

American Judaism: Changing Patterns in Denominational Self-Definition

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American Judaism has been significantly transformed in the past two decades. All four of the principal religious movements—Reform, Conservatism, Reconstructionism and Modern Orthodoxy—have adopted new prayer books for use in their congregations. All but the Orthodox have issued new statements of principles; all, including the Orthodox, have engaged in an unprecedented degree of public self-scrutiny and self-explanation. Thus, although we still know next to nothing about the religious beliefs and experiences of the average American Jew—survey data about synagogue attendance and ritual performance being of little help in this regard—we can document the transformation in the religious options among which American Jews may choose. Such a transformation will be examined here via a careful reading of prayer books, statements of principles, and essays by representative figures of the major denominations. Such an analysis can shed light on the changed self-presentation of the movements and the changed self-understanding of their elites and can also—albeit indirectly—serve as a basis for evaluation of the altered religious landscape of American Jews and Judaism as a whole.¹

Before turning to the four movements' new presentations of self, we should note that the language of "elite" and "folk," so crucial to Charles Liebman's study of *The Ambivalent American Jew* a generation ago,² will be crucial to the present analysis as well in two respects. First, the research methods needed to get at folk beliefs and experiences have been employed only rarely in the study of American Jews. We therefore do well to eschew unwarranted generalizations about them. "Quantitative data," as one historian observed recently, "shed little light on the quality of religious experience."³ Moreover, as Liebman demonstrated convincingly, one cannot make inferences about the average congregant from the testimony of religious professionals whose demands upon faith are in the nature of the case very different. Thus, the analysis presented here will not attempt to glean "the self-image of American Jews . . . from the prayer books of their respective movements,"⁴ as one recent study would have it. The object of scrutiny is neither theology strictly understood—which is the exclusive province of the elite—nor the religion of the

folk, but rather the point at which the two come together: the self-image of American Jewish elites (rabbis, theologians, and seminary faculty), and of the movements that they above all others shape.

Second, however, we should remember that the “shaping” goes in both directions. Efforts of the elites to redefine their respective movements are of course influenced by their perceptions of what congregants want or are prepared to tolerate, what they believe or wish to believe. It is precisely the continuing gap between “elite” and “folk” religion as perceived by the elite, and the continuing attempt to overcome it, that accounts for the significant changes in style and substance to be examined here. The attempt to narrow the distinction between elite and folk generally takes the form of a call for increased observance among the latter. However, it is often the laity that exercises decisive influence—whether by refusing to meet elite demands or, as will be shown here, by encouraging the elite both to avoid theological issues in which the “folk” are not interested and to recast existing commitments in language more suited to popular taste. If, as the survey data reveal, “this has been an era of perceptible change in patterns of behavior among American Jews, particularly in the religious sphere,”⁵ that change has been both cause and effect of no less perceptible changes in the thinking of the men and women who define the limited range of intellectual and institutional options that constitute American Judaism. Reform, Reconstructionism, Conservatism and Modern Orthodoxy are not what they were twenty years ago, even if the dilemmas these movements face have not altered in the interim but only intensified.

Reform and the Language of Mitzvah

Transformation is most apparent in the Reform movement. Reform has always been more prolific than its rivals in the publication of its principles,⁶ and the change in Reform discourse of late has also been most graphic. A movement that as recently as 1972 could not agree to issue a “guide” to the religious practice of its members lest it infringe upon their autonomy⁷ was able by 1979 to publish *Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*, which from its title onward speaks of “mitzvah”—commandment. Rabbi Gunther Plaut is careful to note in his foreword that Judaism “was never meant to be merely an institutional religion. Its ultimate focus remains the individual. . . .” But he now turns that focus on the individual to a new emphasis on “personal observance and personal deed, at home and at work . . . [giving] continual expression to our belief in God and . . . the significance of our membership in the historic people”⁸—hardly staples of past Reform discourse. The volume’s editor, Rabbi Simeon Maslin, similarly follows the unequivocal assertion that “mitzvah is the key to authentic Jewish existence and the sanctification of life” with a footnote referring readers to four essays included in the guide that set forth “different points of view on why, how, and to what extent a modern Jew may feel required to perform mitzvot.” The individual Reform Jew—still the final arbiter of observance, according to the movement—would then be in a position to “develop a personal rationale through which the performance of a mitzvah *may* become meaningful.”⁹

The movement had cleared the way for this strategy of combining the language of commandment with a renewed commitment to autonomy in its 1976 Statement of Principles, the first to be issued since the Columbus Platform of 1937. In almost all respects there is no substantive difference between the statements. Only one paragraph breaks new ground: "Our Obligations: Religious Practice." It goes well beyond the 1937 affirmation of "such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value," paired there with "distinctive forms of religious art and music and the use of Hebrew." The aesthetic emphasis of 1937—ceremony, like art, enriches one; it does not obligate—gives way in 1976 to talk of obligation: "claims made upon us" that extend beyond ethical obligations to "many other aspects of Jewish living." The paragraph's concluding sentence seeks to balance newly affirmed obligation and still-regnant autonomy. "Within each area of Jewish observance Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge."¹⁰

One could of course regard this formulation as trivial, on two counts. In the modern West, all religious observance is voluntarily assumed. No communal coercion is possible. Likewise, when Maslin points out in *Gates of Mitzvah* that "all Jews who acknowledge themselves to be members of their people and its tradition thereby limit their freedom to some extent,"¹¹ he is perhaps calling attention to the obvious. What adult is not aware that freedom is never absolute? What Jew does not know that Hitler counted even the "unaffiliated" among his victims? Nonetheless, it can be argued, the two assertions in context are highly significant. What Maslin and Plaut have done—following the 1976 statement—is contain the hallowed Reform commitment to autonomy within an ambitious new project of providing specificity to Reform observance. The movement is now prepared to do more than guide. It even lends its authority to the traditional notion that God actually *commands*, and is willing to say *what* God commands.

At times, it is true, that command is rather equivocal. The pregnant woman considering abortion is advised to "determine" the proper course "in accordance with the principles of Jewish morality," which are then left undefined.¹² On kashruth, *Gates of Mitzvah* can only recognize the various attitudes and degrees of observance among Reform Jews and recommend that such "an essential feature of Jewish life for so many centuries" bears study by each family.¹³ At the same time, however, "it is a mitzvah" for a couple to be tested for genetic disease before marriage, to bring children into the world and thank God after doing so, and to bring children into the covenant; "it is a mitzvah" to pray on a daily basis, to affix a mezuzah to the doorpost and to celebrate Shabbat with candles, kiddush, challah and the appropriate blessings; "it is a mitzvah" to write an ethical will, to attend a funeral service, to prepare a first meal for mourners and to recite kaddish.¹⁴

The source of authority for these commandments—certainly not the Shulhan Arukh—seems to vary considerably. At times it is the application by Reform rabbis of "fundamental principles" such as "the sanctity of life" (as in the cases of abortion and genetic testing). At other points (as with circumcision or the Sabbath) it seems to be the weight of "Jewish tradition," again as defined by Reform rabbinic interpreters. Understanding of the "ultimate authority" varies still more, as the

essays on the nature and extent of mitzvah included in *Gates of Mitzvah* reveal.

Herman Schaalman, in his interpretive essay,¹⁵ argues that the source of commandment must be a Commander, though the precise character of revelation—"for that is what we are talking about"—remains a mystery. Moses heard "the impact and meaning of God's Presence" in this way, experiencing himself as "commanded, summoned, directed." Jews have reexperienced this commandedness ever since. "Thus the Divine Presence waits for us, and we for It. Thus the commandment comes to us in our time, asking to be heard, understood, and done." The guiding theological presence here, clearly, is Franz Rosenzweig. Schaalman has also adapted Rosenzweig's notion that some mitzvot performed by the ancestors will not be adequate or possible for us, while we may feel obligated by new mitzvot unknown to our tradition.

In a somewhat different formulation,¹⁶ David Polish traces the commandments' authority to Jewish history. Mitzvot "mark points of encounter by the Jewish people with God." They are signs of a continuing covenant. "The self-imposed discipline of observance, to which the Jew submits as a sacred mitzvah, thus becomes a symbol of the commitment of his faith and of his people to the unending struggle to enthrone God in the world within the bounds of human history." Here the presiding presence seems to be Martin Buber: Mitzvot stem from the Jewish people's "encounter" with God. Jews have promised in their covenant to enact God's will in history. That covenant obligates every Jew—but it is one to which the individual Jew must decide to "submit."

Roland Gittelsohn¹⁷ offers a naturalistic variant of Polish's interpretation derived from Mordecai Kaplan, defining the "something [that] happened between God and Israel" to be an "historic encounter between the Jewish people and the highest Spiritual Reality human beings have ever known." Just as the construction of the universe mandates that we breathe, nature commands us to be ethical, and ritual mitzvot serve those moral imperatives by "visually and kinetically remind[ing] us of our noblest values and stimulat[ing us] to pursue them." Mitzvot, finally, bind the religious naturalist "to his people and his tradition. They speak to him imperatively because he is Jewish and wants to remain so."

If so much attention has been paid here to these brief statements, it is because they exhaust the possible inventory of current Reform rationales for observance. One cannot hold to a more literal understanding of "Torah from Sinai" or "Torah from Heaven" and either safeguard individual autonomy or legitimate Reform's departures from halakhah. Nor is the current temper of Reform thinking content with Hermann Cohen's equation of revelation with reason's instruction concerning our ethical duty. Rosenzweig thus represents the most "Orthodox" theological position available, one that maintains belief in the divine origin of the commandments while allowing great room for human initiative, wrapping the relation between "divine and human" in ultimate mystery. Buber, with his emphasis upon individual encounter with the Eternal Thou and the ethical obligations that emerge from such an encounter, is the ideal source for contemporary Reform language of mitzvah, particularly when his individualism is tempered (as in Polish) with the ideal of loyalty to the Jewish people. The Reform thinker who has best articulated a synthesis of all three tendencies, Eugene Borowitz, was also the principal author of

the “Centenary Perspective” of 1976 and his “covenant theology,” via *Gates of Mitzvah*, has now stamped the entire movement in his image.

Three problems with such covenant theology are apparent. First, Reform has accounted for Jewish obligation while adroitly avoiding the theological issues that have plagued such attempts throughout the modern period. According to Reform, one can opt for Rosenzweig’s approach to revelation, or Buber’s, or Kaplan’s, or none at all; the point of the *Gates* series,¹⁸ despite views such as those presented above, is not so much to clarify the authority behind the commandments as to set forth a new standard of expectation for Reform Jews. The rabbis are taking advantage of a new willingness among the laity to study texts and perform traditional rituals without worrying overmuch about the theological basis of that observance. This strategy, by no means unique to Reform, may well work—or else the laity, less committed to observance than the elite, may well decide that, if God has not directly commanded action A or B, their time can be better spent on other things.

Second, in the absence of clear theological rationales, Reform rabbis have effectively assumed authority for the direction of their congregants’ Jewish life—a role they may have played for some time but were prevented, because of considerations of “autonomy,” from assuming formally. A telling footnote in *Gates of the Seasons* (a companion volume to *Gates of Mitzvah*) reports that “the following list of mitzvot is a revision of the earlier ‘Catalogue of Shabbat Opportunities.’”¹⁹ When does an “opportunity” become a mitzvah? When a movement’s rabbis decide to make it such. Why is it “a mitzvah for every Jew to mark Yom Ha’atzmaut” publicly and “a mitzvah to remember the six million” on Yom Hashoah, but not a mitzvah to observe Tisha B’av? Again, particularly if no other reason is given, because the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), Reform’s rabbinic association, has so ruled. The movement’s rabbis have reasserted the legislative role first assumed in the rabbinic conferences of the 1840s but often limited, in the interim, out of deference to the principle (and the fact) of the layperson’s individual autonomy. Again, only time will tell whether the “folk” embrace, reject or acquiesce in this attempt to guide them. Elements of the elite more committed to autonomy than the majority that voted in the new policy have already expressed their discomfort.²⁰

The folk may simply go on doing more or less what they have been doing for some time. To the degree that the Reform movement employs a fictitious present tense in its official pronouncements—as in “Unlike on Shabbat and the other festivals, Yom Kippur candles are lit after the meal”²¹—it will open up the same sort of gap between official pronouncements and lay reality that for decades has bedeviled Conservatism. The rabbis have now gone on record with commands to their congregants to behave more as they, the rabbis, behave. Congregants may enjoy having greater demands made upon them; they may even respond to those demands. It is unlikely, however, that they will meet them. Reform may then sacrifice the appeal that it had gained by validating low levels of observance—telling Jews, as Conservatism could not, that despite minimal practice “you are a good Jew, your people can be proud of you, you are carrying on a precious tradition. God bless you!” The movement may lose in numbers of affiliated members what its elite gains in its own greater sense of authenticity.

The movement’s new prayer book *Gates of Prayer* (1975) has run precisely the

same risk, in the same manner, for the same reasons. No “objective” reading is possible of any prayer book; no “ideal reader” exists to undertake it.²² However, a number of general features are immediately apparent and have been singled out for notice by critics of the prayer book from inside and outside the movement. First, they note that deference has been paid to autonomy. The individual congregant (and individual rabbi!) is presented with four evening or morning services for weekdays, ten services for Friday evenings and six for Sabbath mornings. Length, style, theme and even theology vary considerably. Every principal current of thought within the movement finds representation, from Alvin Reines’s “polydoxy” and partisans of classical Reform to Borowitz’s covenant theology and advocates of a more traditional liturgy. Pluralism rules.

However, even congregants less well-versed in the distinctions among services cannot escape the impression that overall their movement has moved to the “right.” They in fact now hold a siddur that opens from right to left instead of the reverse; that contains a great deal more Hebrew than its predecessor (with the Hebrew placed on the same page as the English, thereby stressing its centrality in the service); and that not only restores reference to Zion but contains a special service for Yom Ha’atzmaut. Tisha B’av is back; there are prayers for tallit and tefillin. *Gates of Prayer* seems utterly comfortable in using traditional language that cannot in any way be justified in a rational, literal reading. In short, there has been a “return to tradition.”²³ The combination of pluralism and tradition in *Gates of Prayer* directly parallels the coexistence of autonomy and commandment found in *Gates of Mitzvah*.

Reform rabbis evaluating the prayer book in a 1985 symposium in the *Journal of Reform Judaism*²⁴ could and did complain about its excessive length, the flatness of its prose, the inconsistencies and evasions of its theological premises. But they could not deny the immense transformation the movement had wrought—to what effect upon their congregants no one seemed sure. Several aspects of their discussion are particularly pertinent. As the rabbis responsible for it have observed, *Gates of Prayer* represented an attempt to bring Jewish prayer into line with “contemporary” trends in American society and culture; as a result, it has already been rendered somewhat anachronistic. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a proliferation of “creative services” reflected both in the array of choices that *Gates of Prayer* offers worshipers and in its seventy-odd pages of suggested material for meditation and reflection. Participants in the evaluative symposium found both excessive. The period likewise saw the rise (but not yet the impact) of feminism; in *Gates of Prayer*, *avot* is translated as “ancestors” (or “all generations”), and there is mention of Reform’s commitment to “the equality of the sexes,” although God is still referred to exclusively in male pronouns. Disenchantment with high rhetoric and a desire for intimacy led the book’s authors to include far more congregational participation and to avoid eloquence that might have seemed to ring hollow. The result, as many Reform critics charged, is all too often “pedestrian.” Poetry is in short supply.

The issue here seems to be more than stylistic. *Gates of Prayer* is attractive in its honesty. It may exceed the level of faith attained by most Reform congregants, but it is always true to the doubts and disbelief of the movement’s elite. At times, how-

ever, this honesty proves problematic. Entire services are devoted to “the struggle to believe” and “the confrontation with estrangement.” The congregant opens the prayer book and finds directed reflection upon how difficult it is to relate to prayer altogether. “For our ancestors, Shabbat was a sign of God’s covenant. . . . Our ways are not theirs. . . . We speak many words, but few prayers. . . . But here, now, we can begin again.” This meditation precedes *Lekha Dodi*. Immediately after it, we read that “the words do not always speak for us, nor can we always understand them. Yet once we understood: to speak the ancient words returns us to that simpler time when as children we felt the world was one, and it was ours.”²⁵ The “gates” metaphor now pervasive in Reform publications takes on new meaning in this connection. The prayer book seems an entry for those on the outside of prayer to walk through, rather than the thing itself. As one rabbi put it, “It is a way in to prayer. It may not yet enable us to pray, that is, to daven (by which I mean the traditional Jewish sense of devoting all one’s faculties, thoughts, words, melodies, limbs, and soul to the encounter with God).”²⁶ Another commented that “we often are faced with the double task of providing our people with religious experience while simultaneously revealing the meaning of the experience itself. However, this should be done in a non-discursive and non-distancing manner.” He cited a note introducing *Lekha Dodi* in terms of how “the mystics of Israel conceived the Sabbath,” what they saw and did, instead of emphasizing that “we welcome Shabbat with joy. We sing Lecha Dodi.”²⁷

A book with such an array of options, arranged explicitly by theme and composed largely of readings and meditations that hammer home specific lessons or work on specific emotions, seems aimed at the worshiper as much as at God. Put another way: It aims less at providing language for the soul’s outpouring before God than at opening the worshiper to the possibility of such encounter. This, however, is less the case where the traditional liturgy is more predominant—leaving the clear implication that the more comfortable with *davening* a person is, the more likely he or she is to prefer the traditional service. The CCAR may not be happy with such an implication, but it is there, and it testifies to the movement’s current state. Reform stands at the gate: at the beginning of a tentative and widely contested turn back to a more traditional liturgical style and message.

Gates of Prayer, finally, marks a return in another sense: to the pattern of German liberalism from which Isaac Mayer Wise and David Einhorn departed so radically more than a century ago. As Jakob Petuchowski’s *History of Prayerbook Reform in Europe* makes eminently clear (and his critiques of *Gates of Prayer* reiterate),²⁸ the German prayer books by and large were quite hesitant in introducing changes and often took care when they did so to justify them with venerable Jewish precedent. *Gates of Prayer*, like the previous Union Prayer Books, has no room for sacrifice or the restoration of the Davidic monarchy; it takes pains to stress the ethical character of Jewish monotheism; and it is committed to the legitimacy of liturgical innovation. However, unlike its immediate predecessors, *Gates of Prayer* has restored Hebrew to prominence and has assumed the metaphoric character of the liturgy, thereby allowing it to sing in traditional voice with renewed sincerity. It thereby revives the tradition of German liberals from whose theology the current Reform repositioning draws inspiration.

In the American case, as noted, there has been no comparable theological innovation. "Despite initial position papers and discussion, those actually engaged in the process of producing *Gates of Prayer* never finally came to terms with fundamental questions," writes Herbert Bronstein, the head of the CCAR's liturgy committee.²⁹ Richard Levy, who served on that committee when *Gates of Prayer* was produced, makes a similar complaint: The prayer book reintroduced the kaddish and several other traditional texts, but

has persisted in denying Reform worshipers the necessity of struggling with the relation between nature and our own deeds. . . . Having been present at the meeting of the CCAR Executive Board when it voted against the inclusion of [the issue of] *techiyat hametim* [resurrection of the dead], I remain saddened that such a profound, troubling, complex, ecstatic idea could have been dispensed with in so trivial a fashion. Reform . . . should not mean the censoring of certain texts, ideas, and commands by the extremely unspiritual mechanism of majority vote.³⁰

The effects of the committee process are evident throughout *Gates of Prayer*. One does not find articulation of a coherent, carefully thought-out theological consensus. Nor does one see the guiding hand of an authoritative figure in the mainstream of the movement who has so internalized its ethos and worldview that he or she can confidently lend its pronouncements the vitality of a personal voice.

All the more reason, then, to attend to the writings of Eugene Borowitz, the Reform thinker who comes closest to this stature and who, more than any other, has influenced the movement's recent course. Borowitz holds the senior position in theology at the Hebrew Union College, and several years back he published a definitive statement of Reform beliefs intended for laypeople.³¹ This is not the place for a comprehensive treatment of Borowitz's substantial oeuvre, but several elements of this particular work bear scrutiny.

First, from its title onward—*Liberal Judaism* rather than Reform Judaism—the volume harks back to Borowitz's German masters (Cohen, Rosenzweig, Buber, Leo Baeck) and through them to the tradition as a whole. The book is organized according to the popular threefold division of Israel, God and Torah (the last divided into two parts titled "the Bible and the Tradition" and "living as a Jew.") Borowitz is uncompromising in his assertion of God's reality and involvement with the world and the binding force of the age-old Jewish covenant with God. He defines "a good Jew" as one "who has a living relationship with God as part of the people of Israel and therefore liv[es] a life of Torah." Covenant and divine encounter, then, are central.³² Thus far, Conservative and Modern Orthodox thinkers no less indebted to Buber and Rosenzweig than the Reform elite could agree wholeheartedly.

But there are several elements in Borowitz's writings that place him squarely in the Reform movement and no other, perhaps because he has played such a significant role in defining that movement's ideological boundaries. One is the emphasis upon faith and covenant rather than peoplehood and history. Conservatives and Reconstructionists would shift the balance. A second distinctively Reform element is the embrace of Israel, but only from a distance. It is doubtful that any non-Reform thinker would have felt the need in 1984 to stress that

American Jews owe political allegiance only to the country of their citizenship. . . . The "Star-Spangled Banner" or "Hail Canada" is our national anthem; "Hatikvah," for all that an effort was once made to have it become the chief song of the Jewish people, is the anthem of a foreign country. It, like the Israeli flag, must be treated with the protocol established by our country's laws.³³

Reform remains the movement most devoted to America. It also, if Borowitz is representative, remains the movement that most emphasizes the primacy of ethical commandment. "Of all the lessons the liberals derived from the prophets, none affected them more profoundly than the principle that ethics are more important than worship in Judaism."³⁴

Finally, Borowitz's thrust is profoundly individualist. He does not address himself to the Jewish people but to the individual Jew, and he will never seek to direct that Jew but only to present him or her with options. The book makes "no special claims to 'authority'" but only hopes "to persuade." No "creed" is intended.³⁵

This reluctance to direct others seems to stem from a commitment to individual freedom so deep that neither Borowitz's personal authority nor the weight of Jewish tradition can be permitted to infringe upon it. The rabbis' role, he feels, is to suggest options. Autonomy must not be compromised—even if, as Borowitz well knows, the philosophical grounding for moral autonomy is precarious indeed. Perhaps because his intended audience is the laity, Borowitz avoids this dilemma by taking refuge in romanticism. Assuming, he writes, that a decision is made out of the depth of knowledge and out of a sense of deepest commitment, "whatever we choose from the past or create for the present should rest upon us with the full force of commandment. For only by being false to ourselves and to what we believe will we be able to ignore or transgress it." Borowitz, however, cannot and does not satisfactorily explain why the commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people is or should be of ultimate importance.³⁶

Herein lies perhaps the most significant step taken by the movement in the past generation, a step to which the language of *mitzvah*, the return to more traditional liturgy, the commitment to pluralism and the reformulation of Reform principles all give expression—namely, the sidestepping of the issue of revelation, which has vexed Jewish theology for two hundred years, in favor of renewed deference to the weight of the past and the new appeal that ritual observance has for American Jews. The authority for Reform, as for Conservatism, Reconstructionism and (in a different sense) Orthodoxy, is no longer God or faith but rather tradition. Gunther Plaut, like Borowitz an heir to German liberal Judaism, captured the point well when he formulated the current Reform preoccupation as: What will my life say? How can I give meaning to life?³⁷ Ritual observance and study are time-tested means for providing such meaning. Hence, perhaps, the renewed Reform attention to Shabbat, study, and ritual—as well as the popular formation within synagogues of small *havurot* for study and celebration—all with no attempt at justification beyond appeal to "tradition" and the palpable sense of meaning that such activity confers. By doing the *mitzvot*, Reform says in effect, Jews have traditionally felt themselves partners to the covenant and witnesses to the presence of God. If one asks (as Reform did in the past) why we should not actively search out *other* means to the

same end, discarding those that do not work for us, the answer is, as Rabbi William Braude put it, "we may not play fast and loose with the tradition."³⁸

Reform Jews, then, continue to value autonomy. Pluralism is the order of the day. Their movement will continue to feel the impact of rabbis such as the one who confessed to feeling indignant when he was told that if he did not put on a *kipah* he would not be admitted to a Reform temple: "I was sorely tempted to absent myself, because I believe that a rule which permits no freedom of choice really violates a basic principle of Reform."³⁹ The movement will probably continue to get around such concerns with Borowitz's language of gentle persuasion rather than authority. Yet it will also probably continue to invoke the language of mitzvah because, for contemporary Reform congregants, there *does* seem to be commandment in Judaism: above all, the command not to sever the link that binds the Jewish generations. Convincing theologies of revelation may be unavailable and the commitment to autonomy may be unassailable, but the current generation of Reform's leadership seems convinced as well that "one cannot play fast and loose with tradition." American Reform Judaism, as a result, is very different than it was only a generation ago.

Conservatism and the Appropriation of "Tradition"

The Reform movement's "return to tradition" heightened the sense within Conservative ranks that the movement could no longer avoid clarification of where precisely it stood. Lack of such a guiding ideology had long been a sore point within the movement and the object of criticism from without.⁴⁰ Now, with Reform tearing down the easy markers by which laypeople had been able to distinguish the two denominations—adding Hebrew to Reform services, embracing Israel, introducing head covering and tallit for men, speaking freely of "mitzvot" and positively of ritual—the need for clarity gained in urgency. In 1988, the movement finally did what it had debated and even attempted without issue in the past. It published a "Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism" entitled *Emet Ve-Emunah*—"Truth and Faith." The statement commission was chaired by Robert Gordis, who had long provided a centrist, de facto definition of the movement. His introduction to *Emet Ve-Emunah* confirmed the path that he had laid out half a century before, thereby confirming as well that those dilemmas plaguing the movement since the 1930s were still far from resolution.

Gordis began, as one would expect, by positioning his movement at the center of the spectrum of Jewish possibility and rejecting the alternatives on either side as unacceptable. Reform had "denied the authority of Jewish law . . . in the name of 'individual autonomy.'" Orthodoxy was divided into many factions but "theoretically united under the dogma that both the Written and the Oral Law were given by God to Moses at Sinai, and have remained unchanged and unchangeable through the ages."⁴¹ Clearly, then, Conservatism had halakhah, while Reform did not, but it also had freedom, intellectual integrity and flexibility—all of which Orthodoxy lacked. Hence, "it is Conservative Judaism that most directly confronts the challenge to integrate tradition with modernity. By retaining most of the tradition while

yet being hospitable to the valuable aspects of modernity, it articulates a vital, meaningful vision of Judaism for our day."⁴²

Just what is "the tradition," and how might one measure its presence or absence in a given modern Jewish life? One clue—perhaps the most important—is provided by Gordis at once. He cites "the Sages." Gordis's movement has in effect conceded the Prophets to Reform and the Shulhan Arukh to Orthodoxy, while claiming for itself the much broader canvas of history and belief bequeathed to us by the Sages and known, in the parlance common to the elites of all four movements, as "the tradition."

The appropriation of "tradition" (and thereby the center) as Conservatism's own has generated an enormous ideological self-confidence that belies the self-doubt often attributed to the movement's elite, even by members of the elite themselves. Gerson Cohen, then chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) wrote in a 1977 symposium that the future of Judaism as a whole would largely be determined by the "present state of things" within the central institutions of Conservative Judaism.⁴³ David Gordis (son of Robert, and a guiding force of the Seminary's West Coast affiliate, the University of Judaism in Los Angeles) wrote the same year that "Conservatism remains the only authentic approach to Jewish tradition today," the "only acceptable orientation for the Jew who wishes to maintain an attachment to the creative existence of his people while not detaching himself from the adventure of discovery of self and of society which characterizes modern man at his best." His polemic against the alternatives to Right and Left is unrelenting.⁴⁴ Elliot Dorff, another leading figure at the University of Judaism, accomplished much the same purpose in his 1978 attempt at a comprehensive explanation of the movement, primarily directed at young people. Dorff's historical survey has the movement developing in response to Reform extremism (the "trefe banquet" figures prominently) and Orthodox inflexibility. "Positive-historical" Judaism, he argues, offered a middle path, one distinguished by its balance of tradition and change.⁴⁵

In the eyes of most of its spokesmen, the movement could make that claim credibly only if it made central what the Rabbis had made central: halakhah. "The first thing that you must understand about the Conservative approach to Jewish law," Dorff counsels his readers, "is that Conservative Judaism requires observance of the laws of classical Judaism."⁴⁶ The first substantive chapter of his book (and by far the longest) is concerned with "Jewish Law Within the Conservative Movement." Similarly, *Emet Ve-Emunah* arrives quickly at those points that both unite and distinguish the Conservative movement: "The Indispensability of Halakhah" and "Tradition and Development of Halakhah." The statement explicitly identifies this twin commitment to halakhah and its alteration with "our ancestors" and "the thrust of Jewish tradition."⁴⁷ Dorff cites "tradition and change" as "virtually . . . the motto of our movement," noting later that for "the Rabbis," it was not true that "anything goes."⁴⁸

This identification of Conservative Judaism with flexible halakhah above all else has not always been accepted by all factions of the movement, but of late it seems virtually unopposed. When Mordecai Kaplan formulated his understanding of the Conservative consensus in 1947, he offered four principles: the centrality of Israel, the primacy of religion in Jewish life, the commitment to a maximal amount of

Jewish content in public and private observance, and a commitment to *Wissenschaft*, the scientific study of Judaism. He noted two areas of divergence rather than consensus: attitudes toward God and halakhah.⁴⁹ As late as 1975, Rabbi Edward Feld objected in the pages of *Conservative Judaism* to a definition of the movement as “halakhic,” conceding that “even the most ‘Leftist’ [Conservative] Rabbis” seemed to include themselves “within the halakhic fold,” but only through “a serious misconception of what the halakhic process is.” Feld emphasized instead that one could be traditional while not halakhic; that Jewish law to the Rabbis of old had been meaningful because of their belief that God commanded it; that most current practice, even if “traditionalist” was nonhalakhic. (His own path was to look at traditional ritual—say, Sabbath observance—seek to find “the spiritual meaning in its essence,” and then fashion “the details of the religious action out of this aggadah.”) Feld’s Kaplanian position was a minority view when published. Today, in Conservative writings, it is virtually absent.⁵⁰

For Kaplan’s Reconstructionist approach is now outside the Conservative movement rather than within. Gerson Cohen had not been alone in celebrating the fact that, with Reconstructionism a separate movement, Conservatism was free to shift back to its classical position at the center.⁵¹ In fact, it seems to have done so decisively in the past two decades; the key words in its rhetorical lexicon of late have been *halakhah*, *tradition* and *pluralism*.

The invocation of pluralism is necessary for Conservatives on two counts. First, while Conservative thinkers can criticize the Orthodox for insufficient flexibility, they cannot deny that Orthodoxy as well represents an authentic voice of Jewish tradition. Their object is rather to make room *alongside* Orthodoxy for the Conservative approach. Halakhically, this is accomplished by arguing that human interpretation is the only means for learning about God’s will and that such interpretation can never be monolithic. Conservative thinkers are fond of citing the talmudic “Tanur shel Akhnai” story in which a voice from heaven that cites the correct halakhah is rebuffed by Rabbi Joshua, “It [the Law] is not [determined] in heaven” (Baba Meziyah: 59b). As Dorff puts it, “The Rabbis clearly and consciously shifted the operation of the law from the Prophets to the Judges, from revelation to interpretation.”⁵² Authentic interpreters can and will disagree; “these and these are the words of the living God” (Eruvin: 13b).

By this reasoning, Conservative jurists are in fact *more* like the Rabbis of old than their Orthodox colleagues because the Conservatives are more willing to disagree with the Rabbis. Where the medievals, and now the Orthodox, regard themselves as “immensely inferior to the Rabbis of the Mishnah,” Dorff writes, “we do not see ourselves bound by the specific decisions of the Rabbis of any generation.” The Conservative method rather “reflects tradition” in the way its rabbis determine Jewish law. “I firmly believe,” he concludes, “that we are doing exactly what the tradition would have us do, if only we master the personal qualities necessary to carry out our program wisely.” Dorff follows this statement with a footnote referring to the Rabbis’ comments on the same “It is not in heaven” proof-text found in the “Tanur shel Akhnai” story.⁵³ The message, in short, is that it ill befits any movement that claims adherence to the tradition to break with halakhah—and equally ill

befits any movement to claim that it alone can determine halakhah, let alone claim to speak for God.

The second locus for pluralism in the movement, not coincidentally the second ground of its divergence from Orthodoxy, concerns the meaning of "Torah from Heaven." Neil Gillman, the Seminary faculty member who perhaps best articulates the "left wing" inside the new halakhic consensus, insists in his 1983 effort to define "a theology for Conservative Judaism" that "it is beyond question that throughout its history, Judaism recognized the legitimacy of theological pluralism." Abraham Heschel's *Torah min hashamayim* (1962) had proven "that the contemporary traditionalist view" of revelation "far from exhausts the range of options reflected in that literature." Buber's dispute with Rosenzweig about revelation and law had demonstrated "how a shared theology of revelation can yield vividly contrasting conclusions on the status and authority of halakhah." Pluralism, in short, Gillman argues, had been the rule rather than the exception in the realm of belief. The Rabbis had tolerated a wide diversity of views on so basic a question as the meaning of revelation. Just as it was wrong to speak of "the halakhah" rather "a halakhah" (for "what becomes halakhah on any one issue is whatever a community and its authorities in fact decide it is"), it was an error to pretend that theological unity had ever been achieved.⁵⁴ Dorff, for his part, lists an array of respectable Conservative positions on revelation (some of them held in common with Reform thinkers such as Petuchowski).⁵⁵ The very lack of agreement is held by Dorff to make a twofold authenticity in Conservatism that is lacking in Orthodoxy—it is authentic in that the Rabbis, too, had held conflicting views and in that not all Orthodox Jews believe in the "dogma of verbal revelation" proclaimed as essential by the movement's leaders. In short, Dorff implies, Conservatives are more honest.

One sees the same general thrust of combining a heavy dose of "tradition" with evidence of flexibility in the movement's new prayer book *Sim Shalom* (1985) and *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (1972). Two voices of the Jewish elite are most helpful in providing a perspective on these two works: Rabbi Jules Harlow, the editor of both, and Jakob Petuchowski, the foremost expert on modern liturgical reform and a strident critic of his own movement's *Gates of Prayer*.

"*Siddur Sim Shalom*," Petuchowski writes trenchantly, "presupposes that the worshiper wants to participate in the kind of worship which, for the last two thousand years or so, the historical faith-community of Israel has offered to the God of Israel." It does not provide "radical variety"; it is "unashamedly traditional." Yet it is also enlightened and knowledgable, he continues, particularly with regard to what counts as obligatory prayer in rabbinic Judaism as opposed to the "free outpourings of the heart with which later generations have enriched the liturgy." Petuchowski then points to Harlow's principal method of achieving this balance: a Hebrew text substantially identical with the one in use among Orthodox congregations (and amended with great erudition when it is not), combined with an English translation that avails itself of paraphrase, "poetic metaphor," to express "sincerely held belief" at variance with the Hebrew as literally understood. In addition, Harlow has assembled more than seventy pages of readings and meditations from a variety of sources spanning all denominational affiliations. In a gesture toward

feminist critics of existing liturgy, *Sim Shalom* avoids male pronouns where possible and adds feminine versions of the prayers said when one puts on tallit and tefillin. In short, "*Sim Shalom* is a liberal, modernist affirmation of traditional Jewish teaching."⁵⁶

Harlow's own preface to the siddur makes it clear that this was precisely his intent. Every Jewish worship service has a formal structure and a prescribed text, he begins. His rationale for prayer, however, is stated in very contemporary language—for example, "prayer, which begins with the self, can move us away from self-centeredness and an unreflective routinization of life."⁵⁷ The English readings make it clear, he continues, that doubts or even alienation are not unexpected as the worshiper approaches the prayer to be offered in its more or less traditional Hebrew form.⁵⁸

Indeed, the siddur "works" for the worshiper only if he or she, like Petuchowski, stands more or less where Harlow does on the line of balance between tradition and modernity. If one is more "Orthodox" the meditations will be superfluous, even jarring; if one is more "Reform" (or more a feminist) the Hebrew text may be unprayerable, the English meditations insufficient. Harlow has drawn his line to the right of the one expressed by *Gates of Prayer*. Where pluralism is shouted from the rooftops in *Gates of Prayer*, for example, its voice is heard in but a muted form in *Sim Shalom*: The *davener* who uses only Hebrew and never turns to the alternative weekday Amidah may never encounter Rabbi Andre Ungar's meditation, "Help me, O God, to pray."⁵⁹

One cannot know whether *Sim Shalom*, true to the religious situation of its editor and probably of the Conservative elite, accurately reflects the belief and practice of the movement's laity. (Dorff, for one, is driven to concede that with respect to observance of Shabbat and kashruth—two staples of prescribed Conservative practice—the rabbis had generally failed to sway their folk.⁶⁰) *Emet Ve-Emunah*, the Conservative movement's statement of principles, is generally unspecific with regard to belief and observance. Part I of the statement, "God in the World," is devoted largely to explaining Conservatism's stance as a halakhic movement that maintains the legitimacy of competing viewpoints concerning God and revelation and which is committed to halakhic flexibility. Part II, "The Jewish People," contains an inexplicably lengthy section in which the commission members call for an end to the Orthodox monopoly on official religious authority in the state of Israel. While affirming "the central role of Israel," the authors (like their Reform counterparts) argue as well for the vitality and legitimacy of "various centers of Jewish life" and make lengthy reference to the legitimacy of other faiths and Judaism's commitment to social justice. Only in Part III, "Living a Life of Torah," is there a discussion of how Conservative Jews are meant to live, and even here the question is never really answered. The first section is devoted to the status of women (surprisingly so, given that the statement must confess to serious disagreement within the movement on this point) and the second to general pieties concerning "the Jewish home," prayer and study—generalities that could equally well have found their place in the Reform statement. Only at the very end is there included what critics of the movement from within and without have urged for decades: a description of

“the ideal Conservative Jew.”⁶¹ But instead of finding that such a Jew should strive above all to do A, B, and C for reasons X, Y and Z, we learn instead that “three characteristics mark the ideal Conservative Jew.” First, he or she is a “willing Jew,” for whom “nothing human or Jewish is alien.” Kashruth, Shabbat and holidays are mentioned specifically here, but beyond that there are only generalities—for example, “the Jewish home must be sustained and guided by the ethical insights of our heritage.” Second, the ideal Conservative Jew is a “learning Jew.” Hebrew literacy is essential. So is acquaintance with contemporary Jewish thought. Finally, he or she is a “striving Jew,” open to “those observances one has yet to perform” and “those issues and texts one has yet to confront.” One wonders if the statement is not more specific because its authors did not want to read out most of their readers from the movement.

The current chancellor of the seminary, Ismar Schorsch, remarks in his preface to *Emet Ve-Emunah* that what makes the entire statement so intriguing is “the tension that lies beneath the surface.” The principal tension seems to relate to the question of how much the elite can or should demand of the folk. Put another way: Should the movement seek to keep the mass base that it attracted in the 1950s and 1960s and struggle for the allegiance of that base against a newly tradition-minded Reform movement? Or, as David Gordis seems to advise in his polemic, should Conservatism rather look to the right and put its efforts into explaining to those Jews affiliated with Orthodoxy (but who dissent from its “rigidity and fundamentalism”) that the Conservative way of being halakhic is really more in keeping with their commitments?⁶² One wonders whether lay support is to be found on either side. Shorn of its Reconstructionist wing and firmly committed to halakhah, the movement may not appeal to those Reform congregants who are quite content with their movement’s renewed traditionalism. But having ordained women rabbis, embraced biblical criticism and propounded a theory of halakhic flexibility, Conservatism may also not have allowed itself any room to attract adherents from the right, who may not actually believe or do all that their elite would want but who prefer to affiliate with an elite that *wants* them to believe and do those things.

In the end, it may be that Shlomo Riskin (then the rabbi of a leading Modern Orthodox congregation in New York City) was right in 1977 when he defined Conservatism’s main problem as the lack of a community that actually and visibly lives according to the movement’s ideals.⁶³ Although there are small elite communities of this sort around the Conservative seminaries, the perceived problem of the movement all along has been the inherent elitism of its approach.⁶⁴ Dorff’s book, which delves into the complexities of various approaches to revelation, only makes implicitly the point that *Emet Ve-Emunah* makes explicit. Namely: Conservative Judaism is distinguished by its method of adjusting halakhah to contemporary conditions, but that process “requires thorough knowledge of both Halakhah and the contemporary scene as well as carefully honed skills of judgment.”⁶⁵ It requires, in other words, an elite that really understands what the movement is about, and a laity willing to accede to that elite’s authority. This is not a recipe for success in egalitarian, antiauthoritarian America. “Tradition” is valued (and obeyed) only up to a point. The only way to win a laity’s allegiance under such conditions is to

provide them with a tangible, attractive reality shaped by Conservative commitments. But this is impossible, for reasons explored above, and so the circle is not broken.

Conservatism, in sum, has staked its claim to the center in the last two decades more forcefully than ever before, arguing its middle position on grounds of halakhic flexibility and aggadic pluralism. It may well find, however, that these grounds are beyond the understanding of the laity—that the center as the Conservative elite understands it is not where most American Jews now want to stand.

Reconstructionism: Language, Myth and Community

For Reconstructionism, which claims the allegiance of perhaps one percent of American Jewry, minority status is a given, not a problem. It is therefore free to strike out in new directions, mandated by its elite, that will be followed by those few among the folk (primarily in the cohort that reached maturity in the 1960s and 1970s) who find these directions meaningful. Even in Reconstructionism, however, there is a striking disparity between elite and folk. For one thing, the intention of the current elite is to shape the movement in a way quite different from the one first envisioned by its founder, Mordecai Kaplan. In addition, there is a clear paradox between the stated aim of the movement—that of “maximalist Judaism,” demanding a significant degree of knowledge and commitment—and the nature of the following to which the movement today largely appeals, which in the main is new to Judaism, unversed in its ways and unwilling to involve itself in the serious communal obligation demanded by Reconstructionism’s elite.

The contrast between the former Kaplanian tenor of the movement and the new approach being formulated by the current president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Arthur Green, is evident when one compares recent essays by Green with a statement of the movement’s aims that appeared as recently as 1988 but was composed before Green’s innovations had taken root. The statement of aims, *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach*, begins with a historical survey of Kaplan’s efforts to create a new kind of Judaism in America, continues with a summary of his understanding of Judaism as an “evolving religious civilization” and then examines in detail Kaplan’s reconception of divinity. “Many Reconstructionists have difficulty accepting Kaplan’s approach to God in all of its facets,” the authors state, “and it is not necessary to do so to identify with the Reconstructionist movement.” Even the “experience of God as a Person” can find a place inside the movement “as long as it does not include affirmation of Torah-from-Sinai and direct supernatural intervention in our individual lives.”⁶⁶

The contrast with Reform and Conservatism here is quite apparent. While the latter two movements stress the multiple possible interpretations of “Torah from Sinai,” Reconstructionism rather implies that its meaning is apparent—and unacceptable. It has no hesitation in unequivocally excluding possible affiliates on the basis of their (traditional!) beliefs about God. Those Reconstructionists who do speak of God in personal terms or even address God in prayer are not in fact

subscribing to beliefs that they, like Kaplan, reject. Rather, they are using “traditional formulations because of their mythic and poetic power to move us.”⁶⁷

The remainder of this volume is strictly Kaplanian in tone. Chapter 4 is even titled with one of Kaplan’s more memorable formulations of Reconstructionist policy, “The Past Has a Vote, Not a Veto.” In this chapter, the authors lament the definition of halakhah as a “rigid body of law, changeable only under rarefied circumstances,” rather than as “the Jewish process of transmitting tradition”—in which case Reconstructionism, too, could be defined as a halakhic movement. Chapter 5, “Living in Two Civilizations,” is likewise devoted to a faithful explication of the master’s teaching, while Chapter 6, “Zion as a Spiritual Center,” sets forth the Kaplanian formulation of dual centers now standard in all four movements. “Suggestions for Further Reading” refer readers by and large to the writings of Mordecai Kaplan.

One gets a somewhat different picture of the movement if one reads the essays published recently by Green, whose approach was adumbrated in a 1976 address before Conservative rabbis in which he urged them to join him in the “seeking out of contemporary theological meaning in the sources of Jewish mystical experience.” Green’s suggestion was twofold. First, where neither rationalism nor the rabbinic effort to discern God’s involvement in history has been of use in confronting the Holocaust, Jewish mysticism—particularly that of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav—has offered valuable assistance. If *zimzum* (divine self-contraction) is taken seriously, there is a substantial portion of reality from which God is absent, “a level of truth on which God does not exist.” On this level, the one we moderns know from experience, one cannot find God because God is not there: “Only by confronting the void and transcending it do we find God.” Second, Green argued, there is a need to recognize that, even without the Holocaust, many traditional beliefs, such as covenant, would have proven alien. Here, too, he said, Rabbi Nahman can be our guide in reminding us that knowledge of God comes first and foremost from inner experience. Thus, while God cannot be claimed as the “direct author of our traditions,” we can “let ourselves be guided by the great depths of faith” that Judaism has fostered.⁶⁸

More recent essays enlarge upon these themes. In fact, Green argues, one source of contemporary difficulties with faith is the lack of authentic language in which to talk about God—this despite the presence, in our mystical-Hasidic tradition, of a rich vocabulary “for discussion of religious states.” Green sets out to provide such a language, always stressing that contemporary Jews must remain both “insiders” and “outsiders” in relation to Jewish tradition. The task here is “spiritual wakefulness and awareness,” “cultivation of the inner life,” a higher level of insight. “Not faith, but vision is what such a religion demands.”⁶⁹ The language is strictly contemporary, born of the counterculture and authentically fused, in Green’s own religiosity, with elements of Hasidic theology.

That fusion enables him to describe a viewpoint that is “that of mystic and naturalist at once”—in other words, appropriate both to the new Reconstructionism and to the old. God, YHWH, is all of being, “the universe so utterly transformed by integration and unity as to appear to us as indeed ‘other,’ a mirror of the universe’s

self that becomes Universal Self." We picture God in personal terms and then pray to God because we must; more precisely, the need to pray generates the pictures necessary to our praying. "'God' is in that sense a symbol, a human creation that we need to use in order to illuminate for ourselves, however inadequately, some tiny portion of the infinite mystery."⁷⁰ Green and Kaplan can agree, then, on what in rational terms cannot be true. They disagree on whether those terms should predominate in our religious lives—most particularly, in our religious language.

A second important shift in the new Reconstructionism is the way in which it places religion (the dimension of spirituality, the search for higher awareness) squarely at the center, building outward from it. The religious life makes demands upon our behavior that we express in the mitzvot; we choose Jewish tradition rather than some other because it is "our spiritual home"; we choose as much of Jewish tradition as we possibly can because "traditions work best when they are least diluted."⁷¹ Green is correct in pointing to agreement with Kaplan on the latter points, but his thrust is radically at variance with Kaplan's. The master, seeking to win back Jews by convincing them that Judaism encompassed far more than "religion," put the emphasis upon other aspects of Jewish life. Green, seeking to win back Jews in search of transcendent meaning, reemphasizes the essentially spiritual character of Jewish commitment. "Inner life" is primary, "civilization" is taken for granted.

Hence the importance of the movement's projected series of new prayer books, which are intended at once to give a sense of what "inner life" is and to direct its cultivation. The problems with this attempt are apparent in the recently issued draft of the first prayer book, *Kol Haneshamah*, consisting of prayers for Shabbat eve.⁷² This siddur presumes a serious and functioning community in which experiments with liturgy can be confidently undertaken and new liturgy actually created. It also presumes a laity sufficiently at home with the act of prayer and the traditional content of prayer to know just how to experiment without destroying all connection to the Jewish past. ("While experimentation is certainly called for," Green has written, "a sense of authenticity and deep-rootedness in tradition . . . should not be sacrificed.")⁷³ *Kol Haneshamah*, by far the most creative prayer book to emerge from any movement in decades, is explicitly a group effort and yet informed by a single sensibility. It may prove to be an effort by and for an elite; the focus here, however, will be on what that elite has apparently sought to articulate.

First, despite the avowal that the siddur's readings "are not didactic; they are meant to help us discover what is ready to be revealed within ourselves" (a degree of 1960s jargon that no other movement would permit itself), it is also noted in the introduction that "a large number of those who will use the new prayer book have little knowledge of the structure or history of the siddur."⁷⁴ The siddur thus includes many quite elementary notes of explanation, and (like *Gates of Prayer*) often seems to be addressed to the person who prays rather than to God. (This of course is appropriate if, as Kaplan maintained, we ourselves are the true intended audience for prayer, not the God whom we purport to address.) On occasion this turn to the worshiper comes in the form of notes that explain why a traditional prayer has been altered or retained. A series of meditations offered as an alternative to the Amidah, for example, directs us to "allow yourself to feel gratitude and joy," or "allow

yourself to feel the holiness of all life,” and so on—thereby rendering explicit the engendering of particular moods that all prayer implicitly attempts.⁷⁵ At other points, despite their avowed shunning of didacticism, the authors have inserted notes that use prayer to drive home an ideological point (e.g., we are told that the tetragrammaton “hints at the absurdity of assigning a name to an ineffable divinity”).⁷⁶

Ideology is most evident in the book’s most experimental feature, an alternative and feminist Amidah composed by the contemporary poet and scholar Marcia Falk. Theologically, Falk breaks new ground by creating Hebrew and English prayers that do not mention, let alone address, any deity. “Let us bless” replaces “Blessed are you, O Lord,” and “Let us hallow the Sabbath day in remembrance of creation” replaces a blessing of God “who hallows the Sabbath.”⁷⁷ The nature of creation is left unspecified. The liturgy also goes much further than any other siddur of the four movements in articulating “an inclusive feminist approach to the themes of the service.” The “avot” section of the Amidah becomes “re-calling our ancestors, remembering our lives,” the re-callers and the re-called being Jewish women. Leah Goldberg’s poem “From My Mother’s House” begins this section, and it is soon followed by Malka Heifetz Tussman’s “I Am a Woman.” Feminist themes are less evident in the remainder of the Amidah, but the imagery and language rigorously avoid the masculine.

Falk guides the worshiper’s reflection with a strong hand, and not only in her new blessings and her selection of poetry. For example, she explains at the start of the “avot” section that “Re-calling our past, we re-member our selves, making the branches part of the whole again.”⁷⁸ Every liturgy seeks to shape the mood and reflection of the worshiper. In *Kol Haneshamah*, the authors do so openly and unreservedly, to the point where prayer sometimes seems advocacy for one position rather than another. Falk’s Amidah, precisely because of its “inclusive language,” drives home the *exclusion* of traditional theists that was encountered in *Exploring Reconstructionism*. If you seek encounter with a personal God here rather than introspective meditation, says this Amidah, look elsewhere—much as (it might add) Jews put off by sexist or hierarchical language are still excluded by more traditional prayer books, including those recently issued by Conservatism and Reform. As noted, however, *Kol Haneshamah* also contains an alternative liturgy that is quite traditional. This alternative is deft in its integration of contemporary concerns such as the Holocaust into received liturgical texts.⁷⁹

In sum: With the Reform movement having embraced Zionism, Hebrew, ritual and *havurot*, and with Reconstructionism having joined Reform in opting for “patrilineal descent,” the Reconstructionist elite has rendered itself distinctive by proving more venturesome than Reform in the realm of liturgy and more creative in the realm of theology. It has apparently targeted two groups as potential adherents: disaffected members on the “Left” of the Reform and Conservative movements; and those among the unaffiliated who are drawn to the new Reconstructionist spirituality. The main obstacle to Reconstructionism’s growth is that it in fact demands *more* from its adherents than any other movement, stressing the need for constant “revitalization, reevaluation [and] repair” of Judaism on the part of all Jews and demanding a true community in which “no one’s duty may be done

vicariously by others."⁸⁰ It is also not clear that those whom Reconstructionism now seeks to attract are interested in a Judaism focused once again on an element that Kaplan had displaced from the center—religion. If Nathan Glazer's classic analysis still holds, most American Jews prefer Jewishness (an ethnic identity conferring a sense of transcendence) to Judaism (faith more strictly understood).⁸¹ The quintessential movement of American "Jewishness" now seeks to move American Jews back to a creative and demanding Judaism—and may well find that only the elite is capable of that transformation, or even concerned that it occur.

Modern Orthodoxy: The Triumphant Under Siege

When *Tradition* magazine polled a group of leading Modern Orthodox rabbis and intellectuals in 1982 about "the state of Orthodoxy today,"⁸² three concerns seemed paramount in the mind of the editor and his respondents. First, to combat the smugness and triumphalism that they perceived among Orthodox Jews following the movement's resurgence in the past two decades—a resurgence that, to the journal's delight, had confounded widespread predictions of Orthodoxy's imminent decline. Second, to shore up the defenses of Modern Orthodoxy against the continuing assault upon its legitimacy emanating from more traditionalist Orthodox circles.⁸³ Third, despite repeated calls for more intellectual openness—in other words, for palpable distance from the Orthodox Right—many of the participants seemed concerned to establish that Orthodoxy, whether modern or traditionalist, constituted a single movement, albeit not a "monolithic" one. The mark of that unity, more often than not, was held to be commitment to halakhah as codified in the Shulhan Arukh.

Limits of space and competence preclude detailed treatment of Modern Orthodoxy in the compass of this essay, and the same limits—plus the fact that the elite of traditionalist Orthodoxy does not interact intellectually with the other three movements—place the latter outside our purview altogether. Nonetheless, the movement of Modern Orthodoxy's elite in the past two decades can be gauged by an examination of the *Tradition* symposium, the decision of the Modern Orthodox rabbinic association to adopt a new siddur for use in its synagogues, and a recent (and representative) essay in *Tradition* magazine by the president of Yeshiva University, Orthodoxy's principal institution. To say that the elite has "moved right" would be simplistic and perhaps even wrong. One should rather note its refusal, in the wake of challenge from the right, either to move left (thereby making room for Conservative Jews disgruntled by their movement's embrace of egalitarianism) or to articulate its own long-stated commitments (personified in the leadership of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik) more forcefully.

For all its complaints about the Right, Modern Orthodoxy has benefited from the latter's perceived success. If the *Tradition* symposium is an accurate indication, Modern Orthodoxy also seeks to claim the Jewish center as its own. (It may be recalled that Reform positions itself rhetorically between assimilators and fundamentalists, Conservatism between Reform and Orthodoxy.) *Tradition's* respondents spoke of two tendencies in Jewish life—insulation from the world and too much being in it—with Orthodoxy as the "party of the middle";⁸⁴ and of the mainstream

and extremes present in every period of Jewish history, with Modern Orthodoxy currently constituting the “most legitimate expression of authentic Judaism.”⁸⁵ Philosopher and theologian Michael Wyschogrod called Orthodoxy (presumably in its modern form) “most clearly continuous with classical Jewish self-understanding,” and the “self-conscious heart of the people of Israel.”⁸⁶ The presence of the Right is indispensable to the definition of the center.

Without that presence, moreover, the definition of the Orthodox center might have taken a form less conducive to distinction from Conservatism. Aharon Lichtenstein’s description of Orthodoxy as “consistent halakhic living”⁸⁷ is rather ambiguous, “consistency” existing primarily in the eye of the beholder. His intent is self-evident only because his category includes traditionalist Orthodox Jews whose notion of “consistency” is not open to confusion with Conservatism. Marc Angel’s suggestion that Orthodoxy is united by belief in the divine authority of Torah⁸⁸ leaves open the question of what precisely that means—and must leave this matter open if Yeshiva University graduates and Borough Park hasidim are to be counted in the same grouping. Indeed, as seen previously, the Conservative elite generally distinguishes itself from Orthodoxy and Reform on precisely this theological ground, arguing that the latter rejects belief in the Torah’s divine authority while the former understands it too narrowly. The Modern Orthodox elite might have been tempted to stress the matter more were it not for this counterclaim by Conservatism and the recognition that, if put to the test, it would have to confess that traditionalist Orthodoxy is, as Conservatism charges, far too fundamentalist. Hence the preferred differentiation put forward by Immanuel Jakobovits: commitment to the Shulhan Arukh.⁸⁹ This marker highlights Conservative deviation (in the name of the Sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud) from halakhah as codified by the medievals. Conservative Jews call themselves halakhic, reads the subtext, but just look at what they do. For example, they ordain women as rabbis.

A comparison of *Tradition* with the organs of other movements—*Journal of Reform Judaism*, *Conservative Judaism* and *The Reconstructionist*—reveals far more concern with halakhic applications in contemporary life, a more reverent (even apologetic) stress on classical and medieval sources and less engagement with recent intellectual approaches such as anthropology and literary criticism. Sustained attention is also given (in a variety of ways) to the issue of Jewish faith, science and the lack of conflict between them—a matter that for the elites of other movements is apparently no longer a live issue. It is perhaps worthwhile to take a brief look here at a representative essay from *Tradition*—one that, like many others, approaches a matter of considerable contemporary interest through an historical and philosophical investigation of halakhah: Norman Lamm’s “Loving and Hating Jews as Halakhic Categories” (1989).⁹⁰

Lamm accepts the question as defined in halakhic sources, assuming that the biblical injunction to “love your neighbor as yourself” applies only to Jews and that it is a problematic injunction because Jews are also commanded to combat evil and injustice. In more concrete terms, what happens if certain Jews reject the fundamentals of their faith and its practice? Must one love them or hate them? Lamm carefully examines an array of halakhic authorities, the focus being Maimonides (who, as both philosopher and halakhist, personifies the synthesis for which Modern

Orthodoxy strives). Lamm concludes, on four grounds, that one must love fellow Jews even if they do not accept the fundamentals of Judaism. Two grounds originate in opinions from previous authorities: that the modern zeitgeist represents a sort of "coercion" that frees heterodox Jews from full responsibility for their behavior; moreover, the lack of "proper rebuke"—a warning that leads to full understanding of what their heterodoxy involves—precludes invoking all the punitive sanctions for which the law provides. To these Lamm adds two further considerations: Doubt of fundamental beliefs does not constitute actual rejection; and the fact that, in his view of the halakhah, removal of apostates from Jewry's midst makes sense only when the great majority of Jews are observant and God-fearing, such that heresy constitutes a demonstrable denial of Jewish identity. This, Lamm concludes, is not so in our time.

This article simply could not have appeared in the journal of any other movement; any article written on the same subject (and many may have been, over the years) would have to have had very different contents. Would the elites of other movements have accepted the classical rabbinic position that "love of neighbor" applies only to Jews—or insisted on a change in light of present circumstances? Would they have arrogated to themselves the right to judge who stands inside and outside the borders of true faith—or argued on historical grounds that those borders were never fixed precisely, were not always fixed in the same way and, furthermore, there was also a principle of pluralism to consider that urged respect for those whose Jewish self-understanding was at variance with their own? Would they have taken the tradition on its own terms, or invoked, say, the anthropologist Mary Douglas's insight in *Purity and Danger* (1966) on how groups maintain boundaries, or that of her colleague, Clifford Geertz, on the functioning of religious ideology? These questions are of course rhetorical, pointing to the distinctive character of Lamm's essay and, by extension, of his movement. A more traditionalist Orthodox figure would likely have approached the subject in somewhat different fashion, perhaps denying Maimonides pride of place and paying more attention to codes such as the Shulhan Arukh as well as specifying (as Lamm does not) precisely what the fundamentals of faith are and who, even among the Orthodox, currently violate them.

One can only speculate on what, if any, influence the viewpoint of traditionalists has had on an article such as Lamm's. In at least one important instance, however, traditionalist influence has been clear. The Rabbinical Council of America recently replaced its authorized siddur (edited by David De Sola Pool in 1960 and accepted as the movement's official prayer book, after much hesitation, a decade later) with the *Complete Artscroll Siddur*, edited by Nosson Scherman and originally published in 1984.⁹¹ Where the De Sola Pool siddur, in the words of one (Reform) scholar, conveyed a message of modernity and science that led to its rejection by Orthodox Jews opposed to liturgical renewal, the *Artscroll* siddur, in the words of a (Conservative) scholar, "traces its inspiration to rabbis associated with the rightist yeshivah world." Transliterations from the Hebrew are in "Ashkenazis" rather than the Sephardic form; down-to-earth idiom ("A mind-boggling investment of time and resources was required to make this Siddur a reality") replaces the dignity and decorum of the previous siddur; the latter's minimal notation, generally providing historical information, has given way in the *Artscroll* siddur to voluminous com-

mentary from rabbinic and kabbalistic sources. We are told, without even a bow to *Wissenschaft*, that the Shemoneh Esrei was authored by “one of the most august bodies in history, the Men of the Great Assembly,” that the “entire leadership of the nation” took the task of composing the liturgy upon itself, and that as a result “every word and syllable has a thousand effects in ways we cannot imagine.”⁹²

Sophistication as defined in the university world is not a value; in Brooklyn’s yeshivah world one need not fear the reverberations of the claim that “women, on the other hand, both historically and because of their nature, are the guardians of tradition, the molders of character, children, and family.” Almost every prayer comes with a preface and/or commentary on its meaning. Mystical interpretation is unabashed. “The twenty-two sacred letters [of the Hebrew alphabet] are profound, primal, spiritual forces. They are, in effect, the raw material of Creation.”⁹³

One cannot say with certainty, no survey having been undertaken, how Modern Orthodox congregants have received the *Artscroll* siddur. Nor can one say how the Modern Orthodox elite has received it less than a decade after *Tradition* published a blistering and even nasty critique of the *Artscroll* Bible series that emphasized (in boldface type), “Artscroll is not modern,” “Artscroll is not scientific,” “Artscroll is not scholarly,” and so on⁹⁴—in other words, that the *Artscroll* series does not live up to norms that *we*, as Modern Orthodox Jews accept, and *they*, more traditionalist Jews, do not. Adoption of the siddur, however, does seem to support the frequent depiction of Orthodoxy’s “shift to the right,” this despite the inclination of many intellectuals (witness the *Tradition* symposium and the thrust of many of its articles) to define and hold to the center, thereby taking up the challenge of Conservatism. Once again, a movement is seen to be standing at a crossroads. Time alone will tell whether the Orthodox center holds—or whether it moves, with demography and the prevailing winds, to the right.

Conclusion

What, then, is it possible to learn from this brief overview? Principally, that several oft-heard characterizations of American Judaism seem to be at best premature, and probably wrong.

To begin with, whatever its merits in the Orthodox case, the generalization of a “shift to the right” is simply not applicable to the other movements. Reform, as has been seen, has reinstated the language of mitzvah, the use of Hebrew and the importance of ritual. But it has done so in a context of pluralism and has not renounced the principle of individual or congregational autonomy. What is more, it has accomplished its “return to ritual” in the absence of any theological transformation, thereby conveying the message that the laity should not regard theological issues as paramount but rather set aside their problems with faith in favor of study and observances that, if they prove meaningful, need no further justification. Mitzvot are to be undertaken piecemeal rather than as a whole, just as one can pick and choose from the lengthy and varied menu of the *Gates of Prayer* services. Reconstructionism, too, has returned to a more traditional language, replacing Kaplan’s borrowings from Emile Durkheim and John Dewey with the Zohar and

Rabbi Nahman. Yet it has bracketed this language in another one, the modern understanding of myth and symbol, in the hope that Jews freed of the requirement to think literally will be able, paradoxically, to think more traditionally. As the authors put it in their preface to the new Reconstructionist siddur, "Fears that more traditional worship styles inevitably carry with them more traditional theology have been put to rest."⁹⁵

Conservatism, too, has not moved right, despite its freedom (thanks to the exodus of Reconstructionists from its ranks) to define itself more strictly in terms of halakhah and "Torah from Heaven." True, the current tendency of the elite is to demand more observance from the laity, to appeal to Modern Orthodox disquiet with its movement's move to the right, and to concede the Left to Reform. But the elite has also increasingly proclaimed its readiness for significant halakhic innovation—witness the decisive break with Orthodoxy represented by the ordination of women rabbis. All four movements have altered their self-presentation in the past two decades, then, but only Orthodoxy has moved to the right. Even there, as has been seen, there is much disquiet among the Modern Orthodox elite, and growing doubts (expressed by several participants in the *Tradition* symposium) that Orthodoxy can be described anymore as a single, unified movement.

Second, while there is ample support for Petuchowski's observation that "American Conservative Judaism, rather than American Reform Judaism, is carrying on the tradition of German Liberal Judaism,"⁹⁶ there seems no evidence to support the comment that denominational lines in the United States are no longer relevant. The Reform Right, it is true, often shares a great deal with the Conservative Left (or even center) and some Reconstructionists; the Conservative center, and of course those who have opposed women's ordination, share much with Modern Orthodoxy. But although individual members of the various elites may pray together, members of the various congregations are certainly united with affiliates of other movements by ties of marriage and friendship, and the rabbis of various movements frequently cooperate on communal matters, the ideological lines dividing the movements do in fact remain.

Reform still lays claim to the mantle of the Prophets, Conservatism to the Sages, and Orthodoxy to a combination of Maimonides and the Shulhan Arukh. (Reconstructionism, the "wild card" in this respect, has apparently abandoned the Jewish rationalist tradition in favor of the mystical.) Reform thinkers cite Abraham Geiger and stress Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, while Conservative thinkers tend to draw on Rosenzweig and Heschel, and the Orthodox on halakhic authorities and "the Rav," Joseph Soloveitchik. Reform Jews still carry the marks of their history, evident for example in Borowitz's presentation of Liberal Judaism, just as Reconstructionists will never entirely discharge the legacy of Kaplan and Conservative Jews will continue to emphasize the fragile union between halakhah and *Wissenschaft*. Orthodox Jews perhaps invoke the shibboleth of "tradition" so much less than the other movements because they are so thoroughly identified with it—the Modern Orthodox in fact being burdened by identification with more right-wing Orthodox "traditionalists." In short, the existing markers remain in place, and what is more, all four movements have moved of late to sharpen the lines when they have been in danger of becoming blurred. Gunther Plaut's prediction of a merger between

the Rabbinical Assembly and the Central Conference of American Rabbis⁹⁷ seems to be wishful thinking by a member of the Reform Right more at home with like-minded Conservative colleagues than with the Left of his own movement. More than organizational inertia will prevent such a merger if the analysis offered here is correct; the competing ideological thrusts are too powerful to permit it.

Finally, it seems that recent reevaluations of Nathan Glazer's classic analysis of American Judaism are correct in faulting him for overemphasizing the ethnic concerns that he called "Jewishness" and underestimating the vitality of more strictly religious concerns, which he called "Judaism."⁹⁸ Unlike Glazer and his critics, this essay makes reference only to the elites of American Judaism. But in their case, at least, there can be no doubt that religion—in the sense of concern with transcendent meaning and encounter with God—is of paramount importance, even if theology in the sense of rigorous, systematic articulation of belief continues to be fragmentary or even absent. It will not do, at least for the elite, to attribute Orthodoxy's revival exclusively to sociological factors such as the growing preference for parochial rather than public schools, the growing strength of Orthodoxy in Israel or the ability of American manufacturers to accommodate small interest groups such as those who demand kosher products.⁹⁹ Such factors are not irrelevant, of course, but neither are they predominant. The elites examined here are engaged in the exercise that has preoccupied religious Jewish intellectuals throughout the modern period: the search for intellectually credible and traditionally authentic syntheses between the Jewish past as they understand that past and those aspects of modernity they have come to value.

Survey data and sociological analysis of the laity will of course find less evidence of that search, while examination of American Jewish theology more strictly understood (a decidedly elitist enterprise) will find the concern with synthesis to be predominant. The present essay, looking at "ideological" materials in which the elite presents itself both to itself and to the folk, has in the nature of the case focused both on organizational needs for distinctive self-definition and on the quest by elites of the various movements to shape those movements in a way that satisfied their own needs and desires. Glazer is still inclined to believe that in Orthodoxy and Conservatism concern with Judaism is predominant, whereas in Reform and Reconstructionism Jewishness holds sway.¹⁰⁰ However, no such generalization is possible on empirical grounds. Indeed, the distinction between Jewishness and Judaism will become increasingly impossible if the elites succeed in making observance of sacred ritual and the study of sacred texts key components of Jewishness, irrespective of theological belief, and if they describe Jewish existence itself after the Holocaust—whether religious or secular, in Israel or in the United States—as a demonstration of the ultimate mystery underlying Jewish destiny. A certain skepticism has been expressed here concerning the elite's chances of remaking the folk in its image, but the effort is not foolish or hopeless, and such evidence as we have about the laity indicates that it finds Judaism most satisfactory when it emphasizes the transcendent meaning of Jewish history to which Holocaust and Israeli statehood bear witness.¹⁰¹ Jewishness and Judaism are increasingly interrelated, and in a time of immense transformations in American Judaism, this may prove the most significant transformation of all.

Notes

1. This present essay builds upon the survey by Jack Wertheimer, "Recent Trends in American Judaism," *American Jewish Yearbook* 89 (Philadelphia: 1989), 63–162. Its methodology follows the one employed in Arnold Eisen, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology* (Bloomington: 1983).
2. Charles Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Philadelphia: 1973), ch. 1.
3. Wertheimer, "Recent Trends in American Judaism," 86.
4. Lawrence Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington: 1987), 67. I agree wholeheartedly with Hoffman's argument that the study of liturgy must involve far more than texts; among other things, it must also deal with the authors, worshippers and social context.
5. Wertheimer, "Recent Trends in American Judaism," 63.
6. See Eisen, *Chosen People in America*, ch. 3.
7. W. Gunther Plaut, "Reform Judaism—Past, Present and Future," *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Summer 1980), 8. Plaut was referring to the CCAR's *A Shabbat Manual* (New York: 1972).
8. Gunther Plaut, "Foreword" to *Gates of Mitzvah*, ed. Simeon J. Maslin (New York: 1979), ix.
9. Maslin (ed.), *Gates of Mitzvah*, 3, emphasis added.
10. The 1976 statement is conveniently available in Eugene Borowitz, *Reform Judaism Today*, vol. 1 (New York: 1978), xix–xxv.
11. Maslin (ed.), *Gates of Mitzvah*, 4.
12. *Ibid.*, 11.
13. *Ibid.*, 40.
14. *Ibid.*, 11–16, 30, 37–38, 41, 51, 54–62.
15. *Ibid.*, 100–103.
16. *Ibid.*, 104–107.
17. *Ibid.*, 108–110.
18. See the bibliography in Wertheimer, "Recent Trends in American Judaism," 102n. The comments made in the present essay about *Gates of Mitzvah* apply equally well to the companion volume, *Gates of the Seasons*, ed. Peter S. Knobel (New York: 1983).
19. Knobel (ed.), *Gates of the Seasons*, 21.
20. See, e.g., Leon I. Feuer, "Some Reflections on the State of Reform Judaism," *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Summer 1980), 22–31. Debates on the merits of "Reform halakhah" fill the pages of the CCAR's *Yearbook* and journals in the past two decades.
21. Knobel (ed.), *Gates of the Seasons*, 52.
22. On this point, see Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, particularly chs. 1 and 4, to which my own analysis is greatly indebted. I have also benefited from a fine analysis of *Gates of Prayer* by David Ellenson, "Reform Judaism in Present-Day America: The Evidence of the Gates of Prayer," forthcoming in a volume honoring Rabbi Seymour J. Cohen. The views of the Reform elite concerning its new prayer book—before, during and after its publication—have been gleaned from the following: Jakob J. Petuchowski, "New Directions in Reform Liturgy," *Journal of the CCAR*, no. 2 (1969), 26–34; "Gates of Prayer" [a symposium], *Journal of the CCAR* (Spring 1973), 73–91; "Report of the Liturgy Committee," *Yearbook of the CCAR* (1976), 47–51; "A Critique of *Gates of Prayer*," in *ibid.*, 115–126; "*Gates of Prayer*: Ten Years Later—A Symposium," *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Fall 1985), 13–61. See also, of course, the siddur itself, *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook*, ed. Chaim Stern (New York: 1975), and the explanatory volume, *Gates of Understanding*, ed. Lawrence Hoffman (New York: 1977), which contains historical and theological essays on Reform worship as well as "Notes to Shaarei Tefillah" [Gates of Prayer] by Chaim Stern and A. Stanley Dreyfus. Finally, a comparable analysis could be written of the Reform mahzor, *Gates of Repentance*, ed. Chaim Stern (New York: 1977), and its explanatory volume, *Gates of Understanding 2*, ed. Chaim Stern (New York: 1984). The output of prayer books, guides and explanatory volumes is truly prodigious.

23. Sefton Temkin, "The Reform Liturgy," *Conservative Judaism* (Fall 1975), 17.
24. "Gates of Prayer: Ten Years Later."
25. Stern (ed.), *Gates of Prayer*, 246–247. On the rationale for this service, see *idem*, *Gates of Understanding*, 175.
26. Richard N. Levy in "Gates of Prayer: Ten Years Later," 26–28.
27. Herbert Bronstein in *ibid.*, 18.
28. See Jakob J. Petuchowski, *History of Prayer Book Reform in Europe* (New York: 1968), and the perceptive review by Yosef Heinemann in *Tarbiz* 39 (1969), 218–221. Petuchowski's comments on *Gates of Prayer* appear in "Gates of Prayer: Ten Years Later," 33–34, and (implicitly) in his review of the new Conservative prayer book, "Siddur Sim Shalom," *Conservative Judaism* (Winter 1985/1986), 82–87.
29. Bronstein in "Gates of Prayer: Ten Years Later," 17.
30. Levy in *ibid.*, 27.
31. Eugene Borowitz, *Liberal Judaism* (New York: 1984). Hoffman calls Borowitz the theological presence behind *Gates of Prayer* in *Gates of Understanding*, 6.
32. Borowitz, *Liberal Judaism*, 129–136.
33. *Ibid.*, 95, 125.
34. *Ibid.*, 296.
35. *Ibid.*, 125.
36. *Ibid.*, 331.
37. Plaut, "Reform Judaism," 7.
38. William G. Braude, "Recollections and an Attempt to Project," *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Summer 1980), 14.
39. Feuer, "Reflections on the State of Reform Judaism," 27.
40. For the "outside" critique, see Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (New York: 1972). See also the evaluation of Sklare's book, with a rejoinder by Sklare, in *American Jewish History* 74, no. 2 (Dec. 1984), 102–168. For the critique within the movement, see Robert Gordis, "The Struggle for Self-Definition in Conservative Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* (Spring 1987), 7–19, and Gordis's introduction to *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism* (New York: 1988), 7–16, as well as the foreword to the statement by Kassel Abelson, 1–4.
41. Gordis, *Emet Ve-Emunah*, 8–9.
42. *Ibid.*, 10.
43. Gerson Cohen in "Conservative Judaism on its Ninetieth Birthday: An Evaluation," *Judaism* (symposium issue, Summer 1977), 268.
44. David M. Gordis, "Communicating Conservative Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* (Spring 1978), 16–22.
45. Elliot Dorff, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants* (New York: 1977), 11–29.
46. *Ibid.*, 60.
47. *Emet Ve-Emunah*, 17–24, esp. 23.
48. Dorff, *Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*, 59, 103. See also his revealing comment on the identification of Conservative Rabbis with the Sages as a function of JTS rabbinic training, which stresses Mishnah and Talmud but not Codes. Elliot Dorff, "Towards a Legal Theory of the Conservative Movement," *Conservative Judaism* (Summer 1973), 76–77.
49. Cited in Sidney H. Schwarz, "Conservative Judaism's 'Ideology Problem,'" *American Jewish History* 74, no. 2 (Dec. 1984), 150.
50. Edward Feld, "Towards an Aggadic Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* (Spring 1975), 79–84.
51. Cohen, "Conservative Judaism on its Ninetieth Birthday," 269.
52. Cf. Dorff, *Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*, 82–83.
53. Dorff, "Towards a Legal Theory," esp. 74–77.
54. Neil Gillman, "Towards a Theology for Conservative Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* (Fall 1983), 4–22. I have argued elsewhere, as does Gillman, that this was precisely

- Abraham Heschel's intent. See my "Re-reading Heschel on the Commandments," *Modern Judaism* 9, no. 1 (1989), 1–33.
55. Dorff, *Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*, 118–157.
 56. Petuchowski, "Siddur Sim Shalom," 82–87.
 57. Jules Harlow (ed.), *Siddur Sim Shalom* (New York: 1985), xi–xii.
 58. *Ibid.*, 800, 812, 844ff.
 59. *Ibid.*, 232.
 60. Elliot Dorff, "The Ideology of Conservative Judaism: Sklare After Thirty Years," *American Jewish History* 74, no. 2 (Dec. 1984), 113. For the closest thing to a Conservative Shulhan Arukh, see the extensive and demanding vision of halakhic life set forth in Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* (New York: 1979). Klein served for many years as head of the law committee of the (Conservative) Rabbinical Assembly.
 61. *Emet Ve-Emunah*, 17–57. For the "ideal Conservative Jew" see 56–57.
 62. Gordis, "Communicating Conservative Judaism," esp. 17–18.
 63. Shlomo Riskin in "Conservative Judaism on its Ninetieth Birthday," 330ff.
 64. Cf. Daniel Gordis, "The Elusive Conservative Third Generation: A Reaction to Elitism," *Conservative Judaism* (Fall 1983), 29–39.
 65. *Emet Ve-Emunah*, 23. This perhaps explains why the original composition of the commission charged with drawing up the statement included only rabbis and seminary faculty, and no laity.
 66. Rebecca T. Alpert and Jacob J. Staub, *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach* (Wyncote, Pa.: 1988), 1–28, esp. 24–25.
 67. *Ibid.*, 25.
 68. Arthur Green, "The Role of Jewish Mysticism in a Contemporary Theology of Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* (Summer 1976), 10–23. Green is also the author of an acclaimed biography of Nahman of Bratslaw entitled *Tormented Master* (University, Ala.: 1979).
 69. Arthur Green, "Rethinking Theology: Language, Experience, and Reality," *The Reconstructionist* (Sept. 1988), 8–11.
 70. *Ibid.*, 11–12.
 71. *Ibid.*, 10, 13.
 72. *Kol Haneshamah: Shabbat Eve* (Wyncote, Pa.: 1989).
 73. Arthur Green, "Imagining the Jewish Future: Prayer, Liturgy, Religious Language." Typescript of address at a conference sponsored by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 25 December 1988, Philadelphia.
 74. *Kol Haneshamah*, xvii.
 75. *Ibid.* For notes, see e.g., 67, 71, 74, 77, 83, 112. I am assuming these notes are not intended for the draft edition only. For the meditations, see 179–183.
 76. *Ibid.*, 10.
 77. *Ibid.*, 150–178. Compare the similar effort in Service VI for Friday evening in *Gates of Prayer*, the so-called equivocal service inspired by Alvin Reines. But in this service belief in a personal God, while not stated, is not excluded by the language, and some Hebrew blessings remain quite traditional. See *Gates of Prayer*, 204–218, and *Gates of Understanding*, 173–174.
 78. *Kol Haneshamah*, 151.
 79. *Ibid.*, 82–83.
 80. Alpert and Staub, *Exploring Judaism*, vi–vii.
 81. Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: 1957, rpt. 1972), and the recent symposium, "Revisiting a Classic: Nathan Glazer's *American Judaism*," *American Jewish History* 77, no. 2 (Dec. 1987), 211–282.
 82. "Symposium—The State of Orthodoxy," *Tradition* (Spring 1982), 3–81. See in particular the foreword by Walter Wurzburger and contributions by Marc Angel, David Berger, Louis Bernstein and Shubert Spero.
 83. On the categorization of Orthodox Jews, see Wertheimer, "Recent Trends in American Judaism," 110.

84. Thus Joseph Grunblatt in "Symposium," 32.
85. Thus Louis Bernstein in *ibid.*, 14.
86. Michael Wyschogrod in *ibid.*, 81.
87. Aharon Lichtenstein in *ibid.*, 47.
88. Marc Angel, in *ibid.*, 6.
89. Emanuel Jakobovits in *ibid.*, 40.
90. Norman Lamm, "Loving and Hating Jews as Halakhic Categories," *Tradition* (Winter 1989), 98–123.
91. On the original adoption of the de Sola Pool siddur, see Hoffman (the "Reform scholar" mentioned in the text), *Beyond the Text*, 68–70. On its replacement with the *Artscroll* siddur, see Wertheimer (the "Conservative scholar"), "Recent Trends in American Judaism," 119. See also the *Complete Artscroll Siddur*, ed. Nosson Scherman (Brooklyn: 1984). Comments made about the de Sola Pool apply even more forcefully to another Orthodox siddur that has been used by modern Orthodox congregations, Philip Birnbaum's *Daily Prayer Book* (New York: 1949).
92. *Artscroll*, x, xv.
93. *Ibid.*, xvi, 19.
94. Barry Levy, "Judge Not a Book by Its Cover," *Tradition* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1981), 89–95. I am indebted to David Ellenson for bringing the review to my attention.
95. *Kol Haneshamah*, xvi.
96. Petuchowski, "*Siddur Sim Shalom*," 84.
97. Plaut, "Reform Judaism," 11.
98. Glazer, *American Judaism*, ch. 6.
99. Thus Glazer in "Revisiting a Classic," 280.
100. *Ibid.*, 282.
101. See Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington: 1986).