28, 1925, pp. 2-6.

23. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, pp. 4~~0~~5.

24. In the years following his student days, Eisendrath seemed to enjoy a cordial relationship with Morgenstern. A perusal of the Morgenstern-Eisendrath correspondence (AJA Hebrew Union College Collection) reveals that they were in touch on a variety of issues like Moses Buttenwieser's premature retirement in 1935 and funding for the Institute of Jewish Studies in Warsaw. Morgenstern warmly commended Eisendrath's conference sermon at the 1937 CCAR convention adding: "I need not tell you that your own views and mine coincide completely;" letter of Julian Morgenstern to Maurice Eisendrath, June 8, 1937.

25. Maurice Eisendrath, "Universalism and Particularism in the Priestly Code with Special Reference to Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah," (rabbinic thesis, HUC), 1926, p. 21.

26. Maurice Eisendrath, "Fulness of Life," HUC Monthly, May 29, 1926, p. 20.

27. Eisendrath's fellow ordinees were Bernard J. Bamberger, Daniel L. Davis, Bernard Dorfman, Julian B. Feibelman, Bable Glazer, Julius Gordon, Victor Emanuel Reichert, William Franklin Rosenblum, and Samuel J. Wolk.

CHAPTER TWO Pulpit and Politics: 1926-1943

1. The American Jewish Yearbook of 1929 on page 302 lists the total population of West Virginia in 1927 as 1,696,000. 7,471 Jews lived in the state, comprising 0.44% of the total population.

2. American Jewish Yearbook (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 307.

3. Leo Loeb, A Narrative of the History of Congregation B'nai Israel (Virginia Street Temple), Charleston, West Virginia, 1948, p. 13.

4. This and the following quotes by Aaronsohn are in Abraham I. Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History 1850-1958, (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 75-76.

5. Harrison E. Salisbury in the New York Times ("West Virginia: Battleground for Democrats," April 29, 1960), noted that until the mid-seventeen hundreds, Roman Catholics were legally barred from Virginia. Salisbury's article can be found in Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, volume one.

6. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 211. Eisendrath recounts this story on pp. 208-212.

7. This figure based upon figures given in Stuart Rosenberg, "Canada's Jews: The Sacred and the Profane," Conservative Judaism, vol. 24, no. 3, Spring 1970, p. 35. In contrast to 150,000 Jews in Canada, there were over 4 million Jews in the United States.

8. The Encyclopedia Judaica article on "Canada," volume 5, p. 105, lists the exact population figures in 1931 for Montreal as 58,032 and for Toronto, 46,751. These exact figures could be obtained because Canadian law permits questions about religious denomination and ethnic origin to be included in the national census.

9. Stuart E. Rosenberg, "Canada's Jews: An Overview," Judaism, vol. 20, no. 4, Fall 1971, p. 12. Temple Emanu-El of Montreal and Temple Anshe Sholom of Hamilton were founded in 1882.

10. For Eisendrath's account of his editorial's impact on Canada, see Can Faith Survive?, pp. 52-54. He gives a whimsical account of the yarmulke controversy on pp. 225-229.

11. Holy Blossom Bulletin, February 12, 1931.

12. Holy Blossom Bulletin, October 28, 1931.

13. Holy Blossom Bulletin, March 7, 1940. These comments originally appeared in the National Jewish Monthly (date unknown).

14. This portrait of Eisendrath's oratorical abilities is derived from my reading of his sermons and addresses, and supplemented by corresponding information supplied in interviews.

15. Maurice Eisendrath, The Never Failing Stream (Toronto, 1939), p. 136.

16. Ibid., pp. 141-2.

17. Ibid., p. 145.

18. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 73.

19. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

20. Eisendrath, Never Failing Stream, p. 212.

21. Ibid., p. 215.

22. For a well drawn account of the growth of fascist movements in Canada as well as the relations between Canada and Germany in the 1930's see Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf (Toronto, 1975).

23. Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf, p. 105.

24. Irving Abella and Harold E. Troper, "'The Line Must Be Drawn Somewhere': Canada and Jewish Refugees, 1933-39," in William Shaffir, Morton Weinfeld, and Irving Cotler, The Canadian Jewish Mosaic (Toronto, 1981), p. 51.

25. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, pp. 70-91. Eisendrath's painful abdication of his pacifism in the 1930's paralleled the experience of some members of the CCAR; see Roland Gittelsohn, "The Conference Stands on Social Justice and Civil Rights," in Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the CCAR, 1889-1964, ed. by Bertram Korn (New York, 1965), pp. 92-93.

26. Eisendrath, Never Failing Stream, pp. 232-233. Emphasis added. Though Eisendrath had expressed in 1929 his support for a binational state in Palestine, there is no evidence that in subsequent years he advocated this position.

27. Maurice Eisendrath, Building a Co-operative Commonwealth in Zion, sermon delivered at the Holy Blossom Temple, January 19, 1936.

28. My view contrasts with that expressed by Howard R. Greenstein in his book, Turning Point: Zionism and Reform Judaism (Ann Arbor, 1981). In chapter four, he examines the Zionist odyssey of Eisendrath, claiming that he went from a position of being an anti-Zionist to, following his 1935 trip to Palestine, being convinced that Jewish settlement in Palestine was a fulfillment of the ethics of universalism. In subsequent years, "Eisendrath soon realized that, by word and deed, he was committed to the Zionist cause" (p. 94). Greenstein's only evidence is Eisendrath's sermons given in 1935. Yet an examination of his sermons and addresses in the years 1936-1942 does not reveal any commitment to the Zionist cause.

29. Holy Blossom Bulletin, May 11, 1937. Reprinted from The New Outlook, a publication of the United Church of Canada.

30. Holy Blossom Bulletin, March 13, 1941.

31. Letter of Maurice N. Eisendrath to Julian Morgenstern, October 18, 1938, AJA Hebrew Union College Collection.

32. Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus in recorded interview conducted by the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 9, 1983.

CHAPTER THREE At the Union's Helm: 1943-1951

1. M. Eisendrath interview.

2. Lipman interview.

3. For a more detailed account of the founding and growth of the UAHC see Sefton D. Temkin, "A Century of Reform Judaism in America," American Jewish Yearbook (Philadelphia, 1973), pp. 3-75.

4. Article II of UAHC Constitution, 1873.

5. Marcus interview.

6. NFTS was chartered in 1913, NFTB in 1923, and NFTY in 1939.

7. Temkin, "A Century of Reform Judaism," p. 54.

8. Dr. Jane Evans in recorded interview conducted by author, New York, New York, August 17, 1983.

9. Resolution drafted by Adolph Rosenberg, AJA Robert Goldman Collection, box 6.

10. Evans interview.

11. Rabbi Eugene Borowitz in recorded interview conducted by author, Port Washington, New York, August 18, 1983.

12. Rabbi Edward Israel, Oct. 19, 1941, AJA Robert Goldman Collection, box 14.

13. Meyer, "A Centennial History," pp. 173-174.

14. Eisendrath favored the passage of the CCAR Jewish Army Resolution. At the 1942 convention he declared: "I am one who interprets Jewish life religiously and spiritually rather than nationally, and I have been laboring in the British Empire so I can speak about leaving things to the judgment of the British government. I think I have seen more real religion, more real application of social justice and moral righteousness in the labor colonies of Palestine than I have seen as a consequence of much of our work as rabbis. I want to see that endeavor for which we as a Conference stand, protected, and I am not certain that it will be protected if we carry out the policy of appeasement of certain influences in the British government. To whose judgment in the British government are we going to leave this question? At the time of Munich we were told to leave everything to the judgment of Mr. Chamberlain. Today there are forces in Great Britain that are favorable to Vichy,

and we have been retreating inch by inch in Malaya because the native population was not armed and not trusted to defend itself. I urge the adoption of a resolution with teeth in it on this question. We are seeking to protect spiritual and religious values in America even though regretfully by force--let us grant the same right to our brethren in Palestine." CCARY, 1942, p. 177.

15. An examination of the Holy Blossom Bulletin reveals that with the exception of 1933, Eisendrath attended every UAHC biennial from 1931-1943.

16. In 1937, Eisendrath's mentor from his childhood in Chicago, Rabbi Felix Levy, was president of the CCAR.

17. Minutes of UAHC executive board meeting, Oct. 3, 1943, AJA UAHC Collection.

18. Marcus interview.

19. "His super-secret work for the government added a patina of mystique and savoir-faire to a public image already becoming well known beyond the bounds of Cincinnati;" Meyer, "A Centennial History," p. 174.

20. "Words cannot adequately express the profound wrench with which I tear myself away from Toronto this week, even though I anticipate being back with you by Pesach, and notwithstanding the fact that we all hope that my leave of absence will be of brief duration. However, it is with genuine heartache that I turn, even for the nonce, to other tasks." So wrote Eisendrath in the March 26th, 1943 Holy Blossom Bulletin. In the debate regarding Eisendrath and the Union post, it is curious to note that in December of 1942, just a month before he became the Union's interim director, the Eisendraths moved into a new home in Toronto.

21. M. Eisendrath interview.

22. Minutes of executive board meeting, Oct. 3, 1943, AJA UAHC Collection.

23. Letter of Maurice Eisendrath to Solomon Freehof, Oct. 19, 1942, AJA Solomon Freehof Correspondence.

24. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, November 14, 1948, p. 29.

25. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, March 3, 1946, p. 20.

26. For the complete text of the resolution see Howard Greenstein, Turning Point: Zionism and Reform Judaism (Ann Arbor, 1981), p. 177.

27. Greenstein, Turning Point, p. 97.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 56.

30. "How inconsistent that in our movement there should be those who would read out of our fold or who would deny full membership privileges in Reform congregations to those who cannot subscribe to all the findings of some particular man-made platform! Yet there are those who, in defiance of this very basis of Judaism and Reform, are today deifying the creators of the Pittsburgh Platform and transmuting its declarations into sacrosanct dogma and charging all those who dare to disagree as traitors to Reform," Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, March 3, 1946, pp. 15-16.

31. Greenstein, Turning Point, p. 69.

32. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1946, p. 16.

33. It probably rankled Eisendrath that the head of the Hebrew Union College possessed the title of president, while he was only the director of the organization that was the patron of the college.

34. "Why the Union Belongs in New York," Liberal Judaism, vol. 16, October, 1948, p. 40.

35. The brochure is reproduced in the August-September 1948 issue of Liberal Judaism, vol. 16, pp. 42-45.

36. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1948, p. 27. He is quoting a statement he made to the executive board in December, 1946.

CHAPTER FOUR Revival and Expansion: 1951-1963

1. The Sentinel (Chicago), July 16, 1952, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

2. These figures are from Decade of Progress, the Report of the President of the UAHC to the Executive Board, October 24, 1953, p. 3. In his report, Eisendrath referred to the growth of the Union membership "from approximately 50,000 members to well over 150,000." I believe that he is referring here to member families and not individual members. In 1948, in his State of Our Union address (p. 5), he indicated that the Union in 1943 comprised some three hundred congregations with a membership of some sixty thousand families. By 1948, Eisendrath stated that the number had risen to four hundred congregations with more than one hundred thousand families enrolled in the Union.

3. Nathan Glazer, American Judaism (Chicago, second revised edition, 1972), p. 108. The figure of one million members enrolled in the UAHC is mentioned in the New York Times, June 15, 1958, and the Cincinnati Enquirer, December 6, 1959. Both articles are in the AJA Eisendrath Collection.

4. Bernard Martin, Movements and Issues in American Judaism: An Analysis and Sourcebook of Developments Since 1945 (Westport, 1978), p. 9.

5. Glazer, American Judaism, pp. 116-117.

6. Letter of Rabbi Jay Kaufman to Irvin Fane, May 15, 1956, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

7. Borowitz interview.

8. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, April 19, 1953, p. 19.

9. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1948, pp. 6-7.

10. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1953, p. 14.

11. Maurice Eisendrath, Report of the President of the UAHC to the Executive Board, October 20, 1956, p. 9.

12. Eisendrath, "Rites and Wrongs of Ritual," Can Faith Survive?, p. 232.

13. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, February 13, 1955, p. 13.

14. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1953, p. 29.

15. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1955, p. 24.

16. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, November 15, 1959, p. 6. Eisendrath condemned the attempt by the Orthodox establishment to suppress Reform Judaism in Israel. He supported Glueck's efforts to establish a branch of the College-Institute in Jerusalem.

17. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 21, 1949, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

18. National Jewish Post (Indianapolis), November 17, 1950.

19. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1955, p. 19.

20. In 1956 I believe that the only fulltime regional directors were Rabbis Albert Baum (New Jersey) and Daniel Davis (New York).

21. Rabbi Erwin Herman, "Reflections on Maurice Eisendrath," Lake San Marcos, California, Fall, 1983.

22. M. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1955, pp. 14-15.

23. Herman, "Reflections."

24. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1953, p. 17.

25. Borowitz interview.

26. Miss Ruth Buchbinder in interview conducted by Rabbi Edward Paul Cohn, New York, New York, April 2, 1981, transcript deposited in the AJA. Over the years, Buchbinder had a very productive and affectionate relationship with her boss. In a letter to him written on May 19, 1965, she stated, "I have said to you in the past, and I gladly repeat now, that I admire your honesty and integrity. I do not always sympathize with your views nor agree with your conclusions. But I am a confirmed respecter of your struggles with yourself and, poor man, with your staff as you go through your special form of self-torture to arrive at decisions you consider necessary, just, compassionate and right. I am a constantly awed admirer of your willing-news to submit your own thoughts and feelings to the not always gentle gaze of others. I think it's a hard way to make a living, but I think it's enriching for those involved. And every third day I'm glad that I've been involved. I think you're an 'honest to God' rabbi--though there are moments when I wish you weren't." AJA Eisendrath Collection.

27. Evidently it was common practice among the staff to organize at each biennial a pool as to how long Eisendrath's State of Our Union speeches would last. Winners usually chose over 60 minutes.

28. Herman, "Reflections."

29. One person interviewed indicated that Eisendrath stipulated as a condition for his employment at the Union that funds be available for Rosa to accompany him during his travels.

30. Maurice Eisendrath, "The Supremacy of Self," Hebrew Union College Monthly, February 28, 1925, p. 5. Eisendrath wrote of his appreciation of the natural beauty of the island in Can Faith Survive?, p. 44.

31. In the citation awarded to Eisendrath by the Religious Heritage of America he was commended for being a "fearless defender of justice, leader of the UAHC, champion of civil rights, the rebirth of Israel, international understanding, aid to needy nations, pioneer statesman, and dedicated prophet of the Holy One;" AJA Eisendrath Collection.

32. Meyer, "A Centennial History," pp. 201-202. Nelson Glueck, in his "President's Report to the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College," January 22, 1958, responded to the charge that the proper relationship of the College to the Union was that of a child to a parent: "Since when must the child be utterly subservient to the parent, and what kind of parent attempts to exact that kind of obedience in this day and age, or ever could in any age? And besides, how long does it take for a child to grow up? This child is only three years younger than the parent and is now 83 years old. Some child!"

33. Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin in recorded interview conducted by author, Los Angeles, California, July 1, 1983.

34. For further details about Eisendrath and Glueck's controversies, see Meyer, "A Centennial History," pp. 200-205; and Gary M. Klein, "Nelson Glueck: A Leader of Liberal Jewry," rabbinic thesis at HUC-JIR (Cincinnati, 1975), pp. 98-106.

35. Rabbi Solomon Kleinman in recorded interview conducted by author, Northridge, California, July 1, 1983.

36. Rabbi Jacob Rudin, CCAR Yearbook, 1958, p. 9.

37. Mr. Albert Vorspan in interview conducted by author, Washington, D.C., June 6, 1983.

38. M. Eisendrath interview.

39. Letter of Nelson Glueck to Maurice Eisendrath, May 18, 1958, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

CHAPTER FIVE "With Moral Indignation and Righteous Protest"

1. Maurice Eisendrath, Retreat or Advance?, sermon delivered before the CCAR at Columbus, Ohio, May 29, 1937, p. 9 & p. 22.

2. Maurice Eisendrath, For Such A Time As This, Founder's Day address delivered at the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, March 27, 1943, pp. 10-11.

3. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the concept of the 'mission of Israel' in the Reform movement.

4. The CCAR already had a Commission on Social Justice. In 1918 the CCAR ratified a social ethics platform that is noteworthy for its progressivism. Revisions were adopted in 1920 and 1928. See Roland Gittelsohn, "The Conference Stands on Social Justice and Civil Rights," in Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the CCAR, 1889-1964, ed. by Bertram Korn (New York, 1965), p. 88.

5. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1948, p. 22.

6. Borowitz interview.

7. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1953, p. 17.

8. Letter of Myron J. Rothschild to Maurice Eisendrath, August 10, 1956, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

9. Letter of Maurice Eisendrath to Myron Rothschild, September 21, 1956, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

10. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 144.

11. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1959, p. 14.

12. Maurice Eisendrath, Report to the Board of Trustees, December 3, 1966, p. 27.

13. Cincinnati Enquirer, October 27, 1969, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

14. Ben Firestone, "Decision on Social Action," Congress Bi-weekly, December 11, 1961, p. 12.
Some, like Alfred Bachrach of Temple Emanu-El, objected to the manner in which the resolution in favor of the RAC was 'railroaded' through the 1959 biennial. Though Judge Emil Barr, chairman of the board of trustees, in his response to Bachrach rejected Bachrach's charge (cf. Letter of Emil Barr to Alfred Bachrach, March 18, 1960, appended to Eisendrath's June '60 Report to the UAHC Board of Trustees), there may

have been some justification for Bachrach's allegation. In a letter to Eisendrath, Rabbi Bernard Bamberger, then president of the CCAR, wrote regarding the procedures at the '59 biennial:

"Important questions were disposed of hastily while many who wanted to express themselves were denied the opportunity. Thus the impression was generated that the Union leadership was determined to have its own way, regardless of what the congregations wanted. This impression, I believe, was mistaken: it was due to deficiencies of technique rather than deliberate 'conspiratorial' intent. But not every one understood that, and even those who did were not pleased with the result." See letter of Bernard J. Bamberger to Maurice Eisendrath, May 19, 1960, appended to Eisendrath's June '60 report to the board.

15. Washington Hebrew Congregation, A Statement of Principle for Reform Jewish Congregations, February 15, 1961, p. 6.

16. Firestone, "Decision on Social Action," page 12.

17. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 140.

18. Maurice Eisendrath, "The Unthinkable Has Happened," The Sentinel, September 28, 1950, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

19. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1959, p. 12.

20. Maurice Eisendrath, Report to the Board of Trustees, May 23, 1959, pp. 20 & 21.

21. Maurice Eisendrath, Report to the Board of Trustees, May 22, 1965, pp. 5-6.

22. For these and other insights about the organized Jewish community's response to the Vietnam War, I thank Irwin Zeplowitz. See his HUC-JIR rabbinic thesis, "Jewish Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War" (1984).

23. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, November 12, 1967, p. 24.

24. Ibid., p. 36.

25. At a regional convention in the West, a president of a Reform temple evoked applause when he confronted Eisendrath on the issue of Vietnam on the floor of the convention; Jewish Post and Opinion, February 24, 1967, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

26. Jewish Chronicle, May 12, 1967, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

27. American Judaism, vol. 16, no. 2, Winter, 1966-1967, p. 25.

28. The New York Times, May 30, 1967, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

29. Cincinnati Enquirer, May 17, 1970, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

30. Maurice Eisendrath, Report to the Board of Trustees, May 28, 1967, pp. 36-37. He voiced these same self-criticisms at the Union biennial six months later; see his The State of Our Union, November 12, 1967, p. 36.

31. Rabbi Joseph Glaser, "Remembrances of Maurice Eisendrath," New York, New York, 1983.

32. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 210.

CHAPTER SIX "Jesus--Man of My People"

1. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 218.

2. Maurice Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, November 16, 1963, p. 24.

3. Ibid., p. 25.

4. Time, "Ecumenism," November 29, 1963, p. 51.

5. Letter from Nelson Glueck to Hillel Cohn, January 23, 1964, AJA Glueck Correspondence.

6. This note and subsequent citations of Rabbi Norman Lamm are from "Reform Leader Castigated for Church Schema Reaction," Rabbinical Council Record, vol. 10, no. 2 (January, 1964), pp. 3 & 4, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

7. Congress Bi-weekly (American Jewish Congress), December 2, 1963, p. 4, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

8. Rabbi Leonard Winograd, National Jewish Post, Letter to the Editor, December 27, 1963, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

9. Rabbi Balfour Brickner quoted in Newsweek, "The Jews and Jesus," December 2, 1963.

10. Maurice Eisendrath quoted in Newsweek, December 2, 1963.

11. Maurice Eisendrath, "Was Jesus a Christian," sermon delivered at the Holy Blossom Temple on December 23, 1934, quoted in Can Faith Survive?, p. 178.

12. Ibid., p. 188.

13. Ibid., p. 185. For a similar statement by Eisendrath in a sermon in 1937 see Sanford Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus in the Reform Rabbinate" (rabbinic thesis, HUC-JIR, 1959), p. 64.

14. M. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, pp. 186-187.

15. Ibid., p. 187.

16. Ibid., p. 193.

17. There are some discrepancies between Eisendrath's quotations of Glueck and the sources located in Glueck's books, Rivers in the Desert and The River Jordan. It is my opinion that Eisendrath captures the spirit of Glueck's remarks in the specific passages he quotes. Whether these passages adequately reflect Glueck's overall assessment of Jesus is open to question.

18. M. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 203. In his book Eisendrath rarely bothered to list his citations. In this case he is paraphrasing Rabbi Hyman G. Enelow; see W. Gunther Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism (New York, 1965), p. 183.

19. Sanford Seltzer's rabbinic thesis, "Reactions to Jesus in the Reform Rabbinate," is an excellent resource for understanding the differing trends in the Reform movement's understanding of Jesus.

20. See S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 1.

21. Rabbi Leo Baeck quoted in M. Eisendrath, Can Faith Survive?, p. 189.

22. See S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," pp. 80-91A.

23. Eisendrath lauded the accomplishments of Christianity in a sermon entitled, "If Jesus Had Not Come," delivered at the Holy Blossom Temple on April 12, 1936. He wrote: "For Judaism, though itself radiantly illuminated by the lights which Israel has kindled not alone for herself but for all mankind, has really made its influence felt, has really shed its lustre over all humanity--primarily through the Church of Christendom. Through Christianity, Judaism became of cosmic importance." Eisendrath's emphasis, Never Failing Stream, p. 341.

24. Julian Morgenstern quoted in S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 30.

25. Rabbi Max Raisin, quoted in S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 14.

26. M. Eisendrath, "A Christ Crucified and a People Resurrected," April 7, 1928, quoted in S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 70.

27. M. Eisendrath, "Crucified and Resurrected, A Person or A People?" March 28, 1937, quoted in S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 73.

28. M. Eisendrath, "If Jesus Came Again," December 27, 1931, quoted in S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 55.

29. It is interesting to speculate whether Eisendrath identified to some degree with Jesus. Though there is no evidence, perhaps Eisendrath's view of himself changed (1930's: rebel; 1950's: Reform Jewish spokesman) and thus affected his depiction of Jesus.

30. "Reform Spirit Stirs Judaism," Bergen Evening Post, November 29, 1958, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

31. Ibid.

32. For two concurring depictions of the Wise controversy see S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," pp. 1-6; and Melvin L. Urofsky, A Voice That Spoke for Justice (Albany, 1982), pp. 193-202. Henry Bamberger recently noted that all the reasoned arguments against Eisendrath's interpretation of Jesus "were overshadowed by malicious attacks on Rabbi Eisendrath's Jewish and personal integrity. This was not scholarly debate or dispute over facts and ideas; it was, at best, name-calling, and, at its worst, outright character assassination." See "Difficulties in Dialogue," Judaism, vol. 32, no. 2, Spring, 1983, p. 181.

33. The tension that exists between Jews and Christians is, of course, two way. However an examination of Christian attitudes toward Jews is beyond the purview of this thesis.

34. Professor Samuel Sandmel quoted in S. Seltzer, "Reactions to Jesus," p. 12.

35. Maurice Eisendrath, A Jewish Platform of Good Will, published by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1953, p. 5, Klau Library.

CHAPTER SEVEN Slowed Steps: 1963-1973

1. Buchbinder interview.

2. Albert Vorspan, "In Memoriam: Rosa Brown Eisendrath," American Judaism, vol. 13, no. 1, Fall, 1963, p. 4. The chapel at the UAHC's Harlam Camp Institute was named in memory of Rosa Eisendrath.

3. Herman, "Reflections."

4. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1963, p. 3. In this same address, Eisendrath made his controversial remarks about Jesus (see previous chapter). I wonder whether his grief over Rosa caused him to be incautious. More than one person who was a staff member at that time indicated to me that he advised Eisendrath against suggesting that there should be a study of Jesus' place in Reform Judaism. Although ultimately Eisendrath made the decisions as to what he would present before the General Assembly, it is possible that at that time he was less inclined to heed his advisors' counsel to avoid a possible public relations controversy.

5. Can Faith Survive? was a collaborative effort by Eisendrath and Albert Vorspan. Eisendrath and Vorspan worked out the outline for a chapter; then Vorspan drafted the chapter; then the two together re-worked it. This information is based upon an examination of drafts of Can Faith Survive? which are in the AJA Eisendrath Collection, and correspondence between Vorspan and the author.

6. American Judaism, vol. 14, no. 2, Winter, 1964-65, p. 53.

7. For a fuller depiction of Kaufman's activities while at the UAHC, see American Judaism, vol. 15, no. 1, Fall, 1965, p. 27.

8. Memo of Jay Kaufman to Maurice Eisendrath, July 15, 1962, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

9. Jay Kaufman died in 1971. For a more personal view of the man, see Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch's memorial tribute in the 1972 CCAR Yearbook, pp. 171-174.

10. Mrs. Rita Eisendrath in recorded interview conducted by author, Purdys, New York, August 16, 1983.

11. Eisendrath, The State of Our Union, 1967, p. 26.

12. R. Eisendrath interview.

13. Cincinnati Enquirer, November 6, 1971, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

14. Buchbinder interview. For an excellent analysis of changes in the Reform movement's commitment to social action see Eugene B. Borowitz, "Rethinking the Reform Jewish Theory of Social Action," Journal of Reform Judaism, Fall, 1980, pp. 1-19.

15. Jerusalem Post, March 12, 1970, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

16. American Examiner-Jewish Week, December 8, 1973, AJA Eisendrath Collection.

17. Maurice Eisendrath, Presidential Sermon, November 9, 1973, p. 12.

18. "Eulogy for Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath" delivered by Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, November 11, 1973.

CHAPTER EIGHT Summary

1. M. Eisendrath interview.

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