

# Changing Social Characteristics of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews\*

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*The issue is raised as to whether the relationships found to exist between social class and various Protestant denominations will also be found for Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews. A study of the income levels of the areas within the metropolitan New York area in which new synagogues were constructed was made in order to assess the social class and social class changes among the three groups. Results indicate that Reform Jews continue to be in the highest income bracket; Orthodox Jews in the lowest; and Conservative Jews between the two, but closer to Reform than Orthodox. However, since World War II, the overlap between the three groups is considerable with the social distance among the members in each group growing.*

There is a large body of studies concerned with the relationship between social class and religious behavior. Almost all of this literature deals with Protestantism. Studies of religion and social class have pointed to significant differences in the educational, occupational and income levels of Protestants according to their denomination.<sup>1</sup>

Although information about social class and religious behavior among Protestants is by no means complete, it seems abundant when compared to the meager

\* I wish to thank the *American Jewish Yearbook* for a grant to cover the expenses involved in this study. I am indebted to Bruce Rachlin and Lawrence Grossman who served as student assistants, compiling most of the synagogue data and making most of the statistical calculations upon which this study is based. The data were substantially developed in the Summer of 1965.

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the findings of a few such studies, see the appendix entitled, "Religion and Social Class Structure" in Herbert Wallace Schneider, *Religion in 20th Century America*, New York: Atheneum, Revised Edition, 1964, pp. 261-274.

data available concerning Jews. We do have, however, the popular notion that, among Jews in the United States, the Reform are the wealthiest, the Orthodox the poorest, and the Conservatives in the middle. This notion finds substantial basis in the literature on the subject. Using measures of self-identification or synagogue affiliation, studies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Providence, R.I., New Orleans, La., Los Angeles, Calif., Rochester, N.Y., New Haven, Conn., Detroit, Mich., Washington, D.C., Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn., a medium sized metropolitan center in the mid-west, a medium sized industrial town in the northeast, and the general observations of social scientists, all confirm the impression that Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews can be differentiated by social class, as determined by income, or by such indirect predictors of social class as place of birth, age, or area of residence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jack Porter, *Differentiating Features of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jewish*

The Orthodox are uniformly found to be the oldest segment of the Jewish population with the highest proportion of foreign born. (Differences in age among Conservatives and Reform are not striking.) Even where data on income, occupation, or education are lacking, one can reasonably assume that foreign-born aged Jews are likely to have lower incomes than the native-born younger Jews. Other studies, while not reporting directly on differences between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform by social class, find that the Orthodox are clustered in areas where Jews are of higher social class. The studies are less

*Groups in Metropolitan Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1958; Sidney Goldstein, *The Greater Providence Jewish Community*, Providence: General Jewish Community of Providence, 1964; Leonard Reissman, *Profile of a Community: A Sociological Study of the New Orleans Jewish Community*, New Orleans: The Jewish Federation of New Orleans, 1958; Fred Massarik, *A Report on the Jewish Population of Los Angeles*, Los Angeles: Jewish Community Council, 1964; Jewish Community Council of Rochester, *The Jewish Population of Rochester*, New York, Rochester: The Jewish Community Council, 1961; Mhyra S. Minnis, "Cleavage in Women's Organizations: A Reflection of the Social Structure of a City," *American Sociological Review*, 18 (February, 1953), pp. 47-53; Albert J. Mayer, *Social and Economic Characteristics of the Detroit Jewish Community*: 1963, Detroit: Jewish Welfare Federation, 1964; Stanley K. Bigman, *The Jewish Population of Greater Washington in 1956*, Washington, D.C.: The Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, 1957; Judith R. Kramer and Seymour Leventman, *Children of the Gilded Ghetto*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961; Leonard Bloom, "The Jews of Buna," Isaacque Graeber and Stuart Henderson Britt, *Jews in a Gentile World*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1942, pp. 180-199; Marshall Sklare, Marc Vosk and Mark Zborowski, "Forms and Expressions of Jewish Identification," *Jewish Social Studies* (October, 1955), pp. 205-218; and Liston Pope "Religion and Class Structure," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 256 (March, 1948), pp. 84-91.

conclusive concerning differences among Conservative and Reform Jews, although most indicate—and none suggest the reverse—that the Reform are of higher social class.

It has been noted that certain types of religious behavior are characteristic of Protestant groups of a particular social class; that those of high social class (whether denominations, churches, or individuals) fall closer to the church end of the church-sect continuum and those of lower social class to the sect end. Is the same true of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform? Can we construct a church-sect continuum for Judaism and indeed locate Reform as closer to the church end and Orthodoxy to the sect end? The use of the terms church and sect in Judaism raises a number of problems. But, roughly speaking, one can say that the classical image of Reform is closer to what would be considered as church behavior; that of Orthodoxy closer to sect behavior; and that Conservatism falls somewhere in between.<sup>3</sup>

If our referent for the social environment is the general American environment, then Reform was traditionally most accepting and Orthodoxy least so. Orthodoxy placed greatest stress on beliefs and personal practices, while Reform placed least emphasis here. Orthodox worship was characterized by the most fervor and Reform by the least. The Reform temple was characterized by a lack of active individual participation, general passivity, and rigid decorum. Orthodox synagogues were at the other end of the scale. Theologically, the Orthodox were Biblical and Talmudic fundamentalists; Reform, the most liberal. Reform rabbis were usually quite likely to be active in secular affairs, and

<sup>3</sup> Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1965, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1965, see particularly pp. 40-45.

Orthodox rabbis to a much lesser degree. While there are no quantitative data available, one has the impression that the synagogue to which the Orthodox Jew belonged was central in his life and that his close friends were likely to be affiliated there. This was not true for the Reform Jew. Thus, we can replicate the Protestant social class scale among the Jews and isolate one group (Reform) at one end whose characteristics parallel that of high status churches, and another group (Orthodoxy) at the other end whose characteristics parallel those of low status churches. (Our focus is on social characteristics rather than basic world views where the Protestant-Jewish church-sect analogy breaks down.) The question we now want to ask is, what has happened among the Jews with their rise in social status? Studies of Protestantism, we recall, admit of two possibilities, both of which appear to have taken place. Individuals may change their affiliation to churches higher on the social scale, or the values of the entire denomination may change and normative beliefs and practices may be redefined and a growing ecumenism take place as various churches converge in a pattern of urbanized middle class or upper middle class religious style.

Lest the reader be disappointed in the discussion that follows, we must caution him that our present analysis will not answer the question conclusively. It will strongly suggest, however, that the Protestant changes have not always been paralleled among the Jews.

American Jews have been highly mobile in terms of social class. And, as among Protestants, changes in social class were, at least in the past, associated with changes in synagogue affiliation. Among Orthodox Jews this often meant a change from Orthodoxy to Conservatism or Reform and the accompanying changes in religious practices, in particu-

lar the abandonment of Jewish law as a code of personal behavior. Evidence is found, for example, in Leonard Bloom's study of a midwestern city which noted that the children of the Orthodox drifted to the "prestige enhancing and less hampering Reformed Temple."<sup>4</sup>

Marshall Sklare's classic study of Conservative Judaism contains the best discussion of this trend. Sklare noted that Conservatism became predominant over Orthodoxy in areas of "third settlement," the most fashionable ethnic settlement, usually close to the city, where residence "symbolized the attainment of solid middle-class position or better and is indicative of a relatively high level of acculturation."<sup>5</sup>

Under the impact of economic necessity and cultural challenge, according to many, the masses of European Jews who came to the United States between 1880 and 1924 abandoned Orthodoxy. Some left religion entirely; a few became Reform. Some, however, and many more of their descendants, adjusted their religious tradition to the mores of contemporary America and evolved a form of worship and ritual that eventually became known as Conservative Judaism.<sup>6</sup>

Changes in affiliation from Conservatism to Reform with increased rise in social class are not well documented. It is believed that such changes took place at least prior to the 1940's, and leaders of Conservative Judaism were reported to have been much concerned that this trend would accelerate in the post-World War II period.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the picture of social mobility and

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Bloom, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> For evidence that the religious commitment of the nominally Orthodox Jews was marginal to begin with see Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> I am indebted to Marshall Sklare for this last observation.

religious affiliation in Judaism appears to parallel in part changes in Protestantism. But we also note that among Protestants entire denominations changed their doctrines, attitudes, and liturgy as their members rose in social status.<sup>8</sup>

Is a comparable development taking place among the Jews? Are Orthodox, Conservative and Reform all rising or converging in social class position? The following sections examine some of the findings and their possible consequences.

#### THE SYNAGOGUES OF NEW YORK CITY

The ideal method of testing the changes taking place in the social class position of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews would be to interview a random sample from each group. Unfortunately, resources for such an undertaking were not available. It was therefore decided to study the New York area alone, using information that would approximate data obtained under ideal conditions. The areas chosen were New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties, residence of an estimated 42 per cent of all American Jews,<sup>9</sup> whose social and religious characteristics are not necessarily identical to those of all Jews.

The basic assumptions on which this study rests are that a new synagogue re-

flects the social characteristics of the area in which it is located and that the relative class composition of Jews is proportional to that of the other residents in a given area. In other words, this study assumes that at the time a synagogue is founded, it will be located in an area where the social characteristics of the general population are similar to the social characteristics of the synagogue members.

Similarly a major expansion of facilities will be undertaken only in a neighborhood of relative stability. To the synagogue, stability means concurrence between the social characteristics of its members and that of the general neighborhood.

The areas of analysis were generally census tracts. The measure of social class is the median income reported by the Bureau of the Census for each tract. It would have been most desirable to use median income of families rather than median income of families and unrelated individuals, but only the latter figure was available for the 1950 period. Income is reported in constant dollars.

Two time periods were selected: 1948-1952 and 1958-1962. Synagogues which were established or expanded during these periods were identified and located according to census tract.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This discussion raises a good many more questions than it resolves. Apparently some individuals move up in social class and leave their particular religious group whereas others remain; otherwise there could be no general rise in social class for the religious group. The question is why some remain and others leave. Perhaps those who leave experience a more rapid or greater rise in social position; are less committed in terms of religious doctrine, practice, or experience; are in different age or family rearing cycles; or have different kinship or friendship ties within the religious group. These are only some of the possible explanations.

<sup>9</sup> *American Jewish Yearbook, 1965, op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> The procedure used was as follows: in New York City the list of tax-exempt property was examined for 1948 and 1952. If a synagogue was listed in 1952 but not in 1948, it was assumed to have been newly created during that period. If the assessed value of the property increased by more than 50 per cent during the time period this was considered a major expansion and the analytical equivalent of being newly created since the synagogue was, in a manner of speaking, reinvesting in its area. If a synagogue switched its denominational identification during either time period it was also considered a new synagogue. If a synagogue moved to a new location in the same tract where it was previously located, but its value did not increase by 50 per cent or more,

TABLE 1  
AVERAGE ADJUSTED INCOME FOR NEW YORK CITY TRACTS WHERE NEW  
SYNAGOGUES WERE LOCATED 1948-1952 AND 1958-1962

Group	1948-1952		1958-1962	
	Number of new synagogues	Average Income \$	Number of new synagogues	Average Income \$
Orthodox	90	4,144	157	5,640
Conservative	19	5,605	43	7,123
Reform	5	4,778	9	7,511

The term "new synagogue," as used hereafter, includes newly established as well as newly expanded synagogues. Some of these are duplicated institutions; that is, they were either built or expanded in the 1950 period and expanded again in the 1960 period. New synagogues were located on a census tract map and identified as Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform.<sup>11</sup>

Table 1 shows the data for New York City in the two time periods with the average (mean) income for the tracts in which Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues were located. Since we are counting synagogues and not tracts, the data for each tract is weighted by the number of new synagogues located there. However, no consideration

it was omitted. If it moved to a new tract it was judged as a newly created synagogue. The same procedure was followed for the 1958 to 1962 period. In the suburbs, data was obtained directly from each synagogue, usually the rabbi, or a neighboring institution. It was interesting that some rabbis took umbrage at the question of whether the synagogue was basically Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform; but none objected to questions about increases in property value and expansion of facilities.

<sup>11</sup> Reliance was placed on official membership lists of national synagogue groups and the opinions of observers for non-member synagogues. Six synagogues which could not be categorized were omitted. No tract data was available for 25 synagogues and those were also omitted.

is given to the size of the synagogue or the number of its members.

The data was also broken down by the five major sections or boroughs of New York. For the city as a whole, in the 1948-1952 period, differences among the Orthodox and Conservative are statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. Differences between the Orthodox and Reform and Conservative and Reform are not statistically significant, but the direction of these differences is of interest. Differences between Conservative and Reform reflect the fact that the Conservative synagogues are clustered in one high income section of the city, Queens, whereas the handful of Reform synagogues are more evenly distributed throughout the city. Within each borough the Conservative and Reform synagogues are located in tracts with almost identical average incomes.

In the 1958-1962 period the pattern is similar for the Orthodox but changes for the Conservative and Reform.

Tracts in which new Orthodox synagogues are located remain at the lowest income level but Reform moves slightly ahead of the Conservative. Differences between the Orthodox and Conservative are significant and differences between Orthodox and Reform fall just below the level of significance. Differences between Conservative and Reform remain insignificant.

Between the 1950 and 1960 time periods there is an increase in the average income of tracts in all boroughs for all groups. The smallest gain for any Jewish group still exceeds the increase for all New York City which went from \$3,724 to \$5,103 in constant dollars. The Reform rise was greatest and that of the Orthodox and Conservative was about equal.

In summary, the findings for New York City indicate that in the 1960 period Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform groups built new synagogues or reinvested in old synagogues in significantly better neighborhoods than in 1950. Of all groups, the Reform show the greatest increase. In both periods, the new Orthodox synagogues were in poorer neighborhoods than Conservative and Reform. In 1960 the Reform overtook the Conservative, although differences were not statistically significant.

So far, only the mean or average incomes of areas in which new Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues were located have been considered. The mean is a measure of central tendency, a short-cut method of summarizing all the income data for the different census tracts. However, an average oversimplifies the data because it does not indicate the extent to which incomes within each group deviate from the mean. Of equal importance is the measure of dispersion—the degrees to which tracts of

Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues deviate from their respective mean. The measure used to test this is the standard deviation. The size of the standard deviation, however, reflects the size of the mean, and in order to compare deviations between different groups whose means differ, a measure called the coefficient of variation ( $v$ ) is used, which is the standard deviation times one hundred, divided by the mean.

The 1950 period shows a high degree of homogeneity in tracts of new Orthodox synagogues as compared to Conservative and Reform synagogues. Ten years later, however, the Orthodox are far more heterogeneous in terms of the income of tracts where their new synagogues are located, whereas the Conservatives are more homogeneous and the Reform slightly more heterogeneous. In other words, although the relative differences in means among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform do not change substantially from 1950 to 1960, there is a change in the pattern within each group. Although the Orthodox, taken as a whole, remain in the lowest income areas, there is less uniformity in the areas in which new Orthodox synagogues are located, while there is increasing uniformity in areas of Conservative synagogues. Graphically, we can say that the income continuum along which the Orthodox synagogues are located is expanding rapidly, that of the Conserva-

TABLE 2  
COEFFICIENTS OF VARIATION IN INCOME FOR NEW YORK CITY TRACTS IN WHICH  
NEW SYNAGOGUES WERE LOCATED 1948-1952 AND 1958-1962

Group	1948-1952			1958-1962		
	Mean \$	Number of new synagogues	$v$	Mean \$	Number of new synagogues	$v$
Orthodox	4,144	90	7.5	5,640	157	29.2
Conservative	5,605	19	31.2	7,123	43	19.5
Reform	4,778	5	35.1	7,511	9	39.6

tive is contracting, and that of the Reform synagogues is expanding only slightly.

Let us look more closely at the direction in which this change is taking place. For this purpose all new synagogues were ranked in the 1950 and 1960 periods according to income of the tract in which they were located and then divided into quartiles. We will use  $Q_1$  for the 25 per cent of all new synagogues in the highest income tracts in the 1950 and 1960 periods, and  $Q_4$  for the 25 per cent of all new synagogues in the two periods. If all Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues were evenly distributed by income then the number of a group's synagogues in any quartile in any time period would be proportional to the group's percentage of total new synagogues in that period. What we find is that in the 1950 period Conservative synagogues are substantially underrepresented in  $Q_1$ , while the reverse holds true for  $Q_4$ . In both quartiles Reform are roughly in proportion to their percentage of the synagogue population. There are so few Reform synagogues that it is hazardous to generalize about them, except to note that the coefficient of variation (Table 2) suggests a highly heterogeneous membership. However, the possibility that our measure is an inadequate reflection of income differences is greatest among Reform synagogues in New York City. For one thing, New York City tracts are far more heterogeneous than suburban tracts. Luxury apartment buildings, particularly in Manhattan, stand almost adjacent to slum houses. Also New York City Reform synagogues are probably the least neighborhood-oriented of any group. In addition, there are so few Reform synagogues that a distortion of our measure in two or three tracts would be enough to change the whole picture of Reform.

In the 1960 period the Orthodox syna-

gogues, while still underrepresented in  $Q_1$  made substantial inroads at the expense of the Conservatives but their overrepresentation in  $Q_4$  actually increased, while the Reform showed a slight decrease in  $Q_4$ . Thus, the pattern is very pronounced. The Orthodox are expanding into the most affluent areas at the expense of the Conservative, and into the poorest areas at the expense of both the Conservatives and the Reform. Income differentials are increasing at the extremes among the Orthodox and shrinking among the Conservatives, while they remain fairly uniform among the Reform. The over-all picture shows that new Conservative synagogues are located in significantly wealthier areas than new Orthodox synagogues.

The reader must remember that the referents are synagogues at the extreme end of the continuum and tendencies over time. Moreover, changes which occurred between 1950 and 1960 do not necessarily presage identical changes in the coming decades. Finally, and most important of all, we are dealing with only one section of the metropolitan area, the central city. And although the number of new synagogues suggests that at least the Conservatives are continuing to build or reinvest in their city synagogues, the possibility exists that their expansion into the wealthier areas has ceased because residents of these areas are moving to the suburbs.

#### SUBURBAN SYNAGOGUES

Before examining income data for the suburbs, the distribution of synagogues between the central city and suburban counties should be noted. Whereas 11 per cent of all new Orthodox synagogues in the areas studied were located in the suburbs in the 1950 period and 7 per cent in the 1960 period, comparable figures for the Conservative were 50 and 55 per cent, and for the Reform 82 and

TABLE 3  
AVERAGE ADJUSTED INCOME FOR WESTCHESTER COUNTY TRACTS AND SUFFOLK URBAN PLACES IN WHICH NEW SYNAGOGUES WERE LOCATED 1948-52 AND 1958-1962

County	1948-1952		1958-1962	
	Number of new synagogues	Average Income \$	Number of new synagogues	Average Income \$
Westchester				
Orthodox	4	4,990	2	5,903
Conservative	4	5,149	14	8,555
Reform	6	5,173	9	8,474
Suffolk				
Orthodox	0	—	0	—
Conservative	1	3,921	13	6,420
Reform	2	3,620	1	6,263
Total Westchester and Suffolk				
Orthodox	4	4,990	2	5,903
Conservative	5	4,903	27	7,527
Reform	8	4,785	10	8,253

76 per cent. In other words, our discussion deals with the large majority of new suburban Reform synagogues and about half the Conservative ones.

In Westchester county synagogues were located by census tract as in New York City. Suffolk county was not tracted in 1950 and data were available only for urban places with a population of 2,500 or more.

Nassau County too was not tracted in 1950. This posed a serious problem because urban places for which income data were available were, unlike Suffolk County, too large in area and population for meaningful analysis. Hence a different procedure was used, making the school district rather than the census tract the unit of analysis. Since income data was not available by school district, 1956 estimates of the assessed value of homes were used.<sup>12</sup>

In Westchester and Suffolk differences

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Sodden, *The Impact of Suburbanization on the Synagogue*, New York University: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1962.

in the mean income of tracts in which new synagogues were located in the 1950 period were negligible.<sup>13</sup>

The income of the Conservatives and Reform shows significant increases from 1950 to 1960 with Reform outdistancing the Conservatives. (Statistically the differences are not significant.)

New Orthodox synagogues are now located in areas with significantly lower average income than that of the Conservative or Reform, but this observation is based on only two new Orthodox synagogues in the 1960 period.

In Nassau county, as previously noted, the data are of a totally different nature. Since the only available information is the assessed value of homes by school district in 1956, we are dealing with a different measure of income, as well as with data for only one year. This means that changes in the income of the residents or in the value of their homes are not reflected. (We assume that the in-

<sup>13</sup> The term tract is used although in Suffolk in 1950 we are dealing with urban places.



TABLE 4  
1956 ASSESSED VALUE OF HOMES IN NASSAU COUNTY DISTRICTS WHERE NEW  
SYNAGOGUES WERE LOCATED 1948-1952 AND 1958-1962

Group	1948-1952		1958-1962	
	Number of new synagogues	Average assessed value of homes \$	Number of new synagogues	Average assessed value of homes \$
Orthodox	7	7,360	9	6,100
Conservative	14	6,370	25	5,800
Reform	15	6,900	18	6,510

come level or property value position of school districts did not change from 1950 to 1960.) Nassau county then affords us the opportunity to ask a question of little direct concern to the study but nonetheless of interest. In what areas did the Jewish influx take place in the post-World War II era when the big move to suburbia occurred? Table 4 indicates that new synagogue construction and expansion began in the higher income areas and only later in the lower income districts since the average assessed valuation is lower in the 1960 period for all three groups.

In terms of average income differentials between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, we find that differences in both time periods were relatively minor.

Let us look at the measures of dispersion among the areas of Westchester and Suffolk counties in which Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues were located.<sup>14</sup> The coefficient of variation for the new Conservative and Reform synagogues has increased substantially from 1950 to 1960. Reform

<sup>14</sup> Data for Suffolk county is not presented separately because of the small number of synagogues there. The coefficient of variation cannot be applied to Nassau county data because assessed valuation of homes does not begin from an absolute zero point. Since this leaves four new Orthodox synagogues in the 1950 period and only two in the 1960 period, they are omitted from the table.

synagogues in the 1960 period show the highest variation of any group in any part of the metropolitan area. Since this is true in Westchester County alone as well as in Westchester and Suffolk combined, we cannot explain the variation simply as a result of different social characteristics. (Westchester is considerably wealthier than Suffolk in most areas.)

In order to determine the direction in which the increased variation is taking place, the sample was divided into the highest and lowest thirds. (Quartile division would have yielded too few synagogues.) We found a relatively proportional distribution of all synagogue groups among both the highest and lowest ranged thirds in both time periods, for all suburban counties.

In summary, looking at the suburbs as a whole, one is struck by the similarity in patterns between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, although new Conservative synagogues are increasing at the most rapid rate and new Orthodox synagogues have remained constant. Income differentials between Conservative and Reform are negligible, and where there is a representative group of Orthodox synagogues, such as in Nassau County, they are developing in areas whose income level is on a par with that of other groups. The variation in incomes within the Conservative and

TABLE 5  
COEFFICIENTS OF VARIATION IN INCOME FOR TRACTS IN WESTCHESTER AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES WHERE NEW CONSERVATIVE AND REFORM SYNAGOGUES WERE LOCATED, 1948-1952 AND 1958-1962

AREA	1948-1952			1958-1962		
	Mean \$	Number of new synagogues	v	Mean \$	Number of new synagogues	v
Westchester						
Conservative	5,149	4	5.0	8,555	14	24.5
Reform	5,173	6	24.4	8,474	9	56.4
Westchester and Suffolk totals						
Conservative	4,903	5	12.1	7,527	27	25.9
Reform	4,785	8	27.1	8,253	10	55.3

Reform groups is growing and the pattern may be similar for the Orthodox. (Data is insufficient on this point.) Within each group, the increased differential is a result of movement at both ends of the income continuum. Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform continue to be represented in the wealthiest and poorest areas in relative proportion to their total number of synagogues in the suburbs.

#### SUMMARY OF SYNAGOGUE DATA

The nature of the data used imposes obvious limitations and restricts broader and more general conclusions. At best, we can draw cautious inferences from the material at hand. These may be summarized as follows:

1) On the average, Reform Jews are, and continue to be, in the highest income bracket; Orthodox Jews in the lowest, and Conservative Jews between the two, but closer to Reform than to Orthodox. However, since World War II, the overlap between the three groups is considerable.

2) If Reform Judaism ever was confined exclusively to the highest income category among Jews, this was no longer

the case in the post-World War II period, and the difference in social status among Reform Jews continues to grow.

3) If Orthodoxy ever was confined almost exclusively to the lowest income category among Jews in the United States, and we have no reason to doubt that this was once substantially true, this is no longer so and the social distance among Orthodox Jews continues to grow.

4) Conservative Judaism is growing most rapidly in terms of new synagogues, and the social distance among its members in the suburbs (the area of its greatest advance) continues to increase.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

There is no reason to question earlier observations that Orthodox Jews or their children changed their affiliation to Conservative and Conservative Jews to Reform as they moved up the social-class ladder. This may still be the case, at least among some upwardly mobile Orthodox Jews. It is quite clearly not the case among all of them since our data indicates that Orthodoxy has penetrated into the highest income neighborhoods of Jews. Furthermore, a previous

study suggested that there was a difference in the religious commitment of the nominally Orthodox who came to the United States at the turn of the century and subsequently abandoned Orthodoxy, and those who did not.<sup>15</sup>

This leads us to the second alternative and the question—has the improved class position of Jews led to changes in their definition of what constitutes normative Jewish practice and belief? The question is complicated, however, by the nature of our findings. The most significant conclusion from our synagogue data, after all, is the increasing heterogeneity in the social class compositions of the different Jewish groups. Is this increased differentiation within each group accompanied by corresponding changes or increased conflict over religious norms?

Superficially this appears to be the case. Within Orthodoxy, the conflict between left and right is often a sharp one.<sup>16</sup> Within Reform Judaism one can point to a continuing conflict over the role of ritual and belief but the two extremes today still seem far apart.<sup>17</sup> In other words, it is possible that social class heterogeneity within Reform and Orthodoxy is accompanied by increased conflict over religion. Socio-economic diversity may provide a framework within which various ideologies and philosophies may legitimately contest. If, for

<sup>15</sup> Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* and Liebman, "Left and Right in American Orthodoxy," *Judaism*, 15 (Winter, 1966) pp. 102-107.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: Ben Hamon, "The Reform Rabbis Debate Theology: A Report on the 1963 Meeting of the CCAR," *Judaism*, 12 (Fall, 1963), pp. 479-486; Jakob J. Petuchowsky, "The Limits of Liberal Judaism," *Judaism*, 14 (Spring, 1965), pp. 146-158; the entire April 1965 issue of the *CCAR Journal* is devoted to prayer, and see also Maurice Eisendrath, "Reform Judaism," *National Jewish Monthly* (April, 1965), pp. 6-7, 41.

example, the religious left wing within Orthodoxy, "modern Orthodoxy," was not associated with the wealthiest and most prestigious Orthodox synagogues, it might not receive the accord and respect it does in the councils of Orthodoxy.

But this is, in a way, an oversimplification. The most significant development within Orthodoxy is its move to the right in recent years and its increased assertion of the importance of ritual observance and creedal fundamentalism. Within American Orthodoxy, the status of the "modern Orthodox" rabbi has undergone vast changes. Whereas even a decade or two ago, the American Orthodox rabbi who was broadly educated, spoke and wrote English well, and moved easily in the elitist circles of the non-Orthodox world enjoyed the highest regard of Orthodox Jews, he is today more likely to be regarded with suspicion. Status accrues to the Talmudic scholar, particularly the heads of Talmudic academies who are divorced from the non-Jewish and even non-Orthodox society and are at home only among their coterie of followers. The sharpened conflict within Orthodoxy is not a result of the improved status position of one group which has moved toward religious liberalism. If anything, it is a result of the increasingly successful challenge of the Orthodox right to the previous hegemony of the left.

Within Reform, there is increasing social class heterogeneity and there is sharp conflict over the importance of ritual and belief. But the latter conflict is no sharper today, indeed it is probably less acute, than it was thirty or forty years ago. Indeed, normative Reform seems increasingly to be crystalizing around a position of "live and let live." The liberalism of Reform is not expressed in the dogmatics of a Rabbi Sherman Wine who removes references to God from his prayer, but rather in the

notion that Wine is entitled to do what he pleases even though he is out of step with normative Reform. Reform has increasingly made religion subject to individual conscience and taste, and it is significant that its right wing, which presumably stresses the more traditional aspects of Judaism, is existentialist in its theology and *Rosenzweigian* in its attitude toward ritual. The practical implications are, on the one hand, opening Reform to an appreciation of the more Orthodox aspects of the Jewish tradition but, on the other hand, reemphasizing the supremacy of individual experience in the concept of God and individual conscience in matters of practice. This itself provides a basis for future reconciliation, not conflict, within Reform. Thus, it appears inaccurate to make any simple association for either Orthodoxy or Reform of social differentiation and religious conflict.

We turn now to the problem of intergroup relationships. Our data indicates a general rise in the social class position of all groups in Jewish life. Is this reflected in any tendency for older distinctions between Orthodoxy, Conservative, and Reform to disappear? Are we entering a period of Jewish ecumenism? Can each group sustain an independent movement with the growing overlap in the social characteristics of its members? Of course, we have examined only one such characteristic—*income*. But there is no reason to suspect that an analysis of other factors, such as occupation or education, would not yield the same conclusions. And here one is struck by the phenomenon mentioned earlier, that a number of suburban rabbis resented being asked for their synagogue's affiliation or refused to characterize themselves as, for example, Reform, even when their synagogue was affiliated with the national Reform movement. Furthermore, the Jews in general appear to be

quite indifferent to the denominational affiliation of their own synagogue, nor do they relate synagogue affiliation to participation in the national activities of the various denominational bodies. Thus, Reform Jews have long been major financial contributors to the Conservative Jewish Seminary and Jews of every type have supported the Orthodox-oriented Yeshiva University.

Nevertheless, and despite earlier predictions to the contrary, organizational tension between, for example, the Orthodox and non-Orthodox is certainly not diminishing. If anything it is growing.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore not all suburban Orthodox congregations are identified with the Orthodox left. On the contrary, the emphasis within Orthodoxy today is to the right. How is this to be explained?

It is suggested that the simple model which accounts for changes in religious behavior by changes in social status may be misleading. An alternative model can be posed. In this model the religious education, ritual practices, institutional affiliations, and peer group identifications establish certain modes of thought and normative orientations. Changes in one's income are, no doubt, attributable in part to these orientations. But let us, for purposes of simplification, treat income as an independent variable, a new environmental pressure. Now changes in one's social class or status no doubt affect one's perception, one's belief structure and inevitably one's religious behavior. But they also have a more immediate effect; one so obvious it is easily overlooked. Increased income in particular expands one's opportunities. One has more resources to acquire what one desires. And the object of one's desires may

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, a prediction about possibilities of even greater intensification of conflict in "Toward Jewish Religious Unity: A Symposium," *Judaism*, 15 (Spring, 1966), p. 137.

be a function of one's past status. Thus, the religious groups, at least in the short run, may react quite differently to the same social stimuli. For example, it is undoubtedly true that the relative rise in income among some Orthodox Jews in the United States has brought them into closer contact with the general culture which has resulted, in many cases, in a diminished sense of separation. But it has also provided Orthodox Jews and Orthodox institutions with the potential of educating young men in Yeshivas and *Kolelim* (Seminars for advanced Talmudic study) until their late twenties and early thirties. The parents or the institution is now in a position to offer financial subventions to permit these men to devote all their time to religious study. This, in turn, affects not only the

student's religious commitment but that of his parents, and his wife and children who are drawn closer to the intensely Orthodox environment. Rising income, for example, has permitted the rapid development of yeshiva high schools and Orthodox institutions which are independent of Jewish Federation support and from Jewish communal life in general.

What is suggested here is not a simple cause-and-effect relationship between income changes and religious changes. It is rather a relationship of interdependence in which religion and ideology determine some of the effects associated with income changes. It suggests further that any study of American Jewish life will have to contend with religion as an independent variable.