



## Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and  
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

### **MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.**

Series IV: Writings and Publications, 1952-1992, undated.

Sub-series A: Books, 1961-1990, undated.

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Come On In, the Water's Fine, unpublished manuscript, fourth draft, chapters 1-4, edited and retyped versions, undated.

## Chapter 1

### DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY

Our discussion began with challenge.

- Being Jewish or being ~~Christian~~ <sup>Christian</sup> ought to make a difference, ~~but~~, but I can't see that it does. The Jacksons lived next door. I went to Sabbath School and John went to Sunday School, but as far as I can tell the only difference in our upbringing was that I got presents on Chanukah and he on Christmas. We were raised with ~~the~~ the same rules. We went to the same schools. We took out the same girls. We liked the same music. We cared about the environment and Vietnam. We were different, of course, everyone is; but it was not because I was a Jew and he a Christian. Perhaps if I had been raised in an orthodox home and gone to a day school I might not feel this way, but I wasn't, I didn't, and I don't think of Jew

as anything but a label. Being a Jew is only a small part of me and not a particularly important part, ~~I can't give you a quick answer, certainly not one that will satisfy you.~~ <sup>I can't give you a quick answer, certainly not one that will satisfy you.</sup>

- Why not? ~~Identity questions are not simple. My reason for leading an active Jewish life corresponds to my need for a sense of community and purpose. You and I are people who have no way of knowing if we are or are not. Compelling reasons.~~ <sup>Identity questions are not simple. My reason for leading an active Jewish life corresponds to my need for a sense of community and purpose. You and I are people who have no way of knowing if we are or are not. Compelling reasons.</sup>

- If I ever need a religion I'll look around until I find ~~the~~ one that seems to fit my needs. Until then, I'll reserve judgment.

~~You don't~~ <sup>You don't</sup> acquire a religion by shopping around and picking whatever happens to catch ~~the~~ <sup>your</sup> eye. ~~The~~ <sup>A</sup> religion ~~is~~ <sup>your family's religion</sup> is lodged in our soul long before you ever know religion. ~~It's only later, as our mind and imagination~~ <sup>you can think about it. When we think about religion, we can not think of our background and experience.</sup> develop, that we become self-conscious and begin to make judgments about the way we've been trained. A religious identity is not something ~~we~~ <sup>you</sup> put on and take off at will. Our ideas and ~~attitudes~~ <sup>attitudes</sup> change, we're not prisoners of the



past; but ~~the past never ceases to be an important part of us~~ <sup>in all probability</sup> The suit that catches our eye <sup>NOT in fabric</sup> will be cut in a ~~simple~~ <sup>familiar</sup> pattern.

~~You are not a Jew because you are a Jew~~ <sup>It is not a question of religion</sup> In college I chose my major.

When I left college I chose my career. I chose my wife. <sup>I</sup> chose ~~not to enter~~ <sup>NOT to enter</sup> a family business. ~~My family's faith was no hold over me. I~~ I'll choose my faith.

~~So my wife says~~

Did you see a Francois Truffaut film called The Wild Child? It's about an infant who was abandoned by his parents and raised by wolves. When he was about nine, ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> farmers found him. <sup>growing in the woods</sup> At that point he was not only illiterate and fearful of human contact but unaware that he could use speech to communicate his ~~needs~~ <sup>needs</sup>. His environment had been wild and so was he.

- But that's a movie.

It was based on an actual case. Without family, schools, books, music, friends, the best and brightest among us would ~~develop only rudimentary, animal~~ <sup>remain as primitive</sup> skills.

Our reach is circumscribed by what others do for us and the opportunities society makes available to us. <sup>Our lives as we live in dependence on the work of others</sup> There are no self-made people. George Bernard

Shaw said it with customary verve: "Independence, that's middle-class blasphemy."

We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth."

- If you're saying be a Jew because your parents are Jews, I won't buy.

I don't ~~like~~ <sup>live</sup> the way my parents do. We have different tastes in music and art. We don't agree on many things. If I don't accept their politics, and I don't, why should I accept their religion?

You've mistaken my point. I'm not arguing that you ~~should~~ <sup>have no choice but to</sup> follow ~~submissively~~ in your parents' footsteps, if that were true we wouldn't be having this discussion, but that <sup>you can't</sup> like it or not, you've been deeply influenced by them.

You spent your most impressionable years in their home ~~None of us escapes~~

~~the imprint of conditioning. Judaism seems natural and comfortable to me; Hinduism,~~

~~despite a good bit of study, remains a distant abstraction.~~

<sup>your</sup> ~~Thinking~~ <sup>Thinking</sup> about religion will always be shaped by your conditioning. I've studied many religions. I understand Judaism. Hinduism, despite a good bit of study remains a definable abstraction.

- I could leave Judaism without ever looking back.

Don't be so sure. Bertrand Russell lost his belief in Christian doctrine as an undergraduate and never found any reason to return to the fold. Yet, ~~when~~ <sup>OP</sup> he <sup>to</sup> <sup>everywhere</sup> visited Athens he found, to his surprise, that a small Byzantine church meant more to him than the Parthenon. ~~He~~ <sup>how much</sup> in his Autobiography ~~that~~ <sup>his</sup> unexpected reaction made him realize ~~that~~ <sup>how much</sup> his ~~Christian~~ upbringing had ~~influenced~~ influenced his attitudes. He would always be a ~~foreigner~~ <sup>citizen of</sup> the Christian world and an outsider, albeit an informed one, in ~~other cultures~~ <sup>other cultures</sup>.

~~People do change. Conversion is not uncommon.~~ <sup>THREATS.</sup>

~~We're not prisoners of our upbringing. There are conversions.~~ <sup>CONVERSION AND OFTEN QUIT</sup>

~~They're generally painful experiences.~~ <sup>It's not easy to become someone else.</sup>

~~Why bother with religion at all. I can't stand sham.~~ <sup>I</sup>

~~It's the church that's corrupting the people.~~ I choke every time I read of those Washington prayer breakfasts where senators, lobbyists, and generals begin the day with bowed heads, asking God to give them the strength to spend the rest of the day manipulating the levers of power.

How do you know that ~~these~~ <sup>people</sup> are hypocrites?

~~They're~~ <sup>They're</sup> either hypocrites or ~~ignorant~~ <sup>they don't know</sup> what religion's all about.

~~It's you're~~ <sup>you're</sup> simply saying that ~~you're~~ <sup>you don't know</sup> politics <sup>and religion</sup>

- They're hypocrites. I remember that when the negotiations at Camp David about a Near Eastern peace were completed a public ceremony was organized at the White House for the formal signing of the accords. <sup>AT THE TIME</sup> ~~At the time~~ each of the heads of state, Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat made an appropriate speech in which he quoted the same few lines from Isaiah: "They shall beat their swords into plough shares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore." The next day Sadat and Begin went up to Capitol Hill to ask Congress to sell more arms to their respective military forces, and ~~President~~ Carter held a press conference in which he explained the treaty in the cold terms of geo-politics.

NOT, I'm sure

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Politicians have been known to ~~use their speeches with~~ <sup>use Biblical</sup> Bible text <sup>in for</sup>

~~effect~~

~~position seem upright and righteous, but that doesn't prove that~~

~~hypocrites~~

~~that~~ believe their position to be principled <sup>in no situation you're</sup>

~~manipulating their~~ <sup>manipulating</sup> ~~constituted feelings~~. I remain convinced that these three

men spoke from the heart. Each is a confirmed believer, in fact a rather traditional believer. Jimmy Carter taught Sunday School for years. Menachem Begin practices orthodox Judaism, and Anwar Sadat followed the Sunni tradition of Islam.

- Then explain, if you can, the quick shift from peace talk to Pentagon talk.

- The major religions teach that as long as the world remains unredeemed, ~~the~~ <sup>not be</sup> idealism <sup>prudence</sup> ~~with~~ prudence.

- Isaiah didn't rush off <sup>after his speech</sup> to a session of Judah's <sup>NATIONAL</sup> Council.

Isaiah was a prophet, not a bureaucrat. Moreover, he was describing a utopian future, not <sup>scheduled</sup> getting out an agenda for arms reduction talks.

- How do you know that?

From his language. <sup>the plowshares and pruning hooks</sup> ~~this~~ speech begins: "It shall come to pass

in the End of Days." <sup>IN ISRAEL</sup> ~~In~~ Biblical <sup>was</sup> 'the End of Days' <sup>was</sup> a specific term <sup>which</sup>

<sup>denoted</sup> ~~the~~ the era of everlasting peace which <sup>would</sup> ~~will~~ begin <sup>when G-d put an end</sup>

<sup>to the familiar world and</sup> ~~brought an end and~~ created a new world in which "the lion shall lie

down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them." ~~The End of Days~~

- You're complicating a simple issue. If <sup>those</sup> ~~people~~ who claim to be religious don't work for peace, they're hypocrites. Bombs and religion don't mix.

(A dead peacemaker is no longer a peacemaker. Judaism was the first major religion to project the vision of universal peace, but our sages also taught:

'if one comes to kill you, kill him first.' <sup>Until the Messiah comes, I'll</sup> pressure our government to negotiate arms reduction, the arms race is a costly



and suicidal folly, but I'll not ~~demand that we disarm ourselves if we are~~ <sup>advocate unilateral disarmament.</sup>

- I guess we mean different things by religion. Define your terms.

Harvey Cox describes religion as "that cluster of memories and myths, rites and customs, ideas and institutions, that pulls together the life of a person or group into a meaningful whole." The religious need, the need to feel that what we're doing makes sense, is as basic and essential to our happiness as the need to love and be loved. We need to feel that the way we live is appropriate, that our commitments have been intelligently chosen, and that ~~we~~ <sup>our actions</sup> will be consequential. We need to feel that there is more to life than eating, sex, work, illness and the grave. I didn't choose to be born. I would prefer not to die, but I can't do much to prevent it. I want to know why I'm alive and why so many confusing things happen to me. Our religion, any religion, assures its communicants that a certain kind of life is the right way to live and that if <sup>they</sup> ~~we~~ follow certain instructions <sup>they'll</sup> ~~will~~ be putting our days to good use. I could give you a number of sophisticated definitions of religion, but you'll understand if I quote Salvador de Madriaga: "Religion is all that we do to prove to ourselves that God is not mad." Religions are the cultural entities which ~~will~~ allow us to affirm and confirm life's inherent meaning. We can't do without this support.

- I could. I do. <sup>I'm NOT religious.</sup>

~~I don't~~ <sup>you don't</sup> ~~believe in God.~~ Everyone's got a religion. Psychologists speak of <sup>the</sup> ~~will~~ to believe as one of the givens of our emotional makeup.

~~I don't believe in God.~~ I accept nothing on faith. My motto is: 'show me' <sup>I don't allow myself to believe in anything I can't see, touch or quantify.</sup>  
I'm not religious.

Do you believe in love, beauty, joy?

Religion isn't. I've never had a religious experience and no one I know has.

Then mystics like  
 Teilhard de Chardin  
 than ~~other~~ mystics

- I'm sure that there are spiritual sensitives. Religion's a special talent,

Mysticism is to religion as ecstasy is to love. It involves a heightening

at a ~~fairly~~ low emotional temperature. In its universal form, religion simply

↑ Life is valid, ~~and~~ <sup>our</sup> feelings are not what someone is not  
 up that life isn't a pointless journey. ~~Everyone needs the resources.~~ Religion

FROM THOMPSON TO PATMAN, NOTIFIED ALSO INCLUDE A NOTICE FOLLOWS  
- I don't accept the Jewish religion or any other. I told you I work from



Facts are useful only if we can fit them into a pattern. Without a religion which sanctifies a particular pattern of ideas and values, your facts are of little use to you.

~~I hate to disappoint you, but speculation on station is not necessarily~~

~~unifying~~ idea, which can inform a religion. ~~A sense of fate or the presumed~~ **SOME RELIGION ARE TENTATIVE, OTHER ARE NOT**

Q - Why do you input every one needs a religion?



# It's all TALKING NOW

Religions have such texts, but that cluster of ideas, values and hopes which we "know" to be right,

Learn a way to ~~ENLIGHTEN~~ <sup>ENLIGHTEN</sup> the  
whole of humanity.



accept on faith that cluster of ideas and institutions which <sup>certify</sup> ~~justify~~ to us that our lives have meaning.

- ~~I don't see how you can~~ <sup>You can't</sup> call me religious. I'm not a believer and I <sup>feel</sup> no particular need to believe.

Do you feel a need to order your life?

- ~~I want to understand my world~~ I look to science, not religion, to give me answers. Science <sup>is order</sup> ~~gives me answers~~. Religions with their myths <sup>and</sup> ~~simply~~ add to the confusion. I look on religion as a <sup>kind</sup> of sophisticated magic. Religion says light candles or make a pilgrimage and you'll get into Heaven. Lighting a candle <sup>won't</sup> ~~can't~~ help you get <sup>anywhere unless you're</sup> ~~into~~ <sup>have done it in your house.</sup>

You're <sup>talking about</sup> ~~specific~~ religious <sup>teachings</sup> ~~teachings~~ and I'm talking about the function of religion. <sup>I know</sup> ~~that~~ blessing the Sabbath lights won't earn me Brownie points, <sup>but I would see that</sup> ~~but I would see that~~ reciting the blessing can, and often does, remind <sup>me</sup> ~~us~~ that <sup>I don't have to live in 20 shadows. There is</sup> ~~that we can't see the light~~. <sup>Evolutionary, let's say.</sup> ~~As to dreams, I know~~ <sup>There is no dream land and perfect relationship, but I feel better.</sup>

- Lighting candles or keeping kosher won't get you into Heaven. Heaven <sup>doesn't</sup> ~~isn't~~ tell us not to give up our dreams. I don't believe that there's any such place, but I <sup>need</sup> ~~know~~ to acknowledge life as more than a brief and hapless <sup>interlude between the grave and</sup> ~~interlude between the grave and~~ the grave. Religions are in the encouragement business and <sup>that's why</sup> ~~Heaven is~~ a projection of our most cherished dreams.

You'll find Heaven in <sup>all</sup> ~~most~~ of the world's religions.

- Precisely, and it's all pie in the sky--a con game.

Not at all. <sup>Hope is necessary to life. Life is not a lucky hand and</sup> ~~including hope in the business of religion.~~ We're <sup>often</sup> ~~often~~ down <sup>and the promise of our religion reminds us that there are</sup> ~~and the promise of our religion reminds us that there are~~ <sup>hope is life. That's why everyone has the need to believe, without</sup> ~~hope is life. That's why everyone has the need to believe, without~~ <sup>hope would give up and live on the street. But I'll not argue</sup> ~~hope would give up and live on the street. But I'll not argue~~ <sup>that there's such a place as Heaven</sup> ~~that there's such a place as Heaven~~

- There's no Heaven and there's no Messiah. It's all pie in the sky.

WE THINK IN IMAGES AND ~~OUR PROMISES~~ THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS HAVE  
 Religions generally held out a number of promises: long life, health and  
 coded the ~~promise of power~~ IN A VARIETY OF MYTHS: Heaven, Utopia, Messiah,  
 wealth, the lasting significance of our lives, a Messiah, a messianic age,  
 NINNIANA, Kingdom of God, the golden rule, emphasized some miraculous  
 peace of mind, a Promised Land, triumph over enemies, Aryan conquest, the victory  
 TRANSFORMATION, people couldn't imagine that they could make for themselves a  
 of the proletariat. As the old images lost some of their power the religions  
 better life on earth. ~~As the old images lost some of their power the religions~~  
 have emphasized promises which seem more creditable to the modern, Liberal Judaism  
 AND Technology changed the form of human life  
 talks more of a Messianic Age than of a Messiah, and takes pains to remind everyone

that they had never encouraged anyone to take Heaven literally. They too,

As new religions have come on the scene ~~which have denied but any role in~~  
 their vision. Marxism promises Heaven on Earth ~~created by the~~  
 working class. ~~in Heaven.~~ supported by the laws of history

- The Messiah hasn't come. ~~He couldn't be a person~~ He's a myth.

The Messiah hasn't come, may never, but for centuries this hope lifted

the spirits of millions.

- IT WAS AN ILLUSION. ~~of the messiah was no more a law~~  
 - My problem is not with the ancient myths but with our modern ones.

Talk  
~~Talk~~ a Messianic Age is just as pie-in-the-sky as messiah talk. ~~We have~~  
~~created a myth of life enhancement, but the transition of hope is~~  
 JUST THAT - A PROMOTION. THE PRIESTS TALKED OF A MESSIAH TO KEEP THE PEOPLE  
 FROM COMPLAINING TO MUCH AND FROM DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR LOT.

way of manipulating people.  
 MARK ARGUES THIS, BUT HIS DISCIPLES AND USING HIS VISION IS JUST THE  
 The priests believed in Heaven every bit as much as the laity.

The ~~only~~ Reformers ~~believed~~ believed that Pollyanna was right and that the  
 world was well on its way to ~~messianic~~ Age. ~~These~~ hopes reflect a society's  
 will to believe that life is a challenging and significant journey rather than

a pointless endurance contest. Without hope and a vision--in other words, a  
 religion--each day is a burden. Caught up in a vision, each day becomes an  
 opportunity.

- Or a frustration.

Better ~~the~~ frustration ~~of~~ a goal unattained than the ~~emptiness~~ of a life  
 devoid of all purpose. We need a reason to get up in the morning.

- But that reason doesn't have to be a religious one.

What else can it be?

- I believe ~~in social progress~~ in the mind and research, and in the possibility of political and social reform. My hopes ~~are based on the fact that~~ have nothing to do with religion.

Oh, but they do.

- They're based on what I've learned and experienced, not on what Judaism has taught me.

Your hopes ~~grow out of your faith in tomorrow. They're based on unprovable assumptions and the fact that they're shared by many shows that you live in~~ <sup>ARE BASED ON</sup> ~~a religious culture.~~ <sup>IS NOT SO. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT SOCIETY WILL GO ON →</sup>

- You're giving religion <sup>such a</sup> ~~the broadest possible~~ definition, ~~so broad, in~~ <sup>I'm</sup> ~~fact~~ that I no longer ~~recognize the religion I grew up with.~~ <sup>WHAT WAS I GROWING UP WITH?</sup> I'll agree everybody needs to believe in something, but my beliefs have nothing to do with prayer, <sup>actual</sup> or holidays, the paraphernalia of religion. Religion, as I understand the term, represents faith organized institutionally. <sup>I'm not an institution</sup> ~~I have no need of that~~ <sup>position.</sup> ~~kind of structure.~~ Organized religion divides people. Look at Ireland, Iran and the Middle East. ~~Religious leaders seem unable to resist telling everyone else what they must believe and do.~~

You're tilting with windmills. <sup>You can't separate religion from people and</sup> ~~You can't have religion without some organization.~~ <sup>Not human beings as a social animal. Religion is a social phenomenon</sup> An Abraham, Paul or Mohammed may express a new and compelling vision, but since we're social animals, not isolates; inevitably others are caught up in it, and since the new ideas need to be taught, its themes need to be celebrated and its teachings have to be put into practice as organization emerges.

- Look at the harm religions do, the Crusades, the Inquisition, <sup>ANAD</sup> 'holy' wars.



~~Religious~~ Religious leaders are power brokers. ~~Others come close to being saints.~~

~~A religious organization is, after all, simply a group of people who share~~

~~an religious way of life and, inevitably, some will be competitive and others fanatic.~~

every compelling religious message ~~any~~ goes public.

another guy earning a ~~living~~ <sup>604K</sup>.

NP problem into NP-complete is NP-Complete

10

Human behaviour is a Full of contribution that help a Team or

~~based on any form of human behavior.~~ Some religious groups promulgate their

convert the unenlightened. Others teach respect for the views of others. Protestantism

of the integrity of the individual conscience.

that Genesis I be made part of the science curriculum.

Some ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

it. The same is true of Creationism. ~~The~~ Religions are not monolithic.

American Protestantism includes the Moral Majority ~~which is the~~ *the Moral Majority*

the old Watch and Ward societies were policed Puritan New England and the National

Council of Churches which has been accused of supporting revolutionaries and

ADVOCATING A "NEW MORALITY"

- Some rabbis testified in favor of the Prayer Amendment.

More were vigorously opposed. Religious communicants share ~~certain religious~~ <sup>general, the faith, Roman</sup>

AND calculate, but they often interpret those auto. & property forms and a vocabulary of hope. They do not understand the place on matters of

public policy. Those who favor the amendment argue that our schools need to

have a clear sense of purpose and that only a faith rooted in God can provide

that ~~other~~ sense of purpose. Those who are opposed doubt that ~~such~~ prayer would

~~An effective response to a world which we can no longer control is to strengthen the student's moral fibre and emphasize the separation of church and state.~~

and State and the avoidance of spiritual coercion as values which must not be compromised.

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## Answers

Yours

To believe

- I can still remember my shock when I learned in a Jewish Studies Seminar

that the early rabbis ~~had~~ deliberately set aside all the writings of the Greek-speaking diaspora. Until then I'd never associated Jews with censorship.

- Chaim Weizmann in his biography describes how he hid his first science texts inside a large Talmud folio for fear that the Melamed would discover he was reading forbidden books and beat him for wasting his time.

THE MODERN SYNOPSIS has been remarkably openminded  
 in its view in the information document, and no value  
 minded. You were surprised because your Jewish experience had led you to  
 of cultural pluralism and would know of publishing  
 expect a more understanding approach. Your suggestions were which a list

of acceptable movies ~~or demand that members sign the agreement to a particular~~  
~~company.~~

- There is never any excuse for censorship.

during

- Weizman's physics primer didn't threaten anyone.

It wasn't ~~the~~ book that worried his teachers. They had been suddenly exposed ~~to a~~ <sup>2. which</sup> They had been suddenly exposed to a cultural world which they didn't understand ~~and felt threatened by.~~

- You can't deny science. No one can.

↳ Asymptotically normal u. unbiased



schools run by the ~~community~~ <sup>Thar Itana</sup> like Yeshivah

- Censorship seems to attract religious folk. The Roman Church forced Galilei to recant. The Amsterdam Synagogue excommunicated Spinoza.

THE BELIEVER HAS A RELIGIOUS DUTY TO CONFIRM  
 AT LEAST RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM BELIEVERS FACE. BY DEFINITION AND FUNCTION  
 CONTAIN VALUES AND THEY SHOULDLY ENDEAVOR TO THAT IF THEY TRUST  
 A RELIGION OFFERS A PARTICULAR SET OF IDEAS AND VALUES AND THE CONVINCED OBVIOUSLY  
 ALL VALUES FORTHANDLY, <sup>PEOPLE ACTUALLY</sup> ~~WE CAN ONLY~~ ENUMERATED ONLY  
 TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT ~~THESE~~ IDEAS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND PROMULGATED AND  
 ABOUT ~~THESE~~ <sup>THESE</sup> ~~WHICH~~ AND NOT CONTAIN TO ~~THE~~ <sup>THE</sup> ~~LIVES~~. THE BELIEVER  
 THAT IDEAS WHICH CONFLICT WITH ~~THEIR~~ <sup>THEIR</sup> ~~CHERISHED~~ <sup>CHERISHED</sup> ~~CONVICTIONS~~ <sup>CONVICTIONS</sup> ~~ARE NOT ONLY WRONG~~

~~but~~

Ladson + 11T 10

*Okey*

- That's what I've been saying. Religions stifle progress ~~and~~

*want us to obey more than God*

because they ~~inhibit~~ our minds to new ideas.

The problem is that religions are valuable to us precisely because they reinforce our commitment to certain principles. A religion without convictions is a contradiction in terms. The familiar image of God revealing the law to Moses is, among other things, a dramatic image of Judaism's ability settling for us, once and for all, the debate over what is right or just. After the Holocaust Judaism has lost its ability to settle the debate over what is right or just for us once and for all.

2- You're right at least on an emotional level. I know  
 3- You're agreeing with me that religious folk have closed minds.

Some do. Not all. A religion may consecrate respect for other views as part of its creed.

- I don't know any creed that begins, 'I am committed to open-mindedness.'  
 No one is completely open-minded. ~~We all have convictions which~~  
 we won't <sup>willingly</sup> compromise. Whenever we take a stand, we  
 lose the ability to shake your head, but I'm sure that you have a question from

~~which no one could budge you and that you feel that there would be a better world if everyone agreed with you. It might well be, but recognize that you've taken a stand. Dare I say it, you're close to your mind. The problem with any religion~~

→ Many of my ~~opponents~~ friends are open minded, ~~black~~ white, when wrong, they don't deny, but an important concept, but white closed minded about their politics



are assigned. ~~You do what you're told.~~ Such collectivist assumptions are no more demonstrable than those ~~more~~ individualistic values you cherish; and both sets of values are, in fact, religious positions though both you and Mao, or his ghost, will object to the label.

- How did Chinese Communism get into this conversation? We're discussing religion, not politics.

Maoism meets Cox's definition. It supports in China a cluster of ideas and institutions which consecrate a particular set of actions as necessary and redemptive.

- Mao closed China's temples. He removed Confucius' writings from the schools. Communism is anti-religious.

True, but at the same time it's a religion. ~~It is~~ <sup>It is</sup> China and the Soviet Union portraits of "saints" hang high in vast ceremonial halls, and people by the millions make pilgrimages to the mausoleums which contain the bodies of their patriarchs. In both countries a consecrated scripture is interpreted officially, and anyone who questions the received dogma is condemned as a heretic.

Books are censored. All schools are parochial. The formation of a person's faith is carefully supervised by a zealous clergy of party faithful. There is even a messianic promise: the great day when the contradictions of history will be resolved and an age of classless joy will envelop the earth. Marx and Mao prided themselves that their philosophy was uncompromisingly materialistic and damned religion as an opiate by which the privileged keep the masses tranquil and passive, but their disciples have established a state-church which, formally at least, seems like a ~~medieval~~ <sup>AS-LANTUN</sup> of the medieval church-states of Europe.

- I've always thought of religion as something to be encouraged, as by definition good, useful in shaping character and moral sensitivity. If I accept your claim that Communism is a religion, then I have to accept the idea that some religions ~~are~~ <sup>may be quite</sup> dangerous ~~to~~.



~~We're predisposed to think well of religions because~~ Most of us grew up in a country where the power of religion was constitutionally circumscribed and so we associate religion with the beauty of a sanctuary; the hush of a congregation and noble thoughts rather than with clerics and commissars who tell us what we can't do, ~~unfortunately~~ <sup>AND PLACE US TO DO WHAT THEY PREFER</sup> Every religion has a darker side ~~AND~~ <sup>AND MANY RELIGIONS CONFIRM TO HAVING KINDS OF VALUES.</sup> ~~and power can corrupt religion as it can every other human institution.~~ A ~~by definition~~ <sup>BY DEFINITION</sup> religion is simply the shared faith and practice of a particular group. Communism is a religion because tens of millions ~~find~~ <sup>FIND</sup> that its ideas give a sense of purpose and hope to their lives, not because its informing ideas are necessarily life enhancing.

- By your definition Naziism would qualify as a religion.

Naziism displayed most of the features we associate with <sup>A CONTAIN KIND OF</sup> apocalyptic religion: strong faith in a charismatic leader; total commitment to a set of values which are held to be of ultimate importance; <sup>ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY</sup> ~~the conviction~~ that there is only one truth and that all error must be suppressed; grand public pageants at holy shrines like Nuremberg; a bible, Mein Kampf; a messianic vision of a redeemed world purified by Aryan leaders. In its heyday Naziism presented a collection of myths, rites, customs, ideas, and institutions which pulled together and certified the aspirations of much of the German nation.

- If Naziism fits your definition, I'm more convinced than ever that the world would be better off without religion.

~~Religion~~ <sup>AND INESCAPABLE</sup> Religion is a natural element of our lives, not an option we can exercise or not. Religions exist everywhere and affect everyone, even those like ~~some of you~~ <sup>FIND IT HARD TO THINK OF NON-RELIGIOUS AS RELIGIOUS.</sup> who ~~are~~ <sup>ARE</sup> No one and no group is religion-less because ~~to be human is to be a confused creature conscious~~ <sup>WE ARE THUS CREATURES WHO</sup> of life's vagaries ~~can't~~ <sup>THINK ON EVER</sup> survive without a sense of purpose, ~~or a set of affirmations which promise to guide us through the confusing experiences~~

~~which are the stuff of our lives.~~

- The Nazis were storm troopers, brutes.

*I find it hard to think of*

*Then as having*

~~any~~ religious personality.

Define what you mean by a religious person.

- One who takes faith seriously and who lives by his faith.

The Nazis were true believers.

- Someone who is affiliated with a congregation.

The Nazi Party was their congregation. You signed up. There were membership dues. There were regular meetings at which hymns were sung, a collection taken up, and loyalty pledged.

- If Satanic ideas like those of the Nazis are religious, why ~~do~~ <sup>are we</sup> any ~~people~~ encourage us to be religious?

*Americans are remarkably naive about religion. We've had*

~~most of our history of religious fanaticism. We've had~~  
*little*  
~~of the West. Then, too, most Americans have not had~~ first-hand experience with the psychopathology of religion. We've never had a religious war in our country. Ignorant of history and associating religion with our parents and a few holidays, we innocently identify religion with motherhood, family, and pacifism rather than with the all white churches of the south, the Scopes Trial, Father Coughlin and the cross burnings of the Klan.

~~may be right, but I don't like thinking~~ <sup>some</sup> If you're right and everyone of us is caught up in the web of ~~our~~ religion, how do

<sup>enable</sup> we ever gain perspective ~~on~~ <sup>to be able to judge critically?</sup> ~~the values it conveys?~~ <sup>Obviously then</sup>

~~How do we ever free ourselves of our conditioning or make the necessary~~

~~critical judgment~~ <sup>as possible.</sup>

God gave us each a mind as well as a heart; and, fortunately, <sup>in that way</sup> ~~we~~ operate somewhat independently. You can fall desperately in love and yet know that your beloved is not right for you. The trick is never <sup>disowned your heart</sup> ~~to~~ your mind, <sup>from</sup>

~~but to~~



~~instinctively, most people are not~~  
~~and not~~

~~said it yourself:~~

- You ~~are saying we're trapped because no one can be a believer and a~~  
~~skptic at the same time. If you believe you don't reserve judgment~~  
~~skptic with~~  
you ~~are~~ a believer.

It's not quite that black and white. ~~Some believers are more intense,~~  
~~our payles, but who also not passionate of conditioning.~~  
~~even, fanatics, others are more reserved in their feelings. The higher one~~  
~~may do success in making judgement, but~~  
turns to his religious enthusiasm, the less likely will ~~that~~ be able  
~~over others that~~ ~~to hear and appreciate other voices. But even at the lower level, the~~  
~~there.~~

~~not to be taken in.~~

- There's a way out. I'm an agnostic.

~~which means~~

that you're not sure about God.

~~Being an agnostic doesn't~~

~~prove that you haven't some non-theistic religious beliefs. Everyone~~  
~~your soul hasn't been shaped by religious tradition.~~

~~I don't believe that. Of course, religion deeply affects what you do,~~

~~you're not. I go my own way.~~

~~I hate to disillusion you, but you don't.~~

~~I don't belong to any religion.~~

~~Q - So what's my religion?~~

~~You do belong to the American civil religion.~~

~~Q - What's that?~~

~~The American civil religion.~~

~~I'm not sure. I'm sure there's no church in my town.~~  
~~No such thing.~~

Not all religions organize themselves into congregations, ~~but~~ there is an American civil religion.

~~So here's the definition~~

America's civil religion consists of the cluster of ideas and hopes which  
are affirmed and celebrated by our nation's institutions and calendar, consecrated  
in its Torah, the Constitution, and broadly shared by the citizenry. ~~These~~  
~~these ideas and hopes, and the ceremonies which confirm them which constitute~~  
~~our civil religion.~~

- You're talking about culture, not religion.

Religion is an inseparable part of a community's culture, ~~as much so~~

~~when the secular state emerged~~ that when under the pressure of revolutionary changes we've faced

in modern times, active membership in the well-known religions ~~has~~ <sup>was</sup> reduced, ~~to its minimum~~

~~the segments of the culture take over the religious role~~ <sup>no. it has developed a mythical and value of the state in</sup>

~~the institutions of the nation-state~~ <sup>the</sup> provide the religious

confirmation ~~the~~ <sup>had no</sup> non-affiliated religious

- What does this supposed religion teach?

Some have described America's civil religion as a secular humanism which affirms social justice: the autonomous individual, the Bill of Rights, public welfare, the work ethic, and human brotherhood. That's the touched-up picture.

~~I~~ <sup>also</sup> The civil religion, like all religions, has a darker side: intense individualism, happiness through having, and a tendency towards extravagant chauvinism. Its Shema is President Kennedy's famous motto: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. . ." Its holidays are the Fourth of July, the second Tuesday in November, and Thanksgiving Day. Its symbols are the flag and the ballot and its liturgy includes the Star Spangled Banner and the Pledge of Allegiance. Its messianic vision suggests a humane republic, secure in peace and established in justice. America's

civil religion provides ~~the~~ <sup>for millions to redemptive vision of the country to life!</sup>

a sense of common purpose, a social and personal ethic, affirming rituals, and a promise of the future, ~~and the~~.

- ~~Is~~ <sup>Some like</sup> your civil religion ~~just~~ a convenient label, designed by people like yourself who are determined to see religion where it doesn't exist?

- Why wasn't the civil religion recognized earlier?

The social sciences have only recently developed the methodologies which allow us to study ~~the~~ <sup>not only</sup> the phenomenon which ~~we call~~ <sup>we call</sup> 'religion.'

- If you're right ~~about the~~ <sup>About the</sup> civil religion, ~~many of my friends are~~ <sup>I know many of it</sup>  
~~not active~~ <sup>not active</sup> members. They dislike institutional religion, believe in human decency,  
 the public school system, affirmative action, arms control, a nuclear freeze,  
 and world government. They're believers, but they'd argue that their ideas  
 are purely rational and personal; ~~but I've noticed that~~ <sup>but I've noticed that</sup>  
~~they're under the spell of America's civil religion and you may be right;~~  
~~when I argue with them about these ideas, they get quite hot under the~~ <sup>some of them are</sup>  
 collar.

The more hotly an idea is defended, the more certain you can be that it's  
~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> that person's religious system. I sometimes describe religion as  
 that cluster of ideas and hopes which we couldn't give up without cutting  
~~out our soul.~~ <sup>out our soul.</sup>

~~I still think you're right. Religion's got nothing to~~ <sup>confusing politics and religion</sup>  
~~do with trade policies or the Federal budget. I~~ <sup>religion deals with</sup>  
~~up with these and ideas and not dealing with the nuts and bolts of administering~~  
~~the everyday world.~~

~~Have you ever looked at the Talmud? It's a massive library which~~ <sup>The Talmud</sup>  
~~deals with all the issues, including the practical ones which face any community.~~ <sup>deals with all the issues, including the practical ones which face any community.</sup>

~~The Talmud sets out halakha, Jewish law, for such areas as contracts and~~  
~~torits as well as for religious observance.~~

~~Our hopes and values are translated in effective policies, and~~  
~~they are, and religion is the sham some critics claim it to~~  
~~be. Since our ideas about life and proper effect should and religion~~  
~~exists to help us live effectively, there can be no arbitrary boundaries between~~  
~~so-called religious and secular spheres.~~

~~In our country the separation of church and state is a constitutional~~  
~~requirement.~~

~~My father gets apoplectic when the rabbi talks politics. He keeps saying:~~  
~~'What does he know, he's never had to make a profit.' Needless to say, they~~



don't agree on much. The founding fathers had had their fill of the joined power of the Cross and the Crown and the separation doctrine was established to preclude the establishment of a state-church. On an institutional level the separation doctrine operates effectively to keep our society free of the dangers which arise when the state and the church reinforce each other's privileges; but in real life none of us actually restricts our religious commitments to the worship hour. It can't be done. Inevitably, my religious ideas color how I vote, my attitude toward public welfare, even how I feel this country should conduct its foreign policy. And when a religious community agrees on some commitment, it's only natural that they should lobby and work for their beliefs. Look at the Quakers' role in the peace movement.

- And the interest of Jews in Israel.

- And of the Catholic Church in Latin America.

Fortunately, there are limits. A church has to abide by the ballot, the constitution, and the democratic process, otherwise there would be no way to restrain the more passionate. The separation doctrine is the cornerstone of our freedom, precisely because piety and politics can never be separated.

I want to get back to the question of a civil religion. <sup>are</sup> you saying that everyone who doesn't belong to a church or synagogue belongs to the civil religion? I can't imagine American Nazis or the KKK signing on.

America's civil religion is a major <sup>denomination, but not the only non-church</sup> ~~purpose~~ <sup>There are also smaller</sup> religious groupings and cults <sup>later</sup> ~~the~~ the religious landscape. The American Nazis and the Klan are <sup>the no no many</sup> ~~small~~ small cults who march under their own banner.

- If you're right about the civil religion, I'm a religious bigamist.

In some areas, my feelings about Israel for one, I react as a Jew; in others, my feelings about <sup>affirmative action</sup> ~~the state~~, I react as a civil religionist.

Up till now I thought it was one religion to a customer.

Not necessarily. In Japan you'll often see a Buddhist shrine fronted by a Shinto gate, and in China you'll often find Taoist and Buddhist <sup>Taoists</sup> ~~shrines~~.

in the same shrine complex. ~~What not accustomed to see religions become~~  
~~have tended to have imperial ambitions and to~~ <sup>demanded</sup> unconditional loyalty, ~~but in recent years there's~~ <sup>but</sup>  
~~it's a new openness between the faiths, signified by the~~ <sup>new</sup> ~~new openness between the faiths, signified by the~~ <sup>new</sup>  
~~religious selections who have deeply affected by other cultures~~ <sup>in an open society like ours, with its public schools and national holidays,</sup>  
~~it's inevitable that~~ <sup>it's inevitable that</sup> ~~almost everyone will have been~~ <sup>attitudes as well as his taken more traditional faith.</sup>

- I can't imagine an orthodox rabbi or a Roman Catholic priest accepting your thesis.

- Groups like the Amish have deliberately kept themselves apart.

The various communities exhibit different degrees of openness, but none are unaffected. ~~The demands by various groups of Roman Catholic nuns~~ <sup>that no church be treated as second-class citizens</sup> ~~be treated as second-class citizens~~ <sup>shows out if no level</sup> →

- I suspect your ~~local church~~ <sup>church</sup> would argue that his church has always accommodated its forms to the needs of the times, but that ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> basic teachings ~~has~~ <sup>remain</sup> fixed and unchanging. An orthodox rabbi ~~make~~ <sup>make</sup> the same case about Judaism. They'd argue that forms may have changed, different melodies are used at services, but that the ~~substance~~ <sup>substance</sup> of the religion remain ~~inviolate~~ <sup>inviolate</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup>

They'd be wrong. History does not substantiate their claim despite its popularity. People want to look on their religion as the guardian of an unchanging truth. They want and need that confirmation, but, in fact, religions are dynamic entities which react to their environment and change with the times.

~~Over the centuries~~ Judaism and Christianity have repeatedly undergone transformations which were substantive and substantial, and not purely cosmetic. For ~~both~~ <sup>both</sup> traditions insisted that ~~religion was the only agent of social change.~~

That which has been is that which will be ~~until the Messianic age~~ <sup>until God will change it.</sup> Today ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> ~~is a new activist among~~ <sup>is a new activist among</sup> ~~the people of both religions~~ <sup>the people of both religions</sup> ~~advocate~~ <sup>advocate</sup>

of ~~these~~ <sup>these</sup> individual efforts in securing social progress, if you had listened to medieval sermons, you'd have heard a lot of hell fire and damnation talk, from you'd more likely to hear a moral



~~health~~ ~~messiah~~ ~~and prophetic commitment~~

Until recently the message was endure patiently the trials of this life in order to gain life eternal. Now we say: be a partner with God in the work of creation.

- As a rabbi does it bother you that we're like magpies ~~we~~ build their nest with whatever we can find ~~that~~ <sup>lying about</sup> seems to fit the bill? I'd think you'd want us to be Jewish to the core.

I never lose sleep over what is impossible. ~~It's not possible~~ <sup>I think it's</sup> Jews and everyone else pick up attitudes from ~~the~~ <sup>your</sup> environment. Fortunately America's civil religion was created by people whose attitudes had been nurtured by ~~Biblical ideas,~~ <sup>and over the years Americans have found many Biblical elements</sup>

~~extreme~~ <sup>no luck</sup> ~~extremism~~. The Liberty Bell is inscribed: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land." The Federalist Papers cite God's rebuke of the Israelites when they cried out for a king as another proof of the legitimacy of constitutional democracy. Our Constitution enshrines Israel's protean vision of humanity, "Have we not all one Father; has not one God created us all?" and the concept of freedom under law. ~~In many ways~~ <sup>I think</sup> I can't tell where the Jewish part of me leaves off and the American part takes over.

On the whole, ~~our~~ <sup>I think that</sup> religious bigamy has been a good thing ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> the country. It's helped us remain a relatively tolerant people.

In 1980 when the president of the Southern Baptist Convention announced that God did not hear the prayers of Jews, his proprietary attitude toward God grated against the broader assumptions of the civil religion and he was widely criticized. ~~I think that if he had spoken as he should~~ <sup>that if he had spoken as he should</sup> ~~to a~~ <sup>to a</sup> ~~Christian~~ <sup>Christian</sup> ~~religion~~ <sup>religion</sup> which had not yet been deeply influenced by a civil religion which encourages respect for those of other opinions - all that Martin Luther King suggested when he said: "We must learn to live together as brothers or we shall perish together as fools" - ~~his words would not have been criticized.~~ <sup>his words would not have been criticized.</sup> After

all, classic Christianity built itself around Jesus's claim: "No one shall come to the Father except through Me."

- Let's go back to our original question. I know I'm an American, ~~and~~

~~I know how this country's laws and customs affect me. I~~

~~I live by American law. I live American~~  
think American. I know I'm a Jew, but I don't know how ~~the Jewish way affects~~

~~I don't think Jewish. I don't live by Jewish law. I'm a Jew.~~  
A few candles and an occasional holiday meal hardly add up to anything

significant. ~~I don't consciously think Jewish or consciously make my decisions~~  
~~by Jewish standards.~~

~~It's not always obvious that our nature and religion~~  
~~is in college. It's Jewish to think college is a must.~~  
Everyone here has been or

- It's a must for everyone.

Not so. ~~Some~~ ethnic groups ~~discourage college enrollment out~~  
~~of the conviction that education beyond a certain level will alienate their~~  
~~children from their way of life.~~ The Menonites take their children out of  
school after the eighth grade. ~~They don't want them to go to college.~~ With us it was off the boat and into City  
College.

- My grandparents never went to college.

~~Many of~~ Europe's colleges ~~didn't allow~~ Jews, but every Jewish boy went  
to heder and the importance of education ~~was emphasized~~ in every conceivable  
way. It was an honor ~~to~~ to marry your daughter to the brightest student  
in the local yeshivah. It was perfectly legitimate for a man to spend his  
life as a matmid, a perpetual student. One of the hardest counseling tasks  
a rabbi can have is to convince parents that their teen-ager is not college  
material and ought to be encouraged to learn a trade.

- You're talking about a cultural trait.

~~In the old world culture and religion were inseparable~~  
~~One of the main goals of the religious tradition.~~ Since the second century  
~~Talmud has remained a part of the~~  
Jews have been taught that they ~~must~~ to educate their sons. Talmud  
Torah, Torah study, was a virtue which could not be too highly praised. I'll  
give you another example: intellectual independence, stiff-neckedness. We're  
not a submissive lot. We've never been a people who meekly accepted authority.

Abraham argued with God about Sodom and Gomorrah and Job had a few things

to say to God about His fairness doctrine. Jewish practice encouraged <sup>independence</sup> ~~more~~

~~Judean~~ <sup>independence</sup> We've never kissed the ring of ecclesiastical superiors. We don't automatically defer to statutory authority. I'm not surprised that the Jewish students in my seminars love to argue or that Israel's Knesset is better known for tumult and noisy arguments than for decorum. We've always been a noisy, cantankerous lot.

- Noisiness has nothing to do with religion.

It's a by-product of a particular religious outlook.

- I'm still troubled by the broad definition you give to religion. I haven't got <sup>a dictionary in my</sup> ~~there~~ but I'm sure <sup>Webster</sup> ~~my dictionary~~ defines religion as faith in God or gods.

I once traced the <sup>various ways</sup> ~~changes~~ dictionaries defined religion and ~~found that they changed with the times.~~ <sup>Found that they changed with the times.</sup> The first dictionaries reflected the parochial horizons of ~~the~~ medieval Christendom, and defined religion as faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. ~~After~~ <sup>After</sup> the age of exploration when Europe <sup>learned</sup> ~~discovered~~ recognized that the rest of the world existed and was civilized, dictionary definitions were enlarged to include Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Chinese traditions. Since these religions all had shrines, scriptures and sacred symbols, religions were <sup>defined</sup> ~~defined~~ as institutions which possessed these features. More recently, dictionary editors have begun to reflect the approach I've been taking which focuses on the function of religion rather than its forms. <sup>Today</sup> you'll find religion defined ~~as~~ as "a way of life in accord with authorized teachings" or "faith that the truth is known and the institutions which support that faith."

- The belief in God definition remains the first one.



Not always, and you must remember that dictionaries list common usage as well as correct usage. I'll make my point again. The modern study of

religion began when scholars recognized that rituals, and even catechisms, are secondary manifestations and ~~show~~ <sup>begin to focus</sup> their interest ~~on~~ <sup>on the</sup> function. <sup>rather than</sup>

The heart of any religious enterprise lies in the redemptive ideas and promises

which it expresses and ~~its~~ <sup>its</sup> function ~~of a religion~~ <sup>is to provide such ideas</sup>

<sup>to accept their ideas and make them applicable in their lives</sup> ~~and on their own terms.~~ Like it or not, idol worship and Marxist

ideology are religious phenomena, and unless the Moral Majority manages to

cancel Mr. Webster the next generation of dictionaries will reflect this understanding even more strongly.

- I'm still here and I'm still an atheist and ~~an outsider~~

You're here, a Jew among Jews.

- That's not what I meant.

But it's part of what I mean. Judaism is a religious civilization, not simply a set of doctrines or practices, and being Jewish isn't limited to those who can say 'Amen' ~~which is~~ after every paragraph in the prayer

book. ~~They are like many Christians, who have their own ideas about their traditions and institutions. We've had ample proof of that.~~

- I kept thinking of Israel as you were making your argument. It's a Jewish state, but I was there over the High Holidays and my hosts never even asked if I'd like to go to services; and when I said I like to go, they made it clear that they weren't interested in joining me.

In Israel there is an orthodox establishment, a growing number of non-traditional synagogues and groups, and yes, an Israeli civil religion which, like its American counterpart, is expressed through the institutions and laws of the state and shapes and confirms the values and hopes of many.

- My hosts called themselves lo-dati, non-religious.

~~Lo-dati is as much a political tag as a statement of religious disinterest.  
If I lived in Israel I'd be a lo-dati. The lo-dati are opposed to current  
administrative arrangements which give the orthodox rabbinate absolute control  
over the laws of personal status.~~

At this point a loudspeaker crackled with the announcement of a volley  
ball game. I got in a last word, a favorite line from George Santayana's  
Reason In Religion: "Every living and healthy religion has a marked idiosyncrasy.  
Its power consists in its special and surprising message and in the bias which  
that revelation gives to life."

- I can't see where Judaism's and Christianity's messages are significantly  
different. Inside and out, my Christian friends and I are pretty much the  
same.

I remember your friends, the Jacksons. Go play ball. We'll come back  
to this point. We've got plenty of time. I was invited to referee their  
game. <sup>5:41</sup> We were off to a good start.

## Chapter 2

# What I Believe - What Judaism Believes

They were even to talk an

picked up the conversation as if there had not been a break.

- I'm not going to give in to your arguments. Religion is a private

matter. I make up my own mind. No one tells me what to believe.

They already have. You didn't start with an empty mind.

By the time we began to think about religion you were already equipped with its most cherished ideas and values. Your mind has been

shaped by the media, what you read, the conventional wisdom, your friends and your home. And you were left with an attitude

- I've friends who never went to religious school and who were raised

in a home that didn't even celebrate Seder. Their parents told them they

They didn't want to impose their beliefs. They wanted their children when they grew up, to make up their minds. They were raised without any religious imprint.

Your friends may have grown up without a Jewish imprint, but they didn't

escape some religious conditioning. Remember no civil religion was still religiously shaped. Their parents didn't even keep them away

from the influences of the civil religion. I'm sure they celebrated Thanksgiving

and Labor Day, took civics in Junior High School, and recited the Pledge of

Allegiance. In all this they were deeply affected by the

parent's faith in the authority of the civil religion.

- I respect parents who try not to manipulate their children.

- I use no words.

Manipulation is a loaded word. I'd never force a child to agree with

me; but I believe that parents shouldn't hide their own beliefs from their children and

should encourage their children to share their religious beliefs. I never

considered my Hebrew lessons as a form of brainwashing. They were

learning a useful skill, the language of Jewish life, and, at the same time,

learning something about me and the values and interests which are important



to me. ~~It could kill them. It could bring us closer.~~ A child needs direction and standards to measure himself against. Just as a knife is sharpened by filing it against a hard stone, so convictions are strengthened when we test them against strong parental and societal beliefs.

~~Always to tell a child, 'I can't tell you what to do,'~~

~~I'm sure my parents kept everything Jewish from me.~~

They kept telling me how important it was to be free to make up my

own mind. They meant well, but I ~~was not sure they did me a favor.~~ I desperately

wanted roots. ~~I needed to know who I was. I needed to know something or~~

~~was something.~~ I didn't know where or how to begin thinking about myself.

A 'keep Judaism away from Johnny' policy guarantees ignorance, not independence,

~~of judgment, but people like your parents tend to be so committed to the idea~~

~~of an open mind that they cannot admit, however often it is demonstrated to~~

~~them, that an open mind requires religious conditioning, and that a home environment~~

~~characterized by conviction and standards more often than not encourages rather~~

~~than stifles strong independent beliefs.~~

~~I grew up in a 'do as I do' home and I felt that~~

~~I wanted my children to have more freedom, but when it came~~  
was about to enter school. We decided at the same time to enroll her in ~~public~~

~~school, and what tipped the scale was our feeling that we didn't want her~~

~~to grow like weeds, unattended and wild, like so many weed children,~~

~~and early kids who ought to have no words by the fact but~~  
~~and they seem to lack a sense of their worth, their identity.~~

~~Who said that Tolstoy said that~~

~~described a weed as a flower whose virtue has not yet been discovered.~~

~~and I often think of weed children as the ones who are denied a chance to~~

~~discover how beautiful a carefully shaped life can be. I guess that's why~~

~~so that we felt that it would be much better to have her spend Saturday morning~~

~~in Sabbath School than watching cartoon carnivals.~~

And we didn't want our children

to be like the ones who

are just like the ones

aleph-bet. **AB, T A H** ~~IS~~ **LEHANT** **WAS** **THE** **REYIGN** **DIDNT** **LENT**  
~~Sunday School was a nothing, nothing that happened there was in~~

WTH anything really  
significant.

- The best course I took before going to college was my Confirmation class. The rabbi made us think.

- I used to come home each week and tell my parents it's all a waste. *Wong Yoon*  
we go over the same holiday prayers and sing the same songs ~~every~~.

~~You probably also complained about that little homework your teachers~~  
~~assigned.~~ Religious schools struggle with an almost impossible task. They

are given two or three hours a week to explain the forms of Jewish life, to teach the facts of ~~the~~ <sup>Jewish</sup> history, to discuss the tradition's ethical ~~and~~ <sup>to inform the student in Hebrew and</sup>

~~concerns; and to enable the student to master enough Hebrew to be able to~~

~~manage our work~~ and they are expected to accomplish this without making

background in serious reading, any serious intellectual demands on the student. Johnny already has too.

much homework ' we're supposed to teach without making any demands. 'if you

~~give some you!!! turn Telnet off.~~

- The problem's not homework or even the [redacted] but the [redacted]

~~INABILITY TO DO OTHER BUSINESS OF LIFE. AS THUS I AM NOT SURE~~  
that ~~there is~~ little benefit to be gained from religious school. If

~~believed an average was important. Today, NOT ANY MORE~~  
~~the schools had all the time they claim they need, the kids would know more~~

~~Hebrew words and more Jewish history, but I doubt that they would necessarily~~

~~be able to live better lives.~~

~~More time couldn't wait~~ An informed Jew will be a happier Jew than

an ignorant one. The more we know about something, the more it can mean to

~~Religion begins in the soul, not the mind~~

used Hebrew for ~~the~~ wisdom men since Bible  
days. Hebrew calls us a little part in a very much of  
our every day language can.



~~Not a family member~~, if I <sup>had spent the hours</sup> ~~had~~ <sup>mastered</sup> Hebrew,  
I'd be fluent in a Foreign language; but I would  
necessarily be a better person or a better Jew. An Arab  
under in Nazareth speaks Hebrew.

Q - You'd understand the prayers

Q - ~~I don't~~ believe God ~~speaks~~ <sup>can</sup> what language we

use.

Q - The Talmud makes the same point. ~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> language  
can be used for prayer.

Q - So why Hebrew?

Q - ~~Hebrew is the language of the Jews~~ Jews have



or  
29 If our religion remains vague and diffuse, it can't and won't make much of a difference in our lives.

~~I still say you can't be taught to be a Jew. You can learn all the facts, but until you decide to accept our way of life such learning remains academic.~~

~~I agree. That is why the home environment is so important in a child's religious development. Sabbath schools were organized to provide the child useful information about the way of life he can in his home.~~

- My school was big on doing: we visited hospitals and sang for the patients, ~~corresponded~~<sup>Wrote to</sup> with Israeli pen pals ~~and~~<sup>and</sup> Soviet ~~ones~~<sup>friends</sup>, ~~and~~<sup>and</sup> ~~our~~<sup>conducted</sup> our own services. Every other year the youth group took a trip to Israel.

~~Today's schools have a new job to do because so many students come from~~  
~~a denuded Jewish home.~~ The first statement any of you made was: 'My home  
was exactly like the Jackson's.' By providing opportunities to engage in

Jewish experiences ~~our~~ schools ~~try~~ to make up for the blandness of ~~my~~ homes. ~~It's~~  
- I can see the logic of such a curriculum, but it seems manipulative.  
- ~~I'm~~ you but it still seems wrong. You're trying to shape people

in an area where I believe they ought to be let alone. Religion is, or should be, a purely private matter.

~~NOT SO.~~ Faith is private. Religion always involves community. A religion draws together and celebrates a group's values and vision. My faith represents

~~my private understanding of Judaism. No one is taking away his~~  
~~religion from him. He takes what he needs out of the religious ideas that are~~

1200, but FUG PUT them ~~part of our environment and we put them~~ together in my way way.

- I don't want to be a magpie. I don't want to build a nest out of leavings.

I want to be an eagle. I want to soar free, be on my own.

Before an eagle can fly he spends weeks as a fledgling being cared for in the eyrie. ~~For as Judaism was a safe and secure nest in which~~ <sup>1) HE WAS NOT NEAR + WAS</sup> were nurtured until ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> imagination and learning had developed to the point where ~~I~~ <sup>I</sup> could fly on our own.

- I've had a checkered religious career: T.M., an Indian guru, Zen, even a brief stay on a religious commune. <sup>I AM NOT FAITH.</sup> My parents maintained a Jewish ~~POST, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT EXPERIENCED HAD ANYTHING~~ home, but whatever I learned there had little to do with my search. ~~Every~~ <sup>step of the way it was always my decision.</sup> I decided ~~when~~ <sup>when</sup> to ~~leave~~ <sup>look</sup> and when to leave. ~~If you're saying that we only think we're making religious decisions,~~ <sup>I AM FORMING MY OWN FAITH.</sup> that we're indelibly programmed in childhood you're wrong. I could and did walk away. ~~I made some totally unJewish decisions.~~

~~APPARENTLY OUT OF THE BALANCE - BECAUSE IF VARIOUS RELIGIOUS CULTS,~~ <sup>I'm not a determinist. People do convert, but I hold to my argument</sup> that the home imprint is deeply etched. ~~Hebrew spent his life attacking~~ <sup>LONG POINT IS THAT WE DON'T SPIN OUR FAITH OUT</sup> of faith. ~~HE WAS FOR YEARS THAT IS AVAILABLE TO US, AND THEN~~ the Church and making Church doctrine, yet, just before he took ~~to be reconciled with the Church of his parents. The main point I've been~~ <sup>trusting to make is that</sup> a good bit of conditioning always precedes conscious commitment ~~and forever after affects our commitments.~~

- I've always assumed that religious commitment grew out of a special experience of God: Moses at the Burning Bush, Isaiah suddenly seized by the word of God. ~~IF I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'VE BEEN SAYING ABOUT THE NEED~~ <sup>TO BELIEVE,</sup> you're saying that being religious is ~~simply~~ <sup>simply</sup> a matter of being alive and part of community. <sup>LASTING</sup>

- Some of us are more emotionally intense than others. ~~Some~~ <sup>what</sup> William James called a conversion experience. ~~Most of us grow into our faith~~ without any real trauma. ~~Others, no~~ <sup>may have what</sup>

- How was it with you?  
~~I was in college towards the end of the second World War. My tutor was~~ <sup>I WAS IN COLLEGE</sup> an Anglophile who felt that the English government had good reason to prevent Jews fleeing Nazi Europe from entering Palestine. The Zionists, he felt,

were being unreasonable, ~~when they demanded that the survivors of the Holocaust~~  
~~be let in~~. The British Fleet needed Arab oil and, therefore, England needed  
 Arab support. As we talked I realized that for me this wasn't just another  
 political discussion. The issue didn't have two sides to it. I became quite  
 determined and was reproved for incivility.

- I wouldn't call that a religious experience.

~~I learned something about myself & what I know before~~  
~~It certainly reveals the intensity of my involvement.~~ (Seder fell a

few weeks after our argument and that night the familiar words, "next year  
 in Jerusalem," caught in my throat. ~~and when I graduated I went to work~~ AFTER

6 ~~aunties~~ <sup>FOR AN</sup> ~~the Jewish~~ agency securing <sup>ARMY</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>would</sup> the yishuv needed to defend itself against  
 invading Arab armies.

~~I learned something about myself & what I know before~~  
~~It certainly reveals the intensity of my involvement.~~

~~experience.~~ ~~Call it then an episode which made me aware of the death of certain things.~~ IT →

<sup>OR</sup>  
~~The following day~~ May fifteenth, the day Israel proclaimed her independence,  
 I happened to be in Times Square, and as that news flashed on the electronic  
 tape high overhead my eyes clouded up, powerful feelings swept over me, and  
 the words a lonely Jacob spoke when he unexpectedly sensed God's protective  
 presence came to mind: "Surely God is in this place and I knew it not." <sup>Now</sup>

~~was such a time.~~  
~~feelings had come into play and I knew that I would probably never again be~~  
~~without them.~~

~~It's like falling in love.~~

In everyone's life there are times when something within us reaches out  
 to something <sup>we</sup> apprehended but not ~~fully~~ <sup>fully</sup> comprehend, and we acknowledge commitments  
 that we have not till then consciously recognized. ~~These are the times when we~~  
~~become conscious of our faith commitments.~~

My father was in Patton's Tank Corps during the second World War.  
 He dates his active involvement - he's president of our synagogue - to  
 the day his company liberated a German concentration camp.











AND SOMETIMES NO COUNTS HAVE  
TO TAKE ANYTHING FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE WITHOLDING PERMISSION  
AS AN UNJUST OPERATION, BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT ALL  
HEALING COMES FROM GOD. THE TALMUD INSTRUCTS SOME "NOT TO →  
powers of faith.

- MY ROOMMATE USED TO TELL ME THAT FAITH WORKS MIRACLES.  
~~What do we say about faith?~~

HAVE THOSE WHO WERE HEALED AND THOSE WHO WERE NOT TO GET COOPERATED.  
~~That faith sometimes works miracles, but that faith alone cannot guarantee~~

~~that our lives will be shaped and disciplined as they should be.~~ Faith may lead an alcoholic to go through  
the pain of detoxification, he will

feel immensely relieved ~~when he admits publically that he's ill~~ but once  
he's ~~clean~~ LIP IT WORKS, FAITH WORKS

he's ~~clean~~ he has to discipline himself never to take another drink.

~~Judaism never lets us forget the importance of habit and discipline.~~ We ~~are~~ ~~not~~

FAITH, ~~it's discipline~~ ~~and that's what Judaism has always~~  
~~emphasized~~ supportive community and the structured way of life as well

~~Taken to extremes~~  
as the significance of faith.

- You've been ~~saying~~ ~~in effect~~ ~~the religious interest begins~~  
~~in the heart, not the head.~~ ~~If you're right, then Judaism moved the boat by~~

~~moving the boat~~ ~~by asking~~ people, as many Christian groups do, to make a public witness. My

Rabbi is always taking the opportunity, a few personal experiences  
~~There are few experiences~~ more compelling ~~than~~ honest words spoken from the

OF BELIEF WOULD HAVE BEEN FROM  
heart.

He's never gotten to me.

~~Love has tended to~~ ~~basal~~ experience cut loose from ~~any~~ moorings in

may be compelling; but we have to ask: what do they commit?  
a defining tradition. We give leadership to the learned, not to the possessed,

~~because no one knows where such a free person wants to land~~  
~~because no one knows where such a free person wants to land~~

US. ~~by wisdom~~ For us it's a matter of balance: schooling, the accumulated wisdom

TO TELL PEOPLE, LATER THAN  
of ~~it~~, ~~the~~ testimony of one. The danger of focusing

~~worship on private testimony is that we'll focus on the so-called miracles~~ ~~and~~

~~neglect the slow, undramatic but absolutely essential work of building a~~

~~wholesome society.~~

- ~~stronger~~ ~~I have a feeling we took our mistrust of witnessing too far.~~ In Religious

School we talked about everything ~~but~~ ~~the~~ ~~light~~ ~~of~~ ~~it~~. Our services are

WHAT JUDISM BELIEVES, BUT NOT ABOUT WHAT  
AN TEACHERS ACTUALLY BELIEVE.

• - I STILL THINK WHEN THE ~~intellectual~~ ~~when my family,~~

A FAMILY OF SYMBIONESE GUNS, EVERYONE TALKED ABOUT  
ISRAEL AND ANTI-ISRAELISM, AND ABOUT THE SYMBIONESE, BUT  
NO ONE EVEN TALKED, AT LEAST NOT WILLINGLY, ABOUT THEIR  
OWN BELIEFS

- I like the Quaker service where ~~each person~~ <sup>people and their</sup> says whatever is on his ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> mind or nothing at all. It's a genuine moment. ~~My rabbi gives me a book and says that he'll explain what I don't understand. I often feel I'm in a classroom, not a service.~~

Intensity by itself is not a virtue. ~~Because faith described an unadorned feeling,~~ <sup>AND ONLY LEAD TO IN IT</sup> There are all kinds of faith, <sup>AND</sup> a religious high ~~can be dangerous~~ <sup>FACTORY OF MAN'S</sup> Millions were caught up in the Nuremberg Rallies and in the Permanent Revolution. I've attended ~~an~~ <sup>AM IF</sup> evangelical service full of clapping and singing, full of faith, ~~crude~~ <sup>crude</sup> patriotism and cruder racism. The moment was special; emotions flowed; the participants felt confirmed and consecrated; but the loyalties the moment ~~evoked~~ <sup>ENCOURAGED</sup> were dangerous and dysfunctional. Faith begins in the heart, but ~~like all emotions~~ must never be left to the heart alone. ~~Judaism does not prize blind faith and is not satisfied with an innocent faith. The person of faith need not~~ <sup>must not</sup> turn off his ~~mind.~~

- I still like the ~~unstructured service.~~ <sup>idea of a day what's in your heart service.</sup> I'm a person, not a parrot.

~~The prayer book was~~ <sup>THE PRAYER BOOK WAS</sup> ~~written by somebody else.~~ <sup>WRITTEN BY SOMEBODY ELSE.</sup>

~~Happenings can be genuine and thrilling, an occasion of~~ <sup>HALENNING CAN BE GENUINE AND THRILLING, AN OCCASION OF</sup>

~~sentimentality and conventional ideas, no space~~ <sup>sentimentality and UNCONVENTIONAL IDEAS, NO SPACE</sup>

~~Our service was shaped around carefully chosen texts and the Torah,~~ <sup>UP UNTIL</sup>

~~to make sure our weekly ritual is~~ <sup>TO MAKE SURE OUR WEEKLY RITUAL IS</sup>

~~But the texts are~~ <sup>ARE</sup> ~~mine.~~ <sup>MY OWN.</sup>

~~The texts are meant as springboards to reflection~~ <sup>THE TEXTS ARE MEANT AS SPRINGBOARDS TO REFLECTION</sup>

~~song and silence to give you plenty of time to develop your own thoughts~~ <sup>NOT AS A LOYALTY OATH</sup>

~~the readings present ideas worth thinking about.~~ <sup>AT LEAST MOST OF THEM LEAD US TO</sup>

~~present the basic dimensions of Jewish~~ <sup>PRESENT THE BASIC DIMENSIONS OF JEWISH</sup>

~~to make sure our weekly ritual is~~ <sup>TO MAKE SURE OUR WEEKLY RITUAL IS</sup>

~~to make sure our weekly ritual is~~ <sup>TO MAKE SURE OUR WEEKLY RITUAL IS</sup>

broken into the summer to give us backcountry

CLAYTON  
J. H. H.

and be true to  
~~what we have~~  
and be true to what the

87704

make it difficult for the

- Getting through?

**RA**

July observed  
from the numinous

ers were in white. The chant  
ation moved with a **back and**  
an **up and**

**A BUCK RAB FOOT**  
an humorous essay wh

They were in

just in my sleep. Trench and  
~~little attention and a~~

~~Special but CP looking around. Otto would find the members in a club.~~

~~It is not possible to~~  
I will say that the

I will say that the youth group does have a lively service.

~~This generation has loosened up a good bit, but being loose and dancing~~

~~Yom Kippur service has a solemn and compelling beauty to it. The mood~~

~~of the worshippers rather than the particular form of worship establishes~~  
~~the holiness of a particular religious experience.~~



~~It's that I've been trying to catch a party on hold~~  
~~Spontaneity must be a major ingredient of the religious experience which~~

~~AND SPONTANEITY. WITH SPONTANEITY YOU'RE~~  
~~has a punch to it. Unfortunately, in all the services I've been to I was~~

~~case of a spectator, not a participant. Someone was always announcing a new~~

~~page. I'm told the Hasidim had a compelling service. We don't.~~

~~A happening can be full of feeling and spontaneity, worship,~~  
~~Spontaneity is your ingredient, not mine. Spontaneity is the free play~~

~~what you normally find in the synagogue. Worship is not designed as a~~  
~~of feeling and thought. Worship involves feeling and thought playing on the~~

~~happening, but as an art form. Responsiveness has not spontaneity, it~~  
~~themes of a carefully crafted service. Spontaneity is an unfocused, light hearted~~

~~no key to the success of a service~~  
~~feeling. A worship service focuses our attention on the religion's basic~~

~~themes. A worship service presents the sacred possibilities of life as~~

~~are defined and affirmed by our tradition. Intensity and concentration~~

~~are the key elements of religious spontaneity.~~

~~- You're promoting an exercise worship which is to no little more than~~

~~- Worship is a well-designed indoctrination technique. What you call holiness is simply~~

~~the emotional electricity which is released when a service is effectively~~

~~presented. Rabbis and other religious folk prefer book worship to spontaneity~~

~~because they know that if people repeat the creed often enough they'll end~~

~~up as believers.~~

~~- of course. Worship permits a community to come together and confirm~~

~~can remind itself of the special message of its religious tradition, and relate~~

~~that message to the details of life. Worship keeps a community from unravelling~~

~~and falling apart. Worship exists in every society not because of the designs~~

~~of crafty priests but because it provided a necessary moment of recommitment.~~

~~It's not the patience with any kind of indoctrination, it's~~  
~~You keep talking of community as if it's the ultimate value. It's~~

~~more to be said, but religion will let us be~~  
~~not. Community permits cooperation, but it also tends to stifle creativity~~

~~and, unfortunately, religious communities are among the worst offenders.~~

~~Parochial schools indoctrinate; pulpits preach; services put words in our~~

~~mouths; and synods organize political campaigns to outlaw abortion or force~~

~~television stations to show "acceptable" material.~~

AND SOON MORE THAN THEM;

As I said earlier, all institutions are rife with contradictions, but  
 you're telling us one half of the story. <sup>many people</sup> ~~we can't do without most of them.~~ Schools educate and indoctrinate, <sup>hospitals</sup> ~~hospitals~~  
 try to encourage ~~critical thinking about no matter how much use of the~~  
~~pool and sometimes unwittingly shorten or unnecessarily prolong a life.~~ Like <sup>hospitals</sup> ~~hospitals~~  
 say. The service reminds us that we must ~~be pious, love money and~~ <sup>hospitals</sup> ~~hospitals~~  
~~all human institutions, the synagogue has a spotty record.~~ One synagogue

~~excommunicates Spinoza, another runs a Great Books course.~~ The synagogue  
 is not always a saintly, or even inspiring, place; yet, it's <sup>and it's</sup> ~~a~~ place.  
~~Without it, the Jewish people would~~  
~~A synagogue offers community instruction, an end to loneliness, a calendar~~  
~~of effective ceremonies and holidays which remind the Jew of the joys and~~  
~~duties of the religious life, the wisdom of the tradition and its moral challenge.~~  
~~Without synagogues and the social welfare institutions of a Jewish community,~~  
~~Judaism's message would float irrelevantly above us in the air.~~

- I don't expect any institution to be pristine, but let it at least  
 be relevant. The people in my parents' congregation are always squabbling  
 over nothing. Our city's full of real problems—race, unemployment, poverty,  
 and they hold endless meetings on whether to redecorate the Social Hall.

~~Religious bodies are human, not divine, institutions.~~ Your synagogue  
 is a community of neighbors who share a religious tradition, not a fellowship  
 limited to the virtuous ~~and the wise.~~ The synagogue's goal is holiness, but

life is with people and few, if any, of us are saints. ~~Inevitably synagogues~~  
~~in any large synagogue the rabbi and the school program~~  
~~reflect in their activities and programs the cultural level and interests~~

~~And it is the Jewish people, not the synagogue, who are the~~  
~~only ones who can be serious about the~~  
~~the tradition has built on.~~

- Irrelevance doesn't bother me as much as hypocrisy. I'm put off by  
 congregations which emblazon The Ten Commandments over their ark and ~~call to the~~

<sup>people</sup> ~~hard-eyed~~ hard-eyed men whose only virtue is their wealth or power.

You'll hear no argument from me. ~~There's a lovely Yiddish proverb which~~  
<sup>says</sup> ~~that it's a shame to~~ that every rich man is wise, competent, has

a beautiful singing voice.

- I was raised to treat religion and religious leaders with respect.

As a child I <sup>OFTEN CONFUSED</sup> ~~thought~~ <sup>with</sup> our rabbi ~~looked like~~ God. Now I find that some of his ideas <sup>ARE</sup> ~~seem~~ trivial and that <sup>he's no better than anyone else..</sup> ~~some of his talks lack information he ought to have.~~

Religious leaders are ~~human beings~~ human beings. Some are intelligent.

Some are simply passionate. Some are truly humble. Some enjoy power and

the trappings of office. Almost all try to serve God but none is Godlike. <sup>ALSO</sup>

<sup>IN ISRAELI RITES, NO ONE DEFERS TO ANYONE LEADER. ANAKKI IS A TENDON OF</sup>  
~~None should command automatic deference.~~ Jews are never asked to kneel before  
<sup>Johann, NOT AN ecclesiastic. Judaism does not encourage</sup>  
their rabbi.

- I once went to a <sup>service</sup> where the bishop sat on a throne looking like Charlemagne. ~~I feel~~ <sup>I</sup> ~~feel~~ <sup>that</sup> ~~royal~~ <sup>royal</sup> trappings fit poorly on those who call themselves God's servants.

<sup>When I wear a suit, I do so in my ordinary suit.</sup>  
~~A seminary teacher I much admired put it well: your ability to do justice and love mercy will often depend on how well you learn to walk humbly with God. In the pulpit I wear a business suit because I don't want anyone to think of me as apart or different.~~

- I can't argue with you when you're in the pulpit.

Many do, later. <sup>I</sup> ~~I~~ I don't claim to preach an Infallible Word. I say what I think, why I think as I do, and why I believe my ideas express the thrust of our tradition. If I'm persuasive, well and good; if not, I'll be tuned out, even if I'm right.

<sup>no after hour to</sup>  
- ~~We have~~ After service discussions and our rabbi gives everyone a chance to talk. He doesn't interrupt. He's a sensitive man, but he also doesn't change his mind.

.. We're back to the problem of open-mindedness. Religious questions are not theoretical questions asked calmly and answered dispassionately, but urgent



De Synagogue, I don't understand any given its purpose at  
such an unorganized entity

41

questions which ~~must be answered~~ <sup>with our lives</sup> ~~if we are to live happily and~~  
~~seriously~~. Faith implies commitment. ~~Our answers keep us going~~ Once we have

answers that satisfy us, we don't readily let go of them. I wouldn't have  
become a rabbi if I ~~weren't~~ <sup>hadn't been</sup> convinced of the importance of our special message.

~~My problem is not to be a rabbi, it's~~  
~~let's get back to the synagogue~~

~~Responsibility is not a sensitive community~~

At home we've had a succession of rabbis, and even the good ones haven't

~~been able to shift people's interest from bazaars and bingo~~ <sup>to such a degree</sup> ~~to~~

~~or serious learning or social action.~~

~~I don't know your community, but I do know that in many~~  
~~Your synagogue also uses the prayer book, offers classes in Bible and~~

~~Hebrew, and raises money for Operation Breadbasket.~~ No synagogue can eliminate

regular services ~~or~~ <sup>or</sup> take Amos out of the Bible. ~~It's~~ <sup>It's</sup> trapped by the Jewish  
tradition

~~Friday night bazaar is crowded~~

- Friday night there are a lot of empty seats.

And a minyan.

- The message isn't getting through.

How can you be sure? ~~Each of our lives has its special schedule and~~  
~~services are there and the rabbi is there whenever our time of need comes.~~

- I think of the synagogue as ~~a place of spectacle rather than a~~  
~~a set-apart place, a sanctuary.~~ <sup>I don't think of it as</sup> ~~It's an unorganized~~ <sup>A place where</sup>  
~~We don't say P.D. - P.M.~~

The Temple in Jerusalem was a sanctuary ~~built~~ <sup>built</sup> around a Holy  
of Holies which only the High Priest could enter. Only a priest of the family  
of Aaron could officiate at the altar. The synagogue, on the other hand,  
is an open place, a people's place, where holiday and Sabbath prayers are  
sung, the Torah read and discussed, and community business debated. From 42

~~who is responsible for the synagogue~~. The synagogue reflects Judaism's teaching  
that every man, every place, and every useful activity is precious to God.

It doesn't have to be built a certain way. It's a place where every individual

counts. Nine rabbis do not make a minyan. Ten laborers do. The Temple was  
~~an aristocratic institution. The synagogue is a democratic place.~~ →

who is able can conduct the service or read from the Torah.

~~- If Judaism in fact teaches that every man, every place, and every useful activity is precious to God, how was it that we made such a fuss over the Jerusalem Temple where everything was controlled by an hereditary priesthood and where there were all kinds of barriers and 'Do Not Enter' signs?~~

~~At first Jews copied for their place of worship the shrines which were everywhere in the world about them. Solomon's Temple was a typical West Asian palace shrine. Institutions never emerge full-blown. It took time before people realized that only a different kind of institution was needed to express their revolutionary religious ideas.~~

~~- IF I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED~~

~~That makes sense, but then why~~ <sup>we</sup> pray for The Temple to be rebuilt?

Personally, I hope it never happens. I've watched animals being sacrificed in the Indian villages of Latin America and there was nothing elevating in such rites. <sup>AND, LIKE YOU,</sup> I don't want my religion done for me by priests.

<sup>TUT</sup> I take the prayer ~~which asks for a renewal of worship in the Jerusalem Temple~~ as nothing more than a dramatic expression of the age-old Jewish hope that we want to be a free people in our own land and be able to worship there as we see fit.

- That's not what it says.

This prayer was ~~written when the Temple was destroyed~~ the Temple was destroyed by the Romans. ~~Some~~ Jews looked on the destruction of the Temple as the beginning of exile. <sup>AND</sup> it was only natural that they should associate its rebuilding with the end of exile. <sup>BUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT</sup> ~~the important thing~~ is that they didn't spend too much time lamenting what they no longer had but quickly reorganized religious life <sup>by attaching added sanctity to</sup> ~~around the synagogue.~~ The leaders of the day recognized the value of

the informal <sup>meetings</sup> ~~congregations~~ which had developed naturally wherever Jews lived.

<sup>LONG SINCE THEN</sup>

The ideal  $\mathcal{A}$  is not a  $\mathcal{B}$ , he might as well be a  $\mathcal{B}$ .

But that's not at all what I was told. <sup>much of the</sup> ~~main~~ <sup>work</sup> was done by a large part of the service and during the summer season as at all. <sup>According to</sup> one of the ~~producers~~ <sup>producers</sup>. ~~But~~ <sup>Donnelly</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> wanted to be more, he says that he is the only ~~person~~ <sup>person</sup> who encouraged competition.



EXTRACTED WITHIN THE

FIND NO SPECIAL ~~NOTE~~ OF ~~INTEREST~~ ~~WHILE~~  
STATIONS,

43

what they did was to ~~attach the aura of holiness to these informal~~  
~~and once the Temple was destroyed attached the aura of holiness to these informal~~  
centers by ruling that a number of rituals such as the blowing of the Shofar  
and the handling of the lulav and etrog, once reserved to Jerusalem, could  
~~now be observed in them.~~

- When you talk about attaching an aura of holiness to an institution,  
I hear intonations of magic.

Not magic but meaning. For worship ~~in the synagogue~~ to work people must  
~~have~~ that emotional electricity which turns a perfunctory occasion into  
a powerful and reassuring rite. ~~The synagogue had been totally informal.~~

It was essential that it be endowed with some of the Temple's ~~holiness.~~

- I've always thought of the synagogue as a community center which has  
classrooms and ~~larger~~ meeting rooms where services can be held. ~~In our place~~  
we hold ~~assemblies~~ public lectures and weddings in the same auditorium  
we hold services. The Ark can be rolled off.

The ~~synagogue~~ <sup>as</sup> The synagogue ~~a mikdash me'at a small sanctuary.~~  
The ~~synagogue~~ an open institution, but not a totally informal one. ~~The Ark~~  
which contained the Torah scrolls was curtained off the way the Holy of Holies  
in The Temple had been. Worshippers bowed when they crossed in front of the  
Ark. When the Torah was paraded worshippers touched it with their prayer  
shawls and then kissed the garment. ~~Synagogue worship comes at set times~~

~~SYNAGOGUES HAVE A SET FORM.~~ BUT IT'S A NATION LAW KAYAL PHENOMENON.

The camp cook chose this moment to bring in a tea cart. When everyone  
had been served the conversation resumed on a slightly different tack.

- I've been debating whether or not to join a congregation. I want to  
set down some roots. I like the holidays. I care about Israel. I'm proud  
of being Jewish, but I don't ~~agree~~ <sup>ACCORD</sup> some of the doctrines the synagogue  
stands for.

For instance.

any one who is competent  
can now, many are called  
up to bless the Lord.

16 - Young Talking Machine. A building is a building and nothing more.

Q Do you know the term MANA. Anthropologists use it to describe  
to spirit which dwells not some special person or concentrated  
in a place or object. <sup>enough</sup> ~~the~~ ANIMATIONS OF NATURE  
is in the eyes of the beholder, not in the object or place.  
~~But the same law is found in the world of the spirit. The expectation~~  
OF A powerful presence, INDEED, the likelihood that something  
SIGNIFICANT will happen. Thus the <sup>spirit</sup> ~~world~~ <sup>STORIA</sup> ~~of~~ AND  
OF THE TEMPLE. ~~As long as the temple is there, the spirit~~  
~~is there.~~ THE HUMANUS NATURE AND THOUGHT IN THE SAME  
WAY, BUT BECAUSE IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NATURE  
OF THE TEMPLE, <sup>THAT</sup> ~~AND~~ IT BECOMES A psychic point,  
A TENSION POINT IN THE STRUCTURE.

- I don't believe God answers prayer or that there's life after death.  
I certainly don't believe that God actually gave the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai or even that he spoke to Moses. ~~He spoke to Moses.~~

No synagogue I know requires potential members to sign articles of faith before they are allowed to join. Even when I was ordained I wasn't required to affirm a creed or ~~agree to submit~~ <sup>help submit</sup> to a superior's authority.

- I'm surprised. I knew that rabbis didn't prostrate themselves before some chief rabbi like newly ordained priests before a bishop, but I always thought there must be some kind of loyalty oath.

Our teacher told us simply: 'We've taught you what we can. Continue studying. Try to ~~live up to the Torah's principles and~~ <sup>live up to the Torah's principles</sup> and teach them to your congregation ~~as best you can~~ <sup>and support the survival of the Jewish people</sup> ~~in every way you can~~ <sup>as best you can</sup>'

- Interesting, but you really haven't addressed my question. You wouldn't have spent years in the seminary if you didn't find Jewish ideas sympathetic. I don't. Judaism's over there and I'm here. How can I affirm what I don't accept?

You can't. You needn't.

- You can't be saying that Judaism is like silly putty that I can shape into anything I want to make of it.

A synagogue is a community of Jews bound together by respect for Torah, familiarity with the patterns of Jewish culture, and concern for the survival of the Jewish people. A synagogue is not a congregation of "true believers."

We don't bar the door to anyone can't say Amen to every idea in the Torah or the prayer book.

- I can believe anything I want.

Who can stop you? But ~~except~~ <sup>remember that</sup> the synagogue ~~will~~ <sup>will continue to</sup> promote its special message.

- That's coercion.



## Summary

22

Life is full of contradiction

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

~~I want to deal with the issue you raise at length at another time. 60~~

31m 2048

~~May 20 1944~~

1998

ALL THE TIME

END



No. 2 Fund.

~~Not so long ago anyone who didn't confess was excommunicated.~~

2. KAD TO KOLYUBO KAK TO OZHIVAYEMOYE DLA KAKOY KONTROLA

ALMOST 25 cent

IT: 5

*reduced*

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Answer

# STATION

- The chief rabbis of Israel <sup>obviously</sup> don't agree with Mendelschn. ~~They want~~

~~everyone to obey the full religious law and they use their political clout~~ <sup>to gain authority in these areas.</sup> ~~to gain authority in these areas.~~ <sup>to gain authority in these areas.</sup>

- Israel's a special case. <sup>ASIDE FROM ALL POINTS IT IS AS</sup> ~~The State defines itself as a Jewish State~~  
<sup>A Jewish state and for many to have no doubts</sup> ~~and for various political as well as historical reasons the orthodox rabbinate~~  
<sup>has been given the right to administer the laws which regulate personal status</sup> ~~has been given the right to administer the laws which regulate personal status~~

~~I disapprove heartily of that arrangement which violates my belief that the~~  
~~democracy requires the separation of church and state.~~ <sup>the</sup> problem is not  
 that rabbinic regulations <sup>are</sup> necessarily unacceptable in general, rabbinic  
 law is both functional and sensible but that the present arrangement is coercive  
 and was imposed after a crude political bargain. Page 47

- Israel's rabbis wouldn't have demanded these powers in the first place  
 if traditional Judaism didn't assume that this was the right way to organize  
 Jewish life. I'm no expert, but it seems to me that Jewish political philosophy  
<sup>is not</sup> ~~cannot wholeheartedly embrace~~ <sup>the</sup> democracy since the tradition assumes that  
 certain rules are God-given instructions and not subject to popular referendum.

Those who believe literally in Sinai must feel that no other law but God's  
 law, the Torah, would be appropriate for a Jewish state.

- Khomeini's Iran is based on <sup>A similar</sup> ~~the same~~ logic.

So were all European states until the French Revolution. So are all  
 Arab states today. The separation of church and state is a modern concept  
<sup>A major difficulty</sup> ~~which requires an almost impossible~~ revision of outlook for those who believe  
~~wholeheartedly that their religion represents~~  
~~revelation. They believe that God's rules cannot be set aside just~~  
 because a majority decide that divorce should be allowed or abortions permitted. <sup>→</sup>  
~~After all, what right have human beings to override God's will?~~

- As a rabbi how <sup>do</sup> you answer the other side of that argument? <sup>that</sup> <sup>if</sup>  
 Judaism can be changed by the popular <sup>will it can be changed</sup> ~~will it can be changed~~ claim to be a sacred  
 tradition?

Holiness lies in a traditional ability to enhance life ~~rather than~~ →  
~~By asking how anyone can be sure he knows what God wants. Revelation must~~

~~always be interpreted and that's a human enterprise and so necessarily one into~~

~~which error can intrude~~

~~However~~ I know orthodox rabbis who deplore the present political

arrangement in Israel almost as much as I do. They believe, as I do, that

in the modern world coercion ends up by being counterproductive and ~~would~~ <sup>that is</sup>

~~be satisfied as long as their right to practice Judaism as they see fit is~~

~~current arrangement~~  
~~not compromised, to have the State enforce the halacha.~~

- You only get this problem because Judaism ~~isn't~~ <sup>intrudes</sup> into practical  
 affairs where it doesn't belong.

I'll say it again. It can't be otherwise. Religion's not a romantic  
 sentiment but a ~~structured way of expression which supports and puts into~~ <sup>special message about the meaning of our life and</sup>  
~~practice that faithful special message.~~ <sup>all life.</sup> Put another way, we who serve God

whom we affirm to be just and merciful must not only worship Him in the synagogue  
 but work to create a just and merciful society. To this end the Torah not  
 only promulgates righteousness in general terms - we are to speak the truth,  
 avoid malicious gossip, not bear a grudge, be loyal to our family responsibilities,  
 respect the sanctity of marriage, and honor our parents - but properly sets  
 out a whole series of specific rules through which holiness, as the Israelites  
 understood the term, would become part of the social order: tithing one's  
 field, freeing the slave on the sabbatical year, paying a laborer immediately  
 all that he has been promised, due process, and a carefully organized judicial  
 system.

- You're talking about law, not religion.

~~Some say not only law but religion is without~~  
~~Religion without law is like learning without a curriculum. It may be~~  
~~pleasurable but it will never add up to anything - be focused~~ Judaism is

not a private piety of withdrawal but an affirmation of righteous living and  
 the righteous community and necessarily is deeply concerned that ways be found  
 to structure its values into <sup>our</sup> public and private lives. <sup>in the world</sup>

~~Self governing communities, do necessarily want that~~  
~~Judaism made itself effective through structure - law. →~~  
~~to structure~~



DO JUDAIISM 21  
Be useful.

~~First I was like a religion man into politics, I had~~  
~~that was my intention, I was like the image~~

of rabbis striking deals in smokefilled rooms and in fact of no rabbi  
of an unpolitical Jew, ~~the image of a political Jew~~  
I wouldn't want my synagogue to align itself with the personal ambitions

of any politician or political party, but when it comes to social policy and  
the questions which involve the future of life on this earth, I can't imagine  
Judaism remaining silent and as a rabbi I can't imagine myself remaining uninvolved.

- Play that idea out for a moment. You want to be in politics in order  
to sponsor Judaism's social concerns. If you become active in politics every  
other religious group has the right to do the same, and many will push for  
programs you don't approve of: creationism, ~~the anti-abortion movement,~~  
federal aid to parochial schools. Most of the single issue crusades of our  
day have begun with some religious body. Wouldn't it be better for all the  
groups to stay out of politics?

Everything we do creates possibilities and problems. Moreover, Judaism  
encourages us to be involved. ~~"Established rules to govern the~~  
~~life of the tribes in their new home. Amos and Jeremiah had much to say about~~  
~~the economics and foreign policies of the ruling class.~~

~~Be that as it may~~  
- A recent poll indicated that most Americans would prefer it if their  
ministers stayed out of politics.

People call a sermon political when they disagree with the preacher.

If they agree he's not talking politics but explaining God's word and doing  
good. The same people who ~~blast~~ blast the Moral Majority for injecting religion  
into politics applaud the Council of Catholic Bishops for approving a Nuclear  
Freeze.

- ~~In~~ <sup>My</sup> college ~~roommate~~ roommate who was a devout church-goer ~~who~~ who always  
insisted that politics was not the church's business. She was full of quotes:

"Render unto Caesar those things which are Caesar's and to God those things

which belong to God" and "My kingdom is not of this world." The church, she said, was in the salvation business, not in the bureaucracy business.

<sup>not</sup> American churches <sup>took</sup> ~~held~~ this hands-off view as long as the school day began with prayer, the school teacher was a church member, and history

assignments <sup>confirmed</sup> ~~didn't~~ what was taught in Sunday School, <sup>and they have</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~public schools~~ <sup>public schools</sup> ~~can~~ <sup>can</sup> no longer be

counted on to reinforce church values. During the 1980 presidential campaign many one-time 'stay out of politics' church folk coalesced into The Moral

Majority whose political agenda is to require America's institutions to again reflect and support church interests. ~~Their drive to make the public school~~

~~day begin with a prayer symbolizes their determination to regain control of the curriculum so that it will again confirm the values and virtues they affirm.~~

~~They want evolution, sex education, and values clarification out, and courses in civics, Christian ethics, and special creation introduced.~~

- You're being quite a cynic. You're suggesting that religious groups stay in or out of politics on the basis of practical benefit rather than principle.

Churches and synagogues are human institutions. During the thirties the Vatican held its tongue on the evils of Fascism. ~~Sometimes protecting~~

~~the institution becomes more important than proclaiming its message.~~ <sup>And during the Fifties and Sixties many churches</sup>

<sup>held</sup> - You argue ~~that~~ that the opposition of most Jewish groups to such programs as public support of parochial education reflects the benefit Jews have gained from the high wall of separation.

<sup>And the sense of belonging Jews gained from the public</sup> ~~As must be clear from the Israeli experience, traditional Judaism does~~ <sup>school experience in the case of Israel, traditional Judaism</sup> ~~not insist on the high wall~~ <sup>not insist on the high wall</sup> ~~The separation doctrine helped to protect our~~

~~rights against Sunday closing laws and Saturday elections, but today those~~ responsible for the budgets of Jewish day schools have, by and large, ceased

to be hardliners on the issue. <sup>There's some self-interest in all</sup>

<sup>now we do.</sup>

<sup>Especially you don't dissent at all</sup>

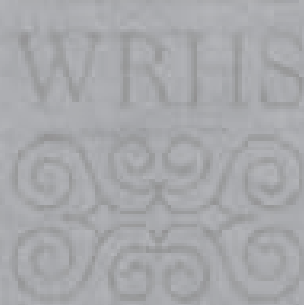
<sup>It's just community spirit and principled conviction</sup>

HABIT, NO HABIT TERM USUALLY TRANSLATED INTO, LITERALLY,  
MONEY ONLY WHO DOES MORE THAN HE NORMALLY, ASPECT OF  
A JERIN OF QUALITY

→ HONOR, BUT, THANKS OUT, BEING AND A LOT OF GROWTH HEARTED AND  
CONNO, PEOPLE. Look ~~was~~ <sup>counted as</sup> ~~to be~~ human being, NOT  
ANGEL AND NO TEST IN TO BELIEVE IN HUMANITY'S SENSITIVE  
AS WE CAN, ~~behave~~.

~~The camp~~  
~~was a place where people were kept for a long time~~  
~~and it was a very bad place~~

~~For~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~was~~ was BUTTER A BIT SMALL AND WE DECIDED  
TO BRING FOR DINNER.



Both leaders, institutions in ~~the~~ civil rights and <sup>the peace</sup> ~~movement~~  
movement,  
think ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> always a principle. The question is which  
principle and how is it defined.

→ I believe that there are no virtues ~~which~~ <sup>they enhance</sup>  
~~life~~ but I also believe that we can never completely  
act out of disinterest. ~~There~~ <sup>Liberalism</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>can</sup>  
not be fully separated from the unity of giving. The  
test is to separate it as far as possible.

→ There are no saints  
~~who are perfect and who are not~~



ON  
Ti

~~Let me say it again~~ Our special message specifically links piety and public policy. God did not allow Moses to enjoy a quiet domesticity with his wife and sons in Midian. He was told to go back to Egypt to carry out God's will. The prophets insisted that God demanded acts of justice rather than sacrifices. "Who has asked this of you to trample my courts. . . I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly." Rabbis were encouraged to be active in their communities even in business - rather than to withdraw into a life of secluded piety. The mandate was clear: "Separate not yourself from the community."

Some years ago I visited an old synagogue in Lisbon. The wall facing the entrance door contained perhaps a dozen slots, each large enough to receive folding money. A brass plate above each slot bore the name of a service organization: Hachnasat Kallah, society for providing to brides; Bikkur Holim, society for the care of the sick; Hevrah Kaddisha, burial society. That synagogue raised and dispersed money for the welfare needs of the community.

- I'm not impressed by charity. It's simply an easy way for the wealthy to feel virtuous and to gain respectability.

Those who put money into these boxes were paying communal dues, not giving charity. Judaism teaches that today's giver might well be tomorrow's recipient and that financial success is as much a result of mazzal, good fortune, as hard work. I don't know a single line in our literature which tells either the rich man or the poor man that he deserves his lot. Hebrew has no term for charity.

~~- Let's not focus in yet on Judaism. I've still got questions about the general nature of religion. You gave us a functional definition of religion and you said that religions are necessary but not necessarily good. Since any religion which commands a group's allegiance is by definition functional and, therefore, useful, how does one decide between the religions of our world?~~

## Chapter 3

**MUST I REMAIN WHERE I AM?**  
**CAN THE LEOPARD CHANGE ITS SPOTS?**

As I thought about our first day's conversation I felt that somewhere at the heart of it was an assumption - how widespread I couldn't tell yet - that a person can switch religions as easily as he might decide to move from one apartment to another or change his style of dress; so I began the next morning by commenting that some of them had talked as if they might take a good look at Judaism and decide whether to join or go elsewhere, and that once that decision was made - to be or not to be - that would be that.

- Isn't it?

It's not that simple. Ask any convert. ~~Many~~ Most ~~will~~ testify to bouts of guilt, feelings of cultural awkwardness, and a nagging sense of being adrift.

~~As we grow up~~ <sup>The</sup> ~~we are~~ <sup>in us</sup> ~~conditioned~~ <sup>we receive</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>from</sup> the prevailing culture, the manners of our class, and the habits and attitudes of our peers. The imprint we received as children is deeply etched and not easily erased.

<sup>Didn't</sup> ~~When~~ the Jesuits ~~who~~ claimed that if they could have a child during the first six years of life his soul would belong to them as long as he lived?

That claim may be apocryphal. It certainly overstates the case. So does the Biblical proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go and he will follow you the rest of his life." But nobody should minimize the power of conditioning.

Wholehearted converts to Judaism have told me, "I can't help it, I miss Christmas," or "I checked the wrong box at last fall's registration before I realized what I was doing" or "I feel more at home every year, but I've never stopped expecting the collection plate." <sup>Almost any change can be emotionally difficult</sup> A young man who'd been raised in a traditional congregation and had joined his wife's synagogue told me: "I agree intellectually with the Reform position but I'll never get used to a woman rabbi." My college advisor,

probably the most learned Jewish philosopher of his day, Harry Austryn Wolfson, began to suffer stomach pains when as an undergraduate he registered in a non-kosher rooming house, and for all his brilliance years passed before he associated these aches with his break with childhood custom. Any change in our habits takes its toll.

- I'm still convinced, as I told you yesterday, ~~that~~ I could leave without any regrets and without ever looking back.

And I'll repeat what I said: 'don't be so sure.' Around every synagogue you'll find a cluster of spiritual returnees; there's even a familiar name for them, ba'alei teshuvah, usually middle-aged or older men and women who stayed away from Judaism for years but now feel a need to come IN OUT A F TG could

Years ago I heard Margaret Mead describe how the pull of home tugs incessantly at the emigrant. The peasants who left the villages of Eastern and Southern Europe for the coal mines of Pennsylvania or the steel mills of Ohio fled abject poverty. Many found a measure of prosperity in the new land; but most never felt at home in their new life, and many returned to the old country and did not stay in familiar surroundings. Necessity drove them abroad and a need to be in familiar surroundings drew them back home by the way, conditioning also explains the other bizarre behavior of some converts to Christianity who worship Jesus in Hebrew, call their church a synagogue and insist that they're still Jews. They've LEFT but gone of most people remain suspicious of converts. It's not so much that they doubt the convert's sincerity but they wonder if the convert may know his heart is not as well as he knows his mind has heart and that deep inside he remains what he was during those first and important years

- I'm like that. I like to think of myself as a fair person, but I understand

the sincerity of most conversions. I'm not surprised when I read that the Soviet



and Red Chinese press labels<sup>KEVINFL</sup> the children of once-privileged families "capitalist roaders."

<sup>SOME OF MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS</sup>  
~~Nonetheless~~ call anyone who comes out of a Jewish background a Jew, <sup>IT</sup>  
<sup>LOCATION AFTER IF THEY HAVE</sup>  
~~even if they~~ been a life-long member of some ~~Christian~~ church.

<sup>NO SOUTER</sup>  
 - Most conversions are acts of convenience. <sup>NOT CONSCIOUS</sup> A Jew wants to move up in the corporate world. A non-Jewish fiancée wants to please her future in-laws, ~~and~~  
~~avoid the problems posed by an intermarriage.~~

<sup>SOME ARE LONG AGENTS</sup>  
 I convert about ~~thirty~~ <sup>twenty</sup> people a year, and about half of those who study with me are not contemplating marriage. Some seek a faith which will inspire them in a way their family's religion did not. <sup>OTHER</sup> ~~Some~~ have lived among Jews long enough to have become more comfortable with us and our ways than with any other group.

<sup>OF THESE</sup>  
 For some it's a highly charged and wrenching emotional experience born out of gnawing and growing doubts about what they had been taught.

- I know people who have gone the conversion route and feel completely at home and at ease.

At home and at ease, yes. Completely at home, I'm not sure.

I remember one young woman, liberal, well-read, sure that her nominal Christian upbringing would not stand in the way of <sup>A WHOLE HEARTED</sup> involvement in the Jewish life of her future husband. <sup>AND FRIEND</sup> She had told me before her conversion: "I never went to Sunday School. I've always believed in God but never in the Christ myth. In many ways I've always been a Jew." Some years later she came and asked me to deconvert her. I told her that no such ceremony exists. Besides, it wouldn't be my place to organize one. But we kept talking, in part because she was so determined that I understand her feelings: "I don't want to become a Christian. I don't believe in the cross, ~~but~~ I find I can't give up Easter and Christmas and somehow I feel disloyal to my parents."

- I've a philosopher friend who's a confirmed atheist and a religion buff.

He travels a great deal and makes it a point to attend services in Indian temples and Shinto shrines, <sup>HE'S PART OF THE FAITH</sup> ~~but~~ he hasn't been inside a synagogue since his bar mitzvah, ~~He says he can't be a hypocrite~~, but I noticed that he took his sabbatical at

the Hebrew University and he's always talking about the cultural scene in Israel.

~~Conditioning~~  
- ~~Y~~ assuming that our homes ~~carried~~ <sup>had</sup> a Jewish imprint. Mine ~~my parents were Jews but our~~ didn't. ~~My home was a Jewish blank.~~ <sup>My parents are good people but</sup> The only thing Jewish about our lives was the fact that my mother served lox and bagels for Sunday brunch. ~~I~~. I could leave without ever looking back.

Perhaps you could. There are many degrees of conditioning and, obviously, the more conditioning the deeper the imprint. However, I doubt that delicatessen ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> the only Jewish element ~~to~~ <sup>in your childhood</sup> ~~my~~ d. I know your parents. We've been in a number of political battles together. I know they're not synagogue people, but I also know their positions on welfare legislation and race and I'd argue that their strong convictions about injustice grew out of their Jewish upbringing.

~~Q-Many non-Jews share their convictions and many Jews don't -~~  
~~Q-True~~ <sup>you're right, but for</sup> since you know my folks you know they're people who are quite aware of what they do and why. They've never once suggested to me that their political ~~convictions~~ <sup>activism</sup> had anything Jewish about ~~them~~ <sup>it</sup>. They feel religion is medieval and the synagogue is irrelevant. I can't tell you how many times my father reminded me that prayer never fed an empty stomach.

~~European cultural reform drew its original inspiration from~~  
~~They wouldn't be the crusaders they are if they hadn't been brought up in~~  
~~and the Jewish~~ <sup>Jewish</sup> ~~never allowed Jews to feel that~~  
~~the passionate world of the Jewish labor movement. Your parents grew up during~~  
~~the world was beyond nationalism, so no class struggle~~ <sup>the</sup>  
~~the twenties in homes where the words of Peretz, Sholem Aleichem and Bar Borechov~~  
~~filled the shelves. Their parents were part of a group of young socialists who~~

~~took for granted that religion was a reactionary force in society. Yet, their~~  
~~special passions had deep Jewish roots.~~ Some day you might want to read Isaac Deutscher's autobiography, The Non-Jewish Jew. As a young man Deutscher renounced the synagogue and became a Communist. He never returned, but as he grew older

~~he recognized that the social legislation of the Twenties and the welfare system~~  
~~of the medieval Jewish community and the tradition which goes back to Moses and~~  
~~Moses of prophetic outrage at all forms of privilege had been spiritually formative~~  
~~and, insofar as they remain central in Jewish life, redress it in his eyes.~~

~~and philosophy~~

- I don't see where you're going with your argument that Judaism should be important to us because we can't quite get rid of it. Deutscher may have remembered reading Amos in heder, but he certainly ~~isn't~~<sup>is</sup> his children ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> read Marx rather than the Five Books of Moses. What you're talking about is a lingering cultural residue, and nostalgia has a short half-life. If the heart has gone out of the enterprise, if no one still believes the special message, why keep at it? ~~You're talking about something.~~

~~You're~~ You're here. The call of the cradle faith is a compelling, often an unyielding, summons. ~~I am not now defining or defending Judaism. I am not now defining or defending Judaism. I am not now defining or defending Judaism.~~

- My parents are strange Jews. They give to the United Jewish Appeal. They belong to a synagogue. They talk about Israel, anti-semitism, Soviet Jewry, ~~and know~~ ~~a good bit about Jewish history, but they never when it comes to~~ ~~synagogue politics about everything except God or prayer.~~

They're not so strange. I can't tell you how often one of my Confirmation students, while questioning me on some religious matter, will add: 'I asked my parents and they told me to ask you.'

- You're the expert.

- They're afraid they won't be able to ~~say it~~ right, ~~and to explain their~~

~~language.~~

- My father kept a ~~table~~<sup>prayer book</sup> on his bedside table, but he never talked about his beliefs. ~~When~~<sup>Once</sup> I asked him why, ~~he~~<sup>and he</sup> put me off: ~~What is between~~ ~~me and him?~~ I always held it against him that he shut me out, and I always wondered why. ~~He'd talk with me quite easily, but he'd talk about matters: love, anxiety, values, etc.~~

- My parents were somewhat like that. I was car-pooled to religious school. If it was their turn to drive ~~the car~~<sup>the house</sup> get out of the car unless I was in a play or receiving some award. After school they would ask whether I enjoyed the morning but not what I'd learned. I never understood why they sent me to Sabbath School.



- It's hard to talk about what you believe.

Q - ~~Others do. ~~unusually~~ at 34, give you my theory. The old~~

- ~~Particularly if you've never really given your beliefs much thought.~~ When

~~ask my father about God he'd say: 'I don't know, that's not a question I~~

~~want to spend much time on.'~~

- So why did ~~he~~ <sup>my mother</sup> insist <sup>580 TL</sup> on Religious School?

- ~~He~~ <sup>my father</sup> told me: 'you'll always be known as a Jew, <sup>at least</sup> ~~and~~ know what it's

all about.'

~~There's a sense of fate. The Jewish people are a people of fate.~~

Jews belong to a community of fate, only part of which is also a community of faith.

Q BUT why?

~~There seem to be fewer drop-the-kids-off-and-go-on families now than when~~

I was being car-pooled. I'm in temple more often than my parents ever were and

in recent years I've noticed my parents, too, have become more observant. I think

it's the times. We're terribly confused ~~and~~ more than a bit disenchanted and

~~we seem to~~ need a regular dose of encouragement ~~and~~ that ~~we're~~ <sup>our culture</sup>

the right thing.

- When I go to services, I'm surrounded by empty pews.

I suspect

~~you're both right.~~ <sup>IN NO JEWISH COMMUNITY,</sup> The interested are more intensely involved and the disinterested are, if anything, less.

~~Fast forward hours and now if we feel we need reinforcement~~

- ~~We keep talking about a Jewish community, but~~ I don't see community; I see groups of Jews who have little

in common: the affiliated and the unaffiliated; community activists and those

who don't do anything; observant Reform and non-observant Orthodox; some who worship

every day, some who worship twice a year, and some who don't come at all.

- Observant Orthodox and non-observant Reform.

- Those, too.

- What's your point?

There's no

~~The Jewish community does not have a center,~~ <sup>we don't know about</sup> it's not clear what,

~~should be considered a community. There's no~~ special message,

~~to go on to F.~~

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~~There's only~~

a lot of conflicting messages out there.

~~a non-Jewish perspective. We have many strong communal. Daniel, 7~~  
We're a fiercely independent lot, always have been. Moses led twelve fractious,

often rebellious, tribes. You know the old line, 'two Jews, three opinions' —

yet, in times of crisis most of us pull together.

~~I'd like to think that we've no better reason to exist than~~  
~~that the Jewish community exists because~~

~~to fight~~ I believe in the importance of  
will rally round when the anti-semites are on the march. Survival is important,

continuing a family, name, if it's a steady for journey.  
~~but there should be some positive benefit in a group's survival. I won't spend~~

time and energy on a group which doesn't stand for values I approve.

~~to begin with the Christian story. It's a good myth to~~  
I think you'll find most Jews, the non-Jewish Jew and the synagogue Jew,

share a commitment to social justice. The non-Jewish Jew feels pride in the prophets

the only emphasis on the practical achievement of a whole community, and  
and their fierce defense of justice in all its forms. The synagogue Jew will

a whole life and a plan for the performance of commandments and  
talk of the mission of Israel and may actually quote Isaiah: "I, the Lord, have

with open heaven's gate,

called you in righteousness and taken hold of your hand, to set you as a covenant

of the peoples, as a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring

the prisoners out of confinement, and those who dwell in darkness out of the dungeon."

~~Both are saying: It's right to be actively, politically, concerned with the world's~~  
problems.

~~That's not such of a special message, but not a special message, many~~  
Christians and communists and non-Communists. They're not —  
~~It is when you consider that~~ most religions counseled men to turn away from

the world and the worldly. Some even told them that they'd not know any peace

of mind until they gave up all public commitments, including family and marriage.

~~And that was long ago. They're not now. Mr. A. J. D. 4, 1947?~~  
~~Before we get side-tracked into the question of purpose, answer for me~~

a more practical question — who belongs to this Jewish community?

Any Jew.

Who's a Jew? How does one qualify?

You become a Jew in the same way that anyone becomes an American citizen

- by being born to parents who are citizens or through naturalization. According

to rabbinic law a Jew is a person born to a Jewish mother or one who converts, and

- I was asking a religious, not a legal, question.

From  
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→ could today. ANTI-SEMITISM.

Q ~~first~~ - you're talking about outside problems.  
I guess what Jim says is that to deal too much we should  
work at being Jews just because <sup>many in our</sup> the world doesn't like Jews.  
Q - we must ~~say something~~ <sup>say something</sup> pretty important, if we  
would never to get up on us.

Q our message is simple, itself. God is man but  
is one. God created life and put a spark of divinity in  
everyone. ~~that's~~ <sup>that's</sup> all. Using to spread prejudice <sup>is</sup>  
intolerable.

Q - so why do we argue so much.



JUST ONE.

STILL A FEW, LET ME AGREE THAT THE CHARTERED WORLD HAS  
become more Jewish.

Q - Before you ~~finish~~ <sup>finish</sup> to define ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> notion of being, explain  
to me just who



~~I've tried to make it clear that the tradition took for granted that one's~~  
~~religious identity was a legal fact as well as a profession of faith.~~ In the  
 ancient world, you were a citizen of a religious community and governed by its  
 law.

- Why was the mother the determining factor?

The Hebrews, like the other peoples of the ancient Middle East, practiced <sup>polygamy</sup> ~~polygamy~~, and in such societies rules based on maternal descent were <sup>generally</sup> the norm  
 since they provided <sup>an</sup> ~~an~~ effective way to settle questions of inheritance  
 and precedence.

- Today it's one husband and one wife. The rationale for using the mother  
 is no longer valid.

Recently the Reform community acknowledged this when it decided to consider  
 as a Jew any child of an intermarriage who had been raised as a Jew ~~regardless~~

~~It's a valid thing. Religion should be a matter of private decision,~~  
~~which you accept or you don't.~~  
~~Even so, law and religion shouldn't have anything to do with each other.~~

~~Shouldn't is a bit too strong. Religion cannot be sealed off from the other~~  
~~sides of one's life.~~ I must say I rather like the matter-of-factness of the ~~old~~  
 approach since, despite all our pretensions to being free spirits, we are in large

measure what our family raises us to be, and ~~must~~ <sup>must</sup> play a major role in that  
 conditioning process. ~~The old rule also states that~~ <sup>But the rule almost makes us into a</sup> The Jewish community ~~is~~  
<sup>is an open community.</sup> ~~is an open community.~~

~~- That's true of all religions~~

~~Not so. You have to be born a Brahmin to be one. Membership in a tribe~~  
~~and caste are often essential to belonging.~~

~~We thought we didn't seek converts.~~  
~~- I was surprised when you talked of Jewish converts.~~  
 We didn't maintain missions, but we are happy to accept converts. In the

Greco-Roman world we were quite active in the missionary field until the emperors  
 of Rome became Christians and ruled that only their church could receive converts.

NOT TO WORK OUT AND IT TAKES A GENERATION OF  
NOT OF BURYING IN AN OPEN SOCIETY, THE FINEST OF US ARE AGAIN  
COMFORTABLE WITH THIS KIND OF EXTENSION.

During the Middle Ages when Europe was ruled by Christian <sup>keep me blind</sup> law, Jewish communities  
were sometimes put to the sword if a local Christian became an apostate. <sup>but</sup> ~~no more~~  
~~Final of the Middle Ages~~

~~Be more specific about the situation today.~~

~~But we still don't have missionaries~~

~~There are some who think that~~

~~we don't actively missionize.~~

- Why not?

I suppose we're still somewhat inhibited by the fact that we are a minority.

Then, too, Judaism has never taught that non-Jews will be barred from Heaven. We're  
~~don't say that that's the only way~~  
not accustomed to the idea that a convert to Judaism saves his immortal soul.

- My mother's a convert. She once told me that when she told an aunt of her  
decision the aunt broke into tears because they wouldn't see each other in Heaven.

- I've always thought of the Jewish community as somewhat tribal.

~~The law is specific: a Jew is a Jew by virtue of birth or conversion, and~~

the convert is the full equal of one born a Jew. ~~The Jewish community is an~~  
~~community.~~ Ruth, a convert, was worthy of being the great-grandmother of King  
David and, by inference, a direct ancestor of the Messiah.

- We claim to be a Chosen People.

The Chosen People, not the chosen race. ~~Anyone~~ <sup>any</sup> willing to follow the  
covenanted way can join with us. ~~we have never claimed any genetic distinction.~~

The Bible is remarkable among classic literatures for the absence of any myth  
which claims ~~for~~ <sup>AT</sup> the community ~~descent~~ <sup>descends</sup> from the gods. Abraham is described ~~as~~  
~~the~~ <sup>as</sup> a semi-nomad of no particular nobility. The Israelites whom Moses  
led out of Egypt are called an asafsuf, an undistinguished lot, and they were  
joined by an erev rav, people of no particular lineage who, having thrown in their  
destiny with our Fathers, are never again spoken of as a distinguishable and separate  
group. ~~no main point of the~~

- Still, ~~the~~ <sup>feel</sup> Jews ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> they ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> God's favorites.

~~We like to feel that we have been singled out.~~ All religions assert some special relationship to their god or patron.

- Only Jews claim to be a chosen people.

Not so. Christianity makes precisely the same claim. In fact, they say that God removed the title from Israel and gave it to the Church. ~~All the classic religions claim some special relationship with their God.~~ The chosen people idea seems to me little more than a reification of what the psychiatrist calls a healthy ego.

- I don't like pretensions of any kind.

~~Pretensions such as pointing out usually lead to claims of special.~~  
God's choice of Israel brought special responsibilities rather than special favors.

- How did the chosen people idea come into being in the first place?

Quite naturally. Our ancestors were certain God had given them a special message, and they felt honored by that fact. ~~They felt that~~ Their lives had a new focus and they spoke of this feeling as 'election.' The Torah has God say to Israel: "You have seen what I did in Egypt and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you here to me. If only you will now listen to Me and keep My covenant, then out of all peoples you shall become My special possession for the whole earth is Mine. You shall be My kingdom of priests, My holy nation."

- Many claim that we're racists because we speak of ourselves as a chosen people.

The rabbis said God first offered the Torah to Israel's various neighbors, but each in turn demurred. They didn't want to be held to such a strict account. Racial arrogance has nothing to do with it. God chose a motley of erstwhile slaves.

~~Our rabbi says that its attractiveness to the gentile, The chosen people idea~~  
~~may have been a useful device in the past. It's a bit out of date~~  
~~should now be dropped because it has become an embarrassment.~~ In a world which  
~~believes in democracy and cultural pluralism~~ <sup>chosen people talk</sup> makes us seem a closed ~~and uncooperative~~  
~~clannish group.~~  
~~group. In fact, he believes that chosen people talk encourages clannishness~~  
~~among Jews.~~



I've no particular trouble with the term, <sup>but</sup> it says to me: 'Be grateful that you belong to a people who sense a special duty and feel compelled to do it.'

I wouldn't want to be part of a people who were <sup>just</sup> satisfied with the ~~minimum~~ conventional standards of their time and place. As God's chosen people, Jews couldn't - can't - let Him down. In any case, I won't allow anti-semites to dictate what I can believe or say.

- You're being uncharacteristically romantic.

- No, I'm simply reminding you that we tend to set our standards by what others expect of us. I did my best work in school for the teachers who expected the most of me. Jews felt God had said to them what my parents often said to me: "Don't settle for the average." Like a capable student whose ability has been recognized, more was demanded of the Jew.

~~- When a teacher said, 'I expect more of you than of some others,' I felt I was being manipulated and hated it.~~

~~- We can't all get A's.~~

~~Judaism's a 'you can't' tradition. There's always room for improvement, and that's the only duty there is. I can understand why those who want only to be left alone never volunteer and say no thank you when they're asked to take on a special assignment, would reject the label.~~ <sup>potential</sup> <sup>affinity</sup> <sup>possibilities</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>holiness</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>life</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>sense</sup> <sup>that</sup> <sup>we're</sup> <sup>doing</sup> <sup>what</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>should</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>doing</sup>

- You make Judaism sound like an <sup>any</sup> version of one of those pop culture human potential seminars.

I don't mean to. Judaism's message is not 'here's the way to be successful' but 'here are God's Instructions.' Our prayers are quite explicit, <sup>guaranteed</sup> <sup>about</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>future</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>world</sup>

<sup>we</sup> <sup>ought</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>doing</sup> "You have chosen us from all peoples. . . you have sanctified us by your commandments and brought us near to Your service." <sup>the</sup> <sup>future</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>world</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>not</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>our</sup> <sup>hands</sup> <sup>but</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>God's</sup> <sup>hands</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>are</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>do</sup> <sup>what</sup> <sup>He</sup> <sup>has</sup> <sup>commanded</sup> <sup>us</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>do</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>are</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>holiness</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>life</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>sense</sup> <sup>that</sup> <sup>we're</sup> <sup>doing</sup> <sup>what</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>should</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>doing</sup>

- By those standards Judaism has not been particularly successful. I don't see that there's any correlation between attendance at services and virtue.

half jesting when he kidded mother about the gonifs in her family.

Not all Jews have been good, saintly, or even conscious of any special obligation, far from it. We've had our crooks - I just finished reading The Rise and Fall of the American Jewish Gangster - our fools and our fanatics; but history bears out that we've been a remarkably creative people over an incredibly long period of time. I'm convinced our track record wouldn't be what it is unless the Jewish people had internalized a sense of election and historic purpose. God's choice laid on us a compelling sense of duty.

- Jews do feel themselves brighter and better. The way my grandparents used the term goy, it was the ultimate put-down.

In Biblical Hebrew goy simply meant a nation or people. At first it was applied to themselves, goy kadosh, a holy people - but in time, and for want of a better expression, goy came to describe the nations and their feelings about peoples they understandably resented. Your parents must have come

from Eastern Europe where though most Jews were as impoverished as the illiterate peasants who cursed them every day and beat them up when they were drunk, Jews maintained a literate and cultured society. Europe's Jews, understandably, felt superior to such leuts and contemptuous of the anti-semitism which excused their bullying.

- It's never right to stereotype another group.

Don't be a Mr. Too Good. Jewish exultation was often a living Hell.

Understand goy as a form of catharsis, a necessary release of frustration, and remember, no rabbi ever defended goy as an estimable expression. The Torah insists that Jews should treat non-Jews with respect. "You shall not wrong or oppress a

a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." God was the Father of all peoples and all peoples merited His care.

- I don't hear goy any more, but some of the ~~existing~~ <sup>implicit</sup> ~~community~~ <sup>distance</sup> is still there. Look at the way Israelis treat the Arabs.

- ~~After that not Arab Jewish men Arab penance~~  
~~wasn't oversteering the wheel.~~ I spent a year in Israel and there are restrictions, mostly born of security concerns, not contempt. Some <sup>Israelis</sup> look down on Arabs. Many do not. Israel's Arabs are citizens. ~~There are Arab members of the Knesset,~~ Arab-owned-and-run newspapers, and Arab professors and students at the Hebrew University. When I was at the Hebrew University I was a member of an activist group of Israelis who were pushing the government to relax the special identity checks to which Arabs had to submit. I wish we'd been more successful, but it's hard for people who have lived for nearly forty years under the threat of terrorist attack and military assault to dismantle what are seen to be necessary safeguards.

↑ ~~Jews don't enjoy even minimally circumscribed rights in any Arab country.~~  
 Jordan's constitution specifically prohibits any Jew from becoming a citizen.

- Jews do feel different. I know I do.

Some years ago I was asked to write A History of Judaism. Before I accepted the assignment I had to ask myself, why write such a book. I came to a simple answer: we had had a significant career. We've been around a long time, but longevity is not in itself interesting. The bedouin and the nomads of the world have been around a lot longer. It's been said, "Jews are like everyone else, only more so." It's the "more so" that interests me. Even people who don't like us admit our significance. Indeed, some scholars who've studied the causes of anti-semitism argue that one of its main components is jealousy of Jewish energies and abilities.

- I've a friend who says anti-semitism is our fault. We claim to be the chosen people. No one likes someone who feels superior.



It's interesting that this argument was first advanced by those who claimed that Christians were the New Israel, the newly chosen.

- What can we do about anti-semitism?

As Jews, nothing. It's their problem, not ours. Prejudices are immune to facts or reason. If all Jews were saints anti-semites would damn us for not being normal. Prejudice seems to be a reflex of some primitive survival mechanisms.

Animals protect their own against strays and strangers, and most human groups have a remarkably low tolerance of physical or cultural differences.

- Then ~~any~~ <sup>only</sup> claim of distinction encourages envy and invites misunderstanding.

Would you have us ~~encourage mediocrity~~? Group distinction and distinctiveness ~~are~~ progress. The advantage of a pluralistic and democratic society is that some group is always ready to challenge what appears obvious to the majority, and which, in fact, is not obvious at all but simply the conventional wisdom.

~~Pluralism encourages progress.~~

- So, vive la difference.

~~Group significance rather than difference~~

Those who dye their hair orange are exhibitionists, not the catalysts of civilization.

- ~~Like~~ <sup>Do</sup> Hare Krishna ~~do~~ add a bit of color.

- So do Jews who make a big thing of playing baseball, wearing a yarmulke.

There's no benefit in flaunting distinction. Jews cover their heads to show respect and reverence, not as a team badge.

- To some baseball is a religion.

You won't find it mentioned in the Covenant.

~~2 - Since we have no Jewish definition, I want to ask - I need another definition. You've now used covenant several times and I'm not certain what it means.~~

~~Covenant, berit, describes the agreement between God and Israel that underlies and defines Judaism. According to the founding myth, God's Instructions were~~



& you have a functional definition of religion in  
 you have said religion is necessary for not necessarily good.  
 since my religion can exist and I have alleged that it is  
 de facto functional and, therefore, useful, you don't have to say whether  
 - And don't bring conditioning up again. It's important but not a  
 answer.

A relationship can be sick but within its own terms functional. We see  
 this in certain marriages where the partner's needs and neuroses allow them  
 to live together intimately but at the cost of <sup>their</sup> emotional growth or ethical  
 maturity. A Leader satisfies the dependency needs of his <sup>minions</sup>, but again,  
 at the cost of their developing the capacity for independent living. Religious  
 communities can be healthy-minded and encouraging or perverse and destructive.

Buddhism encourages asceticism and withdrawal. Medieval Christianity  
 and Islam teach the damnation of noncommunicants. One tradition encourages  
 independent study and interpretation of its Scripture; another demands submission  
 to ecclesiastical authority. A tradition like Judaism which encourages moral  
 discipline, social justice, the cultivation of the mind, an individual's freedom  
 under God, and the ties of human fellowship, has much to commend it.

- Everyone has a right to believe what they want to believe.

~~I'd be the first to insist on everyone's right to believe whatever he~~  
~~wanted,~~ <sup>OF COURSE,</sup> I need not approve his beliefs and, in some cases, I <sup>may need to</sup> protect  
 myself and society from any dangerous actions his beliefs may lead him to  
 take. I find the Hebrew term, le'havdil, useful in making these kinds of judgments  
 and distinctions. In Hebrew when you wish to suggest that there are significant  
 differences in quality or kind between phenomena of the same order you say le'havdil.

So the sentence: Jim Jones, the charismatic leader who induced nearly a thousand  
 followers to drink cyanide and, le'havdil, Martin Luther King were ministers who  
 were active in the Civil Rights Movement; or the sentence: The Jonestown commune  
 and, le'havdil, an Israeli kibbutz are examples of rural utopian communes. We  
~~must~~ make le'havdil judgments when we ~~are deciding which religion and which group~~  
~~within the major religious tradition we will join.~~



- The Jonestown group was a cult, not a religion.

There's not that much difference between a cult and a religion. Because most Americans hold to the romantic notion that any religion is good for you, the media tends to reserve the term "religion" for approved traditions: Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism; and "cult" for the likes of the Moonies, the Church of God and the People's Temple, but the distinction is not that clear. Until the fatal day when the community drank cyanide, the People's Temple remained an accredited member of the Disciples of Christ, a mainline Protestant denomination.

- Cults are small groups of weak and dependent people who find it easier to obey a leader than to work out their own problems.

Some cults are composed of the weak and the troubled who are led by someone who knows The Truth, but not all. Cults are groups of religious people who are a little hotter about their faith than most established congregations. The key element which distinguishes cult from religion is intensity. ~~Cult members tend to feel that they alone will be redeemed since they alone possess The Truth.~~ Most people have a family life and a work life as well as a religious life. The cultist is totally involved and unlikely to have any perspective on his group or its actions.

- You're describing a fanatic.

What one man will condemn as fanaticism another will describe as commendable zeal.

- Cults are dangerous.

Cults can be salutary or dangerous. It all depends on the beliefs around which the group has rallied, the leader who gains authority, and what subsequent generations make of their inheritance. Most cults are like Jonah's gourd: they appear one night and disappear the next. Some abort. Some explode. A few emerge and become major religions.

- And all suffer from an excess of zeal.
- It's the zealous who change the course of history.
- And who chop off the heads of those who disagree.
- I've always been glad Judaism hasn't been as cult prone as Christianity or the Eastern religions.

~~I'm not sure you're right.~~ We've had our share. Habad is a Jewish cult.

In their time so were the Pharisees, the Sabbateans, some of the Kabbalist groups. Some people always care more than others.

- I thought Judaism de-emphasized emotional intensity and enthusiastic faith.
- ~~My rabbi always told us: in faith, as in life, it's wise to look before you~~  
 leap. One of the lines I like best in our prayer book speaks of "zeal tempered by wisdom and guided by regard for other people's faith."

Cults emerge in times of stress. During the darkest period of the Middle Ages a passionate cult developed around the figure of a false messiah, Shabbetai Zvi. A significant number of Jews declared him the Messiah and some held ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> even when he converted to Islam. The "zeal tempered by wisdom" line was written by an American <sup>who lived</sup> rabbi during the calm and prosperous years which closed the nineteenth century. Of course, our leaders have always tried to keep passion in bounds, otherwise, like water breaking open an inadequate dam, everyone is in danger who happens to be in the path of the flood. When Shabbetai Zvi failed his followers, a goodly number committed suicide. Many more died inside.

- Judaism still has aspects of a cult. I'm always troubled when I hear the Akedah story read on Rosh Hashanah. ~~You know the story.~~ God demands that Abraham sacrifice his son Isaac, and Abraham agrees to this unconscionable demand. ~~I guess we're told the story to encourage us to be unquestioning in our loyalty to God.~~ Soren Kierkegaard used the Akedah in Fear and Trembling to illustrate his contention that the man of faith must be prepared to put aside family feeling and what is generally considered morality when he hears the commanding voice.

If I remember correctly, he calls this attitude "a teleological suspension of

the ethical." I call it fanaticism.

Kierkegaard read this story as a Christian. We read the story quite differently.

In Judaism the Akedah myth served the same function as the crucifixion myth in Christianity which is to say it confirms <sup>was the story which</sup> the religion's promise of redemption. Christians believe Jesus' death symbolized by the Cross atoned for Adam's sin and, for the first time, opened the way of salvation to human beings. Jews held that Abraham's submission to God's command earned for Abraham and his descendants a special place in the scheme of things, what theologians call Election. The Akedah myth symbolized and established God's special concern for Israel. A drawing of Abraham, Isaac, the altar, and the ram were sometimes painted on the wall above the Torah's niche which was a focus of worship in Greco-Roman synagogues in much the same way as the cross hangs above the altar in a church. ~~It symbolized God's close tie with Israel rather than any idea about the unconditional demands of faith.~~

- But Abraham still obeyed a command to murder his son.

~~The Bible does not hold up Abraham's conduct as a model for our behavior.~~

🕯 Jews were not to pattern their lives after the Patriarchs but to obey God's Instructions the Commandments.

- Still, it's a confusing story. ~~Why read it on such a holy day?~~ It gives the wrong idea. It certainly did to me.

Reading the Akedah on the High Holidays is an old practice which goes back to the difficult centuries when Jews felt it wise to remind God on the holiest day of the year that they could, in fact, depend on God's special relationship to pull them through.

- How do you explain the story to a modern audience?

Life often puts us to the test and when the issues are serious we must be willing to put our comforts at risk. I like to tell them the legend that the



horn of the ram caught in the thicket is the shophar which will be blown to announce messianic times. ~~IN MYTHIC FORM THE TORAH BECOMES A STORY: IT BECOMES A TEXT WHICH SAYS THAT~~

in life there is hope. I tell them not to be literalists. Biblical language is meant to be suggestive, not determinative.

- Kierkegaard did raise a critical issue which, I suppose, all religious people face. At what point, if any, should prudence, compromise, and open-mindedness be set aside? At what point do we say I won't be reasonable? What's right is NOT and not to be compromised. Bertrand Russell somehow described Aristotle's rule of the Golden Mean as a rationalization devised by and for the respectable and the middle-aged to justify the tendency toward caution which comes with wealth and age. You can always find a reason to pull in your horns, but if you do you'll never achieve greatly. There are times when we have to take the plunge.

Boldness is a romantic virtue but not always a way to accomplish significant progress. In any case, Jews start not with the Golden Rule but with Sinai, a set of original and demanding commitments. These are the given, the axioms, Judaism's special and surprising message. They point the way and no other way is acceptable.

The virtue of the Torah is that principles are strong and demanding but not unrealistic or unachievable. They are rules by which people can live, establish families, conduct business, and establish a just social order.

- You'll have to be more specific tomorrow. We need time to clean up before dinner. The group dispersed slowly.

IF I FELT MYSELF BECOMING PROFESSIONAL, AS SUGGESTED  
~~WE MIGHT TAKE A BREAK~~ THE SUGGESTION WAS ENTIRELY  
 ACCEPTED.