

Samuel C. Heilman



THE MANY FACES OF ORTHODOXY

Among Jews, the Orthodox have often seemed to stand out because of their putative adherence to *halakha*, the strict pathways of Jewish law. Compared to their more liberal counterparts, they have seemed single-mindedly dedicated to an unchanging tradition. Yet anyone who has looked more closely at those who since the nineteenth century have claimed to be "Orthodox" has quickly discovered that what appears from the distance of unfamiliarity to be one face turns out upon closer examination to have a variety of aspects. To put it another way, those walking along the halakhic path have not always agreed on precisely where it could take them. Some remained convinced that the old ways could lead to a new age while others trusted the tradition to be able to take them to the essential core of parochial Jewish life. In what follows, I shall try to sketch these various strands or faces of Orthodoxy.

My efforts are not, strictly speaking historical. Others are far more competent in that area. Rather, I want to suggest a way of sociologically considering some of the history of Orthodoxy.

A sense of the centrality and abiding value of Judaism and the Jewish community was from the beginning part of the reaction to the enlightenment and emancipation by Jews who in contrast to the Reformers were labelled "Orthodox." In the face of the changes occurring in the western world surrounding them, tradition-oriented Jews tried to hold onto what they considered the meaningful, divinely-inspired order of life that was represented in the term, "Torah." Yet it was precisely this effort, to hold onto the past in an atmosphere that championed change, that resulted in fundamental transformations of Orthodox Judaism.

The realities of the new world order were undeniable. Even the most isolationist Jews were touched when, for example, new national laws like one in Austria demanded that, "Jewish communities had to establish schools for their children's civic education and, where this was unfeasible, Christian schools were obliged to take in Jewish pupils." Similar assimilation oriented laws gradually moved eastward across Europe as did emancipation, enlightenment and social change. Jewish teachers and rabbis had to teach and preach in the language of the host culture, and they had to be certified by state authorities. What Mendelssohn had sought to bring about voluntarily, the state now mandated. These changes brought, in a sense, a new version of the age-old Christian efforts to convert Jews.

Now instead of demanding conversion to Christianity, the Christians were demanding a Jewish conversion to secular citizenship.

At the same time that extra-Jewish forces pulled Jews away from their center, currents within the community itself were sweeping even those who tried to remain orthodox into new places. The apocalyptic and unsettling events of Messianism and its aftermath, the unprecedented emotional individualism of early Hasidism, the reaction of religiously disciplined rationalism among *misnagdim* (opponents of Hasidism), the syncretistic emotional rationalism and quasi-acculturation of *mussar* along with its emphasis on ethics and homily for spiritual growth, the integrative secularism of *haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), the cosmopolitan parochialism of religious Zionism, and finally the religious adaptations of early Reform all served to move European (and a budding American) Jewry away from the center, the core values, beliefs and traditions. Even those who were convinced that they were only delving into the depths of the center could hardly be described as having "dug up again the wells" of their fathers.* For all their assertions of continuity with the past, they were essentially different from it in part because they *chose* the form of their Judaism instead of accepting it fatefully as a taken-for-granted reality or destiny. And such choice, as Peter Berger has demonstrated, is the essence of modern consciousness.¹

Finally, the confluence of scientific, social and political changes which served as the background for Jewish history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not only affected their external situation but their mental one as well. As Berger argues, "anyone . . . situated in the modern world . . . is also situated within the structures of modern consciousness."² The cognitive abstractions required to even comprehend that external environment cannot help but have an effect on one's entire thinking. Thus, for example, once aware that the category "citizen" can exist, could any Jew continue to conceive of himself as fatefully encapsulated in his parochial Jewish identity? He could try to do so, but it now required an effort where in the past it was simply a fact of life.

In order to return to the center, to reassert the dominance of the tradition and its sanctity, Orthodox Jews had to traverse modernity and each ring on the peripheral spiral. The problem, again in Berger's terms, is that the Orthodox had (and still must continue) to affirm their version

*This phrase drawn from the description of Isaac re-digging the wells of his father Abraham (Gen. 26:18) which the Philistines had covered has often been used by traditional Jews as a biblical support for religious conservatism since the understanding was that Isaac was turning to the proven wells (i.e. ways) of his father rather than innovating. For Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, one of the voices of modern orthodoxy, Isaac represented one "emancipated, free, and independent to carry on the heritage of Abraham in the midst of [other] nations. . . . This is the Galut [diaspora] test we still have to pass. Then and only then can we look forward to the last stage of Galut, to win the recognition and respect of nations, not although we are Jews. . . ."

of traditional (in its original meaning of something handed over, delivered rather than chosen) Judaism in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary, identifying "Jewish identity as destiny, while the social experience of the individual [then and now] reveals it as ongoing choice."³

What emerged was therefore, to borrow from the language of psychoanalysis, a "worked-through" Orthodoxy. By "working through," psychoanalysts mean a process during which an individual (ego) confronts his resistances and thereby learns to accept what he formerly repressed. He thus frees himself from the compulsive repetition of past patterns of thought and action.⁴ He may still act in ways that he did before his working through, but—as already noted—he does so now out of choice rather than compulsion. Similarly the new Orthodoxy was forced to confront not only Judaism but also the outside world. Now if Orthodox Jews wanted to repeat the patterns of life and religion of their parents, they had to make an effort greater than that of their parents. Modern consciousness had broken the tradition, the taken-for-granted delivery system. Thus, when these worked-through Orthodox tried to replicate the ways of the past, they had to reinterpret and newly legitimate everything in terms of the present, in the framework of modern consciousness. The old had to make new sense and the new had to be comprehensible in traditional ways. The observance of ancient mitzvot became explained psychologically, sociologically or metaphorically. Individually chosen, the old ways were understood as being at home in the modern world. Sabbath, for example, was not observed simply because God had commanded Jews to do so. It was *imitatio dei*, or a chance to transcend time, or in some other way made contemporarily comprehensible.

If, however, the present was to be denied in favor of the past, this denial had likewise to be purposefully chosen, yet, it had to *appear* as fate. All this required the denier to infuse his denial with a vitality that could *in extremis* sap the strength from more positive expressions of Judaism. The forces of modernity, being both ubiquitous and powerful, sometimes forced deniers to become so consumed by their resistances that these overshadowed the very Judaism they were trying to preserve. Ignoring modernity is harder to live with than ignorance of it.

Indeed, the origins of the term "Orthodox Jew" are precisely in such resistance. Those who wanted to remain true to the traditions of rabbinic Judaism, to guarantee "the preservation of Torah within the world of modern secular culture," began to be called "Orthodox" by other Jews.⁵ The first recorded use of the term occurs in 1807 during the Paris "Sanhedrin" which Napoleon convened for the purpose of converting into doctrinal (*halakhic*) responsa the secular answers given a year earlier by the "Assembly of Jewish Notables" (a convocation of rabbis and Jewish communal leaders in the Empire) to questions put to them by the government. Napoleon wanted the answers which he found acceptable to be

religiously binding on even the strictest of observant Jews.* At this gathering, Abraham Furtado, a Bordeaux rabbi who was himself a supporter of emancipation, enlightenment, and all these could offer the Jews, referred to the traditionalists who resisted changes as "Orthodox Jews."⁶

Some historians argue that the term was used as early as 1795. Since Rabbi Furtado could hardly be expected to have used an uncommon expression at such a theologically and politically delicate occasion without being certain that most people present could clearly understand what he meant, this argument seems plausible. In a sense the rabbi was simply institutionalizing a term that was already a frame of reference during the period.

ORTHODOX RABBIS AND ORTHODOX MODERNISM

The notion of using the rabbi as an indicator of the Jewish state of being is useful as a tool for tracing the development of Orthodoxy. While a review of the various streams of Orthodox Judaism as they formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would require a critical history which goes beyond the scope of this work, a suggestive outline that notes who the major rabbinic leaders were and what trends among the rank and file of Orthodoxy they represented as well as the nature of their relationship to one another can give at least an idea of what was going on in the development of Orthodoxy. Always, however, one must keep in mind that rabbis are often followers of lay trends rather than ideological leaders. And those who emerge as leaders often do so precisely because they have tapped something deep and present in the Jewish lay community which was simply waiting for institutionalization.

Almost from the beginning, two major trends appear in European and later American Orthodoxy (i.e. Orthodoxy of the Ashkenazic diaspora). One sought to incorporate elements of the modern world into the framework of traditional Judaism—call it "modern Orthodoxy"—while the other call it "traditional Orthodoxy"—sought to exclude them. Between these two extremes there were, and continue to be, certain compromise forms. Yet the nature of these compromise structures has always been fragile, and their occupants seem more often than not to have felt drawn toward one or another of the extremes.

Each trend may be considered in terms of its representative rabbis. While the empirical situation is always such that one cannot absolutely say that one or another rabbi or community are perfectly consistent either ideologically or behaviorally, essentially four ideal types, running

*In this desire, Napoleon was ironically prefiguring similar aims among modern Orthodox Jews who hoped to force their more traditionalist counterparts into the modern world.

from the traditional toward the modern end of the continuum, exist. I shall call them: *rejectionist*, *neo-rejectionist*, *tolerator* and *syncretist*. Other possibilities lie on the continuum, but these are essentially constructions which grow out of an overlapping of types. Moreover, within some of the types there are sub-types which remain subtle and often undiscernible in the person of the rabbi but become clearer in the complexion of the community which he represents.

Before identifying examples of various rabbis some operational definitions are in order. The *rejectionist* is essentially the person who denies and hence conceptually rejects the legitimacy of his non-Orthodox contemporary of whom he is nevertheless aware. "This procedure may also be described as a kind of negative legitimation."⁷ Everything outside the Orthodox universe is assigned an inferior ontological status and is therefore not to be taken seriously. Instead the rejectionist remains within the shelter of the traditional Orthodox world. To be sure this ghetto exists as a fortress within a larger social situation of modernity. As such it is constantly subject to invasions from the outside.⁸ A student reading profane, secular literature, a son or daughter who wishes to go to the university, a law forcing him to speak in a foreign language, a doctor's physical examination that compels him to think about his own body in modern scientific terms can suddenly put a severe strain on the rejectionist's capacity to deny modernity. Still, wherever possible he chooses in principle to remain oblivious of the outside, and he may even disattend what he considers minor invasions—in spite of their long term consequences—in order to continue his rejection undisturbed.

The *tolerator* is personally entrenched in the traditional Orthodox world, however unlike the rejectionist, does not altogether deny the surrounding situation of modernity. The reasons for this may be various. He may be a tolerator because, like an agent-provocateur, he believes he can undermine modernity and via his tolerance bring back those on the outside to a more genuine Jewish life as he understands it. He may under these conditions be termed the *quasi-tolerator*.

On the other hand, he may act tolerant out of an acquiescence to his situation, feeling too weak to actively oppose modernity in others but at least strong enough to hold on to traditional ways for himself. Unlike the rejectionist, this type of Jew may find himself outside the ghetto walls—an immigrant, wanderer, or exile—and accordingly unable to shut out modernity with the same strength as those in the shelter of the inside. Were he there, at home, he might also be able to carry on as a rejectionist. Outside, however, he has learned to become tolerant, albeit passively. He may be called, therefore, the *passive-tolerator*.

Finally, he may be tolerant because he is himself in a transitional situation. While not yet personally prepared to cross over into the modern world, he is nonetheless willing to let others do so without acting to

prevent them. He acts traditionally Orthodox in his personal life and refuses to serve as a model for those who seek to incorporate modernity, but his ties with those who do are cordial and sometimes even close. He may even go so far as encouraging them in their efforts, but he does so circumspectly. He may never make the transition himself or even recognize the implications of his duality, yet in his stance on the periphery he has pivoted away from the center (in his writing, responsa, friendships) and looks, as it were, out towards the next peripheral band. He may be termed the *transitional-tolerator*.

There is yet another tolerator, although he is not longer in the range of sub-types described above. Rather, he is their alter. Entrenched in the modern world, he nevertheless tolerates those who flirt with or even cross over into traditional Orthodoxy. He may even suffer those who never left it. Under certain circumstances, even with traditional Orthodox Jews or in reaction against the ideologically non-Orthodox, he may even describe himself as a "non-practicing traditional Orthodox Jew." He may be called the *alter-tolerator*. The motives underlying such tolerance may be rooted in emotional ties to traditional Orthodoxy, in a search for authenticity and certainty along with a despair over abiding feelings of anomie.

The *syncretist* tries to uncover and retrieve what from his Orthodox perspective seem to be valuable elements of modernity and fit them into the framework of traditional Orthodoxy. Embracing the modern world, he is however actually less interested in mutual modification of modernity and Orthodoxy than supplementing the latter with the "riches" of modernity.⁹ To be sure, his ultimate allegiance remains to the *halakha* and everything it implies, but he sees that Jewish path as essentially harmonious with life in the modern, secular society and considers himself able to "mediate between the claims of classical Judaism, the work of ages of faith, archaic, supernatural and sacred, and the ineluctable demands of contemporaneity, secularity, unbelief and worldliness."¹⁰

Compared to the unrestrained syncretism of the early *maskilim* (enlightened Jews), that of the Orthodox may appear to be simulative rather than a genuine syncretism. And indeed, technically it is since even the *modern* Orthodox places strict limits on his willingness to transform *halakha*. However, compared to the rest of the Orthodox community, the syncretist is most involved in the reconciliation of traditional behaviors and ideology with modern consciousness and conditions. *Maskilim* who looked toward these syncretizing Orthodox rabbis for a solution to the dilemmas of enlightenment and emancipation often left disappointed when they discovered the limits of their modernity.*

*The case of the disappointed Heinrich Graetz who left his teacher Samson Raphael Hirsch when he found him too conservative is a classic example.

To clarify the distinctions among the various types of Orthodoxy thus far delineated, the concept of center and periphery will once again prove useful. As already suggested, everyone living in Europe (and America) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was ineluctably within the situation of modernity. Even the character of traditional Judaism and its passage through the religious and ideological movements had been unalterably affected. As such all Jews of the period existed on the periphery, removed from the center. The rejectionists denied their distance from that center and on the contrary defined themselves as continuing to live by the core beliefs and practices of Judaism and Jewish life. In this way they could claim that nothing had changed in any significant way over the generations for those who were Orthodox in their observance. Some even went so far as to emphasize in their ritual Torah study those tractates of the Talmud which dealt with the format of sacrifices at the Temple, thereby symbolically maintaining continuity with the most ancient of Jewish practices and ways of life. They would be ready, thus, to carry on in that sacrificial tradition as well as soon as God saw fit to rebuild the Temple.

The tolerators, regardless of subtype, were also on the periphery. They, however, to varying degrees admitted it. Quasi-tolerators faced inward toward the center with longing, often nursing hopes that they would succeed in leading a return back to the good, old ways. The passive-tolerators also recognized their peripheral existence, but it seemed to leave them with a feeling of anomie and need to change. Finally, the transitional-tolerators stood on the periphery and faced outwards with a deep sense of ambivalence and anxious anticipation. They realized that the forces of history and social change were centrifugal and inescapable. Yet still the original center remained dominant in their lives, although the transitionalists occasionally wavered.

The syncretists began from an acute self-consciousness. They saw themselves standing on the periphery and like the transitionalists saw how distant the old center had become and the near impossibility of returning to it. Unlike the latter, however, they believed that by a rational and open admission of their situation they could take control of it. Accordingly, they considered the life on the periphery as constituting a new center. Indeed, some went so far as to suggest that what appeared to be the original center was in truth the periphery of the present center. The forces of history, the situation of exile, had banished the Jewish people for generations to that center, to its ghetto existence and unnatural status and had made them believe that that was the original character of Judaism. A clear comprehension of the Jewish core values, laws and observances, the syncretists argued, would reveal that the *halakha* really demanded a way of life in tune with the one they were willing to live. Their rabbinic responsa and commentaries are filled with legitimations

from the distant past which are nevertheless presented as continuous with the present. Accordingly, the previous few generations of European Jewish life, taken by rejectionists and tolerators to be the baseline of Orthodox propriety, are on the contrary defined by the syncretist as anomalous.

Some syncretists were satisfied to live lives that borrowed freely from the two worlds of Jewish tradition and secular contemporaneity without necessarily synthesizing these two domains. They compartmentalized themselves—at times expressing modern values and on other occasions acting in what might appear perfect consonance with the requirements of tradition. Others sought to create a new form of Judaism—something that brought together the various worlds, values and practices they considered valuable. These latter represented the most ambitious among the modern Orthodox. In some ways, they came precariously close to contemporary Conservative Jews, who are also interested in bringing the present and past together in a dynamic synthesis. In the final analysis, however, even the syncretists hold an ultimate loyalty to the *halakha*, the tradition, and limit their modernity. In the words of one, “we may view the Sabbath as a way of addressing man on the creative use of new-found leisure, and ‘family purity’ as delineating the views of Judaism on the dignity of woman and the significance of erotic love in life. But we can never make their practice dependent on such interpretation, nor can we expect every detail to fit into the scheme.”¹¹

The Conservative Jew, unlike this ambitious modern Orthodox, no longer holds an ultimate loyalty to *halakha*. Rather, he insists that its demands and those of contemporary life have equal claims to authority. The Conservative Jew proposes in principle a genuine synthesis in which modifications are just as likely to diminish the domains of the *halakha* as enlarge them. At the same time, however, like the Orthodox, the Conservative expresses an attachment to Jewish tradition and feels an emotional affinity with it. The changes in his Judaism, whether supplementary or subtractive, are therefore conservative in spirit.

Whether or not Conservative rabbis and communities identify themselves as “Orthodox Jews” often depends more on institutional and social circumstances than ideological ones. If, for example, they are in a place where most of their friends identify themselves as Orthodox or where the only Jewish institutions available are Orthodox, they are more likely to accept the same label and simply consider themselves as marginally Orthodox. However, when the social circumstances are such that either a vacuum or political division occurs in the Jewish community, they may find themselves outside the domain of Orthodoxy. Thus in America some of these Jews have come to call themselves “Conservative;” in Israel a small number have emerged as “Masorati”—Traditionalist; and in Germany some, particularly in Breslau, came to be referred to as the

"Historical School." Although there are important differences between each of these groups, they all seem to begin from the position which I have called "conservative." They began, therefore, on the Orthodox border. As Marshall Sklare notes, "In a sense, . . . Conservatism is conceived by its elite as twentieth-century Orthodoxy. Or, to put it another way, if Orthodoxy had retained the ability to change it would have evolved into Conservatism."¹²

Indeed in America institutions which have since come to be identified with the Conservative movement began by calling themselves "Orthodox." The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York which today trains almost all Conservative rabbis in America was, for example, originally labelled an "Orthodox" seminary. Similarly, institutions which have become associated with American modern Orthodoxy were founded by persons identified with the Conservative movement. The Young Israel movement and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, to name but two examples.

Responding to what they considered a dangerous flirtation with modern secularity by Orthodoxy, there arose a fourth major type of Orthodox rabbi (and community): the *neo-rejectionist*. He is one who once participated in life beyond the purely Orthodox domain, perhaps as a tolerator or even a syncretist. However, having been self-consciously within the situation of modern consciousness, he decided via the same self-consciousness to turn his back on it and return to the center. Where the syncretist rationally aims for mastery over modernity, the neo-rejectionist finds a rationality in scorning it. Where the rejectionist denies modernity in great measure without having experienced it as part of his life situation, the neo-rejectionist does not. Accordingly, his arguments which point to the weaknesses of modernity have a ring of authenticity for those who live in the modern situation. He turns around their arguments for modernity with the wisdom of a former-modernist, paradoxically, indicting it with its own terminology and laws. Pointing to the instability, insecurity, vacuousness and absence of ultimate meaning in the modern secular world, he argues that it is not *reasonable* to live that way, that one must *choose* tradition. He uses hasidic emotion, mussar homiletics, misnagdic legalism, halakhic logic, *haskalah* reason or modern individualistic rebellion to bring about the Judaic restoration and contraacculturation of his adherents. Yet while denying the presence of redeeming values in modernity, the neo-rejectionist never quite reaches a position as pure in its traditionalism as does the rejectionist. His journey back to the center has left him dialectically changed. Unlike a genuine rejectionist for whom traditionalism is second nature, the neo-rejectionist is self-conscious about it. Where the former easily and almost unthinkingly fills his *Kiddush* cup to the brim, the latter has to measure and plan his pouring to fill the same cup.

As in the case of tolerators who hide their openness to modernity, there is also the *private syncretist*. Secretly he syncretizes, for example reading secular books or privately encouraging open syncretizers. Nevertheless, in spite of these personal sympathies, he remains a rejectionist in public. If caught in his double position, he may protect his integrity by posing as a quasi-tolerator which he is not. He remains in his intermediate position partially out of ambivalence and possibly as a consequence of the rejectionist character of those in his social network. While one might suppose that a change in his situation would allow him to go public with his private point of view, there are no guarantees on this score since his duality may touch something deep and true within. Many private syncretizers appeared to be uncompromising rejectionists even when they were the last of their breed. Only a subsequent analysis of their correspondence revealed their private syncretism.

A CATALOGUE OF ORTHODOXY

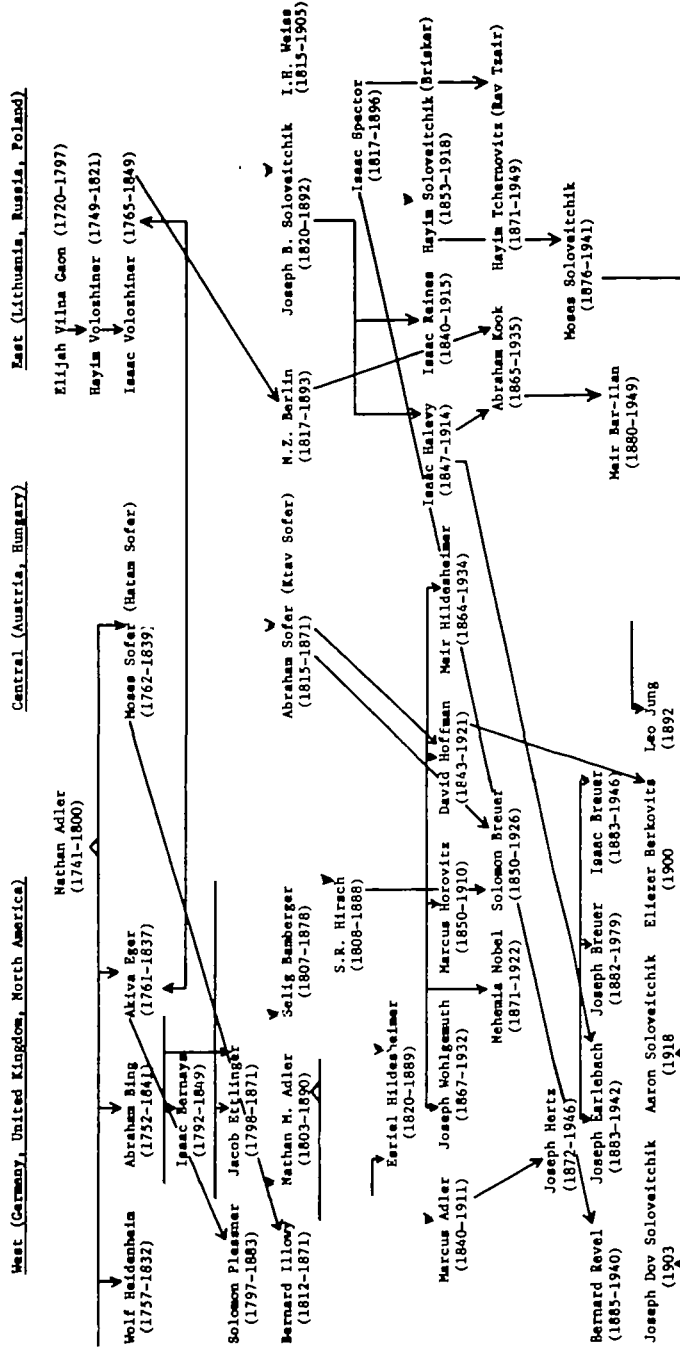
A complete catalogue of rabbis who represented these various types of Orthodoxies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is not possible here not only because there are so many of them, each with his own particular nuance of difference, but also because many of them remained historically anonymous. The teacher in a small town *heder* (one-room school) who read enlightenment literature and then tried to provide a syncretistic perspective for his students, the local preacher who felt a need to lead a rejectionist struggle against what he considered to be the destructive influences of modernity, the community rabbi who held onto Orthodox principles even as doubts about them seeped into his community and ultimately into his own mind all have left little trace of their existence in the literature of Jewish history or even in its great figures. Yet these rabbis and their congregations were an important part of the overall complexion of Orthodoxy and no catalogue would be truly complete without them.

While completeness in the catalogue is impossible, a compendium of modern Orthodox rabbis is. This synopsis may generally be divided into three parts, corresponding approximately to the three geographic areas where Ashkenazic Jewry was concentrated for the last two hundred years:* (1) western Europe and North America, (2) central Europe, and (3) eastern Europe. By the twentieth century these three areas lost some of their significance as organizing rubrics for ideological and behavioral patterns. The social, political and technological changes taking place in the last one hundred years obliterated many of the regionally based differences

*I have largely excluded Israel from this discussion because it is in effect a composite construction.

TABLE I

THE MANY FACES OF ORTHODOXY (Arrows indicate student-teacher relationships) - The Rabbin



among Ashkenazic Jews. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, these still obtained.

By far the most incorporative trends of Orthodoxy were then to be found in the West, in Germany, England and America. In central Europe, rejectionists dominated Orthodoxy until at least the middle of the nineteenth century; and in the East, although the Vilna Gaon and some of his closest disciples held a positive regard for some aspects of secular knowledge, by and large the modern, secular world had not yet become a reality for most Jews.

In the West, at the beginning of the nineteenth century one finds, for example, four figures, each of whom shared the same teacher, Nathan Adler, yet each of whom seemed to pursue a different line of development afterwards. One of these men was an open syncretist, the second was a tolerator, and the third a private syncretist, and the last a rejectionist. The first, Wolf Heidenheim (1757-1832) was a masoretic scholar (i.e. a student of traditional versions of text) and Hebrew grammarian. Acquiring a German and Hebrew press in the city of Rödelheim, he printed various German translations of traditional Jewish texts, some of which, like his edition of the liturgical poems, won wide approval among Orthodox rabbis and others, like his edition of the prayer book which appeared to make concessions to Reformers, won reproach from the same Orthodox rabbis. Heidenheim, clean shaven and in command of German (two clear symbols of modernity), stood among the Orthodox syncretists.

Abraham Bing (1752-1841), the second, became rabbi of Würzburg, and was among the tolerators. While strongly opposed to Reform and most of the innovations taking place in and around Judaism, he—unlike many of the other rabbis of his era—tolerated those who sought to reconcile the modern world with the *halakha*. He did not therefore abandon those young prospective Orthodox rabbis who came to Würzburg to study at the university there. Instead he continued to provide them with rabbinic training and Jewish education, thereby tacitly approving their involvement with secular culture.¹³ Whether he was a passive-tolerator, unable to prevent his students' university education, or transitional in that he believed they were probably the wave of the future is hard to tell. However the fact remains that he did not deny them access to the Jewish world which he represented in Würzburg.

Adler's third student, Akiva Eger (1761-1841), became one of the foremost rabbinic scholars of his generation. He often taught in German. In an Orthodox world where Yiddish was not only the language of conversation but also of study, this was a clear identification with the secular (i.e. non-Jewish world). But Eger was also a man steeped in tradition, so much so that he served as a teacher at the Volozhin Yeshiva, one of the major eastern European seats of learning. Volozhin, founded in Belorussia by Rabbi Hayim, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon, was the

place where many of the great Talmudists of the nineteenth century studied and taught. Here the modern secular world was shut out with passion—so much so that the school was finally forced to close its doors in 1892 because its principals refused to introduce secular study for several hours in the school day in spite of a new civil law demanding it. Here Akiva Eger taught *in German* and—judging by many reports—was much revered.

Yet this same Rabbi Eger also encouraged his student Solomon Plessner (1797-1883), a teacher in the Berlin Normal School, businessman, and Orthodox syncretist to propagate the Torah in German rather than Yiddish, to quote Schiller and Goethe in his sermons, to translate the Apocrypha into Hebrew along with German notes, and in general to engage in syncretistic efforts. But Eger kept these encouragements private for he was indeed a private-syncretizer, one who could thereby move between Volozhin and Posen, Prussia—between the rejectionists and the syncretists.

Adler had one more student: Moses Sofer (Schreiber), better known under his pen name, *Hatam Sofer* (1762-1839). Sofer was born in Frankfort but ultimately moved to central Europe where he became chief rabbi of Pressburg. There he founded a yeshiva in which he declared total war on modernity. In spite of his also having studied with Akiva Eger, the Hatam Sofer saw his mission as one of rejection. Taking as his slogan a dictum which originally had a far more specific legalistic reference, Sofer proclaimed as a general halakhic principle that: "*Hechadash asur min hatorah*," all that is new is forbidden by the Torah. This became the watchword of the rejectionists and the guiding principle of the neo-rejectionists. Sofer did not totally obliterate the secular world—living in the situation of modernity this was no longer possible for him. He did favor some secular education when undertaken for the sake of traditional observance, a cover used earlier by the Vilna Gaon, Maimonides, Saadia Gaon and their like. Before all else, however, the Hatam Sofer asserted the authority of the *Shulkhan Aruch* and its strict code of Jewish law.

In central Europe, the influence of Eger notwithstanding, rejectionism dominated under the leadership of Sofer. In the East, while modernity was not accepted, the reasons often had less to do with conscious rejection and more to do with the fact the Jewry remained isolated from many of the historical changes in the West. Here Hayim Volozhiner (1749-1821), the Vilna Gaon's disciple and founder of the Yeshiva is somewhat exemplary. For him the secular world was incidental and modernity an irrelevancy. His innovations as a teacher were in the yeshiva world of talmudic study where he initiated what became known as the "*khavruse*" style of learning in which a small group of three or four students reviewed the texts together and became united intellectually and emotionally through their scholarship. Volozhiner's innovations were

in fact recastings of the ancient ritual of Torah study; they took little if anything from the modern universe.

By the next generation a new kind of Orthodoxy was beginning to emerge. It reached maturity after the *haskalah* had moved increasingly away from the organized dualism of its early exponents. From the perspective of this generation, even Mendelssohn seemed in retrospect to be very much within the acceptable boundaries of Orthodoxy. The notion of translating religious texts into German and other non-Jewish languages was no longer controversial; the idea of secular education among those who called themselves Orthodox was gaining momentum. While most traditionally oriented Jews remained unconscious of modernity or rejectionists, a significant number began to tacitly accept it. Most of these Jews lived in Germany and some referred to themselves as "*erleuchtet religiös*," religious moderation but their acceptance of at least some of the aspects of the *haskalah* and by implication non-Jewish modernity. They had "worked-through" the recent ideological developments in the world around them.

A number of rabbis became associated with this group of Jews, and many of them had studied at some point under Abraham Bing. The first of these was Isaac Bernays (1792-1849). He openly accepted the idea of the modern world and its radical implications. He symbolized this in his wearing of modern garments, but even more so in his ideological emphasis on the importance of secular education. Not only had he studied at the University at Würzburg, but later when he became head of the Jewish school in Hamburg he broadly expanded the secular offerings that were already being taught there. In his rabbinic posts he preached in German, focusing not only on Jewish matters but also on philosophy, literature and myth. So much so did he see himself as representing a new kind of Orthodoxy that he changed his title from "Rabbi" to "Hakham" (Wise man) to symbolize a new kind of religious leadership.

Bernays served as an important role model for the enlightened religious of the period. Not only did he exert an influence on his students, some of whom would become major figures in the syncretizing Orthodox rabbinate in Germany—men like Jacob Ettlinger (1798-1871), Samson R. Hirsch (1808-1888), and Ezriel Hildesheimer (1820-1889)—but he also left a profound impression on the Hamburg and neighboring Altona lay Jewish communities where his approach legitimated the behavior of the people there.

The depth of this influence and the nature of Bernays' syncretism is nicely captured in a letter written in 1882, 33 years after Bernays' death, by Sigmund Freud to his fiancé Martha Bernays, a granddaughter of the *Hakham*. Freud had been in Hamburg on Tisha B'Av and had purchased some stationery from a storekeeper who turned out to be an Orthodox Jewish follower of Bernays. The man who Freud met was 74 years old,

and thus a young adult when Bernays' leadership was at its height. His portrait of the time and of Bernays was in turn transmitted by Freud to Martha.

The man begins with a description of what by 1882 was a clearly syncretistic Orthodox community and ends by explaining Bernay's role in its ideological legitimation.

We are here a number of men of the old school all of whom adhere to our religion without cutting ourselves off from life. We owe our education to one single man. Years ago Hamburg and Altona formed one Jewish community, later they separated; until the Reform movement came to Germany, instruction was carried out by inferior teachers. Then it was realized that something had to be done, and a certain Bernays was called and chosen to be *Chacham*. This man educated us all.

... He came from Würzburg, where he had studied at Napoleon's expense.

... [Bernays] had been a linguist, an interpreter of the Scriptures, and had left behind him some distinguished children. ...

... Bernays had been a quite extraordinary person and had taught religion with great imagination and humaneness. If someone just refused to believe anything—well, then there was nothing to be done about him; but if someone demanded a reason for this or that which was looked upon as absurd, then he would step outside of the law and justify it for the unbeliever from there.

... Religion was no longer treated as rigid dogma, it became an object of reflection for the satisfaction of cultivated artistic taste and of intensified logical efforts, and the teacher of Hamburg [Bernays] recommended it finally not because it happened to exist and had been declared holy, but because he was pleased by the deeper meaning which he found in it or which he projected into it.*¹⁵

Here in Bernays was the essence of Orthodox syncretism: The law could be justified from within (i.e. the tradition) and without (i.e. the modern secular world). It was subject to rational reflection. It was chosen because it was pleasing and not simply because it was commanded. To be sure, like all Orthodox, he would "step outside the law" to justify it—never to do away with it.

Bernays came to affirm what the community already sensed was appropriate—"it was realized that something had to be done, and a certain

*Even such an unbeliever as Freud was struck by this Orthodox syncretism, and he added at the end of his letter:

When I took my leave I was more deeply moved than the Old Jew could probably guess ... And as for us [Freud and his fiancé, Martha], this is what I believe: even if the form wherein the old Jews were happy no longer offers us any shelter, something of the core of the essence of this meaningful and life-affirming Judaism will not be absent for our home.

Bernays was called and chosen. . . ." He as much responded to community trends as he did set them.

In Germany, Bernays was the first of a generation of syncretizers. Next came Jacob Ettlinger, a rabbi in Mannheim who had also studied at the university in Würzburg and under Abraham Bing. In 1817, however, an antisemitic outbreak at the university forced him to curtail his secular studies but not his desire to bring modernity and Jewish tradition together. Only six years older than Ettlinger, Bernays became nevertheless the perfect teacher and model for him. In a similar way Ettlinger would later become a teacher and model for Samson R. Hirsch who, after having studied with Bernays, received his ordination from Ettlinger.¹⁶

Ettlinger became interested, like Wessely and many of the early *maskilim*, in the modernization of traditionalist education. For the worked-through Orthodox, the notion of a Jewish education that was devoid of any secular knowledge became anathema. Repeatedly they searched for ways to incorporate critical thinking, logic, reason, and all that they had come to value in their university experience into what they already valued in their Jewish tradition. For Ettlinger this meant not only the education of the young in their schools but also the wider adult community who could be educated through the publication of a journal. He thus helped to found "Der Treu Zionswächter," a German language publication with a Hebrew supplement which would serve to train its readers in a critical and scientific approach to tradition. To be sure, those who could and were willing to read it already had taken preliminary steps toward the modern, secular world.

While Ettlinger supported a syncretistic approach to Judaism, he remained staunchly within the Orthodox domain and refused to sanction anything that seemed to him to undermine the authority of the *halakha*. Thus, for example, in spite of his openness to the modern world, he could still take an uncompromisingly traditionalist position during a controversy of the time. The debate concerned the ritual of circumcision. Traditionally, a part of this ritual calls upon the circumciser to suck impure blood from the surgical wound. This procedure is called *metsitsa*. With medical science in the late nineteenth century already emphasizing the importance of antisepsis, a number of rabbis and lay leaders began to argue that a gauze pad should be used in place of the lips and that *metsitsa* should be considered symbolic rather than actual practice. Ettlinger opposed such modernization of the ritual and remained publicly in favor of oral *metsitsa*.

Bing's other students included Selig Bamberger (1807-1878) who ultimately succeeded him in Würzburg. In part because of his location in a center of enlightened Orthodoxy, Bamberger found himself within the social situation of modernist traditionalism. Although he was not personally interested in secular education, he discovered he could no longer function successfully as a rabbi without it; his congregants and students

were simply too much involved in the secular world for him to deny it. Thus after assuming his pulpit, Bamberger pursued some secular studies on his own. However, he seems not to have gone beyond the position of the transitional-tolerator, never really leading the movement toward modernity but only allowing himself to be drawn along with it. So much so did Bamberger reconcile himself to being a tolerator that when a number of Orthodox rabbis sought to separate themselves from the formally recognized Jewish community in Germany because they could no longer tolerate an institutional association with any non-Orthodox Jews (especially the dominant Reformers), Bamberger refused to go along with the secession.

Finally, in addition to Bernays, Ettlinger and Bamberger, Abraham Bing also served as Nathan Marcus Adler's (1803-1890) teacher. Like the others, Adler wanted to be a rabbi with a secular education. Unlike them, he received a Ph.D. With this degree he returned to the rabbinate and took a pulpit in Oldenburg, Moravia where the Jews, like those in Hamburg, were looking for a rabbi who would legitimate their modernism and guide their entry into secular culture while allowing them to maintain ties with traditional Judaism. Adler had the right ascribed and achieved characteristics: heir to a long rabbinic line and possessor of university degrees.

Adler subsequently left Oldenburg for Hanover, his father's former pulpit and thence on to become chief rabbi of Great Britain. (He managed to have S. R. Hirsch, whom he considered similar in outlook, appointed as his replacement.) Here he was able to make grand changes in the character of Orthodox Judaism through the United Kingdom—and all these changes were syncretistic in nature. If modernity advocated universal education, so too would Judaism. Adler pressed for Jewish education not only for boys but also for Jewish girls—always a controversial issue in traditionalist circles. If a university education was important in the modern world, Adler argued it was appropriate for Jews as well. Accordingly, he founded Jews College, an institution nominally dedicated to training rabbis and teachers but more significantly a place where Jewish and secular studies were treated nearly as equals, where excellence in one was as valued as excellence in the other.

Adler's syncretism was, however, like that of his peers: limited by his Orthodoxy. Thus he was prepared to modify modernity if necessary to make it fit Judaism but not the reverse. At the same time, like other Orthodox syncretists, who in many ways echoed the early *maskilim*, he felt that since there were essentially no contradictions between the demands of *halakha* and modernity, the problem of mutual modification would never arise; *halakha* was prepared for the modern world.

Even more than Adler, Samson Hirsch became identified with what is here being called Orthodox syncretism. A contemporary of Adler and Bamberger, Hirsch had studied with Bernays and received his ordination

from Ettlinger. Moreover, he had been born into a family that he himself describes as "*erleuchtet religiös*." His grandfather, founder of the school in Hamburg which aimed to teach both secular and Jewish subjects, and his grand-uncle were both public supporters of the more conservative aims of the early *haskalah*. While "Torah remained their absolute religious authority," they also believed that: "Every effort was to be made to emphasize the universal, cosmopolitan, and humanitarian elements within Judaism."¹⁷

As syncretists in a world where Orthodoxy was not only a mode of Jewish observance but also a political force opposing Reform, Hirsch's forebears and many of his generation as well, felt a need to create their own institutions and new role models, something between the unrestrained cosmopolitan and the completely restricted parochial. The difficulties inherent in this effort displayed themselves in Hirsch's career. He was sent to a non-Jewish school in his formative years, apparently out of his parents' conviction that no place—including his grandfather's school—could offer him the right combination of Jewish and secular learning. For his religious education, Hirsch depended on teachers like Bernays and Ettlinger. At the age of 18, after a short time in the Hamburg school which Bernays had taken over, Hirsch entered the Gymnasium rather than a yeshiva. Two years later he went to Mannheim to study under Ettlinger. Finally he left for Würzburg.

When Hirsch took his first pulpit in Oldenburg, he found a sympathetic community there. Here he could serve as a leader precisely because of the unusual background (for an Orthodox Jew) which he had. He innovated, preaching in German, included a choir in his synagogue and in general made his congregation a place where those committed to German culture and Jewish tradition felt comfortable.

He began to publish his thoughts, and when Hirsch moved to a pulpit in Frankfurt, these thoughts began to crystallize. Here his adopted dictum, "*Torah im derekh erets*," loyalty to Jewish tradition coupled with an attachment to the modern world (a slogan borrowed from Wessely) became increasingly associated with the new Orthodoxy which Hirsch came to epitomize. It signified support for the idea that in "order to apply the Torah to the newly arising civilisation," something all modern Orthodox Jews claim as important, "it was necessary for the Jew to *know* that civilisation," to work his Judaism through it and it through his Judaism. Moreover, a belief in "the eternal newness and applicability of the Torah to any situation that might arise" was enough to offset fears among the devout that immersion in the knowledge of the secular world might undermine one's Orthodoxy.¹⁸

Hirsch thus enthusiastically advocated educational institutions which merged modern secular and traditional Jewish education. In his yeshiva in Nikolsburg he demanded that his students "understand Judaism and

the Torah 'out of themselves' and . . . utilize the general sciences as auxiliary studies for the understanding of the Torah."¹⁹ This primary emphasis on the personal experience—"out of themselves"—was the working through which modernity demanded.

For Hirsch this meant a totalistic immersion in the syncretistic effort. When Heinrich Graetz, later to become the famous Jewish historian, came to study under Hirsch who he believed would make him the ideal modern traditionalist, he was put through a program that completely swallowed up his days: Talmud and study of the laws upon rising, next prayers and some Bible, breakfast and another Talmud session, then Greek, History, Latin or Physics, afterwards Mathematics or Geography, Jewish codes and another session in Bible followed, and finally for late night reading there was a choice of Hebrew, German, French, or Latin. In Frankfort, Hirsch was nearly as rigorous in his demands on his high school students. Syncretism, "*Torah im derekh erets*," in Hirsch's terms, was a full-time occupation.

Beyond this syncretistic approach, Hirsch shared with all nominally Orthodox Jews a steadfast allegiance to *halakhic* praxis. Every jot of the law was to be observed, every ritual scrupulously carried out. But having emphasized personal experience, reason, and the need to work through the modern world, Hirsch, unlike traditionally observant Jews of a previous age, believed that "the carrying out of a Divine commandment merely because it is commanded should gradually change into the inner conviction of the moral rightness of that action."²⁰ With regard to how to act there was no question; the *halakha* was clear. But the modern Orthodox Jew could also uncover the why, had to comprehend the moral reason of his act of piety and therefore could *choose* to do what his forebears had merely accepted.

Yet for all this modernist emphasis on reason and personal choice or experience over obedience and acceptance, Hirsch like other Orthodox syncretists placed limits on what he would modify. He contrasted his modernism to that of the Reformers: "For them, religion is valid only to the extent that it does not interfere with progress; for us, progress is valid only to the extent that it does not interfere with religion."²¹ Like Nathan Marcus Adler, Hirsch *au fond* believed that there really was no conflict between modernity and *halakha*, but he nevertheless affirmed:

Before heaven and earth we openly confess that were our Torah to demand that we abstain from everything going under the name of civilization and enlightenment, then, without vacillation would we honor this demand, since our Torah is our faith. . . .²²

As the social, religious, and political dominance of Reform Judaism grew in Hirsch's Germany, however, he found himself increasingly forced to distance himself from expressions of modernity, which would im-

properly associate him with Reform. He increasingly emphasized the Orthodox side of his philosophy. Accordingly, it was he who led the already mentioned secession movement (which was nothing less than a political expression of neo-rejection) believing that if he could convince the more traditionalist elements of the Jewish community of the genuineness of his attachment to Orthodoxy, they would also accept his proposals for syncretism. Indeed, for all of his later affirmations of rigorous, traditional Orthodoxy, Hirsch never recanted his support for universal Jewish education (i.e. including girls), his conviction that, "the combination of Jewish and general knowledge was not a compromise but an integral part of the Jewish world concept," and that by and large the Orthodox need not isolate themselves from the modern world.²³

Having taken up the banner of secession and its exclusivist ethos, however, Hirsch could not completely control its neo-rejectionist implications. After his death many of his followers continued what they understood as his mandate for such denial. No less a disciple than Rabbi Solomon Breuer (1850-1926), Hirsch's son-in-law, and heir to the Frankfort leadership role, denied his own general education and university degree and established a retrograde yeshiva in which secular education played essentially no role. Breuer, influenced not only by Hirsch but also by the spirit of Moses Sofer, whose son Abraham had been Breuer's teacher in his native Hungary, saw his mission in neo-rejectionist terms, insuring the integrity of Orthodoxy by an aggressive exclusion of all non-Orthodox influences. In practice this meant the building of separate communities, institutions, and ideologies. His sons and disciples, Isaac (1883-1946) and Joseph (1882-1980), did just that. The former became a prime mover in the Orthodox separatist community in Israel and Joseph became the leader of one of the most enclosed and exclusivist Orthodox communities in America located in Washington Heights, New York.²⁴

In the increasingly consuming struggle against Reform, Hirsch and his followers gradually "transferred the emphasis [in German Orthodoxy . . .] from the individual to the community,"²⁵ from an earlier emphasis on the personal experience of syncretism to a focus on the need to be a member of the secessionist community. Those who seceded they considered Orthodox, and those who did not they looked upon as at least suspect and at worst not at all Orthodox. Thus for example Rabbi Marcus Horovitz (1844-1910), a contemporary of Solomon Breuer and rabbi of the Frankfort community, was prevented from taking part in an international conference at which the Aguda Orthodox association was founded because he was considered by many not sufficiently Orthodox; he had not seceded. After secession, "neither the individual's views nor his personal conduct decided his religious status, only his willingness to belong to a community which, as a community, was committed to the standards of traditional Judaism," counted.²⁶ Orthodoxy became identi-

fied with opposition to Jewish religious pluralism and its adherents sounded more and more like rejectionists.

In Hirsch's life, one discovers thus the two major dimensions of contemporary Orthodoxy: the incorporative and the exclusionary. In his religious ideology of *Torah im derekh erets*, Hirsch provided legitimacy for those who hoped in their traditional way of life to simultaneously incorporate the modern world and to live a kind of stabilized dualism, a modern Orthodoxy. In his leadership of the secession movement, however, he stipulated an Orthodoxy that excluded most modern Jews and their way of life and that made the definitive factor of one's religious identity political rather than theological. Accordingly, when he died, Hirsch left behind him two types of Orthodox Jew, both of whom could point to him as their model. One was the syncretizer who took his inspiration from the early, revolutionary Hirsch and the other was the neo-rejectionist who in turning his back on the moderns and their way of life took as his ideal the later more reactionary Hirsch.²⁷

Ezriel Hildesheimer, only a few years Hirsch's junior, tried as well like many of that generation in Germany to steer a course between these two extremes. The son of a distinguished rabbinical family, he had attended the Hasharat Tsvi academy in Halberstadt, the first Jewish primary school in Germany to include a program of secular studies in its curriculum.²⁸ Later, like Hirsch, he studied with Bernays and Ettlinger. Then he pursued advanced secular studies first at the university in Berlin and later at Halle where in 1846 he received a Ph.D. While undoubtedly valuing the knowledge he had acquired, he justified his degree among traditionalists as a means of "elevating the estimation of our party [i.e. Orthodox Jews] in the eyes of the public," (i.e. non-Orthodox Jews who argued that adherence to *halakha* was antithetical to secular study).²⁹

In support of Orthodox syncretism, Hildesheimer founded schools which like Hasharat Tsvi aimed to provide both secular and sacred studies. In Eisenstadt he established a primary school of this sort. Some of his students later became teachers in the seminary which he founded in 1873 in Berlin. In the Berlin seminary, Hildesheimer set a curriculum for would-be rabbis that included secular along with sacred studies; the seminary was a first in this respect. Moreover, those entering had to demonstrate not only a background in Jewish studies but also competence in secular matters as evidenced by their having passed the "Matura" examinations. As in the universities, German was the language of instruction at the seminary. Here at last was a school for the syncretist, for those who had become wrapped up "in the net of the Haskalah but could not separate themselves completely from the domain of the Jewish house of study and the rabbinical world."³⁰

Of course, those who could meet the entrance requirements were a select group who were already among the moderns. The Seminary clearly

was predicated upon a community and educational system that was syncretist in character. At first this meant it was only open to Jews from the West, especially from Germany. Thus, those who wanted to enter but who lacked the requisite background had to go elsewhere. The well-known "Rav Tsair," Chaim Tchernovitz, describes just this sort of obstacle in his own life when he tried to go from the Jewish world in Russia to the Hildesheimer Seminary. His hopes for a syncretist education were dashed when he discovered his educational background—what had been available to him where he lived—was simply insufficient.

From the Hildesheimer Seminary would come a generation of rabbis who like the laymen they served stood at the junction of cosmopolitan modernism and parochial Orthodoxy. On the syncretist side were, for example, Nehemia Nobel (1871-1922) who became rabbi in Cologne and later an instructor in the Lehrhaus, the adult education institute guided by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig where Jewish subjects were taught in the critical perspective of scientific study (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*). Ultimately, Nobel became a professor of religion at the University of Frankfurt. From the standpoint of Orthodox Judaism, this was beyond the pale for it took him outside the Jewish domain.

Another syncretist, who however, stayed closer to the Orthodox world was David Hoffman (1843-1921). A student at Hildesheimer's Eisenstadt school, he later became rector at the Berlin seminary. He had studied as well at the universities of Vienna, Berlin, and Tübingen and had acquired the title of "professor" from the German government. But he had also studied under Abraham Sofer, in an environment where the rejectionist spirit of Sofer's father Moses was still felt. In bringing together these two influences, Hoffman became a major figure in the Orthodox communities of western and central Europe. Undoubtedly his position of authority at the Seminary played a large part in the growth of his influence.

Marcus Horowitz, the rabbi in Frankfurt who opposed secession, and Meir Hildesheimer (1864-1934), son of Ezriel and head of the school after his father's death, also prominent figures of German Orthodoxy, came out of the Berlin Seminary as syncretists. Other graduates, like the Breuers, however, came away from their experiences in Germany with a desire to contra-acculturate. They began to "stress the values in aboriginal ways of life, and to move aggressively . . . toward the restoration of those ways," partially out of a belief that modernity prevented Jews from truly living up to the demands of Torah.³¹ The negative effects of Reform which Breuer and others like him saw as increasingly dangerous for Orthodoxy seemed to make rejection of all vestiges of modernization crucial. The idea of saving all Jews from assimilation was abandoned. Indeed the underlying assumption of secession was that Orthodoxy had to separate itself from all other forms of Judaism. It had to thus save itself and its own. Nothing else mattered. It could not tolerate even a tacit

identification and association with the other more modern Judaisms. Secession was a process of disassociation and purification—a back-to-fundamentals approach, a new (neo) rejection of what some had for a time accepted. For the Breuers it was crucial to demonstrate therefore that Hirsch—one of the apparent modernists—was for this return to basics.

Finally, some Hildesheimer graduates, perhaps epitomized by Joseph Wohlgemuth (1867-1932) first a student and later a dean at the seminary, alternated between syncretism and neo-rejection. In a way, Wohlgemuth was the paradigm of this hybrid type. In addition to his studies at the seminary, he had also gone to the University of Berlin. But when he returned as a teacher to the rabbinical school, he chose to model himself as the “*Rav*,” the rabbi-teacher of old who was completely nourished in the soil of rabbinic Judaism.³² Playing this role, which by now was acceptable since neo-rejectionist trends had grown stronger in Germany since the secession controversy, he came to represent a kind of throwback at the seminary. Yet at the same time he understood the mission of the school to be modern Orthodox in its orientation.

For Hildesheimer, his seminary symbolized his syncretism, his desire to maintain, in his words, “a faithful adherence to traditional teachings combined with an effective effort to keep in touch with the spirit of progress,”³³ but his support for secession and invective against non-Orthodox institutions signified a recognition that a new rejection of certain modern trends was required. Orthodox Jews were afraid of the implications of their modernism. Like Hirsch, Hildesheimer felt himself having to prove his Orthodox credentials in light of the negative implications of modernism which traditionalists drew from their perception of German Reform. Hildesheimer realized there were significant differences between modern Orthodoxy and Reform, but perhaps not satisfied to leave these in the relatively esoteric form of statements of principle, he, like Hirsch, chose to simplify them into the political terms of secession. Thus in 1897 he advocated an Orthodox secession from the “General Union of Rabbis in Germany,” which included members of all ideological persuasions, in favor of the formation of a “Union of Torah-Faithful Rabbis.”³⁴

Hildesheimer, however, “never considered secession the ideal; on the contrary, as far as possible, he maintained unity for the idea of ‘*Klal*,’ the feeling of solidarity with all Israel.”³⁵ To the extent that he sincerely believed in this principle, he could not readily write off all those who advocated different approaches to Judaism or who refused to join the secession. He, like many Orthodox Jews, felt torn between feelings of ideological and political hostility toward those whom he considered to be undermining Orthodoxy and feelings of rapport with those who in a hostile Gentile world were still willing to identify themselves as

part of the Jewish community, *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, even after the secession, he could associate with non-Orthodox Jews and, unlike Hirsch, became an active member in the non-sectarian B'nai Brith group. Despondent about having to choose between rejectionism and syncretism, he reported, "it has caused me many sleepless nights in which I have shed many tears."³⁶

While nineteenth and early twentieth century Orthodoxy in Germany oscillated between syncretism and neo-rejection or secession, central European Orthodoxy was also beginning to feel the pull of the outside world and some of those who remained basically committed to the Jewish tradition were starting to work their way through it toward modernity. Eisenstadt, where Hildesheimer began his version of syncretistic Orthodoxy, was after all in Hungary. The relative success of the school in attracting students was a sign that at least some of the observant Jews in the region were prepared to take their Orthodoxy out of the ghetto. Parents who sent their children to the school must have become persuaded that Orthodox syncretism was desirable and possible, and they must have reached this conclusion even during the time that the Hatam Sofer's denial of innovation was the spirit of Hungarian Orthodoxy.

Even earlier cracks of toleration and some syncretism had begun to appear in the Hatam Sofer's rejectionist wall. Perhaps the most extreme case was that of Rabbi Bernard Illowy (1812-1871). Unlike most of the Hatam Sofer's students, Illowy went on from the Pressburg yeshiva to get a Ph.D. from the University of Budapest. Later he taught French and German in the College of Znaim, all the while identifying himself publicly as an Orthodox Jew. During the late 1840's, he became one of a number of Jews (few of whom were Orthodox) who were active in the abortive revolutionary movement in Hungary. Following the failure of the revolution, Illowy was forced to leave Hungary and went ultimately to the United States, a rare decision for an Orthodox rabbi of his time. Most considered America to be a "trefe medina," an impure land where *halakha* was being constantly undermined. Coming to America, Illowy became successively a rabbi in New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis and points west. As he moved more deeply into the American continent, he, like other nominally Orthodox Jews who had preceded him, became affected by the American ethos of breaking with the past.³⁷ His interpretations of

*To be sure, those Orthodox Jews who decided to come to America before the great migrations of 1881 and after were already a self-selected group. Their willingness to uproot themselves from the large Jewish communities in Europe in favor of the small American one was an indication of at least a latent openness to change. Those who came later, because they were forced out of Europe by pogrom and holocaust, were generally more steadfast in their religious commitments. Indeed, the great surge of energy in American Orthodoxy occurs after World War II when the Jews who would otherwise never have left Europe because of their attachment to strict Jewish life came because there was no other choice; but they came determined to keep their religious life in tact. And even as a remnant community they seem

halakha began to display an emotional loyalty to the concept of Jewish law but an equal commitment to the American situation which Illowy believed demanded modifications in Jewish law. Thus, for example, he allowed women to ride to the synagogue on the Sabbath—something no European Orthodox rabbi would have ever permitted. And yet, Illowy continued to consider himself Orthodox (perhaps because there seemed no institutional alternative open to him and the time) opposed Reform and often referred his religious inquiries to Eziel Hildesheimer.³⁸

By the time of the Hatam Sofer's death, the aggressive rejection which he and his yeshiva represented was surrounded on three sides by modernity. Only in the Northeast, the Galician corner where Hasidic communities flourished and in the East, where emancipation had not yet become a real fact of life, could Jewish tradition still be considered absolutely dominant. This is not to say that the *haskalah* and the situation of modernity were completely absent from these eastern regions, they were simply distant.

In central Europe, however, changes were imminent. When Abraham Sofer took over his father's position in the community in 1839, he could still uphold the rejectionist stance against modernity and innovation. Gradually, however, he found himself increasingly forced to make compromises of toleration. The Eisenstadt school which Hildesheimer organized shortly after 1851 was a modest success. While Sofer and many Orthodox rabbis in Hungary opposed it and ultimately succeeded in getting Hildesheimer to move to Germany, they nevertheless had to recognize that the latter moved not because he had failed but rather because he had succeeded and simply wanted to be closer to the heartland of Orthodox syncretism. Moreover, for all of Abraham Sofer's opposition to Hildesheimer's school, a number of his students went on the Berlin seminary and while there kept up a contact with him. The very fact that these students could see fit to go to an institution like Hildesheimer's after studying with Sofer suggests that the rejectionism in Pressburg had become sufficiently tempered to allow some of its graduates to develop into Hildesheimer syncretists without having to deny their origins.

Abraham Sofer responded to these changes in Orthodoxy as a private tolerator. At the same time that he ceased opposing modernist tendencies in others, he drew the line between them in their situation and himself and his own community. "Perhaps in Germany, in these times," he would argue, certain modernist tendencies like secular education, the use of a language other than Hebrew or Yiddish for Jewish studies, a change in dress, and the like were appropriate, but in his own Hungary, "where the

in great measure to have thus far succeeded more than earlier immigrants in holding on to their Orthodoxy.

Illowy had apparently moved too far from Moses Sofer to ask him for help. In the Hatam Sofer's published list of students, Illowy's name has been expunged.

study of Torah and the fear of heaven blooms on an ancient base and where the yeshivas still disseminate Torah," they were not.³⁹ Thus, for example, Sofer reacted to Hildesheimer's move from Eisenstadt to Berlin in 1869 with the following judgment: "Here he corrupted [Orthodox Judaism]; there he will restore it."⁴⁰

This same attitude coupled with an emphasis on the differentiation between one Jewish context and another appears in a letter between Abraham Sofer and the syncretist Jacob Ettlinger.⁴¹ The letter is in response to Ettlinger's having sent Sofer a copy of a document which he had written. Apparently, this manuscript was a German commentary on some matter of Jewish content which Ettlinger, in the customary fashion, was sending to a series of rabbis for their approval in the hopes that their signatures could be attached to the final publication. The very fact that there was correspondence between these two and that Ettlinger could conceive of sending a manuscript to Sofer for approval is already an indication of a softening of the earlier rejectionist fervor.

Even more convincing evidence, however, is in the letter's content. After a warm greeting and an affirmation of their common battle "against the sinners and tyrants of our generation," (i.e. Jewish innovators and assimilationists), Sofer takes up the question of his approval. While granting it and even agreeing to enlist others as signatories, albeit as anonymously as possible, he is reluctant to openly sanction a Jewish commentary written completely in German. Admitting that German had to be used "so that most people could understand [the document]," Sofer suggests that the German be accompanied by a Hebrew text so that it appear that the former is "only a copy" of the Hebrew. He goes on to explain that people might thereby learn the original language of the text. Ironically, one discovers here the obverse of Mendelssohn's effort. Whereas the latter hoped to teach parochials German, Sofer aimed to train cosmopolitans in Hebrew. He therefore permitted something his father had opposed—a dual language text.⁴² Seeing the Hebrew next to the German, Sofer went on to explain would avoid the risk that lay persons would cease teaching their children "the holy tongue" out of the mistaken impression that the rabbis have abandoned it. Finally, while prepared to support this German text in a Hebrew book, Sofer noted that while such a book would not be inappropriate in "your country," in Hungary and its surroundings it would be inappropriate.⁴³

Whether Abraham Sofer privately tolerated the modernist efforts of the German syncretists because he believed that they would thereby return western Jewry to the paths of tradition—as his comments in this letter hint—or simply because he was resigned to the situation in the West is difficult to determine. That his rejectionism was not as extreme as his father's is, however, beyond question.

I. H. Weiss (1815-1905) was another central European rabbi who, at least for a time, might have been identified with Orthodoxy. However, unlike his contemporary Abraham Sofer, Weiss publicly tried to confront tradition with modernity and in the last analysis saw the need to modify the former. He saw his goal as the creation of something new, a synthesis. A product of the Eisenstadt yeshiva of Rabbi Moses Perls where, in the spirit of the Vilna Gaon, he was taught scientific scholarship could be put into the service of Torah study, Weiss embraced the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* ethos and between 1871 and 1891 completed his *Dor Dor ve Doroshov*, an attempt to scientifically examine the development of the *halakha*. For Weiss, the place to synthesize was in the field of scholarship.

His conviction that the *halakha*, especially as formulated in the Talmud, was something with which Jews should be concerned alienated Weiss from the Reformers. On the other hand, his willingness to submit the sacred law to the critical eye of reason, the hallmark of the *Wissenschaft* approach, brought about his marginality from Orthodoxy. As a would-be synthesizer, he went beyond the simulative syncretizing of even the German Orthodox. Moving Westward from his native Moravia, Weiss could not really find himself a place in the traditional world. For a time, in spite of the fact that he had given up plans for a university education in favor of rabbinic studies at the Trebitch yeshiva, he became a businessman. Later he was a proofreader. Very much the modern man, Weiss learned to compartmentalize his life and turned his religious interests into an avocation. Finally, however, it once again became his calling when he became a teacher in Adolf Jellinek's Vienna *Bet Hamidrash*. This was a non-Orthodox institute which served those Jews who wanted to be modern with a traditionalist accent. It was the perfect institution to reflect Weiss' kind of modernist Judaism. To the right of Reform and yet more modern than even the most secularist oriented Orthodox schools, the Vienna *Bet Hamidrash* was the prototype for the Conservative schools and colleges that would later become the establishment of American conservative Jewry—places like Graetz College in Philadelphia, the Hebrew Teachers College in Boston, Spertus College in Chicago and others which served a Jewry embedded in modernity but still affectively tied to Jewish tradition and culture.

By the late nineteenth century, central Europe, like Germany, had an Orthodoxy being pulled in two directions. The one was toward syncretism or even conservative synthesis and the other was toward a post-modern neo-rejection. Representative of the latter was still the Sofer family, this time in the person of Simon Sofer (1853-1930), son of Abraham. The neo-rejectionists were revising Orthodox Jewish history. Thus when Simon Sofer looked for legitimation for his denials of modernism, he like Solomon Breuer could and did point to Samson Hirsch. The

man who had come for many to personify the capacity of Orthodoxy to survive in the modern situation was now touted as one fundamentally opposed to syncretism, who had only espoused it in resignation to the situation of Germany and in a covert effort to bring modern German Jews back to a traditional way of life. Citing a personal communication from Mrs. Solomon Breuer,⁴⁴ Hirsch's daughter, Simon Sofer declared, for example, that he had been told that Hirsch never meant to prescribe an openness to secular culture for any Jewish community other than his own. Thus did Hirsch become a hero of a traditional Orthodoxy no less than he had earlier become the ideal of those drawn to modernity.

[Part II of this essay will appear in the next issue.]

QUEENS COLLEGE

NOTES

1. Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York, 1979), pp. 11-17.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
4. J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (New York, 1973), pp. 488-9. See also N. Fodor and F. Gaynor (eds.) *Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1950), pp. 69-70.
5. L. Dawidowicz, *The War Against The Jews* (New York, 1975), p. 230.
6. H. Schwab, *The History of Orthodox Jewry in Germany* (New York, 1959), p. 9.
7. P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York, 1966), p. 114.
8. P. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York, 1979), pp. 5-11.
9. H. Burger, "Syncretism: An Acculturative Accelerator," *Human Organization* 25 (1966), p. 166, p. 169.
10. I. Jakobovitz, "Letter" in *Commentary* 58, no. 5 (November, 1971), p. 22.
11. Norman Lamm, "The Voice of Torah in the Battle of Ideas" *Jewish Life* (March-April, 1967), pp. 28-29.
12. M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism* (New York, 1955), pp. 263-4.
13. N. Rosenbloom, *Tradition in an Age of Reform* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 60.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
15. E. Freud (ed.), trans. J. Stern, *Collected Letters of Sigmund Freud* (New York, 1960), pp. 17-22.
16. A. Posner and E. Freman, "Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger" in L. Jung (ed.) *Guardians of Our Faith* (New York, 1958), pp. 231-243.
17. N. Rosenbloom, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
18. I. Grunfeld, *Judaism Eternal* (New York, 1956), p. xviii.
19. M. Breuer "Samson Raphael Hirsch" in L. Jung (ed.) *Guardians of our Faith* (New York, 1958), p. 277.
20. I. Grunfeld, *op. cit.*, p. xix.
21. S. Hirsch, *Igrot Tzafon* (New York, 1971) trans. I Levy, p. 236.

22. M. Breuer, *op. cit.*, p. 291.
23. I. Grunfeld, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.
24. A. Carlebach, *Adass Yeshuron of Cologne* (Belfast, 1964), pp. 19-20.
25. N. Rosenbloom, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
26. *Ibid.*
27. No less a figure than Hirsch's daughter, in a letter to Sofer argues that her father never meant for his modernism to extend beyond the boundaries of Germany. See S. Sofer (Schreiber) *Igrot Sofrim* (Vienna, 1929).
28. M. Eliav, *Jewish Education in Germany during the Era of the Haskalah and Emancipation* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 227-239.
29. D. Ellenson, "A Response by modern Orthodoxy to Jewish Religious Reform: The Case of Esriel Hildesheimer" in *American Jewish History* (1980), p. 2.
30. C. Tchernowitz, *Pirkei Chayim* (New York, 1954), p. 108.
31. M. Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York, 1949), p. 531.
32. I. Eisner "Reminiscences of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary" in *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 12 (New York, 1967), pp. 32-54.
33. D. Ellenson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
34. H. Schwab, trans. I Birnbaum, *The History of Orthodox Jewry in Germany* (London, 1950), p. 60.
35. I. Unna, "Esriel Hildesheimer" in L. Jung (ed.) *Guardians of Our Faith* (New York, 1958), p. 227.
36. *Op. cit.*, p. 238.
37. A. Sofer, *Ketov Zot Zikaron* (Jerusalem, 1967). See also: Henry Illowy. *The Controversial Letters and Casuistic Decisions of the Late Rabbi Bernard Illowy Ph.D.* (Berlin, 1914).
38. H. Illowy, *ibid.*
39. A. Sofer, *Igrot Sofrim* (Vienna, 1928), part 3, p. 41.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, part 3, pp. 6-8.
42. *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 80-82.
43. *Ibid.*, part 3, p. 41.
44. See note 27 above.