MS-630: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Digital Collection, 1961-1996.
Series C: Speeches and Eulogies, 1967-1996.

Box	Folder
24	1a

Speeches, 1966-1974.

3101 Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
513.487.3000
AmericanJewishArchives.org

TRIBUTE TO RABBI NATHAN A. PERILMAN
JUNE 3, 1972
REMARKS OF RABBI ALEXANDER M, SCHINDLER

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to participate in the joyous events of this hour which mark the 40th anniversary in the rabbinate of your rabbi -- Nathan Perilman.

I genuinely like Nate Perilman. I certainly respect him for those qualities of mind and heart he brings to his endeavors...his intelligence....his industry...his integrity...for his capacity to transmit his ideals forcefully articulated in the written and the spoken word and in the manner of his life.

There is little that I can add to what has been said about him and what will be said. Indeed, what can I tell you about him that you do not know so much better yourself? After all, you are his congregants and he is your rabbi. Your relationship spans the years. It is cemented by tears of joy and sorrow alike. That relationship requires no expressing, it cannot even <u>be</u> expressed. It can only be felt.

You ought to know, of course, and to this I can bear testimony, that his influence as a rabbi extends beyond the holy walls of Emanu-El. It is felt in many places; certainly it is felt in the councils of that larger family of Reform Congregations of which you are a cherished part and for which I am privileged to speak.

No aspect of our doing - on a regional or national level - is untouched by his creative talents. Wherever we need his help he gives it willingly and without reserve. A counseling center needs to be established - he is there to create and guide it. A relationship must be restored between a rabbi and his congregation - he is prepared to conciliate, giving hours of his all too precious time. Money is required - he is prepared to ask for it and if you think it is a burden to be asked for money try asking for it -- that burden is more onerous by far.

And so I might continue with area after area of our work. Wherever we need help he responds and whatever he undertakes to do he does exceptionally well.

I like him for one more reason still, for you see I am a kind of travelling rabbi and as such am often consigned to a pew, compelled to listen to another rabbi preach. No fate is more terrible than that - I mean for one rabbi having to listen to another rabbi even while knowing that he can do so much better himself. Not so when I listen to Nate Perilman! He practices that art of preaching with skill, he is a formidable master of that craft. His words have power, they stir the soul.

This morning was a perfect case in point. Nate's response was magnificent, was it not? Especially the peroration. I hope that someone will see to it that his remarks are published. His sentiments were well conceived and beautifully expressed. It was an exquisite poem of the pulpit.

All that I really have to say can be put succinctly...

Nathan Perilman

is the very image ideal of our profession...

what he does and what he is

give true meaning to the words:

rabbi, teacher, friend...

Now he is probably embarrassed by all this,

but this is not the time for modesty...

Jewish tradition compares modesty to a cloak

UMILVASHTO ANAVA.

God's cloak is humility.

Dov Ber of Mezeritsch commented,

humility is like a cloak, he said,

there comes a time when you must take it off.

That time has come for you, Nate,

for in the final analysis we do not praise you to exalt you..

we praise you rather to hold you aloft

as an exemplar for others

and for ourselves.

May you...together with your dear Betsy...
have many more years of life and health and
creative endeavor
for your sake
and for the sake of that cause which binds us
in sacred union.

(1)

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate
to participate in joyous events of this hour
which mark the 40th anniversary in the rabbinate
of your rabbi -- Nathan Peailman...

I genuinely like Nate Perilamn
I certaonly respect him for those qualities of
mind and heart he brings to his endeavors
his intelligenec
his indusrty
his integrity
for his capacity to transmit his ideals
forcefully articulated in the written and the
spoken word and in the manner of his life...

There is litle that I can add to what has been
said about him and what will be said...
Indeed what can I tell you about him that
you do not know so much beter yourself...
after all, you are his congregants and he is your
rabbi...
your relationship spans the years
it is cemented by tears of joy and sorrow alike
~~it needs no expressing~~ that relationship requires no expressing
it cannot even be expressed
it can only be felt...

You ought to know of course...
and to this I can ~~give~~ bear testimony...
that his influence as a rabbi extends beyond the
holy walls of Emanuel...
it is felt in many places...
certainly in the councils of that larger family
of reform congregations
of which you are a cherished part
and for ~~whom~~ which I am privileged to speak

THIS MORNING WAS A PERFECT CASE IN
..POINT
NATE'S RESPONSE WAS MAGNIFICENT WAS IT NOT
ESPECIALLY THE PERORATION
I HOPE SOMEONE HERE WILL SEE TO IT
THAT HIS REMARKS WILL BE PUBLISHED
HIS THOUGHTS WERE WELL CONCEIVED
... + BEAUTIFULLY EXPRESSED
AN EXQUISITE POEM OF THE PULPIT

No aspect of our doing - on a reg or natlt level -
is untouched by his creative talents
Wherever we need his help
he gives it willingly and withut reserve

a counselling cernter needs to be established -
he is there to create and guide it...

a relationship must be restored between a
rabbi and his congregation --
he is preapred to concilliate giving hours on
end of his all to precious time...

Money is required...
he is prepared to give and ask for it
and if you think it is a burden to be asked for money
try asking for it
that burden is more onerous by far

And so I might continue with area after area of our
work...
whenever we need his help he responds
and whatever he undertakes to do he does exceptionally well...

I like him for one more reason still
I am a kind of travelling rabbi for you see
often consigned to a pew and as such I am
compelled to listen to another rabbi preach.
no fate is more terrible than that
I mean for one rabbi having to listen to another
rabbi even while knowing that he can do so much
better himself...
not so when I listen to Nate Perilman...
he practices the art of preaching with consummate
skill formidable that
he is a master of his craft
his words have power
they stir the soul

INSERT A

TURN BACK PAGE

(3)

ALL THAT I REALLY HAVE TO SAY CAN BE PUT SUCCINCTLY...

~~xxxxxxxxx~~,Nathan Perilman
~~xx~~ is the image ideal of our profession...
what he does and what he is
give true meaning to the words:
rabbi, teacher, friend...

He is probably embaraaessed by all this
but this is not time for modesty...
Jewish tardition compares modsty to a cloak
UMILVASHTO ANAVA
God's cloak is humility
Dov Ber of Mezeritsch commented
Humility is like a colak,he said
there comes a time when you must take it off

That time has cmme for you, Nate
for in the final analysis we do not praise you to exalt you...
we praise you to hold you aloft
as an exemplar for others
and for ourselves...

May you...together with your dear Betsy ...
have many more years of life and health and creative endeavor
for your sake
and for the sake of that cause which ~~nids~~ binds us
in sacred union,

Insert A

This morning was a perfect case in point.
Nate's response was magnificent, was it not?
Especially the peroration.
I hope that someone will see to it that his remarks are published.
His sentiments were well conceived and beautifully expressed.
It was an exquisite poem of the pulpit

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER, REMARKS TO NFTB BOARD
APRIL 19, 1972 - BOSTON, MASS.

I am glad to be here also because it gives me the opportunity to wish you a nesiah tovah, a pleasant journey, as you begin your study mission to Israel. It is good that you embark on this venture...good that you add still another link to that precious chain of faith which binds us as a religious community to the people and the land of Israel.

Reform Judaism's programs in Israel are burgeoning, as you may know, Our youth activities there have tripled in the last two years alone. The UAHC has undertaken to build a major educational center in Jerusalem. The World Union for Progressive Judaism will soon move its headquarters to the City of David.

These events do not represent a radical re-direction in our ideology and consequent activity. They are the consequence of forces which had their genesis in the long ago. A hundred years ago, perhaps, Reform Jews were still so enthralled by the vision of the universal ideal that they failed to recognize the just demands of the particular. But World War I altered all that, and since then we have been in the vanguard of those who fought for the establishment of Israel. Israel might not have come to be without the American Jewish community, and the American Jewish community's effort would have suffered greatly and would suffer still were it not for those countless Reform Jews who labored and labor in Israel's behalf and for whom names like Silver and Brickner, Wise and Heller can serve as a shining symbol.

All the more's the pity that old stereotypes still persist... they fade away more slowly than do old soldiers. Here and there, as you move about the country, your identity as a Reform Jew will still be greeted with a leer and sneer. What is worse, some efforts are afoot to read us out of the Jewish people in its entirety.

Even while I speak, representatives of Israel's religious party are pressing the Knesset for a revision of the Law of Return which would limit admission to Israel only to those Jews who are Jews "according to the halachah," - - that is to say, non-Jews who were converted to Judaism by Reform or Conservative rabbis are not to be admitted. In the view of the Israeli rabbinic establishment, neither they, nor their children, not their childrens' children even unto the thousandth generation. And this, despite the fact that such converts consider themselves Jews, that they live as Jews, that they rear their children as Jews and that they want to give crowning expression to their Jewishness by choosing aliyah to Israel, determined to share that community's fate.

What a fearsome step to consider! What a serious threat to the essential unity of our people!

Consider, if you will, its consequences on the American Jewish scene. Here, non-Orthodox Jews represent the overwhelming majority. We work together, Jews of every stripe -- the Reform and the Orthodox, the Conservative and the secular, in the fullest of harmony and with mutual respect for our ideological diversities. No one reads anyone out of the fold here. Now we are told that there are limits to our unity and degrees to the rights we hold as Jews.

Let no one be deluded by pious references to halachah. Halachah is not at stake here, for even if non-Orthodox rabbis observed its minutiae in the ceremonies of conversion, their converts would still be unacceptable to Israel's established rabbinate. Nor is Orthodoxy at stake for that matter, since the official seal of approval is not automatically extended to every musmach (graduate) of an American yeshivah (seminary), however devout its head. The franchise of the Israeli rabbinate is sparingly extended. That is what is at stake here, a franchise, the extension of monopoly, political power.

I hope that the government of Israel will not allow itself to become the cat's-paw of a willful minority, an unwitting tool in the hands of those who cry "Jewish unity" but who risk it in order to consolidate their economic interest and political sway.

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER
Banquet Address
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEMPLE EDUCATORS
Thirteenth Annual Convention
December 28, 1967

THE CHALLENGE OF PROTESTING YOUTH

This is my swan song as far as the National Association of Temple Educators is concerned; it is the last time that I stand before you as the Director of the Commission on Jewish Education.

I leave with the assurance that the leadership of Reform Jewish education is in good hands. Jack Spiro is an exceedingly capable young man, bringing many extraordinary qualities of mind and heart to his endeavors: knowledge, integrity, intelligence, the determination to advance the cause of Jewish education, and the ability to do so. Nor does he stand alone; he is surrounded by strong and able men who are willing to share his burden and to sustain him: the young and brilliant Director of Camp Education, Rabbi Widom; the old-new Director of Adult Education, Rabbi Bemporad, whose knowledge and percipience continue to fill us with awe; and, acharon acharon chaviv, Abe Segal, knowledgeable, wise, sensitive, a Jewish educator second to none.

Can we really dream for more? All we need do is ask their health and strength so that the good promise of their investiture will find fulfillment during the years ahead.

Now I am not only a has-been, completely out-of-date and season. My fate and yours is worse than that, for I am also a surrogate, a substitute, a filler-inner, the understudy who has a chance to take center stage only because the star is indisposed. Dr. Eisendrath promised to be here; he meant to be here; his duties dictated otherwise. As you may know, he is about to embark on a mission of peace, together with leading clergymen of other faiths, which will take him on a round-the-world journey scheduled to begin just a few days hence. He asked that I read you this message, which he addressed to Cel Singer and through her to you:

"Dear Cel,

Please convey my deepfelt regret to the men and women of NATE for my failure to be with you as promised. Be assured that only the most pressing duties keep me from honoring my obligation and sharing your simcha. I am really embarrassed about it all, embarrassed by my inability to be with you not only now but all these many years.

"I feel very much like a wayward father who deserts his offspring just after the bris and even lacks the decency to return for the Bar Mitzvah celebration.

"The child is a child no more. It has grown to robust manhood, not only in physical size, but in mind and spirit too. Your contributions toward the advancement of our mutual cause are many. The exacting standards of education which you have established and maintained have served to deepen the religious instruction program of our congregations. The fruit of your creative genius -- your research projects, your curricula, your syllabi and texts -- have immeasurably enlarged our arsenal of resources in the struggle against Jewish illiteracy, in

ever increasing number, your members are assuming positions of leadership in the wider areas of our work, in camping, youth and social action, not just on a regional level but in our national councils too. In a word, you have fulfilled the promise inherent in the hour of your becoming. You have fashioned a profession in Jewish education among us and for this you were created.

"I hope that what I have said assures you of my regard for NATE. My absence from you was enforced, not voluntary, enforced by the incessant, insistent demands upon my time. Indeed, why should I offer you anything but genuine, heartfelt regard? After all, you are what I am, what every rabbi is or ought to be: teachers of Judaism, builders of our future.

Faithfully,

Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath"

To all this I can only add my heartfelt, fervent Amen. You are indeed what you were created to be, and for this we honor you! Surely nothing, during my tenure in office, gave me greater satisfaction than my association with the men and women of NATE; your counsel guided me, your friendship sustained me. As I enter upon a new field of work, in which I have scarcely been tried, the memory of these years and your affection will be a source of lasting strength.

* * *

I want to talk to you today about youth and the challenge of change, about the protesting generation and the demands its members make on us. I want to talk to you about the beats, the drop-outs, the alienated young, about the hippies, if you will, and what their protest imports.

My subject may seem incongruous, oddly at variance with the occasion which brings us together. Mah Inyan Shemitah Etsel Har Sinai? What mean the hippies to Har Sinai, the beats to the b'nai mitzvah of N.A.T.E.?

Still, we must listen to our young, must we not? As teachers we know that knowledge of the students is a requisite of effective teaching. And while it is true that these youthful, outrageous dissenters represent only a minority of their peers, they nonetheless provide us with an image of <u>their</u> society and with a mirror-image of our own. Their words and deeds may be excessive, extravagant in exaggeration, even grotesque. But at least they speak. The others, alas too often, merely acquiesce; they play it cool by playing <u>our</u> game. In the final analysis the dissenters may well prove to have been precursors, not just aberrations.

What gives their message even greater immediacy is the fact that so many of these protestors are Jewish. Estimates vary, but a prominent sociologist, a member of one of our Northern California congregations, who just completed four months of intensive street work in San Francisco, reports that certainly 20% and perhaps 30% of Haight-Ashbury's residents are Jewish. Mike Loring adds the further information that 70% of that community's leadership is Jewish. Nor do we only encompass in our purview the hippies but all the protesting groups, so many of whom come from well-fed, comfortable suburban <u>Jewish</u> families. They are drop-outs from <u>our</u> schools. They rebel against us.

And so we must listen to them. They are trying to say something to us. And they are probably right in much of what they say, however wrong may be their remedies for righting matters.

I.

Now in the first instance, so I believe, our youthful protestors give voice to their distrust of conventional wisdom. They are loath to give assent to any value system which is asserted as "established and commonly received" and hence inviolate.

To some extent, this kind of anti-authoritarianism has always been a mark of youth -- moral preachment never really worked -- but it is more pronounced today and of a different quality. It has moved from a rebellion against a particular judgment, to a denial of all such judgments, from a rejection of this or that doctrine, to a disdain for all ideology, in fact.

In sharp and curious contrast with their nominal progenitors of an earlier age, present day movements of protest have not developed a clear-cut ideology. Even the New Left is anti-doctrinaire; its spokesmen embrace no "isms," not socialism, not communism, certainly not dialectical materialism. The New Left is no continuation of the rationalist, radical tradition of the enlightenment, as some would assume. If anything, it is a reaction against this tradition, supplanting its hopeful idealism with somber sober realism.

Its adherents are even anti-intellectual, in a way -- youthful dissenters of every stripe are -- suspecting not just systems of thought, but reasoned thought itself. It may well be -- so David Moynihan perceptively discerns -- that our young people are too familiar with that "rational commitment to logic and consistency which leads from the game theory of the Rand Corporation to the use of napalm in Vietnam."

Marginally noted, this antipathy to logical coherence appears reflected in the forms and rhythms of modernity's song: the eight-bar quatrains of yesteryear's tunes lost in the roar of rock-and-roll, the measured symmetry of the fox-trot superseded by the bacchic frenzy of the frug.

Be that as it may, when our youthful dissenters do not reject thought and value systems per se they certainly resent their self-righteous assertion. They abhor that ideological arrogance which insists on universal acceptance, which proposes, as a case in point and on a global level, that a political theory which works well in one country must, therefore, become the option of the world.

Here surely is the foremost reason why our young people are in the vanguard of the peace movement. They reject that ideological self-certainty which rules that just because democracy succeeds here, it must, perforce, be extended abroad, imposed on other lands -- and this, mind you, even while democracy's ideals are not fully secured at home.

II.

Which brings us full square to the second problem feeding the flames of the youth revolt: the credibility gap, the disparity between intent and deed; in a word, hypocrisy, our inability to bring about a harmony of preachment and of practice.

"A major reason for youth leaving society is their awareness of the hypocrisy practiced in this country" -- so writes our case worker from Haight-Ashbury --

"hypocrisy practiced from a national level, down to the family...the double standard toward violence for instance: murder in the streets is wrong, but murder in Vietnam is right." His confidential report continues:

> "Young people are aware that within established Judaism there are some who take an active stand against the war. They know about the many rabbis and laymen who speak up courageously. But they decry the fact that these leaders speak in generalities, yet act in few specifics. Over and again young people say to me: 'perhaps there are Jewish alternatives to the draft, but how many Jewish centers and synagogues offer or even know about draft counselling? How many support the active anti-war program of youth?'"

Questions like this are not easy to answer -- especially in the light of our recent Biennial -- for the only answer we can give is the embarrassed silence of our guilt.

Often this imposture of which we are accused is not so much willful as it is inadvertent, due to our over-optimism, our proneness to make promises we cannot fulfill. /Note, if you will, the innocent beginnings of our involvement in Southeast Asia./ But once our deeds fall short of the goals which we so glibly pronounced, we are reluctant to admit to failure, we rationalize and improvise and cover up and end up doing things we never started out to do. But whatever the motivation, willful or not, the consequence of hypocrisy is cynicism, disenchantment, despair.

As teachers we know or ought to know just how important ethical consistency is to our youth, that deeds will teach what words cannot, that our students look more than they listen, that they follow the man who is, long before the man who only persuades with his lips.

In many ways the younger generation has become more pragmatic than the most pragmatic of those materialists against whom they inveigh. They look to deeds not words; they value achievements, not professed ideals.

Perhaps this is why the protest movement is so action-oriented. Its arts are action arts; folk singing, dance, and abstract films. Its recreation is kinesthetic; discotheques and happenings and psychedelics. The dissenters want a society which truly involves the individual, involves him, body, soul and mind. They demand an education which makes the community a lab for the humanities and breaks down the barriers between the classroom and life.

And they want a religion which demands and does. The benign humanism of 19th century reform simply will not do -- and this applies tc its ritual and spiritual, no less than to its ethical dimensions. After all -- mirabile dictu -- Jewish hippies perform the religious exercises of Eastern disciplines and crowd their meditation chambers. Why, then, should we be afraid, afraid to make demands, afraid to insist on standards in the synagogue and home and in the daily lives of man?

Here, too, alas, we dissemble. We make no demands. We insist on no standards. We transmit a faith which presumably asks for nothing, where every man does what is right in his own eyes. And yet we pray, and teach our children piously to pray: O Lord, our Lord, we praise Thee for Thou has sanctified us through Thy commandments.

III.

A third factor stirring modern youth to its rebellion is the scientism of our society, leading, as it does, to its dehumanization, to the repressing of emotion, and the diminution of the individual's worth.

Young people fear this systematizing of life; they dread the mechanical ordering of people into categories, the compaction of humanity into efficient units of production and consumption. They resent the repression of human feeling and the strangulation of any sense of community, which the process of mechanization entails.

They refuse to be caught in the gears of this giant machine, and so they drop out. They leave society and huddle together for warmth, living in primitive, tribal style, choosing poverty, as it were. And they tell us, in effect, that they will not be bought.

Their heroes too cannot be bought, those balladeers who give voice to their longing, and serve as their exemplars: Joan Baez and Pete Seeger and Bobby Dylan. They may want money, writes Ralph Gleason, but they do not play for money. "They are not and never have been for sale, in the sense that you can hire Sammy Davis to appear, as you can hire Dean Martin to appear, so long as you pay his price. You have not been able to do this with Seeger and Baez and Dylan, any more than Alan Ginzberg has been for sale either to Ramparts or the C.I.A."

This near-disdain for matters material is most disturbing to the adult world; after all, it runs smack dab against our fundamental assumptions. At the same time -- at least for me -- it provides the love-and-flower generation with its one endearing charm. Imagine their brass, their unmitigated chutzpah! They invade the sanctum of our society, the New York Stock Exchange, to scatter dollar bills much like confetti. It is a gesture worthy of a Don Quixote! The leader of this fateful expedition, a young man by the name of Abbe Hoffman -- I herewith make confession -- was one of my confirmands. I shudder to think of it! How many more were really listening?

The so-called sexual revolution is an aspect of the self-same revolt against society's mechanization; it does not import the furtherance of modernization through promiscuity and the reduction of sex to a mere physical act. Every available study of the subject attests that our young people are essentially romantic, that they do not seek the separation of sex and love, and that faithfulness is an essential element of their human approach. Sex, for them, is "not so much a revolution as it is a relationship...it is a shared experience consecrated by the engagement of the whole person." (Chickering)

Now all this is pertinent to us, even though as liberals, as religious liberals, we do take a firm stand against the mechanization of life. And yet we too accelerate the process of dehumanization with our hyper-intellectualism which disdains emotion and makes light of tribal loyalty.

Daniel P. Moynihan makes this telling point in his perceptive study of the problem:

> "...as the life of the educated elite in America becomes more rational," he writes, "more dogged of inquiry and fearless of result, the well-springs of emotion do dry up and in particular the primal sense of community begins to fade. As much for the successful as for the failed,

> society becomes, in Durkheim's phrase, 'a dust of individuals.' But to the rational liberals, the tribal attachments of blood and soil appear somehow unseemly and primitive. They repress or conceal them, much as others might a particularly lurid sexual interest. It is for this reason, I would suggest, that the nation has had such difficulties accepting the persistence of ethnicity and group cohesion..."

Perhaps we are premature in reading out ethnicity as a fact of American Jewish life. Certainly it is strange to note that the very same hippies who decline to serve in Vietnam were among the first to volunteer for Israel. True, the war in the Middle-East was just, its purposes clear and capable of eliciting the sympathetic understanding of all youth. But it is equally true that a people's danger aroused feelings more fundamental by far; it awakened attachments of soil and of blood.

* * * *

In his superb Biennial paper, giving a chapter of his forthcoming book, Emanuel Demby quotes this poignant statement made by one of our adolescents:

> "We ask you what's ahead? You say war. We ask you when the war is going to end? You say you don't know...You don't know nothing. Yet you want us to listen to you. We've got nothing to listen to you for. You better start listening to us."

We listen to them, and listening find that there is altogether too much that is shoddy in our lives: moral arrogance, the widening gap between intent and deed, the self-centeredness of our human approach. The mirror-image of our lives which our youth provides gives substance to Dr. Demby's contention, that adult society and not rebellious youth is really alienated.

Be that as it may, if our understanding of the protest movement is correct, our young people do manifest an uncommon thirst for spirituality, a thirst for meaning, to use that word which Jack Spiro so beautifully adorned for us yesterday. It is a thirst which Judaism can well satisfy, because it is uniquely suited to the spirit of alienation which stirs our youth: with its insistence on human worth, its recognition of the need not just for belief but for a community of believers, with its essential pragmatism which holds the way far more important than the thought: "thou canst not see My face, but I will make all My goodness pass before thee."

Lest we become overly optimistic, we ought to know that our young people manifest one more need still: their moral and spiritual aspirations are suffused with a universalism which challenges the particularism of our belief; the options for actions within the structures of organized religion are not enough for them. This undoubtedly is why they feel so attracted to the near Eastern faiths, whose exotic elements give them the aura of universalism. Here, then, is the ultimate challenge of the protesting youth: Can Judaism be the faith for the global man whose prototype they see themselves to be and likely are?

Yes...if we are daring...if we, as religious liberals, have the courage to do, what Jack Bemporad challenged us to do: to experiment, to cut new paths, to take new directions, even while we build firmly on the solid foundations of the past.

Why should we doubt our faith's capacity to renew itself? After all, our children's vision of the future does not exceed the vision of the Prophets; their dreams do not eclipse the dreams of Israel's past!

We were...we are...and we shall be. For He who walked before us will be with us; He will not forsake us. Be not dismayed.

OFF-PRINT FROM

THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

YEARBOOK, VOL. LXXIX, 1969

II

ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

The world of moral certitudes has crumbled. Its center did not hold. Anarchy is loosed upon the land. "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed. And everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned."[1]

Our certitude, our moral confidence, was rocked by change, inexorable legacy of technological advance. It was eroded by the decay of its supportive institutions — of synagogue and church, of school and home. It was ground to the dust by the horror to which we were witness: the Cyclon B of Belsen and the mushroom cloud.

More was lost. More than this or that value — more even than a world of values. There has been a 'devaluation of valuation' as such.[2] Man's capacity to valuate has been brought to question.

Values, after all, call for choice. And choice is possible only where there is freedom for the will. But science sternly reminds us that this freedom is an illusion or at best severely circumscribed. We may think that we choose freely, but we don't. Our choice is conditioned by a complex of inner and outer circumstance. By situation and tradition, by the environment, and the coalescence of our genes.

The world which science perceives, moreover, is a morally neutral world; it is a world of fact alien to value. Values are only preferences, physics asserts, mere emotions, the proper object for study by psychology. But then psychology comes and abolishes the notion of integral normality: the normal and the abnormal, the good and the bad, they blend; there is no true line between them. "There is neither hot nor cold. There is no high nor low. And there is an enormous amount of nothing in the All."[3]

Man's mind is the sole source of value in a world devoid of values, and his capacity to value is feeble — so concludes science, even while it gives man power over nature, enormous power, the power to control, the power to manipulate, the God-given power to create. Here is that paradox of which Hans Jonas speaks:[4] feebleness and strength in one, omnipotence and emptiness, the "anarchy of human choosing" combined with man's "apocalyptic" sway.

Thus is the ceremony of innocence drowned. "The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity."[5] Such are the stresses and the strains of which the "new morality" is consequence.

[1] William Butler Yeats, *The Second Coming.*

[2] Erich Kahler, *The Tower and the Abyss* (New York, Viking, 1967), pp. 184 ff.

[3] Paul Valery, *Mon Faust.*

[4] Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective" in *CCAR Journal* (New York), Vol. XV, #1, January, 1968.

[5] Yeats, *op. cit.*

Now this phrase, this designation, "the new morality," is much abused. The range of its application is wide. It describes a system of thought as well as a style of life, both running the gamut from libertinism to heteronomy.

Seen as a way of life, the "new morality" is usually identified with the manners and the mores of modern youth. But modern youth is not of a cloth — not even the dissenters. Some are involved, others are not. Some are committed, while others abandon the fray. All hold the "old morality" in slight esteem, especially as it turns to self-righteousness and hypocrisy; but they do not take the same moral stance. As Kenniston's studies[6] reveal, the alienated of our youth are often anti-idealist, situational, prone to indulge desire. The activists, however, are usually sternly moral, prepared to articulate codes of conduct which diverge from the codes of the past but which function like them in that they are held to apply to every moral situation.

The picture becomes no clearer when we focus on the "new morality" as a system of thought. Here, too, a blurring obtains and positions overlap. The situationists throw off the shackles of the law, or so they say, but then they quickly posit principles no less exacting. The heteronomists are pledged to uphold the law but forthwith bend it to meet the need of given circumstance.

Gustafson isolates no less than three distinct trends in contemporary contextualism: those who call for a socio-historical analysis of each situation, those who make their point of reference the person-to-person encounter, and those who listen for the still small voice as they confront their problems, theologians like Karl Barth who believe that the command of God is given not in prior formal rules of conduct but in the immediacy of every moral situation. As for the defenders of the law, they too cannot be lumped in one, Gustafson finds.[7] And he concludes that the term "new morality" has been used to cover entirely too many theological heads and that the debate, hence, is misplaced in its entirety.

When Yale University's Professor of Christian Ethics cannot draw the lines of what has been a disputation primarily in the arena of modern Christian thought, what is a poor rabbi to do, a rabbi, mind you, who is not a *kohen* or a *levi* in Jewish theology, just a *proster yisroel*, a rabbi who has enough of a problem just trying to decide what is, or is not, normative in Judaism.

It is no simple matter to draw a consistent pattern of thought out of an evolutionary process such as Jewish Ethics or even out of a philosophical ambience such as the "new morality." The temptation is great to begin with a pre-conceived notion and then to select those facts which will sup-

[6] Kenneth Kenniston, *Young Radicals* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, & World Inc.), p. 347.

[7] James M. Gustafson, "Context vs. Principles: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics" in *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2, April, 1965.

port it. But facts must be respected, all facts, and contradiction should not be ignored. They should be seen, at least, for what they are: parts of one whole in which divergent strains appear along with those that are more dominant and characteristic.

But we are only human. Autism manipulates us even while we are aware that it is operative. We will always see what we desire to see — find what we really want to find. Therefore, let me be honest with you — and with myself — by readily acknowledging my predilection.

I like this "new morality," as I perceive its mood. I respect its openness. I appreciate its hope. I respond to its essential dynamism and its insistence on passionate involvement. As a system of thought it may not be sufficient for Judaism but its major thrusts that focus on contextual considerations and especially its celebration of individual responsibility — these certainly are congenial to our ethos.

I see it especially valuable as a bridge to those who stand yet apart from the community of faith but who are as determined as are we to come to grips with moral malaise, to create new moral order out of the pervasive spiritual chaos of our time.

To be sure, now, this embrace is not all-encompassing. Judaism's ethical canopy is not so large that it shelters everything. It certainly doesn't shelter those who see the "new morality" as license to do what they please.

There are those, both young and old, who do, for whom the "new morality" means no constraint, free warrant to indulge desire whatever its demands. They think perhaps that we are presently undergoing that "transvaluation of values" of which Nietzsche spoke. Or, inebriated by man's exalted state — the power to create is heady wine — they feel that we have gone beyond the Nietzschean prediction, that all men, not just a few superior men, have now outgrown morality, as they outgrew mythology and magic, that no one 'longer is subject to judgments of right and wrong.[8]

This is no "new morality," of course. Wantonness is neither a new nor a moral phenomenon. Such styles of life are of an ancient vintage. They are as old as Sodom and Gomorrah.

They come and they go, these deviant so-called moralities, with pendulum-like regularity. "Puritanism and paganism alternate in mutual reaction in history."[9] Let this thought bring comfort to those who need it: license cures itself through its own excess.

Not just morals, of course, but manners too have a way of alternating in history. Our children may yet see modesty modish and dress more appealing than undress. (In *their* day, O lord, and not in ours!)

[8] Henry David Aiken, "The New Morals" in *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 236, No. 1413, February, 1968.

[9] Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1968), pp. 37–51.

As the "new morality" takes its stand between libertinism and legalism, it comes closer to the cover of Judaism's canopy. Contextualism's first demand, that situational variables be weighed in the decision-making process, is certainly in order, so long as these variables remain but one of the factors and do not become the sole determinant of moral action.

Situations do vary, even when they involve the same moral principle. "Every case is like every other case and no two cases are alike."[10] Judaism is not oblivious to this truth. It understands that objective law is in continuous tension with the subjective needs of the individual and that these needs must be given proper consideration.

The case of the *Aguna* provides classic illustration of this tension — and of its resolution in favor of subjective need. True, this need was fully met only by Liberal Judaism when it broke with tradition here. But even the traditionalists bent the law, and to no small degree: the testimony of one witness was seen sufficient to establish the husband's death; hearsay evidence was admitted by the court; the deposition of persons otherwise totally incompetent was received, and without cross-examination — all in the effort to loosen the woman's bonds, to serve *her* need and not the law alone.

Yes, Halacha is a legal and not a moral system, in the philosophical meaning of these terms, but it is not and never was blind legalism. The traditional Jew was no automaton of the law, a kind of mechanical man, like Tik-Tok in the *Wizard of Oz*, who could do only what he was wound up to do when he wanted so desperately to be human.[11] The halachists, certainly the greater among them, wanted to be human, and they were precisely because they were not blind but seeing, able to envisage the final union of morality and law.

As we move even closer to the mainspring of Jewish law, the Bible, we also find no aversion to contextual considerations. In its treatment of war, for instance, the *Tenah* is decisively situational. In one case war is justified, in another it is not. In one case God demands resistance to the enemy, in another he warns Jehoiakim through Jeremiah not to join in the revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. Examples can be multiplied. We all can add to them.

It might even be argued that the Biblical approach is fundamentally contextual, in that its principles are drawn from living situations. They are not catalogued as abstractions, set forth in hierarchical order. The Bible is no code of moral principles. It tells the story of men — of a people, and the word of God is deduced from their experience.

This argument is admittedly hyperbolic, an extravagant exaggeration to make a point. But surely it is true, that the Biblical word was never

[10] Edmond Cahn, "The Lawyer as Scientist and Scoundrel," *New York University Law Review*, Vol. 36, p. 10, 1961.

[11] Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (New York, Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 18–39.

detached from the concrete situation. The message of the prophets was never an abstract message. It always referred to actual events. "The general was given in the specific and the verification of the abstract in the concrete."[12]

Contextualism does pose its problems (even as does legalism). Situations are not self-defining. Their outer limits cannot readily be set. Just what is the proper context of a given moral situation? Does it take in only the major protagonists, or also those who stand near to or even far from them? Raskolnikov killed the pawnbroker, and from the narrow perspective of their one-to-one relationship he was probably in the right. He quickly learned, however, that murder tears the fabric of the community, that it destroys not just the victim but the murderer and the bystander too. The rippling effects of moral decisions cannot be contained. Ultimately, they affect the total situation. What is the proper context then? And what about motivation? Can one really disentangle rational and irrational impulses, especially in moments of stress?

These are the reasons which impel Judaism to assert the primacy of principle. These are the reasons which impel even the most obdurate of situationists to posit rules which function not unlike the rules of ethical traditionalism.

A brief word about one of these rules: the law of love, that *summum bonum* of situation ethics.

This norm gives me some difficulty. Not that there is anything wrong with love *per se*. It *is* a noble ideal, a bright and shining star in the firmament of Judaism's values. But when it is applied as widely as it is by the "new morality," it loses all meaning and remains but a murky guide for human conduct.

It is especially unreliable as a yardstick for setting the boundaries of the boy-girl encounter, because love and lust are intrinsically related in the human psyche, and when the former is professed, the latter, more often than not, is purposed.

Cyrus Pangborn penetrates this prevailing pretense in his challenge to those who justify pre-marital intercourse on the ground that it removes an ignorance threatening the success of marriage. He writes:

> I wonder why there is not consistency enough to advocate a trial establishment of joint bank accounts, the temporary designation of prospective partners as life insurance beneficiaries, and a series of dates with a small child along for company. Sexually successful marriages have foundered on differing views about the acquisition, spending and sharing of money, about how to treat and rear children, and about any number of other aspects of the human relationship called marriage. If so thoroughgoing a mutuality and reciprocity seems premature, why not peg sexual expression at some point of restraint chosen for the other factors?

[12] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (New York, Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1955), p. 204.

Such consistency is not likely to be attained or even sought. Precisely because love, in the fuller meaning of the term, as a concern for the total relationship, is not really at play, only love in the narrower physical sense. *Playboy* magazine is more honest here. One of its cartoons, called to our attention by Paul Ramsey (I never read *Playboy*, I just look at the pictures), shows a rumpled young man saying to a rumpled young woman in his embrace: "Why speak of love at a time like this!"

This subject, marginally noted, gives not infrequent occasion to the revival of good old-fashioned religious anti-Semitism. Thus we read in the Bible of the "new morality": The law of love has superseded the legalistic pilpul of Pharisaic rabbinism. And again: The commandments commanded in the New Testament are Judaizing passages which deserve only to be ignored. And this from Fletcher,[13] a liberal Protestant theologian, who really should know better after these many years of exposure to the clean and cleansing winds of the ecumenical dialogue.

The distinguishing ingredient of the "new morality" is its insistence on individual responsibility. This is the cement which binds its divergent elements into a whole sufficiently cohesive to be called by one name. Whatever the differences among the "new moralists," one thing they all have in common: They acknowledge their direct responsibility for the moral act. They make the moral problem their very own. They do not externalize morality, seeing it an abstraction ("what is *the* moral view?") or a generalization ("just what ought *one* to do?"). Moral precepts become first-person precepts: What ought *I* to do, what are *my* commitments, what should *my* loyalties be?

The "new morality" is a morality of dissent, in that it runs counter to the current of the day, resisting its malaise and its gloom, asserting the reality of choice against the many who despair of it. It is also a morality of independence, of autonomy, in that it makes the moral choice a wholly personal reality, deeming the self and the self alone to be the source and arbiter of value.

As dissent, as protest against the temper of the times, the "new morality" stands at one with Judaism. Here, indeed, is the nexus of which I spoke, that bridge which spans the distance between the secular and the religious moralist. But when the adherents of the "new morality" claim full autonomy, they *seem* to row against the mainstream of Jewish thought.

We emphasize the "seem," for on closer look we find no complete incongruity. The morality of Judaism is neither a heteronomous nor is it an autonomous morality.[14] It designates itself to be revealed, but then, in daring paradox — הכל צפוי והרשות נתונה — it declares men free, and grants him full authority to make his moral choices.

Judaism does not exact unquestioning obedience, rather does it seek

[13] Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

[14] Cf. Emil Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future* (Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 204–228.

man's free assent. The commandments are to be performed not just for God's sake, but for their own sake too,[15] because they are seen to possess intrinsic worth. Man has the power to perceive that worth. He is unique in knowing good and evil. The Torah is given, therefore, only when men are ready to receive it.[16] Sinai is not imposed. It is self-imposed. Man must *choose* to scale its heights.

Law is not of secondary concern to Judaism; don't misunderstand me; nor does it become irrelevant once it is appropriated by man; it remains an essential element of the ethical process. But the autonomous choice of man is an integral part of this process too. "The outer limits of man touch revelation," wrote Leo Baeck; "we are God's partners and cannot abdicate this role, and man's vital function as creator is to make the moral choice."[17]

The cleft between Judaism and the "new morality" is not so great after all. It becomes more narrow still, when these outrageous dissenters do not claim all understanding but are prepared to listen to the past, when they remember to "read yesterday's minutes," as Al Vorspan so felicitously put it; when they turn to tradition, if not in submission, then, at least, with attention and respect.

Reverence for the past is a peculiarly Jewish prescription. It is also the counsel of prudence. Human experience did not begin with the birth of science. It began with the birth of man. And man, in his essential nature, has not changed as has his world. The inner man is still the same. Within that inner world, a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past. Man's joys and griefs, his passions and his dreams, these are as they were millennia ago. Science, assuredly, has taught us much concerning the nature of things. It has taught us little concerning their proper use, little concerning the ends which things should be made to serve. We are more knowledgeable but no more understanding than were our fathers, and there is much that we can learn from them. This wisdom, moreover, this tradition alone provides that centripetal force which keeps moral autonomy from breaking its bounds to become mere moral nihilism.

The summons to listen to the past, to hear and heed tradition, also summons *us*, as teachers of tradition, to make its substance pertinent, to bring it to bear on the pressing moral issues of the day. What irony it is — so Gene Borowitz often reminds us[18] — that with all our talk about Jewish ethics, the last significant work on the subject was written by Moritz Lazarus, now nearly eighty years ago.

Nor is there the need only for a fuller, more contemporary exposition of ethical theory. There is a need to be concerned with the perplexing

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[16] *Midrash Tanhumo*, Yisro.
[17] Leo Baeck, *Individuum Ineffabile.*
[18] Eugene Borowitz, "Current Theological Literature" in *Judaism*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Summer 1966.

value issues emerging from the ever more decisive role of our advancing technology. The bitter-sweet fruitage of all our learning — population growth in geometric progression, fundamental alteration of family function and social structure, ever increasing concentration of economic and political power, euthenics and eugenics, the ability to modify not just cultural but biological evolution too — all these have raised diverse and pressing moral cares to which we have barely spoken and rarely if ever brought the light of our past.

Nor can we be content to teach by precept only. Example and exemplars are required, by our tradition and by protesting youth. Moral preachment simply will not do. Yes, as a Conference we have the right to be proud of our *many colleagues* who speak and act with daring, stirred by a passion which does honor to our prophetic past. But we cannot in all honesty preen that our institutions, in the life-blood of their program, ever begin to reflect the primacy of these concerns.

How many synagogues, for instance, offer or even know about draft counseling? How many congregations, whose sons and daughters crowd the universities of our land, have taken the initiative to denounce the shameful fraud of those academies of higher learning, those so-called Temples of Truth, whose finest resources are at the command not of their students but of an industrial military machine? And how many temples can say: we have done enough, we have truly done enough, to relieve the needy, to free the bound, to bridge that yawning, fearsome gap between comfortable, safe suburbia and an inner city in despair.

These are the issues which compel the concern of our youth. These are the issues to which we must speak — by precept and example — if our demand that they learn from tradition is to have meaning and effect.

It might be pertinent to note in this connection that even science admonishes us not to neglect the past. In paleontology there is a law called Romer's Rule. It is a law of evolutionary advance which asserts that radical change is always abortive, that change is possible only when it is adaptive, when it begins by holding on to something tried and true, when it conserves the old in face of the new. Preservation is the first step, innovation only follows. Romer's Rule is operative in the moral realm as well. Conservation is the needful first step. Only then can there be the "opening of vast new doors, that splendid serendipity."[19]

There is one level at which the "new morality" and Judaism touch, if at all, but fleetingly. It is the level of God belief, of creed. Where situation ethics has been a religious concern, it has been a debate primarily in the arena of Christian thought. As for the secular moralists, they do not see the need for faith to validate morality. They define morality as a two-way relationship, betwen the "self" and "the other." They do not see it as

[19] Conrad Arensberg, "Cultural Change and the Guaranteed Income" in *The Guaranteed Income*, Robert Theobald (ed.), (New York, Doubleday, 1966), p. 211.

the three-way relationship — involving man, his human neighbor, and God — which our faith demands.

But even here we can hold with Judaism that the moral pursuit has its own intrinsic worth, in fact, that it can be the decisive first step toward a higher understanding.

> Would that they had deserted me and kept my Torah; for if they had occupied themselves with Torah, the leaven that is in it would have brought them back to me.[20]

A like hope is held forth in the reading which the *Tono debe Eliyohu* gives to Micah's celebrated maxim:

כי עם עשות משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עמך אלהיך

Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly, then God will be with you.

This happening of our day, therefore, this "new morality," should not evoke our despair. Upon the contrary, it should afford us comfort, stir in us new hope. It requires not repression, but careful nurturing and guidance. It is not a symptom of moral sickness, but rather the sure sign of new, returning strength; for beneath its seeming disregard for traditional morality, a deep-felt sense of moral responsibility is manifest. In a word, something good is emerging here, from the moral point of view, perhaps even that "new heart" and that "new spirit" of which Ezekiel spoke.

And having heeded the mandate of one prophet, we may well witness the fulfillment of another seer's dream:

כי הנני בורא שמים חדשים וארץ חדשה

For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind . . . your seed and your name, they will remain forever.

[20] *Pesikta Kahana*, XV

THE AMERICAN JEW: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT - A New Curriculum for a New Community.

How good and how pleasant it is to be here, reunited with colleagues and friends, with men and women from many congregations but of one faith, bound together by a mutual sacred cause.

What do we seek in seeking our brothers? What are the ends we mean to serve in coming here? To learn, perhaps to teach, to take counsel together, to gather the rich fruit of our common experience -- all these, yet even more -- to draw strength from one another, to receive that sustenance of spirit which comes from the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls.

It is a sustenance which flows in ample measure from our fellowship. I can well testify to that, for no aspect of my work gives me greater satisfaction than my association with the men and women of NATE, whose friendship I value, and whose wise counsel is indispensable to

the fulfillment of my tasks. This is a professional organization of the highest order; its programs and activities are substantive, and its members establish exacting standards of conduct and attainment.

When important posts had to be filled this year, on a regional and national level, we did not have to look beyond our own ranks to find the men to fill them. This fact alone bespeaks NATE's considerable growth and maturity.

We meet in Philadelphia, cradle of American democracy and birthplace of much that is valuable in American Jewish life. In this community institutions vital to our continuity were born; here were reared the men and women, leaders of the spirit, whose life and work gave shape to our destiny.

This is a fitting place, then , for the communal "cheshbon ha'nefesh" which our assembly, in its theme, enjoins. This is a fitting time to consider the American Jewish community -- its past,

its present, and its prospects.

A CHANGING COMMUNITY

This Convention Program Committee was wise to ask Dr. Bertram Korn to consider this theme in its fulness; he is a diligent student of our community, one of its foremost chroniclers, whose perceptive vision of its past gives him clear warrant to pierce the veil of our future.

Dr. Korn and I agreed, in order to avoid duplication, that I would limit my variations of the theme to education, while he would deal with the changing patterns of the community as a whole. On second thought, I am not entirely happy with this arrangement. At the very least, Dr. Korn's address should have preceded mine, for changes in the educative process follow, they do not precede changes in the character of the community. The school is the servant of society, not its master.

At the risk of offending a colleague by breaking my agreement with him, at the evermore fearsome risk of having my

analysis contradicted less than 24 hours hence, I feel constrained to consider the transformations of our community, if only bruefly, for without it, without some knowledge of its newer nature, the new directions demanded of our schools can not be understood. Now this transformation of our community is nothing short of cataclysmic, for it involves not only its externals -- its structures, composition, its institutions; it reaches to the very core of our communal being, and we encounter an entirely new Jew -- the American Jew -- and the problems he encounters are unlike those our people faced, at any other time in any other place.

"Al regel achat," simply and succinctly put, our inner alteration involves a loosening, a dissolution of the ethnic strains which bound us once, and the compensating reinforcement of religious bonds expected to serve as unifying force ib their stead.

To put the matter somewhat differently,

the secular cult or nationhood envisaged by man, Jews of a previous generation, has proved illusory, incapable of fulfillment on the American scene; the community has become a communion, bound by belief, turning primarily to religion to define its nature and to justify its continuity.

JEWISH FACTORS

Two events of recent Jewish history gave main impulse and momentum to this metamorphosis: the destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of Israel.

The European Jewish community gave shape to our own, sustaining its cultural and its religious life during most of the formative years. More to the point, Europe gave us its community concept, with its dominant ethnic strains which permeated even its religious expressions. Until World War II, its ideology governed our thinking and our doing. We were involved in the European Jewish situation and conceived our own problem largely in its light, so much so that even the 100% American Council for Judaism spent

its full energies in the feverish debate of an essentially European question, the the Emancipation, which never really was of issue here. Be that as it may, the tragic death of European Jewry cut the physiological and the ideological nexus which bound us to our communal parents. We were compelled to look at our situation as it really is, without the overtones provided by their understanding of it. And we quickly learned that the old-world community concept does not conform to the realities of the American scene, that the resolutions offered by European Jewish ideology simply will not serve us here.

The achievement of Jewish nationhood in Israel, by curious paradox, further enfeebled the non-religious bonds of our union. True, the dream of secular no less than of religious nationalist was fulfilled, their loving labor justified, the validity of their thought established. But the very fulfillment of this dream robbed the adherents of political Zionism

of their reason for collective continuity in the Diaspora. The ever-waning force of a fervor fired before the State's establishment is not sufficient to sustain group loyalty, nor is the State's continuing need for help -- after all, one does not have to be a Jew to be a friend of Israel. Ultimately only two avenues lie open before the secular nationalist that he can choose: either he migrates to Israel, following th deed the logic of his thought; or remaining here, he finds andadded, more relevant means for identification with the American Jewish community. The synagogue becomes his likely choice.

THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT

But not only momentous changes in Jewish life contributed to the diminution of our ethnicity; this diminution was deepened further by an environment which does demand conformity as the price of acceptance.

The measure of required conformity is greater than we think, far greater than America's professed adherence to the creed

of cultural pluralism might lead us to expect. The American Way of Life is not so open that divergent cultural components can easily be made a part of it. A blue ribbon jury of the majority rules; it is dominated by those who came here first; and they are reluctant to accept components which clash with <u>their</u> culture. Folkways fundamentally foreign to the American environment are quickly discarded by a minority which means to escape its not-so-invisible ghetto. Only religion is exempted from these demands; the American ethos recognizes it as a "collective privacy" which may be maintained -- at least, so it appears, for even here some doubts prevail.

In his penetrating study of the problem, Ben Halpern of Brandeis University points out that the acceptance of the "triple melting-pot" analysis does not at all allow us to conclude that Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism stand in the very same relationship to the American social concensus. Here too a jury of the major-

ity rules, and the standard of acceptance is set by American Protestantism with its conception that religion resides in the single man, that the church, the congregation, is an institution designed to help the individual realize his faith, and not at all an instrument to nurture group religion; in a word, "that freedom of worship ... the privacy of religious conscience .. . is a right of individuals, and not of collective entities at all."

If this is true in the realm of religion, it certainly is true, a forteriori, in the realm of culture. Individual divergences are accepted, but that which intensifies collective distinctiveness is decisively discouraged. To be sure now, certain elements of traditional group culture can be given public expression and then find public acceptance. But usually they are trivial traits, drawn from the surface of tradition, that which can be readily understood, the light, the amusing, the entertaining, but about as far removed from tradition's genuine core as is "Fiddler on

the Roof" from Sholom Aleichem.

This, then, is the confluence of inner and of outer forces, the interaction of Jewish experience and the American environment which has resulted in the diminution of our ethnic character and in the reconciliation of our religious bonds. A hundred sociological studies attest to the reality of this transformation. American Jews see themselves as Jews primarily by their religion. Nothing else -- not culture, not nationhood, not even the giving of charity -- is of essential consequence in securing the continuity of their identification.

AFFILIATION WITHOUT AFFIRMATION

But we must carry our analysis just one step further, for we find now that religious identification by itself, affiliation without affirmation, is also not sufficient for the need. American Jews may join a congregation as a matter of communal necessity; they cannot long remain in it, without facing the test of faith.

Ben Halpern puts the matter well:

"... it is impossible to live forever in the synagogue only as in a socially useful institution. At some time one is bound to realize that this is a House of God. How, one must ask, do I stand before God? Do I really believe in Him? Do I believe in Him as a Jew??

Are not these the questions which our people ask with ever-increasing urgency? We saw dramatic demonstration of this fact less than a month ago, at the Union's Biennial in San Francisco, in the reaction of the delegates, and not as merely in the substance of the discussions. Seven hundred people crowded a meeting hall, many of them standing the better part of a full day to listen to a discussion of the "why" of Jewishness. A like number attended a lecture on "The Demands of Prayer," the kind of topic which, a decade ago, would at best have attracted a handful of cognoscenti. Yes, and 1800 men and women stormed the doors of the grand ballroom, to hear four rabbis define their God-belief. They could not get

their full of listening. Over and over again, they insisted on an answer to such questions as: How can I believe in God in the face of the teachings of modern science and technology? Can man really experience God through prayer? What is the unique and endiring contribution that Judaism can make to the modern world?

These are the questions which perplex our people. These questions also delineate the essential problem of the American Jew, for ours is no longer the problem of identification, the difficulty of defining our community status. Ours, rather, is the problem of finding meaning for an identification which we have already chosen or which has been chosen for us. Ours is essentially a spiritual problem. It is a problem of ideas and beliefs. It is a crisis of conscience.

THE COMMUNITY OF OUR CHILDREN

What is true for the adult community (to move just a bit closer to the area of our more immediate concern as educators) is true in equal if not greater measure for the community of our children, for the

emerging American Jew. This is to be expected. After all, our children have experienced neither the holocaust, nor the struggle for Israel's establishment, those two dramatic, traumatic events whose remembrance still binds us to the thinking and feeling of the past.

The Riverton Report was especially revealing in its contrast of the older and the younger generation. Surely you recall some of its findings:

When the respondents asked, for instance, why Jews continue to exist as a distinctive group, parents spoke of the age-old hostility between Jew and gentile. The children, on the other hand, felt that the virtues of Judaism justify the survival of the group. (Their reason for Jewishness is positive, no mere reaction to persecution.)

The adults of Riverton expressed an overwhelming preference for predominantly Jewish neighborhoods, while the majority of adolescents were perfectly willing to widen their community contacts. (Having

experienced no "age-old" hostility from the non-Jew, they feel no reluctance to live in mixed neighborhoods.)

In the realm of charitable giving, parents favored exclusively Jewish causes, both here and abroad, not excluding Israel. In sharp contrast, their children chose many non-Jewish causes as objects of their beneficence. (Clearly, a declining sense of group closeness is manifested here.) And, most directly to the point, when the respondents were asked: what is a Jew? How would you describe him? A good many parents still referred to Jewish culture and to the happenstance of birgh - "my parent is a Jew...I'm a Jew," while fully ninety-seven per cent of the adolescents defined the Jew exclusively by his allegiance to the Jewish religion.

Conclude the authors of the study: "The present Jewish self-image demands religious affiliation as the identifying characteristic... Among adolescents, hardly any other way of distinguishing the Jew is possible...It is not that they are

more religious than their parents. Rather, they are more cut off from the old-world... more completely molded by the American scene, they simply see no other meaning for the word 'Jew'."

As for the matter of discovering meaning in Jewishness, if anything, our children are even more persistent than are their parents in their quest for the relevance of religion. Where adults can often evade the test of faith by accepting the authority of tradition or of religious leadership, adolescents, facing their maturity, cannot. That is why they ask us for an answer to the "why" of Jewishness and the more sensitive and intelligent they are, the more earnestly do they ask it.

THE IRRELEVANCE OF OUR TEACHING

Do we answer their questions in what we teach and do? Is our curriculum designed to answer them? Honesty compels us to say "no" or, at best, to offer only a qualified "yes," for our program of study was given its broad, bold outlines decades ago when our community was different and its needs

were different. Developed under the impact of the old community concept, it fails to meet the requirements of the new. It emphasizes the ethnic, rather than the religious; it focuses on outer form and not on inner faith.

Our problem is not unlike that of the miller whose mill is in excellent condition in all respects, its machinery sound, excepting only one: the mill wheel stands one foot above the water. Much of our teaching is just that -- one foot above the water, failing to cut into the current of our children's deeper needs.

The objectives which we articulate in our curriculum is sound enough. Dr. Freehof's "Statement of Guiding Principles" clearly, stirringly sets forth our real purposes. The listing of curricular goals is also most acceptable, albeit I must confess some embarrassment with the wording of the very first article which bids us "instill in" our children, not a faith in God, mind you, but rather, a "faith in the Jewish religion, according to the Liberal Reform tradition," whatever that

may mean.

But when we move from principle to program, and from the program to the classroom, the gap between objectives and attainment widens, and the relevant becomes largely irrelevant. A Bible taught as literature, history presented principally as the story of persecution, a story moreover, in which God somehow disappears as a protagonist once we make the move from the Talmud, to the Current Era ... Hebrew instruction which emphasizes linguistic competence ... even the teaching of customs and ceremonies when portrayed primarily as pattern of group behavior ... all this may well attract our children and gain their initial willingness to be identified as Jew; it will not provide them with the meaning which they seek to make their identification lasting and vital. As Abraham Heschel put it, in a different context

"... an education which continues to evade intellectual problems or which ignores emotional obtuseness is doomed to

failure. Teaching the geography of Israel will not necessarily evoke the love of Israel. Nor will merely the teaching of the rules about the dagesh chazak assure one of becoming conscious of the pintaleh yid."

Clearly a new approach is needed, attendant upon the re-evaluation of our educational presuppositions and something more than superficial change is required. To paraphrase our colleague David Hachen: we cannot be content merely to put a new cover on an old curriculum, or even to revise it; we must write it anew, in the light of the newer need.

TOWARD A NEW CURRICULUM

This task will not be fulfilled overnight; only evolutions, not revolutions in education have a chance at success. As a case in point -- and I had occasion to make mention of this in a recent Jewish Teacher editorial -- it took the Lutheran Church of America nearly twenty years to complete its

new parish educational plan, and our Christian colleagues had almost unlimited material and professional resources at their command -- some $5,000,000.00 and forty-one full time educators on their national staff.

But more than material and technical obstacles must be overcome; ideological problems confront us also, for no small part of our difficulty is rooted in the radical divergence of theologic view which obtains on an adult level... After all, we cannot teach our children what we do not agree upon, what we cannot accept ourselves.

Here, at least, some forward steps are being taken, for only a few months hence, at the behest of the Commission Curriculum Committee and its Chairman Samuel Glasner, a Conference of Jewish Theologians will convene, involving leading thinkers of conflicting views -- Gittelsohn and Fackenheim, Bamporad and Joans, Borowitz and Reines and Olan -- not so much to forge a unified Reform

Jewish theology, but in the hope of at least coming to an agreement on what we should teach to our children and when we should teach it, on how we can enrich their knowledge and experience to make them believing Jews!

Hopefully these deliberations will be fruitful in their effect. But, of course, we don't have to await this fruition or even the more fundamental changes contemplated in our national curriculum in order to give the needed new direction to our common sacred enterprise. Our criticism of certain fundamentals does not encompass, in blanket fashion, everything we have and do. Much of what we have is exceedingly good, and everything we do can be made to yield our newer purposes, for their realization depends not so much on this or that subject, but rather on its use to which the subject is put, whatever be its matter.

As a concrete case in point, about a year ago a number of communal leaders

and educators from this very community (Philadelphia, Minutes of November 5, 1964 meeting of Community Relations Council, incorporating sub-committee report Dr. William Kakritz, Dr. Eleazar Goelman, Dr. Nan-Horin, et alia) gathered to develop objectives for the teaching of the holocaust. This is a subject which should be taught in our schools indeed; we expect to have a text on it within the year. But listen to the educational objectives which the Philadelphia group selected:

our children must come to know and feel that Nazism is a monstrous example of religious bigotry."

they must understand the "meaning of the Nuremberg laws" with particular reference to the Nazi "claim to the racial superiority of German"

they must be able to comprehend such words as "Swastika," "slave labor," "concentration camps," and "gas chamber."

we should remind them that "Nazis persecuted others than Jews, such as the Christians and Poles, the Czechs and the

Russians."

and, lastly - listen to this travesty of travesties, this mockery of our martyrdom - we must be certain to teach our children that "Nazism directly affected the founding of the State of Israe," as if there everxxx could be a mechanical equating of the two, a balancing of blessing and of curse! Is this what we want our children to know? Is this the sum and substance of the wisdom which can be gleaned from this most tragic chapter of our recent history?

Surely we would do better to help our students grapple with the more fundamental issues which are involved, issues whose resolutions might help them in their quest for faith and for a life reflective of it: How does the Jew react to evil? Is spiritual resistance an answer to an enemy? Doestcollective guilt obviate individual responsibility? What can we say about the face of man after Auschwitz? And what about the face of God? Can we believe in Him in spite of it?

Yes, there is history and there is

history... There is the Bible as literature, and the Bible as the Word of God... There is ethical instruction which is mere moral preachment, and there is such instruction in which the antecesent of the moral law is probed... There is the kind of Hebrew study which constitutes the refinement of language skill alone, and then there is the kind of study in which language becomes a garment for sentiments of faith; when our students learn what a noble Zionist thinker, Chaim Greenberg, insisted, then they learn, not just the literal meaning of such words as "mitzva," and "yirah," and "chava," and "kiddush Hashem," but also the meaning of these words to their deepest sounding and in the full context of all their spiritual tension.

JUDAISM MORE THAN 'RELIGION ONLY'

I trust that no one will misunderstand me and read into my lines a rejection of Judaism's cultural component or a disavowal of the bonds of kinship which bind us to another beyond the bonds of faith. Judaism is manifestly more than a mere

system of precept and belief; it is a covenant binding a historic community. One cannot extract an idea from its historic form and expect it to retain its essence; both must be transmitted, the idea and the form, tradition and belief.

I speak only of an emphasis in our teaching, a centrality of concern which, per force, must vary from generation to generation, and which in our time and place must focus on the transmission of belief.

The narrow conception of Judaism as 'religion only' is alien to me, and not just on ibtellectual and historic grounds. I reject this narrow concept on experiential grounds as well for in my personal journey of the spirit, I was an "ohev yisroel" long before I heard the "veohavto es Adonoi."

It is the "veohavto es Adonoi" which our children need to hear from us, hear it with the hearing of the ear, and sense it in their soul as well. For the Judaism which we mean to convey to them is more than verbal profession, more than intellect-

ual conceptialization, much more indeed than a refined doubt sublimated into a hesitant assumption. It is an all consuming inner conviction involving the full faculties of man, his heart and mind and will and spirit too, all of them blending in to a rapturous communion with the divine. This is faith! This is what we mean by belief in God!

May we find the way to kindle the spark of such a faith in our children, and the strength to nurture it to bright and burning flame. Then will we be able to contemplate with confidence the future of our community, that community of our people which we helped to shape. Then the time will come when those who see our children will say of us that we did not "labor in vain, nor bring forth for terror, that ours is the seed blessed of the Lord."

The American Jew: Retrospect and Prospect

A New Curriculum for a New Community

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER
Director, Department of Education, UAHC

HOW GOOD and how pleasant it is to be here—reunited with colleagues and friends, with men and women from many congregations, but of one faith—bound together by a mutual sacred cause.

What do we seek in seeking our brothers? What are the ends we mean to serve in coming here? To learn, perhaps to teach, to take counsel together, to gather the rich fruit of our common experience—all these, yet even more—to draw strength from one another and to receive that sustenance of spirit which comes from the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls.

It is a sustenance which flows in ample measure from our fellowship. I can well testify to that, for no aspect of my work gives me greater satisfaction than my association with the men and women of NATE, whose friendship I value, and whose wise counsel is indispensable to the fulfillment of my tasks. This is a professional organization of the highest order; its programs and activities are substantive, and its members establish exacting standards of conduct and attainment. When important posts had to be filled this year, on a regional and national level, we did not have to look beyond our own ranks to find the men to fill them. This fact alone bespeaks NATE's considerable growth and maturity.

We meet in Philadelphia, cradle of American democracy and birthplace of much that is valuable in American Jewish life. In this community, institutions vital to our continuity were born; here were reared the men and women, leaders of the spirit, whose life and work gave shape to our destiny. This is a fitting place, then, for the communal חשבון הנפש which our assembly, in its theme, enjoins. This is a fitting time to consider the American Jewish community —its past, its present, and its prospects.

A CHANGING COMMUNITY

The Convention Program Committee was wise to ask Dr. Bertram Korn to consider this theme in its fulness; he is a diligent student of our community, one of its foremost chroniclers, whose perceptive vision of its past gives him clear warrant to pierce the veil of our future.

Dr. Korn and I agreed, in order to avoid duplication, that I would limit my variations of the theme to education, while he would deal with the changing patterns of the community as a whole. On second thought, I am not entirely happy with this arrangement. At the very least, Dr. Korn's address should have preceded mine, for changes in the educative process *follow*, they do not precede changes in the character of the community. The school is the servant of society, not its master.

At the risk of offending a colleague by breaking my agreement with him, at the even more fearsome risk of having my analysis contradicted less than twenty four hours hence, I feel constrained to consider the transformations of our community, if only briefly, for without it, without some knowledge of its newer nature, the new directions demanded of our schools cannot be understood. Now this transformation of our community is nothing short of cataclysmic, for it involves not only its externals—its structures, its composition, its institutions; it reaches to the very core of our communal being, and we encounter an entirely new Jew — the American Jew — and the problems *he* encounters are unlike those our people faced at any other time in any other place.

על רגל אחת simply and succinctly put, our inner alteration involves a loosening, a dissolution of the ethnic strains which bound us once, and the compensating reinforcement of religious bonds expected to serve as a unifying force in their stead.

To put the matter somewhat differently, the secular cult of nationhood envisaged by many Jews of a previous generation has proved illusory, incapable of fulfillment on the American scene; the community has become a communion, bound by belief, turning primarily to religion to define its nature and to justify its continuity.

JEWISH FACTORS

Two events of recent Jewish history gave main impulse and momentum to this metamorphosis: the destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of the State of Israel.

The European Jewish community gave shape to our own, sustaining its cultural and its religious life during most of the formative years. More to the point, Europe gave us its community concept, with its dominant ethnic strains which permeated even its religious expressions. Until World War II, its ideology governed our thinking and our doing. We were involved in the European Jewish situation and conceived our own problem largely in its light, so much so, that even the 100 per cent American Council for Judaism spent its full energies in the feverish debate of an essentially European question, the Emancipation, which never really was of issue here. Be that as it may, the tragic death of European Jewry cut the physiological and the ideological nexus which bound us to our communal parents. We were compelled to look at our situation as it really was, without the overtones provided by *their* understanding of it. And we quickly learned that the old-world community concept does not conform to the realities of the American scene, that the resolutions offered by European Jewish ideology simply will not serve us here.

The achievement of Jewish nationhood in Israel, by curious paradox, further enfeebled the non-religious bonds of our union. True, the dream of secular no less than of religious nationalists was fulfilled, their loving labor justified, the validity of their thought established. But the very fulfillment of this dream robbed the adherents of political Zionism of their reason for collective continuity in the Diaspora. The ever-waning force of a fervor fired before the state's establishment is not sufficient to sustain group loyalty, nor is the state's continuing need for help—after all, one does not have to be a Jew to be a friend of Israel. Ultimately only two avenues lie open before the secular nationalist that he can choose: either he migrates to Israel, following in deed the logic of his thought; or, remaining here, he finds an added, more relevant means for identification with the American Jewish community. The synagogue becomes his likely choice.

THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT

But not only momentous changes in Jewish life contributed to the diminution of our ethnicity; this diminution was deepened further by an environment which *does* demand conformity as the price of acceptance.

The measure of required conformity is greater than we think, far greater than America's professed adherence to the creed of cultural pluralism might lead us to expect. The American Way of Life is not so open that divergent cultural components can easily be made a part of it. A blue-ribbon jury of the majority rules; it is dominated by those who came here first; and they are reluctant to accept components which clash with *their* culture. Folkways fundamentally foreign to the American environment are quickly discarded by a minority which means to escape its not-so-invisible ghetto. Only religion is exempted from these demands; the American ethos recognizes it as a "collective privacy" which may be maintained—at least, so it appears, for even here some doubts prevail.

In his penetrating study of the problem, Ben Halpern of Brandeis University points out that the acceptance of the "triple melting-pot" analysis does not at all allow us to conclude that Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism stand in the very same relationship to the American social concensus. Here, too, a jury of the majority rules, and the standard of acceptance is set by American Protestantism with its conception that religion resides in the single man, that the church, the congregation, is an institution designed to help the *individual* realize his faith, and not at all an instrument to nurture *group* religion; in a word, "that freedom of worship . . . the privacy of religious conscience . . . is a right of *individuals*, and not of *collective entities* at all."

If this is true in the realm of religion, it certainly is true, *a fortiori*, in the realm of culture. *Individual* divergences are accepted, but that which intensifies *collective* distinctiveness is decisively discouraged. To be sure now, certain elements of traditional group culture can be given public expression and then find public acceptance. But usually they are trivial traits, drawn from the surface of tradition, that which can be readily understood, the light, the amusing, the entertaining, but about as far removed

from tradition's genuine core as is "Fiddler on the Roof" from Sholom Aleichem.

This, then, is the confluence of inner and outer forces, the interaction of Jewish experience and the American environment which has resulted in the diminution of our ethnic character and in the refocillation of our religious bonds. A hundred sociologcal studies attest to the reality of this transformation. American Jews see themselves as Jews primarily by their religion. Nothing else—not culture, not nationhood, not even the giving of charity—is of essential consequence in securing the continuity of their identification.

AFFILIATION WITHOUT AFFIRMATION

But we must carry our analysis just one step further, for we find now that religious identification by itself, affiliation without affirmation, is also not sufficient for the need. American Jews may join a congregation as a matter of communal necessity; they cannot long remain in it without facing the test of faith.

Ben Halpern puts the matter well: ". . . it is impossible to live forever in the synagogue only as in a socially useful institution. At some time one is bound to realize that this is a House of God. How, one must ask, do I stand before God? Do I really believe in Him? Do I believe in Him as a Jew?"

Are not these the questions which our people ask with ever-increasing urgency? We saw dramatic demonstrations of this fact less than a month ago at the Union's Biennial in San Francisco, in the reaction of the delegates, and not as merely in the substance of the discussions. Seven hundred people crowded a meeting hall, many of them standing the better part of the full day, to listen to a discussion of the "why" of Jewishness. A like number attended a lecture on "The Demands of Prayer," the kind of topic which, a decade ago, would at best have attracted a handful of cognoscenti. Yes, and 1800 men and women stormed the doors of the grand ballroom, to hear four rabbis define their God-belief. They could not get their fill of listening. Over and again, they insisted on an answer to such questions as: How can I believe in God in the face of the teachings of modern science and technology? Can man really experience God through prayer? What is the unique and enduring contribution that Judaism can make to the modern world?

These are the questions which perplex our people. These questions also delineate the essential problem of the American Jew, for ours is no longer the problem of identification, the difficulty of defining our community status. Ours, rather, is the problem of finding *meaning* for an identification which we have already chosen or which has been chosen for us. Ours is essentially a spiritual problem. It is a problem of ideas and beliefs. It is a crisis of conscience.

THE COMMUNITY OF OUR CHILDREN

What is true for the adult community (to move just a bit closer to the area of our more immediate concern as educators) is true in equal if not greater measure for the community of our children, for the emerging American Jew. This is to be expected. After all, our children have experienced neither the Holocaust nor the struggle for Israel's establishment, those two dramatic, traumatic events whose remembrance still binds *us* to the thinking and feeling of the past.

The Riverton Report was especially revealing in its contrast of the older and the younger generation. Surely you recall some of its findings:

- When the respondents asked, for instance, why Jews continue to exist as a distinctive group, parents spoke of the age-old hostility between Jew and gentile. The children, on the other hand, felt that the virtues of Judaism justify the survival of the group. (Their reason for Jewishness is positive, no mere reaction to persecution.)
- The adults of Riverton expressed an overwhelming preference for predominantly Jewish neighborhoods, while the majority of adolescents were perfectly willing to widen their community contacts. (Having experienced no "age-old" hostility from the non-Jew, they feel nc reluctance to live in mixed neighborhoods.)
- In the realm of charitable giving, parents favored exclusively Jewish causes, both here and abroad, not excluding Israel. In sharp contrast, their children chose many non-Jewish causes as objects of their beneficence. (Clearly, a declining sense of group closeness is manifested here.)
- And, most directly to the point, when

the respondents were asked: What is a Jew? How would you describe him? A good many parents still referred to Jewish culture and to the happenstance of birth—"my parent is a Jew . . . I'm a Jew," while fully *97 per cent* of the adolescents defined the Jew exclusively by his allegiance to the Jewish religion.

The authors of the study conclude: "The present Jewish self-image demands religious affiliation as the identifying characteristic. . . . Among adolescents, hardly any other way of distinguishing the Jew is possible. . . . It is not that they are more religious than their parents. Rather, they are more cut off from the old world . . . more completely molded by the American scene, they simply see no other meaning for the word 'Jew.'"

As for the matter of discovering *meaning* in Jewishness, if anything, our children are even more persistent than are their parents in their quest for the relevance of religion. Where adults can often evade the test of faith by accepting the authority of tradition or of religious leadership, adolescents, facing their maturity, cannot. That is why they ask us for an answer to the "why" of Jewishness, and the more sensitive and intelligent they are, the more earnestly do they ask it.

THE IRRELEVANCE OF OUR TEACHING

Do we answer their questions in what we teach and do? Is our curriculum designed to answer them? Honesty compels us to say "no" or, at best, to offer only a qualified "yes," for our program of study was given its broad, bold outlines decades ago when our community was different and its needs were different. Developed under the impact of the *old* community concept, it fails to meet the requirements of the *new*. It emphasizes the ethnic, rather than the religious; it focuses on outer form and not on inner faith.

Our problem is not unlike that of the miller whose mill is in excellent condition in all respects, its machinery sound, excepting only one: the mill wheel stands one foot above the water. Much of our teaching is just that—one foot above the water, failing to cut into the current of our children's deeper needs.

The objectives which we articulate in our curriculum are sound enough. Dr. Freehof's "Statement of Guiding Principles" clearly, stirringly, sets forth our real purposes. The listing of curricular goals is also most acceptable, albeit I must confess some embarrassment with the wording of the very first article which bids us instill in our children, not a faith in *God*, mind you, but rather, a "faith in the Jewish *religion*, according to the Liberal Reform tradition," whatever that may mean.

But when we move from principle to program, and from the program to the classroom, the gap between objectives and attainment widens, and the relevant becomes largely irrelevant. The Bible taught as literature, history presented principally as the story of persecution (a story, moreover, in which God somehow disappears as a force once we make the move from the talmudic to the current era), Hebrew instruction which emphasizes linguistic competence, even the teaching of customs and ceremonies when portrayed primarily as patterns of group behavior—all this may well attract our children and gain their initial willingness to be identified as Jews; it will not provide them with the meaning which they seek to make their identification lasting and vital. As Abraham Heschel put it: ". . . an education which continues to evade intellectual problems or which ignores emotional obtuseness is doomed to failure. Teaching the geography of Israel will not necessarily evoke the love of Israel. Nor will merely the teaching of the rules about the *dagesh chazak* assure one of becoming conscious of the *pintaleh yid*."

Clearly a new approach is needed, attendant upon the reevaluation of our educational presuppositions and something more than superficial change is required. To paraphrase our colleague, David Hachen: We cannot be content merely to put a new cover on an old curriculum, or even to revise it; we must write it anew, in the light of the newer need.

TOWARD A NEW CURRICULUM

This task will not be fulfilled overnight; only evolutions, not revolutions, in education have a chance of success. As a case in point—and I had occasion to make mention of this in a recent *Jewish Teacher* editorial—it took the Lutheran Church of America nearly twenty years to complete its new parish education plan, and our Christian

colleagues had almost unlimited material and professional resources at their command—some $5,000,000.00, and forty-one full-time educators on their national staff.

But more than material and technical obstacles must be overcome; ideological problems confront us also, for no small part of our difficulty is rooted in the radical divergence of theologic view which obtains on an adult level. . . . After all, we cannot teach our children what we do not agree upon, what we cannot accept ourselves.

Here, at least, some forward steps are being taken, for only a few months hence, at the behest of the Commission Curriculum Committee and its Chairman, Samuel Glasner, a Conference of Jewish Theologians will convene. It will involve leading thinkers with conflicting views—Gittelsohn and Fackenheim, Bemporad and Jonas, Borowitz and Reines and Olan—not so much to forge a unified Reform Jewish theology, but in the hope of at least coming to an agreement on what we should teach our children and when we should teach it, and how we can enrich their knowledge and experience to make them believing Jews!

Hopefully these deliberations will be fruitful in their effect. But, of course, we don't have to await this fruition or even the more fundamental changes contemplated in our national curriculum in order to give the needed new direction to our common sacred enterprise. Our criticism of certain fundamentals does not encompass, in blanket fashion, everything we have and do. Much of what we have is exceedingly good and everything we do can be made to yield our newer purposes, for their realization depends not so much on this or that subject, but rather on the use to which the subject is put, whatever be its matter.

As a concrete case in point, about a year ago a number of communal leaders and educators from this very community gathered to develop objectives for the teaching of the Holocaust.* This is indeed a subject which should be taught in our schools; we expect to have a text on it within the year. But listen to the educational objectives which the Philadelphia group selected:

- Our children must come to know and feel that "Nazism is a monstrous example of religious bigotry."
- They must understand the "meaning of the Nuremberg laws" with particular reference to the Nazi "claim to the racial superiority of Germans."
- They must be able to comprehend such words as "Swastika," "slave labor," "concentration camps," and "gas chamber."
- We should remind them that "Nazis persecuted others than Jews, such as the Christians and Poles, the Czechs and the Russians."
- And lastly—listen to this travesty of travesties, this mockery of our martyrdom —we must be certain to teach our children that "Nazism directly affected the founding of the State of Israel," as if there ever could be a mechanical equating of the two, a balancing of blessing and of curse!

Is this what we want our children to know? Is this the sum and substance of the wisdom which can be gleaned from this most tragic chapter of our recent history?

Surely we would do better to help our students grapple with the more fundamental issues which are involved, issues whose resolutions might help them in their quest for faith and for life reflective of it: How does the Jew react to evil? Is spiritual resistance an answer to an enemy? Does collective guilt obviate individual responsibility? What can we say about the face of man after Auschwitz? And what about the face of God? Can we believe in Him in spite of it?

Yes, there is history and there is history. There is the Bible as literature, and the Bible as the Word of God. There is ethical instruction which is mere moral preachment, and there is such instruction in which the antecedent of the moral law is probed. There is the kind of Hebrew study which constitutes the refinement of language skill alone, and then there is the kind of study in which language becomes a garment for sentiments of faith; when our students learn what a noble Zionist thinker, Chaim Greenberg, insisted that they learn: not just the literal meaning of such words as מצוה and יראה and אהבה and קדוש השם but also the meaning of these words to their deepest sounding and in the full context of all their spiritual tension.

*Philadelphia, Minutes of November 5, 1964, meeting of Community Relations Council, incorporating sub-committee report.

JUDAISM MORE THAN "RELIGION ONLY"

I trust that no one will misunderstand me and read into my lines a rejection of Judaism's cultural components or a disavowal of the bonds of kinship which bind us one to another beyond the bonds of faith. Judaism is manifestly more than a mere system of precept and belief; it is a covenant binding a historic community. One cannot extract an idea from its historic form and expect it to retain its essence; both must be transmitted —the idea *and* the form, tradition *and* belief.

I speak only of an emphasis in our teaching, a centrality of concern which, perforce, must vary from generation to generation, and which in our time and place must focus on the transmission of belief.

The narrow conception of Judaism as "religion only" is alien to me, and not just on intellectual and historic grounds. I reject this narrow concept on experiential grounds as well, for in my personal journey of the spirit I was an אוהב ישראל long before I heard the ואהבת את יהוה.

It is the ואהבת את יהוה which our children need to hear from us, hear it with the hearing of the ear, and sense it in their soul as well. For the Judaism which we mean to convey to them is more than verbal profession, more than intellectual conceptualization, much more indeed than a refined doubt sublimated into a hesitant assumption. It is an all-consuming inner conviction involving the full faculties of man, his heart and mind and will and spirit too, all of them blending into a rapturous communion with the divine. This is faith! This is what we mean by belief in God!

May we find the way to kindle the spark of such a faith in our children, and the strength to nurture it to a bright and burning flame. Then will we be able to contemplate with confidence the future of our community, that community of our people which we helped to shape. Then the time will come when those who see our children will say of us that we did not "labor in vain, nor bring forth for terror, that ours *is* the seed blessed of the Lord."

More was lost. More than this or that value -- more even than a world of values. There has been a 'devaluation of valuation' as such. Man's capacity to valuate has been brought to question.

Values, after all, call for choice. And choice is possible only where there is freedom for the will. But science sternly reminds us that this freedom is an illusion or at best severely circumscribed. We may think that we choose freely but we don't. Our choice is conditioned by a complex of inner and outer circumstances. By situation and tradition, by the environment, and the coalescence of our genes. The world which science perceives, moreover, is a morally neutral world. It is a world of fact alien to value. Values are only preferences, physics asserts, mere emotions -- the proper object for study by psychology. But, then, psychology comes and abolishes the notion of integral normality: the normal and the abnormal, the good and the bad -- they blend; there is no true line between them. There is neither hot nor cold. There is no high or low. And there is an enormous amount of nothing in the All.

Man's mind is the sole source of value in a world devoid of values and his capacity to value is feeble -- so concludes science, even while it gives man power over nature, enormous power, the power to control, the power to manipulate, the God-given power to create. Here is that paradox of which Hans Jonas speaks: feebleness and strength in one, omnipotence and emptiness, the 'anarchy of human choosing' combined with man's 'apocalyptic' sway.

This is the ceremony of innocence drowned. The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity. Such are the stresses and the strains of which the New View of Man is consequence. Against this modern essentially hopeless view of man stands Judaism's assertion of man's perfect-ability. Note the noun: Judaism speaks of man's perfectability and not of his perfect state. It recognizes that man is weak and vain, self-centered and prone to evil. Indeed, Judaism's highest holy day - Yom Kippur - grows out of this recognition. And with all that, man's sinfulness is not Yom Kippur's central theme.

Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur are called the Days of Awe, and awesome is the mood which fills us as we contemplate our lives, our past, as we strive to pierce the veil of our future. Somber, though, our sentiments may be, the fundamental force impelling our worship is really one of hope, for Yom Kippur speaks to us primarily of man's potentiality for achievement, of his capacity for good. This is the central message of the day, this the essence of its thought: not sin, but repentance -- not eveil, but redemption!

Whatever there is of darkness in our contemplation of the past serves merely to enhance the light of our hope for the future. We are reminded of our failings, not to debase us, not to cast us into gloom, but to inspire us to higher and to nobler striving. We confess our sins not so much out of a sense of our unworthiness, but with full faith that out of feebleness new strength will come, that we can, if we will, turn every tear of disappointment into a pearl of virtue, every defeat of yesterday into the laughter and the triumph of tomorrow.

Judaism maintains an abiding faith in human nature, the passionate convictuon that man can choose the good. Ours is not a religion of euphoria, to be sure; it does not close its eyes to the evil of the world' Yom Kippur's 'al chet' is long and detailed, no sin conceivable is left unspoken in its self-accusing lines. But Judaism refuses to see man as a sinner who must sin, whose sin is existential, whose transgression is inevitable. It sees within him, rather, the seed of self-improvement, it invests him with the dream for human betterment.

אם יהיו חטאיכם כשנים כשלג ילבינו "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow." Every sinner can be a saint, every Jacob can become an Israel, if only he wrestle with his God. This is the beautiful promise of our faith and this is mandate: that we seek within ourselves and that we seek in others be it ever so hidden, the spark divine that hallows and exalts the dust that is man.

Can we heed this mandate: Can we share this vision? Is not faith in human nature, an empty dream, a vain illusion? How can we talk of human goodness, we who live in an age of unmatched desolation and destruction, especially we Jews who have been wounded more grieveously than any other people by the naked blade of man's brutality to man? Just where shall we look for the good? Shall we look for it in others? But there is not one among us who has not been hurt by another, who has not been wounded to the innermost recesses of his heart by his fellow man: through slander, humiliation, the deprivation of some dear possession, a promise broken, a trust betrayed,

The Lives We Dream

Your program chairman, in her various communications with me, gave me free choice as far as my topic is concerned, and I am grateful for her courtesy. I finally determined to speak to you on the topic which has been announced: THE LIVES WE DREAM TO LIVE, and the theme which I want to develop is Judaism's essential faith in human nature, its conviction that man can choose and achieve the good.

It is a conviction which has been seriously challenged in our time, challenged by the sorry spectacle of man's brutality to man to which we are continuously witness and of which the massacre at Songmy is but the latest evidence -- look and listen if you have the guts to do so; the father of a child of his own mechanically gunning down a six or seven year old whose one hand covers an even younger child and whose other hand is stretched out to plead for mercy or to ward off the deadly bullets. Whatever the reason, in vain. Mechanical man knows no mercy. Only death was merciful then. Be that as it may, such and like spectacles of human behavior have led many thoughtful men to conclude that our moral foundations have decayed, that man is, at best, without values and that life, in its totality, is absurd.

William Butler Yeats, that great poet of our century, describes our modern malady in what has become one of his best known poems. His words go to the very heart of the matter:

The world of moral certitudes has crumbled
Its center did not hold.
Anarchy is loosed upon the land.
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed. And everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.

Our certitude, our moral confidence, was rocked by change -- inexorable legacy of technological advance. It was erroded by the decay of its supportive institutions -- of synagogue and church, of school and home. It was ground to the dust by the horror to which we were witness: the Cyclon B of Belsen and the mushroom cloud.

Russians."

and, lastly - listen to this travesty of travesties, this mockery of our martyrdom - we must be certain to teach our children that "Nazism directly affected the founding of the State of Israe," as if there everxxx could be a mechanical equating of the two, a balancing of blessing and of curse! Is this what we want our children to know? Is this the sum and substance of the wisdom which can be gleaned from this most tragic chapter of our recent history?

Surely we would do better to help our students grapple with the more fundamental issues which are involved, issues whose resolutions might help them in their quest for faith and for a life reflective of it: How does the Jew react to evil? Is spiritual resistance an answer to an enemy? Doestcollective guilt obviate individual responsibility? What can we say about the face of man after Auschwitz? And what about the face of God? Can we believe in Him in spite of it?

Yes, there is history and there is

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

THE AMERICAN JEW: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT - A New Curriculum for a New Community.

How good and how pleasant it is to be here, reunited with colleagues and friends, with men and women from many congregations but of one faith, bound together by a mutual sacred cause.

What do we seek in seeking our brothers? What are the ends we mean to serve in coming here? To learn, perhaps to teach, to take counsel together, to gather the rich fruit of our common experience -- all these, yet even more -- to draw strength from one another, to receive that sustenance of spirit which comes from the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls.

It is a sustenance which flows in ample measure from our fellowship. I can well testify to that, for no aspect of my work gives me greater satisfaction than my association with the men and women of NATE, whose friendship I value., and whose wise counsel is indispensable to

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

the fulfillment of my tasks. This is a professional organization of the highest order; its programs and activities are substantive, and its members establish exacting standards of conduct and attainment.

When important posts had to be filled this year, on a regional and national level, we did not have to look beyond our own ranks to find the men to fill them. This fact alone bespeaks NATE's considerable growth and maturity.

We meet in Philadelphia, cradle of American democracy and birthplace of much that is valuable in American Jewish life. In this community institutions vital to our continuity were born; here were reared the men and women, leaders of the spirit, whose life and work gave shape to our destiny.

This is a fitting place, then , for the communal "cheshbon ha'nefesh" which our assembly, in its theme, enjoins.

This is a fitting time to consider the American Jewish community -- its past,

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

its present, and its prospects.

A CHANGING COMMUNITY

This Convention Program Committee was wise to ask Dr. Bertram Korn to consider this theme in its fulness; he is a diligent student of our community, one of its foremost chroniclers, whose perceptive vision of its past gives him clear warrant to pierce the veil of our future.

Dr. Korn and I agreed, in order to avoid duplication, that I would limit my variations of the theme to education, while he would deal with the changing patterns of the community as a whole. On second thought, I am not entirely happy with this arrangement. At the very least, Dr. Korn's address should have preceded mine, for changes in the educative process follow, they do not precede changes in the character of the community. The school is the servant of society, not its master.

At the risk of offending a colleague by breaking my agreement with him, at the evenmore fearsome risk of having my

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

analysis contradidted less than 24 hours hence, I feel constrained to consider the transformations of our community, if only bruefly, for without it, without some knowledge of its newer nature, the new directions demanded of our schools can not be understood. Now this transformation of our community is nothing short of cataclysmic, for it involves not only its externals -- its structures, composition, its institutions; it reaches to the very core of our communal being, and we encounter an entirely new Jew -- the American Jew -- and the problems he encounters are unlike those our people faced, at any other time in any other place.

"Al regel achat," simply and succinctly put, our inner alteration involves a loosening, a dissolution of the ethnic strains which bound us once, and the compensating reinforcement of religious bonds expected to serve as unifying force ib their stead.

To put the matter somewhat differently,

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

the secular cult or nationhood envisaged by many Jews of a previous generation, has proved illusory, incapable of fulfillment on the American scene; the community has become a communion, bound by belief, turning primarily to religion to define its nature and to justify its continuity.

JEWISH FACTORS

Two events of recent Jewish history gave main impulse and momentum to this metamorphosis: the destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of Israel.

The European Jewish community gave shape to our own, sustaining its cultural and its religious life during most of the formative years. More to the point, Europe gave us its community concept, with its dominant ethnic strains which permeated even its religious expressions. Until World War II, its ideology governed our thinking and our doing. We were involved in the European Jewish situation and conceived our own problem largely in its light, so much so that even the 100% American Council for Judaism spent

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

its full energies in the feverish debate of an essentially European question, the the Emancipation, which never really was of issue here. Be that as it may, the tragic death of European Jewry cut the phsytological and the ideological nexus which bound us to our communal parents. We were compelled to look at our situation as it really is, without the overtones provided by their understanding of it. And we quickly learned that the old-world community concept does not conform to the realities of the American scene, that the resolutions offered by European Jewish ideology simply will not serve us here.

The achievement of Jewish nationhood in Israel, by curious paradox, further enfeebled the non-religious bonds of our union. True, the dream of secular no less than of religious nationalist was fulfilled, their loving labor justified, the validity of their thought established. But the very fulfillment of this dream robbed the adherents of political Zionism

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

of their reason for collective continuity in the Diaspora. The ever-waning force of a fervor fired before the State's establishment is not sufficient to sustain group loyalty, nor is the State's continuing need for help -- after all, one does not have to be a Jew to be a friend of Israel. Ultimately only two avenues lie open before the secular nationalist that he can choose: either he migrates to Israel, following th deed the logic of his thought; or remaining here, he finds andadded, more relevant means for identification with the American Jewish community. The synagogue becomes his likely choice.

THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT

But not only momentous changes in Jewish life contributed to the diminution of our ethnicity; this diminution was deepened further by an environment which <u>does</u> demand conformity as the price of acceptance.

The measure of required conformity is greater than we think, far greater than America's professed adherence to the creed

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

of cultural pluralism might lead us to expect. The American Way of Life is not so open that divergent cultural components can easily be made a part of it. A blue ribbon jury of the majority rules; it is dominated by those who came here first; and they are reluctant to accept components which clash with their culture. Folkways fundamentally foreign to the American environment are quickly discarded by a minority which means to escape its not-so-invisible ghetto. Only religion is exempted from these demands; the American ethos recognizes it as a "collective privacy" which may be maintained -- at least, so it appears, for even here some doubts prevail.

In his penetrating study of the problem, Ben Halpern of Brandeis University points out that the acceptance of the "triple melting-pot" analysis does not at all allow us to conclude that Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism stand in the very same relationship to the American social concensus. Here too a jury of the major-

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

ity rules, and the standard of acceptance is set by American Protestantism with its conception that religion resides in the single man, that the church, the congregation, is an institution designed to help the individual realize his faith, and not at all an instrument to nurture group religion; in a word, "that freedom of worship ... the privacy of religious conscience .. is a right of individuals, and not of collective entities at all."

If this is true in the realm of religion, it certainly is true, a forteriori, in the realm of culture. Individual divergences are accepted, but that which intensifies collective distinctiveness is decisively discouraged. To be sure now, certain elements of traditional group culture can be given public expression and then find public acceptance. But usually they are trivial traits, drawn from the surface of tradition, that which can be readily understood, the light, the amusing, the entertaining, but about as far removed from tradition's genuine core as is "Fiddler on

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

the Roof" from Sholom Aleichem.

This, then, is the confluence of inner and of outer forces, the interaction of Jewish experience and the American environment which has resulted in the diminution of our ethnic character and in the reconciliation of our religious bonds. A hundred sociological studies attest to the reality of this transformation. American Jews see themselves as Jews primarily by their religion. Nothing else -- not culture, not nationhood, not even the giving of charity -- as of essential consequence in securing the continuity of their identification.

AFFILIATION WITHOUT AFFIRMATION

But we must carry our analysis just one step further, for we find now that religious identification by itself, affiliation without affirmation, is also not sufficient for the need. American Jews may join a congregation as a matter of communal necessity; they cannot long remain in it, without facing the test of faith.

Ben Halpern puts the matter well:

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

"... it is impossible to live forever in the synagogue only as in a socially useful institution. At some time one is bound to realize that this is a House of God. How, one must ask, do I stand before God? Do I really believe in Him? Do I believe in Him as a Jew??

Are not these the questions which our people ask with ever-increasing urgency? We saw dramatic demonstration of this fact less than a month ago, at the Union's Biennial in San Francisco, in the reaction of the delegates, and not as merely in the substance of the discussions. Seven hundred people crowded a meeting hall, many of them standing the better part of a full day to listen to a discussion of the "why" of Jewishness. A like number attended a lecture on "The Demands of Prayer," the kind of topic which, a decade ago, would at best have attracted a handful of cognoscenti. Yes, and 1800 men and women stormed the doors of the grand ballroom, to hear four rabbis define their God-belief. They could not get

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

their full of listening. Over and over again, they insisted on an answer to such questions as: How can I believe in God in the face of the teachings of modern science and technology? Can man really experience God through prayer? What is the unique and endiring contribution that Judaism can make to the modern world?

These are the questions which perplex our people. These questions also delineate the essential problem of the American Jew, for ours is no longer the problem of identification, the difficulty of defining our community status. Ours, rather, is the problem of finding meaning for an identification which we have already chosen or which has been chosen for us. Ours is essentially a spiritual problem. It is a problem of ideas and beliefs. It is a crisis of conscience.

THE COMMUNITY OF OUR CHILDREN

What is true for the adult community (to move just a bit closer to the area of our more immediate concern as educators) is true in equal if not greater measure for the community of our children, for the

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

emerging American Jew. This is to be expected. After all, our children have experienced neither the holocaust, nor the struggle for Israel's establishment, those two dramatic, traumatic events whose remembrance still binds us to the thinking and feeling of the past.

The Riverton Report was especially revealing in its contrast of the older and the younger generation. Surely you recall some of its findings:

When the respondents asked, for instance, why Jews continue to exist as a distinctive group, parents spoke of the age-old hostility between Jew and gentile. The children, on the other hand, felt that the virtues of Judaism justify the survival of the group. (Their reason for Jewishness is positive, no more reaction to persecution.)

The adults of Riverton expressed an overwhelming preference for predominantly Jewish neighborhoods, while the majority of adolescents were perfectly willing to widen their community contacts. (Having

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

experienced no "age-old" hostility from the non-Jew, they feel no reluctance to live in mixed neighborhoods.)

In the realm of charitable guving, parents favored exclusively Jewish causes, both here and abroad, not excluding Israel. In sharp contrast, their children chose many non-Jewish causes as objects of their beneficence. (Clearly, a declining sense of group closeness is manifested here.) And, most directly to the point, when the respondents were asked: what is a Jew? How would you describe him? A good many parents still referred to Jewish culture and to the happenstance of birgh - "my parent is a Jew...I'm a Jew," while fully ninety-seven per cent of the adolescents defimed the Jew exclusively by his allegiance to the Jewish religion.

Conclude the authors of the study: "The present Jewish self-image demands religious affiliation as the identifying characteristic... Among adolescents, hardly any other way of distinguishing the Jew is possible...It is not that they are

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

more religious than their parents. Rather, they are more cut off from the old-world... more completely molded by the American scene, they simply see no other meaning for the word 'Jew'."

As for the matter of discovering meaning in Jewishness, if anything, our children are even more persistent than are their parents in their quest for the relevance of religion. Where adults can often evade the test of faith by accepting the authority of tradition or of religious leadership, adolescents, facing their maturity, cannot. That is why they ask us for an answer to the "why" of Jewishness and thr more sensitive and intelligent they are, the more earnestly do they ask it.

THE IRRELEVANCE OF OUR TEACHING

Do we answer their questions in what we teach and do? Is our curriculum designed to answer them? Honesty compels us to say "no" or, at best, to offer only a qualified "yes," for our program of study was given its broad, bold outlines decades ago when our community was different and its needs

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

were different. Developed under the impact of the old community concept, it fails to meet the requirements of the new. It emphasizes the ethnic, rather than the religious; it focuses on outer form and not on inner faith.

Our problem is not unlike that of the miller whose mill is in excellent condition in all respects, its machinery sound, excepting only one: the mill wheel stands one foot above the water. Much of our teaching is just that -- obe foot above the water, failing to cut into the current of our children's deeper needs.

The objectives which we articulate in our curriculum is sound enough. Dr. Freehof's "Statement of Guiding Principles" clearly, stirringly sets forth our real purposes. The listing of curricular goals is also most acceptable, albeit I must confess some embarrassment with the wording of the very first article which bids us "instill in" our children, not a faith in God, mind you, but rather, a"faith in the Jewish religion, according to the Liberal Reform tradition," whatever that

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

may mean.

But when we move from principle to program, and from the program to the classroom, the gap between objectives and attainment widens, and the relevant becomes largely irrelevant. A Bible taught as literature, history presented principally as the story of persecution, a story moreover, in which God somehow disappears as a protagonist once we make the move from the Talmud, to the Current Era ... Hebrew instruction which emphasizes linguistic competence ... even the teaching of customs and ceremonies when portrayed primarily as pattern of group behavior ... all this may well attract our children and gain their initial willingness to be identified as Jew; it will not provide them with the meaning which they seek to make their identification lasting and vital. As Abraham Heschel put it, in a different context

?... an education which continues to evade intellectual problems or which ignores emotional obtuseness is doomed to

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

failure. Teaching the geography of Israel will not necessarily evoke the love of Israel. Nor will merely the teaching of the rules about the dagesh chazak assure one of becoming conscious of the pintaleh yid."

Clearly a new approach is needed, attendant upon the re-evaluation of our educational presuppositions and something more than superficial change is required. To paraphrase our colleague David Hachen: we cannot be content merely to put a new cover on an old curriculum, or even to revise it; we must write it anew, in the light of the newer need.

TOWARD A NEW CURRICULUM

This task will not be fulfilled overnight; only evolutions, not revolutions in education have a chance at success. As a case in point -- and I had occasion to make mention of this in a recent Jewish Teacher editorial -- it took the Lutheran Church of America nearly twenty years to complete its

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

new parish educational plan, and our Christian colleagues had almost unlimited material and professional resources at their command -- some $5,000,000.00 and forty-one full time educators on their national staff.

But more than material and technical obstacles must be overcome; ideological problems confront us also, for no small part of our difficulty is rooted in the radical divergence of theologic view which obtains on an adult level... After all, we cannot teach our children what we do not agree upon, what we cannot accept ourselves.

Here, at least, some forward steps are being taken, for only a few months hence, at the behest of the Commission Curriculum Committee and its Chairman Samuel Glasner, a Conference of Jewish Theologians will convene, involving leading thinkers of conflicting views -- Gittelsohn and Fackenheum, Bemporad and Joans, Borowitz and Reines and Olan -- not so much to forge a unified Reform

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

Jewish theology, but in the hope of at least coming to an agreement on what we should teach to our children and when we should teach it, on how we can enrich their knowledge and experience to make them believing Jews!

Hopefully these deliberations will be fruitful in their effect. But, of course, we don't have to await this fruition or even the more fundamental changes contemplated in our national curriculum in order to give the needed new direction to our common sacred enterprise. Our criticism of certain fundamentals does not encompass, in blanket fashion, everything we have and do. Much of what we have is exceedingly good, and everything we do can be made to yield our newer purposes, for their realization depends not so much on this or that subject, but rather on its use to which the subject is put, whatever be its matter.

As a concrete case in point, about a year ago a number of communal leaders

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

and educators from this very community (Philadelphia, Minutes of November 5, 1964 meeting of Community Relations Council, incorporating sub-committee report Mrs. William ~~Kaderitz, Dr. Eleazar Goelman, Dr. Ben-Horin, et alia~~) gathered to develop objectives for the teaching of the holocaust. This is a subject which should be taught in our schools indeed; we expect to have a text on it within the year. But listen to the educational objectives which the Philadelphia group selected:

our children must come to know and feel that "Nazism is a monstrous example of religious bigotry."

they must understand the "meaning of the Nuremberg laws" with particular reference to the Nazi "claim to the racial superiority of German"

they must be able to comprehend such words as "Swastika," "slave labor," "concentration camps," and "gas chamber."

we should remind them that "Nazis persecuted others than Jews, such as the Christians and Poles, the Czechs and the

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

Russians."

and, lastly - listen to this travesty of travesties, this mockery of our martyrdom - we must be certain to teach our children that "Nazism directly affected the founding of the State of Israe," as if there everxxx could be a mechanical equating of the two, a balancing of blessing and of curse! Is this what we want our children to know? Is this the sum and substance of the wisdom which can be gleaned from this most tragic chapter of our recent history?

Surely we would do better to help our students grapple with the more fundamental issues which are involved, issues whose resolutions might help them in their quest for faith and for a life reflective of it: How does the Jew react to evil? Is spiritual resistance an answer to an enemy? Doestcollective guilt obviate individual responsibility? What can we say about the face of man after Auschwitz? And what about the face of God? Can we believe in Him in spite of it?

Yes, there is history and there is

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

history... There is the Bible as literature, and the Bible as the Word of God... There is ethical instruction which is mere moral preachment, and there us such instruction in which the antecesent of the moral law is probed... There is the kind of Hebrew study which constitutes the refinement of language skill alone, and then there is the kind of study in which language becomes a garment for sentiments of faith; when our students learn what a noble Zionist thinker, Chaim Greenberg, insisted, then they learn, not just the literal meaning of such words as "mitsva," and "yirah," and "ahava," and "kiddush Hashem," but also the meaning of these words to their deepest sounding and in the full context of all their spiritual tension.

JUDAISM MORE THAN 'RELIGION ONLY'

I trust that no one will misunderstand me and read into my lines a rejection of Judaism's cultural component or a disavowal of the bonds of kinship which bind us to another beyond the bonds of faith. Judaism is manifestly more than a mere

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

system of precept and belief; it is a covenant binding a historic community. One cannot extract an idea from its historic form and expect it to retain its essence; both must be transmitted, the idea and the form, tradition and belief.

I speak only of an emphasis in our teaching, a centrality of concern which, per force, must vary from generation to generation, and which in our time and place must focus on the transmission of belief.

The narrow conception of Judaism as 'religion only' is alien to me, and not just on ibtellectual and historic grounds. I reject this narrow concept on experiential grounds as well for in my personal journey of the spirit, I was an "ohev yisroel" long before I heard the "veohavto es Adonoi."

It is the "veohavto es Adonoi" which our children need to hear from us, hear it with the hearing of the ear, and sense it in their soul as well. For the Judaism which we mean to convey to them is more than verbal profession, more than intellect-

(Begin 1st line flush; indent subsequent paragraphs)

ual conceptialization, much more indeed than a refined doubt sublimated into a hesitant assumption. It is an all consuming inner conviction involving the full faculties of man, his heart and mind and will and spirit too, all of them blending in to a rapturous communion with the divine. This is faith! This is what we mean by belief in God!

May we find the way to kindle the spark of such a faith in our children, and the strength to nurture it to bright and burning flame. Then will we be able to contemplate with confidence the future of our community, that community of our people which we helped to shape. Then the time will come when those who see our children will say of us that we did not "labor in vain, nor bring forth for terror, that ours is the seed blessed of the Lord."

Additional copies in book case

Chapter Eight

•

REFORM JUDAISM AND EDUCATION

ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

The American Jewish community's approach to the complex of problems encompassed in the phrase "religion and education" can best be understood as the effect of an interplay of inner and outer forces, of the ideal and the real, of Jewish theology and Jewish history; it is the product of a people's faith shaped by its experience.

The monism which characterizes Judaism, its steadfast insistence of God's unity and its attendant unitary conception of human nature, clearly calls for the most comprehensive understanding of education's role, for the summary dismissal of any effort to compartmentalize it into well-defined, only thinly-related segments labeled "secular" and "sacred." On the other

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler is Director of Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, holding primary responsibility for the development of Reform Judaism's program of religious education. In addition, Rabbi Schindler heads the national policy-making body for religious education within Reform Judaism.

hand, the life experience of Jews, their persecution in lands where church and state were one and the whiplash of anti-Semitism which they and their children were made to feel in state religion-oriented schools, have made them espouse the ideal of the "secular" public school and thus to qualify the concept of education which comes from their faith.

Hence Jews stand in the vanguard of the struggle to maintain the principle of separation wherever church and state meet on the American scene. They resist the intrusion of denominational instruction and observances in the public classroom even as they oppose with vigor the assignment of public funds to church-established schools. At the same time, their essentially religious world view leads them to understand that not all religious concerns can be excised from the public school curriculum, that every system of education worthy of the name must strive to awaken awareness of life's spiritual dimension and foster devotion to its values. American Jews are confident that the public school can serve these ends without invoking the sectarian symbols and sanctions of institutional religion, without transmitting the teaching and forms of even those great faiths from which our spiritual and moral values are ultimately derived.

Judaism's View of Education

Because it is one of the oldest religions of mankind, its adherents scattered through all the world and their faith challenged by many varied winds of thought, Judaism is not a simple faith. It is, rather, a complex system of life and thought, embracing many points of view and distinctive only in its totality, in the singular integration of diverse details. Thus, there is no single Jewish philosophy of education; the religious literature of the Jew sounds many variations on the theme.

Still, a leitmotif can be perceived among the descants, allowing us to speak of a Jewish view of teaching and of learning.

Central to this view is Judaism's concept of man, which holds his nature to be a blending of body and soul, of matter and of spirit. Man is made of the dust, yet there is something in him which has its source in the divine and enables him to achieve communion with it. Because he was fashioned in the image of God, he can encounter God, if only he seek Him. "Man is not cut off and isolated from the universe, but a part of it. Somehow he can reach out and understand it; Man may be limited and small, but he can grow toward God because something in him corresponds to God."[1] The realization of this potentiality latent within him, the attainment of communion with the divine, constitutes man's essential task; it is the infinite duty which has been laid on finite human life.

Education is a principal means for life's fulfillment; "a man needs to study, so that he may become himself."[2] The unlearned man can never be pious; he may will to find God, but he does not know the way; he perceives the design, but he lacks the tools and has failed to master the craft. Learning is the key to the universe. Man becomes God-like, holy as God is holy, only as he grows in the knowledge of His world and Word.

Education is a means, not the end. Though prizing knowledge above all earthly possessions, Judaism ascribes no worth to study for study's sake alone. "He who has knowledge of the Torah but no fear of God, is like the keeper of a treasury who has the inner keys, but not the outer keys. He cannot enter."[3] The goal of learning is the refinement of a sensitivity to the divine; the beginning and the end of wisdom is the fear of heaven.

Judaism's conception of human nature is essentially unitary. It speaks of body and of soul but sees them bound in indis-

soluble union. Certainly the body is not burdened with all sin, nor is the soul given credit for all virtue.

> To what may this be compared? To a king who owned a beautiful orchard which contained splendid figs. Now, he appointed two watchmen therein, one lame and the other blind. One day the lame man said to the blind, "I see beautiful figs in the orchard. Come and take me upon thy shoulder, that we may procure and eat them." So the lame bestrode the blind, procured and ate them. Some time later, the owner of the orchard came and inquired of them, "Where are those beautiful figs?" The lame man replied, "Have I then feet to walk with?" The blind man replied, "Have I then eyes to see with?" What did he do? He placed the lame upon the blind and judged them together. So will the Holy One, blessed be He, return the soul to the body and judge them as one.[4]

Man is not a loose federation of two or even three separate states—body, mind, spirit—but rather is a composite of these correlative principles of being.

The implications of this conception for the understanding of education's task are clear. Its function is all-encompassing. It cannot be divided in any manner or restricted in any fashion. One cannot refine the competence of mind while oblivious to the needs and potentialities of body or blind to the values and final purposes which are born of man's spirit. The development of the total man is every teacher's concern. All life is education's proper province.

Judaism's reluctance to ascribe a final duality to human nature extends to the nature of man's universe. Here too, no artificial divisions are made, no realms sequestered from the horizons of inquiry which a man can properly pursue. "There is no not-holy, there is only that which has not been hallowed, which has not yet been redeemed to its holiness."[5]

The history of the Jews reveals no parallel to the warfare of theology with science which mars the history of Christendom.

Scientific inquiry was usually encouraged and given free rein. As one example, a twelfth-century curriculum sets the following order of studies: reading, writing, Torah, Mishnah, Hebrew grammar, poetry, Talmud, philosophy of religion, logic, arithmetic, geometry, optics, astronomy, music, mechanics, medicine, and lastly, metaphysics.[6] The array of Jewish scholars who coupled knowledge of Jewish law and lore with equal competence in the sciences is impressive; the leading contributors to the development of Jewish theology invariably ranked among the foremost scientists of their day. Moses ben Maimon (usually called Maimonides) offers classic proof: he was Talmudist and philosopher, astronomer and physician; his mastery of rabbinics was sufficiently great to have future generations of Jews designate him as a "second Moses"; his philosophical writings, seeking to harmonize Judaism and Aristotelianism, reveal an equally excellent grasp of Greek thought; and his scientific works—two volumes on poisons and their antidotes, a book on sexual intercourse, essays on asthma, on hemorrhoids, on hygiene, and a commentary on the aphorisms of Hippocrates—were consequential enough to merit translation and republication throughout the eight centuries since they were first written, most recently in English, by Johns Hopkins University, on the occasion of a Maimonides anniversary.

The study of nature is not inimical to the pursuit of the religious life, so teaches Judaism; it is a pillar on which the life of faith rests; God can be known only through its free and unrestricted service.[7] The student of science ought never be hindered in his quest by theological presuppositions; the "Torah is not a code that compels us to believe in falsehoods."[8] A contradiction between the teachings of Judaism and the findings of science can only be apparent, never real, and calls for the careful reevaluation of both. Either may be at fault, tradition misunderstood or scientific method poorly applied, and if

the conclusions of science prove correct, tradition must yield the point and modify its understanding of the Word.

Nothing which serves to expand the adventurous horizon of man's mind should be excluded from consideration in the life-long educative process. The science, the wisdom, the skills of the world are as significant to man as are the teachings of tradition. All are necessary if man is to fulfill the purpose inherent in life.

That purpose must be served. If it is not, knowledge, whatever its kind, is vain; "the end of the matter, all having been heard: revere God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."[9] It is in this spirit that the modern Jew voices his prayer:

> O Lord, open our eyes, that we may see and welcome all truth, whether shining from the annals of ancient revelations or reaching us through the seers of our own time; for Thou hidest not thy light from any generation of Thy children that yearn for Thee and seek Thy guidance.[10]

When they speak these lines at their weekly Sabbath services, and when they translate into their lives, as they hopefully do, the ideal implicit in them, Jews keep alive the ancient prophet's dream, a dream superbly characteristic of Judaism's view of learning, which envisages man's future as a time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea."[11]

Faith Tempered by Experience

This then is the compelling religious conception which governs Judaism's approach to education: study is a never-ending task in life, a vital means for its fulfillment. All realms of knowledge, not just religious disciplines, but the sciences of

man and nature too, and the humanities, are encompassed by this mandate; and all learning must be made to serve the end of faith, this end alone, the principal object of being—to help the I encounter the Eternal Thou.

It is a conception which still holds sway for Jews, at least for those who define their Jewishness primarily in religious terms. Its modification, to which we alluded in the introduction, is not one of substance but one of detail; and it applied, in the main, to American Jews, whose recent history witnessed their mass migration from central Europe to America.

Jews were made to suffer grievously in the lands of their origin; their existence was in continuous jeopardy, their religious life severely circumscribed. Invariably, their persecution was most relentless where Luther's dictum, *cuius regio eius religio*, determined the relation between church and state, where rulers told the ruled how to worship God, and priests told rulers how to execute state affairs. By the time Jews came to these shores in substantial numbers, the alliance between Protestant dissent and secular humanism had yielded its richest fruit; the principle of religious freedom was well established, and the concept of voluntariness in matters of faith had become a cornerstone of American law. Here Jews found safety. Here they found freedom in a measure rarely matched in the two thousand years of their wandering. Little wonder that they attributed their liberties primarily to the principle of separation and that they are boldly zealous in its defense!

The sharp and comforting contrast between the old and the new was strikingly manifested in the realm of public education. In Europe only a handful of Jewish children were granted admission to government-established schools; the lucky few who were thus chosen had to make a payment of blood for their privilege. They were subjected to stinging indignities, insulted

and assaulted to remind them of their inferiority, to make them appreciate the gracious gift bestowed. Whatever the ultimate purpose, the state was hardly guiltless. State-appointed teachers condoned or even encouraged such incidents. These expressions of anti-Semitism invariably were cloaked in the garment of religious bigotry, given occasion by class prayers (always alluding to the Crucifixion), by school observances of festivals (Easter was ever a propitious time to resuscitate the blood libel), and by the caustic commentaries of teachers in interpreting the Biblical text. Not so in America! Here the Jewish immigrant found governmental schools whose doors were opened wide to welcome his children, whose teachers and administrators accorded them treatment fully equal to that extended to all other students. Again, the American Jew attributed his blessing primarily to the principle of separation, to the circumstance that the American public school had been divested of those denominational dimensions that so distressed him and his children elsewhere. Thus it was that American Jews became champions of the "secular" public school, learning to reverence it as a "precious gift to be passionately protected and preserved."[12]

Here we confront the modern-day modification of Judaism's traditional approach to learning. Today's American Jews recognize the worth of disjoining the educational process, conceding the possibility of its departmentalization into "secular" and "sacred" components.

The modification is modest indeed. It involves a peripheral change, not an alteration in essence. It constitutes a division of labor, as it were, and not a dichotomy of final purposes. The goals of education, public and private, remain the same. The public school can well serve religion's ultimate concerns without also teaching religion in any formal sense.[13]

Maintaining the Wall—Religious Observances

American Judaism offers substantial, unaccustomed unanimity in its approach to the many issues affecting the adjustment of church and state in the realm of public education. The response is uniform and unequivocal, always applying the principle enunciated by the highest court, "separation means separation, not something less."

Every ritual expression of religion in the public elementary and high schools is rejected on this basis, from the recitations of prayers to the devotional reading of the Bible, from the singing of sacred songs to the observance of sectarian festivals, not excluding joint religious celebrations.

Long before the Supreme Court rendered its decision in the *Engel* v. *Vitale* case, American Jews asserted that state laws requiring or permitting the recitation of prayers are wholly inconsistent with the Establishment Clause, even when these prayers are chosen for their "nondenominational" quality or composed with this intent in mind.[14] Moreover, to be true to its essential nature, prayer must be personal, particular, passionate; it cannot be neutral or detached. Here, Jews share fully the view of the late Paul Tillich, who holds the "unspecified affirmation of God" to be "irrelevant," a "rhetorical-political abuse" of religion in its finest sense.

> Politicians, dictators, and other people who wish to use rhetoric to make an impression on their audience like to use God in this (unspecified) sense. It produces the feeling in their listeners that the speaker is serious and morally trustworthy. This is especially successful if they can brand their foes as atheistic.[15]

The rote recitation of "neutral" prayers holds forth no hope for the attainment of a meaningful religious experience; it is form without substance, an empty gesture bereft of spiritual significance. Nor can such recitation, without further comment

by the teacher or discussion by the class, be seen to serve the ends of character education; the expectation that the mechanical mouthing of prayer formulas will steel the moral fibre of the student runs counter to reason, counter to evidence, counter to all accepted theories of learning.

What is true for "neutral" prayer is true for nondenominational Bible reading, not when the Book is studied as part of a great literature course, but when it is ordered as a daily exercise in religious devotion. Such Bible reading as the latter virtually constitutes compulsory attendance at a religious service. Jews fear, further, that in this manner Christological ideas at variance with the Jewish understanding of the Bible will be transmitted to their children.[16] The Bible is not a nonreligious book, and the hypothesis that it is a nondenominational book must similarly be put to serious question.

> Theological difference among Protestants, Catholics and Jews have necessitated each group authorizing its own translation of the Bible. These theological differences resulted in frequent and prolonged controversies in the nineteenth century, when in numerous instances Catholics asked the courts to ban the readings of the King James Bible and when even Protestant groups fought among themselves as to which denominational translation should be declared non-denominational.[17]

Again, as in the use of prayer, the hurried, perfunctory recitation of texts can never further but only retard the advancement of both religion and moral education.

Jewish opposition to school observance of holy days—particularly the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, the singing of carols, the presentation of Nativity and Crucifixion plays, the display on school property of manger scenes—has been a cause of considerable community tension and of serious interreligious misunderstanding. Hopefully, the preceding paragraphs have helped to clarify the issue somewhat by showing

that a consistent application of the principle of separation makes this opposition essential.

After all, Christmas and Easter are religious holidays in the specific sense of the term. They are sectarian, denominational festivals. They celebrate the birth and death of Jesus, who is the founder of the Christian faith. The Nativity scene is a hallowed symbol of Christ's birth. Christmas pageants are representations in word and dance of profoundly religious, Christian ideas. And Christmas carols derive from the music of the church; their words have origin in its sacred liturgy.

Manifestly, Christmas and Easter are not national or cultural holidays, and thoughtful Christians should be as offended as are Jews by the effort to obscure or to diminish the theological content of their celebration.

> The fact that Christmas music is mixed with such other "holiday" music as "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth" in no way changes the situation. . . . If Christmas is a holy day of great religious importance, Christians should be the first to rebel against its vulgarization in the public schools. Indeed, many sensitive Christians have joined in the campaign to "Put Christ Back into Christmas." But it is with a sense of sadness that we observe how very few Christians have seriously objected to the cheapening of their sacred day.[18]

In a sense, Jews long for the restoration of at least some of the stern standards of colonial New England, whose Puritans prohibited the public celebration of Christmas, barred all "pomp and pagan revelry" in the observance of the day, and insisted that it be marked in conduct with a solemnity befitting Christianity's most holy hour.

The attempt to assuage Jewish sensitivity by instituting joint holiday observances fails in the desired effect. American Jews are particularly discomfited by the Christmas-Hanukkah union,

which, principle aside, gives currency to a grave misunderstanding of their faith when it equates a relatively minor festival of Judaism with a feast of the greatest moment to Christendom. The springtime twin-observance is only slightly more appealing; Easter and Passover hardly strike a heavenly harmony of theme. But what is infinitely more important, a principle is at stake. And principle will not be compromised. Joint observances of religious holidays in public school are not less a breach of the American ideal than are the celebrations of a single faith.

Religious Education and the School Curriculum

The problem of religious instruction in the public school is vexing in its complexity, more intricate by far than are the issues of religious observance. Its ramifications are many and tangled, forming a Gordian knot which, so the better part of valor dictates, cannot be cut in a single bold stroke but must be unraveled with infinite patience and care.

Two possible approaches, both extreme, can readily be rejected and require no lengthy elaboration. Sectarian indoctrination on public school premises clearly constitutes a breaching of the wall between church and state. Indeed, it was ruled to be so by the court in the historic *McCollum* case. The opposite alternative, the elimination of all religious concerns from general school teaching, is neither desirable nor feasible. One simply cannot teach without transmitting some religious data. One cannot convey a full understanding of contemporary culture without at the very least recognizing religion's role in the making of its essential elements–its music, literature and art, its morals and its laws. This view, too, is supported by court opinion. In the *Schempp-Murray* majority decision, Justice Clark took pains to point out that the banning of devotional Bible reading and the injunction against the recitation of the

Lord's Prayer do not by any means imply that the study of the Bible for its "literary and historic qualities" or the study of religion "when presented objectively . . . as part of a secular program of education" constitute a violation of the First Amendment.

But the objective transmission of religion's historic contribution to civilization hardly qualifies as religious teaching. Can religion itself be taught in the public school–its tenets and its values–without partiality, without the substitution of indoctrination for learning? This the question that yields no ready answer and continues to trouble the waters of intergroup relations on the American scene.

A number of proposals in recent years aim to allow the teaching of religious tenets without doing violence to the principle of separation. They build on the assumption that there are fundamental principles of faith which all religions share, which can be isolated and organized in unit form and then transmitted as the common, nondenominational core of faith.

American Jews do not embrace such efforts with a full heart. Of course they agree that a common core exists, that the great religions of the world do hold many views in common. There is a place to allow for full cooperation between religions. However, Jews doubt that these tenets can be isolated from the context of the religious current without destroying their essential nature and without vitiating all that is spiritually meaningful in every faith. Religious ideas and their forms are inseparably intertwined. Both are sanctified by faith. The moment they are separated one from the other, form loses its essence and the idea is robbed of its force.

> Phrasing and style become supremely important and indeed matters of conscience, as is evidenced by the fact that chuches differ not as to the content of the Lord's Prayer, but as to its wording. There is not a single thought in that prayer to which

> a devout Jew could take exception. Yet it is for him a Christian prayer which Jewish tradition and his own religious sensitivity enjoin him from reciting. It is only a person emancipated from religious tradition who speaks of forms as the "externals" of religion. How meaningful then can a common core of belief be that does not have the support of a tradition which includes symbols, memories, powerful emotional associations.[19]

More than this, once an idea is abstracted from one form and is cast in another form, the idea itself undergoes substantive change. When the principles of a faith are isolated from their tradition and combined with other principles similarly extracted, something entirely new emerges. Doubtless this is what the American Council on Education had in mind when it criticized the common-denominator plan on the ground that it "might easily lead to a new sect, a public school sect, which would take its place alongside the existing faiths and compete with them."[20] Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, in his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, makes this pertinent and incisive comment:

> Public school sponsorship of non-denominational religious exercises (and teaching) potentially establishes a new major faith—"public school religion." For a brief, but significant time during the school day, the school becomes a house of worship, the teacher becomes a religious leader, the class becomes a congregation, and the members of the school board are enshrined as founders of the new faith. How are the ritual, the theology, and spiritual heritage of the "new Public School Religion" determined? Through divine revelation and interpretation by theologians? No, by public boards, commissions and courts, elected or appointed through the secular, political process.

Still one other, more practical matter must be considered. Once such a common-core curriculum is actually developed,[21]

how can we be certain that teachers will transmit this teaching without partiality toward their own religious commitment? Are we reasonable to expect teachers to suppress their own deep devotions and commitments? More important by far, and assuming for the moment that the impossible is possible, just what religious values would such objectivity in teaching yield? Proper religious instruction calls not for objective detachment but for passionate involvement. "There is no more ineffective way of teaching religion than to give an objective account of religious history. For this means robbing history of the inner meaning and specific elements of faith and truth."[22]

These arguments manifestly mitigate against all nondenominational or interdenominational religious education plans put forward thus far. This is the considered view of the American Jewish community on the subject.

> We are opposed to all attempts by the public elementary and secondary schools to . . . teach about the doctrines of religion. Without passing on the question whether such teaching is inconsistent with the principle of separation of church and state, we believe that factual, objective and impartial teaching about the doctrines of religion is an unattainable objective. Any attempt to introduce such teaching into the public schools poses the great threat of pressures on school personnel from sectarian groups and compromises the impartiality of teaching and the integrity of the public school educational system. Our opposition to such teaching rests on these grounds.[23]

If religious doctrines cannot be taught, what of moral and spiritual values? Can they be drawn from the matrix of religion which brought them to existence and be kept alive without continued dependence on their source?

Here, American Judaism voices a somewhat more optimistic view.

> Insofar as the teaching of "spiritual values" may be understood to signify religious teaching, this must remain, as it has been,

> the responsibility of the home, the church, and the synagogue. Insofar as it is understood to signify the teaching of morality, ethics, and good citizenship, a deep commitment to such values has been successfully inculcated by our public schools in successive generations of Americans. The public school must continue to share responsibility for fostering a commitment to these moral values, without presenting or teaching any sectarian sources or sanctions for such values.[24]

This mandate is not easy to fulfill. It requires the delicate disjoining of the educative process, which, as indicated, historic Judaism did not deem possible, the abstraction of the ideal from its original form, the separation of ethical values from their life-giving tradition. American Judaism encourages this departmentalization only because of its profound regard for the secular public school, because of the school's ability to transmit religious values apart from denominational doctrine and without sectarian bias.

To be sure, spiritual and moral values cannot forever be maintained without reference to their source; faith is the necessary condition of their continuance; they gain their fullest dimension only when they are woven into the tapestry of a rich religious life. That is why Judaism insists on an intensive program of religious instruction in the synagogue and on the development of meaningful religious life-patterns in the home.

It might be noted, in this connection, that the *Zorach* decision did not end the Jewish community's unfavorable response to the released- and dismissed-time programs. The following objections are usually offered: such plans threaten the principle of separation; the amount of religious instruction which can be given in the time provided is negligible; more often than not, school authorities put pressure on students to attend religious school classes; those who refuse to be "released" are rarely if ever given meaningful general instruction; such programs serve to emphasize religious difference in a public arena; indeed,

Jewish children at times attend Christian classes for fear of disclosing their religious differences.

Be that as it may, the public school cannot be enjoined from transmitting ethical and moral concepts, however religious the origins. To begin with, these concepts cement our democracy. They form the faith of this land. Their preservation is vital toward the fulfillment of the American dream. Were we to keep our schools from fostering moral values, we would deprive them of their reason for being and then we might as well give up the enterprise of public education. A school which does not seek the moral development of its students is no school at all; all education worthy of the name is essentially education of character.

An Aid to Religion and a Challenge

What has been said concerning the proper goals of public education should serve to refute the charges that our schools are "godless," "atheist," and "antireligious," that they create, of necessity, an antagonism to faith and institutional religion. On the contrary, the spirit of religion, though not its forms, can animate the atmosphere with which the school surrounds its students. And in this atmosphere our children can grow, intellectually and spiritually, precisely in a manner in which we as religious people want them to grow.

When Jews espouse the cause of the "secular" public school, they do not use the adjective in its philosophical context. Our determined opposition to doctrinal instruction extends with equal force to the dogmas of scientific naturalism. We do *not* want the school to teach our children that reality is limited to the "seen," that empirical science and logic are the only proper tools in man's quest for knowledge. We do *not* want the school to teach our children that spiritual values are "purely sub-

jective," that religion is thus but a branch of psychology, revealing the vagaries of man's mind and the caprices of his emotional life, and no more. Even as the teacher is debarred from teaching principles which presuppose the acceptance of religious doctrines, so is he debarred from teaching principles which presuppose the acceptance of antireligious doctrines.

"Secular," as the American Jewish community applies the word to the public school, means not "irreligious" but "non-denominational," "nonsectarian," intended for pupils of all religious persuasions, and even for those whose parents affirm no faith. What it means is that the state, enjoined by law from establishing any one religion, without endeavoring to provide for all education but leaving many of its essential aspects to church and home, attempts to give moral and mental training and instruction in secular subjects of consequence to all future citizens—the entire process being conducted in "an atmosphere of social idealism."[25]

Jewish opposition to doctrinal instruction in the public classroom rises in no small measure from the fear that such teaching, in attempting to meet the conflicting demands of competing religious groups, will not further but hinder the advance of religion. "We urge a broad interpretation of the first amendment precisely because we want religion. If we were truly secularists, we would encourage such things as non-denominational prayer in the public schools as a tool by which to make life and faith less sacred, less passionate . . . the worst thing that could happen to the churches and the synagogues would be to . . . [develop in the public schools] a religion which would consist of a set of meaningless, watered-down, non-sectarian platitudes."[26]

Thus, the problem of religious education can never be solved by shifting the burden of responsibility for its advancement from church to public education.[27] It will be solved only when

church and synagogue recognize their full and final responsibility in this realm and take the matter of religious education much more seriously than they have.

> When organized religion spends more for religious education than for its choirs; when it plans its programs of religious education with the fervor with which it promotes evangelistic campaigns; when it is more proud of its schools than of the size of the congregation or the beauty of its architecture; when it selects ministers of education with the same care it chooses its preachers and when it invests its attempts at educating the young with the importance it ascribes to its weekly Sabbath service—then shall it have begun to cope with the problem of religious education.[28]

In this manner, the public school both aids and challenges the religious of America in their quest to transmit the heritage of faith. It aids the synagogue and church by fostering a devotion to the values which they share. It offers them challenge by imposing on them the duty to transmit the doctrinal beliefs and practices which give these values sanction.

The late President John F. Kennedy perceived this challenge and expressed it well when, immediately following the Court's announcement of the *Engel* v. *Vitale* ruling, he declared: "The Supreme Court has made its judgment. Some will disagree, others will agree. In the efforts we are making to maintain our constitutional principles, we will have to abide by what the Supreme Court says. We have a very easy remedy here, and that is to pray ourselves. We can pray a good deal more at home and attend our churches with fidelity and emphasize the true meaning of prayer in the lives of our children."

NOTES

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Eugene B. Borowitz, *Philosophies of Education*, Philip Phenix, ed. (New York: Wiley, 1963), p. 87.

2. Ibid., p. 88.
3. *Sabbath*, 31b.
4. *Sanhedrin*, 91a-b.
5. Martin Buber, *Hasidism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 135.
6. Joseph ben Judah ibn Aknin, *Cure of Souls* (12 Century), Chapter 27. Ibn Aknin's criteria for successful teaching may interest the modern reader: the teacher must have complete command of the subject he wishes to transmit; he must carry out in his own life the principles he wishes to inculcate in his pupils; he must exact no pay for his teaching; he must look upon his pupils as if they were his own sons; he must train his pupils to lead an ethical life; he must not be impatient but come to his pupils with a happy countenance; and he must teach his pupils according to the range of their intellectual capacities.
7. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Part I, Chapter 55. Cf. *Sabbath*, 75a.
8. Levi ben Gerson (Gersonides) in *The Wars of the Lord*, quoted by W. Gunther Plaut, *Judaism and the Scientific Spirit* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1962), p. 6. His books offers a superb exposition of the problem under discussion.
9. Ecclesiastes 12:13.
10. *Union Prayer Book*, Part I (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1940), p. 34.
11. Isaiah, 11:9.
12. Leo Pfeffer, *Creeds in Competition* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 60.
13. Eugene B. Borowitz, p. 93. Also, Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 355.
14. Jews never acquiesced in lower court rulings which held the Lord's Prayer to be "non-denominational." Although the words, when taken literally, are not at variance with Jewish teaching, sacred usage over many centuries by Christians has made this prayer wholly Christian. As such, it violates the conscience of the Jew. The Lord to which the prayer's title refers is not God as Jews conceive of Him, but Jesus of the Christian tradition. Indeed, the words are the words of Jesus drawn verbatim from the Gospels.

Reprinted from
AMERICA'S
SCHOOLS AND
CHURCHES

Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue, New York